Early-Stage Gentrification in America’s Heartland:
Analyzing College-Age Experiences of Rapid Transformation inside
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Sean Michael Volavong

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Dr. Douglas McAdam, Primary Advisor
Dr. Clayton Hurd, Secondary Advisor
Deland Chan, Secondary Advisor
ABSTRACT

Fayetteville, Arkansas is the largest city in one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the United States – Northwest Arkansas. Projected to grow from its current population of 86,000 to 143,000 people in 2040, Fayetteville is adding 48 new residents every week. Using Fayetteville as a case study, this qualitative study explores individual and community perceptions in smaller American cities experiencing high growth and subsequent gentrification. Twenty-six one-hour-long interviews with 13 Fayetteville residents (two meetings each) aged 18 to 25 conducted between July and October 2018 reveal the student population’s pressured and competitive interactions when searching and securing rental housing along with their perceptions of the area’s socioeconomic changes before, during, and after college. This research uses qualitative data analysis on frequencies and themes to conclude that the University of Arkansas and the area’s Fortune 500 companies have reinforced Fayetteville’s state of early gentrification as indicated by a constrained housing market, a shift in demographics, and the transformation of the social and political landscape of the city. This study addresses the assertion by scholars Japonica Brown-Saracino, Lyn Macgregor, and Michael Barton that recent gentrification scholarship is limited by focusing on larger, post-gentrified, and geographically-biased cities such as San Francisco, California, and Boston, Massachusetts. This study, intended for academic scholars and policy advocates alike, urges further research on early gentrification trends and reactions inside smaller, rapidly growing cities such as Bend, Oregon, and St. George, Utah along with those with a significant university presence such as Fort Collins, Colorado, and Boise, Idaho.

Key Words: Fayetteville, Arkansas, Northwest Arkansas, University of Arkansas, College, Growth, Housing, Renting, Gentrification, Socioeconomic, Interviews, Qualitative, Youth
“I hate that Fayetteville is so crowded now. The town is pretty small. How are they going to expand Dickson Street and the town without having to renovate everything else? You know what I mean? It’s hard because I never think about this stuff, you know? This is the first time I’ve had to think about this stuff and it’s hard…it’s hard.”

- M.F., Age 21, University of Arkansas Class of 2018.5
Rents a Room in a 2-Bedroom House in North Fayetteville for $650/month

“I feel like Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas won’t listen until something big happens. In my opinion, we don’t have to wait until tragedy happens to make changes.”

- J.I., Age 23, University of Arkansas Class of 2018
Rents a Room in a 4-Bedroom House in South Fayetteville for $400/month
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NOTES TO THE READER

• All statistics (i.e. population, rent) and rankings (i.e. “third largest city”) reflect measurements compiled and reflected for the year 2018 unless noted otherwise.

• A “small” city describes the U.S. Census Bureau’s designation of a city population less than 100,000 and a “large” city describes the U.S. Census Bureau’s designation of a city population more than 100,000.

• Northwest Arkansas is colloquially known as “NWA”. Thus, the name is shortened to NWA when necessary to be succinct. Furthermore, “Northwest Arkansas” is used as a proper noun.

• The term “Latinx” designates the gender-neutral term of “Latina” and “Latino” to embrace the ongoing movement of intersectionality and the inclusivity of the gender spectrum.

• When “Sean Volavong” is cited as the source of figures, such citations are either referencing my work on the Fayetteville 2018 Community Equity Profile (i.e., Figure 7) or are self-generated (i.e., Figure 10).
STATEMENT OF PROJECT ORIGINS

Growing up as a first-generation Asian-American in a lower-income household in Van Buren, Arkansas (roughly 50 minutes south of Fayetteville, Arkansas) posed a financial obstacle to travel 1,800 miles from the San Francisco Bay Area to Arkansas for many academic breaks. For the first three years at Stanford University, I had only spent one-month-long winter breaks in Arkansas that exposed me to stronger bonds with family, reminiscing memories with friends, and unexpected changes to my hometown area of Northwest Arkansas.

Within three years, with minimal observations and interactions compared to a long-term resident of the area, what was once a desolate collection of post-Antebellum, crimson-brick buildings in Fayetteville’s downtown Dickson Street had transformed into an upbeat conglomeration of trendy, revenue-generating boutiques and up-and-coming bars frequented by the city’s growing student population. Furthermore, Fayetteville’s downtown Square has been transformed to host traditions such as a nationally-recognized farmer’s market and a locally-produced schedule of “First Thursdays” block parties. Thirty minutes north driving on Interstate 49, the once sleepy perimeter of beige and mahogany buildings in Bentonville, Arkansas’ downtown has evolved into an epicenter of financial investment by locally-headquartered Walmart. Millions of dollars have been invested into Bentonville’s amenities to

Image 1. Driving directions from Van Buren to Fayetteville, AR.
Source: Google Maps
attract a young wave of talent that has resulted in the increased manufacturing of highly-rated culinary destinations, and an upsurge of residential construction focused on colorful, prefabricated townhouses and apartments.

Such observations were glances of the rapid changes to the built and social environments throughout Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas. My initial perceptions of such changes were overtly positive as I associated them with the processes improving Northwest Arkansas as it continues to expand socioeconomically and thus, placing the region “on the map” for talented graduates and professionals seeking abundant opportunities in a relatively affordable area. However, through Stanford’s community-based-oriented Cardinal Courses (i.e. Ethics and Politics of Public Service taught by the Haas Center for Public Service) and through student-based initiatives such as the Stanford Coalition for Planning an Equitable 2035 (SCoPE 2035), I have grown my awareness for the tradeoffs supplemented by high-growth areas as it relates to gentrification inside heavily-researched, larger cities such as San Francisco, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and Seattle, Washington.

### Our Platform

1. **Workers deserve housing on campus.**
2. **The treatment of workers at Stanford should be improved by eliminating subcontracting and extending benefits to all workers.**
3. **Transportation and housing metrics should be updated.**
4. **Transportation benefits should be extended to all workers.**
5. **Stanford should contribute more monetary resources to transit and schools.**
6. **Stanford should be responsible and transparent in its development.**
7. **Stanford and its Affordable Housing Fund contributions should be accountable to those most impacted by Stanford’s development and the housing crisis.**

Image 2. SCoPE 2035’s platform for equitable Stanford development.

Source: Stanford Coalition for Planning an Equitable 2035
At the beginning of 2018, I synthesized this political awareness of urban dilemmas with my sudden realizations from Northwest Arkansas to propose an honors thesis in Stanford University’s Program on Urban Studies understanding the high-growth narratives of Northwest Arkansas with a focus on Fayetteville. I traveled to Northwest Arkansas between June and September 2018 to conduct on-ground qualitative research. Simultaneously, I began working as a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellow for the City of Fayetteville’s Sustainability and Resilience Department via sponsorship from the Urban Sustainability Director’s Network. With the objective of researching, compiling, and presenting a 130+ page community equity profile visualizing and textualizing the various demographic, economic, educational, health, transportation, and housing inequities associated with a growing Fayetteville for the city mayor and city council, such research supplemented my ongoing research.

The experience of being a fellow for the City of Fayetteville complimented my thesis research by contextualizing the city’s socioeconomic conditions within the mindset of its local government personnel. The experience gave me a boost of optimism for the influence and collaborative nature of local government as the area’s governmental jurisdiction was very receptive to community-based feedback. However, the experience gave me a sense of worry for the limited amount of qualitative data analysis the region has conducted to plan for the region’s crowded future. Although there are initiatives underway (detailed later in this thesis), I witnessed the most significant impact by revealing community-based narratives to city stakeholders.

Transitioning from Arkansas back to the San Francisco Bay Area in September of 2018, I am motivated to produce this project for three reasons. One, to distill critical and often hard-to-get
information to stakeholders eager for big-picture questions and solutions to allow for stronger, data-based decision making inside Northwest Arkansas. Two, to expand upon gentrification literature saturated by research on larger cities that are mostly post-gentrified and geographically coastal to allow for more holistic and synergetic conversations between community development professionals such as urban planners and city politicians. Third, to satisfy a central goal of contributing and translating my academic experiences back to my hometown area of Northwest Arkansas to bridge the gap between two perceived communities varying in educational opportunities, fulfilling the mission of bringing talent back into the region.
INTRODUCTION

Every week, 48 individuals are either being born or moving into Fayetteville, Arkansas, the equivalent of an estimated 832 three-person households entering The Natural State’s third-largest city annually. Some come rooting for the Arkansas Razorbacks, whether they are part of the incoming class of 5,900 first-year students out of the 27,750-student body at the flagship campus of the University of Arkansas or are long-term fans of the historical and culturally-strong athletic program.\(^1\) Primarily due to the large student population, some are eager to find the socially-liberal funkiness and growing popularity of the area’s eclectic neighborhoods compared to the more conservative and growth-stagnant communities located in the rest of the state and regional area. Due to the presence of three Fortune 500 companies headquartered in the area including the largest company in America in terms of revenue\(^2\) (Walmart, Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt), some have gravitated for higher-paying jobs, unemployment rates less than 2\%, and the multiplier effect of corporate-influenced employment such as hundreds of suppliers and vendors relocating for easy-to-access opportunities. Lastly, some are excited for the enticing combination of both a relatively affordable cost-of-living and the chance to be surrounded by the lush Ozark Mountains and the myriad of outdoor adventures within a half-day trip. These factors have led Fayetteville to be ranked 5\(^{th}\) on U.S. News and World Report’s 2018 Best Places to Live, a list that the city has held top-10 positions three years in a row.\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)“Enrollment.” Enrollment Reports | Institutional Research and Assessment, University of Arkansas, 2018, oir.uark.edu/students/enrollment.php.


My own family and friends have been influenced by such factors. Since my time entering university in 2015, my sister and her family along with their millennial friends have swiftly moved from sleepy hometown roots and other regional cities such as Little Rock and Fort Smith towards Fayetteville. Childhood summers transitioned from lonesome, humidity-exhaustive afternoons in my semi-rural streets in Van Buren, Arkansas to spending my days hiking up the Boston Mountains and subsequently rafting down the Buffalo River, browsing the weekly farmer’s market in Fayetteville’s downtown Square, and visiting a new coffeeshop or organically-friendly restaurant that happens to open every few weeks around Fayetteville’s downtown Dickson Street. Furthermore, many of my hometown friends have debated relocating to the area after their time in college in pursuit of paid internships and high-paying full-time careers not available elsewhere.

Image 3. The Arkansas Razorbacks athletic program’s promotion of Fayetteville.

Source: University of Arkansas
With such high growth and abundant amenities, I am intrigued by the underlying questions: what is happening in Fayetteville? Are there any downsides contrasting the strength of the area’s positive educational, economic, and social characteristics? Are there critical stakeholders and communities that are underprivileged and hidden from the media and my social network due to systematic forces at play? What happens when a majority rises to the top, and a minority shifts to the bottom? Such questions are influenced by my status as an Urban Studies scholar living in the socioeconomically complex San Francisco Bay Area but are nevertheless essential to investigate within any community.

This thesis synthesizes such thoughts while focusing on the research question: what are the narratives of experiencing high socioeconomic growth and (assumed) subsequent gentrification inside smaller American cities such as Fayetteville? Many cities and select neighborhoods in the United States have experienced stages of gentrification, which for this thesis is defined by Hwang and Lin’s definition as: “the process in which neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status (SES) experience increased investment and an influx of new residents with higher SES. Markers of gentrification include changes in physical, cultural, and demographic characteristics. Improvements in amenities, such as safety or shopping, and increases in housing values and rents also commonly characterize gentrification”. However, most scholarship on gentrification, especially in recent years, has focused on more-populated cities in America such as San Francisco, California, and Boston, Massachusetts where processes of gentrification have stirred controversy in neighborhoods such as The Mission District and The South End respectively. As a result,

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gentrification scholar and sociologists Dr. Japonica Brown-Saracino from Boston University, Lyn Macgregor from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Michael Barton from Louisiana State University assert that gentrification scholarship is limited due to the above factor coupled with the assertion that many social science researchers study such cities that host robust research institutions or areas in which they currently reside within. Furthermore, Brown-Saracino assumes that many cities documented by gentrification scholarship are either in a state of mid-gentrification or late-gentrification. Few case studies characterize and represent smaller cities along with those who are also in a state of early gentrification.

Such scholar’s observations motivate this thesis by arguing that Fayetteville (along with other Northwest Arkansas cities such as Springdale, Rogers, and Bentonville) is currently in a state of early gentrification indicated by a constricted housing market and a dramatic transition in demographics. Without conscious and active short and long-term social policy efforts from urban planners, local politicians, community leaders, and the lay resident, I also argue that Fayetteville will inevitably experience heightened gentrification and its potential socioeconomic drawbacks.

Between July and October 2018, I conducted on-site research based out of East Fayetteville by interviewing 13 university residents aged 18 to 25. Using 26 one-hour-long interviews with 13 Fayetteville residents (two meetings each), I qualitatively analyzed the experiences of the city’s increasing student population’s perceptions and interactions with gentrification themes of finding

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and renting housing, investing in community amenities, and reactions to the area’s socioeconomic changes before, during, and after their time in college. Such analysis situates this research in gentrification scholarship by adding an academically-underrepresented region (Northwest Arkansas) into the mix of larger and more-researched cities. This research, intended to initiate conversations between academic and political audiences alike, urges further research on early gentrification trends and reactions inside smaller and rapidly growing cities around the United States such as Coeur d’Alene, Idaho; Bend, Oregon; and St. George, Utah.

In chapter one, I introduce the research setting of Fayetteville. Such information allows the reader to conceptualize the current status of the City of Fayetteville to reinforce my biases and positionalities. This chapter also describes the area’s transitioning demographics and geographies.

In chapter two, using a reference of the current conditions of Fayetteville, I illustrate the historical context of the city and Northwest Arkansas broken down into three decades. Between 1990-2000, I visualize the high Latina/o migration patterns in NWA affecting the first wave of mixed community perceptions of transformation. Between 2000-2010, I depict the changing infrastructures of NWA affecting the second wave of growth along with the start of more focused research on community opinions. Between 2010-present I describe the continued growth of the area that has resulted in a more robust series of community-based events and research projects that have allowed the region to plan for a more equitable future to a certain extent. Furthermore, I also describe critical gaps associated with the current initiatives in NWA and how my research can fill them in with resident voices that focus on the area’s college-aged population.

In chapter three, I outline the various literature as it relates to the broader picture of gentrification scholarship today, the lessons learned from such research, and how it is limited in the representation of smaller, growing American cities. Furthermore, I outline the narrow scope of
early gentrification case studies. By revealing the literature of gentrification and fast-growing cities, I lay the foundation for the insertion of Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas into such research by synthesizing my definition of gentrification in the context of the region.

In chapter four, I outline the methodology of this project. By allowing the reader to understand my study’s justifications, data collection, data organization, and data analysis methods, those who are motivated to replicate and/or mimic this study can do so in other cities that are also growing rapidly such as Coeur d’Alene, Idaho; Bend, Oregon; and St. George, Utah.

Between chapters five and six, I analyze two gentrification indicators and themes within my interviews by exploring Fayetteville’s housing market and shifting demographics that have transformed the city’s systematic and institutional economic and social forces within the context of my interviews and supplementary resources. Such analysis reinforces the historical context and literature review by asserting that Fayetteville has traits like other gentrifying cities around the country but at a minimal yet growing state. These indicators support the hypothesis that Fayetteville is undergoing a state of early gentrification.

In chapter seven, I conclude this research by summarizing my findings, urging further research in early gentrifying cities and for the City of Fayetteville as the city continues to grow socioeconomically. I also allow readers to consider that without the representation of smaller cities like Fayetteville and their residents’ narratives in current gentrification scholarship, our understanding on how to mitigate and target negative gentrification trends as we plan for more equitable and inclusive cities will be incomplete.
CHAPTER 1. RESEARCH SETTING
“I don’t feel like Fayetteville’s big enough to accommodate that many people. It’s not big enough and not laid out well. It’s still old and has a small-town type of vibe. I know they’re making apartments, but they’re not great. There’s not enough parking. There’s not enough business space. I don’t know where all these people would live in Fayetteville.”

