"God Bless the Farmer": Community Perceptions of Legal Challenges to Hog Farming Operations in North Carolina

by

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Abstract

This research is designed to complement existing research concerning the health and the ecological impact of industrial agriculture through semi-structured interviews with residents of Duplin County, where two major lawsuits over property and civil rights are currently underway. My analysis of the ways in which locals understand the nuisance lawsuit, playing out in federal court, as well as a civil rights lawsuit brings property rights to the center of understanding ways in which rural people seek to stop environmental injustices. I demystify the property-centric processes through which rural populations are attempting to regain their rights after being dispossessed in favor of industrial hog farming operations. Both land dispossession and environmental injustices are unique venues through which rural populations are stripped of their ability to enjoy clean air, water, and their property.

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CAFO – concentrated animal feeding operation

RTF – right-to-farm

UCC – United Church of Christ

UCC-CRJ – United Church of Christ – Commission for Racial Justice

REACH – Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

My first interaction with a hog farm supporter in Duplin County took place while I was sat at a table meant for preschoolers. I had stepped into the library to escape sweltering July heat that seemed much too common during my initial visit to the area. Despite the weather, I was excited to explore the area often touted as the "hog producing capital of the world". This title is not without merit, as the area has over 500 animal feeding operations that house approximately 2 million hogs and leads nation in hog sale profits (Clark 2018). In spite of my eagerness, I had yet to secure an interview with any of the county's residents as many were apprehensive to talk with me about the farms; I was hopeful that an escape from the afternoon's heat would also afford me a chance at an interview in a quiet and secluded setting. Upon entering the large building, an elderly white woman with large-rimmed glasses resting at the tip of her nose and silver hair held in a tight bun briefly glanced up from her reading material as if to acknowledge my presence. I sheepishly smiled at her, attempting to appear as if I was someone she could have known, before meandering through a row of plastic stands that held a variety of magazines and other colorful periodicals. I soon emerged in an open lobby; as I glanced around, a display on a much shorter bookcase caught my attention. On top of the bookcase rested five books, each supported by a thin wire stand. The center of the display showcased a vivid picture book titled "Life on a Pig Farm". Its position in the center of the display seemed intentional, as if to draw the attention of wandering eyes directly to it. I plucked the book from the display and began to examine it.

Looking for a place to sit, the only spot I managed to secure was secluded away in the aptly titled "Kid's Corner," surrounded by large stuffed animals and other playthings. I first sat in a slicked plastic chair, being forced to shift my body around in a fruitless attempt to find a comfortable arrangement. After about two minutes, I decide to let my knees rest against my chest

and the book rest on my knees as it was nearly impossible to place the book on the table and also read it at the same time. I briefly glance up and notice a novelty sized teddy bear occupying the seat across from me; I imagine that this bear and myself currently have the same posture, with our heads titled down at an uncomfortable angle and our bodies scrunched together haphazardly in our much-too-small seats. The pages of the book contained bright, colorful pictures of a white family performing various tasks around their farm, such as feeding hogs inside a pen and helping one of their sows give birth to a litter of piglets. The pictures were drastically different from the scenes that had been described to me in various news articles on the county. As I read, a young librarian wheeled a cart piled with books through the area. Upon noticing me, she tried to disguise her chuckle with a cough. She then mentioned the number of larger tables throughout the library, but I tell her that they were all occupied by the time I had sat down. She nods before inquiring about my choice in reading material. She rolls her eyes at the explanation of my research before commenting, 'Oh, I didn't think you were from around here.' Her sharp and near immediate comment about "outsiders" leads me to believe that I am not the first person she has heard talk about the effects of hog farms. I capitalize on the opportunity to ask her about complaints regarding their presence. She quickly belittled the complaints and maneuvered the discussion to economics, noting the necessity of the farms for the local economy and assuring me that any possible side effects are outweighed by the benefits of the industry (with a stark emphasis on the word "possible"). I took special care to note that her responses did little to differentiate between the industrial nature of the hog farming operations in the area and the types of operations around which she had grown up.

Her answers were short and direct until I inquired about the recent nuisance complaints involving a few homeowners in the area. Her tone noticeably softened, and she appeared to think

more before she answered any more of my questions. Her answers became choppier when I mentally compared her words to the prose with which she constructed her previous answers; I was not able to determine if this was because she was suddenly less confident in the answers she was providing to me, or if she was instead more purposeful and deliberate with the particular language she was using to respond. The conversation slowly tapers out, and she decided it was time for her to return to her job. As she began pushing the cart to the front desk, I followed and asked if the farms were operating before most of the homes in the area were built. Her sharp response rattled me – without even looking up from the pile of books on the counter, she matter-of-factly states 'Oh, the homes were definitely here first.'

Does who is there first matter? Further, whose property rights in the context of industrial animal production prevail? This study aims to reveal how the legal structure surrounding industrial agriculture defends certain types of property rights, as well as the cultural mechanisms that lead to the erasure of property rights that belong to those who seek other ends, like homestead living that requires clean air and water. To date, research on industrial agriculture in the United States has criticized the rapid increases in scales of production, specifically concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), as well as the vertical integration of large corporations into rural communities, but has done significantly less to study the ways in which current farm deflate the property rights of some, while inflating the property rights of others. Beyond CAFOs, academics have also been interested in analyzing the types of conditions that are favorable to the proliferation of CAFOs. Specifically, rural sociologist have been occupied with understanding the types of laws and other legal structures that either incentivize the utilization of CAFOs or limit the ability for industrial operations to remain in rural communities. One of the most important findings related to this area of study is the historical success in anti-

corporate farming laws in limiting the presence of industrialized operations in the Midwest region of the United States (Lyson and Welsh 2001). More specifically, research has found that anti-corporate farming laws are successful because they limit the ability for foreign entities to purchase land and own operations; these limitations help to largely prevent the establishment of CAFOs in rural communities.

Significantly less attention has been paid to right-to-farm (RTF) laws amongst sociologists (Walker 2017). RTF laws are designed to protect agricultural operations in the face of legal challenges, particularly in instances of nuisance litigation. Of the mainly legal research that exists, scholars have found that RTF laws often serve to protect corporate agribusiness operations regardless of their potential harms on the surrounding community and environment, and that these laws are often born out of the belief that farming operations are integral to the economies of rural communities and are also under attack from outside groups, such as animal rights and environmental activists, who seek to eliminate farms across the globe. RTF laws largely problematize the property-based solution originally supplied by anti-corporate farming laws; whereas anti-corporate farming laws were designed to limit the expression of property rights for foreign-based corporate entities in favor of protecting rural community residents, RTF laws make no delineation between property-owning entities, meaning that the property rights of a multi-national agriculture corporation are considered to be the same as the rights of a community resident. Thus, studying personal property rights as a dimension of power is crucial.

The emergent focus on property rights in a number of disciplines concerned with agriculture, like agricultural law, highlights sociology's general (and somewhat surprising) lack of interaction with property rights throughout the development of the discipline. As a result, scholars are now placing a larger emphasis on understanding the mechanisms by which those

who possess rights are subsequently dispossessed of their rights while officiating agencies attempt to adjudicate between conflicting property uses. Moreover, legal scholars are beginning to analyze nuisance litigation efforts to more accurately understand how they currently fit into the property regime concerning agricultural operations. Pulling from a storied history of work on efforts to secure environmental justice, some scholars have highlighted the historical role of litigation in fighting against industrial agricultural operations as a mechanism to ensure that communities are not disproportionately exposed to the harmful side effects of agricultural production (Pruitt & Sobczynski 2016).

This research is designed to complement existing research concerning the health and the ecological impact of industrial agriculture through semi-structured interviews with residents of Duplin County, where two major lawsuits over property and civil rights are currently underway. My analysis of the ways in which locals understand the nuisance lawsuit, playing out in federal court, as well as a civil rights lawsuit brings property rights to the center of understanding ways in which rural people seek to stop environmental injustices. I demystify the property-centric processes through which rural populations are attempting to regain their rights after being dispossessed in favor of industrial hog farming operations. Both land dispossession and environmental injustices are unique venues through which rural populations are stripped of their ability to enjoy clean air, water, and their property.

CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review interweaves the law with sociology of agriculture and environmental justice literature to facilitate a better understanding of rural community residents' attempts to confront industrial agriculture. To begin, I will discuss the role of the Goldschmidt hypothesis in shaping the direction of social science research concerned with the effects of large-scale agricultural operations on the standard of living in rural communities. Within this subsection, I will give particular attention to the findings of rural sociological research that addresses CAFOs and other intensive production operations. In the next subsection, I will present a brief history of the environmental justice movement in the United States. It is necessary to discuss the works of environmental justice scholars because they offer many unique insights into the ways that industrial agricultural operations harm populations and environments while also identifying and critiquing different political, economic, and social structures that allow for the continuing of operations in the face of legal and social challenges. In the finals subsection, I will analyze the current proposed solutions to the issues surrounding industrial livestock production operations as well as the roadblocks to realizing many of these solutions. Particularly, I will address the role of right-to-farm laws in protecting farming operations from challenges and highlight the increasingly important nature of property rights as a tool for both dispossessing populations of their rights and as a tool for securing rights that have been dispossessed. Additionally, I will discuss the current disdain of property rights found in articles from environmental justice scholars as well as sociologists and other environmentalists and articulate why it is necessary to reconceptualize disciplinary relationships to property rights while still challenging property regimes that prioritize the rights of corporate owners. Finally, I will discuss the current gaps in the literature base and articulate why it is necessary that these gaps are filled.

PRIVATE PROPERTY AND SOCIOLOGY

Sociology has long understood the connections between economic structures, legal structures, and inequality but has largely ignored property as a dimension of the aforementioned phenomenon (Carruthers and Ariovich 2004). This is particularly unfortunate when one considers the connections between property rights as an economic phenomenon, as a legal phenomenon, and as a mechanism for producing inequality. As a concept, property can demarcate the types of things that can be owned, such as land or even people, and that can directly contribute to the formation of inequality within a given society. Additionally, property rights can also be used as a way to fight inequality, often through the use of one's property to produce things that can be sold or traded. Despite the importance of property rights in a variety of social contexts, the lack of engagement with property amongst sociologists has left academic understandings of the concept rooted strictly in terms of economics and the law.

Environmental sociologists and rural geographers have more readily engaged private property, primarily within cases of enclosure and the privatization of land in the developing world (Blomley 2007). Despite this engagement, environmental sociologists continue to treat property rights as if they are a legal conglomerate, uniform and undistinguishable from one another. Specifically, within environmental sociological literature, private property rights are often seen to be exerted in a top-down manner that destroys the commons and significantly disenfranchise populations, as articulated by criticism of the global land grab phenomenon. This understanding has demonized the concept of private property and the way that private property rights are legally exerted. As such, the problematization and, increasingly, the outright rejection of private property rights are instrumental to the theoretical development and progression of environmental sociology (Foster 1999). This academic disdain arises primarily out of Marx's

critique of private property as a conduit for Bourgeoisie oppression of the Proletariat – more specifically, the use of private property that ensures the concentration of monetary capital and societal power that could only exist as a result of the oppression of the working class (Hardt 2010). As long as private property exists, society would lack the means by which to transition into a truly classless utopia. For such thinkers, the notion of private property represents not only the accumulation of capital that results from class-based oppression but also typifies the capitalist epistemology that separates humans from their communal origins. This associative shorthand between "private property" and "capitalist ecological exploitation" has created a powerful stigma concerning property laws and has even informed current academic understandings of environmental injustices.

But, there is a complexity to property rights that the existing literature fails to adequately address or even recognize. Nuisance law highlights this complexity, as the field is specifically designed to aid in the adjudication of instances of conflicting property rights expressed through the utilization of property. As noted by von Wangenheim and Gomez (2015:2391),

> When one examines in detail the rules in place in the law of nuisance—one of the classical building blocks of property law, and one that directly addresses conflicting uses by entitlement holders over neighboring tracts of land—the picture seems to get less structured and more complicated.

The aforementioned picture becomes more complicated or, more accurately, is revealed to be complicated because of various factors and legal rules that are employed while enforcing certain property rights. This is particularly true with regard to property utilizations that have explicit environmental impacts, such as agriculture operations. In fact, common nuisance law traces its origins back to a trial in which a judge ruled that a hog farmer could not use his property in a way that detracted from his neighbor's enjoyment of their property (Smart 2016). Similarly, in a departure to the operationalization of property rights that result in the destruction of the

commons, some expressions of property rights can be used to challenge or prevent offensive property utilizations. However, this is not to say that all expressions of property rights are misunderstood – many environmental sociologists are correct in their analysis and criticism of property rights and law, particularly with regard to industrial operations in developing countries. But, it is necessary to understand that property rights are not a monolithic entity and have more complicated interactions than previously demonstrated with regard to the state of the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, PERSONAL PROPERTY, AND THE LAW

While environmental sociologists have largely failed to analyze the complicated nature of property rights, environmental justice scholars have more readily embraced nuanced property rights as a dimension of numerous movements for environmental justice. The environmental justice (EJ) movement began in the United States through the interactions of academics, state-based organizations, governmental organizations and localized movements against the sitting of waste facilities in minority and impoverished communities (Cole and Foster 2001). In 1982, a number of prominent civil rights and community activists collaborated to protest the dumping of soil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyl in a landfill located near the impoverished, predominantly African American and decidedly rural community of Afton, North Carolina. Residents of the county engaged in multiple episodes of civil disobedience in order to draw attention to the discriminatory processes employed by the state of North Carolina while choosing a location for the PBC landfill (Holifield 2001). Activists also detailed the ways that their homes would be situated closely to the landfill and would expose them to environmental hazards not experienced by other communities in the state. Intrigued by the claims made by community members, the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice (UCC CRJ) decided to

study the national locations of toxic waste dumping facilities and their proximity to minority communities. The study, released in 1987, found that community composition was significantly correlated with the presence of toxic waste facilities across the country, with racial composition being the most significant associated factor. Following the publication of the CRJ's study, academics from a variety of disciplines also documented similar results concerning the presence of waste dumping facilities and utilized these findings to spur the federal government to address the unequal exposure experienced by minority and impoverished populations throughout the country (Bryant 2009).

There are significant connections between the origins of the EJ movement and expressions of personal property rights, as indicated by the claims utilized by both community activists and academics in identifying the unequal exposure to environmental hazards that arose from the sitting of waste facilities (Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts 2009). The existence of environmental hazards compounded upon the strains already experienced by the citizens of Afton and other communities that resulted from systemic racism and poverty. For many people, the communities they lived in were one of the few things they had. Moreover, the association between the origins of the EJ movement and property is not accidental – communities are formed based on the associated characteristics of those who live or work in close proximity to one another. The experience of exposure to environmental hazards serves to demarcate the social boundaries of communities in relation to injustices, but also allows them to mobilize their experiences to combat their exposure. The role of property, then, cannot be understated – property becomes a way to identify the boundaries of environmental injustice and simultaneously serves as a mechanism to fight against harmful operations, such as toxic waste dumping

facilities. As a result, property rights are particularly powerful when combined with the law to resolve issues associated with environmental hazards and discrimination.

Beyond merely documenting the existence of environmental injustices, scholars are also concerned with resolving the injustices they have identified. The legal system is often thought of as an important conduit to ensuring EJ (Pruitt and Sobczynski 2016). More specifically, the law is often seen as a way to combat injustices through a pragmatic and uniformly neutral process. The justification for focusing on the legal system as a solution to injustices is drawn from a long history of numerous activisms that engage with state-centric politics and seek the state to formulate recognized protections for those most at risk. The notion of understanding the facilitation of EJ strictly in lockstep with the state has become the pragmatic position of scholars who propose solutions to environmental injustices (Faber 2008, as cited in Pulido, Kohl and Cotton 2016). More specifically, the law has been seen as an avenue for long-lasting change to ensure the rights of populations. Despite the emphasis placed on the law, current research does little to differentiate between types of law and their effects on the resolution of injustices related to environmental conditions and health. A large majority of the research into the role of the law has focused on regulatory laws concerned with limiting point-source pollution; while these laws are important in the fight against environmental injustice, the solitary focus on laws concerning pollution has eclipsed analyses of laws concerning industrial agriculture and the issues caused by its associated technologies.

RURAL SOCIOLOGY & LAND USE LAWS – AN ATTEMPTED SYNTHESIS

Rural social scientists have spent a large portion of the twentieth century analyzing the ways that farming operations have changed and the effects of these operational changes on rural communities. As early as 1947, Walter Goldschmidt identified that there were significant

associations between farm scale and operation structure and the quality of life in two rural communities in California. Since his initial theorization, rural sociology as a discipline has continued to investigate the relationship between the scale of farm operations and dimensions of rural livelihood. Some of the most striking characteristics of American agriculture in the twentieth century are the dramatic decrease in land used for farming operations, a decline in the number of farmers across the country and a significant increase in the scale of farming operations (Labao and Meyer 2001). Studies have found that the vertical integration of agribusiness corporations into rural communities significantly disrupts the operations of smaller and sole-owned proprietorships and often results in the closure of smaller operations (Welsh 1998). Moreover, some researchers have focused on the health and environmental impacts of industrial agriculture operations in rural communities; numerous studies have found positive correlations between the presence of industrial CAFOs and air pollution and respiratory conditions such as bronchitis and asthma (Wing, Horton, and Rose 2013), mental health issues stress-related conditions associated with living near a CAFO (McElroy 2010), and groundwater pollution (Burkholder et al., 2007). These findings have prompted sociologists to analyze the role of various social and political economic mechanisms in facilitating or hampering the development of industrial agricultural operations.

