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**“UPSIDE DOWN FROM THE WORD GO”: KENTUCKY’S BLACK
FARMERS SPEAK OUT ON THE ISSUE OF LAND LOSS**

By

Willie Jamaal Wright
B.A., University of Houston, 2007

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Pan-African Studies
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2010

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A Thesis Approved on

April 12, 2010

by the following Thesis Committee

Thesis Director

DEDICATION

This is for my father, Willie Jones Wright, a young man
from Louisiana who dared drop the cane knife
and flee from Franklin, Louisiana
and those fields full of sugar cane for Houston's
bright city lights.

To Brenda Joyce Chapman, my mother,
whose spirit birthed
Donnell, Hahleemah, Jennifer, and me.
Your intelligence, love, and leadership continues to
bring smiles to the soul of your mother, the soul of my grandmother.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledging those who have helped you on your journey through life is nothing less than a challenge. For me there have been many. To my mother and father, I thank you for teaching me to respect myself, others, and my elders. I recognize and appreciate the many sacrifices you have made. To my siblings, Donna, Donnell, Jahmeelah, and Jennifer, I rarely say it, but I love you all.

This work is also dedicated to my extended family that was just as important to my upbringing. To my dear grandmother, Doris Booker, who raised us all, your legacy lives within our accomplishments. To Smokey, Uncle Benjamin, Ron, Red, Glenda Ann, Sam, Aunt Mariah, Uncle Robert, Uncle Johnny, Aunt Bip, Mr. and Mrs. Deltoro, Steven, Davin, Deucie, Angela, Jermarcus, Rodney, Braxton, Krissna, and my two nephews, Ayinde and Jordan, your presence and lessons are forever with me.

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(Tiff's?), those bi-weekly rap sessions helped produce this research. Alexandre Dumas said it best, "Men's minds are raised to the level of the women with whom they associate." I would like to believe that I am a testament to this sentiment.

For my many academic mentors: Dr. James L. Conyers, Jr., Sandra Gold-
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make it."

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ABSTRACT

“UPSIDE-DOWN FROM THE WORD GO”: KENTUCKY’S BLACK FARMERS SPEAK OUT ON THE ISSUE OF LAND LOSS

Willie Jamaal Wright

April 12th, 2010

The decline of black farmers and black-owned farmlands is an ever worsening problem. Though their numbers neared one million at the start of the 20th century, the most recent account of black farmers states that there are only 30,599 left in America (Census of Agriculture, 2007). The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences and perspectives of black farmers in Kentucky regarding factors that contribute to land loss. Participants in this exploratory study were gathered using convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Each farmer owned land in Central and Eastern Kentucky counties.

This study discovered that contrary to popular arguments, the farmers did not report that economies of scale or racial discrimination, contributed to land loss. However, patterns of racial discrimination did emerge as a factor that farmers had to negotiate in their farm operations and sales. Land loss was closely associated with real estate sales and lack of interest among rural youth in farming and/or rural lifestyles.

A limit to this study is its small sample size; yet, despite this shortcoming, this research is an entry point for assessing and learning about Kentucky’s black farmers, their lives, and their perspectives on land loss.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Race-Based Frameworks.....	13
III. How Black Farmers Lose their Land: A Review of the Literature.....	25
IV. Methodology.....	42
V. Findings and Analysis.....	51
VI. Conclusion.....	71
REFERENCES.....	75
APPENDIX.....	84
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	91

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The number of black farmers in America is declining rapidly. Though their numbers neared one million in the decades following Emancipation, the amount of black farmers in America has diminished considerably since 1920 (Wood & Gilbert, 2000). Currently, there are 30, 599 African American farmers in America. This statistic includes full and part-time farm owners, as well as, tenant farmers. At the time of this census black farmers represented 1.4% of the total farming population (Census of Agriculture, 2007). However, according to this database, in 1920, there were a total of 925, 708 black farmers, who, at that time, represented 14.4% of America's farming population. Conducting a comparative analysis of the decline of black farmers from 1920 to 2010 shows an estimated loss of 10, 489 farmers yearly and illustrates that black farmers now represent less than 1% of the total farming population.