- E.D., Age 21, University of Arkansas Class of 2018

Rents a Room in a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Downtown Fayetteville for $670/month
FAYETTEVILLE AND NORTHWEST ARKANSAS VISUALIZED

Source: Northwest Arkansas Council

Image 5. The regional location of Fayetteville.
Source: Butterfield Trail Village | Lifecare Retirement Community

Image 6. Fayetteville’s city boundaries labeled by its (now-outdated) wards.
Source: Fayetteville Flyer
1.1 RESEARCH SETTING:

The Current Conditions of Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas

Northwest Arkansas (NWA) encompasses a four-county region within Washington, Benton, and Madison Counties in Arkansas and McDonald County in southwestern Missouri. Officially designated as the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), the region is represented in media and research by its five largest cities according to 2017 Census population estimates: Siloam Springs (17,000), Bentonville (49,000), Rogers (66,000), Springdale (80,000), and Fayetteville (86,000). Over time, there has not been one major city in the area, as the region has grown linearly with a regional mindset versus the normalized pattern of having a central city surrounded by a ring of supplementary cities and suburbs (i.e., Houston, Texas).

Over the past decade, Northwest Arkansas has encountered rapid socioeconomic development. As the 15th fastest growing MSA in the United States between 2010 and 2017, the region’s population grew 16.04% from 463,200 to its current population of 537,500 residents in the span of seven years, the equivalent of 204 new
residents moving into the area every week. Such a high influx of people places NWA ahead of other fast-growing and population-comparable MSAs in the same seven-year period such as Boise-Nampa, Idaho (15.15% growth with 710,000), Des Moines-West Des Moines, Iowa (13.39% growth with 646,000) and Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina (12.51% growth with 567,500).

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Figure 1. Projected growth rates of counties in Northwest Arkansas.
Source: Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission

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Figure 2. Projected growth rates of cities in Northwest Arkansas.
Source: Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission

Specifically, the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission’s adopted 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan projects that the City of Fayetteville will reach a population of 91,000 by 2020. As indicated in the figures above, Fayetteville will increase its population by an average of 25.5% every decade to reach a total population of 114,000 by 2030 and 143,000 by

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2040. Out of all of the Northwest Arkansas cities compared, Fayetteville is posed to increase the fastest statistically. However, Springdale is projected to be the largest city in the area by 2040 at a population of 149,000 primarily due to the sheer land area the city encompasses that allows for increased residential, commercial, and business development compared to the more rugged and development-regulated landscape in Fayetteville.

Along with the high population growth, the region is also diversifying its demographic makeup. Currently, the estimated percent of the city’s population that is people of color (those who do not identify as white) is 19%. This percentage is expected to almost double to 35% in 2040 which can result in a variety of views and opinions throughout the city as explained in chapter six.

Source: Sean Volavong
1.2 RESEARCH SETTING:

The Current Infrastructure of Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas

Economically, Northwest Arkansas has a high ratio of three Fortune 500 companies relative to its population and comparable regions. Walmart Inc. is headquartered in Bentonville. Tyson Foods is headquartered in Springdale. J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc. is headquartered in Lowell, a small town of 9,500 people located between Rogers and Springdale. The trio has fostered social and economic externalities including waves of intrastate and interstate immigration and community investment into amenities. Over the past decade, the Walton Family of Walmart has invested billions of dollars in producing amenities such as the globally-acclaimed Crystal Bridge Museum of American Art adjacent to downtown Bentonville which opened in 2011 with an existing endowment of over $1.2 billion. As the first major art museum (one with an endowment over $200 million) to open in the United States since 1974, Crystal Bridges has influenced a variety of construction projects to attract more growth and talent into the area. One example of such externalities is a series of modern and eclectic eateries in the region initiated by the Walton-funded Ropeswing Hospitality Group which includes The Preacher’s Son, an upscale restaurant created from the renovation of the First Christian Church of Bentonville and The Holler, a conglomeration of a bar, restaurant, and a shuffleboard arena in the up-and-coming 8th Street Market that hosts multiple eateries of a similar environment.

The Northwest Arkansas region also boasts a healthy unemployment rate averaging 2.5% and an adjusted cost of living that is 14.0% lower than the national average. Furthermore, the economic conditions of the area garnered high intrastate and interstate migration during harsh

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periods such as the Great Recession between the late 2000s and early 2010s. These factors attribute to the assertion that NWA has a far greater socioeconomic opportunity than is typically found in other areas of its size and in the heartland region.10

Along with the overwhelming corporate presence inside the area, another key infrastructure in Fayetteville is the city’s largest employer: The University of Arkansas. As of Fall of 2018, the college is home to 27,778 students split between undergraduate, graduate, and law, a number that has grown from 17,269 in the Fall of 2005. Within that cohort, 23.3% are affiliated with the Sam W. Walton College of Business, a number that has grown from 19.7% in the Fall of 2005 assumingly due to the increasing economic presence of the three Fortune 500 companies and their vendors exhibiting an abundance of internship and employment opportunities. The rising enrollment at the University of Arkansas (10,509 or 60.9% more students within 13 years)

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indicates that the area has grown dramatically over the past few decades. Furthermore, with a growing enrollment leads to assumptions of consecutive dilemmas such as a tight rental housing market in off-peak seasons (usually at the end of an academic year around May and at the beginning of academic years in August). As the growing student body is only required to live on campus for their freshmen year, a sizeable portion moves off-campus to find housing in single-family homes or apartment complexes throughout Fayetteville and immediate areas outside of city borders. This condition along with other relationships between infrastructural stakeholders has influenced the rise of gentrification indicators throughout the city and region which I analyze within chapters five and six.
CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: 1990-PRESENT
“Concerns about housing were rampant in the relation to Latinas/os, and in 1994 Springdale residents and several members of the Springdale City Council knew how to handle overcrowded housing caused by a growing Hispanic population: Hire an officer with a gun.”

- Dr. Perla M. Guerrero

- Nuevo South: Latinas/os, Asians, and the Remaking of Place

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2.1 NORTHWEST ARKANSAS HISTORICAL CONTEXT:


Northwest Arkansas was originally settled by the Cherokee Tribe in the mid-1820s when Arkansas was still a territory. Over the next century, due to federal efforts to relocate Native Americans throughout the American South along with Civil War-migration movements, the region quickly transitioned into a white-majority community. Starting in the latter half of the 20th century, Northwest Arkansas began to face high growth accompanied by a transition in demographics. This study starts its historical context in 1990 because the region began to witness one of the first major demographic transitions from the majority-white community during the decade.

Between 1990 and 2000, Washington, Benton, and Madison County’s population increased at an average annual rate of 4.0%, accounting for one-third of the entire state’s population increase during the decade. Furthermore, the area grew more than triple the national average. While Benton County increased by 55,900 people and Washington County increased by 44,300 people, population growth was unequally distributed across the state. The primary areas of growth were situated around the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway Metropolitan Area in central Arkansas and the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Area in northwestern Arkansas. Declining population rates and increasing unemployment rates were present in Arkansas’ southern counties containing cities such as El Dorado (home to Fortune 500 Murphy Oil) and in the state’s eastern


Mississippi Delta counties containing cities such as Blytheville, a community with a current crime rate more than triple the national average.\(^\text{14}\)

Source: Arkansas Business and Economic Review

Such areas lacked (and still struggle to attract) the formidable base of growing blue-collar industries such as NWA’s poultry and trucking amenities granted from the multiplying effects of Tyson Foods and J.B. Hunt respectively. Furthermore, the proximity of the Little Rock metro area serving as the state’s centralized employment base within a two-hour drive from southern Arkansas.

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and the Mississippi Delta drew people out of those areas in search for economic opportunities.\textsuperscript{15} In particular, the economic rise of Tyson Foods during this decade by expanding into international markets, marketing its attractive entry-level wages, and its willingness to employ those with limited English-speaking skills gravitated a population group that grew at a rapid 44.9\% in NWA during the decade: Latinxs.\textsuperscript{16}

Between 1990 and 2000, the Latinx population was the fastest-growing demographic in the State of Arkansas, increasing by 67,000 people at a rate of 15.9\% each year. Out of the total amount of Latinx individuals being born or coming into Arkansas, more than 30,000 chose Northwest Arkansas as their home. The Latinx community primarily had Mexican and Central American origins but mostly immigrated from other states such as California and Texas in search of low unemployment rates, the availability of attainable employment, and a lower cost of living.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NWA Total</th>
<th>Total White</th>
<th>Total Latinx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population in 1990</td>
<td>328,171</td>
<td>320,886</td>
<td>3,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in 2000</td>
<td>456,064</td>
<td>418,440</td>
<td>30,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decade Growth</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>730.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Growth</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>73.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. 1990-00 growth rates of Northwest Arkansas’ White and Hispanic population.

Source: Henderson State University


Throughout the decade, the Latinx population purchased homes, established communities, and integrated their cultures into the southern heartland. During a period of high socioeconomic growth and a diversifying demography, how did the existing community composed of a primarily white demographic react? Unfortunately, little research was conducted on the Latinx population’s narratives as they moved to Northwest Arkansas. However, initiatives were conducted to gain the pre-existing community’s reactions and perceptions of both the increase in immigration rates and the overall growth of NWA.

In the fall of 1993, a survey on 1,000 registered voters in Washington and Benton Counties was conducted examining feelings about the growth in Northwest Arkansas as it relates to residents’ perception of the quality of life, the environment, transportation, and job satisfaction as the area continued to grow.\(^{17}\) When asked about the seriousness of problems in Northwest Arkansas, the following topics were prioritized in from most urgent to least urgent: environmental concerns such as landfills, population growth concerns such as the high increase in the Latinx population, traffic congestion along Highway 71, and rising crime in areas such as south Fayetteville. When asked whether the rapid growth was a sign of community well-being, most were divided in their responses. A majority felt that increased socioeconomic growth would result in higher infrastructural, tax, and environmental costs over time. Only 18% of participants agreed that the local municipalities were doing a good job regulating growth. The survey concluded that residents of Northwest Arkansas saw new growth with fear and encouragement. The community’s mixed feeling foreshadows Fayetteville’s reactions to new growth in subsequent decades. Furthermore, this mixed feeling mirrored the local media’s representation of the area’s growth.

Some journalists marked the newcomers as “illegal aliens” racializing all Latinx populations as undocumented, criminal, and Mexican.\footnote{Guerrero, Perla M. “Impacting Arkansas: Vietnamese and Cuban Refugees and Latina/o Immigrants, 1975–2005.” \textit{University of Southern California Dissertations & Theses}, Dec. 2010, pp. 1–338.} Media outlets interviewed community members who visualized the Latinx population with being criminals or associated with those with tendencies to break the law. Similarly, Rogers resident Dan Morris formed the Americans for an Immigration Moratorium (AIM) in 1997. Throughout the following year, AIM repeatedly attacked pro-immigration and seventeen-year incumbent John Sampier during his 1998 mayoral campaign for Rogers. For the past decade, Sampier had been at the forefront of attempts to positively incorporate the Latinx population into the local community while also acting as the co-chairman of the Governor’s Hispanic Relations Task Force. Such targeted and xenophobic marketing by AIM led to the mayoral victory of anti-immigration Alderman Steve Womack.\footnote{“A Town's Two Faces.” \textit{Newsweek}, Newsweek, 3 June 2001, www.newsweek.com/towns-two-faces-153335.} As of 2019, Womack is a current U.S. Representative for Arkansas’ Third Congressional District which encompasses all of NWA except for Madison County.

Such backlash visualizes the first wave of community and political negativity towards high socioeconomic growth as it relates to racial and ethnic themes of citizenship, belonging, and exclusion. In summary, the high socioeconomic growth of the Latinx population in Northwest Arkansas between 1990 and 2000 prompted an initial response marking such newcomers as foreigners and outsiders. Furthermore, such reactions influenced a new wave of perspectives as the area continued to grow infrastructurally during the following decade. As reflected in Womack’s current political presence in the area, such actions have created a lasting impression for
NWA’s residents that have affected their reactions to the ongoing growth of the area’s college-aged demographics analyzed further in this paper.
2.2 NORTHWEST ARKANSAS HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Infrastructure Influence New Growth (2000-2010)

The decade containing the years 2000 to 2010 for Northwest Arkansas followed two significant trends relating to the area’s continued growth. One, the construction of transportation infrastructure including Interstate 49 connecting the manufacturing-heavy Fort Smith Metropolitan Area to the south and the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Area (NWA) to the north bolstered spatial ties and increased economic infrastructure aiding the area’s three Fortune 500 companies. Two, after securing the construction of Interstate 49, the area witnessed a quick economic rebound from the Great Recession throughout the late 2000s and early 2010s that led to a surge in population mainly coming from in-state and surrounding metropolitan regions.

While 1990 to 2000 was a decade characterized by high demographic growth for Northwest Arkansas, hundreds of hours of meticulous planning for the area’s infrastructural future was simultaneously conducted to accommodate the influx of people. As mentioned before, surveys conducted during the early 1990s indicated the public’s awareness of the growing traffic congestion on the primarily-two-lane limited access U.S. Highway 71. Winding through the Boston Mountains, the highway was the only high-speed transportation artery connecting Northwest Arkansas with the greater heartland region encompassing cities such as Tulsa, Oklahoma and Kansas City, Missouri. Once coined as “one of the most dangerous highways in America” the curved roads of Highway 71 were marked with large signs proclaiming how many people had died in traffic accidents along the route to encourage increased safety precautions.20

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Two decades before in 1987, Congress took notice of the highway’s capacity and approved the construction of alternate, 41.5-mile multi-lane route named the Highway 71 Relocation Project to improve economic efficiency, community accessibility, and driving safety. On August 28th, 1995, the first 9.5 miles opened from Alma, Arkansas to Mountainburg, Arkansas. On January 8th, 1999 the Highway 71 Relocation Project, the remaining 32 miles (along with the state’s first and only highway tunnels) were completed between Mountainburg and Fayetteville to much anticipation and excitement as the project was named Interstate 49.\(^{21}\) Northwest Arkansas, cohesively tied through multiple transportation arteries of varying capacities, became a region of economic potential as such improvements supplemented the key logistical feature of Tyson, J.B. Hunt, and Walmart’s primary medium of mobility: long-distance trucking.

Securing the construction of Interstate 49 and establishing economic ties allowed Northwest Arkansas to become resilient during the Great Recession that occurred worldwide between the late 2000s and early 2010s. Although many metropolitan areas within the United States witnessed dramatic increases in unemployment and lower returns to their gross domestic products, the NWA region weathered the downturn as the area increased its median household

income at a faster and earlier rate than many areas. Between 2008 and 2010, the NWA metropolitan area increased its median rent from $44,000 to $45,100, an increase of 1.25% annually.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, as shown in the chart below, Fayetteville has an unemployment rate considerably lower than the national average, even when its rates increased during the recession.

![Unemployment Chart](chart.png)

Figure 5. Fayetteville, AR (Bottom Line) unemployment rates compared to the national average (Top Line).

Source: Sean Volavong

The combination of a robust economic infrastructure and attractive employment outlooks continued from the 1990 to 2000 decade attracted a new wave of intrastate and interstate migration into Northwest Arkansas.\textsuperscript{23} Specifically, all five major cities in NWA increased their populations


by more than a fourth, with the most significant increase in Bentonville. Although Fayetteville was the slowest-growing city in the area during this decade, the community witnessed a 29% increase in population – a figure far higher than many other American cities at the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>2000 Population</th>
<th>2010 Population</th>
<th>Decade % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fayetteville</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>73,600</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springdale</td>
<td>45,800</td>
<td>70,800</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers</td>
<td>38,900</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentonville</td>
<td>19,800</td>
<td>35,300</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siloam Springs</td>
<td>10,900</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. 2000-10 growth rates of Northwest Arkansas’ major cities.
Source: Sean Volavong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2000 Population</th>
<th>2010 Population</th>
<th>Decade % Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian / Alaska Native</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>2,267</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / African American</td>
<td>2,979</td>
<td>4,379</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>4,725</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian / Other API</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>1,159</td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>2,262</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>51,400</td>
<td>61,661</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. 2000-10 growth rates of Fayetteville’s demographics.
Source: Sean Volavong

Fayetteville’s demographics also continued to shift. Building upon the foundations in the 1990 to 2000 decade, the Latinx population in Fayetteville increased by 66.4% (2,840 to 4,725 residents). Other demographic groups also underwent increased changes, including the area’s Black/African American population which increased by 47% (2,979 to 4,379 residents). With a
diversifying infrastructural, economic, and demographic landscape in Fayetteville, local organizations were motivated to pursue further community-based research to supplement unknown biases, opinions, and suggestions that city stakeholders were eager to gain from its constituents.
2.3 NORTHWEST ARKANSAS HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Continued Growth with Action (2010-Present)

From 2010 to the present, a multitude of community-based organizations with philanthropic and business development initiatives began to aggressively conduct research analyzing the different options to mitigate Northwest Arkansas’ dilemmas that has arisen as the area becomes increasingly popular from both intrastate and interstate migration. A trend for this decade has been the transition from community analysis to more proactive community action.

