Who Let the Dogs Out? A Study of Rural Gentrification, Roaming Dogs, and Community Conflict

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DEDICATION

For Flapjack, and every dog I've ever loved, those I've helped, and those I couldn't.

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ABSTRACT

Fairfield Glade, a master-planned retirement destination community, has attracted thousands of newcomers—wealthy urban and suburban in-migrants—to rural Cumberland County, Tennessee since its inception in 1970. The sociological canon on gentrifying rural spaces, such as Fairfield Glade, shows that there is underlying tension between newcomers and longtime locals—lifelong residents of Cumberland County who currently live in Fairfield Glade. A perusal of social media shows that there is conflict over the free roaming of dogs in Fairfield Glade. I conducted 18 semi-structured interviews of longtime locals and newcomers in Fairfield Glade to understand if conflict over free roaming dogs seen on social media also occurs in neighbors, as well as how that conflict might get resolved. I found that while there is little conflict over free roaming dogs directly, I discovered themes of class division, differing perceptions of rurality, and a resistance to pay higher taxes to fund better animal control and sheltering services.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On an East Tennessee "lost and found" pets Facebook page, a contributor posts that a dog showed up at her house on a hot, sunny day. She "could not leave the little guy" out in the heat, so she brought him inside her home and made a post on Facebook to try to find his owner. In her post, she exclaims, "He's so cute. Someone's gotta be looking for him!" The contributor posts a picture of the dog and asks if anyone knows where he came from. She states that if she is unable to find his owner by tomorrow evening, she will start looking for a new home for him. She asks people to message her if they are interested in him.

Many posters praised the contributor for taking in the dog and making the post. Some posters offered the contributor advice and suggested that she take the dog to a local vet to be scanned for a microchip in an effort to find the dog's owner. Others criticized the contributor, saying that she was "giving away someone's dog" and that they "couldn't imagine giving away someone else's dog like that" and how heartbroken they would be if their dog got out and someone tried to find their dog a new home after just one day of searching. One poster replied that the contributor should take the dog to the local shelter because "most owners will check the shelter before they check anywhere else" and that giving away the dog before checking with the shelter made the contributor "horrible" and "uncaring." This is just one example of conflicts between people over roaming dogs—dogs that, for whatever reason, are not confined by a home, fence, or chain—that occur in

places where rural development leads to clashes between long-time rural residents and urban and suburban newcomers.

Statement of the Problem

While the conflict referenced above occurred on social media, it seems reasonable that conflict over free roaming dogs may also happen in neighborhoods. Literature on neighborhood conflict reveals that often neighborhood residents can regulate and resolve conflict, but this is not always the case (Merry 1987). Additionally, sites of rural gentrification—rural places that are growing due to the in-migration of affluent people (Leebrick 2015), typically from urban and suburban places—are likely places for neighborhood conflict over roaming dogs, as roaming dogs are typically a rural phenomenon (Blouin 2015; Irvine 2015; Silva-Rodríguez et al. 2023), as urban places tend to have stricter animal regulations, including leash laws (Armbruster 2019; Jorgensen & Brown 2017). However, most of the research on neighborhood conflict has been conducted in urban areas (Sharp and Lee 2017), so we know far less about conflict in gentrifying rural places. Inspired by the conflict over free roaming dogs on social media, my thesis examines the gentrifying rural area of Fairfield Glade, Tennessee, in efforts to better understand neighborhood conflict in gentrifying rural areas and how conflicts get resolved.

Fairfield Glade

Sitting atop the Cumberland Plateau, Fairfield Glade is a retirement community in Cumberland County, Tennessee (Fairfield Glade 2025d). Fairfield Glade began development in 1970 as a “master-planned” community oriented toward attracting people

of retirement age (*Cumberland County Times* 1969; Peters 1970). Over the decades, Fairfield Glade has attracted senior in-migrants by promoting nearby medical care facilities and several built environment amenities including a community center, a library, a small art gallery, walking trails, restaurants, grocery stores, two assisted living facilities, several golf courses, two marinas, and 11 lakes for boating (Fairfield Glade 2025a; 2025d).

Located near the Smoky Mountains and the Obed River which runs through Cumberland County, Fairfield Glade is surrounded by natural amenities which are a large draw for in-migrants (Lapping 2016; Fairfield Glade 2025b; 2025d). The amenity-based development and influx of in-migrants classifies Fairfield Glade as a gentrifying rural space (Leebrick 2015). In-migrants to Fairfield Glade are typically wealthy, retired white people (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c).

Rural Gentrification

Rural gentrification is when wealthier in-migrants move to lower-income rural areas lured by amenity-based development (Leebrick 2015; Nelson et al. 2010). A "simultaneously physical, economic, social, and cultural phenomenon" (Nelson et al. 2010:345), rural gentrification changes the landscape of an area (Jin & Gong 2025; Pilgeram 2019; Golding 2016). Rural gentrification "requires a demographic shift of populations from urban and suburban areas to rural ones, happening according to particular timelines and in particular locations" (Pilgeram 2019:913). There are both positive and negative effects of rural gentrification (Deller 2010; Hunter et al. 2005; Jones et al. 2003; Sherman 2017;2023), but it is a slow process that takes years, if not

decades, for those effects to be fully realized (Golding 2016; Leebrick 2015; Nelson & Nelson 2010).

Some rural areas that experienced deindustrialization in the latter half of the 20th and start of the 21st centuries have benefited from amenity-based development that replaced their declining industrial sectors and extractive industries (Deller 2010; Sherman 2017;2023). While most rural places in the United States continue to lose population (Carr and Kefalas 2011; Ulrich-Schad 2013), amenity-based development has been shown to lead to job growth, population growth, and higher incomes (Deller 2010; Reeder & Brown 2005; Sherman 2017;2023). Natural amenities tend to attract young, educated, highly skilled in-migrants who often work remotely (Carr & Kefalas 2011; Nelson & Nelson 2010). Retired and semi-retired people of higher incomes also tend to be attracted to rural areas with scenic natural amenities (Lapping 2016; Nelson & Nelson 2010). Some locations are particularly attractive to in-migrants, such as the Rocky Mountains, Southern Appalachia, or "energy boom" regions like those in the Great Plains (Jones et al. 2003; Pilgeram 2019).

Downsides of rural gentrification include displacement of locals due to increased costs of living and housing prices, with low-wage renters being especially at risk of displacement (Leebrick 2015; Nelson et al. 2010; Sherman 2017;2023). Longtime locals that are not physically displaced risk being culturally displaced as newcomers "impose a degree of social and cultural hegemony over consumption choices" (Pilgeram 2019:914). In this way, newcomers can "impose profound changes on the social and physical environment" of rural spaces (ibid:914). Additionally, many of the jobs created due to an

influx of wealthy in-migrants are low wage, service sector and construction jobs (Sherman 2017). These jobs are often part-time or seasonal positions, making it challenging for locals to find steady work (Sherman 2017; Valente et al. 2023).

Due to the master-planned nature of Fairfield Glade, the continued development of the community has consistently led to the expulsion of long-time locals no longer able to afford the ever-increasing costs of living and housing in the area, signaling a class divide (Golding 2016; Kim & Lee 2023; Nelson & Nelson 2011; Nelson et al. 2010; Sherman 2017;2023). Although it cannot be said that rural gentrification always leads to conflict between newcomers and longtime locals, it can allow space for conflict to happen (Jones et al. 2003; Leebrick 2015; Sherman 2017;2023).

Spaces for Conflict

One potential arena for conflict in gentrifying rural areas is over the management of free roaming dogs in the areas where both locals and newcomers reside. Free roaming dogs are conceptualized in my study as "those that are not permanently restrained or under human control" (Hughes and Macdonald 2013:342). In rural areas, it is more commonplace for residents to let their dogs roam free because of the vastness of open spaces which can allow dogs to safely explore, and exercise without the need for constant leash control, and because dogs are sometimes used as working dogs (Blouin 2015; Mosley et al. 2020; Rubin & Beck 1982; Silva-Rodríguez et al. 2023). However, over time, people have become aware of the dangers that free-roaming dogs face, but this awareness has spread faster in urban than rural areas, perhaps because the dangers of traffic to roaming dogs are clearer and because of norms created by leash laws (Awawdeh

& Forrest 2024; Butcher & De Keuster 2013; Canal et al. 2018; Hughes and Macdonald 2013). What I have observed on social media suggests that conflict occurs when a newcomer takes a roaming dog to the local shelter or posts an image of the dog on social media in effort to find the dog's owner. A longtime local may recognize the dog as belonging to another person in the neighborhood and become alarmed by the newcomer's efforts to find the dog's owner when the dog already has an owner. This has led to conflict on social media, such as I described above, but it is unclear whether this is creating conflict in neighborhoods and among whom. Are these in-migrant versus local differences in dog management perceptions? Certainly, differences in perception of appropriate dog care and management potentially between rural gentrifiers and longtime locals especially on the topic of roaming dogs—those allowed to wander neighborhoods unsupervised—generate space for confusion and conflict.

Cultural sociology scholars assert that cultural ideas and practices are connected to where a person was born and the place in which they now live (Swidler 2001). This applies to newcomers and longtime locals in the case of rural gentrification and free-roaming dogs. In-migrants from suburban and urban areas are conditioned to living in areas with rules and regulations about the care and management of dogs (Arroube & Pereira. 2025; De la Puente-Arévalo et al. 2022; Instone & Sweeny 2014; Irvine 2015). These include things such as leash laws, waste pickup, vaccination requirements, and in some states, sterilization laws in efforts to help reduce the overpopulation of dogs (Arroube & Pereira. 2025; MSU 2025; De la Puente-Arévalo et al. 2022; Shamsaddini et al. 2024). In areas with more dense human populations, dogs must be supervised for

public health and safety, and as a means to manage space (Awawdeh & Forrest 2024; Hughes and Macdonald 2013; Irvine 2015; Jorgensen & Brown 2017; Merry 1987). For example, dogs must be leashed on sidewalks as to control the dog when passing other people (Irvine 2015). Free-roaming dogs are also a threat to local wildlife, so having these laws and regulations prevents damage to local wildlife populations (Hughes and Macdonald 2013; Jorgensen & Brown 2017; Yosef 2025). These aforementioned factors impact how people from non-rural areas view the care and management of dogs (Blouin 2015; Mosley et al. 2020; Naughton et al. 2024); there is a cultural and societal expectation that dogs must be managed in such a way that they do not become a nuisance or public safety issue (Arroube & Pereira. 2025; Butcher & De Keuster 2013; Canal et al. 2018; De la Puente-Arévalo et al. 2022; Irvine 2015; Jorgensen & Brown 2017; Merry 1987).

Rural culture concerning the care and management of dogs is different than that found in more urban areas due to a variety of factors including space, lack of spay/neuter laws, and the utility of dogs in rural areas (Blouin 2012&2015; Naughton et al. 2024; Rowan & Kartal 2018). Rural spaces, by definition, have less population density; housing is sparser, and neighbors can be miles apart. With space comes more safety for dogs to roam unsupervised. In more rural areas, there are fewer cars, which means there is not as high of a risk of a dog getting hit by a car as opposed to urban and suburban areas (Arluke & Atema 2015; Canal et al. 2018). The landscape of rural areas makes it safer for dogs to roam.

Culturally and historically, people in rural areas also tend to view dogs as useful for protecting family, livestock, and property (Blouin 2015; Mosley et al. 2020). Some types of dogs may also be used to herd livestock (ibid). To do their jobs, working dogs must be allowed to roam (Mosley et al. 2020); this might not be well-tolerated by newcomers to a gentrifying rural area as expectations of in-migrants do not necessarily align with the cultural and practical practices of longtime locals, creating a unique point for potential conflict.

The Relationship Between People and Dogs

Referring to them as "friends" and "fur babies," Americans are known for pampering and caring for their dogs like children (Blouin 2012). At least two-thirds of American households have either a dog or a cat and at least half of those households consider their pet to be a family member (Blouin 2012). For comparison, only 40 percent of households have children according to the 2022 US Census (US Census Bureau 2024).

Many Americans feel significant emotional connections to their dogs (Taylor et al. 2006). A 2006 Pew Research Center survey showed that 85 percent of people with dogs considered them to be family and 94 percent of those people felt they were closer with their dog than their mother or father (ibid). Having a pet in the home has also been shown to have positive socioemotional and socioeconomic effects on children such as increasing their empathy and lowering delinquency (Jacobson & Chang 2018).

People are also spending more money on their dogs now than in previous decades (Blouin 2012; White et al. 2022). From grooming to daycare, there is an entire service industry centered around pet care (ibid). The amount of money spent on veterinary care

in the US increased from 7 billion in 1996 to 16 billion just ten years later (ibid). By 2020, Americans were spending nearly $100 billion on their pets (White et al. 2022).

Many Americans care for their dogs and claim to have an emotional connection to their dogs, but at the same time, there is a lot of dog suffering in the United States (Blouin 2012). Dogs suffer due to neglect, abandonment, and abuse (Blouin 2012; Rowan & Kartal 2018). Overpopulation from failure to spay and neuter leads to high euthanasia rates, especially in southern states (ibid). Southern states also report higher numbers of stray dogs compared to other states (Rowan & Kartal 2018). Overall, euthanasia rates have drastically decreased in the last 50 years (ibid). Still, the ASPCA estimates that roughly 530,000 cats and 390,000 dogs were euthanized in animal shelters in 2019 (ASPCA 2025).

The media espouses two extremes in pet care management: pampering and abuse (Blouin 2012). Human-pet, or in the case of this study, human-dog relations are far more complicated than having only two polarizing extremes (ibid). Sociologists suspect that there are various cultural differences that explain why some Americans claim their dogs as family members and others view dogs more like a tool for work or something to be disposed of if the dog becomes a nuisance (Sanders 1993;2003). These differences also impact a person's view on their dog's need for veterinary, behavioral, and other types of care (Blouin 2012).

Likewise, there are cultural differences in what people think is appropriate care for their dogs (Blouin 2015). For example, tail docking and ear cropping are routinely performed on working and herding dog breeds to prevent injury to these extremities

during work (Mills et al. 2016; Reyes-Sotelo et al. 2020). Some breeds of dogs routinely have their tails and ears docked for aesthetic purposes or to prevent health issues, such as ear infections (ibid). People have varying opinions about whether or under which circumstances it is okay to dock tails and crop ears, but other people think these are inhumane practices (Bennett & Perini 2003:208-9). The same spectrum of decision-making can be applied to roaming dogs; some people feel that allowing dogs to roam is part of appropriate dog care and management (i.e., letting dogs be dogs) while others do not hold that same sentiment (Blouin 2015; Mosley et al. 2020; Naughton et al. 2024).

Some dog-loving people may feel it is best to allow dogs to roam because this gives the dog the freedom to go where they please and that it is part of a dog's nature to roam (Blouin 2015; Mosley et al. 2020; Naughton et al. 2024). These dog-loving people may feel it is cruel and harmful to not allow a dog to roam, whereas some dog-loving people may feel that a dog is safest where they can be secure and managed. This could include being indoors, on a leash, or in a fenced-in yard (ibid). Public safety is also a concern with free-roaming dogs as not all dogs are friendly to humans and other animals and not all owned dogs are vaccinated (Instone & Sweeny 2014; Overall & Love 2001; Rubin & Beck 1982); a free-roaming dog could also get hit by a car or be injured in other ways that could be prevented by supervision (Awawdeh & Forrest 2024; Hughes & Macdonald 2013).

Overall, the literature is clear that pet ownership, perhaps especially the ownership of dogs, is an important part of our culture, yet there is considerable divergence in what is considered reasonable pet care (Bennett & Perini 2003; Blouin

2015; Mosley et al. 2020; Naughton et al. 2024). I believe that gentrifying rural places are a vital space to examine conflicts over roaming dogs, as the movement of urban and suburban people to rural spaces potentially places people with vastly different views of appropriate pet maintenance in close proximity.

Research Purpose

Problems between neighbors "occur in the everyday domestic setting of residential life" (Liu et al. 2023:238). Age, income, and social status can impact how people react to neighborhood problems (Liu et al. 2023; Merry 1987). These problems can blur the conceptual lines between civility/incivility and private/public (Liu et al. 2023). Literature on neighborhood conflict shows that, most of the time, residents of most neighborhoods can regulate and resolve intrusions and annoyances so that they may coexist (Merry 1987). In most neighborhoods, residents "find ways to cooperate, to reciprocate, and to develop shared rules and techniques for managing dogs, noise, children, neatness, and so forth" (Merry 1987:35-6). Sometimes, however, neighborhood regulation fails (Liu et al. 2023; Merry 1987).

Neighborhood conflict is an expression of social disorder and can undermine the autonomy a resident has at home, making them feel less comfortable (Liu et al. 2023; Merry 1987). Disputes between neighbors can also escalate into intimidation, property damage, and bodily harm (Liu et al. 2023). Understanding neighborhood conflict is important because not only does neighborhood conflict affect the mental, physical, and emotional state of people living within neighborhoods, but informed policymakers could

design more appropriate rules, laws, and regulations to help reduce the likelihood of problems from occurring (ibid).

The purpose of my research is to understand if the conflict that I have observed over free roaming dogs on social media occurs within neighborhoods, focusing on roaming dogs because I see this issue as one that is unique to rural gentrification which is potentially an underlying source of conflict. Researchers have already studied how rural gentrifiers shape rural landscapes (Nelson et al. 2010; Pilgeram 2019; Sherman 2017&2023), but my research offers a more thorough understanding of how rural gentrifiers and longtime locals shape each other's experiences within neighborhoods, including how they approach conflict. My research offers insight into how newly transplanted urbanites approach conflict in rural spaces as opposed to how people in rural spaces typically approach neighborhood conflict as well as how conflict might get resolved within these spaces.

As mentioned previously, cultural differences can also be a cause for conflict between neighbors concerning perceptions on proper dog care and management. I wanted to understand if cultural differences between urban and suburban in-migrants and rural locals created space for tension and conflict over the management of roaming dogs in Fairfield Glade. To do this, I am using the theoretical framework of Swidler's (2001) identity model of culture. By using this framework, my research offers sociologists a better idea of how cultural identity influences the behaviors of urban in-migrants in rural living environments and spaces and how rural longtime residents and urban newcomers renegotiate these cultural understandings. In my study, I find that local residents do find

ways to resolve their conflicts over roaming dogs. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, I also draw more sociologically interesting conclusions. First, I find that Fairfield Glade residents engage in what Zerubavel (1996) calls “lumping and splitting” whereby they create artificial divides and connections between neighborhood residents, potentially creating allies in neighborhood conflicts. Second, I find that locals have divided perceptions of rurality, which challenges the assertions about rural and urban differences in cultural expectations of appropriate dog behavior as noted in the cultural sociology literature. Third, I find that newly transplanted urbanites and suburbanites express dissatisfaction with the level of animal control services in Fairfield Glade while also putting pressure on local politicians to keep local taxes low, making better services unlikely.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND AND THEORY

Fairfield Glade

Located at the heart of Cumberland County in East Tennessee, Fairfield Glade is roughly 70 miles west of Knoxville and 120 miles east of Nashville (Fairfield Glade 2025b). More specifically, Fairfield Glade sits just southeast of Crossville, the largest city within the Cumberland County region (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a; 2023b). A master-planned community (MPC) established in 1970, Fairfield Glade is a gentrifying rural space that attracts in-migrants, often wealthy and retired, due to low property taxes, a temperate climate, and several amenities, such as natural lakes, wildlife, outdoor pools, hiking trails, and golf courses (*Cumberland County Times* 1969; *Chattanooga Times* 1970; Fairfield Glade 2025b; 2025d).

Kim and Lee (2023:1) note that while there is no clear definition of MPCs in practice nor in academia, it is generally understood "as the development of a comprehensive community guided by a master plan and controlled by a master developer." Large-scale developments of mixed-use or residential communities located at urban peripheries and in suburban, exurban, and rural areas, MPCs have distinguishable features that make them stand out from other residential subdivisions (ibid). These communities have well-planned roads, streetscaping, and a mix of uses, such as golf and boating (ibid). Carefully planning infrastructure, road networks, and amenities, community builders "create a coherent and definable sense of a neighborhood" (Kim & Lee 2023:2). The scale of an MPC can range from "wholesale developments of new

towns or cities to communities developed on several hundred acres" (Kim & Lee 2023:1). Current-day Fairfield Glade is like a small rural town with resort-style amenities, discernably separate from nearby Crossville and the surrounding Cumberland County area (Fairfield Glade 2025d).

The development of Fairfield Glade began in 1969 (*Chattanooga Times* 1970; *Cumberland Times* 1969). The first nine holes of Druid Golf Course were completed in October 1970 (*Plateau Visitor* 1969). The development-in-progress immediately garnered the attention of soon-to-be residents who contracted the construction of new homes several months before Druid Hills Golf Course had opened to the public (ibid). Fairfield Glade now sports five championship golf courses and has grown substantially since its inception, including several lakes for boating and fishing, two marinas, nearly 30 miles of hiking trails, outdoor and indoor pools, sixteen racquet courts, a local creative arts center, and library (Fairfield Glade 2025a; 2025b; 2025c; 2025e; Wallace 2025). All of this is to say that Fairfield Glade was a long time in development with, today, some neighborhoods much older than others and with amenities appearing in different locations and at different times.