Research on black farmers suggest that in addition to the economic pressures faced by most small and mid-level farmers, racial discrimination has affected the farm operations and magnified the degree of land loss for African Americans (Civil Rights Action Team, 1997; Harris, 2008). The purpose of this study is to assess the experiences and perspectives of black farmers in Kentucky regarding factors that contribute to the loss of farmland. This study is important for a number of reasons. First, the number of

black farmers in the United States has decreased precipitously since 1920 and doubles that of white farmers (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982; Wood & Gilbert, 2000).

Secondly, previous research also suggests that ownership of rural property provides a litany of social, economic, and political benefits for African Americans. Two studies, McGee and Boone (1976) and Pennick, Gray, and Thomas (2009), demonstrate that across generations and geographic regions, rural African Americans hold landownership in high regard. Moreover, in a review of 100 interviews conducted with black residents of New Deal resettlement camps Salamon (1979) found that black landowning farmers felt a sense of independence and had a more positive outlook about their lives than black tenant farmers. In addition, black farmers within these programs also fared better, economically, than did tenant farmers.

A separate study of rural blacks found that landownership contributes to positive feelings of self-worth and self-identity as well as the economic stability of rural communities (Brown, Christy, & Gebremedhin, 1994). Dyer (2007) supports this position in her work on partition sales by black heirs, stating that land is a “source of pride” for the rural blacks she studied (p. 95). In addition, in a study of kinship affiliations in a rural community in North Carolina, Jones (1980) demonstrates how ownership of land adds to the stability of kinship patterns and supports annual homecomings. Lastly, Groger (1987) discusses the importance of landownership to the well-being of elderly blacks and Marable (1979), Nelson, (1979), and Pennick (1990) highlight the political empowerment associated with black landowners.

Thirdly, a study of this type is valuable, because little research has recorded the experiences and perspectives of black farmers in Kentucky. Therefore, an inquiry of this group is likely to provide significant and regionally specific findings.

The purpose of this section is to establish groundwork for understanding agriculture in America and its transition from subsistence to commercial farming and its effects on land tenure. This essay also discusses the challenges that landowning minority groups provided white farmers and the historical discrimination that manifested as a result of high rates of landownership among minority farmers.

Chapter two presents the theoretical lens for this research. Three frameworks of race and racism guide this study and assist in analyzing previous literature on black farmers, as well as, findings produced by this study. The racial concepts used in this study are Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation theory, Bonilla-Silva's (1997) ideas on racialized social systems, and Carmichael and Hamilton's (1967) thoughts on group and institutional racism. These theoretical frameworks were selected, because of their congruence with the arguments of previous research in chapter three that suggests that racism is a factor in land loss among black farmers.

Chapter three is a review of the literature regarding landownership and land loss among black farmers. Two consistent arguments arise in the literature on black land loss; one believes that economies of scale (i.e. size of farming, access to capitol, and access to technology/equipment, information, etc.) is the primary contributor to the loss of black-owned farmland (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982). Other reports contend that racism from within federal, state, and county-sponsored programs has intensified the rate

at which African Americans lose ownership of rural lands (Civil Rights Action Team, 1997; Pigford, et al., v. Glickman, 1997).

Chapter four details the methodological approach to studying this group. This research is an exploratory study that uses in-depth interviews in order to document the experiences and perceptions of black farmers in Kentucky. Six farmers were interviewed and provided responses regarding their perspectives on this subject. Chapter five consists of the findings and analysis of this research. These findings are analyzed, in part, by referring to previous studies, as well as, by the racial frameworks highlighted in the theoretical section. The final chapter draws some conclusions based on the analysis of the findings and identifies areas for future research.