For example, on January 25th, 2015 the Northwest Arkansas Council, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life, infrastructure, education, and economic opportunity of Northwest Arkansas, released its “Greater Northwest Arkansas Development Strategy” announcing its mission for the following two years.24 Key metrics from a study period between 2012 to 2015 included community feedback from over 150 local leaders that summarized three areas of improvement for NWA: diversifying the regional economy, expanding and enhancing the supply of regional talent, and improving and sustaining the region’s physical and social infrastructure. The three results from this research include increased investment into the quantity and quality of industrial and residential real estate, more local partnerships encouraging the growth of jobs and investment, and a collaboration with the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission initiating a comprehensive, 25-year, regional infrastructure capacity plan. Over the following years, the report has been updated to add more insights and additions to the existing literature. Although this research is relevant to understand what the region is eager to achieve, the leading voices represented are those with more political and economic power in the

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region – such as business executives, professors, and directors of community organizations. What is absent is the input of the lay resident’s perspective on the area’s recent growth as it relates to trends of gentrification. I intend to analyze this demographic and attitude within this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT PEER REGIONS</th>
<th>Economic Strength</th>
<th>Future Inertia</th>
<th>Talent</th>
<th>Business Climate</th>
<th>Infra-structure</th>
<th>Innovation &amp; Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>OVERALL RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raleigh, NC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1T</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provo, UT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1T</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Arkansas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des Moines, IA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison, WI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 PEER REGIONS</th>
<th>Economic Strength</th>
<th>Future Inertia</th>
<th>Talent</th>
<th>Business Climate</th>
<th>Infra-structure</th>
<th>Innovation &amp; Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>OVERALL RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Arkansas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City, MO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omaha, NE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knoxville, TN</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5T</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulsa, OK</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsville, AL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5T</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8. Northwest Arkansas ranked against peer regions (2015)

Source: Northwest Arkansas Council

On January 1st in 2017 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released a 14-page “Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers-Arkansas-Missouri Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis” report documenting the changes of the economic conditions, population and households, and housing market trends of the region.25 Key findings include an increase of 7,600 non-farm jobs between 2015 and 2016, a figure ahead of all other metropolitan areas in Arkansas. Furthermore, one-fifth of all the counted employment in Northwest Arkansas (242,900 in 2016) stemmed from Walmart, Tyson Foods, and the University of Arkansas. More importantly, the


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study analyzes the rental market in NWA that has continued to become tighter with a then sales vacancy rate of 1.8% and a then rental vacancy rate of 5.8% (down from 13.9% in April 2010). These figures are influenced by the growing local economy, increasing population growth, and transitioning preferences to rent instead of own primarily as enrollment at the University of Arkansas increased over time (college students seek temporary housing). Specifically, the total demand for rental units in NWA was 4,750 units while a supply of 1,525 rental units was under construction in 2017 – an indicator that achieving a balanced real estate market was (and continues) to be a challenge.

As attainable and accessible housing has become a primary concern for Northwest Arkansas as it continues to grow, political and social stakeholders have translated years of community-based research into community-based activism. On February 3rd and 4th in 2018, hundreds of students, policymakers, urban planning professionals, and engaged citizens traveled to Fayetteville and Bentonville for the region’s first “Housing Northwest Arkansas Regional Symposium.” Funded by the Walton Family Foundation, the philanthropic branch of the namesake-family owning 50.8% of Walmart shares as of December 2014, the symposium was part of a greater initiative titled Housing NWA. Over the span of a weekend, presentations and moderated discussions by regional and national housing experts to provided participants with an overview of issues and challenges to develop attainable, affordable and mixed-use housing using other regions of the United States as examples. This symposium highlighted one of the first steps NWA has taken to understand and determine that affordable housing has become a priority for an underrepresented portion of its residents as the area has grown dramatically over the past two

decades. Although decades of debates on affordable housing and gentrification have made the term “affordable housing” a common household term within larger cities (i.e. San Francisco, CA and Boston, MA), the topics have slowly interwoven themselves inside conversations in Northwest Arkansas as the area begins to accept that such characteristics will become a reality for many in the area. Affordable housing has become a fight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREE WAYS TO BE INVOLVED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPLORE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAN. 16 – MAY 5, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Design Studio will engage students in the study of housing issues and precedents that incorporate the social, urban, and architectural agendas into a cohesive whole. Student work will be uploaded throughout the studio. Focus: Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INFORM</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 3 - 4, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Regional Symposium will bring local and national experts together to address the current state of policy, design and development in a public forum. Focus: Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADVANCE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEB. 3 – MAY 4, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Professional Design Competition will invite design professionals to present mixed-income and attainable housing solutions that embrace the local challenges, culture, values, and vision of Northwest Arkansas. Entries will be uploaded throughout the competition. Winners to be Announced May 10, 2018 Focus: Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the housing symposium, the Walton Family Foundation released a 71-page study titled “Measuring the Vitality of Downtowns in Bentonville, Fayetteville, Rogers, Siloam Springs, and Springdale” reporting the results of a research study conducted during October of 2017. In this report, researchers presented evidence of “vibrant” downtowns that include a growing population of residents in the downtown areas, a “good” mix of residential, commercial, and public space that is consistently improved through a steady stream of building permits, low vacancy rates, and stable lease rates. Furthermore, another measure included an increase in demand for multifamily

27 https://www.housingnwa.org/
residential units. Specifically for the City of Fayetteville, the report indicates that the 0.54 square mile radius of the city’s downtown has seen increases in property market values and historically low rental vacancy rates – a sign that supply and demand are becoming increasingly unbalanced for the area and the greater city. Although the report is helpful for understanding NWA, the main lens of the research was economic vitality, and its intended audience was private developers, business owners, and urban researchers. On the other hand, the report along with Housing NWA’s efforts offer little insight into how different groups of residents are coping with the challenges of rising housing costs and values – a narrative I investigate further in this paper by directly interviewing and analyzing resident behaviors and perspectives on growth.

### Summary of Key Trends in the Northwest Arkansas Area

- 27% of Northwest Arkansas residents are cost-burdened
  - 16% of owners are cost-burdened
  - 40% of renters are cost-burdened

![Image of housing and rental market data](Image 12. Housing NWA: Summary of key trends in the Northwest Arkansas area.

Source: City of Fayetteville, Arkansas)

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Each decade between 1990 and the present has exhibited strong socioeconomic growth for Northwest Arkansas with varying opinions from its community concerning change. Furthermore, within each decade such growth has resulted in mixed feelings. Although the upsurge in non-white populations led to negative political actions from local jurisdictions in the 1990s, the area quickly transitioned its opinions to the broader landscape of how high growth can negatively affect the entire community. Initiatives to study community perceptions within the late 2000s transitioned into community actions in the present that reflect the community willingness and support to understand how NWA can proactively plan for its successful future. However, as indicated, there are voices and topics not included in the planning processes even today. This research intends to fill in this gap by integrating more input from those directly impacted by Northwest Arkansas’ socioeconomic growth and by using gentrification as a lens. These topics could eventually become contested and controversial if the region does holistically prepare for its upcoming decades of even more growth using relevant community-based data such as those analyzed in this study.
CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW
“Families who pay more than 30% of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. An estimated 12 million renter and homeowner households (11% of Americans in 2018) now pay more than 50% of their annual incomes for housing. A family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage cannot afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment anywhere in the United States.”

- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

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29 (12m households * 3 average household size) / (323m U.S. population in 2018)

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW:

This Study’s Contributions

For many scholars that interact with urbanism-related projects or who conduct research in urban areas, the term *gentrification* has become common lingo within debates over movements affecting systems such as affordable housing, transportation equity, and lower-income economic development. However, even today, the term’s definition has evolved and has not solidified among contemporary scholars. This paper synthesizes historical definitions of gentrification to create one for Fayetteville’s context as it relates to four elements that allow researchers to analyze an area’s state of gentrification: (1) the affecting population and (2) their (or related stakeholders’) inputs along with (3) the affected population and (4) their (or related stakeholders’) outputs. These four indicators of gentrification guide my analysis of Fayetteville’s to determine whether the area is indeed undergoing a state of early gentrification.

By doing so, this research poses a significant contribution to existing scholarship attempting to define gentrification because it synthesizes such definitions to inspire a new definition and narrative of gentrification analysis for smaller regions throughout the United States. Due to the lack of scholarship analyzing high socioeconomic growth in smaller cities and region, this study also allows researchers to enter such communities not usually connotated with gentrification research to have a more comprehensive understanding and toolkit on how to engage with residents. For example, entering Fort Collins, Colorado using qualitative methodologies that researchers have used to analyze gentrification in a post-gentrified San Francisco, California would be less strategic than using techniques tailored for demographically-smaller and arguably less-gentrified cities. Furthermore, this research study is one of the first, if not the first, research study on gentrification and related trends for Fayetteville, Arkansas.
3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW:

Defining and Indicating Gentrification

Throughout this literature review, a select amount of scholars dedicated to investigating urban narratives and institutions are compared by their gentrification definitions in a descending timeline to contextualize gentrification’s temporal influence. A scholar or source’s definition of gentrification is characterized by the affecting and affected populations in a locality, the inputs (what do the affecting people bring in or influence) and outputs (what do the affected people bring out or influence), and the time of the publication.

In 1964, the term gentrification was coined by urban sociologist Ruth Glass in her book *London: Aspects of Change* when describing the invasion of working-class quarters in London by both the upper and lower middle classes who began to capitalize on the leases of residences.31 Laying the foundation for decades of controversial debates on the growth and decline of cities, Glass’ definition overlaps with all the scholars and sources’ definitions of gentrification mentioned throughout this subchapter as hers is arguably the broadest when it comes to the output: social character evolution. The social character of a community can encompass demographics, infrastructures, and systems. This paper also considers this output as there are many indicators of gentrification that arise from migration and growth especially in the context of a community such as Fayetteville.

John Betancur from the University of Illinois at Chicago describes gentrification as a complex system of inputs and outputs rather than the more simplified definitions outlined above. Betancur’s 2003 definition revolves around intangible elements such as the political infrastructure

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of development policies as the affecting party, a highly-localized and contextual population as the affected, housing supply and consumers’ demand as inputs, and the output depends on the method of analysis (i.e., revitalization when considering the economic value vs. displacement when considering the social value). This paper incorporates Betancur’s visualization of the affected population’s status as being dependent on the specific locality of the area researched. For example, one can argue that downtown Fayetteville is vastly different both infrastructurally and economically than inner-city neighborhoods in rapidly-gentrifying cities such as Boston, MA, and Oakland, CA. By allowing the definition of gentrification to adapt to the specific elements of a community, one can analyze such changes in academically-unorthodox locations such as Fayetteville and other rapidly-growing cities such as Bend, Oregon.

As gentrification became more commonplace within sociology and urban studies throughout the late 2000s and early 2010s, Robert Sampson and Jackelyn Hwang (of then-Harvard University) collaborated to define gentrification in 2014 as a process of neighborhood change. The duo took inspiration from geographer Neil Smith’s heavily-cited definition from 1998: the process by which central urban neighborhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off middle and upper-middle-class population. Smith’s definition correlates with the mainstream depictions of gentrification, hence its popularity amongst scholars, because of the visualization of central urban neighborhoods which can more easily be depicted as being disinvested during suburbanization.


Since Fayetteville’s inner-city core and many parts of Northwest Arkansas’s major cities do not necessarily identify with being historically affected by the economic drawbacks of rapid suburbanization, this paper does not consider this part of Smith’s definition holistically. However, Smith’s definition also points out the flows of investment and disinvestment that can alter the visual appearance of a neighborhood or area. Given this study’s assertion that institutional forces such as the University of Arkansas and the area’s Fortune 500 companies are investing heavily into specific neighborhoods and amenities, Smith’s definition influences this observation.

In 2015, Miriam Zuk from the University of California, Berkeley published a literature review investigating the different perceptions of gentrification within academic scholarship. Although Zuk et al. did not define gentrification from the term itself, they describe it synonymously with residential investment/disinvestment as an input and residential displacement as the main output because analyzing a residential element of a community is accessible and tangible through qualitative and quantitative means.\(^{34}\) This paper’s perspective on gentrification takes more inspiration from the parties that are affecting gentrification: direct/indirect social forces that can include an increase in a specific demographic (i.e. 18-24-year-olds in Fayetteville) or even an increasing pressure from a particular employment sector onto the pathways of such demographics (i.e. Fayetteville’s corporate influences from regional growth and the growing enrollment of the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas).

One year later, sociologist Jackelyn Hwang of then-Princeton University and Jefferey Lin of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia’s 2016 definition of gentrification was defined as the process in which neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status (SES) experience increased

investment and an influx of new residents with higher SES. Markers of gentrification include changes in physical, cultural, and demographic characteristics. Improvements in amenities, such as safety or shopping, and increases in housing values and rents also commonly characterize gentrification. It is worth noting that Hwang and Lin differentiate from previous definitions (and later definitions) because they do not describe the displacement of individuals as one of the outputs of gentrification. Instead, they note the investment of “amenities” that result in improved characteristics of a community whether it be intangible (i.e., perceived safety) or tangible (i.e., diversity in established businesses). Conversely, the duo agrees with the commonality that those with more financial ability are those that affect those with less financial ability. By having a broader definition on the outputs of gentrification, Hwang and Lin’s definition is applied to a more diverse and temporally-early set of cities and neighborhoods that might not yet have traces of high displacement within gentrification’s timeframe such as Fayetteville.

In 2017, Marilyn Pineda of the University of Massachusetts Boston published a comprehensive report outlining the effects of gentrification and its construed definition that has evolved. While criticizing some scholars over their ambiguous and overgeneralized approaches to analyzing gentrification, Pineda is more concrete on who is affecting the affected as they assert that gentrification is primarily caused by the influx of wealth and differentiating values of white, professional, and single-parent individuals into vulnerable communities mostly comprised of lower-working class, elderly, and unemployed population. However, Pineda’s approach to defining gentrification becomes ironically unclear when outlining the inputs and outputs of

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35 Hwang, Jackelyn, and Jeffrey Lin. “What Have We Learned About the Causes of Recent Gentrification?”

gentrification. Pineda asserts that the inputs of gentrification focus on the investment into institutions and systems such as the educational, political, and economic infrastructures of an area which results in a restructured social class or landscape. This study takes inspiration in this definition’s inputs and outputs as the City of Fayetteville’s educational (University of Arkansas), political (shifting demographics), and economic (Fortune 500 companies) are critical elements of the rapidly developing landscape in Northwest Arkansas.

By analyzing the six definitions in the following chart, the primary commonalities of gentrification include an influx of middle-class or wealthier residents into a neighborhood with lower socioeconomic status. Those living in the communities, usually with lower socioeconomic status, are either displaced or simultaneously surrounded by an environment of modified and revived amenities tailored by the newcomers and development policies existing previously in the area. It is worth noting that the temporal aspect of when a definition was created or compiled does not correlate heavily with significant differences in definitions. Furthermore, the most varied elements of a definition amongst sources is the output of gentrification: what are the outcomes of a community that gentrifies?

For the City of Fayetteville’s definition of gentrification, the affecting stakeholders are direct or indirect social and political forces and their input is an investment into amenities and other institutions in the locality. The affected stakeholders are pre-existing residents and the output of the affecting stakeholders’ inputs is a restructured social landscape. Such a definition applies to other smaller and rapidly-growing regions because it generalizes the narrative of increased investments and unequal flows of capital from higher SES residents that might not explicitly be apparent in all communities. For many communities that might be undergoing early stages of gentrification, a quantitative analysis of their demographics might not reveal the effects of a great
transition of higher SES residents coming into neighborhoods and increasing cost-of-living on the scale that post-gentrified cities such as San Francisco and Boston might have. Instead, such communities, such as Fayetteville, might have possible “indirect or direct social and political forces” such as housing organizations, legal frameworks, educational institutions, and corporations potentially leading to such outcomes. Such forces are much easier to identify and subsequently qualitatively investigate using applied community-based methodologies detailed later in this study.