The affluent, amenity-rich development of Fairfield Glade is in juxtaposition with the broader, more varied demographic and physical landscape of Cumberland County (Fairfield Glade 2023a; U.S. Census Bureau 2023b;2023c; TDTD 2025; Ryssdal et al. 2025). Cumberland County, while also having scenic views and natural amenities, is much poorer than Fairfield Glade (ibid). The county struggles with infrastructure problems and population loss due to prolific drug use and brain drain (Cumberland

County TN 2024; TDH 2024); issues that are not found in Fairfield Glade (Carr and Kefalas 2011; Lichter & Brown 2011; Potter 2004; Rigg et al. 2018). The resort-style community of Fairfield Glade and the countryside of Cumberland County – a more typical rural American community – stand in sharp contrast as the lived experiences of residents are entirely different (Leebrick 2015; Nelson & Nelson 2010; Ryssdal et al.2025).

Cumberland County

Founded in 1856, Cumberland County is a scenic rural county with trails, parks, lakes, and mountains attracting in-migrants and visitors who enjoy being outdoors (Krechniak & Krechniak 1956; TDTD 2025; Lapping 2016). A temperate climate combined with an average elevation of about 2,000 feet above sea level allows for mild weather year-round (ETSU 2020; Fairfield Glade 2023a). With an area of 681.3 square miles, Cumberland is the fourth largest county in Tennessee in terms of land area (U.S. Census Bureau 2025). Cumberland County has a population of 62,529 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023b). Crossville, the county seat, is home to about 12,265 residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a). Fairfield Glade has about 9,149 residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c). The rest of the population is spread throughout the county (U.S. Census Bureau 2023b).

Like Fairfield Glade, Cumberland County is predominantly white. Specifically, Cumberland County is 93% white and Crossville is 87% white (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a; 2023b). About 32% of the population of Cumberland County is over the age of 65, with a median age of 53 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023b). Fairfield Glade's population of

people 65 and older is 69% with a median age of 70 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c). Household income is higher in Fairfield Glade than that of the surrounding Cumberland County area (U.S. Census Bureau 2023b; 2023c). In 2023, the median household income of Fairfield Glade was $73,569 as compared to $58,475 in Cumberland County as a whole (ibid). Crossville's population is 21% aged 65 and older with a median age of 40.8 and a median household income of $50,672 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a). There are very few children in Fairfield Glade, making up only 4% of the population compared to 17% in Cumberland County and 16% in Crossville (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a; 2023b; 2023c).

Cumberland County has a poverty rate of 13.4% (U.S. Census Bureau 2023b). As expected with increasing numbers of wealthy in-migrants, Fairfield Glade's poverty rate is much lower than that of the surrounding county at 7.9% (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c). Fairfield Glade also has a higher concentration of high school graduates and about 1.5 times as many college graduates holding at least a bachelor's degree than the Crossville, TN micropolitan area (ibid).

While these numbers provide insight into the contrast between Fairfield Glade and Cumberland County, these statistics do not paint a complete picture of what Cumberland County is like – the major employers, economic structure, or causes of population loss. In many ways, Cumberland County is a typical US rural area, with major employers offering mostly low-wage, low-skilled jobs, including a logistics/supply chain firm, a poultry breeding plant, and other firms (Crossville Cumberland County Chamber 2021; Thiede, Lichter, & Slack 2018). Cumberland County experiences population loss

due to prolific drug use and population aging, typical characteristics of rural US areas (TDH 2024; U.S. Census Bureau 2023b; Rigg, Monnat, & Chavez 2018; Thiede et al. 2017). Notably, Cumberland County also experiences population loss through "brain drain," a common phenomenon affecting rural areas in which young, capable, intelligent high school graduates leave their hometowns to pursue college and career aspirations, never to return (U.S. Census Bureau 2023b; Carr and Kefalas 2011; Lichter & Brown 2011).

Rural Gentrification

Schwirian (1983) builds on Keller's (1968) concept that the two general components of a neighborhood are social and physical. He poses that people, place, the interaction system, shared identification, and public symbols are the five major elements of a neighborhood. Schwirian (1983:84) defines a neighborhood as "a population residing in an identifiable section of a city whose members are organized into a general interaction network of formal and informal ties and express their common identification with the area in public symbols."

There are several lenses through which sociologists view neighborhoods and change. Robert Park (1952) of the Chicago School claims that neighborhoods are "natural areas" that change, and pose new dynamics and problems, when people die, are born, or move (Schwirian 1983:84-5). The division of labor and "the degree of elaboration of integrative mechanisms and institutions centering on transportation and communication," i.e., "societal scale," causes neighborhoods to change structurally, physically, and socially (Schwirian 1983:85). Suttles (1972) poses that neighborhoods are "interaction

systems" in which social organization is elaborate and exists on many levels (Schwirian 1983:87).

Another approach that sociologists use to view neighborhoods and change is that of the political economy framework in which the "complex linkages among economic and political institutions and the various segments of the business and housing markets" are examined to conceptualize the growth of a space (Schwirian 1983:94). The political economy perspective orients neighborhood change within a broader "perspective of change" in the larger economic and political system of an area, such as a city or county (ibid). External social, political, and economic forces determines what happens to and within neighborhoods, limiting the response of neighborhood actors themselves (ibid).

I contend that rural gentrification represents neighborhood change that can be viewed through a lens at the intersection of political economy and interaction systems. Rural gentrification is the process by which affluent in-migrants move from urban and suburban to more rural areas to consume a slower-paced lifestyle, reshaping the economic, physical, cultural, and social landscape of an area over a long period of time, sometimes decades (Golding 2016; Nelson et al. 2010). A growing number of urbanites are moving to rural areas rich in natural amenities (Jones et al. 2003; Nelson & Nelson 2010; Smith & Krannich 2000). Young, white, working professionals are drawn to these spaces because they can work remotely and enjoy idyllic scenery, such as mountain and lake views, lower costs of living, and a more rural lifestyle that cannot be found in cramped, urban settings (Carr & Kefalas 2011; Nelson & Nelson 2010; Payne 2019; Smith & Krannich 2000).

It is well-documented in the rural gentrification literature that wealthy, retired in-migrants make up the largest demographic in gentrifying rural spaces (Leebrick 2015; Nelson & Nelson 2010), such as the case of Fairfield Glade. Bunce (2003) argues that the "designer countryside" was marketed to wealthier in-migrants by playing upon the "nostalgia for a less complicated, pre-industrial understanding of home and 'pure' nature" (Nelson & Nelson 2010:444). Building upon Bunce's research, Nelson and Nelson (2010) claim:

> Despite living most of their lives in suburbia, urban professionals (particularly those of the baby boom generation) have been bombarded by images of the rural idyll: from Laura Ingalls and her "Little House on the Prairie" to the pages of the LL Bean Catalog, urban and suburban residents are marketed a constructed[,] but appealing version of rurality (p. 444).

Literature on rural gentrification explains that these areas are not always, but are often, resort-style communities that have developed over time due to their natural amenities, such as Aspen, Colorado (Golding 2016). Golding (2016:131) claims, "Rural gentrification is an inequality-driven temporal process occurring in multiple contexts." Because of their social positionality, newcomers have unequal cultural power that enables them to change the cultural landscape of an area, such as the types of goods and services offered, changing both the social and physical environment of a space (Pilegram 2019). This can also be a source of conflict in gentrifying rural spaces, although much more subtle than direct confrontation (Smith and Krannich 2000). For example, if newcomers to an area do not want to support a local coffee shop with limited options, but opt for a boutique coffee shop with several pastries, types, and flavors of coffee instead, more national chains could appear in the area, while the longstanding local shop could be at

risk of closing due to lack of customers as more newcomers move in and longtime locals are forced to move out. In this way, newcomers impose change on the landscape of their community, creating less space for longtime locals to gather and by pushing their preferences on the entire community (Pilgeram 2019; Smith and Krannich 2000).

Rural gentrifiers segregate wealth by generating jobs that are typically limited to the service sector (Golding 2016; Nelson et al. 2010). These are generally low-wage jobs and contribute to wealth inequality in gentrifying rural spaces (ibid). While most of Fairfield Glade's economic infrastructure is retail, service, and recreation based, new construction of houses and landscaping requires engineering and manual labor, leading to a more varied economic infrastructure than some other gentrifying rural spaces (Sherman 2017).

There are both advantages and disadvantages to rural gentrification (Sherman 2017;2023). In-migrants stimulate demand for new business opportunities, creating the demand for new shops and restaurants that can be patronized by all locals and visitors, a positive byproduct of rural gentrification (ibid). There are two Food City grocery stores in Cumberland County; one was constructed in Fairfield Glade in 2008. Other shops in the area include Dollar Tree, Dollar General, and Ace Hardware. The Village Green Mall off Stonehenge Drive has a couple of restaurants, a nail salon, a hair salon, a US Post Office, a small Kroger pharmacy, and a few other sundry shops. Fairfield Glade also has two veterinary clinics, three large banks, two convenience stores, an automotive repair shop, a carwash, several real estate offices, eight churches of varying denominations, and a few restaurants scattered throughout the community. Even with limited options,

businesses throughout gentrifying rural spaces are well-kept with manicured storefronts as newcomers incentivize business owners to upgrade and maintain their store fronts to attract in-migrant and visitor business (Kim & Lee 2023; Sherman 2023).

A disadvantage to rural gentrification is that newcomers might not support local shops that reflect local culture, opting instead to order goods online or by driving to nearby towns to shop (Golding 2016; Leebrick 2015; Lichter & Ziliak 2017). A lack of financial support of local shops by newcomers can allow space for a changing economic landscape by causing long-standing enterprises to go out of business (ibid). In summation, new businesses create jobs, but they also change the character of a place by offering goods and services that may seem odd because they are different from the goods and services that locals expect to see in their community (Golding 2016; Leebrick 2015).

Likewise, another disadvantage to rural gentrification in a resort-style area is that cash flow can be hard to manage throughout the year due to seasonal influxes of vacationers and part-time residents (Lapping 2016; Valente et al. 2023). Although most residents in Fairfield Glade are full-time, the fluctuation of residents and visitors, especially during cold months, can translate to instability for local businesses, limiting the ability of businesses to find reliable workers and manage cash flow (Fairfield Glade Rentals 2025; Guidetti et al. 2021; Sherman 2017; Valente et al. 2023). Even though full-time residents do not have vacation homes in other states, they may still travel during winter months, leading to further instability for local businesses (Guidetti et al 2021; Valente et al. 2023).

In addition to fluctuations of the retail, construction, landscaping, and service sectors that occur throughout the year, the influx of permanent residents who are "aging in place" put a higher demand on the local delivery of medical and social services (Carr & Kefalas 2011; Rowe et al. 2016), which could expand jobs in these sectors and demand more high-quality healthcare (Lapping 2016). Aging populations, like that of Fairfield Glade, are most vulnerable to the effects of brain drain as a shrinking workforce leads to labor shortages, especially of skilled workers, such as those in the caregiving sector that is much needed by the community (Carr and Kefalas 2011; Lichter & Brown 2011).

In-migrants also create demands on the local healthcare system, requiring local governments to upgrade their facilities (Lapping 2016; Rowe et al. 2016). The high demand for healthcare generated by Fairfield Glade's aging population has engendered the expansion of medical facilities in the Cumberland County area, benefiting all residents of Cumberland County (Covenant Health 2025). Cumberland Medical Center in Crossville has seen several upgrades to their facilities over the decades to keep up with the demand for medical services from not only the county, but particularly, the aging population of the county (ibid).

Importantly, while Cumberland County has seen many upgrades to their medical facilities, it is like many rural areas in that healthcare options are limited, often due to a lack of providers, with medical offices often not accepting new patients due to the high demand for services (Burton et al. 2013; Lapping 2016). The expansion of medical services in Cumberland County has resulted in more healthcare in the county as a whole, but has created few high-paying jobs as many jobs in the healthcare industry are low-

paying such as orderlies, janitors, and Certified Nursing Assistants (Bowers et al. 2003; Glied et al. 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2025). It is reasonable to expect that Fairfield Glade, with such a wealthy, aging, health-insured population, would have access to several medical service providers within the community, but this is not the case (Carr and Kefalas 2011; Rowe et al. 2016). Despite being a retirement community, medical care in Fairfield Glade is scarce. Observationally, many of the people that I know who live in Fairfield Glade travel to Knoxville, Nashville, and sometimes, Cookeville, for medical care. Additionally, several of the participants that I interviewed expressed their concerns over the lack of medical care, stating that they drive to Cookeville, Knoxville, and Nashville for certain health services. Notably, there is a dedicated medevac helicopter landing site next to the Fairfield Glade Food City, as well as three other locations in Fairfield Glade (Richards 2011). This service is available for residents to purchase through private air evacuation companies to transport their members to larger, better equipped hospitals during medical emergencies (ibid).

Choosing Fairfield Glade as a Case Study

To understand why I chose Fairfield Glade as my case study, it is crucial that I first explain how the changes to the physical landscape to develop the Fairfield Glade community innately makes for a gentrifying rural space. Before this section of Cumberland County became a vacation-retirement destination, the land that was purchased by Fairfield Communities, Inc. was largely agricultural land from the Peavine area (*The Plateau Visitor* 1969; *Chattanooga Times* 1970). The name "Peavine" came from the abundance of vines "which provided both food and often shelter for grazing

livestock" (Martin 1986:13). Locals said that "cattle could 'live' under the shelter of the vine in severe weather" (ibid). Livestock grazing in Peavine stopped around 1947 (West 1995). The vines were eventually eaten away or burned off, clearing land for what would become Fairfield Glade decades later (Martin 1986:13). Fairfield Glade is bordered in part by the Catoosa Wildlife Management area (WMA); the rest of the immediate area surrounding current-day Fairfield Glade is mostly rural land used for agricultural purposes[1]. The development of Fairfield Glade has brought newcomers to Cumberland County which has changed not only the physical landscape, but has had significant influence on the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of the county, as is the case in gentrifying rural spaces (Leebrick 2015; Pilgeram 2019; Sherman 2018;2023).

I chose Fairfield Glade as a case study because I am familiar with and have access to the area. I knew when I commenced this study that Fairfield Glade was a mostly typical gentrifying rural area. Fairfield Glade is somewhat atypical in that it is an MPC, and most gentrifying rural areas are not, but it is typical in that urban people are moving into rural spaces (Jones et al. 2003; Payne 2019). It is the typical nature of the area's development that makes it an appropriate case for my study.

Rural Gentrification and Conflict

Amenity-based development as the result of gentrification can lead to negative socioeconomic outcomes for communities (Golding 2016; Leebrick 2015; Sherman 2017;2023). Urbanites and suburbanites who move into rural areas typically have more wealth than the local population (ibid). Their in-migration creates a demand for housing

[1] According to publicly available property records through the Cumberland County Register of Deeds, and GIS data

that can lead to an increase in housing costs (ibid). The increase in housing costs pushes out locals as they can no longer afford to live in their neighborhoods (ibid). Locals face shortages of affordable housing because of an influx of wealthy in-migrants (Golding 2016; Leebrick 2015; Sherman 2017). Low-wage renters are most at-risk of displacement (Leebrick 2015; Nelson et al. 2010; Sherman 2017). Affordable housing shortages are a prominent theme that causes underlying tension in gentrifying rural communities (ibid)

While Fairfield Glade's development did not directly displace longtime locals, it has, like other gentrifying rural spaces, gradually pushed out longtime locals with housing costs becoming more expensive over time (Golding 2016; Leebrick 2015; Sherman 2017). Critically, the way that Fairfield Glade developed has led to the exclusion and displacement of certain groups of longtime locals – those in the Tuttle Lane and Wilshire neighborhoods. These two neighborhoods represent pockets of poverty within an otherwise highly affluent community. These are the only neighborhoods with a high concentration of longtime locals within Fairfield Glade as most newcomers are from out of state. In chapter four, I recount interviews with longtime locals of these neighborhoods and their experiences of living in Fairfield Glade, including issues with conflict and overall tension between themselves and newcomers.

The Tuttle Family owned a substantial amount of land in the Peavine area during the time that Fairfield Communities, Inc. was looking to purchase land for their new development. The exact acreage owned by the Tuttles has not been traceable, despite much correspondence with the Cumberland County Assessor of Deeds and the Register of Deeds offices. A member of the Tuttle Family explained to me that the Tuttles either

did not want to sell their land, or they were not given the opportunity to be included in the original contract with Fairfield Communities, Inc. Either way, Tuttle Lane residents who physically live within Fairfield Glade do not have to follow the covenants and restrictions set by the Fairfield Glade Community Club and enforced by the Fairfield Glade Administration Office (Crossville Chronicle 2020), the entity also in charge of ensuring monthly dues are paid to the Property Owner's Association (POA). Those living in the Wilshire neighborhood, in contrast, must abide by these covenants and restrictions, which creates some resentment among Wilshire residents who also feel excused from Fairfield Glade. I discuss this in greater detail in chapter four.

Leebrick (2015:26) states, "Community tensions are often class based and represent a major tension between the consumption of rural landscapes as idyllic vistas and bucolic playgrounds for the enjoyment of the affluent and the use-based needs of lower classes." In the case of Fairfield Glade, an example of use-based needs includes the farming practices of those on Tuttle Lane. Much of the Tuttle Family still uses the land for farming, while the development of new, large homes encroaches upon their homestead, causing underlying tension between themselves and newcomers.

Lichter and Brown (2011:572) found that when newcomers migrate from urban areas into rural communities, they "upset the local power and stratification system and bring different values and attitudes to the community." The theoretical reasoning behind value differences and related conflicts "is that newcomers of urban origin bring a particular sociocultural identity to the rural communities to which they migrate; this identity and the associated value orientations differ significantly from those held by

longer-term residents" (Smith and Krannich 2000:399). Price and Clay (1980:8) refer to these differences as a "culture clash."

Culture clashing is complex and can occur through land use, environmental, political, and an array of other possible sites of conflict (Clay & Price 1980; Jones et al. 2003; Smith & Krannich 2000). "Microlevel processes of social exclusion, symbolic boundary formation, and resource hoarding are thus frequently missing from understandings of how these conflicts occur and recur" (Sherman 2017:178). As with other gentrifying rural spaces nearing homogeneity, there are not many longtime locals in Fairfield Glade. To be clear, there were never many longtime locals in Fairfield Glade, but newcomers clash with the longtime locals that do live in the community, or they do not acknowledge their existence at all. Newcomers also exclude based on "symbolic boundary formation" such as the case with Tuttle Lane as the residents in this neighborhood have a different zip code than that of the rest of the community, despite being nestled within the center of Fairfield Glade, symbolically underscoring the divide between Tuttle Lane and the rest of Fairfield Glade (Nawrocki 2017).

Cultural sociologists assert that cultural ideas and practices are connected to where a person was born and the place in which they live (Swidler 2001). Newcomers bring their cultural ideas and practices with them when they move to a rural area just as longtime locals have their own cultural ideas and practices (Matarrita-Cascante et al. 2017; Swidler 2001). These ideas and practices include their perceptions of proper dog care, such as whether it is appropriate to allow dogs to roam, without supervision, throughout rural areas that are now neighborhoods (perhaps ignoring the irony that the

growth of the area due to gentrification has made it less safe for dogs to roam). One area in which there may be cultural differences that may or may not be causing conflict is over the proper care and management of roaming dogs.

Conflict over Dogs

In urban areas, there are many different reasons as to why neighbors would come into conflict with one another including contested boundaries, such as fence management, lawn maintenance, parking, and nuisances such as noisy dogs (Legewie & Schaeffer 2016; Liu et al. 2023). Referring to these issues as "neighbor problems," Liu et al. (2023) found that areas with a higher concentration of renters are prone to having more neighbor problems. Neighbors living close together due to small lot sizes are significantly more likely to encounter conflict, while neighbors with more green space, and larger lot sizes, encounter far fewer problems (ibid). Neighbors in urban areas are more likely to experience all types of conflict, including animal-related conflict, than those in rural spaces (ibid).

My thesis is framed around conflicts over free roaming dogs, which I argue is another way that conflict can manifest between newcomers and longtime locals. I chose this specific point of potential conflict because I argue that it is unique to gentrifying rural spaces. Urban and suburban residential settlements typically have greater restrictions on animal behavior that is strongly enforced; this is not true of many rural spaces (Armbruster 2019; Arluke & Atema 2015; Instone & Sweeny 2014; Irvine 2015). Not all rural people feel it is okay to allow dogs to roam, but it is important to acknowledge that sparsely populated rural areas are safer than densely populated areas

when it comes to allowing dogs to roam, and so some people think nothing of it (Blouin 2015; Raynor et al. 2020; Rubin & Beck 1982; Silva-Rodríguez et al. 2023). Understanding the relationship between people and their dogs gives more insight into how conflict over perceptions of proper dog care and management has the capacity to occur.

How Conflict Over Dogs is Unique to Rural Gentrification

Conflict over roaming dogs is an interesting aspect of study because it is largely unique to rural gentrification. People moving to gentrifying urban spaces are unlikely to experience conflict over roaming dogs as urban areas have leash laws and ordinances that prevent dogs from being allowed to roam due to the density of people within urban spaces (Butcher & De Keuster 2013; Instone & Sweeny 2014; Irvine 2015; Yan 2025). It is genuinely unsafe for dogs to roam freely in densely populated areas, making conflict over free roaming dogs in urban spaces extremely unlikely (Awawdeh & Forrest 2024; Canal et al. 2018; Hughes and Macdonald 2013; Irvine 2015). The presence of a roaming dog in an urban space would be highly unusual and animal control authorities would be alerted to remove the dog for the dog's safety and for the safety of people nearby (ibid).