Beyond analyzing the intensity of agricultural production in a vacuum, researchers have focused on investigating the connections between various ownership structures and the employment of industrialized production methods, such as CAFOs. Geisler (1993) notes that land ownership and, perhaps more accurately, land privatization has changed the very nature of agricultural production in predictable ways, particularly with regard to the industrialization of production. As a result of these changes, Geisler urges future land tenure scholars to research the

numerous dimensions of land ownership to properly address concerns related to widespread industrialization.

As land tenure research continued to gain momentum amongst rural sociologists, some scholars turned their attention to laws that directly affected types of ownership structures with an emphasis on understanding the connections between ownership and the employment of industrial technologies. Bonanno and Constance (2001) note that the distortion and (more frequently) elimination of legal statutes and regulation processes by state and local governments is one important mechanism that helps protect CAFOs within rural communities from organized opposition. The newly articulated importance of the law prompted some rural sociologists to investigate the historical successes of anti-corporate farming laws in stopping the most deleterious consequences of ever expanding scales of agriculture. Anti-corporate farming laws emerged in a group of Midwestern states in the late 1970s and early 1980s to limit the ability for foreign corporations to purchase land and establish agricultural operations within state boundaries. The laws are largely considered to be successful at limiting the amount of land owned by foreign corporations and have also been demonstrated to significantly lessen the negative effects associated with industrial agriculture in rural communities that Goldschmidt had identified within his original hypothesis (Lyson and Welsh 2005). Research into the role of anti-corporate farming laws seemed to fulfill Geisler's request to consider the ever fluctuating dynamics of land ownership with regard to agriculture in the United States.

While questions and criticisms of land ownership and usage have enjoyed attention amongst rural sociologists, few researchers have investigated the framings employed to either support or oppose industrial agricultural operations. Identifying the frames of support or opposition is important because it grants insight into the nature of controversies surrounding

industrial agriculture in rural communities. Henson and Bailey (2009) found that cultural frames of personal property are often mobilized as a means to combat the sitting of CAFOs within rural communities. Specifically, Henson and Bailey point to the existence of "not in my backyard" syndrome as the primary cultural sentiment used to protest CAFOs – that is to say, operations that trespass over property boundaries are not tolerated within tight-knit and "neighborly" rural communities and opposition emerges when trespass occurs. However, mobilization against industrial agriculture is often met with derision by many residents of rural communities who view CAFOs as a necessary part of agricultural production that is closely tied to the cultural identity of the community; this often forces those who oppose the operations to seek outside arbitration in order to resolve the identified issues, which places further strain on communalism.

The enactment of anti-corporate farming laws appeared to be a boon for rural land owners, as they no longer had to fear losing their land to investors that had never stepped foot within their community. Moreover, the laws seemed to provide a legal mechanism that protected rural community residents from industrialized operations that were typically associated with absentee landownership. However, the effects of anti-corporate farming laws are not as far-reaching as current academic research would lead one to believe, as they only limit the ability of foreign corporations to purchase land and do nothing to limit the types of agricultural operations that can be established on areas of land. The positive reception afforded to anti-corporate farming laws has steered sociologists away from investigating other types of agricultural laws, such as right-to-farm laws.

The Right-to-Farm and Agricultural Property Rights

Right-to-farm (RTF) laws currently exist in every state throughout the country in some capacity, although the laws themselves are as different as they are plentiful. Similar to anti-

corporate farming laws, RTF laws were designed in the 1970s to protect dwindling amounts of farmland across the country, but were also designed to ensure that the property rights of farmers were not subjected to frivolous legal action from urbanites that migrated to rural communities and were unfamiliar with the sights, sounds, and smells of agricultural operations (Heffernan 1999). Since their creation, the laws have shifted in application from ensuring the ability for family farms to operate to protecting large corporate agribusinesses and their industrial operations from claims of nuisance. Whereas anti-corporate farming laws were seen as an obvious blockade to foreign land grabs and the establishment of foreign industrial agribusiness, RTF laws were generally constructed in a nebulous way that left little distinction between the types or sizes of agricultural operations, with some laws even protecting operations that drastically changed in size or type after a period of time (Walker 2017). This nebulous construction allowed for corporate agribusinesses to establish themselves as the type of operations protected by RTF laws in a number of states.

The property-centric focus of RTF laws has a significant effect on the types of legal interactions that can occur between a farming operation owner and their neighbors. As previously noted, RTF laws significantly strengthen the property rights of agricultural operation owners in the face of nuisance claims related to the operation. Specifically, the laws prioritize property utilizations for agricultural production with regard to conflict that emerges between an operation owner's use of property and their neighbor's use of adjacent property. The ability for the laws to limit the effectiveness of nuisance litigation is a significant reason that RTF laws ensure the continuation of large, intense agricultural operations even after documented concerns related to the health and community effects of operations (DeLind 1995). Moreover, some research has concluded that RTF laws are often coopted by powerful corporations and their

lobbyists so that future modifications to laws are written in ways that afford numerous protections to industrialized operations, such as modifications to the measurement of harmful substances outputs and the engineering specifications for the construction of operations (Constance and Bonanno 1999; DeLind 1995). What is perhaps more shocking (and significantly understudied) is the trend found among a number of laws that specifically limit the ability for local communities to legislatively regulate operations as RTF laws will often include a clause designed to supersede all local ordinances and policies concerned with placing restrictions on operations (Walker 2017). The variety of protections afforded to large, intense, and potentially harmful operations by RTF laws highlights the need for sociological research that analyzes the laws and also investigates how public movements against industrial agriculture grapple with the laws.

RTF laws complicate localized attempts to resolve issues identified with CAFO usage in a number of ways. First, North Carolina's Right-to-Farm Act (N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 106-700 – 106-701) operates on a state level making it particularly difficult for the residents of Duplin County to persuade their local government officials to change operational and regulation policies. Moreover, the state's RTF law preempts the enactment of local ordinances that attempt to zone out agricultural nuisances – this is to say, local laws are not able to effectively resolve issues associated with industrial agricultural operations because they have no regulatory power with regard to the state's law. Second, the RTF law protects operations that expand in size, change in ownership, or change the type of agricultural product produced so long as the facility in question has been in operation for one year and was not considered a nuisance within the year. This creates a very tight timeline in which community residents are able to challenge an operation through claims of nuisance. Additionally, this statute allows for corporations to establish non-

offending operations that are then protected despite drastic changes to the products produced and the technology employed for the operation, such as open air manure lagoons. Finally, the law holds that non-successful plaintiffs in nuisance litigation are held responsible for the defendant's costs and expenses, including attorney fees, incurred during the litigation process. This makes it particularly difficult for the residents of Duplin County to engage in litigation, as a loss would certainly push many of them even further below the federal poverty line. In the case of the litigation involving residents of Duplin County, the lawyers themselves are likely not requiring payment from the plaintiffs themselves but will keep a portion of any monetary awards. This is an important consideration when discussing the choice to engage in litigation, as this payment structure dissuades lawyers from small communities to take on corporate agribusinesses because of the resource imbalance between the two legal teams and would make it nearly impossible for plaintiffs to ever win.

THE REMAINING GAP

The demonstrated health effects of CAFOs are certainly enough to classify them as an environmental hazard on their own and render them scrutable to environmental sociologists and EJ scholars. Beyond their negative health effects, the presence of CAFOs disproportionately affects rural populations, particularly impoverished and minority rural populations. Additionally, the emergence of laws that strengthen the property rights of CAFO operators over community residents highlights the need for more nuanced analyses of the way rights are legally deployed with regard to agricultural operations. So then, why have few sociologists engaged the idea of personal property as a mechanism to combat the sitting of CAFOs in rural communities?

One part of this is lack of rural foregrounding in a variety of works related to EJ, especially as rural people and places have more land than their urban counterparts. Moreover,

landownership often plays a preeminent role in power relations as well as rural culture (Ashwood 2018). Second, the lack of EJ and sociological scholarship that focuses on agricultural law has hampered larger academic understandings of RTF laws, which has limited the field's understandings of the mechanisms that facilitate environmental discrimination. The publicized success of anti-corporate farming laws in limiting the establishment of foreign agribusiness operations within the Midwest has largely overshadowed other laws that facilitate the protection of industrial operations throughout the United States. Finally, the dogmatic view of private property rights within environmental sociology has unknowingly complicated research into the mechanisms of resistance to environmental harms. The expression of private property rights is seen as problematic no matter the scale on which they are exerted, and this view has steered researchers away from understanding how private property rights may intersect with collective actions for environmental justice and ecological restoration.

The lack of sociological investigation into property law as a conduit for dispossessing rural populations has forced communities to attempt to resolve the negative effects of corporate agriculture on their own, often without a proper understanding of the laws that facilitate their disenfranchisement. The demonstrated health impacts and the erasure of smallholder property rights that arise from the presence of industrial agriculture operations in rural communities highlights the necessity of a sociological examination of the political economic factors and individual perceptions that serve to legitimate the rights of corporations over those of community residents. Through this analysis, sociologists will gain a better understanding of the legal avenues through which disenfranchised populations attempt to resolve these issues.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODS

THE EXTENDED CASE STUDY

For this project, I have employed the extended case study method (ECM) as articulated by Burawoy (1998). The purpose of the extended case study is to delimit the applicability of ethnographic studies beyond the specific contexts from which the data emerged; in essence, this method is designed to extend the particulars of one case study beyond the traditional confines of ethnographic research and understand how those particularized data are situated within larger sociohistorical contexts. However, it is not enough to simply extend the data one has collected outward – it is also necessary to understand how the data fits with or even challenges dominant theoretical regimes. As such, a major component of ECM is to constantly reflect on the ways that the data may contradict trends demonstrated in past literatures and isolate the particularities of the case that distinguish it from others as to further enhance understandings of the social world. After all, it is from this position that social scientific advancements are made.

Duplin County is particularly well suited as a site for ECM, because of its geographic, cultural, and political economic position within the hog farming industry. As mentioned in the first chapter, Duplin County is known as the hog production capital of the world. The industry has enjoyed decades of success in the county since its emergence in the 1980s and is one the county's top employers, as shown in Table 1 (American Community Survey, 2016). The jobs offered by the livestock industry have changed the racial profile of Duplin County as well. As shown in Table 2, the county's Hispanic population grew substantially, increasing from 15.1 percent of the population in 2000 to comprising 20.6 percent of the population in 2010. The area's white and Black populations have decreased over the past three decades, with the county's

white population shrinking from 65.5 percent in 1980 to 52.9 percent in 2010 and the county's black population shrinking from 34.2 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in 2010 (U.S. Census).

Table 1. Employment in Duplin County, 2016.

Industry	Total Employed	% Employed
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting, and Mining	2,494	10.2
Construction	2,039	8.3
Manufacturing	5,108	20.9
Wholesale Trade	588	2.4
Retail Trade	2,421	9.9
Transportation and Warehousing	1,142	4.7
Information	144	0.6
Real Estate & Finance	632	2.6
Profession, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	1,132	4.6
Education Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance	4,694	19.2
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Food Services	1,887	7.7
Other Services (Excluding Public Administration)	1,290	5.3
Public Administration	878	3.6
Total	24,449	90.0%

Table 2. Selected Demographic Characteristics of Duplin County.

Year	Population				% Below Poverty Line	Median Household Income
	Total	*% White*	*% Black*	*% Hispanic*		
1960	40,270	62.4	37.6	--	--	--
1970	38,015	65.8	34.2	--	28.9	--
1980	40,952	65.5	34.2	.01	23.1	$11,133
1990	39,995	64.1	33.0	2.5	18.8	$19,312
2000	49,063	55.2	28.8	15.1	18.7	$29,157
2010	58,505	52.9	25.0	20.6	24.0	$31,026

Perhaps the most important factor that isolates Duplin County as a necessary research site is the simultaneous occurrence of two lawsuits that seek to challenge many of the hog farming operations in the area. The first lawsuit alleges that numerous hog farming operations owned by Murphy-Brown, a hog farming contract subsidiary for Smithfield Foods, have been negligently

operated and constitute significant nuisances to the everyday lives of nearly five hundred residents across twenty-six counties of North Carolina, including Duplin County. It is important to note that the litigation does not target specific farmers, but rather operations that are owned by Murphy-Brown themselves. The issues presented within the suit include descriptions of the smells emitted from the operations, complaints about liquefied manure ending up on people's homes and vehicles, and stories about outdoor family gatherings that were ruined by swarms of pests and flies that were attracted by the farm's odors. The suit is currently filed in state's Eastern District within the United States District Court system and began trial on April 2, 2018. The lawsuit itself has been a contentious issue since its filling in 2014, even prompting politicians in the North Carolina legislature to approve a bill that "prohibits plaintiffs who win nuisance suits from being awarded compensatory damages, including money to pay for medical treatment related to a farm's odor, flies and noise" (Sorg 2017).

The second lawsuit, also filed in 2014 with the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Civil Rights by the environmentalist organization Earthjustice, alleges that the North Carolina Department of Environment Quality (DEQ) violated Title XI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a result of the organization's failure to adequately regulate hog farming operations in the eastern region of North Carolina. Title XI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits any organization that accepts federal monies from discriminating against people on the basis of race, color, or national origin; with Title XI as a legal foundation, the lawsuit contends that the lack of regulations has disproportionately subjected the region's Black, Latinx, and indigenous residents to health hazards, such as air pollution and exposure to pig feces. The lawsuit evolved from an administrative complaint filed by the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, the Duplin County based Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help, and the Waterkeeper

Alliance, and seeks to permanently strengthen DEQ's regulation of the offending operations (McCloskey 2014). This suit recently reentered the public sphere after the University Of North Carolina Board Of Governors stripped the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Law's Center for Civil Rights (CCR) of its ability to litigate on behalf of the state's residents (Travis 2017). The termination of the CCR's ability to litigate called attention to the lawsuit because the Center served as co-counsel with Earthjustice (Haddix 2015); despite the recent advancements in the lawsuit, relatively few of the county's residents have any knowledge of it as indicated through the interviews I conducted.

While the growing presence of the industry has been noticeable for decades, its rise did not occur without issues. The aforementioned lawsuits both seek to change the ways that the industry is allowed to operate for the benefit of minority and impoverished populations throughout the county. The lawsuits are particularly controversial because of the industry's history and position in the area, and have also created significant fractures within the social fabric of the county. The public nature of the controversy has allowed me to gather data on the personal beliefs that Duplin County's residents hold toward the hog farming industry and the legal challenges to their operations. Moreover, I have collected data that explores resident's perceptions of private property rights with regard to farming operations as a way to analyze how the deployment of private property rights within this context challenges dominant theoretical trends in the discussion of property rights and environmental injustices. One aspect of this project that I have failed to complete was the creation of a map detailing the location of hog CAFOs in Duplin County by virtue of time needed to complete that portion of the project and a lack of available resources; I would implore future researchers to engage in the creation of these

maps as they are necessary to help demarcate the location of the operations with regard to the residential populations of Duplin County.

RECORDING THE DATA

For this study, I utilized semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observation to capture the current controversy surrounding industrial hog farms in Duplin County. I completed a total of 26 interviews. I chose to utilize semi-structured interviews because of the ability for me to venture off the pre-written interview script to explore interesting quotes or statements that may have otherwise been ignored in a structured interview. While allowing flexibility, semi-structured interviews also facilitate comparative analysis of interview scripts, so that various themes can be explored between respondents in a standardized manner. I audio recorded interviews whenever possible (n = 13) to aid in the accurate transcription and analysis of data, while interviews that were not recorded were reconstructed as accurately as possible from written notes and my memory after the conclusion of each non-recorded interview. I used the qualitative data coding software NVivo, which allows users to track emergent themes and sort them into a hierarchy that helps to identify general themes and associated subthemes. I also used ethnographic observation to better record and analyze non-verbal data that significantly contextualize the spoken word by recording gestures, scenes, and emotions. Ethnographic observations and recordings are particularly useful for contextualizing quotes from interviews, as well as giving insight to other phenomenon that may not be verbalized through interactions. Within the context of this study, ethnography is particularly useful as a means to highlight the composition of organizations that either support or criticize the farms and the types of interpersonal interactions that occur between supporters and critics. Ethnographic notes were

written during interviews as notes or, in cases of personal interactions, as audio notes on my cell phone.

ANALYZING AND REPORTING THE DATA

Interviews were initially coded according to a set of general organizing themes generated while constructing the interview script. In addition to this pre-coding, codes were also developed as they emerged in the interview scripts, meaning that while many codes were deductively developed, some were inductively developed, and their initial parent code was not developed with the construction of the interview script. Interview notes and personal musings were analyzed by hand and later added as notes to the transcribed interview files within Nvivo.