Furthermore, the outcome of a “restructured social landscape” also broadens the narrative of gentrification. From a quantitative approach, gentrification’s outcome can be defined using financial metrics such as rental prices, eviction rates, and demographics. However, this study expands upon such parameters by commenting on the human-centered opinions and perspectives of such changes. For example, a restructured social landscape can include a transformation in the relationships of specific demographics in a community and a shift in norms or ideas once associated with a specific community’s culture. These approaches and assumed conclusions allow researchers to enter communities not usually associated with high rates or trends of gentrification indicators. This study hopes, through both its synthesized definition along with its methodologies discussed throughout this paper, to expand upon gentrification’s scholarship for new audiences and researchers in areas that are on the edge of becoming more gentrified.

37 Brown-Saracino, Japonica. “Explicating Divided Approaches to Gentrification and Growing Income Inequality.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Affecting</th>
<th>Affected</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>University College London</td>
<td>Middle-class</td>
<td>Working-class</td>
<td>Residential improvements</td>
<td>Social character evolution</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>City University of New York</td>
<td>Middle-class, Upper-middle</td>
<td>Central / Urban Neighborhoods</td>
<td>Reinvestment and migration</td>
<td>Revival</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betancur</td>
<td>Uni. Of Illinois at Chicago</td>
<td>Development Policies</td>
<td>Depends on local context</td>
<td>Supply and demand</td>
<td>Depends on analysis method</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuk et al.</td>
<td>Uni. Of California Berkeley</td>
<td>Direct or indirect social forces</td>
<td>Pre-existing residents</td>
<td>Investment or disinvestment</td>
<td>Residential displacement</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pineda</td>
<td>Uni. Of Massachusetts Boston</td>
<td>Whites, Professionals, Single parents</td>
<td>Lower-working class, Elderly, Unemployed</td>
<td>Investment in institutions</td>
<td>Restructured social classes or landscape</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volavong</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td>Direct or indirect political or social forces</td>
<td>Pre-existing residents</td>
<td>Investment into amenities and institutions</td>
<td>Restructured social landscape</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Definitions of gentrification compared.

Source: Sean Volavong
3.3 LITERATURE REVIEW:

Current Gaps in Gentrification Methodologies

In the 2017 edition of the Annual Review of Sociology, Boston University sociologist Japonica Brown-Saracino asserts similar mixed feelings regarding gentrification’s evolving definition and analysis regarding the outputs rather than the inputs of gentrification. Brown Saracino’s report focuses on the divided qualitative and quantitative approaches to understanding gentrification and growing income inequality and how separate methods can result in vastly different conclusions among academic and political audiences.38

Brown-Saracino describes recent qualitative gentrification scholarship as emphasizing the outcomes of gentrification. Common themes include the conflicts between newcomers and established residents surrounding community norms along with the displacement of long-time commercial institutions. In short, current qualitative scholarship documents gentrification (a) as a social problem which is to be resisted, (b) to appear to be in advanced forms within communities around the United States, (c) in a way that infiltrates communities in an invasive and critical manner, and (d) as a lens to pursue questions about the influences of powerful intuitions that advance gentrification projects.

On the other hand, Brown-Saracino describes recent quantitative gentrification scholarship as depicting visualizations that tones down the impact of gentrification on such communities compared to qualitative research. In summary, current quantitative scholarships documents gentrification (a) as not that far-reaching into the communities it lies within, (b) challenges the common assumption that the affecting party of gentrification is a white population coming into an affected party’s neighborhood that is characterized by African Americans, and (c) does not

38 Brown-Saracino, Japonica. “Explicating Divided Approaches to Gentrification and Growing Income Inequality.”
enhance the processes of displacement to the extent that qualitative research concludes. For example, in 2010, the University of Arkansas Community and Family Institute conducted the “Northwest Arkansas Community Survey: A Quality-of-Life Assessment of NWA Residents.” Such a study resulted in a comprehensive analysis on Northwest Arkansas as a place to live, evaluations of core services such as health care, education, and transportation, and lastly an investigation into “social capital” which is defined as one’s interpersonal connections.39

In the study, two questions targeted similar themes that this study attempts to analyze. One: how would you rate the relationship between people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in your community? Two: (agree or disagree) immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights. Although these two statements deepen the perceptions of high socioeconomic growth as it affects the opinions of residents from a qualitative standpoint rather than a more quantitative standpoint, responses are in statistical frequencies along with optional comments that do not provide more in-depth analysis.

![Graphs showing responses to NWA 2010 Community Survey questions](image)

Figure 10. Responses to the NWA 2010 Community Survey.
Source: University of Arkansas

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Although a mixed-methods approach to analyzing gentrification in Fayetteville could potentially solve the varying differences Brown-Saracino lays out along with the gaps in the Northwest Arkansas survey mentioned above, this paper considers the current initiatives that the City of Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas have completed and the data lacking that can allow researchers to further analyze the status of gentrification within the area. As mentioned throughout the historical context of Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas, the dominant theme of research conducted on the high socioeconomic growth of the area has been quantitative in nature – community-based surveys that garner statistics on broad statements on the economy and social interactions. This paper’s methodologies is qualitative in nature to investigate whether the common themes (and assumed pitfalls) of qualitative research Brown-Saracino explains does align or does not align with the data analysis from the interviews conducted with Fayetteville’s younger residents. If such data aligns, it should be reviewed against the overarching generalizations of qualitative research Brown-Saracino cautions in her review.

Along with the differences between research methods, Brown-Saracino, more importantly, outlines the gaps existing within gentrification scholarship which this paper intends to fill. The first nuance with existing scholarship is that qualitative research tends to preselect areas that are either currently undergoing a medium state of gentrification or a late state of gentrification such as New York and San Francisco. Scholars assumingly do so because already-gentrified spaces can better exhibit the themes of social dynamics that tend to be invasive and problematic as mentioned before. For example, in the case of studying areas that are undergoing advanced gentrification, Butler and Lees qualitatively analyze advanced gentrification occurring in Barnsbury in north London and Brooklyn Heights in New York using longitudinal data within groups of educationally
and financially elitist populations in 2006.\textsuperscript{40} Also, Boerum Hill in Brooklyn, New York is used as another case study by Kasinitz of an ongoing gentrifying neighborhood using qualitative interviews to reinforce roots of protest and community pushback from an influx of newcomers in 1988.\textsuperscript{41} Lastly, Sullivan examines resident voices in two Portland, Oregon neighborhoods in 2007 that have been deemed gentrified for over 15 years using probability sampling and representative sampling to reveal differences in community opinions even within populations of the same races and ethnicities.\textsuperscript{42} Such qualitative research does not consider the earlier stages of gentrification. This study adds Fayetteville as a location that is beginning to exhibit traits of gentrification, allowing for analysis that gains community opinions on such changes before they become invasive such as those found in London, New York, and Portland.

The second nuance with gentrification scholarship is that qualitative research tends to focus on specific neighborhoods (which are often ambiguously defined) versus quantitative research that tends to focus on larger or singular Census tracts, MSAs, or counties as units of analysis. For many qualitative researchers, they choose to focus on specific localities because those used by quantitative researchers are too broad to investigate on-ground findings associated with a distinct population of a neighborhood. However, by not looking broad enough, some qualitative researchers might overlook neighborhoods or sections of metropolitan areas that are also undergoing elements of gentrification instead of specific poster child neighborhoods. For example,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
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Barton determined that selecting and analyzing census-based neighborhoods and larger regions of cities instead of particular neighborhoods within New York more than doubled the amount of gentrified tracts.\(^{43}\) Within this study, although some interview questions relate to resident perceptions on Fayetteville’s downtown areas, qualitative analysis extends to the greater city as participants did not live in one specific neighborhood. This study contributes to this gap in the literature by qualitatively analyzing an entire jurisdiction rather than a small subset of its area.

The third nuance with gentrification scholarship and the most critical to this research is that the dominant subjects of scholarship are cities that are mostly larger in population and are more academically accessible to researchers. In Brown-Saracino’s agenda for the future of gentrification scholarship, she warns readers that our understanding of gentrification is not complete if we only study it in well-known and arguably more-population cities such as New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Boston, and San Francisco.\(^{44}\) Furthermore, it is assumingly true that many of these larger cities are also home to the social researchers that allows them to enter such neighborhoods for analysis easily. From the above cities, you have powerful community-based, research institutions that host prominent gentrification scholars such as Columbia University, New York University, George Washington University, the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Southern California, Boston University (of which Brown-Saracino resides), Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, and the University of California, Berkeley respectively among others. Fayetteville represents a much smaller jurisdiction within the Northwest Arkansas metropolitan region that only hosts one prominent research

\(^{43}\) Barton, Michael. “An Exploration of the Importance of the Strategy Used to Identify Gentrification.”

university (the University of Arkansas) that arguably has a smaller sociological field of researchers than the institutions mentioned before. This study allows for the insertion of community voices in Northwest Arkansas that are outside of the normative narrative of where gentrification and high socioeconomic growth is dominant. Thus, our understanding of the differences and similarities of gentrification across diverse communities within the United States is more comprehensive.

In summary, this study qualitatively investigates the City of Fayetteville’s four elements of gentrification as defined by its synthesized definition: the affecting stakeholders (the direct or indirect social and political forces) and their input (investment into amenities and other institutions in the locality) along with the affected stakeholders (pre-existing residents) and the output of the affecting stakeholders’ inputs (a restructured social landscape). These elements are investigated through the lens of Fayetteville’s housing market and demographics which are two characteristics often affected and transformed by gentrification. Furthermore, by using Fayetteville as a case study, this research contributes to gentrification scholarship’s qualitative research as this paper focuses on earlier timeframes of community change, represents a more substantial area or entire city rather than a smaller subsection or neighborhood, and lastly deviates from the norm of larger cities that are more accessible by researchers.
CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY
“Second, and relatedly, recent quantitative assessments find that gentrification is unevenly distributed across the United States; several prominent analyses present this as yet another manner in which gentrification is limited in scope. Part of this scholarship indicates that the gentrification we associate with New York, San Francisco, and increasingly with cities like Boston, Seattle, and Washington, DC, is not uniform. The pace, scale, and intensity of growth of affluent neighborhoods…varies by region”

- Dr. Japonica Brown-Saracino

2017 Annual Review of Sociology\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45} Brown-Saracino, Japonica. “Explicating Divided Approaches to Gentrification and Growing Income Inequality.”
4.1 METHODOLOGY

Experiencing Fayetteville: Study Design

The primary aim of this study was to understand how the narratives of younger adults in Fayetteville in a time of high growth can reinforce thematic indicators to conclude that the city is undergoing early gentrification. This research study takes inspiration from the interviewing format from contemporary gentrification research that primarily focuses on qualitative methods. Due to the assertion that grounded narratives can produce thicker, more descriptive stories of community transitions than the muted conclusions that result from analyzing gentrification using a quantitative, population-tract perspective, this study utilizes conversational interviews rather than methods such as quantified surveys. Furthermore, interviews allow researchers to gain more in-depth, equitable analysis into socioeconomic dilemmas as narratives can supplement or even expand upon the conclusions made by quantitative research.

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Stanford in March of 2018 and through community-based input on research objectives from groups such as the Northwest Arkansas Council between March and April of 2018, participants were recruited in May of 2018 through digital mediums such as a personal Facebook account and a university-sponsored email. The participant recruitment message provided participants with an objective of the study, a brief overview of the two interviews formats, a description on the study’s guiding themes of housing, employment, and community-change, and asked that interested participants contact me through Facebook, email, or phone to provide tentative consent until they can physically fill out a printed and written consent form during the first interview.

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46 Brown-Saracino, Japonica. “Explicating Divided Approaches to Gentrification and Growing Income Inequality.” Volavong – Page 64
Eligibility was limited to 18-25-year-olds who have rented housing inside Fayetteville’s limits for a minimum of one year between 2010 and 2018, have been affiliated with the University of Arkansas as a full-time student, have attempted to secure part-time or full-time employment within Northwest Arkansas during their time as a student, and those who must have been able to conduct an interview themselves using conversational English. The focus on 18-25-year-olds was guided by long-range planning research from the City of Fayetteville’s Sustainability and Resilience Department indicating that the 18-25-year-old demographic is the fastest-growing age group in Fayetteville growing at a decade rate of 4.70% and that the 25-29-year-old demographic is the fastest-declining age group decreasing at a decade rate of -3.50% projected between 2010 and 2020.47 As the 18-25-year-old age group in Fayetteville who choose to stay in the city will inevitably transition into the 25-29-year-old age group, the decision to target such an age group was motivated by gaining longitudinal and phenomenological insights into the values on housing, employment, and community-change in an area of high socioeconomic growth.48 Furthermore, the decision was also motivated by this study’s purpose of adding a community-based perspective that deviated from the normative communities studied in gentrification research. Instead of investigating the responses of the population groups that are assumingly displaced by direct and indirect forces, this research focuses on the population groups that are assumingly the displacers or growing majority.49 However, as this study was limited to speaking only to college students, such a population only gives a specific perspective and experience when engaging with Fayetteville. For example, the duties and lifestyles of college-aged residents creates a distinct
university-life association with different amenities in the cities such as bars, restaurants, neighborhoods, and demographics. For example, the housing values and living priorities of Fayetteville’s 18-25-year-old age group might drastically differ from those in the 25-29-year-old age group, thus leading to alternative conclusions of this study using a similar methodology.

To gain access to the 18-25-year-old demographic in Fayetteville, participant recruitment involved a combination of purposive (selecting participants to represent the greater population of 18-25-year-olds in Fayetteville) and snowball sampling (research participants recruit other participants) that emphasized convenience for my limited capacities and the unfamiliarity of the social landscape of the city. Out of the 15 participants who expressed interest in the study from an initial outreach of personal contacts, five were able to schedule and complete two interviews and fill out consent forms. Over the span of three months, the five initial participants evolved into five layers of snowball sampling with a concluding amount of 13 interviewees interviewed for two hours each, for a total of 26 hours of transcriptions. During the fifth layer of sampling, saturation was established as the sample approached maximum variation in terms of educational backgrounds, renting histories, geographic distribution throughout Fayetteville, and a modest representation of the city’s demographic identity. The research study did not interview four other interested participants. As community engagement specialist Dr. Glenn Bowen explained,

“Data saturation entails bringing new participants continually into the study until the data set is complete, as indicated by data replication or redundancy. In other words, saturation is reached when I gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added.”50

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Participating young adults were aged between 18 and 25 years old. Educational backgrounds ranged from being a 3rd year at the University of Arkansas to completing the 1st year at the School of Law. Furthermore, employment backgrounds ranged from actively searching for employment, recently laid off, to working a part-time position. Geographic origins of residence differed from two-bedroom apartments in south Fayetteville to three-bedroom single-family homes in west Fayetteville. Lastly, the participant group contained eight females and five males.
4.2 METHODOLOGY:

Engaging Fayetteville: Collecting My Data

Between June and September 2018, I lived in a basement apartment in east Fayetteville renting for $400/month (an arguably cheaper rent than many similar residential layouts due to attaining housing through a local contact). Within the initial communication with interested participants, I allowed participants to propose their preferred interview locations to enhance factors such as community-based observational learning, logistical convenience for interviewees, and improved understanding of critical differences between residences throughout Fayetteville’s geography. Examples of interview locations include personal homes, coffee shops, restaurants, and Skype calls.

In total, the study gathered 26 hours of interviews with 650+ double-spaced pages of interview transcriptions. Each interview followed a semi-structured format, which encouraged participants to more easily share their views and experiences with a foundation of guiding questions. Specifically, a semi-structured format garnered a response regarding housing, employment, and community-change which allowed participants to alter questions, add necessary follow-ups, and provided structural similarity between transcriptions for analytical purposes. Each interview averaged one-hour in length and a sanitized interview transcription averaged 25 pages, doubled-spaced.

The first interview protocol contained six demographic questions and six open-ended questions. The second interview protocol included five demographic questions and 17 open-ended questions. During each interview, consent was given to be anonymously recorded on an audio-


Volavong – Page 68
recording device which was placed in a location under the interview protocol to both remove the
distraction and intimidation of technology but to also allow the interviewee to reference the
questions throughout the process as they were sitting across from the interviewer. This practice
takes inspiration from Burke and Miller who argued that doing so “yield[s] more thick, rich
descriptive data from participants.”