Those who move from urban and suburban areas to more rural spaces are not likely to expect dogs roaming in their yard (Blouin 2015; Irvine 2015). There are explicit reasons why people from urban areas have different attitudes about free-roaming dogs than some rural people (Blouin 2012; Blouin 2015). In urban settings, social norms tend to reflect the view of dogs as close members of the family, expected to be well-trained and closely supervised (Instone & Sweeny 2014; Yan 2025). Because city life involves

navigating tightly shared spaces, such as parks, sidewalks, and apartment complexes, there is an expectation that dogs behave calmly and predictably (Instone & Sweeny 2014; Yan 2025). Free-roaming dogs in densely populated spaces are often seen as disruptive and unsafe (Instone & Sweeny 2014; Irvine 2015; Yan 2025; Yosef 2025).

Clearly, not all rural people allow their dogs to roam, but some do. People in rural areas may have traditionally allowed their dogs to roam freely, trusting the safety of open spaces (Mosley 2020). As communities grow and infrastructure expands, such as the construction and widening of roads, those same spaces may no longer be safe. What was once a low-risk, sparsely populated environment for free-roaming dogs has become less rural with increased population density and more cars, presenting new dangers and making these areas far less safe for dogs to run around (Awawdeh and Forrest 2024; Canal et al. 2018). The changing of the physical landscape of a gentrifying rural space puts roaming dogs in danger, but poses more of a health and safety risk to humans, their dogs, and other animals as well (Awawdeh and Forrest 2024; Canal et al. 2018; Puente-Arévalo et al. 2022; Shamsaddini et al. 2024; Yosef 2025).

In remote rural areas, people who allow their dogs to roam may live too far away from others to have conflict (Mosley et al. 2020; Silva-Rodríguez et al. 2023). The presence of working breeds, such as Australian Shepherds and Border Collies, is expected on farmland, herding cattle and protecting flocks of sheep, chickens, goats, and other livestock (ibid). In this context, dogs are viewed more as a utility or tool (Blouin 2015). Certainly, conflict can arise between neighbors in rural areas over roaming dogs, especially if the dog is aggressive or is considered a nuisance (Mosley et al. 2020; Silva-

Rodríguez et al. 2023). The attitudes and expectations of dogs roaming among longtime locals of rural areas are more tolerant of roaming dogs (ibid). In some areas, roaming dogs are part of the local culture (Blouin 2015; Mosley et al. 2020; Silva-Rodríguez et al. 2023). Conflict between longtime locals would be centered more upon one neighbor's roaming dog killing another neighbor's chicken, and less likely that the neighbors have differing perceptions on whether dogs should roam (Mosley et al. 2020; Silva-Rodríguez et al. 2023).

The cultural expectations and attitudes of urban in-migrants about how to properly manage dogs can clash with that of longtime locals who are used to allowing their dogs to roam (Blouin 2015; Irvine 2015; Silva-Rodríguez et al. 2023). City life is far removed from rural life in the sense that encountering roaming dogs is not likely to be an expectation of urbanites and suburbanites when migrating to a gentrifying rural space (Irvine 2015). Just as urban people who move into rural spaces do not expect tractors to be running at 4am to harvest crops (Dong et al. 2022), they also do not expect to see dogs outside without supervision or on a leash as they are conditioned to living in densely populated areas with strict laws and ordinances (Armbruster 2019; Instone & Sweeny 2014; Irvine 2015; Yan 2025).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Study Design

I conducted 18 interviews with residents of Fairfield Glade, Tennessee. The ages of participants ranged from 29 to 82. I conducted 16 interviews that were about an hour long and took place at public locations convenient to the participants' homes. While in the field, I conducted two additional "spontaneous" interviews simultaneously that were much shorter in length, around twenty minutes, in a lower-income area of Fairfield Glade. In total, I conducted 15 interviews with newcomers and three with longtime locals.

While conducting my fieldwork, I did not ascribe "newcomer" or "longtime local" status to a predetermined number of years lived in Fairfield Glade. Instead, I deemed all in-migrants to Fairfield Glade as newcomers regardless of how long they have lived in the area or their connections to the community. Because I suspected that potential conflict over free roaming dogs was a class issue, I separated longtime locals into two groups: lower- or working-class and middle- or upper-class. My goal was to interview five longtime locals in each group, but I was only able to interview three longtime locals, total, so I was unable to pursue the class angle, although class-like divisions were noted, as I discuss in the next chapter.

Nonetheless, in attempting to determine social class, I asked participants questions about their educational and occupational history. I began the study with the notion that newcomers generally have higher levels of education and wealth than

longtime locals (Leebrick 2015), as is seen in US Census data of residents of Fairfield Glade and literature about rural gentrification as education and wealth are key components of social class (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c). According to the 2020 Census, Fairfield Glade has a population of about 9,200 where 94.3% of the population is white, and 69% of residents are over the age of 65 (ibid). Most in-migrants of Fairfield Glade are couples (ibid).

Overall, the demographic profiles of the people whom I interviewed did not differ much from the Census Bureau statistics I discussed in the previous chapter. Most of my research participants were wealthy, retired white married people; only five participants were single. One woman had been widowed, but she had moved to Fairfield Glade with her husband. There were a few professionals working remotely in high-paying careers, with one working professional who had moved to Fairfield Glade for a short commute to her newly acquired job in Crossville. All the participants were white. Most of the participants were women; only three men participated in the study (see **Table 3.1**).

Table 3.1. Pseudonyms, gender, and age ranges of participants.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Category
Natalie	Female	25-34
Ashely	Female	35-44
Jessica	Female	35-44
Nora	Female	35-44
Cara	Female	45-54
Monica	Female	45-54
Clint	Male	55-64
Sandy	Female	55-64
Blanche	Female	65-74
Dorothy	Female	65-74
Evelyn	Female	65-74
Gertrude	Female	65-74
Rebecca	Female	65-74
Rose	Female	65-74
Arthur	Male	75-84
Greg	Male	75-84
Kevin	Male	75-84
Sophia	Female	75-84

Data Collection

To attract participants, following approval of the University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I posted in several "general use" Facebook groups concerning local matters, inviting people living in Fairfield Glade to participate in my research project. I offered a $20 gift card to a local department store for participation in a one-time, one-hour interview. I posted in groups covering Crossville and Cumberland County, TN, as well as Fairfield Glade-specific Facebook groups. I did not include my phone number in the social media posts. I posted the same information on Nextdoor, but those posts received less interaction from contributors. Instead, I asked people to message me directly. Social media was an effective way to find participants.

Before posting in any group, I messaged at least one person in each group who served as a site administrator to introduce myself and sent the flyer to them for their review. It is not always possible to tell if someone has read a message on Facebook as the recipient can read a message from their "message requests" folder, but not "accept" the message. The sender has no way to tell for certain if the recipient has read their message, but I did message at least one administrator from every group that I requested access so that my posts would not be removed for being a potential scam as I was offering gift cards for participation. I felt this step was necessary for transparency.

While using social media as a platform to recruit participants was effective, I did experience some obstacles when attempting to join certain Facebook groups to circulate my research flyer. I only experienced these obstacles in Fairfield Glade-specific groups. While many requests to join were accepted, including every request for Cumberland County and Crossville general use groups, I was rejected repeatedly by a few Fairfield Glade groups for not providing my exact address or for wanting to post my "Participants Invited" flyer. One group, "Ffg, Fg, Fairfield glade, the good, the bad, the ugly" accepted my request to join, but would not approve my research flyer. When I messaged the administrator, I was told that she did not feel comfortable with me asking questions to any of the 516 members in her group. It is critical to understand that the description of the group is as follows:

> In any and every community, there is the good, the bad, and the ugly. While it does no good to have a bitch and moan session, being constructive, open, and honest,[sic] help promote reality. We can still be kind and constructive while whining and being truthful. So please join with decorum and happiness inn-your [sic] heart… for the most part.

In another attempt to join a Fairfield Glade general use Facebook group, I sent a membership request for "Fairfield Glade Residents 'No Whining," a private group with 3.2 thousand members. The group's description is as follows: "This is a group for Fairfield Glade current homeowners only. Let's share our wonderful experiences and joy of living in Fairfield Glade. No political posts will be tolerated." For membership requests to be accepted, you must provide your address.

Importantly, my husband purchased a condo in Fairfield Glade years before we met; the deed is in his name. Feeling uncomfortable providing the exact address of our condo to strangers on Facebook, I contacted the administrators of this group. I explained that I was conducting research, but that I had been a resident of Fairfield Glade full-time for seven years and part-time for four. I was told by one of the administrators that I had been rejected for not providing my exact address and that their screening process was "pretty good at detecting scammers." He further explained that even if I provided my exact address, the deed would have to be in my name and that each request is investigated by an unnamed realtor to confirm that the Facebook user requesting to join is a homeowner in Fairfield Glade. I conveyed that I was not comfortable, especially as a woman, providing my exact address to men on the internet that I did not know. He sent a "thumbs up" emoji and did not respond. I managed to get accepted into a few other Fairfield Glade-centric Facebook groups. Those administrators allowed me to post my research flyer.

In addition to circulating my flyer on social media, I posted a few physical flyers in local shopping areas. I posted one flyer at a hardware store and two at the Village

Green Mall, a heavily trafficked mall housing the Fairfield Glade US Post Office. I asked the Fairfield Glade Art Guild, community center, two local restaurants, and a gas station to post the flyers, but I only received two calls from participants from these efforts. To attract more participants, I printed pocket-sized flyers and handed them out to people at the local library, community center, and shopping areas. I was able to set up several interviews after talking to people about my research project. This created a sense of trust between me and the participants.

When participants first contacted me after seeing my social media posts, I introduced myself and asked two screening questions to determine if they were eligible for my study. I asked potential participants if 1) they were over the age of 18 and 2) if they lived in Fairfield Glade. After participants passed the screening questions, I set a time and place in which to meet them.

During the interviews, I asked participants about neighborhood conflict by asking them questions about free roaming dogs in the area and what they would do if they found a dog. The questions I asked were centered around what they viewed as proper dog care and management and if they experienced conflict with neighbors over the management of roaming dogs (see **Appendix C**). The completed semi-structured interviews provided most of the data for this study, although additional data was also considered as it was made known to me. I recorded all interviews with my phone using Zoom as it auto-transcribes speech. I found this to be very helpful when open coding during the data analysis stage of my study.

After conducting 15 interviews of middle- and upper-class participants, I felt that I had achieved saturation with that demographic group, but I had yet to interview any lower- or working-class longtime locals. Having lived in Fairfield Glade, I was aware that a higher concentration of lower- and working-class people inhabited both the Wilshire and Tuttle Lane neighborhoods. I used to have friends who lived in a mobile home in Wilshire, but I did not ask them to participate because they moved to another county several years ago. I also had the phone number of a longtime local who lives on Tuttle Lane. I called her to ask if she would like to participate in my research. She agreed and we met at the Village Green Mall for her interview. In an effort to interview more longtime locals, I drove around the Wilshire area and talked to people to attempt to recruit them for my study. I managed to gain some insight by talking to a couple of people directly. I tried to recruit them for full interviews, but I did not receive a call back from either person.

Data Analysis

I used open coding as an initial strategy to help me identify larger themes in the collected data. I also took notes while interviewing participants and wrote memos immediately after conducting each interview about anything I found to be particularly interesting. Within 24 hours of each interview, I listened to the Zoom recorded interviews once without taking notes until I finished listening. Then I, once again, noted items that I found interesting. I read the transcript of each interview and listened to it again, this time while taking notes on index cards to give me a visual representation of data. This helped me to identify themes in the data—both those related to conflicts over free-roaming dogs

occurred in Fairfield Glade and additional themes, as they emerged. Because I was not engaging in grounded theory, I did not move on to axial or later-order coding. I simply used the open codes to guide later analysis.

Once I started to hear participants repeatedly bring up the same issues, I began asking questions about those issues in subsequent interviews with new participants. By doing so, I was able to identify certain language patterns and themes, particularly concerning how residents differentiate groups of residents, differing perceptions on rurality, expectations of newcomers, and that newcomers are frustrated about the poor animal control and sheltering services in Cumberland County, while also putting pressure on local politicians to keep property taxes low, making better services, with a higher capacity to take in animals, unlikely. While I first noticed most of these patterns during the interview process, some of these themes were not apparent until I reviewed the memos that I had made during and after the interview process and examined the codes.

To move from data collection to conclusions about my data, I used analytic induction. Analytic induction allows a researcher to generate conclusions ("hypotheses") about their findings and then to refine, discard, or change their hypotheses as new data are collected (Katz 2001). I began this study with the idea that rural gentrification led to conflict over roaming dogs between newcomers and longtime locals. My hypothetical answer was that newcomers would be less likely to allow dogs to roam than locals, and disagreement about how to properly care and manage roaming dogs could lead to conflict in neighborhoods.

In the process of collecting data, I also gained access to key informants who were able to provide me with a great deal of information about the history of Fairfield Glade and many of its dynamics. These key informants included elected officials and local government employees. The access to these people provided an ethnographic element to my data collection, as they shared with me images, maps, graphs, and other information beyond what could be gleaned just from interviews, and this information enriched my understanding of the themes I will discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The focus of my research is to better understand conflict and conflict management between longtime locals and newcomers of Fairfield Glade by asking participants questions about conflict over free roaming dogs, a conflict that I assert is unique to gentrifying rural places. My data finds little evidence of conflict over roaming dogs, but reveals that there are several things happening within Fairfield Glade including themes of social division and differing perceptions about who belongs in the community and who doesn't, and differing perceptions of rurality. My data also reveals that newcomers want better animal control and sheltering services while also voting against proposals that call for an increase in property taxes to fund such services.

Lumping and Splitting

The first theme that became apparent in my interviews with participants is not directly related to conflict between neighbors or roaming dogs per se, but is related to what Zerubavel calls "lumping and splitting" (Zerubavel 1996). People make sense of the world by "lumping" groups of people, things, words, and concepts together and "splitting" them into categories so that they are more easily comprehensible. Without lumping and splitting, people would not be able to carve "islands of meaning out of reality" as the world would be too overwhelming (Zerubavel 1996:422). These necessary cognitive acts complement each other, yet they operate at different levels of abstraction.

Lumping operates at the intracategorical level of abstraction and overlooks differences; lumping helps people to form mental clusters of things that are socially

considered to be similar. Splitting widens perceived gaps between seemingly unlike elements and operates on an intercategorical level. As a simple example, using **Table 3.1** in the previous chapter, I "split" up participants by their ages and "lumped" together participants of similar age ranges, to make it easier to categorize the ages of participants. Critically, these acts concern what is *socially* considered to be similar or different as similarity and difference are neither necessarily objective or subjective matters. Lumping and splitting are both types of "mental cartography" for fundamental social categories that is "indispensable for understanding the general underlying structure of this world" (Zerubavel 1996:431). However, although lumping and splitting are normal cognitive processes, how they play out regarding Fairfield Glade is revealing.

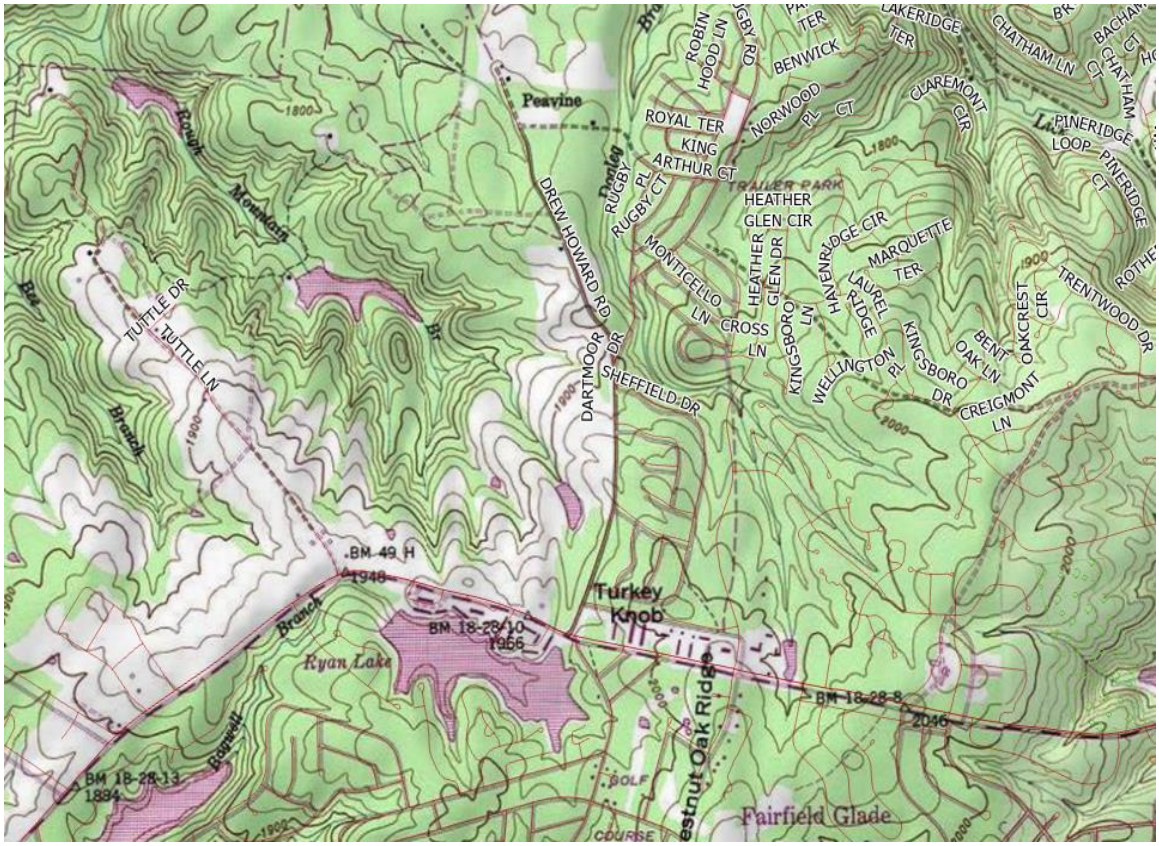
Lumping

Lumping is the act of cognitively clustering that which is similar, such as perceiving apples and bananas as similar because they are both fruit with no attention paid to their differences. Another example would be lumping people over the age of 65 together and categorizing them as "seniors," allowing for the perception that all people over the age of 65 share common traits. Lumping allows people to "outweigh" differences between groups of people and to "create relatively homogenous 'mental fields'" (Zerubavel 1996:422).

The rural gentrification literature suggests that the movement of newcomers to a place would create two "lumps": those who are new to the area and those who are not. My research reveals a more nuanced approach to lumping and splitting that creates

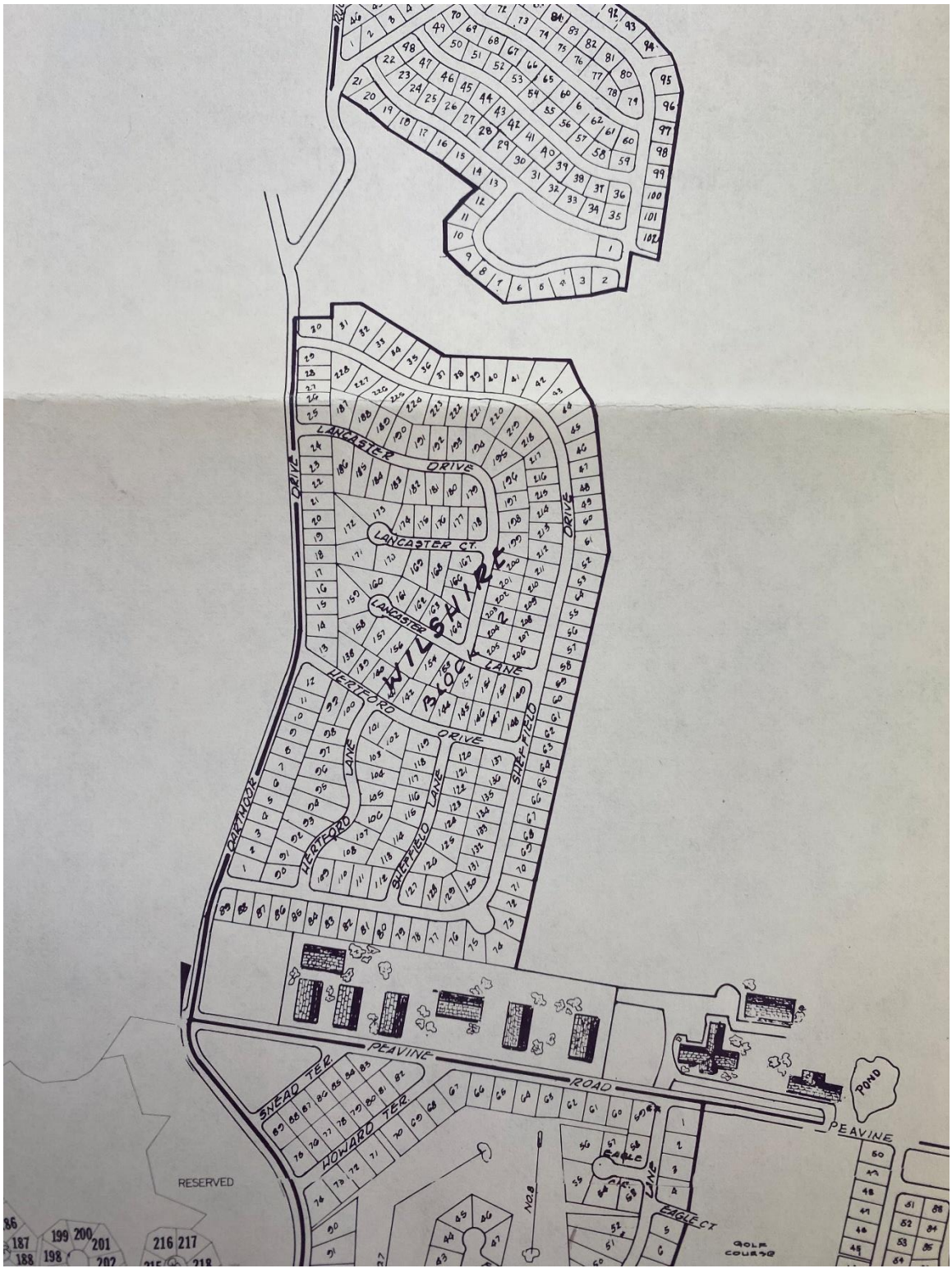
division (and potential for conflict) between newcomers and renders the longtime locals who are of poorer socioeconomic status virtually invisible.