For the sake of transparency, I am employing a data reporting technique popularized by Mitchell Duneier to help demarcate direct quotes from interviews with recorded audio, and recreations of quotes from interviews without recorded audio. Lines that are encapsulated by double quotation marks (e.g., “”) are verbatim quotes from interviews with an associated audio file, while lines that are surrounded by single quotation marks (e.g., ‘’) are quotes recreated as accurately as possible from written interview notes and memory.

REFLECTIONS ON MY RESEARCH

As is necessary with qualitative research, this particular section of my discussion of methods will be devoted to reflecting upon the ways that my personal biases and my own actions during interviews may have influenced the construction and analysis of my data. Orne and Bell (2015) highlight the importance of reflexivity when performing qualitative research as a tool to increase the contestability of research and avoid making universalizing claims with regard to the study’s findings. The importance placed upon this reflexivity is rooted in standpoint theory, a theory of epistemology that situates people within numerous social locations to highlight the

various ways of acquiring knowledge as well as the ways that different knowledges shape thoughts and actions. This concept is nothing new to sociology, as theorists such as DuBois (1920) and Marx (1867) have argued that the positions of the oppressed within society gives them a dualistic view of dominant culture as well as their own culture simultaneously, and that their numerous knowledges make them more apt at identifying and critiquing dominant social structures. Various feminist scholars, such as Patricia Hill Collins and Sandra Harding, use standpoint theory to highlight the importance of beginning research from the position of the oppressed to avoid the erasure of their worldview (Bowell n.d.). This position has been somewhat reconfigured with regard to qualitative research, but its importance remains – reflecting on one's own social location, and all the factors that emerge and contribute to those locations, helps to ensure that research is both rigorous and contestable.

Drawing from the need for understanding the influence of one's social location, I believe that it is necessary to briefly identify my own background in relation to this work, as to offer the reader more insight into my own relationship with the topic. I grew up in a small, rural community in the Texas Panhandle. As such, I am intimately familiar with the livestock production process as well as the effects of industrial CAFOs on nearby residents. My interest in researching the sociopolitical factors of rural life related to agriculture was born from my own experiences and those around me, some of whom had their health severely impacted by air and water pollution from the operation.

Beyond my exposure to industrial livestock operations, my own position as a research undoubtedly influenced the types of people that I was able to interview, and how they responded to me. The controversial nature of the lawsuits within the county made many people apprehensive to talk with me, as I was readily identified as an outsider. Moreover, some people

informed me that they would not talk to me out of fear that I was a lawyer in the case myself, or that I had been hired by the lawyers to pose as a researcher so I could collect sensitive information about the people in Duplin County. Not only did this factor limit the scope of people I could interview for my study, it also affected my choice to solicit interviews from people in certain locations, such as farm equipment stores, as I felt they would not participate in my research. Moreover, my position as a researcher influenced the language that I would use to describe phenomenon related to hog farming operations. While in Duplin County, I chose to avoid using terms such as “factory farm”, “concentrated animal feeding operation/CAFO”, and “industrial agriculture” when discussing the hog farming operations. This choice came out of my own initial interactions with community members, many of whom either rejected the specificity of the terms or reacted negatively to the terms. I felt that this choice was necessary to ensure that the participants were not put off by my own use of terminology, but also to ensure that there was as little confusion as possible regarding the definition of a hog farming operation during the interview itself. Finally, there are instances in which I thought of questions to ask outside of interviews, and did my best to ensure that I included those questions in future interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR – HOGS AND HEGEMONY
THE BRUSING OF DUPLIN COUNTY'S INVISIBLE POPULATION

THEREFORE, I proclaim North Carolina to be the
PIG PICKIN' CAPITAL OF THE WORLD
and call upon all dedicated pig pickers to defend this culinary title to the last bite.

Robert W. Scott, Former Governor of North Carolina, Executive Decree, October 2, 1972

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of agriculture to the socioeconomic profile of Duplin County. Within the geographic boundaries of the county, you can tour the oldest Muscat grape winery in the southern United States, handpick strawberries, blueberries, and, occasionally, blackberries fresh from the field, and visit numerous butchers to purchase homegrown pork chops, steak and fresh turkey. One small town in the southeastern corner of the county is home to North Carolina's annual strawberry festival, which brings in large crowds from across the state, while another is home to the state's noteworthy poultry jubilee which started as a way to highlight the importance of the poultry farming industry in providing jobs and money for the area. Agricultural organizations and businesses also have many important and recognizable roles within their respective communities. Throughout my time in the county, I repeatedly saw flyers advertising a "Squealin' for a Cure" charity marathon that was sponsored by Smithfield Foods, one of the largest contract-based pork producers that operate in the United States despite being owned by a Chinese company. A storied history in agriculture has helped carve Duplin County into the place it is today, as it currently enjoys the illustrious title of hog production capital of the world with some also considering it an important hub for sweet potato and soybean production in the South. It is impossible to deny – the presence and influence of the industry has forever bruised the residents of Duplin County.

By "bruised", I mean to describe the impact that the agriculture industry has had on vulnerable populations within the county, namely Black residents. Bruises may be painful to the touch but, in many cases, can be hidden under the skin for long periods of time. Bruises describes the current state of the industry in Duplin County – operations have been particularly affecting minority and impoverished residents throughout the county, and many who have been suffering in silence for years or even decades have little chance at recourse. When analyzing the impact of the industry on Duplin County, it is important to remain critical of the processes by which operations are protected and justified, as well as the various living conditions that result from farming operations. The unfortunate truth is that the benefits that the industry brings to the area are not evenly felt by the county's residents, as my thesis will show. As discussed in Chapter Two, numerous studies have indicated that increases in agricultural production often come at a significant price for minority and impoverished community members. This is particularly true with regard to the hog farming industry, which readily employs CAFOs and open-air manure lagoons to keep producer costs low, and community costs high by externalizing pollution and a focus on lots of production for few owners. With the advent of litigation efforts, the bruises that were once hidden deep beneath the surface has become painfully visible, allowing visibility for the once invisible.

To properly understand the position of the industry within Duplin County, as well as the severity of the bruising of the area's vulnerable residents, it is necessary to analyze the political economic and social justifications that have allowed the industry to exert hegemonic domination over the residents of Duplin County, and thus hide bruising. Why has the hog farming industry taken such a strong hold in the area, and what are the specific benefits that the hog farming operations bring to the area? In this chapter, I present the findings of archival research into the

history of the agricultural industry of Duplin County and analyze several emergent themes to explain the benefits that residents believe stem from the presence of the industry. In the first subsection, I trace the major developments in agriculture over time in Duplin County with special attention given to the emergence of the hog farming industry. In the second subsection, I analyze residents' general perceptions of the hog farming industry's importance to the political economic fabric of Duplin County. In the final subsection, I showcase respondents' beliefs regarding the negative externalities of hog farming in the area.

THE AGRICULTURAL HISTORY OF DUPLIN COUNTY

Large-scale agricultural production has long had a power over the structure and popular ideology in Duplin County, even while the types of commodities in production have evolved over time. In a pamphlet titled "A Brief History of Duplin County," the county's historical society declares that "[The county] has maintained its agricultural heritage and rural environment through the years while still allowing for a blending with industrial development, economic growth and an enviable lifestyle" (p. 6). Table 2 details the types and amounts of agricultural products produced throughout Duplin County's history. While the industrial hog farming industry is a relatively new development within the county, various types of agricultural production and extraction have long been important factors that have shaped the political economic fabric of the area.

Dating back to the colonial era, Duplin County's first noteworthy industry was centered around the construction and selling of naval store goods such as pitch and lumber (Martin n.d.). Prior to European colonization, the eastern portion of the state was covered in hundreds upon thousands of acres of longleaf pine trees. The landscape made it particularly difficult for settlers to establish colonies within the area, but difficulty for England in obtaining naval stores from

Sweden during Queen Anne's War influenced many colonizers to establish residences throughout the region in hopes of profiting from the emerging industry (Lee 1952). Along with the general population increase, many slaves were brought to the area and forced to work on the newly established plantations (Oxford III 2004). Duplin County is no different as Henry McCulloch, a London merchant, settled a 71,160-acre forested plantation and began the production of naval stores in the area in 1736; fourteen years later, Duplin County was officially established, taking its name from Sir Thomas Hays, Lord Dupplin, a member of the Board of Trade and Plantation for the British Crown (Sikes 1984). The industry's growth into the early 1800s was a double-edged sword, as there was no way to harvest turpentine in a sustainable manner. As the trees were drained of turpentine, populations moved south in search of more longleaf pine forests, and the remaining trees in the region were harvested for lumber (Bailey 2017). As the industry shifted away from Duplin County in the lead-up to the Civil War, the area remained populated.

The newly emergent lumber industry was at its peak for a few decades in Duplin County. As tracts of forests were stripped bare, residents of the county began to cultivate the newly available land. The United States Department of Agriculture (1959) attributes the initial success of crop-based agriculture in Duplin County to two main factors: the quality of the soil and its location within a coastal plain that facilitates a temperate climate and longer-than-average growing season. The once large naval stores operations faded away as numerous homestead farms began to grow a variety of crops, such as corn, soybeans, and tobacco, which helped to distinguish the state from its plantation-heavy neighbors to the south (North Carolina Museum of History, n.d.). During this time, many homesteads began growing brightleaf tobacco as the state had become a production and export hub both during and after the Civil War (McElwee 2005). Duplin County was particularly advantaged by the establishment of the nearby Wilmington and

Weldon Railroad in the late 1800s, which allowed for the transportation goods to market nearly anywhere in the state (Martin n.d.). During the Great Depression, it was hard smaller tobacco operations to profit from sales because of the massive amounts of tobacco that flooded the market in an attempt to compensate for the economic downturn that plagued the country. Nevertheless, tobacco farming would enjoy immense success in Duplin County, and North Carolina in general, until the mid-1900s, when the then Surgeon General Luther Terry delivered the results of a groundbreaking report that proved a strong association between smoking cigarettes and acquiring diseases such as cancer and heart disease (Mims 2014). As the American public moved away from smoking, many small farmers were priced out of their operations because they could not produce enough tobacco to make a profit. This set the stage for the introduction of the hog farming industry in Duplin County, as the former tobacco farms could be converted into hog farms with relative ease.

The stagnation and eventual freefall of the domestic tobacco market left many of Duplin County's farmers with a difficult choice – either continue to lose money growing and selling tobacco or leave their farms all together. This choice was particularly difficult for many of the county's residents, as they were continuing to farm the same land that their parents and grandparents had initially farmed when they settled in Duplin County. Enticed by the newly available clients, Murphy Family Ventures reached out to the area's farmers in the hopes that they would enter into contracts to produce hogs for the company. When faced with the choice, a large portion of the area's farmers chose to join Murphy as contracted producers, particularly enticed by the security offered by the contracts themselves. Moreover, the contracts guaranteed a relatively stable number of hogs for the company to sell. The growth of the hog farming industry in the southeastern region of the state boomed during the 1990s, most readily identified by the

implementation of significant technological changes to the production process, the industrialization of large operations, and the decrease of smaller hog farming operations (Jones 2006).

Table 3. Amount of Agricultural Products Produced in Duplin County for Selected Years.

Year	Naval Stores (in barrels)	Forest Products (in dollars)	Tobacco (in pounds)	Hog Population
1840	47,662	--	--	31,061
1870	--	43,589	275	20,767
1900	--	66,702	1,162,939	32,621
1935	--	32,951	12,669,182	35,901
1954	--	148,009	19,256,531	44,177
1987	--	--	15,171,985	275,705
2007	--	--	18,807,000	2,285,224

As technological developments made operations more efficient with regard to production, the structure of the contracted operations physically changed. Gone were the days of raising hogs in a pen – instead, the construction of massive sheds that went up in rows of six occurred in all corners of the county. The increasing efficiency of production meant that operation managers would see larger and more frequent profits from their contractors. As the farms grew, so did the surrounding towns and municipalities as people moved to area, enticed by the employment opportunities brought about from the operations. The industrialized nature of the farms necessitated larger workforces for the operations themselves as well as transport fleets to haul the hogs to large processing facilities.

There is a hegemonic aspect to the agricultural production industry within Duplin County as demonstrated by the area's historical involvement with agriculture. The area first grew because of the naval stores industry, which attracted many eventual "Tar Heels" to the area, ambitious to join in a rapidly growing and relatively secure industry. As the source of naval

stores was depleted and large portions of the state's population moved south to work in the forests of Georgia and Alabama, those who stayed transitioned to working in the lumber industry. After thousands of acres of the longleaf pines were cleared, they were used to grow crops for the sustenance of the local residents, but the growth in the global tobacco market and the desirability to brightleaf tobacco lead many of the county's farmers to venture into the industry as a means of providing for their families. The transition between the various industries from the 1700s to the mid-1900s were all relatively smooth, as each seemed to be a natural progressions from one good to another. Trees could still be harvested for lumber even when they were drained of their turpentine, and the space made available from the lumber industry as well as the timing and location of growth in the tobacco market naturally afforded many of Duplin County's farmers an opportunity to remain active within agricultural production.

The emergence of the hog farming industry occurred in a substantially different manner. As opposed to the natural flow between the production of goods that had characterized the last two centuries, the intense shock to the tobacco market from the Great Depression and the Surgeon General press conference were both too disruptive for farmers to earn profits. As the opportunities once afforded by the tobacco industry quickly evaporated from Duplin County, those who chose to continue farming took contracts to grow hogs from a local agribusiness corporation directed by a Duplin County local. The localized origin of Murphy Family Ventures complicates the narrative of vertically integrated corporations that proliferates within the rural sociology literature, as there was no perception that the contracted growers were beholden to a large, out of state corporation but instead were joining a smaller company native to Duplin County. Additionally, the farmers particularly welcomed the contracts because of the assurance they guaranteed in the face of an unpredictable market, ensuring that their generational

homestead farms would continue; this significant dependence on the industry continues this day. The contractual nature of hog farming operations that proliferated in Duplin County serves as a safeguard to the hegemonic impact of the industry, as the industry was able to ensure that independent growers in the area were absorbed into the larger corporatized structure of the industry. Today, the industry is widely recognized as an integral characteristic of the county, as evidenced by the operation of 280 farms that housed over 1.7 million hogs (approximately 19 percent of the state's entire population) as of the 2012 Census of Agriculture.

RESIDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE INDUSTRY

The area's extensive historical involvement in agricultural production serves as the foundation for many respondents' beliefs for the reason that the hog industry has enjoyed so much success in Duplin County. Within this category, respondents focused on the cultural and economic atmosphere that surround agricultural production as the main reason that hog farming was so readily welcomed into the area. To some, agriculture is most readily identified as the longest standing profession in the county. *'Agricultural production has structured the county since its founding in the mid-1700s, and farming is a very respected pastime,*' Brad, a white county employee, informs me as he leans forward over his thick and glossy dark oak office desk. The large paper calendar that rests on his desk wrinkles and tears under the pressure of his forearms. He finishes his sentence with a smug and toothy grin stretched across his face as he looks me over, almost as if he was searching for the slightest hint that his answer had amazed me in its simplicity. His response is certainly fitting for a high-ranking county government employee and, as he would later inform me with a similar grin, a multi-generational farmer. This sentiment is shared amongst a number of respondents across different occupations, classes, and races throughout the county. However, even within this theme, there exists some variation between

responses that attempt to isolate the industry's beginnings in the area. Joseph, another county employee in one of the county's smallest municipalities, clasps his hands together and rests them under his chin before clarifying that there are roots of the hog production industry specific to Duplin county itself - "*Well I mean Duplin County has always been a big hog farming community so they've always done that...because of the companies that have started here, they've actually only gotten bigger so there's more production on that.*" As I take a few notes for my own records, he sinks down into his armchair and closes his eyes, nodding as if to reassure us both of the accuracy of his response.

Josephs' identification of hog production businesses that began in Duplin County is noteworthy, as he is the first respondent to articulate the almost dualistic nature of the industry's beginnings in the county. Upon further questioning, he is unable to identify if the small-scale operations or the agribusinesses came to the area first. He continues, describing the small operation that his grandfather owned as a means of providing for his family – but he concedes his grandfather's hog pen looks nothing like the massive sheds that populate the area today. Nonetheless, hog farming enjoys a particular important place within the identity of the county that extends to the far corners of the world. Many of the hogs that are grown in Duplin County are sold in East Asian countries, particularly China (Clark 2018).