For interviews conducted through Skype, questions were emailed or messaged beforehand, and the audio-recording device was not in view from the participant’s screen. Besides the previously mentioned differences along with not physically being in a space with the interviewee, the interview protocol for Skype interviewees was identical to those interviewed in a physically-similar area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Section</th>
<th>Example Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td>Can you describe your educational status (i.e. year in college, major, interests)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can your state your initials, your age, and the race/ethnicity you identify with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td>For every year you lived in Fayetteville, can you describe to me your housing rents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How have you adjusted to the increase/decrease in rent payment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment/Money</strong></td>
<td>Can you tell me where you work, how often you work, and how much you make?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How much money do you usually spend on Dickson Street and the Square?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community-Change</strong></td>
<td>Have you witnessed any changes on Dickson Street and/or the Square?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How have you reacted to such changes? Is there anything you want to change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. Example questions from the interview protocol.

Source: Sean Volavong

As each interview was recorded, minimal notes were taken during the meeting to establish a more personal rapport with the interviewer given the community-based values of the project.

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notes were made, they indicated transitional phrases or indicated-codes that were not expanded upon, which prompted further investigation as the interviews continued. At the end of the second interview, a question regarding snowball sampling was asked: do you know anyone between the ages of 18 and 25 that have rented housing in Fayetteville and is also affiliated with the University of Arkansas that may be interested in this study? Following the second interview, participants were compensated with a $40 Visa gift card.
4.3 METHODOLOGY:

Understanding Fayetteville: Analyzing My Data

As the on-ground research period ended in September of 2018, data analysis consecutively began. Each recording of an interview was stored in a confidential Stanford-sponsored cloud database in my personally-owned laptop, and a copy of the discussion was stored in a password-encrypted flash drive for easier access to files when located in a setting without internet access. After completing the last interview in October 2018 (virtually rather than on-ground), interviews went through one pass of transcriptions using an online service that inputted the audio files and used an automated service that outputted a rough draft of an interview transcription. Once all data went through the first transcription, they were then sanitized for grammatical, formatting, and word-choice issues and errors using an online service that allowed audio files to be slowed down and repeated for faster efficiency when transcribing. Furthermore, transcriptions included details such as pauses within the dialogue, facial expressions, changes in the tone of an interviewee’s voice, and the situational description of the interview time and location. In summary, while the automated process took less than 15 minutes per file to analyze, the sanitization process took more than three hours per hour-long interview for a rough total of 78 hours of sanitizing.

Once all transcriptions were sanitized using Microsoft Word as a platform, the process of coding interviews was conducted. This project conducted two passes of coding onto all the interview transcriptions. Coding charts that included both interviewer-created codes such as RENT for renting, MOVE for moving, and CORP for corporate were supplemented by interviewee-created codes such as COMP for competition, SAFE for a feeling of an area being “safe,” and CONF for the confusion regarding a decision or idea. Over 30 codes were used for the first pass of coding, and over five codes were used for the second pass of coding. The second pass of coding...
condensed ideas from the first pass to deepen the understanding of specific themes that occurred within multiple sets of interviews. For a complete visualization of the coding charts, they are in the appendixes section of this paper. The process of coding was a digital process of using NVivo software when dialogue or a phrase of the transcription either associated with or explicitly stated a specific code. Often, two or more codes applied to the same section of the transcription.

While coding, the primary method of analysis was noting the frequencies of each code (how often a code was indicated in all the transcriptions) in relation to another. Each code was analyzed for having a low, medium, or high frequency that was delineated between the two interviews. For example, codes such as LAND for landlords might have a systematically higher frequency in the first interview that is surrounded by the theme of housing than GROW for growth which might have a higher frequency in the second interview that details the theme of community changes. If codes had higher frequencies, they are assumed to be too broad or generalized. As a result, the second pass of coding used codes that either broke down such codes or investigated them further by combining such codes with other high-frequency codes to group larger pieces of the interview dialogues together.

After coding was completed for the subsection of the data processed, a sequence of propositions and post-analysis tools were used to produce findings. Propositions are statements that inform the relationships between codes to draw conclusions about the topics discussed. For example: when residents of Fayetteville experience the act of moving and renting apartments every year, they value the feeling of spontaneity as they discourage the act of comprehensive financial deliberation. As assumed, each word that is bolded is a separate code that happened to have a high frequency of occurrence with the other bolded codes. Using propositions to conduct
conclusions on the four areas of analysis (housing, demographics, infrastructures, social landscape) allowed for the last process of examination including the creation of post-coding tools.

![Image 13. A screenshot of qualitative coding using NVivo software. Codes (nodes) are located on the left and textual references of such codes are located on the right.](image)

Source: Sean Volavong

Post-coding tools are visualizations and graphics that allow researchers and readers to deepen their understanding of the context of the codes and thus the thesis of this paper. An example of a post-coding tool is a chart that outlines the years each interviewee has lived in Fayetteville, the varying rents they paid each year, and the location in Fayetteville that they lived inside. By creating a post-coding tool such as the one described, a reader can better understand what locations in Fayetteville are becoming increasingly expensive and where most 18-25-year-olds are living in the city’s neighborhoods. Furthermore, post-coding tools and visualizations allow readers to better capture generalizations and conclusions of more complex, qualitative research.
CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS:

GENTRIFICATION IN FAYETTEVILLE’S HOUSING MARKET
“Fayetteville is a very tight market, right now, for housing and renting, so that just means that time is of the essence. It's just a quick market. In normal markets the real estate agents are advised to let the offer stand for 24 to 48 hours and in our market my broker advised us, whenever we make an offer, to only leave it open for 2 to 4 hours because it's that quick. I just think that's interesting. That really goes to show how fast things move and how things are improving.”

- S.F., Age 23, University of Arkansas School of Law Class of 2021
  Rents a Studio Apartment in Downtown Fayetteville for $925/month
5.1 GENTRIFICATION IN FAYETTEVILLE’S HOUSING MARKET

Searching for Housing in Fayetteville

As you exit Interstate 49 and drive through the congested West Wedington Drive that cuts through west Fayetteville, you will encounter empty rust-brown fields showcasing prime real estate opportunities that exist beside newly-created subdivisions containing dominos of identical townhouses and single-family homes. What was once a route filled with forested green open space that many would utilize to travel north to Rogers or south to Fort Smith has transformed into a multi-lane corridor attracting flocks of budget-conscious college students and recent graduates. The amenities around Wedington are tailored to such communities: Arvest Bank, a Walmart Neighborhood Market, Starbucks, Planet Fitness, the popular JJ’s Grill, and a collection of fast-food options clustered in a convenient cul-de-sac. Using the street view function on Google Maps, most of these amenities did not exist merely five years ago.

As Fayetteville’s college-aged population continues to grow dramatically, the once-concentrated bubble of students who chose to live within the proximity of the University of Arkansas’ 718-acre campus located in central Fayetteville has expanded. Sophomores in particular who can live in off-campus housing for the first time have full-reign to explore the residential landscape of the city. Where students choose to live influences their social networks and academic motivations throughout the upcoming academic year.

This autonomous feeling of choice overwhelmed me as I searched for housing to prepare for my incoming stay as a researcher in June of 2018. Craigslist. Airbnb. Community Facebook groups. Zillow. I struggled to collect my arsenal of housing resources as I searched for a temporary three-month-long vacancy within the city limits. All I needed was a single bedroom with a decently-comfortable bed. While accessing resources to search for housing in the area was
confusing at times, securing housing was another behemoth. I chose to search for accommodation one month before I was set to travel to Fayetteville which turned out to be a grave mistake. All the temporary sublets offered by college students were taken. Call after call to leasing agencies and anonymous phone numbers listed in online advertisements resulted in rejections. For one phone call, they mentioned that I should have reached out six months prior when they were negotiating between several offers. I wondered why their post was still online. My experience reflects two major themes one will experience as they search for rental housing in Fayetteville: rental competitiveness and subsequent confusion of housing support networks.

**Searching for Housing in Fayetteville: Increased Competition**

As Fayetteville continues to grow, the residential landscape per the above themes has dramatically changed. In particular, the search for rental housing has become a challenging game for residents. In a city with over 47% of renters designated as cost-burdened (paying 30% or more of their incomes on housing), college students are now fighting more fiercely with first-time-renters who are moving into Northwest Arkansas along with long-term renters whom both are assumingly searching for affordable housing with variable financial resources. For recently-graduated International Business student J.I., he reminisces that college-aged students are now in a time-sensitive competition for cheaper rents with Northwest Arkansas newcomers:

“I do know that a lot of people now are living off campus, whether they are college students or adults, and are having a very hard time finding houses and apartments because of a pretty competitive market that has recently developed. Maybe the lower-end prices of houses are more, you know, competitive than the higher-end houses so most people want the cheaper ones. So, therefore those are the ones that are always occupied and are first-come-first serve places.”
J.I. further describes that the stress that has negatively affected his peers during the search process. He continued to vividly describe the moments when friends did not get off the growing waitlist for on-campus housing and had to “scramble to find a place to live within a span of a few weeks.” This feeling of unmet residential capacity in Fayetteville is best described by noting that the newest University of Arkansas on-campus dormitory (Founders Hall) was opened more than five years ago during the 2013-2014 academic year. Since then, the addition of 214 beds in Founders Hall has only covered a third of the additional 664 new first-year students that have entered the university between Fall 2013 and Fall 2018.

J.I., a past residential assistant for a dorm at the University of Arkansas, described the feeling of “chance” that incoming freshmen felt when he received housing on campus that “requires” all first-year students to live in one of 18 residence halls. For those not getting off the waitlist soon enough, he mentions that they are placed in temporary hotel rooms for the first semesters. J.I. notes that this occurrence is becoming more prevalent throughout the recent years of high growth. Furthermore, the University of Arkansas fourth-year Political Science year senior K.M. expands upon J.I.’s reflection on the increased tensions and competitiveness that renters feel when attempting to attain housing with basic amenities without sacrificing perceived safety:

“There's just a ton of apartments that appeared down [North] Leverett [Ave] and a lot of them are for college or lower income families, because it's not a super nice or safe area. I don't feel unsafe there…but many do. If you're trying to get anywhere near downtown Dickson Street or Old Fayetteville or the University…it is really, really, expensive. Depending on what your income is

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53 “Founders Hall.” Division of Student Affairs: University Housing, University of Arkansas, 2018, housing.uark.edu/campus_communities/Founders/information.php.

54 “Enrollment.” Enrollment Reports | Institutional Research and Assessment
and what you're looking for, just getting a place that's perfectly fine, that's right on a bus route, that's even walking distance to school…is quite difficult.”

The slowing supply of rental housing in Fayetteville against the growing demand has troubled both J.I. and K.M. as they searched for rental housing. Indirect social forces present in Fayetteville include the University of Arkansas who has increased its student population despite not meeting residential demands. Direct social forces present include the movement of renters, regardless of age or income, into Fayetteville who are actively competing with other first-time renters in a crowded market. Such forces combined have influenced a restructured social landscape representing early-stage gentrification in Fayetteville characterized by increasing residential competition especially for those at lower income levels (i.e. college students) who are pressured to compete with one another due to an influx of residents with supposedly higher incomes – a trend faced by many post-gentrification cities such as Toronto55, New York City, and Berlin.56

**Searching for Housing in Fayetteville: Increased Confusion**

Along with residential competition during the housing search, many younger residents of Fayetteville expressed a sense of confusion regarding the hundreds of real estate agents, online listing services, and physical brochure marketing that is associated with the city’s crowded rental market. Due to the rapidly changing residential infrastructure throughout the community (some interviewees noted “a new apartment complex comes out of nowhere every week”), a sense of confusion can arise as first-time renters typically do not know where and how to begin their search for housing. Among my interviewees, about 95% moved off-campus and continued to live off-

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campus after their first years at the University of Arkansas. For the few that continued to rent on-campus dormitories and apartments, the sense of confusion on resources and personal capacity to search influenced their decision, just as recently graduated Journalism student S.T. describes:

“I ended up staying on campus because I thought I was going to move off campus, and then my friend and I that was going to move with me, actually my current roommate at the time, we just got really overwhelmed with all the choices, apartment complexes...all new to me from my small Arkansan hometown. And we were just like – this is too hard. Let's just live on campus.”

While a majority of the 54.22% of Arkansas-native incoming students at the university are from the state’s two largest metropolitan areas (Northwest Arkansas and Little Rock), S.T. who is from a small city in the Fort Smith Metropolitan represents a growing majority of students who are from less-populated counties.57 These students assumingly have not encountered such a competitive and complex rental market in a rapidly-growing large city thus reinforcing a sense of helplessness and apathy associated with the autonomy to find off-campus housing after their first year. Within the framework of Hwang and Lin’s definition of gentrification rooted in the tension between those with higher SES and those with lower SES, one can argue in this situation that those with higher SES are more socially-advantageous residents from the larger metropolitan regions of Arkansas who might have experience renting housing and/or might have easier access to the housing support and resource networks.58 While incoming students at the University of Arkansas from rural backgrounds are a portion of the population expressing confusion surrounding


Fayetteville’s rental market, incoming non-university residents also exhibit similar feelings. First-year law student S.F. who has a professional background in residential real estate marketing described helping a couple moving to Northwest Arkansas from rural Arkansas in their search for their first apartment:

“I felt like this is kind of weird…[my clients] were all moving from only rural parts of Arkansas and they just wanted to move to Northwest Arkansas like everybody else does. It's just the place to go, it's the only place developing really rapidly right now around here so they just see the opportunity and they see a chance where they can make more money so they're gonna come. But they have no clue how to rent, they don't even know how to begin. They’re lucky they found me.”

Image 14. Fall 2018 in-state University of Arkansas enrollment by county.

Source: University of Arkansas
For my interviewees that did move off-campus and into apartments or single-family homes, the more socially-advantageous insiders versus outsiders’ framework of gentrification appeared as such residents mentioned the benefits of having access to informal housing relationships. The most common insider benefits include the prevalence of familial or personal connections that influenced how and why residents chose to rent specific housing options. For example, accessible connections accelerated the housing search while also providing residents with a “hidden” market of less-expensive housing. Third-year university student S.C. who grew up in nearby Bentonville admits his insider positionality compared to his peers while he began his search for a new apartment:

“Actually…for renting in Fayetteville I would talk to my dad, because my dad knows everyone in Northwest Arkansas – Fayetteville, Rogers, Springdale…Bentonville. Literally everyone that owns a business or has connections to cheaper apartments, my dad knows.”

On a similar note, Retail Analytics student T.K. who grew up in Lowell (headquarters of J.B. Hunt) also benefited from his personal connections:

“I actually just got thrown into the downtown Springdale house because it was my boss’ old friend that owned the townhouse complex. And so, we got $50 off our rent. It was nothing much, but anything helps when my friends’ rents have jumped over the past years in Fayetteville.”

As shown through dialogues with S.C. and T.K., familial and personal connections can not only create a disadvantaged start to the rental search for those without such relationships, but they can also build community inequities from intergenerational support. Within this research, five out of the thirteen interviewees grew up in Northwest Arkansas. Having grown up in the area or knowing a connection who has done so can be an asset. Familial and personal support, whether it is providing housing connections (interviewee S.C.) or transferring financial incentives (interviewee T.K.) to help younger residents in a competitive housing market, further drives gentrification as it
allows young adults to have access to additional sources of wealth, indirectly driving up housing prices in different areas of Fayetteville that are hotbeds of familial or personal connections. As these new flows of capital are established, such support allows residents like Fayetteville’s college students to “afford” to reside within high-value and high-rent areas such as the city’s downtown area surrounding Dickson Street, the Uptown District, and The Square (characteristics of these gentrifying areas are investigated in subsequent analysis chapters). For example, in a qualitative study on Amsterdam’s residential transformations, parental wealth was found as the key predictor of young people’s financial ability, propensity, and preference to move towards “up-market” gentrification neighborhoods.

This subchapter synthesizes the feelings of competition and confusion (two codes that had a strong relationship along with high frequencies) when searching for rental housing in Fayetteville. These themes can be inserted into this study’s grounded definition of gentrification. Specifically, when considering gentrification’s four elements, indirect social forces present include familial and personal connections who have created an emerging input of alternative pathways of financial investment into their recipients. These investments generate an output of increasing land prices in gentrifying downtown and uptown neighborhoods as they can now afford higher rents, potentially creating a false signal to landlords and housing management agencies to raise their rates and further continue a timeline of gentrification in Fayetteville.