In Fairfield Glade, there are differing perspectives about who belongs and who does not. Because Fairfield Glade is a master planned community promoted as a resort-style place to retire, it is expected that most residents will be wealthy, retired people over the age of 65. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are two sections of Fairfield Glade that are inhabited by a greater concentration of lower- and working-class people, Wilshire and Tuttle Lane. The inhabitants of these areas did not, for the most part, migrate from outside of Cumberland County. It is crucial to understand that Tuttle Lane is not in the Fairfield Glade zip code, signaling separation between the two communities, and is not bound by the covenants and restrictions of Fairfield Glade. Likewise, people living on Tuttle Lane are not permitted to purchase memberships to use amenities managed by the Fairfield Glade Community Club since they do not share the same zip code, further separating newcomers and longtime locals. Not being allowed to purchase amenity memberships makes those on Tuttle Lane less likely to intermingle with newcomers. Tuttle Lane is, however, geographically close to the center of Fairfield Glade as shown in **Figure 4.1**.



[Figure 4.1 – GIS image of Tuttle Lane and Fairfield Glade]

Wilshire is the original development of Fairfield Glade. Before the clearing of forest and farmland for the Druid Golf Course in 1970, the Wilshire area was cleared, and trailers were hauled in. These trailers housed some of the workers as well as some of the very first golfers to visit Fairfield Glade. Several of these trailers remain on lots in this neighborhood. Over the decades, small houses and manufactured homes were introduced to Wilshire, but many singlewide manufactured homes remain. Notably, Wilshire is spelled incorrectly as “Wiltshire” on the Nextdoor app and is commonly called “Wiltshire,” despite their never having a “t” in the name of the original plat map as seen in **Figure 4.2.**


LANCASTER DRIVE
LANCASTER CT.
LANCASTER LANE
HEREFORD DRIVE
HEREFORD LANE
SHEFFIELD LANE
SHEFFIELD DRIVE
DARTMOOR DRIVE
PEAVINE ROAD
PEAVINE
SNEAD TER
HOWARD TER
EAGLE CT
EAGLE LANE
POND
RESERVED
GOLF COURSE

[Figure 4.2 – Original plat map for Wilshire]

The types of housing in Wilshire varies; the neighborhood is not a strictly a trailer park, despite being referred to as a "trailer park" by several people I interviewed. While I was aware of Wilshire and had friends who used to live in the area, I did not think to ask participants about Wilshire specifically until I began seeing a theme. This theme was not apparent until the fifth interview. Once I realized that I needed to ask about participants' views on Wilshire, every respondent but four referred to it as a "trailer park." Two of those participants had only lived in Fairfield Glade for a couple of years and do not attend community events; they were completely unaware of the Wilshire neighborhood's existence.

When interviewing Rebecca, a resident since 2024, I asked about her opinion of the Wilshire area. She did not know about the area, so I tried to describe the location of Wilshire and asked, "Have you driven down Dartmoor Drive, that road between the two banks? Do you know where I'm talking about?" Rebecca responded, "No."

Because Rebecca has only been a resident for about a year, it is reasonable for her to not be aware of every neighborhood in Fairfield Glade. What is interesting about her response, however, is that Wilshire is located off Dartmoor Drive. Dartmoor Drive sits directly between two major banks, Regions and One Bank of Tennessee. There are only three banks in the very wealthy development of Fairfield Glade. To access those two banks, you must enter Dartmoor Drive. Dartmoor Drive is immediately off the main thoroughfare, Peavine Road. The road sign is visible from Peavine Road as are the two large banks that sit on either side of Dartmoor Drive (see **Figure 4.3**). Dartmoor Drive is

not to be confused with Dartmoor Lake—an area with much higher-than-average home values in Fairfield Glade. The Dartmoor Lake area is often referred to as “Dartmoor.”



[Figure 4.3 – Dartmoor Drive Entrance]

I had a difficult time finding anyone to interview for this study who lives in Wilshire. Because my social media posts about my study were not attracting people from this area, I took to the Nextdoor app, asking questions about how to get in contact with any of the folks in Wilshire. One contributor asked, “Why only the trailer park area?” In another effort to talk to some people from Wilshire I reached out to an employee at the Fairfield Glade Community Center. I had talked to her previously about my study in

general and she told me that she would try to put me in contact with some people in the community to participate in my research. She promptly ended the call when I asked her, “Do you know how I can get in contact with the people who live near where Red’s Ale House used to be? The lower income area that has some trailers?” She asked me, “Why do you want to talk to them?” I replied, “They are residents of Fairfield Glade just like everyone else. I want to talk to everyone, including the people who live in that area.” I left a voicemail for her a few days after this interaction as I had not heard from any of the people whom she said she would try to get me in contact with; I never received a call back. Although I cannot say for certain that her non-response was due to my questions about Wilshire, it was the impression I received.

For those participants who were aware of Wilshire, Kevin said, “Everybody knows it's there, knows it's not the best area of Fairfield Glade, and pretty much just stays away. Listen, okay, listen. Let them have their ways and as long as it doesn't affect us, there's no trouble.”

> Kevin has lived in Fairfield Glade for over ten years but says he refuses to go to that part of the Glade as he feels it is dangerous. He brought to my attention that there was a murder in the Wilshire neighborhood in 2022. I investigated this matter and discovered that there was a murder in the Wilshire neighborhood in 2022, but no other murders have occurred in that area either before or since (McAlister 2022). Interestingly, there was a more recent murder in Fairfield Glade near the Dorchester Golf Course in 2024 (Moore & McAlee 2024), but no one suggested that I should avoid that area.

Early on in my interviews, I noticed a theme about Wilshire being referred to as a “trailer park.” The area has some manufactured home, but is objectively not a trailer park. The people who live in this area, however, are lumped together and referred to as "the trailer park people.” I began asking every subsequent participant if they knew about the Wilshire area and if they would share their feelings and opinions about the neighborhood’s optics and people. When asking Sophia, a Fairfield Glade resident of almost twenty years, how she felt about the Wilshire neighborhood, she responded with a similar attitude that other participants had expressed. Sophia stated, “We know it’s technically part of Fairfield Glade, but it’s not functionally part of Fairfield Glade. It’s not part of the community.”

During another interview, I asked Sandy, a resident since 2022, how she felt about the Wilshire neighborhood. Sandy claimed, “I think everybody just kind of pretends it doesn't really exist.” I asked Sandy, “So, you kind of just ignore that one section of Dartmoor?” She responded, “Oh, I don't think of it as Dartmoor. I think Dartmoor is way up there with all those beautiful houses.” I said, “Yes, but Wilshire is off Dartmoor Drive. It’s right in between the two banks.” Sandy responded, “Well, there is no Dartmoor Drive, is there?” This interview with Sandy shows that she does not register the existence of Dartmoor Drive (which is an existing street), further supporting that newcomers have rendered the residents of Wilshire, and beyond that, the less affluent residents of Fairfield Glade, invisible.

When interviewing Nora, a Cumberland County native and longtime local of Fairfield Glade, she informed me of the history of the Wilshire neighborhood. I later

confirmed the information that she had provided with Rob Harrison[2], the president of Plateau Properties Inc., the company that sold most of the land to Fairfield Communities for their master planned community. Nora explained:

> A lot of the trailers that are still sitting there that are so bad and run down are in an exclusive part. That was the very first ever subdivision, and they're grandfathered in with no covenants and restrictions.[3] They put those trailers out there for the developer to house workers, and then they flipped those trailers into like Airbnb style things. That's where the golfers would come and stay and golf. Those were the first ever developed properties. That's the part they're pretending doesn't exist.

Still struggling to find participants in the Wilshire neighborhood, I began asking each participant if they knew how to contact anyone from that neighborhood. I was warned by at least three participants, and two community members who were not study participants, to not drive over to Wilshire because it "wasn't safe." I approached a person in the parking lot of the local grocery store. I introduced myself and told them about my research. They informed me that they were an employee at the Fairfield Glade Police Department. When asking how I could potentially get in contact with anyone from the Wilshire neighborhood, they warned me to be careful if I were to interview anyone in their home. I assured them that I would not be interviewing anyone in their home as I had to meet all participants at a public location.

Only one participant considered the neighborhood to be part of the Fairfield Glade community. Greg, a resident of eight years, is involved with community outreach for his

[2] Rob Harrison gave permission to be quoted by name in this study.
[3] Nora worked for the Fairfield Glade Administration Office for several years and clarified that all other lots in Wilshire are subject to the covenants and restrictions set by the admin office and community club.

church. Greg helps coordinate church events and bus pick-up for kids and others who cannot drive. When asking his opinion of the Wilshire area, Greg said,

> In that area, let's see, we picked up kids in one, two, three of the houses there [Wilshire]. We had a couple that went to a church that lived in that area but have moved to New Mexico since. So, we know some people there, but so, their house isn't as big as ours, and ours isn't as big as somebody else's.

Greg owns a house on the southside of Peavine Road and repeatedly told me that he was grateful to be living in Fairfield Glade and that he and his wife feel like they are "living in luxury" and that they "really don't deserve to be here." Greg was the only person whom I spoke with who knew anyone in the Wilshire area, let alone befriended them and viewed them as members of the Fairfield Glade community.

I managed to interview two people from Wilshire, but to do so, I had to drive around to catch people outside. During these brief interviews, I found out that many of the people in this area offer cleaning, lawncare, painting, and handyman services to the rest of Fairfield Glade, often through the Nextdoor app. Many of the people living in Fairfield Glade are older people and some of them might not be able to do this kind of work themselves, which keeps those in Wilshire employed year-round. Despite the fact that most of my respondents held negative views of the people of Wilshire and even considered them dangerous, they were also comfortable enough to have them work in their houses and on their lawns.

I drove around the Wilshire neighborhood and a couple of people in their driveway noticed me. Jessica and Clint, both longtime residents of Wilshire, informed me that they use Nextdoor to find work and that older people need help with all kinds of things year-round. Jessica stated, "I know that Fairfield Glade wishes we [Clint and

Jessica] weren't here at all." Importantly, it was clear that when Jessica said "Fairfield Glade," she was referring to the Fairfield Glade Community Club: the entity that oversees the operations and functions of the community.

Jessica has lived in the area for 31 years, since she was a young child. She claimed that she and her friends in her neighborhood take care of all kinds of things for "the rich people over there on Dartmoor." When I told Jessica that another participant that I spoke with said, "I think everybody just ignores that section and pretends it's not here," Jessica exclaimed, "They want to act like we don't exist? We take care of their lawns and everything else they need!"

Despite the services that those in the Wilshire neighborhood provide, the area is viewed negatively by many of my participants and is lumped together and perceived as a trailer park with its residents being referred to as "the trailer park people." Those living in the Wilshire area are not considered to be part of the greater Fairfield Glade community by many of the participants of my study.

Although it is clear that at least some residents of Fairfield Glade engage in acts of erasure surrounding the settlement of longtime residents, there are also some longtime locals who do not consider themselves part of the Fairfield Glade community, despite living in it. Nora, a Cumberland County native and resident of Tuttle Lane since 2006, does not feel as though she is part of the Fairfield Glade community. I asked her, "What brought you to this area?" She replied,

> My husband and I moved into his family farmhouse. I am not sure what year they acquired all that land, or how it all came about. There's not very much information out there, but his grandparents and great grandparents I know were there and they all died there. And you know, there were lots of siblings, and so everything's all

> split up. And then his dad kind of bought a bunch of people's shares of the land, so we inherited that. And then we also bought right across the street, some more land that used to be Tuttle Family land that had been out of their hands for 40 years, and we purchased that, too.

I asked Nora how the Tuttle Family used their land. She replied, “Corn, cattle, tobacco. They sold those products for a living. That's how they fed their children. They had lots of kids.”

She elucidated that a lot of her husband’s family still live on Tuttle Lane. Nora and her husband own about 22 acres of farmland in the neighborhood in which they have one house and one trailer that they use for rental income.

As mentioned in chapter two, the Tuttle Family did not sell their land in the late 60s when Fairfield Communities Inc purchased 9,600 acres from the Plateau Properties. Nora explained:

> I just got natural gas down that road last year when they put all those spec homes in and ran it all the way to the back one, the closest one to me. Those $350,000 homes. The brand new ones. So, when they got it down there, it took about 6 calls, but I finally got the natural gas company to run the 300 feet from there to my house.

Here, she is referring to the brand-new houses that are being built at the front of her road. Expansion has just started on Tuttle Lane, even though it has been viewed as “not FFG” since its inception.

I asked, “Were you just like, ‘Hey, I'm so close. Why can't you run this here?’”

Nora replied, “‘I've lived here for 20 years. Why can't you run this here? Why am I having to haul in propane?’”

I asked, “Do you consider yourself part of the Fairfield Glade community?”

Nora replied, “Absolutely not. So, my family has worked in and around the Glade my whole entire life. So, in construction, painting and drywall and things like that. These people have kept us fed my entire life. The community of Fairfield Glade is our livelihood.”

For clarification, I asked, “And you've been here for 20 years, and you've raised your kids here?”

Nora stated, “Yeah. I'm a part of the Cumberland County community. I love Fairfield Glade, but I am not a Fairfield Glader.”

To more thoroughly understand, I asked, “Are there other reasons you feel like an outsider?” She then replied,

> I mean, most of it is, you know, age. They’re retired. I'm not retired. This is a retirement community, and the Fairfield retirement communities that Fairfield was modeled after in the beginning, in the sixties, were “no kids.” That was a rule. There were no kids allowed in those Fairfield communities. There's a lot of history. There's reasons why this place is the way that it is because those people bought into it, thinking that there wasn't gonna be any kids here. I'm pretty sure that was very appealing.

She then elaborated about how continued development has encroached upon her neighborhood. Nora explained,

> The Catoosa area that we're surrounded by is very dense forest, and then we're just kind of like this little bubble right in the middle. Tuttle Lane’s mostly farmland, and then the rest is just this rapidly developing community. Houses on top of houses on top of houses. We feel that coming down Tuttle Lane like it's creeping in all directions into our little bubbles. You know, you drive down our road, and you're in a totally different place. And as soon as you drive out like, if you go down Peavine Road past the community club where you get your membership card, you just keep going down that hill, you're getting in the Hebbertsburg territory, which is totally different.

Nora expressed that it was as though newcomers to Fairfield Glade were unaware that they were moving into a rural space and that longtime locals tended to live in those more rural and lower income spaces. Nora mentions "Hebbertsburg territory;" Hebbertsburg is a rural town a few miles northeast of Fairfield Glade. Either side of Peavine Road becomes densely wooded immediately after passing the last road in Fairfield Glade towards Hebbertsburg.

Keller (1968) poses that neighborhoods have both social and physical components. Fairfield Glade newcomers do not view Wilshire neighborhoods as part of the community's social network. Indeed, when asked directly about Wilshire, newcomers used descriptive terms and phrases including "trailer park," "trouble," "ignore," "overlook," "dangerous," "trailer park people," and "we pretend they aren't there." At the same time, at least one resident of Tuttle Lane divorced herself from the rest of Fairfield Glade, although she did not express negative views toward Fairfield Glade residents.

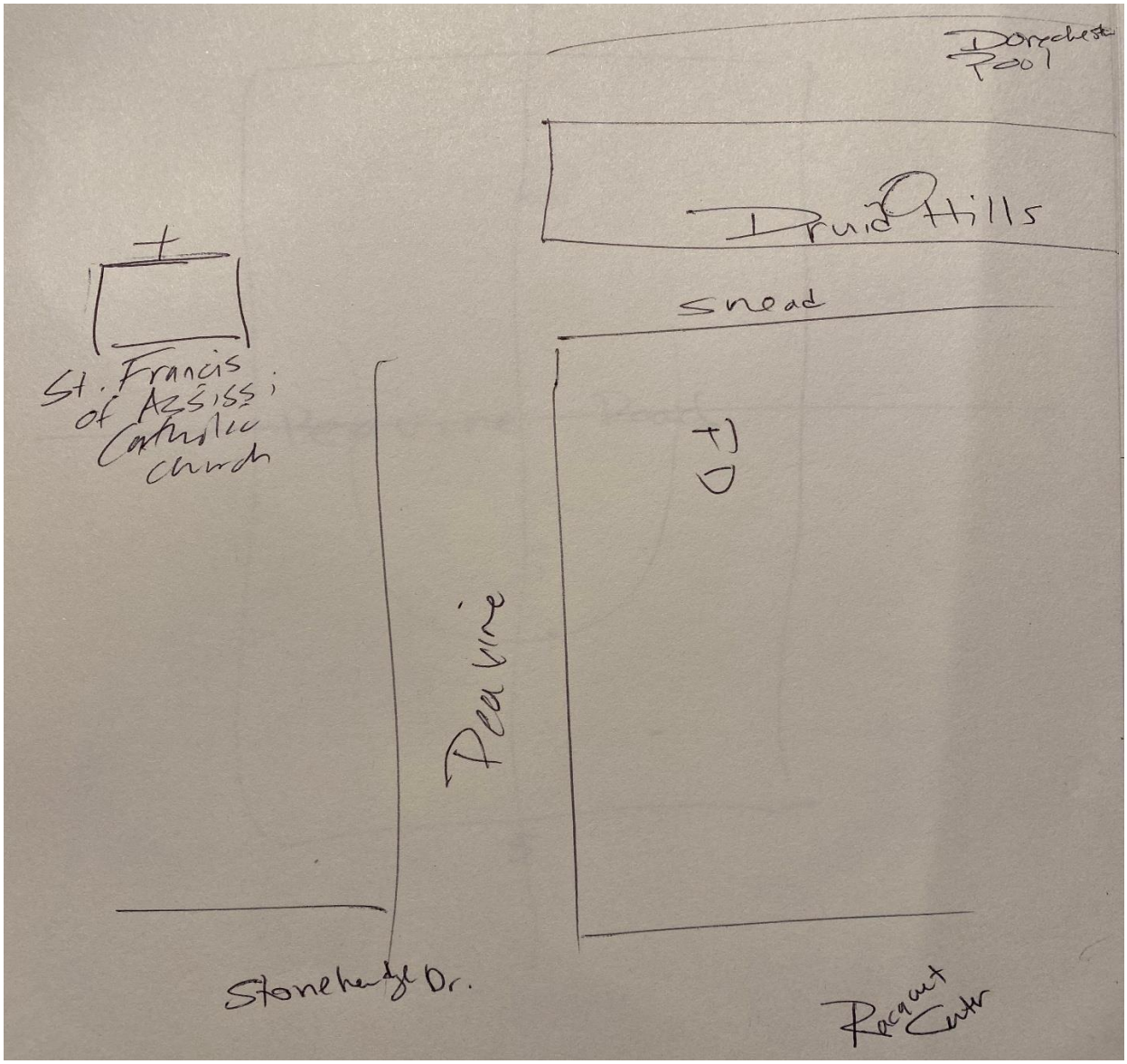
Nora feels the encroachment of the Fairfield Glade community into her own community on Tuttle Lane. During her interview, Nora proclaimed, "We are Fairfield Glade," then proceeded to explain how she views Tuttle Lane as part of Fairfield Glade geographically, and how Tuttle Lane existed long before Fairfield Glade became an MPC, but acknowledges that newcomers do not view anyone on Tuttle Lane as part of their social or physical networks. She also explained that she had to buy a plot of land to qualify as a "Fairfield Glade property owner" to purchase a membership to use local amenities. Nora pays property owner's fees and property taxes on an empty plot of land just to be permitted to pay an additional amount of money for a membership to be able to

use amenities in a community where she feels like an outsider, even though she has lived in the area for over two decades, and her husband's family had lived in the area for several decades, with many growing until old age and passing in their homes. She noted that when she takes her children to the pool or marina, that newcomers are nice, but they give her a lot of "looks" because she does not fit in based on her age and the presence of her children.

My interview with Nora prompted me to question if newcomers perceive Tuttle Lane and the Wilshire neighborhoods as physically delimiting; do newcomers view these neighborhoods as necessary for navigation or anything else? It can be gleaned from previous interviews that the Wilshire neighborhood is not recognized as a physically necessary space for the navigation by newcomers, but what about Tuttle Lane? I was particularly curious about newcomers' physical perceptions of Tuttle Lane as the neighborhood is centrally located in Fairfield Glade.