The "Hog Boss" of Duplin County

Some respondents take Joseph's responses a step further, articulating the importance of Wendell Murphy in establishing the industry in Duplin County. In particular, four respondents identified Murphy as the primary reason for the proliferation of the hog industry in the area. Murphy is a former state representative and lifelong resident of Duplin County, and is one of the founding members of Murphy Family Ventures as well as Murphy-Brown, LLC, a hog farming

contractor for Smithfield Foods. During his time in the North Carolina state legislature, Murphy introduced and supported several pieces of legislation designed to both grow and protect the hog farming industry throughout the state. Jessica, an employee of a local restaurant that is owned by Murphy, chose to use the word empire as the descriptor of Murphy's businesses – '*The Murphy Family is well respected because of their businesses. It's almost like an empire, since they own lots of other businesses in the area.*'

Today, he resides in Duplin County, and some respondents have informed me that they see him in public a few times every month. *'Yea, I saw him just the other week at the gas station down the street!*' Brenda, an older but not quite elderly white woman with curly brown hair, resituates herself on the wicker couch across from me as the sun peeks through the open blinds of her sunroom. She pauses, as if she expects me to react in an astounded manner. After all, as an outsider, I should be astounded to find myself only one degree of separation from the person who helped to put Duplin County on the global map of agricultural operations, but my reaction is much more subdued. '*Can you tell me about him?*' I inquire, attempting to temper my voice to match her previous bravado. '*He helped to increase the area's knowledge of hog farming and actually help people do it well. That helped people stay on their farms, especially after their kids leave.*' There is a sweetness or fondness in her voice when she talks about Murphy. Moreover, she also attributes the modernization of the area to the successes of the hog industry - *'We wouldn't have near as much of what we do if it weren't for all the money brought in [by the farms]*.' She then rattles off various stores and restaurants in the area that would have never remained in the area if not for the effects of the hog industry on the economy. The success of Murphy Ventures in offering contracts on behalf of Smithfield Foods is the near-exclusive method of hog farming in Duplin County; as I learned through a brief interaction with a Murphy

employee, no one who works for the corporation is able to grow hogs if they do not have a contract with the business and small-scale operations are often crushed by the efficiency and profitability of Murphy's operations. To him, it's merely part of the small price to pay for economic security.

While these were some of the few mentions of Murphy by name in my interviews, numerous reconnaissance interviews with residents throughout the towns and municipalities in the county revealed that Murphy is indeed a popular figure for his role in the industrialization and spread of hog farming operations. To many respondents, Murphy personifies triumph over economic stagnation that is common in rural communities throughout the United States – the growth of the industry has allowed Duplin County to maintain its identity as an agricultural hub while allowing people to engage in an activity that has likely structured their entire life course.

Benefits Attributed To the Farms

While the previous theme explores the reasons that respondents believe the hog industry is well represented within Duplin County, it does not explain why residents believe the industry continues to proliferate throughout the area or how the area has changed because of the industry's presence. In order to broaden the understanding of resident's perceptions of the industry, it is necessary to explore the benefits that Duplin County residents attribute to the hog farming industry. Within this category, respondents identified the benefits that they themselves experienced because of the industry's presence in Duplin County, or the benefits that they imagined others experienced. Many of the emergent subthemes are centered on economic benefits, as they are likely the most noticeable and widespread benefit that the farms have brought to the area.

Employment Opportunities.

Twelve respondents identified that the industry's largest benefit to the county is the large number of employment opportunities available in the area. "*I can't even count the number of people I know who work for some of the bigger farms, and even besides that…you know, smaller farms, independently owned farms…it's huge.*" Ashley, the petite and newly hired librarian who served as one of my initial research contacts, informs me while she is looking over my right shoulder into the distance, almost as if she is mentally tallying each person she knows who is employed by the farms. Without saying it, Ashely has already highlighted two of the most important categories when discussing farm employment – those who are contracted by entities like Murphy-Brown and Murphy Ventures (otherwise referred to as growers), and those who are employed by the farms themselves without being growers. Upon an inquiry for further clarification, Ashely articulates that there are numerous jobs associated with the farms in general, such as feeding the hogs or cleaning the sheds, that requires hiring external workers. The ease with which she responds is contradicted by her body language, as she tilts her heard in an inquisitive manner and purses her lips in thought before answering my question. The implicit delineation between growers and farm workers in Ashely's response speaks directly to the nature of the jobs provided by the industry; specifically, the notion that the industry does not just employ farmers themselves.

This sentiment is echoed in another interview I had with Cindy, a civil servant married to a local hog farmer. Posters for various attractions around Duplin County populate the walls of her office, each of the advertisements large and vibrant; on her large desk rests a magazine produced by the Duplin County Tourism Board, somewhat hidden under random papers concerned with various things. At this point in the interview, Cindy has confessed to me that she

is fearful of anything that could disrupt or eliminate the industry from Duplin County specifically because of the jobs that the industry provides:

> *You've got farmers, you've got owners, you've got the [farm] employees, you've got the truck drivers, they have – companies have feed mills, so you've got that. You've got vendors that sell to you, so yeah, there is a lot of people employed by that industry.*

The look on Cindy's face as she finishes her sentence appears to be one of legitimate concern. Perhaps she is apprehensive that changes to the industry could hamper her husband's ability to farm, her own position as a civil servant, or some of her friends and family who are tangentially employed because of the industry. Her fears are certainly understandable. There are two livestock processing facilities within Duplin County, and another one located just across the county border in neighboring Sampson County. The amount of livestock produced in Duplin County necessitates the need for butchers and processors to ensure that the products can be sold in a quick and efficient manner. The number of hogs also requires a well prepared fleet of truck drivers to transport live pigs to the processing facilities and then to transport the meat itself to a myriad of other locations for sale. As a brief aside, one of my earlier respondents challenged me to count the number of Smithfield Foods branded cargo trucks that I saw on my daily excursion through the county – I counted twenty-six.

Economic Development.

Beyond the numerous jobs available in the county because of the hog farming industry, some white respondents felt that their communities would look significantly different without the presence of the industry. '*The agriculture industry makes up about 70 percent of the largest sectors in Duplin County,*' Brad makes sure to inform me, as he motions to the window on the opposite side of his office and fans out his hands, seeming to suggest everything beyond the walls of his office would not exist without the hog farming industry. While I have not been able

to find an outside resource that confirms his claim, Brad is confident in his assertion. '*The effects of the industry are felt everywhere.*' Duplin County is a predominantly rural area, with towns and municipalities far and few between one another; despite this, many of the towns either house or are within driving distance of 24-hour grocery stores, big-box retailers and fast food restaurants. The presence of these businesses seems only possible in the area because of the growing population and because of the expendable funds that residents have from their occupations, many of which are tied to the hog farming industry as previously mentioned.

To some, the developments experienced by the community are inseparable from the economic influx provided by the industry. "*I've told people all along and I'll tell you the same thing: if you live in this region of the state…part of the money in your pocket is from hogs. There's no, no getting around that.*" I look up from my notepad so that I can be sure to memorize the look on my respondent's face. Tom is a lifelong resident of Duplin County and works for the city' government in one of the county's smaller towns. Sitting across from me, behind his old fashioned office desk, Tom leans back in his chair and rests his hands on his stomach. There is nothing particularly noticeable about the look on his face; his white mustache contrasts sharply against his thinning grey hair, and his glasses shimmer a bit under the fluorescent lighting of his office. I am surprised at the lack of expression on his face - maybe he has said this to everyone who has asked. It certainly would not surprise me if that were the case; minutes before this question, Tom had told me about the increasing presence of hog farming throughout his childhood to his early adulthood. The construction of Interstate 40 helped the hog industry to grow, since farmers could more easily get their products to market Tom says as he closes his eyes, no doubt reminiscing in a few vivid memories from the county's recent past. He gently

opens his eyes and focuses them on me, working to emphasize his following remark – "*The impact that the swine industry has on our economy...it's a big part of the economy around here.*"

Continuation of Generational Farms.

This subtheme is related to the "Agriculture as Identity" theme in that it highlights the importance of continuing the agricultural lineage of the area. Four respondents articulated that the presence of the industry within Duplin County has allowed many farmers to remain active on their farms when they would otherwise be forced to quit. '*Smithfield lets people stay on their farms; without them, the industry in Duplin County would be practically dead*,' Brad informs me as I am packing away my things. Often, the best quotes come from after the interview has concluded, and this situation was no different. It also helped to tie together most of the things Brad had told me during our forty-five-minute interaction. Agriculture was an important industry within Duplin County, and it was part of his job as a county employee to ensure that it was protected. While some of his responses had been generalized to the entire industry (he seemed particularly fond of also discussing poultry production), his final response purposefully singled out one of the largest hog farming corporations that operates in the area as the sole reason for the continuation of family farming within the county. This phenomenon is likely personal for many of the area's residents – it is impossible to know how many people around me at any given time were indebted to the corporations for allowing their parents, grandparents, or even themselves to continue farming.

To those who work in agricultural extension, the idea of farm succession is particularly important. One of the primary goals of extension services is to ensure that people in often underserved communities have the education and resources necessary to provide for themselves and are in accordance with the laws and regulations established for agricultural production

(Maunder 1972). While the goal itself is quite large, farm succession remains a crucial goal of extension agencies across the globe to ensure that farms remain operational by farmers and their families in sustainable ways, even across numerous generations. Elizabeth was the first respondent to mention issues of farm succession when discussing the benefits of the industry in Duplin County; this fact seemed to lose it potency when I remember that she is an extension agent and that part of her job is to facilitate both succession planning and eventual transfers. Her short, brown hair bounces slightly around her head as she paces back and forth during portions of the interview, her portly frame swallowed by the long-sleeve shirt almost draped over her figure. Her rapid pacing between her desk and the table at which I sat seemed to indicate that my previous question about the factors that limit farm succession had stumped her a bit – not because she did not have a response, but because she seemed to be considering where to begin her answer:

> *I think there's a lot of things that impact farm succession…maybe it skips a generation, sometimes your life moves you and you can't be there to take care of the farm. Sometimes it's health related, sometimes a parent dies and it's not feasible to continue farming because the remaining spouse doesn't have the ability to continue farming.*

While many of these factors do legitimately impact farm succession, I decide to test her on their applicability to Duplin County. While it is impossible to ever know every reason that each farm in the area has stopped producing, Elizabeth was quick to identify one reason the hog farming industry was crucial in the preservation of family farms throughout the area:

> *A lot of the farmers tell me they really got interested in livestock production because tobacco was no longer something that they felt could be sustainable at keeping their farms going. So, it was a choice, or an opportunity, a way for their farm to keep being productive.*

Her words highlight an unaddressed issue in the analysis of each previous theme. Tobacco farming enjoyed a rich and impactful legacy in the county until the 1960s, as the general public

became aware of the impacts that smoking cigarettes had on respiratory health and class-action lawsuits targeted large tobacco corporations. The collapse of the tobacco market allowed the hog industry to step in and support the county, a transition that cast the industry's leaders as necessary and important figures who heroically saved the area from economic turmoil and the destruction of its cultural identity.

The narrative of the hog farming industry as a hero to the people of Duplin County epitomizes the various emergent themes throughout my first level of analysis. The ability of the industry to prop up and replace failing tobacco farms is well respected throughout the area, but this should come as no surprise – after all, hog farming has allowed Duplin County to retain a significant and modern connection to its historical roots. More specifically, the presence of the industry has helped many of the area's farmers retain ownership of their operations, with the generational nature of the operations serving as another significant connection to the area's history.

Beyond the continuation of the area's historical trajectory, the industry has also resulted in various material developments that are directly recognizable by the residents of the county. The emphasis on jobs is one important dimension of the material conditions brought about by the industry, as it necessitates positions not only on the farms themselves but in other venues across the county, such as processing plants and the transportation of livestock. The multi-faceted nature of the economic benefits of the industry is not just felt in the employment sector alone, as many respondents also attribute the number of typically urban businesses and stores that populate the county to the presence of the industry – after all, these shops would not remain in the area absent the ability of residents to spend money from their many jobs within the industry. While it is hard to find statistics that can confirm the specifics relayed to me in many interviews,

the strength of and confidence in the beliefs that respondents expressed about the significance of the industry to the economic profile of the area highlights the larger sociocultural and political economic dependence that sustains the industry and its associated operations within the county.

Finally, the industry has many public actors that are referenced with regard to the benefits of the industry. Respondent's perceptions of Wendell Murphy highlight the way that Murphy's role in the establishment of the industry is personalized amongst many of Duplin's lifelong residents as they have seen the numerous changes that have been brought about by the presence of the industry. Moreover, the identifiability of Murphy as a resident of Duplin County helps to situate the industry culturally and geographically, as day-to-day interactions for many of the county's residents could include a run-in or chat with the famous "hog boss." This personal connection is important, as it serves to remove the industry from its empire-like structure and refocus the resident's attention to the personality of its founder and its numerous employees. In short, the personable nature of the industry's local founder becomes the material through which other feelings and perceptions of the industry are filtered through, and makes identifiable the hero that saved Duplin County from an economic downturn and the removal of its connection to the past.

UNDER THE SKIN – NEGATIVE EXTERNALITIES OF HOG FARMING

Despite the benefits that the industry has brought to the people of Duplin County that white residents focus on, the farming operations themselves are not perfect and they often create discomfort for the populations that surround the operations. The white, hegemonic narrative surrounding the essential nature of the hog farming explicitly excludes negative externalities largely born by black residents who live beside such operations, and Latinx workers within them.

While environmental and health issues are well documented within the appropriate literatures, what does not currently exist within the literature is an analysis of the responses that rural community members employ to defend industrial farming operations in the face of criticism. Within this subtheme, I explore the issues that respondents identify with the farming operations, simultaneous to their disregarding the potential severity of the issues. Moreover, I focus on the description of the externalities presented by nonwhite respondents and analyze the social mechanisms by which their experiences are hidden and erased. While these experiences may be erased, they are still the painful realities for many of the county's citizens who live near hog farming operations.

Smell and Manure Lagoons

Smell is the most commonly identified negative externality among respondents. Despite the academic attention that has been devoted to both describing the smells produced by industrial hog farming operations and offering potential solutions, the issue remains contentious and unresolved. When I ask Billie and Russ, two elderly Black activists, to describe the smell of the nearby farms, they both quickly exclaim some variation of *'Oh my word,*' in an almost exasperated tone, as if they both dread having to expend any precious mental energy entertaining thoughts about the smell. After a few moments of silence, Billie is the first to speak – '*It just smells foul. The air smells like it's soaked in blood almost, that's how thick the stench gets.*' My own nose is bothered by a buzzing sting; I find it difficult to even imagine how many hogs it would take for the air to feel saturated with blood after a truck has driven by her home. Her frame shifts against the backdrop of the large window in her living room that overlooks the nearby highway. She purposefully moves one of her frail hands and pinches the bridge of her nose to emphasize just how intense the smell can be; after releasing her nose, she then points to the rotund and elderly Chihuahua that rests at her feet. '*When the air gets really bad, he'll just sit*

and rub his nose raw. I can't do anything about it.' There is something pitiful about the tone of her voice when she says this that helps to situate just how frustrating and exhausting it is to deal with the smell day after day. I steal a lengthy look at Russ during the silence to see if he offers an objection like before, but he remains uncharacteristically still leading me to believe that he agrees with the sentiment.

While many quickly address concerns related to smell, others deny the severity of the issue. "*Of course you have people who complain about the smell...the smell is a big issue, I think, with any farm.*" Gretta quickly glances around the room, as if to escape my inquisitive gaze. Her long, brown hair appears almost brittle as it reacts in a jerky manner to each quick movement of her head. Her actions lead me to believe that she is eager to escape similar questions. While she is only a library employee in the county, her husband is a contracted hog farmer for one of the corporations in Duplin County; as a result, she has no doubt heard of the public controversy surrounding farm smell in the area. She stops moving briefly to press her hand to her forehead before continuing - "*Yea, I don't think you really smell it…*" Her answer confuses me, mainly because it seems to contradict her previous statement. Before I am afforded the opportunity to ask for clarification, she informs me that she and her husband do not live near any hog farms, so she cannot be entirely sure that they do not smell. She contorts her wrinkled face into a manufactured smile, as if to feign innocence.

Not all respondents believe the smell to be intolerable or even bothersome. Ahmed is an average statured Middle Eastern man who immigrated to the county around seven years ago. '*When I first got to the area, I wasn't really sure what to think of the smell. It was pretty awful because there aren't any smells like it where I'm from.*' He readjusts his body on the leather couch that served as the base for our impromptu interview. As he gently slides down the surface

of the couch, the flannel of his shirt elicits a slight squeaking noise from the slick material; he then rests his left foot on top of his right knee and clasps his hands together at the fingers, holding his foot in place. He turns to face me. *'I think the smell has gotten better since I've been here though. I'm not really sure if it bothers anybody else here, because they may be more used to it since they live in the country.*' He pauses for a moment, his mouth slightly agape as if he had more to add to his previous statement, but he settles for nodding his head a few times instead.

To others, the smell is just a necessary part of living in an area with hog farming operations. To these respondents, the smells are an unfortunate but temporary reality that is ultimately overshadowed by the benefits the industry brings into the county. The palpable eagerness in Tom's voice surprises me a bit as he rolls his chair forward toward his desk – "*And there's no doubt that, at times, that there's a stench. And, uh, it's always been that way…you can put up with a little bit of [smell] when it's good for everybody.*" Tom's response certainly makes sense within the context of his job; as a local government employee, he is tasked with balancing the issues associated with hog farming and the benefits his own community experiences because of the industry (he even admits to such after I have turned off my recorder). This sentiment even seems popular amongst almost the entire population of Duplin County, or so William is quick to say. As I sit in the lobby of him and his wife's law office, he removes his grey overcoat and hangs it neatly on a coatrack in the corner. He appears to be relatively tall for someone approaching his seventies, but his back seems to be giving him some issues as we begin to talk, so he remains somewhat hunched over before relaxing in a chair himself. '*You know, we used to have a politician here who said that the farms smell better than poverty. And a lot of the people around here believe that.*' What follows is a personal account of his own time in the county as a boy, and his vivid remembrance of dilapidated houses that became abandoned as farms shut

down and people left the area. As his recollections slowly taper, he looks at me and says '*And I can see why they believe that. As one bedroom homes became two and three bedroom homes, and those became two and three-story homes, I can see why they believe that.*' But, he is not completely accepting of the smell, as he believes that people have become complacent in attempting to fix the issues related to smell.