5.2 GENTRIFICATION IN FAYETTEVILLE’S HOUSING MARKET

Living in Fayetteville’s Housing

Searching for housing in Fayetteville is only a portion of one’s experience interacting with the high-growth community. Living and sustaining a secure home is equally, if not more, essential and strenuous for Fayetteville’s younger residents who are doing so during a period of high socioeconomic growth. As mentioned, one prominent format of real estate marketing is brochures lining tables in restaurants, boutiques, and community centers highlighting “student-oriented” apartments with incentives including reduced first-month rates, promises of high-quality amenities such as gated community pools, and an accessible commute to Dickson Street, the center of entertainment and nightlife in Fayetteville only a ten-minute walk from the university campus. Prominent apartment complexes in central Fayetteville include The Academy at Frisco, Atmosphere, The Avenue, The Cardinal at West Center, The Dickson, Eco Modern Flats, Gather Dickson, Watson Street Apartments, and YOUnion @ Fayetteville.

As such apartment complexes have become more desirable and competitive to live primarily due to their central location, interviewees who have attempted to live in them have expressed negativity and apprehension towards stakeholders such as management agencies and landlords who can influence and manipulate the social and financial aspects of rental life. The latter element of monetary manipulation in favor of higher returns has also created a tumultuous situation in Fayetteville as younger residents are forced to compete in a constrained, limited, and gentrifying housing market that favors landlords. From the experiences of my interviewees, two important themes summarize one’s experience as they start and continue to live in rental housing in Fayetteville: navigating an abundance of landlord manipulation and adjusting financial realities.
Living in Fayetteville’s Housing: Landlord Manipulation

Two high-frequency codes stemming from interview analysis was a sense of exclusion and red-tape from housing management, the University of Arkansas, and newcomers to the area when younger residents were searching or starting to live in rental housing. Along with the confusion associated with the first-time financial obligations of searching for housing in Fayetteville, another source of first-time commitments is handling the relationships with management stakeholders such as off-campus landlords. For example, recently graduated History, Arabic, and Middle Eastern Studies triple-major E.D. described to me a tumultuous time during her junior year when she lived in a student-oriented apartment complex near Dickson Street in downtown Fayetteville. Due to logistical issues from the upsurge of students competing to move into the complex before the academic year started along with an unreactive rental management, E.D. was stuck in a week-long limbo period of homelessness as she waited to secure housing: a common situation for those on the University of Arkansas’ waiting list as previously described by interviewee J.I. She told me:

“So, at the beginning of junior year I actually didn’t have anywhere to live for the first week of school because my apartment complex refused to help move me. They said they were printing out..."
papers….which took them two weeks to do. I felt trapped and betrayed. Although I could’ve waited at the Hilton [Hotel] like my friends, I had to do things myself as I moved to a different, more expensive apartment.”

This feeling of non-transparency and subsequent confusion from landlords who have aggressively marketed their apartments to eager college students also affected fourth-year student R.E. who was caught in unfavorable management circumstances associated with attempting to negotiate his recent rental in a three-bedroom house in west Fayetteville. He told me:

“Through the whole time we were renting he was horrible. He would say he would do all this stuff and would never ever do it…here’s the thing. We tried to sign a lease when one guy left, then our other roommate and then the other one moved in. We were like, "hey we want to sign a new lease, we got a new guy living here." And then our old landlord was like, "I'll get it to you. I'll get it to you.” I was really trying to get it done before school started and he knew he could manipulate us. He was like, "Yeah, yeah, I'll get in trouble about it eventually. Don't worry," is what he said.”

Throughout the interview, R.E. further described how his vulnerable position as a college student without secure housing weeks before classes began sparked an ability for his then-landlord to not only have assumed flexibility in mismanaging the rental housing (i.e., waiting prolonged periods without repairs) and adjusting R.E.’s rent prices without much opposition (i.e., the landlord raised the rates by $50 after R.E. attempted to negotiate the timing of his roommates’ move-in dates). Although R.E. expressed his opposition to me during the interview, he noted that he had no choice but accept his landlord’s actions because he is in a financially and physically vulnerable position: as a college student, he does not have strong financial resources to navigate a competitive rental market easily, thus he felt he must take any offers that are available to him. R.E.’s sense of helplessness was reinforced by my interview with J.I., who said:
“But because we are in a college town where I think half of our population is college students, landlords feel like they can charge whatever they want. And I think there is a limit on how much they can charge, but even if there is a limit, they would go up to that limit and people would still pay up to that.”

When coding for references of landlords, E.D., R.E., and J.I.’s interviews were examples of conversations that reinforced the strong coding relationships between landlords and rental management stakeholders and codes such as exclusion and red-tape. Although college students in a gentrifying Fayetteville are eager to find cheaper places to live with limited budgets, rising systematic pushback from social institutions such as rental management stakeholders have led to a sense of hopelessness (another code) when faced with the realization that finding cheaper housing in Fayetteville will result in minimal success rates without sacrificing a sense of living security. This narrative further reinforces indicators of early gentrification such as those who are affecting (landlords), those who are affecting (money-conscious college students), and the output (a restructured landscape of local distrust in social institutions related to rental management).

Living in Fayetteville’s Housing: Adjusting Financial Realities

The visual further in this subchapter depicts a trend almost universal to my interviewees: rent has increased in Fayetteville over the recent years. As Fayetteville will grow from 87,000 residents in 2018 to over 143,000 residents by 2040, not only will new residents face a sense of confusion and manipulation from the search for housing, but a more crowded rental market will directly increase demand (and prices) and decrease housing supply.

Many of my questions asked to interviewees not only investigated their current housing conditions but also how such situations have changed over time. As housing competition continues to increase which will positively affect rent prices, it is assumed that Fayetteville’s younger
residents are modifying their budgets. My questions allowed me to gain insight into how residents are reflecting upon gentrification’s effects on their personal lives as they prioritize financial decisions. E.D. describes her confusion and adjustment about budgeting a set amount of money for renting after the fact, especially as she comes from a smaller town in Arkansas that has not faced a dramatic population boom such as Northwest Arkansas. She told me:

“I just had unrealistic views of how much it would be to live. How much rent would be, I knew it would be like…$500? At least I knew that…but I didn’t take into account utilities and parking and stuff like that. As each time I moved on I realized that life in Fayetteville is really expensive.”

E.D. represents the segment of 18-25-year-olds living in Fayetteville who have had uneasy feelings when given the opportunity to live in housing that requires them to commit hundreds of dollars from their (or related persons’) incomes after simply signing a housing contract. E.D. then proceeded to describe to me the financial conditions of her close friends. About 50% have strong financial support from their parents (i.e., “her parents are paying for all of her rent.”). For example, fourth-year political science student K.M. describes her opinion on the financial relationship between students and their guardians related to living in student-oriented apartments:

“I think [student apartments] are like really really expensive to be marketing them towards students and like no student is living there unless their parents are paying for it or over half of it. So, I don't necessarily like it. I understand that the student living is great if you're in your first or second year of college and you don't really understand how utilities work and you don't have all your own furniture to put into an apartment yet. So, I think they're good for that, but I don't think that they're very good for teaching financial independence to students moving out into the real world. It's so expensive here.”
The other half of E.D.’s friends were described as having minimal support. Her friends’ situations have motivated them to compete for cheaper, affordable housing in Fayetteville. For some, like E.D., they might enter the housing lotteries with a set amount of money for rent each month that they ideally would not exceed when finding a house or apartment. However, for some, those limits have become the minimum, rather than the maximum. For example, fourth-year political science student M.F. told me:

“I would say the average rent probably a student pays for a house here a month is $600 not including utilities…and if they live in an apartment building, you know bills are included in that, so I'd say around $6-650 is the average…which is just a lot. It’s a lot….and I think it's hard to find cheaper rent in this area. My limit, at first, was $500. I'm sure it exists, but I don't know where. I don't know of anyone that lives in cheaper places…I've never seen them. I don't know those places myself.”

When E.D. and M.F. entered the University of Arkansas in the fall of 2015, the median gross rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Fayetteville was slightly below $575/month. Over four years, the median gross rent has increased by $75. The median gross rent in the city has increased by $125 since 2010. Although such figures might seem minimal to those living in larger metropolitan areas, the focus of analysis of 18-25-year-olds in Fayetteville is the overwhelming feeling of confusion and red-tape of such new experiences relative to humble beginnings as young adults in Arkansas. Especially as college students are primarily searching for temporary housing situations (i.e., nine-month rentals for the academic year and three-month rentals for the summer session) versus incoming residents who might be older and are looking for long-term housing, the temporary nature of accommodation could pose a sense of constant financial pressure. How are

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61 Volavong, Sean M. “Fayetteville, AR Community Equity Profile
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such residents in Fayetteville mitigating such feelings when thousands of people are moving into their city every year?

![Interviewees’ Reported Rent Prices Per Year as Students](chart.png)

Note: Data only shows interviewees who have rented for four or more years in Fayetteville.

Figure 12. Yearly Reported Rents from Interviewees.

Source: Sean Volavong

As Fayetteville’s cost of living increases, the main factor that young college students in the city witness is a change to the affordability of their current and prospective housing options. As some students have less autonomy with their financial resources, they are increasingly aware of the need to budget their funds in a growing city. Along with this conscious effort, pre-existing residents in Fayetteville are becoming less informed and more confused regarding the social dynamics and relationships that arise during a time of early gentrification.
CHAPTER 6. ANALYSIS

GENTRIFICATION IN FAYETTEVILLE’S SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS
“I would say that we need to protect the original residents of Fayetteville. Because having a whole town run by younger rich people, especially from Texas, is not indicative of Arkansas or any diversity. That's not what Fayetteville has been. And it's disappointing to see it turning into that.”

- S.T., Age 22, University of Arkansas Class of 2018

Rents a Room in a 2-Bedroom Apartment in West Fayetteville for $500/month
6.1 GENTRIFICATION IN FAYETTEVILLE’S SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS:

A New Majority

Fayetteville has experienced several waves of socioeconomic transitions over the past three decades (detailed in chapter two). Between 1990 and 2000, the community witnessed a dramatic growth in its Latinx population that prompted mixed reactions. Similarly, between 2000 and 2010 Northwest Arkansas, fueled by infrastructure developments, gained an influx of in-state residents moving to the area in search of better-paying and economically-sustainable opportunities. Starting around 2010 and into the present, Fayetteville is garnering a new, more-youthful majority of residents that is shifting the city’s demography: college students and college-aged residents.

A New Majority: College Students with a Normative Culture

During the decade from 2010 to 2020, the fastest-growing age group in Fayetteville is expected to be its 18-25-year-old population at a positive decade rate of 4.70%. However, the fastest-declining age group is the one directly proceeding it: the 25-29-year-old population at a negative rate of 3.50%. When presented this statistic to my interviewees, multiple hypotheses were formulated. The top three responses, in order of frequency, include (1) the result of migrated residents into Northwest Arkansas bringing their children who are growing older, (2) the increasing enrollment of the University of Arkansas, and (3) the presence of many higher-paying part-time and full-time employment opportunities present in a growing community. While the first and third observations have merit, qualitatively and statistically analyzing such trends within the capacity of this research study would be implausible. The second observation of the growth of the University of Arkansas enrollment over the past decade and beyond provided a baseline suggestion that the assertion that Fayetteville’s early gentrification could be influenced by an institutional
push along with the direct movement of residents with higher SES increasing rental prices and decreasing housing supply in high-demand areas such as Dickson Street, the Square, and Uptown.

![Figure 13. The Growth of 18-25-Year-Olds in Fayetteville (top line). Source: Sean Volavong](image)

If college students are increasingly entering Fayetteville, it is assumed that they are also projecting their priorities, backgrounds, and needs into their behaviors as they interact with the community. Within my interview period, I coded any mentions that referenced a normative culture: a set of person-centered ideas or norms that are shared by a community. To understand how Fayetteville is experiencing a state of early gentrification, it is critical to reflect upon a growing

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62 For the purposes of analysis, I am grouping together 18-25-year-olds and college students into the same category.


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majority’s specific behaviors and their effects onto a community. By analyzing such norms, researchers and community stakeholders alike can understand how college students affect Fayetteville’s social, physical, and symbolic environments.\(^{64}\) By doing so, Fayetteville can better tailor its infrastructure and amenities to counteract any negative results of a growing majority (discussed in chapter seven). However, the indication of a new normative culture reinforces a restructured social landscape caused by an input of a new group of residents under Fayetteville’s definition of gentrification.

One category of Fayetteville’s college students’ normative culture relates to their values and priorities related to rental housing search and subsequent living. What are college students looking for in housing? How are potential landlords and rental management agencies using such information for their financial gain at the expense of Fayetteville’s livability? When asked why the student-oriented apartments centered around Dickson Street and Uptown are rising in costs and value, J.I. mentions:

“A lot of college students are going to be very petty and they will want to live like rich kids even though they cannot afford that, so they are going to want stainless steel appliances, a kitchen with granite counter tops, a gated pool with a jacuzzi, a parking garage with more than one space for their friends, and stuff like that. At this point pretty much, every single apartment complex or student living apartments around Dickson [Street] will have some kind of amenities like that. And if the landlords are smart and it has all what college students want, it will be more expensive.”

Although the mentioning of amenities associated with contemporary apartments is not groundbreaking (but can be used to justify the “cookie-cutter” feeling of Dickon Street’s student-

oriented apartments), J.I. reveals that college students are (a) willing to spend copious amounts of money on living luxuries while also (b) obliviously choosing financial decisions without being able to afford them. The latter is essential to note because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, many incoming students are coming from backgrounds without a strong sense of apartment renting or understanding the effects from the rising cost of living in the area. Furthermore, the norm of rental values and priorities can create a possible opportunity for rental prices to be artificially increased knowing that an oblivious demand outweighs a minimal supply.

**UNIT BENEFITS**

- Your Own Private Space
- Property-Wide Blazing-Fast Wi-Fi
- Private Locks on Each Bedroom
- Private Bathroom
- Fully Furnished
- Granite Kitchen Counters
- Memory Foam Mattresses
- Wood Plank-Style Flooring in Living Room, Kitchen and Bath
- Walk-In Closets
- Full-Sized Washer and Dryer
- Flat-Screen TV in Living Room and in Each Bedroom
- Penthouses Available with 55” Flat-Screen TV and Brick Accent Wall in Living Room
- Electronic Keycard Access to Front Door
- ENERGY STAR® Appliances
- Private Patios or Balconies in Select Units
- Private Locks on Each Bedroom
- Ceiling Fan In Bedrooms
- Pet Friendly

Image 16. Unit benefits at the YOUnion@Fayetteville located near Dickson Street.
Source: YOUnion@Fayetteville

Conversely, while J.I. mentions infrastructure amenities that college students are prioritizing, interviewees such as third-year Political Science and Urban Studies student S.C. describes his assumption that Fayetteville’s college students are more so valuing environmental amenities that give them access to high-demand areas:

“Maybe perhaps college students and millennials in general are not looking for a grand mansion with a bowling alley and a huge TV inside their house. They're more looking for a small apartment...”
that has access to the bowling alley and has access to the movie theater and has access to the coffee shops. I feel like that has changed, at least in Fayetteville: the desire for different kinds of housing. They’re more looking for what the housing can provide around them rather than what the house will provide for them directly, you know what I mean?”

S.C. touches upon the value college students have on accessing in-demand areas of Fayetteville that are undergoing early stages of gentrification via a transition in a new demographic majority (college students) outputting higher land and rental prices while also created a restructured landscape of value-added amenities that are tailored towards a younger demographic. Such amenities are centered around two districts/neighborhoods in Fayetteville: Dickson Street and Uptown. Dickson Street is an approximately 0.6 mile-long avenue comprised of restaurants, bars, and establishments (listed in order of frequency mentioned by interviewees) such as: JJ’s Bar and Grill, Arsaga’s, Puritan Coffee & Beer, The Walton Arts Center, Brewski’s Draft Emporium, Hammontree’s Grilled Cheese, Theo’s, the Dickson Street Booksop, 21st Amendment, Pickleman’s Gourmet Café, Shotz Bar, Chipotle, and the list goes on. These elements are all within walking distance from both the University of Arkansas and the many student-oriented apartments clustered around Dickson Street.

Image 17. Student-oriented apartments at Dickson Street (Frisco Apartments - left) and at Uptown Fayetteville (Uptown Apartments - right).