The Growth of the Modern Agricultural Complex

Following the Civil War, Southern white farmers fell into a decade long depression fueled, in large part, by overproduction of cotton (Franklin, 1969). In one, ten year time span, the price of cotton fell from thirty-one cents a pound to a dismal six cents a pound (Morison & Commager, 1942). Tough economic conditions caused an exodus of white farmers from their plantations. Referencing this mass capitulation, Hicks (1931) writes:

Thousands of acres of the best land were for sale at three to five dollars an acre – prices that compared favorably with those in the West. Other thousands of acres were simply abandoned by their owners... In many parts of the South houses and barns were burned, fences and railroads torn up, and public buildings destroyed or rendered unfit for use. (p. 37)

The problems caused by the overproduction of cotton did not result in the immediate abandonment of this commodity. Due to its long-term storage capacity and

marketability, many creditors refused to fund farmers who attempted to grow other crops. Consequently, Southern farmers were engaged in a “one-crop evil” method of farming, which depleted soil stability and fertility (Fite, 1979; Goodwyn, 1978; Hicks, 1961, p. 45). This was especially true for African American farmers, many of which were tenant laborers growing cotton for white landowners (Daniel, 1973).

Farmers throughout the frontier West were subject to the similar economic problems. This region was populated and cultivated by American and immigrant homesteaders responding to advertisements calling for the expansion of the frontier West (Farmer, 1924). Yet, their hopes for success were dashed, partly, by devastating droughts and heat waves that crippled crop production. In addition to their climatic woes, rural farmers were faced with the growth in urbanization, modern industry, and urban markets. These developments ushered farmers from subsistence to commercial agriculture. Railroad companies were instrumental in this progression. This industry provided the means for farmers to ship their wares from state to state (Farmer, 1924). The advent of the refrigerated car stimulated this growth even further (Masao, 2004).

African Americans during the early 20th century era of industrial and technological expansion became less and less rural/agricultural and more urban/industrial. The economic and social pressures of rural life had become too great. Unable to secure adequate educations, economic and physical security, many Southern Africans Americans opted to migrate north and join commercial industries as laborers and entrepreneurs (Franklin, 1969).

Despite the modern conveniences of industrialization, the advent of the railroad system was disastrous for many farmers. Spreading rail lines throughout the country,

railroad companies consumed large amounts of arable farmland. In addition, these companies charged abhorrent shipping fees along with high taxes. These realities combined with the effects of overproduction in the South and crop failure in the Midwest, caused farmers to turn their angst and disappointment towards politicians and industrialists (Goodwyn, 1978).

These conditions helped produce “the most elaborate example of mass insurgency we have in American history” (Goodwyn, 1978, p. xvii). This uprising is known as the Populist Movement or Populism. Populism was the collective effort of groups like the National Grange, the National Farmers’ Alliance, The Colored Alliance, and The Southern Alliance (a.k.a The Industrial Union). Each group had specific organizational structures and region-specific agendas, but, in essence, all called for economic and political equity for farmers (Goodwyn, 1978; Hicks, 1928).

The National Farmers’ Alliance began as a Western farmer’s movement and moved south. Though the Southern Alliance developed as an offshoot, it was more important to the centralization of the National Farmers’ Alliance. The Southern Alliance was more organized. They established bureaucratic lines of authority, created and distributed alliance newspapers, and held annual meetings (Hicks, 1928). However, despite the economic plight faced by all subsistence farmers, the racial climate in America excluded blacks from joining the Southern Alliance. Instead, they were encouraged to create their own separate alliance. The segregation of these organizations did not diminish the impact African Americans had on the Populist movement. In fact, the political support of black farmers was essential to the stabilization of this political

movement, because Populists leaders relied on black votes to gain access to political office (Abramowitz, 1950; Franklin, 1969; Saunders, 1969).