Halfway through my study, I began asking participants to draw mental maps to help me better understand how residents viewed their community (see **Figure 4.4**). "A request to draw a sketch of a city is a quick and simple method to obtain data similar to those elicited during a lengthy interview which is usually boring for the respondent (Nawrocki 2017:23)." Mental maps allow researchers to identify the most characteristic places within a space, such as important landmarks that inhabitants use to navigate (Nawrocki 2017). The omission of certain elements, such as veterinary offices in an area that has at least one veterinary office, can show that their location is not relevant for an inhabitant because they do not have a pet (ibid). "Mental maps make it possible for us to

get to know both the elements that are essential for our orientation in a given city and those important for its residents" (Nawrocki 2017:24).



[Figure 4.4 – Participant's Mental Map]

I asked my final six participants, "Would you please draw a map of what you consider to be your community?" When they asked for clarification, I replied, "Just draw whatever you feel is your community." Several of the mental maps illustrate important

elements to certain individuals, such as swimming at the pool with friends or the church that they attend. One mental map included a bubble outside of Fairfield Glade; the bubble depicted the participant's community outside of her physical neighborhood. When asked to draw a map of their community, all six participants expressed that community was more than a physical location. When asked, one participant stated that she viewed all of Fairfield Glade as her community but later expressed that she did not feel Wilshire was a part of Fairfield Glade. None of the mental maps drawn by participants depicted the Wilshire or Tuttle Lane areas, which suggests that Fairfield Glade, as a space, does not make sense to newcomers with Wilshire or Tuttle Lane in it. Likewise, Wilshire is not important for navigating Fairfield Glade for those living outside of that neighborhood.

Interestingly, the participants whom I had asked to draw mental maps did not include Tuttle Lane, but they acknowledged the existence of Tuttle Lane as it is in a central location and is passed frequently when driving by most residents. Despite that Tuttle Lane is a dead-end road located near the center of Fairfield Glade, when probed, newcomers denied that the neighborhood was part of the community. With new, expensive homes currently under construction near the entrance of Tuttle Lane, the question is: Will Fairfield Glade residents begin recognizing the Tuttle Lane neighborhood as part of the community, or will only those living in the newly constructed homes be considered part of Fairfield Glade?

Splitting

Those in Wilshire are not the only people cognitively classified in Fairfield Glade, however. There is also an "us versus them" theme of social division among the wealthy

in the community. This theme of splitting came up repeatedly as I was talking to residents of all areas. While lumping is the cognitive act of creating mental clusters of "similarity" to help people understand the world around them, splitting is the act of determining "differences" within mental clusters. Splitting is a type of mental zoning that spatially partitions things from one another, which can exaggerate distance between things (Zerubavel 1996). This distance can apply to physical boundaries, such as a downtown parking space two blocks from your destination is a "great" parking space, but a parking space halfway across the Walmart parking lot is a "terrible" parking space, even though the second one is probably closer to your destination. Thus, distance is mental.

Zerubavel (1996) uses the example that people born on November 21st are mentally clustered as Scorpios, while those born on November 22nd are Sagittarians. Zerubavel (1996:424) refers to mental divides as "mental quantum leaps." Although being born one day apart is metrically negligible, the cognitive act of splitting inflates the "temporal distance across mental divides" (ibid:425). Another example is how people "transform negligible steps in time into significant leaps in age," such as the perception that the tenth birthday of a child is more important that the 364-day interval between her ninth and tenth birthdays, simplifying the continuous aging of humans (ibid).

Splitting allows people to perceive an exaggerated "fundamental difference between 'us' and 'them'" (Zerubavel 1996:425). Just as I noticed the theme that the people in Wilshire were not considered to be part of the Fairfield Glade community during the interview process, it came to my attention that there was a notable social

divide among the wealthy in Fairfield Glade depending upon the side of Peavine Road in which a newcomer lives.

Social Division

Folks who live on the south side of Peavine Road are "split" from those living north of Peavine Road; there is a perceived difference between the two groups. Succinctly, the south side of Peavine Road was developed before the north side, which means that the homes on that side, near Lake St. George, are older than those in the north. According to an administrator at the Fairfield Glade Community Club, the north side of Peavine Roads plans to continue to be developed, offering houses with bluff views that look out toward Crab Orchard, a community near the eastern border of Cumberland County. Plots on the south side of Peavine have plans for development. Druid Hills, the original golf course of Fairfield Glade, also lies on the south side of Peavine Road and is currently undergoing significant renovations, including a new clubhouse and restaurant. While the south side of Peavine does have many significantly older homes than the north side of Peavine, the area has been continuously developed and has several large, expensive homes. The south side of Peavine Road is objectively not a low-income area and yet the people living there have been split from the people in the north.

Sandy informed me that in Fairfield Glade, a beer and wine analogy is used to describe people who live on either side of Peavine Road. People living on the south side of Peavine Road are referred by residents of the north side[4], of Fairfield Glade as the "beer and pretzel" people and those on the north are referred to as either the "wine and

[4] The information in which I derived the origin of the "beer and pretzel" and "wine and cheese" analogy came from interviews with participants of this study.

cheese" or "champagne and caviar" people. Sandy clarified that the latter phrases are used interchangeably. For simplicity, I will be referring to these groups as "beer and pretzel" and "wine and cheese." The splitting of these two groups is not that of an "newcomers vs longtime locals" perspective, but rather "us vs them" in terms of external displays of the wealth of residents, such as the house they live in or the car they drive.

During my interview with Sandy, she told me that she hated to hear the division between the "wine and cheese" and "beer and pretzel" sections of Fairfield Glade. Having never heard the analogy, I asked her to elaborate. Sandy explained,

> The poor part of the community, which is not even true, but this is the thing is, well, so if you're on Peavine, coming from town on Peavine, anywhere you turn right is the "beer and pretzel" section. Everything on the St. George Lake side, and everything on the Dartmoor Lake side is considered the "wine and caviar section." And then the Rebel Run[5] thing is on the "caviar" section, and so is the trailer park, by the way. I think everybody just kind of pretends it doesn't really exist, because if you take that out, the North, as they call it, "side," does have more nicer houses overall than the South side. Newer houses, more expensive houses. But people definitely have that division. Like, the "snooties" live over here, and the "commoners" live over here. Ask the next few people you interview. Ask about it. They'll all tell you. They'll say "wine and cheese" or "wine and caviar." They'll say something. "Champagne and caviar." But most people that I hear say that, they say it as a joke. They don't really think that we're snobs, but it's definitely a thing. I bet you the next five people you interview, ask them and they'll all say it.

I asked all subsequent participants about the analogy. I spoke with one participant, Evelyn, briefly before our interview about this perception in social distance and she said she hadn't heard of the analogy, but she was aware of the perceived difference. Before our interview, she did some independent research and talked to some people in her

[5] Rebel Run is the last road in the Fairfield Glade zip code and is still being developed.

neighborhood and was told that the “beer and wine” analogy “was started by a group of women near the end of the Dartmoor Lake.”

I asked all subsequent participants about the “beer and wine” analogy, but no other participant reported that they had heard of the analogy, although nearly all participants were aware of the perceptions of social distance among newcomers and that this divide was dependent upon which side of Peavine Road a person lives. Only one participant, Dorothy, stated that she was unaware of a perceived social distance among the retired residents of Fairfield Glade. When asking if she had heard of the “beer and wine” analogy, Dorothy responded,

> No, I can't say that I ever heard that before. I think what we're trying to do as retired people is not categorize people. And so, like the “you got the lots of money, and I don't.” We're all past that.

Dorothy was unaware of the perceived social distance between those who live on the north side of Peavine Road versus those on the south side, but most of my respondents were. This splitting of the clusters of newcomers is mental but aided by the topography since the road creates a visual barrier that reinforces differences depending on the side of the road a person lives. The road is an easy demarcation between old and new, as the neighborhoods on the south side of Peavine Road were built first. Peavine Road might seem to separate the clusters and inflates the social distance between groups of retired wealthy people to create the perception of a fundamental difference between the “snooties” and the “commoners,” despite both sides having access to lakes, golf courses, hiking trails, and other amenities, but this separation isn’t because of the road at all. Peavine Road serves as a visual division, but the perceived social divisions would exist

between newcomers whether Peavine Road ran between the north and south sides of Fairfield Glade or not.

To illustrate how this is the case, take, for example, how the interstate highway system divided white neighborhoods from Black neighborhoods. The interstate system that separated, and in many cases, demolished, historic districts, churches, schools, and parks, were visual divisions as the social divisions between Black and white neighborhoods were preexisting (Connerly 2002; Karas 2015; Kuswa 2002). “Highway construction displaced Black households cut the heart and soul out of thriving Black communities as homes, churches, schools, and businesses were destroyed” (Archer 2020:1260). The highway system was a segregationist tool “protecting White people from Black migration” (ibid).

There is no racial component that divides groups in Fairfield Glade. Most of the residents of Fairfield Glade are wealthy, retired, white people (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c), but by exploring how the interstate highway system created visual, physical divisions between white and Black neighborhoods, it can help social scholars to understand why a road can appear to be the dividing factor between neighborhoods, when actually, the true division is social (Archer 2020; Connerly 2002; Karas 2015; Kuswa 2002). Thus, the splitting is interesting when, in reality, the vast majority of people in Fairfield Glade have the same demographic characteristics. Zerubavel (1996) claims, “Splitting enables us to perceive grape juice as different from wine” (ibid:422). In the case of Fairfield Glade, splitting enables newcomers to perceive “beer” as different from

"wine," with the assumption from the "wine" crowd that "beer" is inferior, with no objective grounds for this assumption.

While Zerubavel did not discuss conflict in his literature on lumping and splitting, I can see how these acts of mental clustering could lead to conflict in Fairfield Glade, particularly concerning newcomers and longtime locals. There are not necessarily grounds for conflict between the "beer and pretzel" and "wine and cheese" people in Fairfield Glade as both groups are still perceived as part of the community, whereas Wilshire and Tuttle Lane are not.

Rurality

Another theme that I noticed when conducting interviews which arose from discussions of potential conflicts around roaming dogs in Fairfield Glade is differing views on how to classify the space – is Fairfield Glade rural? A surprising finding of my research is that roaming dogs are viewed differently depending on whether participants perceive themselves as living in the country or not. Furthermore, three participants made the distinction that Fairfield Glade is "rural" or "semi-rural," but not "country."

Blurring Rural-Urban Boundaries

Lichter and Ziliak (2017) make the case that urban and rural boundaries are blurred through the outmigration of people in urban areas to that of more rural spaces. Rural areas surrounded by natural amenities attract people who desire to use the space for recreation. Some of these areas, such as Fairfield Glade, attract people of retirement age, especially those who wish to leave urban and suburban dwellings for a quieter existence paired with a lower cost of living. On the flipside, retirees from urban and suburban

spaces are accustomed to material comforts that can be found in most amenity-based developments, such as shopping centers and restaurants, leading to a blurring of rural-urban boundaries. These boundaries are challenging to determine as they are highly fluid due to advancements in technology and communication (Lichter and Ziliak 2017). For example, if you can afford to have consumer items shipped to you, then the absence of retail opportunities in rural areas is less troublesome. These reasons contribute to why participants had varying perceptions on classifying Fairfield Glade as a space. This is highlighted by how some participants classify Fairfield Glade as rural due to few shopping options or medical facilities.

Perception of Rurality

When interviewing Arthur, 82, he referred to Peavine Road as a "Big, rural road." I asked him if he saw Fairfield Glade as a rural space. He responded, "No." He then clarified that Peavine is a rural road, but that it is heavily traveled. I asked, "How would you categorize Fairfield Glade as far as like city, town, developing space?" Arthur replied, "I would say it's probably still developing." Arthur lives in Fairfield Glade a little over 6 months out of the year. He lives in a rural, sparsely populated community in Michigan the rest of the year. He has lived in rural areas for most of his life.

I asked newcomer Evelyn, 67, if she would classify Fairfield Glade as rural. She responded, "Yeah, this is rural. But when I grew up in Johnson City, that was country. I mean, that was backcountry." Rose, 64, also perceived Fairfield Glade as rural, but not country. She said, "I would definitely say, this is definitely a rural area. It's more rural, not country, but more rural." Rose moved to Fairfield Glade from a major metropolitan

area. When asking Monica, a 49-year-old suburban transplant, how she classified Fairfield Glade, she explained,

> It's almost a little suburb. Like in my mind when I think of back home, you know, you have Chicago proper, and then you have your little suburbs, and I kind of feel like Fairfield Glade is like a little suburb of Crossville. I would definitely think it's a town. It's definitely not rural. I mean, with the amount of development that they're doing throughout the community, which is one of the things I hate because I feel like they're taking out all the trees or taking away like native habitats, which was part of the reason I moved here.

To better understand Monica's reasons for moving to Fairfield Glade, I asked, "Why did you start looking in the Crossville area?" She responded:

> I definitely wanted a more quiet existence. I wanted something that was, I would say, quote unquote 'semi-rural,' you know what I mean? Where you're not completely isolated, but you're still getting somewhat of that country-type life with all the trees and the trails.

Her answer is congruent with why people move to gentrifying rural spaces; to get away from the city and consume a more rural lifestyle.

During my interview with Sophia, 75, I asked, "If you had to categorize Fairfield Glade as a type of space, would you consider it rural?" She responded, "Semi-rural. Yeah, this is not rural at all anymore, but you don't have to go far. It's a short drive to really be out in the country. Like if you go down Peavine out toward Catoosa, it can be extreme. A very rural area very quickly, so Fairfield Glade is semi-rural." Sophia spent most of her life in suburban and urban spaces but grew up in a rural area.

Ashley, 43, was born in what she calls a "very rural" midwestern town" in Southern Indiana. She described Fairfield Glade as "outskirts of urban." She elaborated, "It's so close to Knoxville. It's so close to Walmart and everything is here. Like where I'm

from, there's like, no one. It'd be more like Crab Orchard. There are a lot of amenities and clubhouses and activities that they have here."

I asked, "So, you said that you would classify Fairfield Glade as like outskirts of urban. Do you mean like a suburb?"

She replied, "Yeah, like a suburb with a little longer commute maybe than like Farragut. I don't feel like this is rural. I do feel like Crab Orchard would be considered rural. Rockwood, possibly, but Crossville's too big."

I asked longtime local, Nora, "Do you feel that this is a rural area?" She replied,

> Absolutely. We're an hour from Knoxville and two hours from Nashville. That's what I tell people. Like, if you want to go to Costco, you got to go to Knoxville, or to go to the mall to buy shoes. There's no shoe stores here in this rural community of Fairfield Glade. There are bears in their backyard. This is not a metropolis.

Gertrude, a former suburbanite, claimed that Fairfield Glade "Is definitely rural." She pointed out that medical care is also lacking in the community. Gertrude elaborated,

> My understanding is that this is a retirement area, so you've got a lot of retired people here and you would want to make more, I mean, it was very difficult to find a physician when I first moved here that was taking patients. Very difficult to find a dentist that was taking on new patients, you know what I mean? I'm spoiled because I don't want to drive to Cookeville. I don't want to have to drive to Nashville to make a doctor's appointment. Yeah, come on, but that's the choice that we made moving here. I'm just surprised that there isn't more medical care.

I asked Greg, "What do you dislike about Fairfield Glade?" he responded, "There's not enough shopping here. There's some shopping, more of a necessity. You know, the Food City. There's not department stores, that kind of thing. Yeah, there's not a lot of shops." I then asked, "Do you consider this to be a rural area?" He replied,

> I take a lot of surveys now, and I've learned that if you're in a town 20,000 or less, you're supposed to call yourself "rural." In fact, I just looked this up in the Atlas

> yesterday when traveling, Crossville has got 12,000 people. Fairfield Glade is 9,500. That puts us just over 20,000, which is considered a rural community by most survey stuff that I've taken. You don't have to go too far to go out and find farms and all that, so it's rural in that way, too. So sometimes, when you use the word "rural," you think of a farm right away, and I've learned taking these surveys that rural means "small town," too.

Another aspect to keep in mind is that people perceive places differently according to their group identity. By contrasting tourists and locals of a Swiss Alpine Village, Klanicka and their colleagues (2006) demonstrates how place attachment is connected to group identity. Different socio-cultural groups "establish different relations to places, depending on their cultural values, interests and individual experiences (Klanicka et al. 2006:55)." Tourists experience a superficial sense of place as compared to inhabitants due to absence of ancestral and cultural connections (Klanicka et al. 2006:56).

Newcomers move to Fairfield Glade to experience retirement and consume amenities. I am not claiming that newcomers have a tourist-like superficial attachment to Fairfield Glade, as many newcomers have been residents for years and have strong ties to the community. I am, however, highlighting that the lack of awareness of the rurality of Fairfield Glade stems from a separate cultural identity than that of longtime locals as well as what newcomers perceive as the physical area of Fairfield Glade. As mentioned in the previous section, these areas do not include Wilshire or Tuttle Lane. This separation is multi-dimensional along both class and socio-economic lines.

Classifying Fairfield Glade as Rural

The population estimates that participant Greg provided for Fairfield Glade and Crossville are fairly accurate. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) delineate

metropolitan from micropolitan statistical areas (U.S. Census Bureau 2023e). According to the 2020 standards for delineating core based statistical areas (CBSA), metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) must have at least one urban area of a population of 50,000 or more (ibid). Micropolitan statistical areas have a minimum of 10,000, but no more than 50,000, inhabitants in at least one urban area (U.S. Census Bureau 2023e). Crossville, TN is a micropolitan statistical area (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a; 2023e). Knoxville is the closest metropolitan statistical area to Crossville with a population of 947,017 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023d).

The "principal city" of a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area is the largest city within that area (U.S. Census Bureau 2023e). Crossville is Cumberland County's principal city with a population of 12,265 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a; 2023e). Fairfield Glade is the second most populous area in Cumberland County, with 9,149 inhabitants (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c).

The OMB does not determine whether areas are "urban" or "rural," only metropolitan and nonmetropolitan, which are largely coterminous. Nonmetropolitan (or rural) counties have some combination of open countryside, rural towns (places with less than 5,000 people and 2,000 housing units; Sanders 2025b), and urban areas with a population of 50,000 or more that do not contribute to larger labor markets (ibid). The US Census Bureau considers areas with some combination of these characteristics as rural (ibid).

Cumberland County is a nonmetropolitan county as it has open countryside and is not a part of the larger labor market of the Knoxville metro area, i.e., fewer than 25% of

Crossvillians commute to Knoxville for employment (Sanders 2025b). Based on these characteristics, Cumberland County is a rural county; Fairfield Glade is a rural retirement community.

Conflict Over Free Roaming Dogs

Generally, there was a surprising variation in whether people viewed themselves as living in a rural space. Participants' perceptions of rurality influenced how they answered questions about potential conflicts over roaming dogs. I asked all participants, "Have you heard of any issues concerning roaming dogs in Fairfield Glade on social media?" I made the distinction that roaming dogs are left unsupervised to roam on a regular basis, unlike stray dogs which do not have an owner and are, therefore, not intentionally left outside, unsupervised, for an extended period by their owners. All but four participants reported that they had seen posts about roaming dogs spotted in Fairfield Glade on social media.

When asking newcomer Sophia if she had seen any conflict over roaming dogs on social media, she commented that rural people let dogs roam. Sophia explained,

> Occasionally, I'll see something posted about just a random dog that somebody saw maybe on Chestnut Hill, and they want to catch the dog, but people outside of the subdivisions, people do let their dogs run, and that doesn't mean the dog is stray just because it's out loose. Just leave them be. That's my advice. They let dogs roam. Some of the more rural people they just do. They let their dogs roam.

While Sophia has not experienced conflict over roaming dogs in her neighborhood, she did inform me that she is aware that the location of her home is near farmland and that sometimes dogs from those farms and more rural areas roam. She told

me of two instances in which she has personally encountered roaming dogs on the golf course near her home. Sophia stated,

> A couple of years ago now, there was a bloodhound who was a wanderer, and I lived close to the Dorchester clubhouse. If you look at that on the map, if you're going as a dog would go, it's only about a mile or so to get down to like Chestnut Hill and those farms down there, and the dog lived in one of those farms. He'd come loping over, and he'd go to the golf course. Well, people kept reporting sightings of him. Well, her, actually. And one day I'm out in my yard, and she's in my yard trying to play with my dog. And so, I thought, I'm going to be a good citizen. I didn't know about her at the time, so I'm going to try to catch her. I grabbed her collar. She went, "No, no!" And she pulled her collar off right over her head and took off! Oh, no, no, no! So, the collar had the name and phone number and everything. She had an air tag which I'm now holding, so I called the owner. And anyway, it all worked out. She came and got the dog, but she said they'd put in a pen for her, but the pen was no match for her and they were going to have to put in a taller fence, but there was no harm done. It was all fine.
>
> And then, I like to walk on the Dorchester Golf Course, one day, there's a couple of dogs. It's dusk around there, and there's a couple of people there who say, "Oh, we found these dogs! We found these dogs!" So, I looked at one of the dogs and I looked at his collar, and I could see that he lives on one of those places over off Chestnut Hill. And the people were saying, "Should we put them in a garage? What should we do?" And I said, "Look, those dogs know exactly where they are. It's less than a mile for them to run back home. Just let them go. They're just roaming. They're on an unauthorized walkabout, basically." I said, "Just leave. Leave them be. They know they know how to get home."