The primary culprit when discussing issues related to smell are the open-air manure lagoons that store liquefied waste that is then sprayed on croplands as fertilizer. Thirteen respondents related smell issues back to the presence of manure lagoons in the county. Beyond connecting the smell to the mere presence of lagoons, some respondents articulated that the smell was worst when the lagoons themselves were drained and sprayed on fields. Cindy seems to have wanted to avoid questions regarding the smell, likely a result of the growing public controversy surrounding the issue as well as her position as a county employee. "*Well, that's where probably some of the controversy comes into play is, a lot of times when they pump the lagoons, the lagoon water is pumped onto fields*." Almost immediately after finishing her sentence, she informs me that farmers are under strict regulations to ensure that they only spray at certain times, under certain weather conditions. The quickness with which she informs me of the regulations shows me that she has done well rehearsing a few talking points to discuss the farms; however, she is unable to inform me of any specific regulations that she mentioned.

Pollution

Couched within other discussions concerning the manure lagoons was the fear that they could pollute groundwater or flood, but no one had actually heard of any instances where those issues materialized. Andrew, a reporter with the county's newspaper, informed me of a series that the paper ran on water pollution. '*We knew it was a concern*,' he informs me while turning his chair to face his computer monitors. '*But we didn't find anything about it happening in*

Duplin County. We found other stuff, like sewer issues that had happened, but no documented instances of water pollution from the hog farms. And [the DEQ] has to publish that stuff, you know?' Andrew is referring to is a violation bulletin that the DEQ publishes whenever an agricultural operations manager has violated regulations and polluted a water source or waterway in North Carolina. Other respondents echo his sentiments, believing that the lack of notifications of occurrences means that there were none – for this newspaper reporter, no news was good news.

Air pollution was given more serious considerations, at least at first. As my interviews began to address the issue of air pollution, many respondents would reject the possibility of it occurring. "*I know there's always talks about the smell, but in my opinion, the air is outdoors!*" Cindy laughs, the brief movement of her head causing her hair to bounce. What Cindy's answer particularly highlights is the belief that the smell of the operations themselves is enough to constitute air pollution – therefore, if one cannot smell an operation, then the air around the operation itself is clean. This belief, which was mirrored in other interviews and various interactions I had with the residents of Duplin County, suggests that there is a prioritization of personal experiences as a metric to evaluate the claims of others. This phenomenon is not limited to Duplin County, or even North Carolina, but it does help convince a person that the issues others take with the farms are not legitimate.

Manure Spray on Homes

Even though there are strict regulations in place to prevent issues, some of the county's residents allege that manure ends up on their homes and their property when farmers spray their fields. But many respondents are skeptical about the allegations. Greg, an elderly pastor at a church in the northern area of the county, leans back in his chair before sharply tilting his head forward to address my inquiry. '*I've heard people say that the spray ends up on their homes, but*

I've never seen it. People don't live close enough to the farms for the spray to drift that much.' He then motions to the window across from his desk – '*Maybe on a really windy day like today, but not just in general.*' He is particularly gentle with his words in that he entertains the possibility that certain conditions make it likely for effluent to end up on people's homes and property. Others reject any possibility – '*It just doesn't happen. It does not happen.*' Brad's face lights up as he speaks, eager to assure me that the allegations are just that. '*I've never seen it happen; farmers are members of the community, it doesn't make sense for them to dirty their own communities.*' Brad's answer reverberates through several responses, as other respondents speak of hog farmers as important community members who gain nothing by ignoring regulations and spraying on people's homes. To them, this belief alone eliminates any potential for the allegations to be true.

The Saturation of the Industry

Despite the praise imbued to Murphy for his role in the industry, not all residents believe Murphy to be a hero. A large and exaggerated huff signals to me that Billie is likely one of these residents. *'The hog farms are here because of Murphy. And now there's so many farmers and businesses around here...who you gonna complain to?!*' The grimace on her face is difficult to discern in the dark living room, but I could tell it was there. The thick, grey storm clouds outside help to accentuate the particularly dark turn that the interview has taken with regard to the realities of life close to the offending farms. She contorts her body in the tall parlor chair so that her torso is diagonally resting on the back cushion of the chair while her bony hand rests under her chin and her elbow presses into her thigh. Russ, sitting on a couch across from Billie's chair and cattycorner to the couch on which I was sitting, offers a brief objection. '*Some people do speak out, but it's a small group because nobody wants to rock the boat. What's really frustrating is that there are no politicians we can go to.*' Billie looks at Russ as she beings listing some of

the daily frustrations she experiences because of the farms; from water pollution to personal health, no topic is barred from the discussion. To both Billie and Russ, Murphy's businesses and influence have spread throughout every social, political, and economic avenue in the county, making it near impossible to actually criticize any aspect of the industry or resolve any of the aforementioned issues. This harkens back to one of my earliest interactions with a resident of Duplin County – being told that the politicians were in the pockets of the hog farming corporations and that almost nothing could be done to address any of the public's growing concerns with the farms. Billie pulls me from my recollection with an enthusiastic '*Yea!*' said to no one thing in particular. From here, the interview marches forward, but I am left focusing on the malice in Billie's voice when she first mentioned Murphy. It was thick and deliberate, similar to how she described the smell of the farms close to the homes of the area's Black residents.

Charles, a Black man in is upper thirties, tells me much of the same. "*…even though you know there's pollution, they have capital and they could probably pay you off very well…*" A firm gust of wind buffets my notepad, causing the pages to flutter. Charles takes a moment to adjust the sunglasses resting on his face before looking around at the empty streets. He had agreed to an interview, but felt most comfortable conducting the interview in a small courtyard, away from the curious ears of the patrons at the library in which we met. Now it seems he was more conscious about those who could be passing by before he spoke. "*[The problems are] probably ignored, and again…to make those comments [about the farms], you have to see those people the next day at the grocery store. If you have that courage, so be it; if you don't, you'll never say anything.*" He nods as another gust of wind blows against, and he pulls his jacket tighter over his frame as if to camouflage himself from the elements and the reach of the industry.

Billie, Russ, and Charles have all highlighted significant issues related to the hegemony of the hog farming industry in Duplin County. All three respondents believe that it is particularly difficult to speak out against the industry, either because the industry is too powerful within the country or because they face social ostracization for the expression of their opposition. As previously discussed, the industry is a large factor in the economic landscape of Duplin County – because the industry is believed to have done so much good in most people's lives, it makes it much harder to have a meaningful dialogue about the very real issues that people experience because of the operations. More specifically, these beliefs are not just relegated to the social sphere, but the political sphere as well. As Russ points out, many of the area's politicians appear to be pro-industry thus hampering any possibility of the issues being legislated away. These fears are not unfounded, as the overwhelming presence of the industry in the area as well as its connections to the history of the area likely contributes to election of pro-industry candidates, particularly when campaigning against an anti-industry candidate. This creates a social atmosphere that is hostile to those who criticize the hog farming operations, and leaves those with legitimate complaints without any chance at political recourse.

Deadtrucks and Pig Carcasses

Another smell issue that only a few residents chose to highlight was the smell of deadboxes and deadtrucks. As I would learn during my time in Duplin County, farm operators store the carcasses of deceased hogs in crates so that the aptly-termed deadtrucks can transport the pig carcasses to processing plants. This topic came about as I was conducting an interview with Dusty, a white man and pastor of a local church. His congregation had thrown him a surprise birthday party at the church's weekly soup kitchen. As we spoke, he would intermittently pause to enjoy a slice of birthday cake; his teeth and wispy white mustache were quickly stained blue from cake icing. '*The biggest issue with the farms is the smell. There is no*

getting around that, but it's something that can't be changed.' He looks down as he cuts off a small piece of his remaining cake before he looks back up at me. '*You can't change the wind.*' I chuckle briefly, less at the quote itself and more at the idea that all of these issues could be blamed on the wind – it was a common sentiment during my time in the area. '*Well, others have told me that they've had increases in the kinds of pests that have disrupted their lives. Do you know anything about that?*' He shakes his head. '*Nah, I haven't heard of that. But how bad could it actually be? So you've got a few more flies in your house than normal.*' The sound of a chair on the other side of the table digging into the wooden floor as its yanked jolts me away from my notes. Zeke, a tall and slender Black man, then sat down in the chair and looked right at Dusty. '*It's worse than that. The smell doesn't just attract flies. When farmers leave pigs in the deadboxes, you get vultures!*' Zeke is now leaning forward, the glare from his glasses forcing my head back down to my notepad as I attempt to switch between various pages to record the interaction. '*You ever see vultures around here?*' Dusty retorts, challenging the assertion. Zeke then cocks in head slightly to the side, as if to suggest that Dusty's response is unwarranted. '*The pigs sit in the boxes and they rot. They're still rotting in the trucks too! I've started seeing vultures around my place.*'

This conversation continues for a few more minutes, both respondents seeming to forget my presence. The interaction seems organic, but is also epitomizes the interactions other Black respondents have been irritated by – specifically, interactions with other community members that feel the issues are not as serious as alleged because they themselves have not experienced them. Ultimately, it appears that many of Duplin County's non-Black residents cannot empathize with the experiences of the Black residents who have bared the brunt of these externalities. These

interactions serve to cover the bruises that the industry has left on the most vulnerable of Duplin County's population.

THE RACIALIZED HEGEMONY OF INDUSTRIAL HOG FARMING

There are significant racial differences in the types of responses afforded to me. Black respondents frequently described, in great detail, the way that farming externalities have affected them. Unsurprisingly, my interviews with Black respondents focused on the daily experiences of exposure to the numerous externalities of industrial hog CAFOs. They are frustrated that they can no longer enjoy many activities that they once did, such as visiting with family on their front porch. Additionally, many are subjected to physical and mental health hazards associated with air pollution, hog fecal matter, and exhaustion from working to combat the occurrence of externalities. The expression of these frustrations was commonly accompanied by an acknowledgement and criticism of the role of social ills, such as capitalism or racism, that have belittled the concerns and, bluntly, the lives of these people with regard to profits. To these respondents, the issues extend much further beyond the smell or the risks of pollution (even though they are significant concerns) – the issues exist because of the actions of politicians that have shielded the industry from criticism. This is further showcased through the feelings of sociopolitical isolation from the larger community of Duplin County for their opposition and criticism of the farming operations; moreover, some respondents indicated that there is no involvement from local religious leaders or institutions in resolving these issues, which have forced the victims of injustices to navigate the path for redress on their own.

The identification of harms associated with CAFO usage was substantially different for non-Black respondents. There is a level of trust afforded to the industry by non-Black respondents, as indicated by their blanket assertions regarding the strength of the identified

regulations to which farm operators abide; moreover, there is also an implicit trust that farm operators would willingly abide by the regulations for various reasons, such as being an important member of the community. These beliefs stem from the saturation of the industry in Duplin County, as well as these individuals being removed from experiencing the aforementioned effects, such as decreased property value or exposure to the intense smell. To put it plainly – they experience the benefits of the industry on a daily basis and are only occasionally inconvenienced by the operations. Finally, there is also a generalized acceptance of the externalities rooted in political economic factors. This is best supported by the popularity of the belief that the occasional interruptions to life are just part of living in the area.

The hegemonic nature of the hog farming industry is clearly reflected in the various elements that construct Duplin County. As one of area's largest employers, the industry leaders are well-regarded for their presence in the area. There is a significant political economic and cultural dependence on the industry that was expressed numerous times during my interviews with the county's residents. It would be an understatement to say that Duplin County would look significantly different if not for the hog farming industry – the industry itself contributes substantially to the profile of the region on numerous levels. On the microsocial level, the industry affords a unique stability to those who have contracts with the industry, as well as those who are employed in fields closely related to the industry. On the macrosocial level, the industry has helped make the county a globally recognized hub for hog production.

The intensity and significance of the benefits associated with the presence of the industry shield the hog farming operations from legitimate criticism from Duplin County's minority and impoverished residents. First and foremost, each of the identified externalities must compete with the historical legacy of the industry in the county. The negatives are juxtaposed to the

benefits brought about by the industry, meaning that most white respondents are able to excuse the existence of some externalities and epitomize the hegemonic influence of the industry in Duplin County. Moreover, there is a significant racialized component to the hegemonic impact of the industry, as showcased by the descriptions of the externalities offered by most of the Black respondents. As they indicate numerous hazards that they are exposed to because of their proximity to the CAFOs, they feel that there is nowhere to go with their complaints as the industry is too powerful with regard to the political economic structure of the county. Moreover, the expression of these concerns is largely ignored by those with positive views of the industry, or even excused by some, which significantly hides the bruises inflicted upon Duplin County's most vulnerable residents.

CHAPTER FIVE – PERSONAL PROPERTY IN RURAL AMERICA

"The negro has all the rights of the citizen, and is secured and protected in the existence of them with the same jealous safeguard of the law as the white citizen."

North Carolina and Its Resources
Written by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture
1896, pg. 222

The clouds were slowly beginning to part as I made my way up a small, two-lane road between Rose Hill and Magnolia. I drove much faster than the posted signs allowed as I had received a phone call from an elusive county historian named Gladys whom I had been attempting to interview for nearly three weeks. Despite my initial efforts in talking with her, each of my personal calls to her home phone number collided with an overflowing voicemail box. As a result, I was particularly elated to have a notification for a voicemail appear on my own phone just after finishing another interview. As the voicemail began to play, a somewhat creaky voice informed me that she would be at home this afternoon and would love to take the opportunity to visit with me. Having finally connected with someone I had convinced myself was a myth, I packed up my belongings and raced to the location relayed to me in the message.

Twenty minutes later, I pulled onto a smaller, one-lane road right off the highway and made my way over some rusted train tracks protruding from the ground. The concrete of the highway quickly transformed into loose dirt and gravel that almost seemed to shroud my car as I traversed even further away from any recognizable residential areas. Suddenly, a large brick house appeared in the distance and my heart seemed to quicken its pace. Nerves? I was certainly nervous, as I hoped that chatting with the local historian could offer me a breakthrough that I had been desperate to find. I park my car in front of the home and make my way to the front door.

After a few loud knocks on the stiff, wooden entrance, I was accosted by the same voice I was introduced to earlier in the afternoon from the side of the home. An elderly Black woman of almost miniscule stature stood before me, her thin, grey hair and large shawl snapping side to side from the short gusts of wind that had decided to join our outdoor meeting. After introducing myself, she led me inside to a spacious sun room with a large TV that was set to a national news channel. The wall adjacent to the entrance was covered in various plaques and awards that stretched from the tile floor to the ceiling, each one representing years and even decades of local activism for the surrounding communities and residents. The reflective surfaces cast green, red, gold, and blue hues onto the floor and the opposing walls depending on the angle of the sun outside, making it shine as though it were a stain glass window. The motif was rather fitting, as I felt that I could be entering an almost holy setting.

While I make a few passing glances up and down the wall, she introduced herself as Gladys and motioned toward the kitchen table a room over as a potential spot to conduct the interview. As we chatted, she took special care to address me as if I am her close friend reminiscing about days long since gone. She recalled her own time growing up on her family's tobacco farm, making sure to describe the dynamic that came with being one of the only Black families in the area to own their own farm. After she left the farm to attend college at Yale, she began to work with schools across the country on developing advanced science education programs. After being involved in education for over twenty years, she returned to see that the area she called home had changed in surprising ways. The tobacco fields to which she was accustomed were rapidly shrinking or had disappeared altogether. She did not need anyone to tell her what kinds of operations had taken their place – she could smell them. "*Oh yeah, well the*

whole farming thing has changed," she said. *"If this has become hog country, then it's going to be hog country…*" She then chastised the way that the industry seemed to overtake the area:

> *The politicians who knew what they were doing did it. As this growth process took place…they were more interested, I believe at the time, in product. 'How many can I have? How many can I get? Let's get this money, let's grow this thing.' [The county] was a place that had not been tapped at the time that it was tapped. All of a sudden, you found this area sitting out there not doing too much of anything besides growing some corn and tobacco…but all of a sudden, it was something new and different.*

Something that particularly stood out to me was the way that Gladys considered the owners of the corporate agribusiness and the politicians nearly one in the same; in her mind, it was the combined effort of the two groups that opened up Duplin County to the hog industry. When asked why she thought that the controversies surrounding the farms existed today, she took little time in formulating her answer – "*Maybe not having the capacity to do the impact [study], do the research to see what the impact of all the changes they were making and wanting them to happen quickly would have.*" This is a sentiment that was echoed throughout a number of my other interviews, but other respondents were much less kind with their words.