Ultimately, Populism did not succeed as a party, or in protecting the gentleman farmer. Soon, more and more farmers began to flee from subsistence farming for commercial production. Lobao and Meyer (2001) document this escape from past antiquated agricultural technique. They write, “One of the most profound changes in the United States in the past century is the national abandonment of farming as a livelihood strategy” (p. 103). For all farmers, this widespread abandonment of subsistence farming was not a choice; it was inescapable. At least four factors contributed to the consolidation of farmland in the transition to commercial farming: technological advancement in farm equipment, mounting indebtedness due to land and equipment expenditures, overcapacity in agricultural output, and reduced revenues. Heady, Haroldsen, Mayer, & Tweeten (1965) remark:

As these substitutions took place (i.e. technological and economic adaptations in agriculture), the mix of inputs—the amount of labor needed, the amount of capital needed— has changed. With these changes, some types of inputs—horses, binders, pull-type combines, two-row planters and in some cases even manual labor became outdated. The new inputs—tractors, hybrid seed corn, feed additives, and weedicides could produce a much greater output per unit of input. (p. 4)

These substitutions changed American agriculture from one focused on manual labor and the use of large land acreages to a system that reaped bountiful harvests from machinery. However, there was a catch. In order to acquire equipment, most farmers relied on farm loans, which presented unforeseen challenges for commercial farmers.

Cochrane (1958), in his description of the treadmill effect, discusses the trend towards the use of large, fast, and more efficient farm equipment as a disastrous and

insatiable pattern. He believes that only the farmers who invested in this system early would reap the financial rewards of increased commodity returns. Subsequently, the need to compete would force more and more farmers to increase usage of mechanized equipment. Eventually, this would result in overcapacity and reduced commodity returns. Cochrane (1958) furthers that farmers would then re-invest in larger, faster equipment to produce crops sooner and to compensate for a reduction in commodity prices. As more farmers join the race for increased equipment, the cycle continues; hence, the treadmill effect. This cycle is problematic, because the majority of farmers finance expensive equipment with loans, which become more difficult to repay as commodity prices decline. Alston (1989) estimates that from 1921 to 1940, an average of 96,000 farms foreclosed annually.

Many of these farm foreclosures were the result of unpaid farm loans. It was common for farmers to have intricate lines of credit from multiple long-term and short-term creditors, all with different payment procedures. Case (1960) explains:

The financing consisted of a first mortgage secured from the federal land bank, joint stock land, an insurance company, a mortgage company or a bank for as large an amount could be borrowed with the seller of the land taking a second mortgage for the balance of the purchase price. With any failure in current income to meet farm-operating expenses and the heavy interest commitments and taxes, the new farm owner soon began to owe secondary creditors, including the implement dealer, the grocer, the doctor, and others. (p. 174)

Because farmers lacked sufficient information regarding lending and repayment processes and protocols for relieving debt, farm foreclosures escalated throughout the 20th century.

In an attempt to address these issues, Congress passed the Farm Credit Act of 1933, which created the Farm Credit Administration (FCA). This agency was responsible

for refinancing loans and extending farm mortgage loans to farmers. This act assisted in solidifying a subsidiary-based American farm policy provided by agencies like the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the Farmers Home Administration, and the Farm Service Agency (Harding, 1946; Hopkins, 1936; Shephard, 1942; Williams, 1939). Although subsidy programs benefitted many small-scale farmers they did not stop the push towards the increasing commercialization of American agriculture.

In Fite's (1986) analysis of the 1980s farm crisis, he argues that the problem lies within marked increases in grain exports to Russia a decade prior. Once, one of the largest exporters of the world's grain supply, widespread crop failures left Russia in dire need of agricultural support (Volin, 1951). Agricultural economists convinced the American farmer to increase agricultural outputs to supply the world market. Economists not only facilitated this overhaul that expedited the expulsion of small-scale farmers, former Secretary of Agriculture, Earl L. Butz symbolized United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm policy that targeted large-scale farm operators. Responsible for opening America's farmers to the world market, Butz directed farmers to "plant from fencerow to fencerow" and to "adapt or die" (Wyant, 2008).