Source: Fayetteville Flyer
Fayetteville’s Uptown District is an ambiguous neighborhood in north Fayetteville enclosed by the Northwest Arkansas Mall, North College Avenue, the Fulbright Expressway, and North Gregg Avenue. Within Uptown, one will find a greater diversity in housing options and entertainment options. These include student-oriented apartments and townhouses, restaurants such as Grub’s Uptown, JJ’s Beer Garden & Brewing Company, and Buffalo Wild Wings, and commercial institutions such as Walmart, Target, Kohl’s, The Home Depot, Best Buy, and much more. First-year law student S.F. described how she and her friends felt about Uptown Fayetteville especially as it is increasingly becoming a more popular destination for college students:

“Okay, so if you're living in Uptown that's by the mall and there's tons of stuff up there: restaurants and brand new apartment and townhouse complexes…so realistically, if you wanna live by yourself as a college student in a nice area like Uptown, I would just say budget $1,200 for rent because I know classmates who live in Uptown in those apartment complexes and it's a really nice complex but they pay like $1,100 to $1,200 just to live by themselves.”

Dickson Street and Uptown Fayetteville are two areas experiencing tangible gentrification: a transformation of residential and commercial amenities driven by the economic and normative influence of a new majority of residents: college students.\textsuperscript{65} This subchapter reveals a new normative culture from a growing majority (college students) in Fayetteville that is pivoting community investment into amenities that are tailored for a specific audience. From analyzing interviewees’ descriptions on Dickson Street and Uptown, it is apparent that Fayetteville is becoming a community whose infrastructural future is guided by the new norms and priorities of college students. How will Fayetteville react when, during a stage of early gentrification,
residences such as student-oriented apartments become inaccessible to many college students (and the greater community) if the timeline of gentrification continues?

A New Majority: Texas Students Divide a Community

Another justification for the hypothesis that Fayetteville’s college-aged population is rapidly growing due to the increasing enrollment at the University of Arkansas is the institution’s application incentives. If one is a resident of Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas and has at least a 3.20 high school GPA and a 24 ACT or 1160 SAT score, they will automatically gain a 70% reduction in out-of-state tuition fees. This award can reach a 90% reduction with a 3.60 high school GPA, and a 28 ACT or a 1310 SAT score, providing a financial incentive for applicants from surrounding states to attend the University of Arkansas at a lower cost than their state flagship institutions.

Out of all the neighboring states, one state was mentioned in every single interview when interviewees commented on the changing demographics of Fayetteville over the past few years: Texas. When interviewees described who was driving an increase in rental prices throughout Fayetteville and especially in areas such as Dickson Street and Uptown, many were reluctant to admit that college students are the primary demographic. However, many interviewees were quick to answer with varied opinions and remarks who closely aligns with the input of resident displacers in Fayetteville’s gentrification definition: Texas-natives at the University of Arkansas. In recent years, the University of Arkansas’ New Arkansas Non-Resident Tuition Award Scholarship has resulted in an upsurge of Texas residents flocking to Northwest Arkansas for cheaper rents, a less competitive college admissions process, and a similar collegiate environments compared to the University of Texas’ flagship campus located in the booming and increasingly-expensive Austin,
Texas. For example, J.I., who rented housing on-campus for all of the years he was affiliated as a student at the University of Arkansas, described to me the movements of Texas residents which allowed him to analyze his friends and residents who came from the state. He told me:

“What I’ve heard before, and I don’t know if it’s true or not, I mean I don’t know much about law or real estate, but what I know is at least 50% of our students come from Texas...and housing in Texas is extremely expensive. So, people...Texas people...are used to paying $1,000 for one-bedroom apartments. So, when they come to the University of Arkansas, they pay the same.”

J.I. introduces a dilemma. Not only is there awareness of the migration of Texas residents to Northwest Arkansas from pre-existing residents, but there is also the existence of a financial dialogue of newcomers versus pre-existing residents that has become more controversial as growth continues in Fayetteville. Similarly, recently graduated S.T. also synthesizes J.I.’s argument that Texas residents have influenced a new financial landscape of renting in Fayetteville’s student-oriented apartment complexes:

“I think it has a lot to do that a lot of our student population comes from Texas and Arkansas is the cheaper option for them, but they have money, and they have money to spend. So, obviously the apartment complexes can charge it, which is great for them, but it means people that have lived in Fayetteville their whole lives, can’t afford housing prices anymore. So, that’s an issue.”

This new landscape dominated by assumingly more financially-equipped Texas residents pricing out the pre-existing college students creates a complication when analyzing who the true displacers are in Fayetteville under gentrification’s definition. I argue that Fayetteville’s college students, indirectly influenced by the University of Arkansas’ long-term planning to grow its student body,
are displacers as they are continuously driving rental prices by pivoting priorities and demands, yet Texas-natives at the University of Arkansas are a subsection of such college students who are further accelerating the timeline of early gentrification in Fayetteville. This observation is a familiar occurrence as it mirrors the feelings of apprehension and tension past residents of Fayetteville felt when subsequent waves of newcomers (i.e., Latinx population in the 1990s and in-state migrants in the 2000s) produced mixed reactions. Such mirroring also reinforces the fact that Northwest Arkansas’ growth and subsequent mixed community reactions are not new, but rather are transformed dilemmas that engage different stakeholders.

Within gentrification’s definition, the affecting population in this situation is financially-equipped newcomers into Northwest Arkansas searching for rental housing such as this subchapter’s mentioned Texas residents. The affected population are the pre-existing young college-aged residents (and lower-income residents alike) in Fayetteville who have lower budgets than the newcomers. The input is a transitioned normative culture that such newcomers are placing into the community and the output is a restructured social landscape including investment into amenities in high-demand areas such as Dickson Street and Uptown along with higher rental limits.
6.2 GENTRIFICATION IN FAYETTEVILLE’S SHifting DEMOGRAPHICS:

An Emerging Corporate Culture

Within my interviewing period, another set of high-frequency codes were related to the rising employment and economic opportunities as a result of the growing power of Northwest Arkansas’ corporate base. Within such codes, there is a clear relationship between the area’s “corporate culture” and institutions such as “Walmart” and the “business school” (the Sam M. Walton College of Business) at the University of Arkansas. Furthermore, such codes were usually complemented by other codes detailing “competitiveness” and “pressure” from my interviewees which indicated a negative outcome from rapid socioeconomic growth. This chapter investigates such coding relationships while also relating them to the narrative of gentrification: direct and indirect social and political forces such as the University of Arkansas and the area’s three Fortune 500 companies have financially invested into Northwest Arkansas’ rising majority (college students), resulting in a social landscape output characterized by pressure and competition to capitalize on the economic opportunities presented by such forces.

An Emerging Corporate Culture: The University of Arkansas Incubates Pressure

The University of Arkansas is the largest employer in Fayetteville, and the second-largest employer in Washington County (Tyson Foods Inc. is first). As a self-proclaimed college-town, Fayetteville is economically, socially, and politically dominated by the University of Arkansas’ prideful influence onto the community. Throughout the city’s streets, one will find the college’s athletic mascot, a cardinal-hued Razorback (a type of pig), promoted on vehicles, advertisements, and even embedded in business names (i.e., Yeehawg is a popular bar located on Dickson Street).

Furthermore, as the university’s combined student, faculty, and related employee population is about a third of Fayetteville’s resident population, Fayetteville is partially dependent on the economic ebbs and flows of the academic school year. Such observations and relationships will become more commonplace as the university continues to increase its student enrollment. Along with this trend of rising enrollment, what other trends exist within the university’s functions and what systems extend outward into the greater community? The following conceptual framework, driven by a grounded-theory approach using evidence from interviewees, outlines the ties between Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas while reinforcing the scales of influences that contribute to the assertion that Fayetteville is undergoing early gentrification.

![Figure 14. The relationship between the University of Arkansas and Fayetteville.](Source: Sean Volavong)
The Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas comprised 23.3% of all students in Fall 2018. Over the past ten years, this figure has increased by 5.9%. What has caused this increase and what are its social and economic implications onto Fayetteville’s younger residents? Within my interviewee pool, only J.I. is affiliated with the business school as he recently graduated with an International Business major in 2018. When asked about the perks and advantages of choosing the Walton College of Business over the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Architecture, the College of Engineering, the Bumpers College of Agricultural Food & Life Sciences, and the College of Education and Health Professions, J.I. said:

“I think the University of Arkansas does a great job on really letting us know what the real-world is like and what the corporate world is looking for...at least for the Sam Walton College of Business. I knew exactly who my competition was and what companies I could work for compared to my friends. I knew what they were looking for in candidates and what they required – their minimum qualifications. So, in my case, I was well-connected with internships...Walmart, J.B. Hunt, and their distributors...no matter what while my friends struggled to figure out how to use their majors in the workforce here in Arkansas.”

J.I. further described the vast amounts of pre-professional advising, exclusive career fairs, and internships that were only available to students at the business school. Although this observation (a specific academic department garnering tailored amenities) is not vastly different from colleges across the United States, what separates the University of Arkansas apart from others is the sheer economic, social, and political advantage of enrolling in the business school due to the corporate nature of Northwest Arkansas. Recently graduated E.D. who is from the Fulbright

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68 “Fall 2018 Enrollment Report - Office of Institutional Research.”

69 Undergraduates must enroll in one of six colleges that host their intended majors.
College of Arts and Sciences describes this polarization of advantages of her friends compared to her journey throughout college searching for employment:

“I'm not entirely sure how pre-professionalism works because I'm a history major. It's the complete opposite of the business school. I do know it's extremely competitive to get internships if you're not a business major. I know with my friend Rachel, the one that works at ALDI’s corporate office, she got offered several jobs last semester. She's literally like perfect on paper like all of them. Other than that, our business school, which is literally funded by the Walmart family, is huge here and almost every single student can get an internship at Walmart or Tyson or any of their partners if they minimally try to network.”

E.D. provides a different perspective to J.I. as she has witnessed the popularization of the business school. Many of my interviewees represented the humanities: political science, journalism, theatre, international relations, studio art, and psychology. Furthermore, for those with such backgrounds, feelings of resentment and helplessness emerged when discussing the professional job search in Northwest Arkansas. E.D., like many of my interviewees, are aware of the presence and influence of the corporate surroundings onto the university but are now just recently understanding how it can impede on their ability to compete professionally in a biased job market. If Silicon Valley in the San Francisco Bay Area is biased towards those with computer engineering backgrounds and the Research Triangle in North Carolina is biased towards those with biomedical engineering backgrounds, then Northwest Arkansas has transitioned into the perfect clustered economy for those with business backgrounds.

The University of Arkansas is an indirect force that is funneling its students into its business school that serves as an incubator for a heavily-corporate workforce. While the university is not a direct contributor towards Fayetteville’s gentrification, the institution is providing the foundations for more direct stakeholders, such as graduated business school students, to enter the Northwest
Arkansas rental market with higher salaries, more strategic housing and professional connections, and a new set of priorities and values that can accelerate the timeline of early gentrification.

**An Emerging Corporate Culture: A Land of the Fortune 500**

Northwest Arkansas has a high ratio of Fortune 500 companies per capita as the presence of Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt, and Walmart is in a metropolitan area of only about 550,000 residents. Within the region, Walmart alone has attracted over 1,300 vendors (suppliers of the supermarket’s goods and furnishings) that have contributed to a strong multiplier effect of corporate employment and spillover into the local economy. The pipeline of college students entering the University of Arkansas primarily funded by the Fortune 500 companies, enrolling into the Sam M. Walton College of Business, specializing in either Business Administration or International Business, and subsequently entering back into the companies directly or indirectly related to the three Fortune 500 companies is a cycle of increased investment into Fayetteville that fuels gentrification indicators such as shifting demographics. This cycle was described by R.E. who is originally from Eureka Springs, a small town on the edge of the Northwest Arkansas metropolitan region:

“I mean Bentonville, Lowell…and Fayetteville with Walmart always has an insane amount of money coming in. I think that they're trying to lure people, bringing their families like mine and moving to work at the home office or all the distributors. Same with getting more college kids here, and so they're trying to make it really nice for them. It is really nice here. We have better restaurants now. We have better jobs here now. Everything is getting better….if you’re one of them.”

After hearing this, I verbally defined gentrification in the context of Fayetteville and was eager to ask how R.E. would react to this cycle of investment. I further asked what actions he or other stakeholders would enact in response. He described:
“I don't necessarily have a strong feeling about what I would do, but I also don't feel that I know what's really at play. What native Fayettevillians feel about [gentrification]? How much development or apartment complexes are actually going up….I have an impression, but I don't totally know. And a lot of that is kind of necessary because so much of the money that comes into Fayetteville that allows us to have nice things comes from the university and Walmart, so it's a balancing act. You want there to be money in this place, but a balanced combination. The university's an entity that grows and has its needs to incentivize and continue to grow. And to handle that growth, it needs to expand and make housing for that – which it hasn't exactly done recently.”

R.E.’s response is a repeated reflection upon the sense of confusion and questioning associated with Fayetteville’s recent growth previously related to the act of searching and living in Fayetteville’s rental housing market. This new sense of confusion is now associated with searching for employment in a battleground dominated by corporate ties. Using community-based values to drive the formulation of interview questions, I then prompted to ask other interviewees on their response to gentrification’s definition and how and if it can apply to Fayetteville’s context. Many exhibited similar sentiments as R.E. especially regarding their perceived need for investment into Northwest Arkansas yet balancing negative externalities such as a constrained housing market and a rise in the cost of living for those without strong financial backgrounds. On the other end of the spectrum, S.T. notes her awareness for such negative externalities becoming more common throughout her community and is actively against the Fortune 500 pressure in the area:

“Northwest Arkansas is just Walmart and families. No young people want to live here unless they work for Walmart. I firmly believe this. No person that just graduated from the UofA would choose a different job…I know people that have...actually…well never mind, I know a lot of people who got jobs in Walmart since they graduated, but they're one of the many people contributing to gentrification with their high salaries. As much as I hate them, I do admit I am a bit envious.”
S.T. was one of the few interviewees who directly placed gentrification at the hands of Fayetteville’s rising college-aged, business-specialized population. What will happen when Fayetteville’s displacers are divided? Throughout this chapter, evidence from my interviewees has indicated that Fayetteville has transformed into a new social landscape influenced by direct and indirect institutions. The result of the University of Arkansas funneling students into the community’s corporate world has motivated the area’s Fortune 500 companies to continue a cycle of investment and indirect exclusion from residents without such professional connections, higher salaries, and access to Fayetteville’s increasingly-costly housing options. Many questions arise towards Northwest Arkansas’ corporate culture. Is the workforce too saturated? Is the economy too dependent on the successes of a few companies? When will the economic bubble burst?

I have argued, using evidence from my interviewees and background research, that college-aged residents within Fayetteville are the active displacers accelerated by direct and indirect institutions such as the University of Arkansas and the area’s Fortune 500 companies. Over the past decade, this relationship has transitioned the region’s demographics to be heavily corporate and heavily biased towards those within the corporate world’s sphere of influence. This relationship is indicated by the rise of enrollment in the Sam M. Walton College of Business, the increased competition and pressure stemming from the search for employment opportunities, and the polarized perspectives of business-insiders and business-outsiders. Within gentrification’s definition, the affecting population is now complicated as it is aligned with college residents (who previously was the affected population) but specifically those graduating from the University of Arkansas’ business school along with the business school itself and the area’s Fortune 500 companies. The input is continued investment from corporate businesses into the University of Arkansas that has led to an output of a restructured social landscape in Northwest Arkansas.
dominated and biased towards the insiders (those affiliated with the corporate world) and outsiders (those not affiliated with the corporate world).
CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION
8. CONCLUSION:

<table>
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<td>Pre-existing residents</td>
<td>Investment into amenities and institutions</td>
<td>Restructured social landscape</td>
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Figure 15. Fayetteville’s Broad Definition of Gentrification
Source: Sean Volavong

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<td>college students, original and lower-income residents of Fayetteville</td>
<td>financial investment into institutions, new normative culture</td>
<td>restructured social landscape: new normative culture, increased competition, rise in cost of living</td>
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Figure 16. Fayetteville’s Specific Definition of Gentrification
Source: Sean Volavong

Over the past decade, Fayetteville’s housing market and demographics have transformed as Northwest Arkansas continues to add dozens of new residents each day. From analyzing the interviews conducted, the primary findings associated with Fayetteville during a time of high socioeconomic growth include a confirmation on the affected populations, affecting populations, and input and output elements associated with Fayetteville’s gentrification’s definition. In this case, the affecting population includes the vast amount of college-aged residents in Fayetteville, specifically those who identify with being from Texas with higher financial statuses and those affiliated with the Sam M. Walton College of Business who have more advantageous employment and economic prospects compared to the general student population. Furthermore, landlords and

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rental management agencies overlooking residences such as Fayetteville’s network of student-oriented apartments are included in those affecting a state of gentrification by becoming increasingly aware of the financially-vulnerable student population in the city. Lastly, direct and indirect social forces such as the University of Arkansas and the area’s three Fortune 500 companies (and related corporations in the area) are included as well.