Throughout the time I spent with Gladys, she kept narrowing our discussion to one primary issue: that the problems with the farms largely exist because of a failure to properly research, understand, and communicate the potential effects that the industrialized operations could have on local populations. To Gladys, the insurgence of large-scale hog farms in the area was not completely new – there had always been hog farms in the area, but the modern operations were considerably different than the farms around which she had grown up. She ultimately attributed the existence to politics that privileged profit over people, a sentiment that she feels has long existed in Duplin County. These feelings are similarly expressed by nearly all Black respondents, and beg the question: how do the bruised populations attempt to change the industry? Within this chapter, I will explore the processes by which Duplin County's minority

and impoverished residents attempt to mobilize against the harms perpetrated by the hog farming industry. In the first subsection, I present an ethnographic scene that displays how the residents of Duplin County have chosen to organize within their own community to oppose the externalities of the hog farming operations in the area. In the second subsection, I describe the white and Black respondents' perceptions of the lawsuits involving the hog farming operations within the area. Specifically, I focus on presenting the reasons that respondents believe the suits to be legitimate or illegitimate, as well as the potential impacts of the suits as identified by respondents. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the lawsuits as a tool to highlight the bruising caused by the industry, with a particular focus on the nuisance litigation and the claiming of property rights as a mechanism to equalize the rights of residents versus the right to operate.

THE LOCATING OF RACE WITHIN DUPLIN COUNTY

Gladys' frustration with the industry is not entirely misplaced, as the very nature and structure of the farming operations that now populate the county is substantially different than that of their predecessors. And, perhaps, it is the acceptance of these developments as natural, similar to the advancements in the agriculture industry of the past, that has allowed the white residents of Duplin County particularly focus on the benefits of the industry when confronted with the existence of externalities. Nevertheless, the new operations ushered in a slew of widespread problems that have particularly affected the minority and impoverished residents of the county. As discussed in the previous chapter, concerns ranging from the intensity of the smell produced by the operations to the overall concerns of the geographic proximity of the industrial operations close to the living quarters of the area's minority and impoverished residents have entered the public consciousness, both within Duplin County and beyond.

Despite the documented nature of these concerns as well as significant research into the hazards posed by the hog farming operations, they continue to enjoy significant political protection throughout the area as well as the respect of many of the county's residents. As the bruising of the county's most vulnerable residents occurs and is hidden by the hegemonic presence of the industry. So then, what possible recourse do the afflicted residents have? They do not have the opportunity to engage in meaningful political action within the county because of the political economic importance of the industry. With this emergent question heavy on my mind, I excitedly made my way east out of Wallace at the direction of my GPS on a warm Wednesday evening.

Only moments into the journey, I was forced to adjust my rearview mirror so that I was not blinded by the setting sun to my back. The sunsets in Duplin County were certainly beautiful, as they helped to remedy the near blistering midday heat and coat everything in a warm amber and raspberry sheen. I was quickly brought back to the reality of my trip as a robotic voice informed me of the distance remaining to my new destination – a paltry five miles. Through an incredibly well-timed tip from one of my initial gatekeepers, I had learned of a monthly meeting that was occurring at the headquarters of one of the oldest community activist organizations in Duplin County. The organization's director had not returned any of my prior phone calls or emails, despite my near weekly attempts at contact, and I was nervous at how my presence to the meeting would be received, especially as I had shown up sans an invitation. The road beneath my car slowly transitions from a smooth, paved surface to one littered with cracks, random assortments of gravel, and lost its once heavily demarcated median.

"*In two miles, the destination will be on your left,*" the same robotic voice informs me.

The homes that lied on either side of the decrepit road seemed to be haphazardly spaced throughout the area, almost as if they were plants that had sprung forth from the ground on which they rested. Moreover, many of the homes seemed abandoned or in need of drastic repairs – an apt metaphor for the whole of the county. At the ends of some dirt roads that connected to the highway were large placards that displayed the names of the farm owners who had operations thousands of feet away from my position and served as a constant and obtrusive reminder of my reasons for being in the area. As I refocus my eyes on the road to look for my upcoming destination, I cannot help but consider the possibility that many of the homes in the area are abandoned because of the farms that remain hidden just beyond the horizon.

"*In half a mile, the destination will be on the left.*"

In the distance, I spot a large sign advertising the headquarters of the organizational group. The building itself is made up of two mobile homes placed next to one another. I park my car in the open space to the side of the office; upon exiting the vehicle, the brood of chickens in the front yard scatters in different directions to avoid any potential confrontation with the large creature heading their way. The air is thick with the smell of grilled meat, no doubt emanating from the large grill housed on the porch next to the parking lot. I take a few moments to glance over the sign that had directed my attention to the building; the words "Rural Empowerment and Community Help" were plastered along the top of the sign in bold red font. Below the font, the sign listed both the phone and fax numbers for the organization's leader.

After a few quick breaths to steady myself, I make my way up the homemade ramp to the front door of the office, the somewhat damp wood creaking under each step. My knocks elicit no return from anyone inside the building, presumably because everyone inside the building is busy preparing for the evening's meeting. After another firm knock, the door slowly slides open,

almost inviting me inside. I take the opportunity to let myself into the office space. In front of me sits a large desk covered in scattered papers and pens. To my left are two smaller rooms, both currently blockaded behind stacks of boxes. To my right, a wide doorframe gives way to the presumed meeting space. The room itself is lined with rows of collapsible plastic tables, each one adorned with alternating pink and red table clothes and a centerpiece made up of heart shaped balloons and curly ribbons. A television on the wall next to me is set to a local news station, the anchor speaking quickly as information about a school shooting incident filter into his earpiece.

Beyond the doorframe, I can hear the remnants of a conversation that has slowly dissolved into a few hearty laughs. I attempt to step forward, but my legs refuse to budge. In almost no time at all, the back door to the office swings open and a group of people walk inside, carrying several shopping bags. As the last person turns to close the door, they lock eyes with me. I manage to wave at the individual before they turn around and announce my presence to his friends and whoever else is within earshot – '*Hey Clarence, you got a visitor in the front!*' He turns back to me and flicks his head to the side, motioning me into the room. I accept the invitation and make my way through the doorframe, toward a table in the back of the room. Two older Black men are sitting at either side of the table, their chairs turned at an angle toward another Black man whom is sitting behind a smaller table at the front of the room. The person whom called me into the room has disappeared into a small, kitchen-like space in a corner of the room. As I walk across the room, one of the men shouts at me '*Hey, who are you?*' and squints his eyes. I introduce myself to the group and hand one of them a copy of my research information letter. '*Oh, so you wanna talk to Clarence then!*' one of the other members of the cadre says warmly, reaching out to shake my hand. '*He's right over there,*' directing my

attention to an older man with his back turned to the group. '*He may be in a phone call though,*' he mentions, pointing to a device on Clarence's ear. I remember reading somewhere online that Clarence is never seen without his ear piece.

'*No, I'm not on a call, I'm just thinking!*' Clarence retorts before turning around. Standing at around 5'6", each of his limbs is hidden beneath his checkered button-up shirt and denim jeans. Both his hair and his beard are bright white, no doubt a signifier of his age. His round, wire frame glasses sit on the tip of his nose, causing him to push them back toward this face with a trembling finger. '*What can I do for ya?*' he asks, continuing to glance around the room as he speaks. After I introduce myself, he interjects, '*Oh are you that person who's been calling the office? We've been so busy getting ready for this meeting, ain't none of us have had the time to do much of anything else.*' Clarence rests his thin hand on my shoulder, as if to offer an apology. I warmly accept any sign of familiarity and ask if it is possible for me to attend the month's meeting. '*Well, this meeting isn't just a regular meeting, we're also hosting a Valentine's day party for our members. That's why we've been so busy getting everything ready!*' He makes an effort to high-five one of the men sitting next to him, but he goes unrewarded. '*But it's fine if you stay. Who told you about the party?*' I inform him of my research project and mention the acquaintance who tipped me off to the meeting. After hearing her name, a big smile spreads across Clarence's face as his hand once again rests on my shoulder. '*She's gonna be here tonight! It's gonna be great.*' His hand retreats from my shoulder and attaches to his earpiece as he turns his attention away from me to take a phone call. The same individual who had asked me about my purpose for visiting the office then asked more about my academic background before leading me to one of the decorated tables in the back of the room. The meeting would be starting in about twenty minutes and I was relieved to have been allowed to stay.

As people begin to filter into the building's meeting hall, I am careful to record information about the demographic profile of the organization's members. Nearly everyone in the building now are elderly people, with nearly all of them being Black women or men and a few older white men sitting at a table in the middle of the room. Occasionally a young child will walk through the doors of the room only to be greeted with an excited acknowledgement, often some variation of '*Oh my goodness!*', as they are hoisted from the ground in a firm hug by their grandparents or family friends. Each person seems to float around the room, moving from one conversation group to the next expressing heartfelt joy at seeing folks they may not have seen in a while. Every once in a while, a loud and boisterous laugh drowns out all the other noises from the room as excited and long, drawn out hugs are exchanged between various persons. There is a communal warmth that flows through the entire building, one that slowly drifts to me and enraptures me even though I do not quite know anybody else at the meeting; I cannot help but smile at the genuine interactions.

As people transition from standing in groups to sitting, they are approached by a small, white man with a large water bottle decorated with stickers. Without mentioning his name, he warmly greets the attendees as he hands them an outline of the month's meeting agenda. A few people even take the time to shake his hand and thank him for his efforts within the organization. Before moving from one attendee to the next, he is careful to place numerous red tickets at the center of each table, instructing each person to take one so that they could have a chance at winning a prize from their Valentine's Day raffle. I am too preoccupied with reading the month's agenda to pick my ticket – I will never know if I was to win the gigantic stuffed teddy bear that later went to a fortunate young girl, courtesy of her grandfather.

Ten minutes before the meeting is set to begin, I am joined at my table by three other people. To my right sits an older Black woman in a blue long sleeve, button-up shirt, with a round face and short, curly grey hair resting on the top of her head. Across from me sits another older Black woman, substantially taller that the first, also wearing a blue button up shirt with long sleeves rolled up to her forearms. Her thick and curly black hair bounced whenever she would speak and especially when she would laugh. The two women seemed to know each other, as they conversed and joked over the table. When the backdoor to the office opens, both women are sure to make comment on the savory smell of grilled meat that floods the building, a mouthwatering reminder of the dinner to follow the meeting.

As Clarence walks up to a podium located at the front of the room, I take one last look around to ensure that I have a grasp of the organization's members. Most of the attendees are Black, with some Latinx and white people interspersed at the various tables. Each individual table is completely full, with some of the balloon centerpieces having been placed on the ground to accommodate the number of people. Those who show up after the meeting starts would be forced to either stand in the back of the room or try to find a seat along the eastern most wall of the room. I notice that the walls of the room are covered in research posters that discuss the harmful effects of hog farming waste and air pollution, each one sponsored by REACH. The reality of the meeting has now set in – while it is a party, this organization has put a lot of time and effort into documenting, remedying, and organizing to fight the issues associated with industrial hog production.

Clarence picks up a handheld microphone from the wooden podium and turns it on. A static crackling fills the room and causes the multitude of conversations throughout the space to dissipate as all eyes focus on the front of the room. '*Okay everybody! Everybody, we're going to*

get started now. We're gonna open up with a prayer.' His eyes scanned the room until he found a suitable candidate – '*Pastor Rick, would you be so kind as to lead us in opening prayer?*' A Black man, similar in physique to Clarence yet at least 6 inches taller, stands up from his seat in the near center of the room. His grey tweed jacket bounces as he speaks, his booming voice echoing throughout the room. As he begins to pray, his words are accented with a variety of emotional utterances. '*Amen!*' '*Praise Jesus.*' '*Yes Lord, please Lord.*' Rick beseeched God to bless the organization, the people, and those within the various communities and townships of Duplin County. '*We ask you to lead us in the good fight, and to support us when we feel weak!*' The air almost felt electric. Despite my own lack of religiosity, the room's energy was more intense than before – I could tell that there was not only a resolve on the part of the organization, but also on the part of each attendee who yearned to see the world become a better and more hospitable place.

The end of the prayer is met with an intense round of applause. Clarence returns the microphone to his lips and refocuses the crowd's attention on himself. He thanks Rick for his prayer, and then reads over the meeting agenda. He is also quick to express that this meeting will be run a little bit differently than meetings in the past, acknowledging the various decorations and the number of people in attendance as out of the ordinary for the organization. '*Now, you all know me, but I'd like to take this time to start the group introductions since I seen some new faces here.*' He instructs the listening crowd to stand up and introduce themselves alongside an interesting fact to make it easier for others to remember. As others introduce themselves, I am only able to focus on how to talk about myself. The room is filled with paralegals, pastors, politicians, county judges, and community citizens. As the waves of new information hit my ears, I wonder how to best couch myself as to remain true to my research project but also not

compromise the relationships I had been building throughout the night, working quick to process my potential words.

The woman across from me reclaims her seat after introducing herself. As I stand up, my legs are slightly trembling from my nerves. I raise my head and meet the crowd, expecting to be scrutinized. However, the heaviness of the stares from strangers that I had felt in other settings while in Duplin County was nonexistent within this space. Instead, as I look out over the crowd, I see looks of interest and curiosity, no doubt a result of my age and my non-local origins. As I introduce myself, I find my mouth seemingly running on autopilot as I recall my own experiences growing up in a rural community and being subjected to the externalities of industrial agriculture. I recall the ways that my mother was hospitalized because of pollution and feel tears welling up in the corners of my eyes. In the moment, when I realized what I had said, it felt unprofessional to have burdened near strangers with my own emotional baggage. But as they looked at me and absorbed my testimony, their looks changed from curiosity to acceptance they welcomed me onto the front lines. '*You're here now, and we're glad you are,*' spoke a soft voice from somewhere close to the front. The woman to my right grabs my hand and rubs small, comforting circles on it with her thumb. I reclaim my seat, the experience cathartic.

Finished with group introductions, Clarence refocuses the group's conglomerate attention on the agenda, highlighting the importance of each project the organization is currently sponsoring or undertaking. '*But before we talk specifics, we have to talk about the generals.*' Clarence returns the microphone to the podium so that he can spread his hands wide to visualize the following topic. '*We make no secret of our work on injustice.*' His words are met with vocalized agreements. '*And we know that there are people out there who do not like us. And that is okay! Because we know we are on the right path.*' As he speaks, a middle age white woman

with blonde hair walks into the room, followed closely by a Black woman who appears to be in her late twenties or early thirties. The two are sticking close together. Upon noticing them, Clarence quickly cuts off his own ramblings. '*Now that some of our special guests are here, I want you all to remember this – we are a voice crying out in the wilderness. And Jesus is listening!*' Another round of '*Amen!*'s flood the room as Clarence smiles out at the crowd. '*One more thing: remember our motto: Educate, Empower, Lead. This is how we make change.*' A few members in the crowd clap while others nod their heads in support of the motto. Through his words, purposefully emphasized the communal nature of the group as well as the problems they hoped to address in the lead up to the guest's introduction. Motioning for the duo to step forward, Clarence introduces them as critical members of the legal team in the fight against the hog farming industry.

It is particularly difficult to parse out which members of the crowd are actual plaintiffs in the lawsuits versus those who are not. The white woman replaces Clarence behind the podium and introduces herself as Martha; next to her is Reshieda, a law student who has focused her studies on community and environmental law. She then begins speaking about recent updates to both the nuisance lawsuit as well as the Title VI lawsuit. She accompanies her speech with various facts about industrial agriculture and racial minorities; the one fact that I can remember was that race and geographic proximity to industrial hog farming operations is positively and significantly correlated. Her words are also met with occasional head bobs, as if the attendees had heard all she had to say before. Her speech was clearly designed to encourage the organization's members to not give up in their fight for environmental justice. It is certainly a necessary rallying cry, as this kind of work is often fret with physical and emotional labor that leaves participants physically exhausted, no doubt intensified because of the attendee's growing

ages. Martha talks briefly about the second round of settlement talks that are currently underway with regard to the Title VI lawsuit and informs the eager crowd that the negotiations are going better than expected. This sets off a chattering buzz amongst people at numerous tables, no doubt excited by the prospects that one of their legal battles will soon come to an end. Martha then thanks the crowd for their attention, and calls on them to steady themselves for the road ahead. As Clarence retakes his place behind the podium, the duo saunters to a set of chairs in the back of the room, shrouded in a shower of applause and gratitude.

More guests speak on a variety of topics of interest to the organization, but I was too fixated on gauging the crowd's reaction to the information regarding the lawsuits. I was incessantly curious – what made the second round of negotiations better than the first? What would Martha and Rashieda do to help the nuisance trial plaintiffs prepare for their upcoming court testimonies? As these questions swirled around my head and I spent more time focused on writing notes instead of listening, I was pulled back to my current reality by the woman who sat next to me. I never caught her name, nor do I believe she ever told me what it was aside from her earlier introduction to the entire crowd; but she seemed particularly invested in making sure that I was a participant in the meeting's activities. Around me, each of the organization's members stood up and formed a circle by holding hands with the person on either side of them. I firmly grasp the hands of my table compatriots as Clarence begins to speak – '*Now you all know this is something we do at the end of every meeting!*' He warmly laughs while raising his own arms above his head, his fragile looking hands firmly grasping the hands of the people beside him. 'It's to help remind all of us that we are fighting together. And that we all rely on one another.' A final round of '*Amen!*'s circulate the room as Clarence clears his throat. '*We're gonna go around the room, and we're each gonna say 'I'm a link in the chain, and the link in the chain will not*

break here!' Just like that.' He takes a brief moment to glance around the room – '*Y'all ready? Okay, I'll start.*' As he repeats the phrase and it moves down the line, I am filled with the same electric energy as before. The phrase flows through the line as if it were a surge of electricity itself. There is no one left out of this chain, and in this moment, it does not matter who you are or where you come from – in this space, we were all fighting the odds to make ourselves known in opposition to a system that did not care about us, or actively oppressed us. The number of people in the room is only one or two shy of the number when the meeting started; specifically, I counted 60 individuals who were joined, both physically and spiritually, in the fight against environmental injustice. After the circle dispersed, people went back to their pre-meeting cadres, socializing and talking with people while grabbing plates of freshly prepared roast to top off the evening's festivities.