Unlike many other participants, Sophia had encountered roaming dogs in her neighborhood. She did not experience conflict with longtime locals or other nearby residents over these experiences, but she did expound upon why she was not surprised to see roaming dogs near her home. I asked, "You've lived in Manhattan and lots of other urban and suburban places. Where did your understanding of roaming dogs come from?" Sophia responded,

> We've had dogs for so many years. We've had big dogs. We've had little dogs. I've had dogs that I could walk off leash. Yeah, I mean, like the ones I have now. They're never going to be off leash, you know? It's not their temperament, but I've

> had dogs that I could let off leash. We lived in a quite rural area where we had a minimum of 5 acres zoning to have a house, and we were on 30 acres. And I would walk our dogs off leash down this country road all the time. Never a problem, so I'm used to that idea.

Sophia acknowledged that it would be extremely unusual to see a roaming dog in Manhattan and that she would be "very concerned." She stated, "I would think that dog would be in distress or something."

Sophia indicates cultural differences in her responses rooted in the practices and perceptions of people living in rural areas with the space to allow dogs to roam more safely than people living in more populated areas, threatened by the dangers of cars and managed through stricter leash laws (Armbruster 2019; Awawdeh & Forrest 2024; Canal et al. 2018; Hughes and Macdonald 2013; Irvine 2015; Jorgensen & Brown 2017). Sophia explained to me that even though she knows that dogs roam, "That there are occasions, many reports of dogs that apparently might have been dumped, you know. Clearly, the dog needs help, and then people do always try to help them and catch them, and eventually, quite often, they do."

Sophia uses discernment to determine if a dog is roaming or has been dumped. Other newcomers that I interviewed did not indicate their awareness that sometimes people in more rural areas allow their dogs to roam. Instead, other newcomers commented that Fairfield Glade was a "dumping ground" for dogs, assuming that people from the poorer, more rural Cumberland County areas abandon dogs in Fairfield Glade, assuming that some wealthy person would take in the dog. Natalie, a local veterinarian and newcomer to Fairfield Glade, supported the sentiment that Fairfield Glade is used as

a dumping ground for unwanted dogs. Natalie claimed, “There are several people in Fairfield who have gotten their dogs because they were strays.”

Unless a dog has been seen in the same area many times and appears well-fed, it would be difficult to determine if a dog was roaming or stray. Many of the newcomers that I interviewed said that they would assume that any dog roaming without supervision could have potentially been dumped. This is because newcomers could not imagine allowing their dog to roam due to their own cultural practices and perceptions of how to properly care for and manage their own dogs due to having lived in areas where allowing dogs to roam was not acceptable or safe for humans, the dog, wildlife, or the environment (Awawdeh & Forrest 2024; Irvine 2015; Hughes & Macdonald 2013; Jorgensen & Brown 2017; Merry 1987; Shamsaddini et al. 2024).

Newcomer Sandy, 64, had a conflict with the owner of a small dog in the Rebel Run area. She was driving and saw “a miniature kind of Chihuahua dog, and he was just shaking on the side of the road.” In efforts to help him she explained that she took the following actions:

> So, I pulled over, and he didn't move. He was just trembling and trembling, and I could see that he was bleeding a little bit. I didn't know what to do, there weren't very many houses, so I went to the first house that was closest, and nobody answered the door. So then, I drove down the road and there was another house, and they were out in their driveway, smoking cigarettes. I said to them, “Do you know anything about this dog?” And she said, “Oh, yeah, that that dog lives in that house over there. He's always out. He's always getting attacked by hawks.” So, she went back with me, and she was much more aggressive than me. I mean, I was in an area I didn't know with people I didn't know, right? So, she was much more aggressive. She pulled in the driveway, and she's like banging on the door and banging on the garage door, and the guy comes out and he's like, “Oh, is that stupid dog out there getting attacked by a hawk again?” And he scooped it up and he took it in the house. I called the police.

I responded, “Well, you didn't know what else to do, right?” Sandy replied “No, and the police are like, ‘Are you kidding me, lady?’ Like, ‘What do you want us to do about this, you stupid New Yorker?’ It was really sad. I was really sad about it for days. For days I was upset about it.” Sandy did not expect to see such a small dog running lose on the side of the road. This happened in her neighborhood in which she was having a house built, but she had not moved in yet.

Longtime local, Nora, lives in a more rural part of Fairfield Glade, as mentioned in the previous section. She lives off Tuttle Lane on a farm. I asked Nora if she ever sees conflict over free roaming dogs on social media and she elucidated:

> The rabbit dogs, especially. I mean, beagles are impossible to keep. And we have them all in like a huge field with chicken wire all around the bottom, even into the ground where they can't dig out. But yeah, sometimes they're hunting, and if they don't have their tracking collar on, then they'll just keep going, running a deer or whatever. And a lot of times, a lot of people's hunting dogs, I’ll see them on there, and everybody on our road at some point, because all of our dogs love to just run roam free and hang out with each other and stuff. There’s no law to stop that. But yeah, a lot of people on our road, if they have a missing dog, they will immediately go look on those pages, like we all do, and they'll find it because someone in Fairfield’s found their dog. The hunting dogs that we have, the beagles, they've been found in Hebbertsburg and all around, but not in Fairfield. I did have a German Shepherd one time that kept going to this same lady's house in Fairfield, but if my dogs run into somebody else's yard, I want them to run back. Run them back, you know? “Get out of my yard! I'm not going to feed you, give you treats, and give you water.” That's what people around here do. “Here, let me feed him, give him water.” That's why my shepherd kept going back to this lady's house. I'm like, “Did you feed him? Give him water?” “Yeah. Of course. He's here in my garage.” “No! Tell him to go home! Tell him to get out! He's a guard dog. He's supposed to be with my sheep.”

Nora’s statement is an example of how newcomers, because they come from urban and suburban spaces where dogs are pets and often live indoors (Blouin 2015), do not have any concept that dogs as working farm dogs (Naughton 2024). The newcomer

that gave Nora's dog food and water did not understand that in doing so, she prevented the dog from going home and protecting his flock of sheep. The newcomer's offering of food and water would have been kind if the dog were stray or malnourished due to having been dumped. The newcomer in this situation did what she felt she should to "help" Nora's dog based on her perceptions of dogs as pets as opposed to dogs as working animals. Note that Nora feels comfortable "running off" any dog roaming on her property because she presumes that a roaming dog must belong to someone, rather than assuming the dog was stray or had been dumped.

Asking about roaming dogs gave me insight into not only how residents view the rurality of Fairfield Glade, but also how conflict might occur, and resolve, in this gentrifying rural area. Most respondents said that they had heard of issues with roaming dogs in either their neighborhood or in another part of Fairfield Glade. Only three respondents answered that they had experienced issues with roaming dogs themselves. For two participants, this led to conflict.

Rural gentrification is a slow process that takes many years but is never really finished as gentrifying spaces are constantly in flux (Golding 2016). "As gentrification nears completion, inequality grows less severe. This is referred to as the cumulative impact hypothesis" (Golding 2016:132). In the case of Fairfield Glade, this inequality is less about wealth and more about retaining urban/suburban expectations. Some people have encountered issues with roaming dogs in Fairfield Glade, but this does not often appear to lead to conflict as most newcomers are reported to keep their dog on a leash or contained by a fence.

When I asked Kevin about neighborhood conflict, he replied.

> People. They come from all over. And the different areas have different ways. Some people like to complain about things, at least on social media. “Things aren't done here like it was back home.” It depends on what your attitude is. I mean, we came down here to be Tennesseans, not Illinoisans. you know? Not everybody's that way. Some people move here to try to make this like the state they came from, and I can't say that goes over real well with a lot of other people that are comfortable here.

Resistance to Economic Responsibility

Newcomers are moving to the country, but they are not taking on a “country” behavior, or what they perceive as a “country” behavior. Newcomers are not moving to the country to let their dogs roam; they are moving to live a lifestyle free of traffic and away from the noise of the city (Leebrick 2015; Nelson & Nelson 2010; Sherman 2017;2023). Since most newcomers are retired and living on a fixed income, they are drawn to Fairfield Glade’s amenities and low property tax rates (Begum & Momen 2021; Fairfield Glade 2025d; Shan 2010). Counties with low tax rates do not have the local government revenue to support services such as animal control (Irvine 2015). Newcomers move to Fairfield Glade with the idea that animal control should operate similarly to the places in which newcomers are from, places with much higher tax bases. They are frustrated that local animal control services are understaffed and underfunded, but newcomers also don’t expect animal control to answer the phone because they are aware that animal control deputies and staff will tell them to deal with a found dog themselves. Simultaneously, newcomers oppose increases in property taxes which would help fix the issue of inadequate animal control services in Cumberland County.

A third theme that was revealed when I interviewed participants was a resistance to economic responsibility. Fairfield Glade is a community that greatly influences the tax structure of Cumberland County, a rural area with some of the lowest property taxes in the state (Spears 2024). Tax structures, and other external forces, such as local politicians, determine the type and quality of services accessible to neighborhoods, including animal control and municipal shelters (Levy et al. 2020; Moss et al. 2022; Reese & Li 2023; Turner et al. 2012). Counties with lower property taxes – the main source of revenue for local governments - and a smaller tax base, tend to have poorer quality public services, such as schools and animal control services (Hou 2020; Levy et al. 2020; Moss et al. 2022; Turner et al. 2012). Some counties are too poor to maintain a local shelter at all (Irvine 2015; Reese & Li 2023; Schiefer et al. 2025). Cumberland County is a typical rural county in that animal control services do not meet the demands of residents (ibid). Political pressure from Cumberland County's older, more conservative residents, keeps property taxes low (Begum & Momen 2021; Kelsey et al. 1995), resulting in unresolved structural issues that frustrate newcomers, such as inadequate animal control services.

When designing my research questions, I expected that I would gain a better understanding of how people would ostensibly react and relate to dogs by asking participants, "What would you do if you went outside and found a dog in your yard?" The answers that I received to this question not only gave me insight into how people might relate to dogs, because people say they will act one way, but when faced with the situation in question, they may take different actions, but I also gleaned information

about the expectations of newcomers, and a longtime local, concerning matters of animal control and the political pressure concerning the local tax structure which directly impacts the quality of animal control services in the county.

I asked longtime local, Nora, what she would do if she went outside and found a dog in her yard. She answered,

> Run it off. I have one dog, I call her “Dottie,” I must be entertaining her because she is one I have to [run off]. My little dog runs her off, and then she'll come back to play, and then we'll run her off again. I don’t want her killing my chickens, so I don't want her to think that this is home.

Nora further elaborated that if she had not seen the dog before, she would take photos and post them to local Facebook groups to help reunite the dog with their family. She assured me that most people in her neighborhood, as well as the rest of Fairfield Glade, would do the same. My interviews confirmed this to hold true, with a few exceptions.

I asked newcomer Evelyn what she would do if she walked outside and there was a dog in her yard. She replied,

> If the dog is being aggressive, I would probably just go back inside. And I say this because I don't really know that there's any course of action. We had a dead deer in our driveway last week. It was a baby. It was so tiny, it couldn't have weighed 10 pounds, it was so little. When I came to the driveway, it was just laying in the middle of my driveway, and I thought, “Well, that's weird.” And I thought maybe it was sleeping, but when I drove by, I could tell it was dead. So, I pulled into the garage and I went in, and I called the police department because I didn't know what the process was here. And she said, “If there's a dead animal on your property, you have to take care of it yourself.” And I said, “Well, is there wildlife management? I mean, because this is a wildlife management place up there in Obed.” And she said, “No, you're responsible for anything on your own property.” So, my husband got it and took it down the street where a dead groundhog was the week before that. But if it [a dog] was aggressive, I probably would call the police anyway. But other than that, I'd probably just go inside. I don't have outside animals, but I don't know what else I could do, because I'm certainly not going to

> approach a stray dog. I mean, there's too many wild animals here. There has to be rabies here with all the foxes and skunks and stuff. It is Tennessee.

It is important to note that Evelyn assumes that any dog outside is a “stray” which is consistent with a more urban attitude of keeping dogs under supervision (Amrbruster 2019; Arroube & Pereira. 2025; Instone & Sweeny 2014; Irvine 2015). For clarification, I asked Evelyn, “If the dog appeared friendly, would you still go back in?”

Evelyn replied, “I'd probably watch it from my porch just to see what it did, you know, if it was just sniffing around.”

I asked, “Would you try to take like a picture of the dog and post about it on social media?”

Evelyn responded, “No. If it had a collar, I might, but I certainly wouldn't put myself in any danger to look that close, you know?”

To better understand Evelyn’s previous experiences with dogs that might influence her decision, I asked if the breed of the dog would matter. She replied,

> No. Unless it looked hurt. If it was a little dog, and it looked hurt, I might try to get it to move, you know. Like ask it to come see me. Maybe get some cat food and put it on the driveway and see if it moves. But I mean, I'm scared of big dogs for sure.

She explained that if the dog was injured, she “would probably call a vet and ask them what to do.” She expressed that she would not think about social media as the first step and stated, “I mean, I guess, if it was friendly, I would think about it. I got bitten by a German shepherd when I was a kid. I'm just really leery of big dogs. I like dogs, but I like them on a leash better.” Evelyn has lived in Fairfield Glade for nearly five years and has not had any issues with free roaming dogs.

I asked all participants if the breed or appearance of the dog would influence whether they would approach the hypothetical dog in their yard. Evelyn and one other newcomer stated that they would not approach the dog, despite whether the dog looked friendly, unless it was a small dog with a small mouth and small teeth to minimize risk. Asking this question helped me to determine if people's answers were influenced by previous bad experiences with dogs. Also, some breeds, such as Dobermans and American Pit Bull Terriers, have unfavorable media representation which influences how the public views them (Iliopoulou 2019; Twining et al. 2000). Dogs of any breed can be dangerous, but large dogs can do much more damage than small dogs (Overall & Love 2001), so it is only reasonable and expected to be cautious with large dogs. Although many participants claimed they would approach a large dog if it appeared friendly, people may act differently in the moment if they were to encounter an unknown, large dog in their yard.

In Fairfield Glade, there are few options regarding who to call for help with roaming or stray dogs as explained by newcomer Natalie. She moved to Fairfield Glade about a year ago from a much larger, Southern metropolitan area. She works as a veterinarian in Crossville. I asked Natalie what she would do if she found a dog in her yard. Her response was illuminating:

> Call animal control. And they wouldn't answer the phone. And then I would take it to my work and scan it for a microchip. If it didn't [have a microchip], I'd call animal control again. If it did have one, then you can look up the owner and call them, or if it had a tag, but if it didn't, I'm calling animal control and telling them that they need to pick up the animal.

Natalie clarified that she would go on social media and post to try to find the dog's owners. She differentiated that she would make a greater effort looking for the owners if the dog appeared well-cared for and groomed, but she would reach out to rescue groups if animal control would not take the dog, especially if the dog looked emaciated. She then conveyed,

> It's like, the way it's supposed to work is that when somebody has a stray dog, animal control will come pick it up, and they'll bring it to the shelter, you know, and have sit it in there for however many days for the owner to come claim it. You have a 5-day stray hold if you have a microchip or a tag, or whatnot. If you don't have any ID, your stray hold is only 3 days. Then, after that, the dog is like, you know, nobody's property, and or it's the property of the county or the city, or whatever. And Crossville doesn't really enforce that at all, so it's a free for all. I would say that there isn't much of a consensus among residents on what to do if they see a stray dog. Some people think that they should call animal control. Some people think that it's "Oh, now, look, we have a dog now." People think, "Oh, I could breed this dog and make a few extra bucks." They think "Oh, this dog's on my property. I'm gonna shoot it." There's a multitude of ways that could go, and when the rules like aren't followed, there aren't any in animal welfare in general, there aren't any consequences it seems, either.

I asked Natalie if she had seen this lack of consistency in her professional capacity as a veterinarian. She elaborated,

> I guess, based on just my conversations. Well, people bring in stray animals, and I'll ask, "Have you called animal control?" They say, "No." I've had a stray dog brought to my work that somebody did not call animal control. They were out of Crossville, though. They said it killed one of their chickens, and so they couldn't have it anymore. So, they brought it to us, and I called animal control, and they said they were full, and that shouldn't happen. And pretty much what I've heard from other people, and I have heard this from people that live in Fairfield, too, when they've called [animal control] with a stray dog, that they've said that the shelter is full, and they need to keep it and be responsible for finding its owner finding it at home. And so, the community is putting that burden back on people and kind of, you know, not taking responsibility for it and putting the burden on the person who found the dog. Because that's not fair to do to somebody, like some 85-year-old lady who lives here that finds stray dog. She can't keep it, you know? And they should be able to come and pick it up, and keep it at the shelter until whatever happens to it.

As a veterinarian, Natalie has a clear understanding of the limits of animal control in her rural community. Some of my other participants were also somewhat informed through word-of-mouth. Cara, a 47-year-old newcomer from Southern California, claimed that she would be hesitant to call animal control if she found a dog in her yard because she had heard that when you call animal control here, “They tell you to figure it out yourself. ‘We’re overbooked here. Take good care of it yourself.’”

I asked another newcomer, Dorothy, what she would do if she found a dog in her yard. Her response was similar to Natalie’s. She replied,

> If I felt comfortable, and I usually feel comfortable with dogs. If it was friendly and I could get it to come to me, I'd try to protect it some way. I don't know about taking it in the house, because I don't know what my girl [another dog] would do. She'd probably love it because she loves everything. Yeah, but I would definitely get it in the garage so that I could try to find out if it belonged to someone.

I asked if the dog had a tag what she would do. Dorothy replied that she would try to call the number on the tag and that she’d post in Facebook groups if no one answered. When asking what other steps she would take, if any, she replied,

> I'm not sure who even to call. If it was during the day I could call Hendrixson's office, and someone would get me to Jan to figure out. “Can you take this dog, Jan?” I don't know. I’d put it on Facebook to start with. And there's different places [Facebook pages and groups]. I have them all on my Facebook. you know, to advertise them. I have a dog, and I'm trying to protect it, and I'll feed it, but somebody needs to step up.

I asked Dorothy, “And what about animal control?” She replied,

> I don't know. I don't know if I'd want to, because then it goes to the shelter. I don't know. We have a shelter in town. I don't think they euthanize, do they? I don't know. FOCCAS did a lot of things for local animals. They [the shelter] do[es] a lot of things for local animals, but they [FOCCAS] did more.

Dorothy refers to Dr. Mark Hendrixson, a well-known and established oncologist in Crossville. His wife, Jan, is the president of Focus on Cumberland County Animal Safety (FOCCAS), the only animal rescue in Cumberland County (FOCCAS 2019b; 2019c). According to Dr. Mark Hendrixson[6], the rescue is no longer able to intake roaming or stray animals in Cumberland County due to legal issues, but they can accept animals from other counties. This has left a massive strain on the county shelter to intake stray and roaming dogs and cats (Great Nonprofits 2025). Dorothy was not the only participant who mentioned how impactful it has been for FOCCAS to no longer have the capacity to accept animals. FOCCAS takes owner surrenders, but they have a waitlist that can sometimes be months long (FOCCAS 2019a). Some participants, including Dorothy, stated that they felt the rescue did much more than the local shelter.

Animal Control as a Structural Issue

Despite the limitations of animal control known to some of my participants, when asked what they would do if they found a dog in their yard, several participants mentioned that they would call animal control. Only a few participants said they would not know who to call. Nearly all participants said they would rely on social media to network in efforts to reunite the dog and their human. Many participants shared the sentiment that even if they called animal control, no one would help and that would be burdensome for the finder of the dog. In all cases, newcomers expressed frustration that animal control services were inadequate.

[6] During a brief interview, Dr. Mark Hendrixson relayed that FOCCAS was no longer able to pick up dogs in Cumberland County due to legal issues. FOCCAS is only allowed to pick up dogs or cats within the county if contacted by a veterinary office about an animal in need of rescue placement.

Newcomers are under the impression that animal control services should be prompt and easily attainable – that animal control officers, or the shelter, would be able to answer the phone to help with a lost, found, or injured dog, but they also do not expect animal control to answer the phone as many newcomers, which has led to confusion about who to call if a roaming or stray dog wanders onto their property. Many newcomers are from the city or the suburbs, areas where animal control is well-funded and easily accessible (Irvine 2015). Higher tax bases in metropolitan areas allow for adequate animal control services, with many cities having a tax-funded, subsidized low-cost spay/neuter clinic that lowers the overall burden of county shelters (Irvine 2015; Schiefer et al. 2025). Newcomers are frustrated with Cumberland County's animal control services do not meet the needs of locals after having moved from areas with much larger tax bases and far more county-wide resources. Newcomers also realize, however, that animal control is not going to answer the phone or help with found dogs.

Like other rural shelters, Cumberland County Animal Shelter (CCAS) is understaffed, underfunded, and cannot stay open for long hours. The tax funds allocated to animal control services by local government entities are not enough to keep the shelter open to the public for more than four hours at a time (Cumberland County TN 2020). The shelter is open 10am to 2pm, which are peak working hours for most people, so if someone wanted to adopt an animal or volunteer to lower the burden on the county shelter, they could not due to work obligations (ibid). The shelter is closed on Wednesdays and Sundays, further limiting the availability of animal control services and access to shelter staff (ibid).