Following the advice of experts, many farmers increased farm acreage and the use of farm equipment. However, as in earlier years, their technologically induced financial gains were short-lived and followed by the overproduction of commodities. As revenues declined, the cost of farmland reached peak levels, and farmers found themselves unable to cover their operating costs, mortgages, and loan repayments (Barnett, 2000). The impact of farm foreclosures extended beyond the loss of landownership. Researchers alert

to that farmers also suffered communal and psychological results as a result of losing their farms.

Guither and Halcrow (1988) feared that the foreclosure of small and mid-level farmers would result in the economic destruction of rural communities, due to the dependency of these communities on farm income. Wendell Berry, the noted Kentuckian, farmer, poet, and author also recalls these turbulent times in his eye-opening text, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*. According to Berry (1986), farmers throughout the country paid financial and mortal prices for their ill-advised investments during this period. Disturbed by these events, he wrote:

And now, almost a decade later, it is evident to everyone that, at least for farmers and rural communities, the situation is catastrophic: Farmers are losing their farms, some are killing themselves, some in the madness of despair are killing other people and rural economy and rural life are gravely stricken. The agricultural economists chart the “liquidation of assets,” the “shakeouts,” and the “downturns,” apparently amazed that now even the large “progressive” and “efficient” farmers are in trouble. (1986, pp. vii-viii)

Black farmers were not always subject to these pitfalls, primarily, because they did not have access to the capital nor the technology required to compete in an increasingly commercial agricultural world. Grim (1995) argues that most African Americans did not view farming as a business, nor did they have the necessary business connections to develop their farm operations. In her essay on the agribusiness participation of African Americans, Grim (1995) states:

For most black farmers, however, even with more attention given to increased production, specialization, diversification, centralized management, and improved technology, between 1945 and 1970, most remained largely disconnected from agribusiness. The traditional, alternative, and diversified ways of farming helped some African American farmers stay in business for a while, but these strategies neither significantly increased profits for the majority, nor did they create additional opportunities for them to receive much-needed credit and capital. These strategies also

failed to build the kinds of connections with agribusiness entities that black farmers needed to begin thinking about farming as a complete business... (p. 258)

Therefore, even in instances when African American farmers had access to the necessary tools to operate commercial farm operations, their farm practices lacked two vital components – a business mentality and business ties with large manufacturers. As a result, many African Americans remained subsistence farmers who relied upon outside income from off-farm employment and revenue gained from renting their lands to larger farmers. This disengagement from commercial agriculture was more than economic in its development.

Historically, minority farmers, particularly African Americans and Japanese, aside from the economic challenges to farming, confronted racial discrimination from white farmers with whom they were in competition. This prejudice was based upon the past relationship these groups maintained as exclusive labor for white landowners, who began to acquire significant amounts of farmland on their own.

Takaki (1993), in his account of America's multicultural history, acknowledges the trials and successes faced by the Issei – first generation Japanese immigrants. He highlights that these farmers were instrumental in transforming California's deserts into arable, productive farmland. Although they entered American agriculture as laborers, the Issei were able to acquire land through contracts, shares, leases, and land purchases. By 1920, Japanese farmers were the producers of much of California's produce, and accountable for 10% of the state's farm revenue (Takaki, 1993).

Reformed Japanese farmer's achieved partial success through production of alternative food crops like strawberries and asparagus, the invention of the refrigerated

car, and their habit of working in teams comprised of family units, techniques which required that they rely less on mechanized equipment for their farm operations (Azuma, 1994). Their economic success and rapid accumulation of land prompted considerable political backlash from whites.

A major consequence to Japanese farmers was the action of California legislators who restricted the naturalization of Japanese immigrants as American citizens and regulating the influx of Japanese laborers into the U.S. In 1913 and 1920, California passed Alien Land Laws, which restricted people incapable of becoming citizens (i.e. Japanese immigrants) from purchasing land (Masao, 2004). It is debatable whether the economic depression or racial discrimination resulted in the eventual decline of Japanese farmers; however, similar to African Americans the barriers opposed to landownership by this group extended beyond their ability to compete economically (Azuma, 1994; Gilbert, Sharp, & Felin, 2002, Masao, 2004).