As I made my way back to my hotel for the evening, I could not quite comprehend the meeting that I had just witnessed. I was incredibly happy to have been granted permission to attend the meeting, and I was thankful that I had been accepted as a member of the group even though my time in the county was quickly drawing to an end. But I was most ecstatic about getting to discuss and commune with other victims of the externalities of industrial agriculture; it was reaffirming and helped to legitimate my own experiences as part of a larger social struggle to secure basic human rights in the face of industrial-scale extractive operations. And this is what REACH is for many of Duplin County's bruised population – it is a place and an organization that offers the affirmation of experiences. While the confession of my own experiences with industrial agriculture may have been inappropriate in other settings while I was acting as a researcher, I was not required to remove my history as if it were a coat at the front door of the trailer. Furthermore, I was invited to discuss my role as a researcher and as a person

simultaneously to a crowd that was welcoming to my presence. Beyond serving as a place of catharsis for the people, experiences, and concerns rendered invisible under the hegemonic body of the hog farming industry, the organization also participated in research with scholars from various colleges and programs across North Carolina to document their own experiences and situate themselves within broader trends of industrial agricultural developments. In this sense, the purpose of REACH cannot be understated, because it helps connect the local to the global and demarcates Duplin County as a battleground in the fight against industrial agriculture.

Perhaps, then, it would make logical sense for members of the organization to mobilize through the various lawsuits directed at the industry. After all, despite the community that has emerged in the face of the hazardous externalities, there is still a significant lack of recognition or respect of the complaints articulated by the county's minority and impoverished populations. Their concerns ignored by a community that more readily experiences the industry's benefits, these people had no choice but to seek redress through the law. The emergent legal challenges employ not only claims about the hazards created by the presence of the industrial operations, but also frame many of the discussions through a lens of property rights as a means to protect the bruised population. As the suits have garnered significant public attention both in Duplin County and beyond, many of the county's white residents have been forced to confront the reality that the operations have created for the minority and impoverished citizens of the county. However, many white respondents recognize the claims advanced in the lawsuit while still affording reasonable doubt and respect to the industry, meaning that it is necessary to examine the justifications given for defending the industry in the face of these legal allegations.

THE BRUISES MANIFEST – PERCEPTIONS OF CHALLENGES TO THE INDUSTRY

Increased recognition of issues concerning smell, manure spray, and pollution as well as ongoing nuisance litigation against some of the hog farming operations in Duplin County has forced many of the area's residents to address the externalities of the hog farming industry for the first time. However, many of the county's Black residents are all too familiar with the externalities and their effects on their everyday lives. Frustrated with the status quo, many have become plaintiffs in the litigation against Murphy-Brown and their operations in Duplin County.

Despite the externalities, many white residents of the county are not willing to blame the industry for these issues and reject the notion that the industry's workers must be penalized for their actions. In this section, I present the reactions of residents regarding the lawsuit, as well as analyze the justifications for their beliefs about the lawsuit. Additionally, I showcase respondent's beliefs about the potential impacts of the lawsuit on the hog farming industry within Duplin County. Finally, I will discuss the role of nuisance litigation in helping the metaphorical bruising of Duplin County's most vulnerable populations become visible and recognized as the painful blemish it is.

A Lawsuit for Pigs

The nature of researching litigation as a focal point for community perceptions of farming operations almost necessitates interacting with people in a variety of occupations. Moreover, the highly public nature of the lawsuit seemed to imply that lawyers in the area would be readily available to discuss their perceptions of the operations as well as the lawsuit. Unfortunately, I had overestimated how willingly lawyers would choose to participate in an interview. After weeks of unreturned voicemails, I decided that my best course of action would be to have an impromptu visit with one of the county's many available lawyers.

As I parked my car in a parking lot for what appeared to be a vacated shop, I consciously slowed my breathing so that I could focus on the questions I would ask my next participant – that is, if they would agree to talk with me in the first place. I had been persuaded by a previous participant to reach out to a local law office in hopes of talking with one of the county's most prominent lawyers. Looking in my rear-view mirror, I hastily worked to press down a somewhat unruly cowlick that I had not been able to remedy before leaving my hotel room for the day. I trounce up the few steps separating the wide, white doors from the sidewalk and steady myself before grabbing the dull gold handle protruding from the door. *It's okay, you know what to say.* I think to myself before pushing one of the enormous doors forward. The door begins to slowly open before buckling against the office floor. I visibly wince and shudder as the sound of the door gouging the wooden floor announces my presence well before I am able to myself – or so I thought. I quickly find myself in a compact entry way and no signs of life anywhere in the office proper. A nervous and audibly ragged breath escapes my mouth, a sign that I am thankful that my first introduction to a potential respondent was not prematurely ended by adding another deep gouge to their office floor.

I take a few moments to glance around the space in a fortunate silence. The office itself is somewhat homey, if not a bit destitute. The walls are covered in artworks that depict Biblical scenes or scriptures as well as numerous framed pictures of aged white people in various courtroom settings, an apparent souvenir from a law school graduate reunion. Behind these ornaments, the walls were covered in a dingy yellow wallpaper. The wooden floor creaks under my every step – it seems as if the building itself is poised to betray my mission. I approach the bank teller-like window that separated the patrons from the employees. I gently tap a bell that instructs me to "ring for service" to formally announce my presence to whomever is hidden in

the back rooms of the building. As the chime slowly fades, I patiently wait, quickly rehearsing my introductory script before I would be forced to recite it yet again. But nobody ever shows up behind the smudged window. I briefly chuckle to myself, as the feeling of this situation as a metaphor for my attempts to contact participants is not lost on me. I ring the bell again, this time making sure that the chime could be heard throughout the entire building. As the chime quickly spreads through the open space, a head peers at me from a doorframe in the back of the building with what appears to be a scowl. Suddenly, I am approached by a stout white woman with a sharp looking blazer and powder white hair. Her sharp voice emits a scripted '*Can I help you?*' that seems to reverberate through the room and centers in my spine – it was now or never.

I retort '*I'm here to see if I can talk with a lawyer for my thesis research.*' After an inquiry regarding the focus of my research, she informs me that her husband, one of the partners in the firm, is currently busy in a meeting, but that she would see if he would be willing to talk with me. I am instructed to remain at the window as she disappears into a room connected to the reception area. A few moments later, I am greeted by James, a larger but similarly aged white man in a long sleeve shirt with an almost offensively obnoxious tie. After a brief introduction, I describe my research focus and ask if he is free for a brief chat. He seems to look me over and the silence surrounding this transaction seems almost deafening – at this point, I am not confident that I do not look like a nervous wreck of a person. In response, he informs me that he knows very little about the lawsuit itself but that he is more than happy to put me in contact with the lawyers who are representing the plaintiffs. I inform him of my past attempts to contact their office and he sighs before directing me to have a seat in the same dreary room plastered with pictures of what appears to be his fellow law school graduates. I nod and situate myself in a cheap pleather armchair, thankful to have more time to mentally rehearse my interview script.

Twenty minutes later, James joins me in the lobby. As he sits in a small couch across from me, he crosses one leg over the other and clasps his hands around his knee. '*Now, what was it you were interested in again?*' he almost barks as if testing my resolve. I attach a friendly grin and inform him of my interests. As he answers my initial questions, he allows his head to rest against the cushion behind him. '*Duplin County produces an average of six million hogs every year, and it's the largest grossing industry in the area; bigger than any other farming business, like corn, soybeans, or even tobacco.*' I ask him why the area seems to have so many hog farms, and he informs me that the farmers get contracted out and supported by "integrators," or another word for agribusiness corporations he informs me. While this was the first time I had heard the term used while in the county, it would not be the last.

I inform him that he is the first respondent I have heard use the term integrators to describe the agribusiness corporations in the area. Upon learning this information, he adjusts his position so that he is leaning closer to me, almost as if he is going to inform me of an immense secret that dare not be heard by anyone else. In a soft voice, he mentioned that the external support for the farmers, in the form of contracts, significantly helped establish hog farming as a viable occupation as the tobacco industry in the area rapidly declined. When I ask him to tell me more about the decline of the tobacco industry, he quickly highlighted the ongoing nuisance lawsuit that involved many of the farms throughout the county and compared it to tobacco's storied history. To James, the lawsuit was yet another parallel between the hog industry and the tobacco industry:

'*It's just like in the past with tobacco – people from the outside came in, told people all these things about the health effects from [the cigarettes] and asked people if they wanted to sign up for free money. First it was tobacco in the seventies, then the pharmaceuticals eighties, now it's the hog farms.*'

James was very staunch in his assertion that the claims of nuisance where nothing more than a ploy from outside environmentalist and animal interest groups that was designed to eliminate the industry in Duplin County and change the very way people lived their lives. '*But why would they choose Duplin County specifically?*' I quickly riposte, my voice echoing through the lobby as if a firm challenge to his reasoning. When confronted with this question, he closed his eyes and exhaled a heavy breathe before reopening them as wide as he could, almost as if to emphasize his next sentence – '*Because of the size of the industry here and money that can be made from suing someone. It's always about the money.*'

This is the only connection that emerged from my interviews between the tobacco industry and the hog industry that focuses on the lawsuit discussed in the previous chapter. Despite its singular occurrence, it serves as an important bridge between the litigation and its potential effects on the county; moreover, it also serves to reify the concept of agriculture as a key facet in the cultural identity of Duplin County. Perhaps it is of little surprise that a lawyer made this connection. While my own investigation into archival documents failed to return any information regarding a class action lawsuit concerning the tobacco industry in which lawyers specifically targeted residents of Duplin County as potential plaintiffs, it is not unreasonable to believe that the narrative of collusion between lawyers and everyday citizens was deployed throughout the country to discredit the lawsuit, and was particularly well received in the county because of the economic and cultural importance of the tobacco farming industry. Moreover, James' explanation is eerily similar to a narrative that pervaded the South during the Civil War era – that the Union was attempting to eliminate the very backbone of the cultural identity of the Confederacy through the liberation of slaves and the closure of plantations that were necessary for the tobacco production engine of the region to function. As previously discussed, the belief

that the lawsuit is driven by activists and people who moved into the area from other places underlies much of the opposition that many of Duplin County's residents hold toward the lawsuit and has informed many of the structural changes that have bolstered protections afforded to the industry, such as RTF laws.

With James' perspective as a theoretical backdrop of the types of responses I could reasonably expect, I returned to the field eager to interview more respondents. I was thankful for the honesty that James afforded me during our interaction, particularly because others had been much less kind when I attempted to question them about their knowledge of the suits.

Perceptions of the Lawsuits

Most respondents would have rather avoided any discussion of the litigation that involved some of the local farms. My questions regarding the respondent's knowledge or feelings about the lawsuits were more often than not followed by an apprehensive warning about their inability to speak to the specifics of the case, or a firm rebuff of the subject matter. This was hardly surprising, as part of what made Duplin County such a necessary community to study was the controversial nature of the lawsuits. Moreover, the lawsuits (and an accompanying video documentary available online) had thrust the people of Duplin County into a national spotlight where they were subject to harsh and painful criticisms from people around the globe. Despite this reality, I must admit that it was rather frustrating for my respondents to each react in a similar manner – upon hearing the question, they would often change their sitting position to one that was more upright and seemingly alert while shaking their head in a purposeful manner, almost like they were trying to rid their ears of a furious buzzing that was ignited by the question. Some respondents expressed concern that their responses could be taken out of context or would be used to get them fired from their job. This hesitation is certainly justified as anything that

challenges the industry or has the ability to negatively impact the industry could drastically change the operational structure of the county and cost numerous people their jobs in the process. Despite these concerns, the confidential nature of the interviews made some people feel more comfortable in expressing their opinions regarding the litigation.

Legitimacy of the Lawsuit

Eleven respondents indicated that they had some knowledge of the nuisance litigation prior to their interview. Of these respondents, nine expressed the belief that the lawsuit is illegitimate and their responses often fit within multiple subthemes.

Born out of Jealousy/Easy Money.

James' initial focus on jealousy had come about during a brief discussion of an increase in local complaints about issues related to the smell from manure lagoons. Moreover, the expression of his beliefs was the most memorable part of my interview with him. '*No one has come into my office in over five years and talked about suing a farm because of the smell.*' He briefly chuckled as if to suggest that the mere notion of suing the farms because of smell is ridiculous. But my earlier question was strictly concerned with the potential issues that he knew of, not about the lawsuit. In contrast, my most recent question about the reasons behind the lawsuit hung in the air for mere seconds before James pounced on it – '*I think it's because people are jealous. They didn't have enough money to start hog farming when it started getting big but maybe their neighbors did. So now they're suing so they can make money!*' He seems so proud of his answer, as if this assertion would serve as his final line in an impassioned closing statement were he a lawyer in the case. He briefly sits up, anticipating some sort of response; but I do not have one right away. I sit for a few seconds in silence, absorbing and processing the substance of his answer. I had not expected him to believe jealousy to be the root of the litigation

– but his response helped to illuminate the way that many other respondents seemed to feel, whether they would admit to it or not.

If jealousy is the primary reason behind the lawsuit, then money is the only sensible end goal. Despite the presence of the industry as well as most respondent's belief that the industry provides Duplin County with numerous jobs, the area still experiences a poverty rate nearly twice the national average. Jessica is the first respondent to make this particular connection as she saunters to a sink behind the bar and pours the remnants of her previous customer's beverages down the drain. '*People around the county don't really have a lot of money, so I think people sued to make money.*' By her own admission, she was currently working two jobs and was able to sympathize with those who were financially struggling; regardless, she feels that the lawsuit is a drastic (and risky) solution to a negligent problem. The effects of poverty are visible throughout the area as cars sit in gravel driveways, broken and rusted, while church marquises include announcements about weekly soup kitchens alongside requests for clothing donations from the area's more fortunate residents. The sound of clattering metal, presumably from silverware dropped in the large basin, pulls me from my notetaking and snaps my attention back to Jessica. '*It's sad, don't get me wrong, but…*' she says, her own small voice nearly erased between the exclamations of the large televisions focused on college basketball games and her own ferocious scrubbing of a glass that will not become pristine. '*In the world we live in, if people see a big corporation and can sue it, they will.*'

There is an interesting temporal aspect to the responses that highlighted jealousy as a cause for the lawsuit. James' response perhaps articulates this best with his assertion of the lengthy period of time that has passed since he last had someone in his office complain about the smell from the farms. Jessica's response also leads to this insight as well, based on her own

analysis of the level of poverty that has endured in the county. Other respondents also articulated that the issues concerning smell have been well known (yet largely ignored) for decades as the industry has established numerous large-scale operations throughout the county since the early 1980s. But, if the issues related to the smell of the operations have been known for decades, why are respondents just now choosing to sue the farms? The failure of jealousy as a subtheme to explain the occurrence of litigation in the mid-2010s necessitates the further analysis of the other subthemes within this category, keeping in mind the temporal dimension of the previous answers.

Criticism of Lawyers.

Given the inadequacy in the first subtheme to encapsulate all dimensions regarding the supposed illegitimate nature of the lawsuit, it is necessary to dissect the feelings that respondents possess toward the lawyers representing the clients bringing suit against the farming operations, whether the actual lawyers themselves or the constructed boogeyman they believe to be representing the plaintiffs. There are two emergent reasons that respondents indicated they believe the suit's prosecutors compromised the case's legitimacy: first, many respondents with knowledge of lawsuit believe that the prosecutors are not licensed to practice law in North Carolina but in another state, meaning that they chose to sue hog farming operations without having ever stepped foot in Duplin County; second, in a similar vein to the previous theme, some believe that the prosecutors came to the area specifically to solicit clients to join the lawsuit in the hopes of winning a larger settlement. While these are two distinct themes, I feel that it is necessary to discuss them both simultaneously because of the ways that respondents would often discuss the two issues together, as if the first theme informed their reasoning for the second theme.