Cumberland County's proposed general fund for the 2024-2025 fiscal year was $40,593,877[7] (see **Figure 4.5**). Rabies and animal control received 0.42 percent of the general fund's budget, while the animal shelter received 0.87 percent (see **Figures 4.6, 4.7**). Despite the shelter operating at maximum capacity seemingly constantly (Chase 2025), in efforts to keep up with the county's intake needs (Luther 2024), the proposed budget for CCAS for 2024-2025 was $166,820 less than the previous year (see **Figure 4.6).** Rabies and animal control saw an increase in funding of about $35,000 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year (see **Figure 4.7**). While shelters receive donations – which are inconsistent throughout the year – plus some funding through non-profits and other organizations (Schiefer et al. 2025; Turner et al. 2012), municipal shelters largely rely on local government funding (Moss et al. 2022; Reese & Li 2023; Schiefer et al. 2025). CCAS must be financially supported through tax allocation so that adoptions can take place for the animals in the shelter (Reese & Li 2023). Several conditions are required to be met for adoptions to take place, such as spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinations, deworming, heartworm testing, preventative medications for flea, tick, and heartworm, as well as a budget for sick and injured animals (Reese & Li 2023; Tuner et al. 2012). As the shelter animals clear, animal control will have more of a capacity to pick up stray, roaming, or abandoned dogs and cats. Thus, supporting both animal control and the shelter is required for animal control to operate more efficiently (Moss et al. 2022).

[7] This budget was proposed on August 5, 2024 during a Public Hearing and Special Call Session of the Cumberland County Commission.

A RESOLUTION MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE VARIOUS FUNDS, DEPARTMENTS, INSTITUTIONS, OFFICES AND AGENCIES OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY, TENNESSEE, FOR THE YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2024 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2025.

SECTION 1. BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Cumberland County, Tennessee, assembled in special session on the 5th day of August, 2024, that the amounts hereafter set out are hereby appropriated for the purpose of meeting the expenses of the various funds, departments, institutions, offices and agencies of Cumberland County, Tennessee, for the capital outlay, and for meeting the payment of principal and interest on the County's debt maturing during the year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025, according to the following schedule:

101 GENERAL FUND		
51100	County Commission	3,571,284
51210	Board of Equalization	3,300
51220	Beer Board	1,000
51240	Other Boards & Committees	7,500
51300	County Executive/Mayor	354,957
51310	Personnel Office	108,702
51400	County Attorney	90,000
51500	Election Commission	539,032
51600	Register of Deeds	444,862
51740	Engineering (Communication System)	261,618
51750	Codes Compliance	304,990
51800	County Buildings	890,338
51900	Other General Administration	169,898
51910	Preservation of Records	364,395
52100	Accounting And Budgeting	630,330
52300	Property Assessor's Office	822,218
52400	County Trustee's Office	486,331
52500	County Clerk's Office	889,644
53100	Circuit Court	949,566
53300	General Sessions	358,917
53400	Chancery Court	395,717
53500	Juvenile Court	171,888
53700	Judicial Commisioners	284,721
53800	Probate Court	264,040
53920	Courtroom Security	255,928
54110	Sheriff's Department	5,233,017
54120	Special Patrols	686,760
54150	Drug Enforcement-Cops	44,232
54210	Jail	5,773,256
54240	Juvenile Services	192,275
54310	Fire Prevention and Control	1,360,980
54410	Civil Defense	193,315
54420	Rescue Squad	12,000
54610	County Coroner/Medical Examiner	300,000
54900	Other Public Safety	31,154
55110	Health Department	2,075,671
55120	Rabies and Animal Control	169,789
55130	Ambulance Service	6,501,743
55170	Alcohol And Drug Programs	150,270
55190	Other Local Health Services	52,539
55390	Appropriation to State	55,930
55900	Other Public Health Animal Shelter	352,239
56300	Senior Citizens Assistance	30,000
56500	Libraries	1,077,005
56700	Parks and Fair Boards	371,301
56900	Other Social, Cultural and Rec	17,100
57100	Agriculture Extension Service	155,244
57500	Soil Conservation	138,065
58110	Tourism	85,000
58190	Other Economic & Community Development	971,152
58300	Veteran's Service	139,058
58400	Other Charges	1,424,872
58500	Contributions to Other Agencies	67,840
58600	Employee Benefits	205,392
58900	Miscellaneous	95,500
	Total General Fund	**40,593,877**

[Figure 4.5 – Cumberland County Budget Proposal 2024-2025]

General Fund
Fiscal Year 24-25

	ANIMAL SHELTER	Actual 22-23	Estimated 23-24	Proposed 24-25
149	Laborers	52,729	52,168	56,515
164	Attendant	45,594	46,540	48,867
169	Part-time Personnel	49,162	75,798	94,596
186	Longevity Pay	1,864	1,660	2,040
201	Social Security	11,383	13,431	15,591
204	State Retirement	8,170	8,164	9,556
205	Employee & Dependent Insurance	26,598	28,656	29,988
206	Life Insurance	135	132	147
208	Dental Insurance	980	980	992
299	Other Fringe Benefits	1,942	1,689	1,790
307	Communication	1,771	1,540	2,100
338	Vehicle Maintenance	0	0	1,500
340	Medical Services	6,405	15,052	18,000
399	Other Contracted Services	1,763	2,049	2,500
425	Gasoline	185	206	237
452	Utilities	21,903	20,136	35,000
499	Other Supplies & Materials	34,210	27,686	30,000
599	Other Charges	0	0	820
707	Building Improvements	1,040	571	2,000
718	Motor Vehicles	0	222,600	0
	TOTAL ANIMAL SHELTER	**265,834**	**519,059**	**352,239**
	TOTAL PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE	**7,674,394**	**7,998,474**	**9,358,181**

[Figure 4.6 – CCAS Funding 2022-2025]

55120	RABIES & ANIMAL CONTROL	Actual 22-23	Estimated 23-24	Proposed 24-25
106	Deputy	78,632	77,323	88,209
169	Part Time Personnel	808	11,318	23,255
186	Longevity Pay	1,688	1,789	1,897
196	In Service Training	725	0	3,725
201	Social Security	6,150	6,947	8,902
204	State Retirement	6,426	6,427	8,147
205	Employee & Dependent Insurance	16,727	18,646	19,992
206	Life Insurance	63	66	72
208	Dental Insurance	653	653	661
299	Other Fringe Benefits	0	1,229	3,000
307	Communication	641	414	0
355	Travel	107	155	1,000
425	Gasoline	4,190	3,938	4,528
435	Office Supplies	136	0	200
451	Uniforms	1,082	1,188	1,200
499	Other Supplies & Materials	3,778	4,399	5,000
	TOTAL RABIES & ANIMAL CONTROL	**121,806**	**134,493**	**169,789**

[Figure 4.7 – Cumberland County Rabies and Animal Control Funding 2022-2025]

Compounding these issues, Cumberland County does not have a county-funded spay/neuter clinic. A Time 4 Paws, a local donation-based organization, opened a low-cost spay/neuter clinic one year ago, but they are on a waitlist due to high-demand for surgeries (A Time 4 Paws 2025). With limited low-cost solutions in Cumberland County, people end up with puppies that they do not want (Luther 2024). The nearest fully operational low-cost spay/neuter clinic is about 40 minutes west in Cookeville, making this option for low-cost spay/neuter non-viable for many[8]. The main issue is not that people refuse to fix their dogs, however (Reese & Li 2023). While lack of spay and neuter does certainly lead to strain on local animal welfare systems (Schiefer et al. 2025), the scarcity of animal control services in Cumberland County is by choice. Not allocating enough funds to adequately meet the animal control needs of the county is a structural problem (Reese & Li 2023). Fixing this issue would require the reallocation of tax funds or an increase in local government funding by raising taxes (Hou 2020; Wilkerson & Lewis 2024). Namely, property taxes (ibid).

The issue is that newcomers do not want to pay higher taxes that could be used to fund animal control services in Cumberland County, and they actively participate in town hall meetings and Fairfield Glade Community Club Board of Directors meetings to discourage property tax increases. I could not find explicit minutes from Crossville Town Hall or Chamber of Commerce meetings, but I did find several posts on social media, mostly on Nextdoor, wherein newcomers vented about Board of Directors meetings, and

[8] Cumberland County Animal Shelter Facebook post- Crossville, TN. March 28, 2024. (https://www.facebook.com/share/p/171kMyymoT/).

aired their displeasure about increases in POA and HOA dues. Importantly, these dues stay within the community and do not contribute to local tax revenue and pay for things such as amenity upgrades, which are often contested on social media posts, but dues also help fund basic community needs such as fire department services, road improvements, and better infrastructure (Kim & Lee 2023). Of course, longtime locals can be opposed to these due increases, too, especially because they can cause longtime locals to be displaced (Kim & Lee 2023; Leebrick 2015; Sherman 2017), but there aren't many longtime locals left in the community to complain about higher dues.

Critically, two of the participants that I interviewed told me that they were Fairfield Glade Ambassadors. Not affiliated with any real estate agency, Fairfield Glade Ambassadors can be reached through the "Become a Resident" tab on the Fairfield Glade Community Club's website (Fairfield Glade Community Club). Ambassadors promote Fairfield Glade by answering questions that potential future residents may have and by sharing their positive experience of living in the community, as ambassadors are people "who just love living here," as told to me by a participant. Ambassadors provide free labor to the Fairfield Glade Community Club, which is a corporate entity, inspiring more newcomers to move to the community, resulting in more money for the Club. While newcomers do not want to pay higher dues and fees to the POA, some of them are happy to provide the Fairfield Glade Community Club, the entity that charges dues and fees, free labor and the monetary benefit of attracting more newcomers to the community.

It can be gleaned that newcomers' resistance to paying higher dues for better services within their community also means that they do not want to pay higher property

taxes. Furthermore, a perusal of social media posts indicates that newcomers also do not want to pay higher property taxes, which contributes to better services for the entire county. In most of my interviews, I did not ask about taxes, but the ethnographic work I completed in preparation for the interviews highlighted this problem. In nearly all of my interviews, however, when asking participants why they moved to Fairfield Glade, newcomers stated that they moved to Fairfield Glade, or chose Fairfield Glade over another retirement community, because of the low property tax rate. A few participants commented that they are "paying nothing" compared to what they were paying previously. One newcomer mentioned how Fairfield Glade is the "breadbasket" of Cumberland County because the influx of wealthy newcomers creates an increase in overall tax base, but the money generated by MPCs, like Fairfield Glade, tend to stay within the community and don't contribute to public services throughout the rest of the county (Kim & Lee 2023). Rural gentrification literature shows that newcomers are more likely than locals to be involved with local politics (Jones et al. 2003). Although I was not researching newcomers' involvement with local politics, the research that I did complete supported this theme.

During an interview with Rob Harrison, a Crossville City Council member and Cumberland County native, he stated that in the past Crossville was not as dominated by conservative voters – who aim to keep taxes low and limit government spending – as it is today and that the major shift occurred when Fairfield Glade's population started to boom in the early 2000s[9] (see **Figure 4.8**), with the population more than doubling over the last

[9] Data taken from *Tennessee: 2000: Population and Housing Unit Counts,* 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

20 years (ibid). Harrison said that historically Crossville's voters often elected more liberal Democratic, rather than conservative, public officials for local political positions. I was not able to independently verify this information, but I also couldn't disprove his statements. This is important as a tenant of the Democratic Party is to increase taxes in support of public services, such as education and animal control (Allers & Rienks 2024). The political shift, according to Harrison, has taken place over the course of a few decades and is, in part, the result of many members of the Cumberland County Democratic Party, who were dedicated "New Deal Democrats" – thanks to the highly beneficial-to-locals Cumberland Homestead Project established in 1934 under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal (Domhoff & Webber 2011; Howell 1991) – dying or having been outnumbered in local elections because of the influx of conservative voters who tend to be resistant to higher taxes (Allers & Reinks 2024; Kelsey et al. 1995), mostly in-migrants to Fairfield Glade (see **Figure 4.8**; U.S. Census Bureau 2023c). In fact, the property tax rate in Cumberland County has not shifted in nearly a decade (Parker 2025).

Table 6. **Population and Housing Units: 1980 to 2000; and Area Measurements and Density: 2000**—Con.

[For information concerning historical counts, see "User Notes." A place or place part is designated as (U) if it has entirely urban land area, as (R) if it has entirely rural land area, or as (U/R) if it has both urban land area and rural land area. An entity shown as entirely urban (U) may have rural water area, which is not included in the total area shown. An entity with land area rounding to less than 0.01 in square miles (shown as "–") has a small amount of land area in square meters (less than 12.949 square meters). Density computed using land area. For information on nonsampling error and definitions, see text]

State Place and [in Selected States] County Subdivision	2000 urban (U) or rural (R) land area	Population			Housing units			2000 area measurements in square miles		2000 average per square mile	
		2000	1990	1980	2000	1990	1980	Total area	Land area	Population	Housing units
The State—Con.											
Fairfield Glade CDP, Cumberland County	(U/R)	4 885	2 209	(X)	3 118	1 566	(X)	22.26	21.79	224.2	143.1
Urban part	(U)	3 095	(X)	(X)	2 117	(X)	(X)	3.35	3.03	1 021.4	698.7
Rural part	(R)	1 790	(X)	(X)	1 001	(X)	(X)	18.91	18.76	95.4	53.4
Fairmount CDP, Hamilton County	(U/R)	2 600	1 578	1 286	952	605	452	5.90	5.90	440.4	161.3
Urban part	(U)	1 248	(X)	(X)	463	(X)	(X)	1.22	1.22	1 022.6	379.4
Rural part	(R)	1 352	(X)	(X)	489	(X)	(X)	4.68	4.68	288.7	104.4
Fairview city, Williamson County	(U/R)	5 800	4 210	3 648	2 245	1 479	1 177	14.15	14.11	410.9	159.1
Urban part	(U)	3 818	(X)	(X)	1 456	(X)	(X)	4.43	4.43	861.5	328.5
Rural part	(R)	1 982	(X)	(X)	789	(X)	(X)	9.72	9.68	204.7	81.5

[Figure 4.8 – Population of Fairfield Glade 1980-2000]

Political Pressure

Political pressure keeps property taxes low in Cumberland County. Fairfield Glade is a root source for low property taxes caused by political pressure as is the case in many areas with a high concentration of wealthy, retired residents as they often vote against proposed legislation that would increase taxes (Begum & Momen 2019; Kelsey et al. 1995). Aging-in-place elderly voters, like those in Fairfield Glade, are more likely to vote against an increase in taxes than other demographic groups (Kelsey et al. 1995). Combined with higher voter turnout, communities like Fairfield Glade can have a substantial impact on local politics (ibid). Through the political economy framework, neighborhood actors have little input over what happens within their own neighborhood; however, Fairfield Glade is a community of over 9,000 residents in a county of roughly 63,000, allowing Fairfield Glade residents to have a significant impact on local politics (Kelsey et al. 1995; Schwirian 1983; U.S. Census Bureau 2023b; 2023c).

MPCs are governed by private entities which maintain roads, landscaping, and provide security and waste management services inside these communities (Ingram & Hong 2010; Kim & Lee 2023). While Fairfield Glade has had a county-funded police department for several years, other services, such as road and landscaping maintenance, is, for the most part, covered by membership dues paid to the Fairfield Glade Property Owner's Association (POA) and, in some cases, the homeowners' association (HOA) of a particular neighborhood (Crossville Chronicle 2020; Kim & Lee 2023), rather than tax levies (Ingram & Hong 2010). Private dues reduce the demand for higher county taxes (ibid). Also, people do not want to pay more taxes when they pay POA and HOA dues (ibid). Both the POA and HOA are controlled by the Fairfield Glade Community Club.

Throughout interviews, when I would ask participants what they would do if they went outside and a dog was in their yard, many newcomers stated that they would call the Fairfield Glade Community Club to ask for advice on how to handle the situation, with a few stating that they would not know who else to call other than the Club. The Fairfield Glade Community Club dictates the covenants and restricts of the community, and the Fairfield Glade Administration Office enforces these rules, as well as making sure service needs, such as streetscaping, are met; these two entities are the governing force of Fairfield Glade. Data collected during interviews shows, without uncertainty, that residents of Fairfield Glade perceive the Fairfield Glade Community Club and the Administration Office as a quasi-government, rather than the Cumberland County government itself.

Newcomers stating that they would call and ask the Fairfield Glade Community Club what to do if they found a roaming dog in their yard, not only shows that they view the Club as an authoritative and governing entity, but this also illustrates that newcomers are separated from Cumberland County in the sense of who they view as offering services to their community, as many services that would otherwise be provided to Fairfield Glade by the county, are provided via the Fairfield Glade Community Club. This separation makes it understandable as to why newcomers would not think to reach out to county service providers, such as animal control.

Fairfield Glade newcomers want their property taxes to stay low, but they are frustrated that animal control services are insufficient. The only way for animal control services to operate at an adequate level is through reallocating local government monies, which means taxes need to be raised (Hou 2020; Irvine 2015; Moss et al. 2022). Political pressure from the older, wealthy demographic of Cumberland County, which is mostly concentrated in Fairfield Glade (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c), keep taxes low (Begum & Momen 2019), so animal control services continue to be poor, newcomers believe that animal control should help with roaming dogs, or at least answer the phone when called, but they also don't expect animal control to help, leading to frustration. Newcomers are frustrated that animal control won't answer the phone, but they put political pressure on the local government to keep property taxes low, highlighting their refusal to accept economic responsibility, contributing to poor animal control services. I am not stating that residents of Fairfield Glade are the reason that animal control services are lacking in Cumberland County, but I am pointing out that newcomers have historically voted for

low property taxes; poor services are a result of insufficient funding (Hou 2020; Irvine 2015; Moss et al. 2022). This issue is compounded by the mental separation of newcomers from county services by viewing Fairfield Glade Community Club as their government authority, rather than perceiving Cumberland County's government entities and public services as also covering Fairfield Glade.

The resistance to accept economic responsibility is particularly impactful as Fairfield Glade has more concentrated wealth than any other area in Cumberland County (U.S. Census Bureau 2023c), a typical rural county with some of the lowest property taxes in the state (Spears 2024). This resistance to support higher property taxes to fund county services leads to an endless cycle of frustration and insufficient animal control services, including vaccination and spay/neuter measures that would fight overpopulation and disease (Begum & Momen 2019; Kelsey et al. 1995; Moss et al. 2022; Turner et al. 2012; Schiefer et al. 2025). Instead, newcomers blame other residents by claiming things like "they just won't get their dogs fixed around here" or "these poor people in Cumberland County dump dogs here all the time," when inadequate animal control services are a consequence of a refusal to allocate more funds to these services and increase tax revenue (Begum & Momen 2019; Hou 2020; Irvine 2015; Moss et al. 2022).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

There is a substantial amount of research that has been done on gentrifying urban areas (Glass 1964; Golio 2025; Nelson et al. 2010), but not gentrifying rural areas, which means that there is more literature about how people in urban areas handle conflict and the changing of neighborhoods and communities, often leading to displacement, in urban gentrifying areas (Glass 1964; Golio 2025). Research on rural gentrification is worthwhile, not because there is not as much literature on the subject as opposed to traditional, urban gentrification, but because rural gentrification creates the space for conflicts to happen that are unique only to gentrifying rural areas (Leebrick 2015; Sherman 2017;2023). My study focuses on a conflict that I argue may be unique to rural gentrification – roaming dogs.

Dogs are not expected to roam in densely populated areas (Armbruster 2019; Instone & Sweeny 2014; Irvine 2015). At the outset of my study, I argued that in-migrants from densely populated areas may not expect to see roaming dogs in their yard after moving to a rural area, while longtime locals may feel it is part of a dog's nature to roam unsupervised, creating a space for conflict to occur. I chose to use Swidler's (2001) identity model of culture as a framework for my research as Swidler delves into why people have different cultural beliefs based on the places where they were born that they bring to the places where they currently live (Jin & Gong 2025). These practices are not always spoken, they are understood (ibid). Sometimes, these cultural practices spring from laws and ordinances, such as leash laws which make people from urban places more

likely to view dogs as needing to be physically controlled, supervised, and leashed, which may influence expectations when a person moves to a rural area (Armbruster 2019; Hughes and Macdonald 2013; Irvine 2015; Jorgensen & Brown 2017). This behavior is also related to the social condition of having lived in a densely populated area in which people must co-manage space with others, such as navigating sidewalks while walking with a leashed dog and moving over to allow a jogger to pass (Armrbruster 2019; Irvine 2015). Conversely, people living in rural areas are more likely to allow their dogs to roam also because of social conditioning that comes from a rural tradition of using working dogs to protect livestock and hunt game (Mosley et al. 2020), and also due to the perceived safety of living in a space with less traffic and fewer people, making the environment genuinely safer for dogs to roam (Canal et al. 2018; Silva-Rodríguez 2023). Although I did not find much neighborhood conflict over roaming dogs in my study, my study does support the idea, explicated by Swidler (2001) that in-migrants in Fairfield Glade feel that dogs need to be controlled and managed, automatically assuming that a loose dog must be stray or have been dumped, rather than it might belong to a nearby rural resident. By contrast, at least one longtime local I talked to assumes that a loose dog that arrives on her property has an owner, feeling comfortable enough to run the dog off so it will go back to an assumed nearby home.

Rural gentrification connects sociological literature and theories about amenity-driven development, class division, the political economy of neighborhood change, and neighborhood conflict (Leebrick 2015; Liu et al. 2021; Merry 1987; Schwirian 1983; Sherman 2017;2023). Amenity-driven development in gentrifying rural spaces leads to

low wage service sector and seasonal jobs, high housing costs leading to the displacement of longtime locals, and the changing of local landscapes to cater to the wants of in-migrants (Leebrick 2015; Pilgeram 2019). For example, local businesses could close after an amenity-driven gentrifying space piques the interest of corporate businesses that, once the corporation or franchise is built, dominate the local economic system, maintaining a monopoly on goods and services (Pilgeram 2019). Because Fairfield Glade is an MPC that was built in the 1970s and is a retirement community with an amenity-driven economy, most of the jobs in the area are low wage, service sector positions (Lapping 2016; Valente et al. 2023). Fairfield Glade has construction sector jobs, too, but these jobs are impacted by seasonal weather changes (Foster 1970; Valente et al. 2023). The local economy fluctuates seasonally, making it more challenging for businesses to retain workers and plan financially for slow months (Marcos 2025; Valente et al. 2023).