Research presented in this chapter demonstrates how historically, among racial minorities, economic and social factors have been major obstacles to the success of minority farmers. Given this history, this study examines black farmers in Kentucky and seeks to understand their experiences and perspectives on factors that affected African American land loss.

CHAPTER II

Conceptualizing Race & Racism

The history of blacks in the United States is one founded on racial structure and racial ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Talley, 2009). The life and experiences of African American farmers, is no different. Prior research on black farmers indicates that racism is a factor that affects the life of farmers as well as land loss (Civil Rights Action Team, 1997). This section discusses selected race-based frameworks that are useful in analyzing the experience of black farmers. The frameworks are discussed in three sections.

First, this essay will explain racial formation in America as a socio-historical process. Secondly, this section will demonstrate that racialized societies are established in hierarchal terms (i.e. one race as superior to another). Within these hierarchal societies, limitations are placed upon racialized minorities resulting in their diminished capacity to earn society's many social, economic, and political resources. Lastly, using race-based literature this essay will illustrate that in racialized societies racism exist in two distinct forms – group and institutional.

In the discourse on race and racism no one concept succeeds in explaining these phenomena successfully. In fact, there are a multitude of perceptions of race and racism (Benedict, 1940; Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Cox, 2000; Myrdal, 1944; Omi & Winant, 1994; Talley, 2009; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1950). This work will rely upon three: the racial formation theory by Michael Omi and Howard

Winant, racialized social systems by Bonilla-Silva, and Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton's notions on group and institutional racism. Combined, these frameworks help to define race and racism and what they mean for racial groups in America. Furthermore, this mixture of racial thought assist in explaining why the assertion that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a racially biased institution (Pigford, et al., v. Glickman, 1997). This essay proceeds with a brief overview of past concepts of race and racism. This address is followed by a discussion of the frameworks chosen for this study, their position statements, and what the realization of their concepts means for African Americans.

Establishing a Foundation for Race & Racism in America

Early constructions of race are often associated with the work of the 18th century Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus (Bernasconi, 2000; Myrdal, 1972). A scientist and doctor by training, Linnaeus' affinity for nature resulted in his simple, yet famous classification method for plants and animals by variety and species (Botanical Gazette, 1907; Fara, 2004). This new method for determining plant and animal difference would later apply to human difference.

Charles Darwin followed Linnaeus in categorizing group difference genetically. According to Darwin, "...a being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected" (2008, p. 110). This belief in natural selection would influence scholarly and untrained racial beliefs throughout American history. Alfred Wallace, a protégé of Darwin, exhibited similar sentiments regarding the

inferiority of certain human groups. During his anthropologic journey through the Amazon, Wallace referred to the groups he observed as “uncivilized” and “savage,” unsuited for the physical features bestowed to them (Raby, 2001, p. 202). Biological determination (i.e. scientific racism) became widely accepted among the scientific hierarchy of this era. Though highly problematic due to their reliance on genetic features, biological concepts of race continued well into the 20th century.

Following the end of World War II, leading European nations convened at the very first conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It was here that the leaders of these nations called upon the top sociologists and anthropologists of their day to provide scientific comprehension of racial difference. Following in the errant paths laid by evolutionary scientists, the UNESCO scientists used biological determinates to define racial differences. The conference report states:

A race, from the biological standpoint, may therefore be defined as one of the group of populations constituting the species *Homo sapiens*... In short, the term designates a group or population characterized by some concentrations, relative as to frequency and distribution, of hereditary particles or physical characters, which appear, fluctuate, and often disappear in the course of time by reason of geographic and or cultural isolation. (UNESCO, 1950, p. 5) [No emphasis added]

Nearly fifty years later, scientists continued to use biological determinism to define race. One study attempted to prove the existence of specific genetic differences between races (Nei & Roychoudhury, 1997b). In a separate study, conducted by the same researchers in the same year, efforts were focused understanding the biologies of white, black, and Japanese subjects (Nei & Roychoudhury, 1997a). Since the works of these scientists, biological notions of race have been heavily disputed and disproven

(Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). However, their past prevalence and their enduring impact on notions of racialized groups among the untutored require that scholars understand biological arguments in order to address and articulate today's racial frameworks.