The narrative of the prosecutors invading Duplin County from another state pervaded each of my six interviews that discussed the legitimacy of the lawsuit. Brad initially chuffed at the question as if he was withholding an impactful secret. '*The first thing I ever heard about the lawyers was that they came from out of town. I remember hearing something about Kansas, or the Kennedy environmental lobby.'* I nod my head, furiously scribbling down the potential location and affiliation of the prosecutors for my own personal investigation. '*That should tell you all you need to know about the case, because no local lawyers would even touch it. It doesn't have any merit!*' He is careful to emphasize each word of this last statement, each sound accented by a dull but ringing thud of his open hand colliding with his wooden desk. I am quick to retort an inquiry regarding the case's supposed lack of merit. After all, I had read the court filings and knew how many individuals had actually signed onto the suit. '*But why would the plaintiffs trust out-of-state lawyers?*' I shoot back in a challenging tone, resting the tip of my pen on the corner of my mouth, eager for his response. A strident retort is flung back at me, the words leaving Brad's lips as if they were a rocket propelled by his own bodily momentum as he leans his body closer to mine – '*People signed up because they were enticed by money. They preyed on people in lower socieoeconomic strata, like a carrot-and-stick approach.*' His words seem to crack against mine as if he had hit them with the aforementioned stick. Both our cards were on the table, our own personal feelings laid bare before the other. Despite the confrontational nature of the space, it felt as though an aura of mutual respect emerged from the pile of emotions that sit between us. His answers were insightful and understandable (despite my own personal issues with the voraciousness of his beliefs), as they would help me to understand the feelings that others held toward the prosecutors.

One unexpected dimension to these responses is the public nature of the invader narrative. Tom's own thoughts on the matter are short – "*Yea I've heard they're from out of state…I've read it, I've read it. All I can tell you is what I've read in the newspaper.*" It would be one thing if this narrative was primarily propagated through various social circles that allow respondents to secure some form of plausible deniability regarding the accuracy of their statements, but its alleged appearance in the county's public newspaper necessitates more thorough a more thorough investigation of the narrative. Unfortunately, the county paper to which Tom was referring does not have a digital archive of their articles, nor did they return my request for transcripts of the articles concerning the lawsuit. While I am unable to verify the accuracy of Tom's statement, I do not doubt that the newspaper itself included some reference to the lawyers within the case having non-local origins, a narrative has continued to cloud the public sphere despite the case being handled by a firm within the state.

This particular narrative has also manifested in a more whimsical form. '*They're called Bonnie and Clyde,*' Rodney, a middle aged Black man, informs me. Sitting behind the counter of his wife's business, he is barrel chested from his time in the military, and each bodily movement, from the swivels of his neck to the movement of his arms to emphasize words, appears to be thoughtful and done with purpose as if to conserve energy. '*That's what I've heard people call them. Supposedly, they're part of some environmental group out of D.C.*' His warm laugh fills the entire building and reverberates off the various knick-knacks that are placed against the bright, white walls. '*If you get the chance to go up north, make sure you ask them about Bonnie and Clyde,*' chimes in Grace, his wife and impromptu interview partner. While both Rodney and Grace believe that the lawsuit is legitimate (and long overdue), their own utilization of the names reveals a more deep-seeded belief that the county's residents hold toward the prosecutors. The

real Bonnie and Clyde themselves were nationally recognized and feared criminals, most famous for robbing banks during the Depression Era (Phillips 2002). With this information in mind, the parallels between the real life duo and the prosecutors become more apparent – both groups roamed from place to place, forcefully taking money and other valuables from hard-working people during times when it is particularly hard to actually provide for themselves and their families. The comparison seems to reflect more implicit beliefs about the hog farming industry itself because of the juxtaposition of hog farmers as the unfortunate victims of money-hungry villains. In this vein, it becomes much easier to enshrine the industry as something that must be protected from those who only seek to harm others.

Allegations.

While the previous subthemes have been primarily concerned with analyses of people who are a part of the litigation efforts, respondents also indicated that the allegations in the lawsuit were part of the reason they believe the case to be illegitimate. The geographic proximity of the plaintiffs to the offending operations was often contested, as six respondents particularly articulated that the farms are significantly separated from the county's larger residential areas. '*The farms are conscious about where they are,*' Greg informs me matter-of-factly as his chair loudly squeaks as he reclines. At this point, he decides to silence the portable radio that is playing soft Christian music, almost as if he wants to ensure I hear each of his words. '*The farms are located in the country, so they aren't close to the towns around here.*' There is no denying his point when it comes to the location of his church; located approximately three miles south of one of the county's larger townships, there is only one farm visible from his office window, with the two properties separated by a two-lane highway. His comment is certainly intriguing, though, because it implies that there are reasons that would justify keeping the operations separated from

residential areas. While there are numerous reasons for this, such as the physical space required to house livestock and construct manure lagoons, Greg's own words isolate that there are aspects of operations that farmers would have to be conscious of in the first place.

Moreover, some respondents profess that the hog farms in the area were likely established well before many of the homes in the area because of Duplin County's historical reliance on agriculture. This reliance mandated the acceptance of particular norms associated with agricultural operations. Moreover, many respondents feel that the plaintiff's claims of nuisance are implicated by this reality – the only reason people would then complain about the operations is because they chose to move close to farming operations without knowledge of the operation's mechanisms. This is further extrapolated on by Cindy as she attempts to explain her beliefs. "*It didn't just happen overnight. I mean, we're not talking…all of a sudden 'Here's my house and this farm went up beside it.*" Cindy says with a bright expression on her face. This particular quote followed a brief discussion of a moratorium that was established in the 1990s and forbid the construction of new hog farming facilities. "*You won't wake up and they're building [a farm]*." She lets out a cackle at her own response like she had just convinced herself that she was correct in her reasoning. These beliefs likely stem from the area's agricultural past – to these respondents, it would take special consideration to move into an area that has been agriculturally dependent for centuries, and those who choose to do so seemingly forfeit all right to complain about their living conditions.

Potential Impact of Litigation

It is unsurprising that many of the respondents are apprehensive about the potential impact of the lawsuit. As the largest industry in the region, the lawsuit has the potential to drastically change the way farms are allowed to operate. The most common fear is that a drastic

shift in the way that farms are allowed to operate would force farmers out of the industry, either because the farmers would not be able to afford the renovations necessary to be compliant with the law or that the contractors would eliminate contracts in order to afford the settlement payouts. Ahmed specifically believes that the lawsuit could impact the county's job sector. '*If the plaintiffs win, I think a lot of people would be out of a job.*' He takes a moment to compose his thoughts before focusing his eyes on mine. '*It could hurt a lot of people because the companies could not afford to hire them anymore.*' Others worry about the type of precedent that the lawsuit could establish for future actions against other industries. Jessica slowly shakes her head as she thinks over the possible scenarios that could befall the industry and affect her husband's farm:

> *I don't know if they're looking just for money, you know like damages or what have you, if this is like a way to whittle down, like are they trying to close the hog farms down? I think it would depend on what their motive is. Are they like 'Okay, if we win this sets a precedent and now we can go after all the hog farms out there.'*

Despite their verbalized apprehension, a majority of respondents believe that the lawsuit will not have any lasting impact on the industry in Duplin County. Brenda is very adamant about this belief. '*The lawsuit is just stupid. But nothing is gonna happen if they lose because the farms are so respected here.*'

Who Will Win?

Not a single respondent believes that the plaintiffs will be able to win the lawsuit. While most believe this to be the case because of the aforementioned subthemes that highlight why residents believe the plaintiff's claims are illegitimate, others feel that the plaintiffs will not win the suit because of the industry's influence in Duplin County. '*The industry is just so powerful here. I don't think they'd actually win.*' Billie concludes. She looks physically exhausted from our conversation. Both Billie and Russ are thankful for the lawsuit, particularly because it has served to legitimate their experiences even if they themselves are not plaintiffs. Billie's

exhaustion may not be a result of our interview but instead may be from fatigue – she has been fighting the industry for decades. The amount of work related to the materialized payoffs is very imbalanced, and it is disheartening to work tirelessly for change and not see it occur.

PROPERTY AS POWER

Private property has long been centered in discussions and criticisms of industrial agricultural operations, whether it has been explicitly recognized or not. The very language of RTF laws proves that the mechanisms to protect farming operations from nuisance litigation are entrenched in legal jargon designed to allow the usage of one's property for the purposes of agricultural production (Walker 2017). The laws that often protect harmful industrial operations are fundamentally about exerting hegemonic domination through property rights – the juxtaposition of bodily rights for nearby residents with the right to farm showcases that the right-to-farm is most often a defense employed to protect the right-to-pollute or the right-to-commit-nuisance (Smart 2016).

There is particular power demonstrated by this juxtaposition though, as it is easy to neglect the claims presented by individuals about disruptions to their daily lives and hazards to their well-being when compared to the long-established operations. When nuisance claims are advanced against operations, it's particularly easy for people to substitute their own personal experiences to discount their claims. The invocation of property rights helps to combat this, as it relies on a more geographic barrier (the boundaries which demarcate the ownership of property) to showcase nuisances. This is not to say that the invocation of property rights will always stop people substituting their own experiences in lieu of others' experiences – as the data I have presented shows, that is certainly not the case for the residents of Duplin County. However, the use of property rights erects a functional barrier to the externalities associated with industrial hog

production; the crossing of that boundary by the various externalities, whether the smell or manure or pests, signals a violation of private property rights that also articulates the violation of the property resident's bodily rights. Moreover, the invocation of property rights can combat the public perception of the plaintiffs as newcomers to the area as they can show that their properties existed long before the farming operations began.

One particularly interesting dimension of nuisance litigation as well as the civil rights suit is that they involve the sitting of operations in relation to areas populated with minority and impoverished residents. As highlighted at the REACH meeting, there is a significant correlation to the presence of industrial agriculture and the racial makeup of communities across the South; with regards to the civil rights lawsuit, this is significant as it shows the permitting process for hog farming operations does not take into account local populations and their potential experiences with and exposures from past operations when permitting operations to continue. This is, at a fundamental level, an issue of property rights as a dimension of human rights in instances of industrial agriculture. A similar feature is present within nuisance litigation, as the lawsuit includes claims of property devaluation as a necessary consideration when adjudicating nuisance claims. In theory, these claims are easier to prove in a quantitative method as a means to legitimize the nuisance claims. Furthermore, nuisance lawsuits can also utilize property barriers as a way to show how air or water from a particular area has been affected in significant ways. While property is considered power within the agricultural industry, the mobilization of property rights to combat the violation of rights by residents has substantially leveled the playing field.

Ultimately, the role of the lawsuits is particularly powerful. In the fight for equality, it can be easy to lose sight of the end goal as the surrounding community belittles your experiences

and concerns. The lawsuits themselves help to make visible the harms brought against Duplin County's minority and impoverished residents on a large scale, even though the members of their community may discount the severity of the issues. Engaging in nuisance litigation as a mechanism to resolve this issues is particularly powerful, because it invokes property rights as a way to shield against other types of rights violations, such as exposure to pollution and other health hazards associated with the farms. Now that the wounds are laid bare, the people of Duplin County have no choice but to interact with and, hopefully, resolve the issues identified with the farms.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

Throughout this work, I have shown the beliefs and perceptions that sustain the hog farming industry in Duplin County, even in the face of legal challenges. There is a significant dependence on the industry that permeates Duplin County. To many, the industry is the literal savior of the entire county; if not for the hog farming industry, the economic network of the region would have suffered, if not collapsed all together. The presence of the industry also helps create numerous employment opportunities for the county's residents, some of which exist beyond working on farms themselves. The presence of the industry has also enabled many farmers to continue working, even after the stagnation in the tobacco markets in the 1970s. To many of the residents of Duplin County, these are all benefits that outweigh any potential negatives.

In this work, I have also highlighted the thoughts and feelings of Duplin County's often ignored populations, as well as the methods they employ to resist the presence of industrial hog CAFOs within their communities. The hog farming industry has intense ties to the cultural legacy of the area, but these ties are more complicated than may respondents indicated. As previous research has shown, the presence of hog CAFOs is highest in areas of North Carolina that had large populations of enslaved people. Moreover, there are significant parallels to the harms that were experienced by enslaved persons and the harms experienced by residents of Duplin County – specifically, hazards to health and bodily integrity as well as the destruction of numerous rights. From being forced to meet in the middle of the country under the cover of night, to having their own legacies erased for challenging the practices of the industry, many of Duplin County's racial minority and impoverished populations have been forced to resist and reaffirm

their own right to existence – like Clarence so aptly said, '*like a voice crying out in the wilderness.*'

The occurrence of two lawsuits in North Carolina that concern hog farming operations highlights the nature of the operations as an area of contested terrain. To many white respondents, the suits are frivolous attempts from urbanite environmental and animal rights activists to eliminate the industry from Duplin County. They believe that many of the people who complain about the farms are newcomers to the area and are unaccustomed to the characteristics of agriculture, that the homes nearby the farms are occupied by farmers and farm workers, and that the lawyers who are representing the plaintiffs in the suits recruited poor people to make it seem as though the case has merit. Respondents also indicated that the lawsuit could force the industry to change in significant ways, such as making expensive upgrades to infrastructure; others felt that the lawsuit could force the industry to limit the number of contracts available to farmers as a way to cover legal expenses and a possible settlement. Despite the fears of these scenarios, there is a belief amongst these respondents that the lawsuits will not favor the plaintiffs and that the industry will be protected.

A majority of nonwhite respondents indicated that they have been subjected to the externalities of the area's hog farming operations for decades and that it has been difficult to showcase their plight to those in power within the county. Moreover, some allege that the area churches are no longer invested in combating the environmental injustices within Duplin County – a significant departure from past efforts at addressing injustice. This is not surprising, given the dependence of the area on the hog farming industry – it is almost blasphemous to criticize or seek the regulation of the industry lest it cost numerous jobs and force the industry to leave Duplin County. As a result, many of the victims of environmental injustice have organized to

fight the industry for their alleged negligence and blatant disregard of criticisms. The use of nuisance litigation to combat the farms highlights the importance of property rights as an avenue to ensure environmental justice – but, this type of action is dependent upon the mobilization of small-scale property owners, and not the conglomerate of property rights that are frequently discussed and demonized in environmentalist literatures. Despite the passion that these respondents displayed, they also believe that the lawsuits will not be successful at addressing the issues associated with industrial hog farming in Duplin County.

The Two Portraits of Duplin County

There is no question that Duplin County would be drastically different if not for the presence of the hog industry and numerous industrial-scale farming operations. Most immediately, the very landscape of the county would be different – it would likely be barren, with towns and municipalities far and few between. Rural areas across the United States are rapidly shrinking and decaying from the landscape as people migrate to urban areas (Carr and Kefalas 2009). It is near impossible to completely predict what the area would look like absent the intervention of the hog farming industry in the late 1970s, but it would likely be a former shell of its old self. To many residents, the aforementioned benefits outweigh any particular negatives that could occur in the area from the operations themselves.

When I proposed that Duplin County would look significantly different without the presence of the hog industry, it was to implore you, the reader, to imagine the landscape of the county or a similar area with which you have more personal attachment. I would like you to envision what the area would look like based on the responses entrusted with me that you have read. Many of the county's residents would be disheartened by the absence of the industry; beyond feeling disheartened, there would certainly be intense feelings of anger, fear, and anxiety

from those who have been involved in the industry for a long period of time. Others would even suggest that the area would lose its cultural identity, its signifier to the outside world that demarcates what gives Duplin County its sociocultural and political economic worth.

However, when confronted with the aforementioned request, there are two nearly similar yet distinct pictures that one can envision from the data. First, one can envision a landscape that has been stripped bare of the infrastructure that has been constructed as a result of the area's population increase, often attributed to the employment opportunities afforded by the industry. The lack of modernization would morph the towns and municipalities of the county into an image more in line with the dominant stereotypes of life in rural America. People would lose jobs, they would lose their resources, and they would likely lose a significant portion of their identity if the importance placed upon the industry to the cultural construction of Duplin County is as significant as my respondents indicate. Farms would be abandoned. These would all be devastating developments that would seriously affect the area's population. And it would be impossible to fault you, the reader, for jumping to this conclusion. If you have grown up in a rural location, you have likely experienced, or at least heard chatterings of, something similar. It is a popular narrative that infests areas that house significant extractive industries, particularly within rural communities. And there is certainly some truth to these claims.

The second picture would look similar: a lack of infrastructure and economic opportunities available to residents. However, what distinguishes this portrait from the previous one is that the industry never took hold of the area and industrial-scale hog CAFOs were not erected in every corner of the county. A portrait in which the county's Black, Latinx, indigenous, and impoverished populations were never exposed to air pollution, water pollution, noxious fumes that permeated their homes and disrupted their lives, and the erasure of their property

rights in the face of industrial agriculture; nor were they exposed to the vitriol of their fellow community members for attempting to bring attention to these issues, and for working to ensure that they would not be erased for the benefit of the industry. To these respondents, there is no secret and insurgent ploy from out-of-touch urbanites and activists to eliminate all traces of the hog industry in Duplin County – they are fighting for to ensure that industry leaders are held accountable for what residents lost for the sake of the farming operations, and to ensure that there are regulations in place to prevent the most vulnerable of a community's population from having their rights further eroded for the sake of the industry.

What makes this legal fight unique is that they have chosen to fight fire with fire, pitting their own property rights against the property rights of industrial operations to limit the intensity of operations near them and their neighbors. The invocation of property rights has given teeth to the claims of many of the county's lambasted residents, and others have been forced to at least entertain the notion that these complaints emerged from a grim, yet hidden reality in which already oppressed populations were further subjected to undue harms in the name of profit. When you consider this particular landscape, with the point of view that has been unearthed by the residents of Duplin County who are subjected to numerous hazards to health and property day after day, it is important to remember that they are fighting for a world that should have always been, and never was.

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