In Fairfield Glade, there are not many longtime locals left, with pockets of them living in the Wilshire and Tuttle Lane neighborhoods. Amenity-driven development has been shown to create a foundation for class division and conflict in rural gentrification literature as the influx of newcomers leads to an increase in property taxes, pushing out longtime locals who can no longer afford to live in their homes (Leebrick 2015; Nelson et al. 2010; Pilgeram 2019). Though this is a prominent theme in the literature on rural gentrification, my research does not show that this is a phenomenon occurring in Fairfield Glade.

Class division in rural gentrification literature is largely focused on a socioeconomic separation between longtime locals and newcomers (Leebrick 2015;

Sherman 2017). My research shows that class division does exist between longtime locals and newcomers, wherein newcomers ignore the existence of longtime locals and longtime locals are being actively socially erased, such as the rejection of newcomers to accept those in the Wilshire and Tuttle Lane neighborhoods as part of Fairfield Glade, although at least some longtime locals do not view themselves as part of the community. My research also reveals a perceived class division between two groups of wealthy newcomers.

Literature on the political economy of neighborhood change shows that neighborhoods do not have much say or control over the changes that they face as they are subjected to the whims of larger, more powerful actors (Schwirian 1983). Fairfield Glade, however, is not a neighborhood. Fairfield Glade is a community whose residents make up roughly 15 percent of the population of Cumberland County (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a; 2023b; 2023c). Most residents are wealthy, retired, white people whose age indicates they are more likely to participate in local and national elections and vote on tax referendums than any other group of voters (Begum & Momen 2021; Kelsey et al. 1995). Fairfield Glade residents historically have voted to keep property taxes low. Keeping property taxes low impacts the types, availability, and quality of services provided to all Cumberland County residents (Hou 2020; Wilkerson & Lewis 2024). To be clear, I am not claiming that Fairfield Glade residents collectively perpetuate poor animal control services across Cumberland County. I am illustrating, however, that there is a disconnect between Fairfield Glade residents wanting better animal control services,

while also voting against higher taxes that could make better services possible for all neighborhoods throughout the county.

This disconnect between Fairfield Glade residents and the rest of Cumberland County is, in part, due their relationship with the Fairfield Glade Community Club. Residents pay dues to the club, as well as to their HOA, in exchange for services that would often be provided by local government entities, such as waste management services, streetscaping, and road maintenance in some parts of the community. During interviews it became clear that many residents view the community as a sort of quasi-government, relying on them rather than the local government for services. I pose that this creates distance between newcomers, the local government, and the need for public services, including animal control, in the rest of Cumberland County.

Studying neighborhood conflicts in gentrifying rural spaces allows sociologists to understand how conflict is regulated within neighborhoods (Merry 1987). Although I found little evidence of conflict in Fairfield Glade, especially between newcomers and longtime locals, and I found little evidence to support that conflicts arise over roaming dogs, I did uncover themes that provide greater insight into issues related to rural gentrification.

The original purpose of this study was to examine conflicts over free roaming dogs as a source of contention in gentrifying rural areas. My research ultimately revealed little about that, although other aspects of rural gentrification were uncovered. The fact that I found that conflict between newcomers and long-time residents over free roaming dogs did not occur—at least, it did not occur among the participants in my study—the

lack of conflict is interesting in itself. Likely conflict did not occur because newcomers are a ubiquitous group throughout the community, with few longtime locals remaining. Moreover, newcomers have engaged in erasure where they simply disassociate themselves from the longtime locals. If a group of people are presumed to be outside of your neighborhood, then there's no source of neighborhood conflict.

I was able to identify three major themes in my data that provide new information about rural gentrification, an area of sociology that remains understudied. These findings include the residential tendency toward lumping and splitting that does not fall strictly along newcomer versus longtime local lines, differing views of rurality, and resistance to paying higher taxes to support an expected level of county animal control services.

The first theme is that residents of Fairfield Glade "lump" and "split" each other into groups to make more sense of their community and relationships among one another. Lumping is intracategorical and overlooks differences so that people may form mental clusters of things that are socially considered to be similar. Splitting widens perceived gaps between seemingly unlike elements and is intercategorical. All people in the Wilshire area were lumped together as living in a trailer park that, for most, was not technically part of Fairfield Glade, with no perceivable differences between those living in trailers as opposed to houses within the same neighborhood; they are referred to as "the trailer park people." This theme reveals that longtime locals are virtually invisible because of their lower socioeconomic status, their inability to share communal spaces, and their perceived geographic separation (further perpetuated by a myth that the neighborhood is too dangerous to enter), creating division and space for potential

conflict. The invisibility of the Wilshire residents is particularly interesting considering that residents who live there provide needed services for other Fairfield Glade residents.

Unlike in the urban gentrification literature where conflicts arise between newcomers and longtime locals (Golash-Boza et al. 2024), rather than finding social divides between new and old residents, I found more social divide among objectively similar newcomers. The theme of splitting became apparent when newcomers began discussing perceived differences between those living on one side of Peavine Road as opposed to the other. Those on the north side of Peavine, which has been more recently developed, are called the "cheese and wine" or "champagne and caviar" people and those on the south side, in older, more established homes, are referred to as the "beer and pretzel" people. There really is no class division between these two groups. They are all wealthy in-migrants with roughly the same socioeconomic status. The concept of those living on one side of Peavine Road as being different than those on the other side is a social construct and "mental split" (Zerubavel 1996). This constructed difference has not created a space for conflict; they are "two sides of the same coin," but it appears to reduce solidarity. There is, in a sense, a way that these two groups form allies with one another, however. Lest newcomers forget that those living on either side of Peavine Road have access to marinas, lakes, golf courses, hiking trails, pools, pickleball courts, and other amenities.

Sociological literature about neighborhoods illustrates that Peavine Road represents a visual division between these two groups, but potentially, the social division would exist whether Peavine Road ran through Fairfield Glade or not. Literature about

the interstate highway system illuminates how Black neighborhoods were separated from white neighborhoods by the highways and interstates, but these roads were visual representations of social and racial divisions that already existed (Archer 2020; Connerly 2002; Karas 2015; Kuswa 2002). Fairfield Glade is an MPC with almost entirely white residents as the community was designed after the racially exclusive MPCs of the 1960s. There is no racial component to consider in Fairfield Glade, as the community is mostly white and racial conflicts are not the cause of division, but this literature illustrates how roads can be perceived as a visual divider that may perpetuate divisions that would occur anyway, or may actually create separation.

I began this study expecting to find conflict between newcomers and longtime locals, but instead, I found little evidence to support conflict between these two groups. My research revealed, instead, a split between two groups of newcomers based on external displays of wealth. Succinctly, there are no objective grounds to assume that the "beer and pretzel" people have any less money than the "wine and cheese" people or that one mentally constructed group is superior to the other. More work is needed to delve deeply into the consequences of these splits and to see if such splits occur in other rurally gentrifying areas.

A second theme that emerged from my interviews is concentrated around the question—is Fairfield Glade rural? Participants in my study viewed roaming dogs through the scope of whether they perceived themselves to be living in a rural space. The results were mixed—some participants felt as though Fairfield Glade was a rural space, others said "semi-rural," while others stated that the area was not rural at all. There was a

consensus that, regardless if a participant perceived Fairfield Glade as rural, newcomers did not view themselves as living in the "country." But what does it mean to live in the "country" or to perceive a space as "rural," but not "country?"

During interviews, some participants stated that they felt Fairfield Glade was semi-rural because of the prevalence of shops, amenities, restaurants, and medical services. Some claimed that they felt Fairfield Glade was "definitely rural" because of the limited availability of local goods and services, including within the Crossville area, stating that they had to drive for a wider variety of options. There was a consensus that somehow by having at least some goods and services nearby, that Fairfield Glade was not "country." I gleaned from additional interviews that "country" seemed to be perceived as a lifestyle, that is lived out within a desolate physical location, without amenities, goods, or services in close proximity to where a person lives. Additionally, I got the sense that "country" was viewed in a negative way, not because any participant said anything directly negative about a country lifestyle—in fact, one participant said she like that Fairfield Glade felt "country"—but because newcomers related allowing dogs to roam with a country or "back country" lifestyle.

Price and Clay's (1980) research shows that that in-migrants do not move to rural areas to become "back-to-landers," meaning that they don't move to rural spaces to live off the land or to become involved in agricultural economic structures. Pilgeram's (2019) research supports these findings. Newcomers move to rural areas to consume amenities and to get away from the busy life of urban and suburban spaces (Nelson & Nelson 2010), not to take part in local agricultural economies found in many rural areas, or to

live a similar lifestyle to longtime locals (Pilgeram 2019; Price & Clay 1980), or to let their dogs roam, as they perceive this to be more of a "country" behavior, as gleaned from interviews.

All newcomers that I interviewed stated that their dogs are either leashed, contained in a fenced-in yard, or are supervised when outside, never being allowed to roam freely without supervision. But, the consumption of rural amenities without the embrace of a rural lifestyle has real consequences for rural communities, as other scholars have noted, including Price and Clay (1980:3), stating "the compositional characteristics of the in-migrants often do not match those of the receiving population, presenting a situation of incongruent needs, wants and normative expectations."

Leebrick's (2015) work on rural gentrification shows that newcomers are often only part-time residents, but their preferences for consumer goods changes the local shopping landscape for everyone. Sherman's (2017;2023) research reveals that part-time residents significantly impacts the goods and services available in a gentrifying rural space. Lichter and Ziliak (2017) illustrate how urban and rural lines have been blurred when it comes to choices of local goods and services as technological advancements allow newcomers to drive to a town several miles away for medical care or more expansive shopping options, rendering unto them the material comforts they were used to in the city. Newcomers may also order goods online, as can longtime locals, to give them more options than what are available locally (ibid). My research reveals that newcomers often drive long distances to Cookeville, Knoxville, or Nashville for shopping and medical care. What is interesting is that many newcomers expressed their frustration with

the lack of variety in local goods and services, but I got the sense that they seemed to relate, in part, living in a more "country" area as having limited access to goods and services.

Newcomers also seemed to use the term "country" in a way that coincided with an expected behavior, such as allowing dogs to roam or "dumping" them when they were no longer wanted. More research could be done concerning how people in gentrifying rural spaces compartmentalize the differences between "rural" and "country" and the behaviors, physical landscape, and social constructs rural gentrifiers associate with these terms. Notably, the longtime local that I was able to interview in depth had no disillusion that Fairfield Glade is rural, but she specified that Tuttle Lane is more "country" due to the agricultural use of the land and because those moving in are from the city, but that newcomers moved here to retire, not take part in local agriculture or social practices.

A third theme is that newcomers are unwilling to provide the tax base to meet their expectations and needs, at least with regard to animal control services. Many newcomers stated that they have no illusions about the county's animal control services; they are aware that animal control won't answer the phone and if they do, newcomers will be told to take care of a roaming dog themselves. Rural counties cannot often afford animal control services, unlike urban areas with tax bases that generate enough income to support these public services. Newcomers to Fairfield Glade, located within a rural county with low property taxes, expect local animal control services to operate at a capacity that is similar to that of an urban area, but this is not plausible. Newcomers pressure local politicians to keep property taxes low, but they also express frustration

about inadequate animal control services. This demand for services coupled with a reluctance to pay for them does not cause conflict among neighbors, but it can create an underlying tension throughout the community because newcomers have the capacity to influence local politics in ways that may not benefit locals.

Newcomers want both Cumberland County Animal Control to operate efficiently and the Cumberland County Animal Shelter to have the capability to take in dogs when they are found, but they are resistant to paying higher property taxes to support these county services. After all, one of Fairfield Glade's main selling points is the low property tax rate, a significant draw for in-migrants. I recognize the other side to this coin, of course. In many gentrifying areas, especially those established around amenities such as beaches, the perception is that wealthier newcomers create demands that drive up local tax rates in ways that force out local residents (Ding & Hwang 2020), so increasing taxes to pay for needed services may harm longtime locals. Studies on the direct effect of gentrification on the property tax base of local residents, however, do not support the idea that higher taxes displace longtime locals (Martin & Beck 2018). Animal control relies on government funds to operate, as does the shelter. An animal control officer cannot pick up an animal without a place to take them. With the local animal shelter operating at max capacity constantly, there is no end to the problem unless taxes are raised or funds are reallocated, but the latter may cause another issue in another part of the county's public services.

Limitations

My findings were greatly limited by having only a few longtime locals in my study, and by failing to anticipate divisions among the newcomers to Fairfield Glade which are deserving of greater study. It appears that people in Fairfield Glade are lumping lower-income residents, who are also long-time locals, together and not acknowledging them as part of the community. Because I was only able to interview three longtime locals, and two of those interviews were only twenty minutes in length, I could not collect more data from the perspective of longtime locals, meaning that I was unable to determine if there was a theme of conflict between longtime locals in lower income areas of Fairfield Glade. From the limited interviews that I conducted with longtime locals, I learned that longtime locals often worked for newcomers in various capacities, from lawncare to housecleaning. More interviews would have helped me to better understand the dynamic between newcomers and longtime locals and how newcomers perceive longtime locals as simultaneously not being part of the community, but also as integral in keeping up with home repairs and maintenance and how this contributes to the overall theme of spaces for conflict. Also, interviewing more longtime locals would have given me insight into conflict that occurs in neighborhoods with a high concentration of longtime locals and why those conflicts happen.

My limited time in the field is also a limitation of this study. My original plan was to study neighborhood conflict and conflict resolution in a gentrifying rural area, and it was inspired by social media posts that blamed newcomers for improperly dealing with roaming dogs. However, in my fieldwork, I found few conflicts at the neighborhood level

about roaming dogs or anything else. What I did uncover is interesting, but it would be good to observe the neighborhood long enough for a conflict to emerge over time and to study its resolution.

Another potential limitation of my study is that Fairfield Glade is a master planned community, which is not the case for all gentrifying rural areas. As an MPC, management of the development is able to restrict longtime locals from sharing in many of the same community spaces that newcomers have access to (Kim & Lee 2023). This creates a point of separation that might not be present in other places (ibid).

Where the Research Can Go From Here

The bottom line is that there is conflict on social media over roaming dogs, and there's a tendency in social media posts to blame newcomers for not properly handling roaming dogs. This mismatch between what happens on social media and what happens in neighborhoods is interesting. Clearly there's a sociological literature on how social media tends to give people a license to act uncivil in a way that they wouldn't in real life (Suler 2004), but a future study unpacking some of this (maybe focus groups with Fairfield Glade residents where they talk about some of the social media posts) could tell us more about how people think through some of these issues.

While my research did not reveal many conflicts over roaming dogs occurring in Fairfield Glade, a gentrifying rural space, it could be informative to study a gentrifying rural space that has a more even mix of longtime locals and newcomers as there are too few longtime locals left in Fairfield Glade for newcomers to have much of an opportunity to intermingle with them at community events, let alone have conflict with them. Another

limitation is that I framed my study around conflicts over roaming dogs between newcomers and longtime locals, but with more time in the field, I might have been able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how conflicts between newcomers are resolved.

One particularly interesting finding came up when asking participants about conflict between neighbors. In chapter four, I elaborated on how I'd asked participants, "If you found a dog in your yard, what would you do?" I asked this question to gauge if participants would attempt to call local animal control services, and to lead up to the question, "What would you do if you know where the dogs lives, but you don't get along with their owner?" Asking this question gave me a better idea about conflicts that might occur over the free roaming of dogs, but also, how conflicts might get resolved between neighbors.

I asked Dorothy how she would handle the situation if a dog appeared in her yard, but she didn't get along with their owner.

Dorothy replied, "It doesn't matter whether you like them or not. That's the dog that deserves to be home. Call them anyway, and go, 'The dog is in my yard,' or 'The dog is in my garage, you need to come get her,' or whatever."

I asked her, "And what if this happened more than once?"

She replied, "Then that's a problem." She proceeded to explain that she wouldn't quite know what to do if the dog got loose multiple times.

I asked newcomer Blanche, 72, the same question. She replied, “If I didn't get along with the dog's owner, I could still get along with the dog, probably because there's a big difference between a dog and a human.”

She explained that she would let the dog roam, unless she thought the dog was going to go towards Peavine Road, as she lives just a few hundred feet from the road. Blanche further elaborated,

> If it was constantly there, if it was laying down on my patio, so I couldn't enjoy my patio, I might call just to find out if I should try to get a hold of the owner. If I didn't know the owner's number, then I might call the ACC[10] office, but I would not call the police on the dog, no. I would make an attempt to go through the ACC to get the owner's attention to come and get the dog off of my property.

When answering this same question, newcomer Monica replied, “If I obviously know where the dog lives, I would want somebody to go with me to return the dog. I wouldn't want to go by myself if I don't get along with them to return the dog.”

She clarified that she would want someone at home with her if the person were to come to her home to pick up the dog. She expressed that she was unsure how she would approach the situation if the dog showed up in her yard repeatedly as animal control is unlikely to answer the phone and the police would be unhelpful.

Most interesting, Cara, a young woman from California, had an incident in which her neighbor’s dog got loose and wandered into her yard. She brought her neighbor’s dog into her home. The neighbor did not reclaim her dog for several hours as she and her partner were playing golf. Cara had experienced several conflicts with this neighbor in the past. Cara called her neighbor and stated,

[10] The Fairfield Glade Community Club and Administration Office are often referred to as the “ACC.”

> "I got your dog." She goes, "All right." I seriously thought she was going to be here to pick up her dog in a few minutes, right? Because anybody would. I have my day to get along with, too, and again, I've got my dog who's not getting along with this dog. So, I kept her dog in the bathroom. But yeah, she came at the end of the day. She came hours later and finally picked up her dog and goes "I was on the golf course."

Cara did not have another incident with her neighbor's dog. I asked what she would do if her neighbor's dog got loose again. She replied, "I'd still hold on to the dog. It's not the dog's fault their owner's a jerk."

In this case, the dog was used as a device for conflict. The neighbor, who did not like Cara and was consistently condescending towards Cara about her age, as being a young woman in the retirement community of Fairfield Glade is unusual. The neighbor had also said several negative statements about what she assumed to be Cara's political affiliation as her neighbor is conservative; she assumed Cara was liberal because she moved from California.

Cara's neighbor's dog was not the cause of the conflict; Cara was not upset about taking care of the dog. Cara was upset, however, that when she called her neighbor, her neighbor proceeded to play golf and did not retrieve her dog for several hours, knowing that her dog and Cara's two dogs were not getting along and that Cara was stressed out about having to keep her neighbor's dog in the bathroom to prevent the dogs from fighting. Cara's neighbor was able to take out her frustrations on Cara indirectly by forcing Cara to care for her dog while she leisurely played golf. Researching how certain things might be used as devices for conflict, such as the case with Cara's neighbor's dog, might help sociologists better understand how conflict occurs in gentrifying rural spaces.

This could also add to the sociological canon of how neighborhood conflict is not only approached, but, potentially, resolved.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Facebook post for participant recruitment

I am a graduate student at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville conducting research on rural communities. I am interested in interviewing people living in Fairfield Glade, both lifelong residents and people who are new to talk about our community. Those who qualify for the study and complete a one-hour interview will receive a $20 Walmart gift card. If you are interested in participating, message me.

Appendix B: Flyer for participant recruitment

I am a graduate student at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville conducting research on rural communities. I am interested in interviewing people living in Fairfield Glade, both lifelong residents and people who are new to talk about our community. Those who qualify for the study and complete a one-hour interview will receive a $20 Walmart gift card. If you are interested in participating, please call me at 931-210-8213.

Appendix C: Questions for Participants

Introduction/Demographic Questions

Are you retired?

What did you do before you retired?

Do you need a lot of education for that?

(If not retired) What do you do for work?

Did you have to go to school for that?

May I ask your age?

Questions about living in Fairfield Glade

Have you always lived in Fairfield Glade, or did you move here?

When did you move here?

Where did you move here from?

Given how long you've lived here, do you feel as though you are part of the community?

Do you ever feel like an outsider?

Why do you feel like an outsider?

Conflict Questions

What do you like about living in Fairfield Glade?

What do you dislike about living in Fairfield Glade?

When new people come to a place, sometimes they bring new ideas and practices. One thing I've noticed is that there always seem to be a lot of fights on social media about stuff like people letting their dogs run around. Have you seen anything like that?

Have you heard of any problems with roaming dogs in your neighborhood?

Have you heard of any other problems in your neighborhood?

Conflict-resolution Questions

What would you do if you walked outside and there was a dog in your yard?

Would the type of dog change how you approached the situation?

What if you know where the dog lives, but you don't get along with their owner?

What if the dog has no identifying information, such as a collar or tag?

VITA

Kimberly Ann Haliburda was born in Xenia, Ohio. Her family moved from Ohio to Tennessee when she was a young child. She graduated from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a Bachelor of Arts in both Philosophy and Sociology in 2017, the latter with a concentration in Environmental Issues. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Sociology with a concentration in Political Economy and Globalization. Kimberly has fostered special needs dogs for many years and is a breed ambassador for pit bulls and retired racing greyhounds. She will continue to devote her life to helping dogs and understanding how dogs have the capacity to influence peoples' relationships with one another.