Following these biological constructs, ideological ideas of race began to take root. These viewpoints exist on a pendulum. On one end, these ideas drift towards the notion of race as a fallacy (Corcos, 1994). On the other end, they discuss race as a finite concept (Parks, 2000).

In *The Myth of Human Races*, Alain Corcos (1994) discusses the improbability of applying strict classifications to races due to the physical variances within population groups. Though Corcos (1994) is correct in the assertion that there are a plethora of variations within racialized groups, he uproots his thesis concerning the falsity of race by acknowledging in a later chapter that racial categorization is used to calculate citizens in governmental census records. Therefore, though the concept of race may be a "myth," history has proven that there are social, economic, and political ramifications for racialized groups that are inside and outside mainstream society (Corcos, 1994, p. 15, Franklin, 1969).

As mentioned before, this racial pendulum also swings toward finite racial concepts. Robert Parks (2000) was a firm believer in assimilationism. Conducting his research during America's massive influx of Jewish, Italian, and Irish immigrants, Parks (2000) believed that race relations occurred in five steps ending in the assimilation of the outlying group into the dominant group. Yet, again, history has proven through the continued geographic, economic, and political marginalization of black and Native

American racial groups that assimilation is not the automatic outcome of contact and conflict between different racialized groups (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007; Zinn, 1980).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a group of lawyers responding to the sluggish results of Civil Rights legislation to effect issues of racial inequity began to present their viewpoint of racism as systemic entity of all institutions in America. Derrick Bell is commonly accredited by subscribers of critical race theory (CRT) as one of the forerunners of this framework (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1995). CRT presumes that racism is at the core of American society. Due to the sedimentation of this prejudice racism, critical race theorists believe that legal aims that demand racial equality will only affect the most overt acts of racism, leaving its foundation intact. Thus, these scholars seek to address systemic racism via alternative academic means using storytelling, personal experience, and common culture as their methods of offense (Delgado, 1995).

Arguments against CRT state that it fails to account for how race and racism enter American society and that it only documents racism (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). However, in spite of its limitations, CRT offers an alternative lens through which to view America and different methods for confronting racism in legal and other studies. Aside from these legal debates, economic arguments are also a part of this theoretical arena of race relations.

Oliver Cromwell Cox, the black American Marxist, was instrumental in incorporating race relations into Marxist theory. In Cox's (2000) long overlooked analysis of American race relations he stresses that what is perceived as racial conflict between black and white Americans were the manifestations of class conflict.

He was not alone in presenting a Marxist approach to racial theory. Raymond Franklin (1991) was also of the understanding that the links between race and class as well as racism and class were self-evident within American society. Unlike Cox (2000), who reported that race relations were the result of class conflict, Franklin (1991) believed that for black Americans, these aspects of society occurred simultaneously. Therefore, any analysis of these social constructions must develop in tandem. Franklin (1991) attempted to justify this notion by professing that for the majority of African Americans, to be black in America was to be poor in America.

Marxist approaches to the race problem are central to this ongoing debate, because they shift this debate towards understanding the emphasis class constraints have on the development of racial structure and race relations. If there is at all an ongoing critique of class-centered approach it is that they do not get to the heart of the American dilemma, which some see as racism (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). For Blauner (1969), however, racial conflict is the result of internal colonization.