The affected populations in Fayetteville are also its rising college-aged population but specifically a subset of residents who (a) are coming from backgrounds without a firm grasp on navigating the rental market in Fayetteville via housing resources or professional relationships and (b) are coming from financial backgrounds that are not as adaptable and strong compared to their peers. Furthermore, original residents of Fayetteville and its lower-income population are included in those affected as well as they must now compete with a more-crowded rental market for a more constrained affordable housing stock.

Affecting stakeholders such as the University of Arkansas, the area’s corporations, newcomers, and a portion of college students are increasingly investing into Fayetteville through pathways such as (a) increasing the enrollment of the university that exceeds the amount of housing in Fayetteville, (b) funding the Sam M. Walton College of Business, and (c) renting out apartments and houses throughout Fayetteville at artificially surged prices. Furthermore, stakeholder such as landlords and rental management agencies have created a new normative culture of pressure and financial competition that has aligned with the priorities and values of Fayetteville’s newcomers.

Finally, the input of financial investment and a new normative culture into Fayetteville by affecting stakeholders has resulted in an output of a restructured social landscape characterized by increased competition in the search for rental housing, increased pressure associated with the
biases for a dominant corporate culture, and a rise in the cost of living of student-oriented apartments located in high-demand areas such as Dickson Street and Uptown Fayetteville.

These elements of gentrification reinforced by evidence from my interviewees’ and my observations assert that Fayetteville is undergoing a state of early gentrification. However, due to the qualitative nature of this study, possible limitations exist. For one, the sample size (n=13) along with the focus on current or recently graduated college students in Fayetteville poses an obstacle for generalization onto the entire population of Fayetteville. Although measures have been taken to ensure heterogeneity and sample diversity as it relates to rental histories and financial statuses, a future research study can further investigate the experiences of the 25-29-year-old age group in Fayetteville. Such an age group could potentially provide further insight into the economic and employment reactions to indicators such as a normative corporate and pressure-inducing landscape in Fayetteville.

Two, speaking only to college students gives a specific perspective and experience when engaging with Fayetteville. For example, the duties and lifestyles of college-aged residents create a distinct university-life association with different amenities in the cities such as bars, restaurants, neighborhoods, and demographics.

Three, by only investigating residents of the City of Fayetteville, many findings of this study are relative to the cultural aspects of Northwest Arkansas itself and less so towards other rapidly growing, less-populated areas around the United States such as Coeur d’Alene, Idaho; Bend, Oregon; and St. George, Utah. Furthermore, fast-growing smaller cities that have a significant university presence such as Boise, Idaho (Boise State University), Fort Collins, Colorado (Colorado State University), and Fargo, North Dakota (North Dakota State University)
are potential case studies for the assertion that universities play a social, economic, and political role in shaping their surrounding communities. However, this study encourages researchers to enter such communities with a similar qualitative approach to uncover indicators of gentrification that either confirms this study’s assertions or complicate this study’s findings, which would then prompt a dialogue on solidifying the gentrification’s definition in small-town America.

From a historical and contemporary analysis of Fayetteville, this study also asserts that the current socioeconomic growth occurring in Northwest Arkansas is not a new trend to the area, but instead this decade’s surge in population is associated with a different set of inputs, outputs, institutions, and related stakeholders. To proactively plan for an equitable and sustainable future for Fayetteville, researchers and political advocates alike must delineate and investigate their constituents’ values and priorities to incorporate their perspectives in all facets of community growth planning.

Within the City of Fayetteville itself, existing and future stakeholders should research the social intercourse between the different populations occupying housing in the city. For example, a group can analyze the occupants of student apartments in Fayetteville broken down by geographic origins and demographic makeup over time. Such research can inform different policies regarding housing allocation for the University of Arkansas, tighter landlord management laws to enforce equitable consideration of rents, and a potential overhaul of the in-state-tuition offering that the University of Arkansas gives to out-of-state residents. Another opportunity for research is an analysis of the various social networks residents in Fayetteville use to search, plan, and execute leases for rental housing. For some, they might use their parents, friends, or external sources. Doing so can allow city stakeholders to understand housing accessibility concerns better and mitigate potential conflicts if it imposes specific laws and policies that inhibit such informal actions to be
conducted. Furthermore, such research can inform other cities that are rapidly undergoing growth and gentrification of the social processes that exist within initiations such as universities and how such institutions can provide better resources for their students to search and find rental housing within their areas.
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APPENDIX 1:

Data Index of Interviews

Note: This information is reflective of the research time period of June-October 2018. All participants consented to be interviewed, recorded, and anonymously identified (i.e. using one’s initials) in published work.

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APPENDIX 2:

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Note: This set of two interview protocols with their questions acted as a foundation to guide my interview process. I always asked follow-up questions to gain a comprehensive perspective on my interviewees’ backgrounds, biases, motives, etc. Furthermore, although the first interview protocol is shorter, respondents often spoke for longer periods of time with such questions.

Interview One

1. Can you tell me your name, your age, and the race and/or ethnicity you identify with?
2. Can you describe your educational status (i.e. year in college, major, minor, interests)?
3. Can you tell the town/city you identify with being your hometown?
4. Can you tell me where you work, how often do you work, and how much you make?
5. For every year you lived in Fayetteville, can you describe to me the layout of your housing situations (i.e. two-bedroom apartment living with one roommate)?
6. For every year you lived in Fayetteville, can you describe to me the rent of your housing situations?
7. For every year you lived in Fayetteville, can you describe to me how you found your housing situations (i.e. friend, family, online, door-to-door)?
8. For every year you lived in Fayetteville, can you describe to me any difficulties or triumphs you have found in your housing situations?
9. (If rent has changed over time) It seems as though your rent either decreased/increased over time. How did you adjust to such changes?
10. What type of amenities did you take into consideration when searching for housing?

11. If I were an incoming second-year student at the University of Arkansas (first-years must live on campus) with no knowledge of the city, which areas would you suggest I consider, what mediums should I use to search for housing, and how much should I expect to pay?

12. If you attained a full-time job after college and the position was in Fayetteville, where would you consider living and where would you not consider living?

**Interview Two**

1. Can you tell me your name, your age, and the race and/or ethnicity you identify with?

2. How often do you visit Dickson Street? During the week? During the weekends?

3. Where do you usually visit on Dickson Street?

4. How much money do you usually spend on Dickson Street?

5. Have you witnessed any changes (i.e. new restaurants, stores) on Dickson Street? How have you reacted to such changes? Is there anything you would want to change?

6. If I were a friend with no knowledge of the city and wanted to experience Fayetteville, can you describe a typical day/night out on Dickson Street?

7. How would you describe Dickson Street to someone?

8. How often do you visit The Square? During the week? During the weekends?

9. Where do you usually visit on The Square?

10. How much money do you usually spend on The Square?

11. Have you witnessed any changes (i.e. new restaurants, stores) on The Square? How have you reacted to such changes? Is there anything you would want to change?
12. If I were a friend with no knowledge of the city and wanted to experience Fayetteville, can you describe a typical day/night out on The Square?

13. How would you describe The Square to someone?

14. Without assuming you have a lot or little knowledge on gentrification, do you mind describing what you think the term means?

15. What are you visualizing when you describe gentrification?

16. Are there cities or areas that you are visualizing?

17. Have you heard of the term, gentrification, in any capacity at the University of Arkansas?

18. Who do you think affects and is affected by gentrification?

19. Do you think places in Northwest Arkansas are gentrifying?

20. If so, how do you feel about them? If not, can you describe to me why you don’t think those places are gentrifying / are not considered gentrifying?

21. Do you think people your age is concerned or aware of the growth in Northwest Arkansas?

   How do you feel about it? Why do you feel that way?

22. What are some things that you have learned or thought about more while going through these two interviews?
## APPENDIX 3:

**First and Second Pass Coding Charts**

### First Pass Coding Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJST</td>
<td>Adjust – Modifying something due to an influential force.</td>
<td>“it’s like a shock when you have to pay for everything”</td>
<td>EX - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td>Bars – The naming of any bars in Fayetteville.</td>
<td>“my sophomore year I mostly stuck at like JJ’s”</td>
<td>IN – Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSN</td>
<td>The Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas</td>
<td>“the business school is funded by Walmart”</td>
<td>IN - Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>Competition – If there are two forces attempting to get the same thing.</td>
<td>“there's so many people applying for the same job”</td>
<td>EX - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONF</td>
<td>Confusion – Not knowing something.</td>
<td>“I didn't know anything about any other apartment complexes around”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOL</td>
<td>Cool – Perception of “being cool”</td>
<td>“It's something that our area doesn't really have yet now they do type thing”</td>
<td>IN - Interpretive/ In Vivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORP</td>
<td>Corporate – Relating to the 3 Fortune 500 Businesses or similar places (Tyson, J.B. Hunt, Walmart, etc.)</td>
<td>“not every single student can get an internship at Walmart or Tyson or wherever”</td>
<td>EX - Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DKSNS</td>
<td>Dickson Street</td>
<td>“like Dickson Street has always been upbeat but I feel like it's getting more upbeat”</td>
<td>EX - Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRVE</td>
<td>Driving – Anything related to automobiles such as parking, traffic, Ubers, etc.</td>
<td>“so I thought I had to buy a parking pass”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAM</td>
<td>Family – Any reference to familial ties.</td>
<td>“my parents almost sued them a couple of times”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAD</td>
<td>Graduate/Graduation – Relating to the act of finishing university.</td>
<td>“like they graduated college and they were moving off”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROW</td>
<td>Growth – Related to the influx of people and businesses into NWA.</td>
<td>“the population is growing even more and there's more students here”</td>
<td>EX - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMLS</td>
<td>Homelessness – Without having a permanent place to live.</td>
<td>“I actually didn’t have anywhere to live for the first week of school”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITRN</td>
<td>Internships – Related to having or searching for an internship.</td>
<td>“Riff Raff takes a lot of sorority girls and uses them as their interns”</td>
<td>IN - Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOB-NP</td>
<td>Non-Professional Jobs – Related to positions that do not require college degrees.</td>
<td>“I’m about to get a job to be like a part-time nanny”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive/ Binary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOB-P</td>
<td>Professional Jobs – Related to positions that require college degrees.</td>
<td>“they hired her back and they sent her to China to do networking work”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive/ Binary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAND</td>
<td>Landlord – Related to the management of housing.</td>
<td>“management sucks and they go through new management every year”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONY</td>
<td>Money – Reference to monetary uses.</td>
<td>“I have no clue. I know it was very expensive”</td>
<td>EX - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTV-Y</td>
<td>Motivation – The urge to do or achieve something.</td>
<td>“we were continuously hounding them to move out”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic/Binary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTV-N</td>
<td>Non-Motivation – The urge to not do or not achieve something.</td>
<td>“It just would take a lot and I don't really care that much”</td>
<td>IN -Thematic/Binary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVE</td>
<td>Moving – Going from one place to another.</td>
<td>“but then I got moved to a different apartment”</td>
<td>EX - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>New – The state or perception of becoming one of the first to do something.</td>
<td>“Taco Bell Cantina does but it's brand-new”</td>
<td>EX - Interpretive/ Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NITE</td>
<td>Nightlife – The description of socializing in the evening.</td>
<td>“Dickson, but that's also where the life of Fayetteville is during the school year”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORM</td>
<td>Normative Culture – Doing something because “that’s what we do”</td>
<td>“because people in Fayetteville and in Arkansas in general are pretty loyal to where they're going”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic/ In Vivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREP</td>
<td>Preparation – Acting ahead of schedule in order to get ahead in life.</td>
<td>“So, she had to take a year of class before she could take her internship”</td>
<td>IN - Interpretive/ Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RENT</td>
<td>Renting/Leasing – The act of acquiring temporary housing.</td>
<td>“if you live there once and you sign your lease again”</td>
<td>EX - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REST</td>
<td>Restaurants – The naming of any places to eat lunch/dinner in Fayetteville.</td>
<td>“There's like Joy House Coffee Shop or Fork and Crust, which is a pie shop off Crossover”</td>
<td>IN - Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOM</td>
<td>Roommate – Reference to people you live with.</td>
<td>“So, for my dorm I lived with three other girls”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFE</td>
<td>Safe – Related to places/lifestyles that are comfortable.</td>
<td>“They bring in a relaxed type of crowd which is nice people”</td>
<td>IN - Interpretive/ In Vivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF-RLY</td>
<td>Self-Reliance – Doing something without the help of others.</td>
<td>“I would have been a little more independent”</td>
<td>IN - Interpretive/ Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPON</td>
<td>Spontaneously – Happening without much thought or “on the fly.”</td>
<td>“where can I sign to live because it was so last minute”</td>
<td>IN - Interpretive/ Thematic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SQRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Square</th>
<th>“Because when you think of The Square”</th>
<th>EX - Categorical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### STEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEM Fields – Science, Tech, Engineering, Math, etc.</th>
<th>“in my sorority are chemistry or biology majors”</th>
<th>IN - Categorical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### SUPP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support – Having resources given to you such as financial aid.</th>
<th>“like my department would have offered more like talks or explanations”</th>
<th>EX - Descriptive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### TEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texas – Anything related to the state.</th>
<th>“I know a lot people that have them in Dallas”</th>
<th>IN - Categorical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### UNI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University/College – i.e. University of Arkansas</th>
<th>“I was in Maple South which is a dorm at the UofA”</th>
<th>EX - Categorical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### WALT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walmart/the Walton Family</th>
<th>“like the stores around here like Walmart is a pretty big one”</th>
<th>EX - Categorical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Second Pass Coding Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SP-FRUS</td>
<td>Frustration – Having a negative or unsatisfied feeling about something.</td>
<td>“I didn’t enjoy it. It’s not like any other dorms”</td>
<td>IN - Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP-OPP</td>
<td>Opportunity – Having a chance to do something effective or successful.</td>
<td>“if you get buddy-buddy with professors, they’ll lend you their copies”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP-RECO</td>
<td>Recognition – Having a well-known brand or presence in an area.</td>
<td>“And it’s really close in proximity, that’s why I’m staying there”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP-REDT</td>
<td>Red Tape – Not being able to control a situation.</td>
<td>“my apartment complex refused to move me”</td>
<td>IN - In Vivo / Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP-TARG</td>
<td>Targeted – Something that is meant for a certain group of people and not others.</td>
<td>“Riff Raff takes a lot of sorority girls and uses them as their interns”</td>
<td>IN - Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP-UNSO</td>
<td>Un-Southern – Anything that does not feel “at home” with NWA.</td>
<td>“Maybe a restaurant that isn’t so modern”</td>
<td>IN – In Vivo / Thematic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4:

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Documentation

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
Stanford, CA 94305 [Mail Code 5570]

Penelope D Eckert, Ph.D. (650) 723-2480
CHAIR, PANEL ON NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS

Notice Of Exempt Review

Date: March 1, 2018
To: Sean Michael Volavong, Urban Studies / Junior, H & S Programs
Douglas John McAdam Ph.D. Sociology

From: Penelope D Eckert, Ph.D., Administrative Panel on Human Subjects in Non-Medical Research

eProtocol Title: Northwest Arkansas: A Community-Based Profile Responding to Downtown Gentrification In Rapidly Growing Small Town America

eProtocol #: 45517 IRB 2 (Registration #: 349)

The IRB reviewed your research protocol on March 1, 2018 and determined that the only involvement of human subjects in the research activities will be in one or more of the categories that are exempt from the regulations at 45 CFR 46 or 21 CFR 56. If this protocol is used in conjunction with any other human use it must be re-reviewed. The IRB requests prompt notification of any complications or incidents of noncompliance which may occur during any human use procedure.

Please remember that all data, including all signed consent form documents, must be retained for a minimum of three years past the completion of this research. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, HIPAA, or other entities. (See Policy 1.9 on Retention of and Access to Research at http://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook)

Review Type: EXEMPT - NEW
Funding: None
Exempt Under Category: 2
Assurance #: FWA00000935 (SU)

Penelope D Eckert, Ph.D., Chair