In *Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt*, Robert Blauner (1969) presents his thesis that white and black relations in America are one of the colonizer and the colonized. He focuses this address on explaining what he views as colonialism and how this system is applicable in America. His argument for an American colonial condition is not congruent with the traditional concept of a colonial society.

According to Blauner (1969), there are four components of colonialism: First, a racial group enters a dominant society by force or involuntary means. Next, the culture of the dominant group converts the culture of the colonized group. This happens with the use of the political power. Third, the colonizer manages the colonized group. Fourthly,

racism is born. Blauner (1969) supports his view on internal colonialism in America by referring to four forms of attack on the colonial system: riots, cultural nationalism, programs of separation, and control for the ghetto.

The race riots of the 1960s primarily targeted white businesses. Blauner (1969) believed these outbursts were early examples of revolts against colonial authority. In addition, according to the internal colonialist perspective, the cultural nationalism of the late 1960s was a rallying point for African Americans. During the Black Power Movement, black people began to self-define and self-assert their identity and ideology in opposition to mainstream society through the guidance of organizations like the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and Maulana Karenga's US Organization (Karenga, 2002). Control for the ghetto is the last method of revolt found within the internal colonialism model. The aforementioned Black Power organizations actively sought to control their neighborhoods by way of breakfast programs for children, cultural programs, and by physically policing black neighborhoods in California and other states (Brown, 1992).

Though intriguing, an obvious problem with Blauner's (1969) position is that it does not fit the traditional definition of colonialism. In this framework, the colonizer and the colonized inhabit the same landmass. Blauner (1969) defends this affront by stating that the similarities between traditional and American colonialism outweigh their differences.

Another limitation to this framework is that it assumes that Africans entered America as racialized groups and does not attempt to support this assumption. In the first of his four components of colonization, Blauner writes, "The first refers to how the racial

group enters the dominant society (1969, p. 396). Here, one would presume that enslaved Africans entered America racialized. Yet, in his address of cultural nationalism, he infers that Africans were brought to America having ethnic plurality. Blauner states, "...the integral cultures of the diverse African peoples who furnished the slave trade were destroyed because slaves from different tribes, kingdoms, and linguistic groups were purposely separated to maximize domination and control" (1969, p. 400). Given these inconsistent statements, readers are left to decipher the racial or ethnic make-up of enslaved Africans. The reader must also determine whether racial structure and racialization for enslaved Africans began upon their arrival or during the final component of colonization.

Clarence Talley (2009) discusses the economy and society of the plantation system in America and its effect on the racial structure and the racialization of the enslaved as inferior. According to Talley (2009), racial structure, categorization and signification in America are direct results of the plantation economies and societies first established in the Caribbean following Columbus' 15th century exhibitions. The plantation model degraded Africans and Indians into inferior beings suitable for forced labor. Furthermore, this system of control helped pacify class tensions between landowning whites and non-landowning whites, because if nothing else, the latter could rest on the fact that they were not black. Thus, they were still human and superior to blacks. Talley (2009) argues that this pacification of class tensions between whites was created by hiring landless whites as overseers on plantations, as well as, by enlisting them as security forces against the enslaved blacks. Therefore, the stark economic disparities

between groups of whites were kept unchecked by racial loyalty and the belief of racial superiority.

Talley's (2009) position is useful, because it traces race relations and primarily, racial structure to the plantation system of agriculture and social domination. This framework is also important, because it attempts to explain how racial structures are created, thus, explaining how racial ideologies and race relations are produced, which previous studies have avoided or discussed superficially (Bell, 1992; Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Cox, 2000; Franklin, 1991). By analyzing racial structure, Talley (2009) establishes an intriguing argument for the origins of racial categorization, signification, as well as, pathological racial ideologies (i.e. racism).

Limitations to this framework exist. Inchoate in its development, this concept of racial structure does not provide an explanation for how hierarchal racial structure inseminated northern states whose economies and societies were more industrial/urban and not directly influenced by plantation economies of the South, which relied upon the control of a massive agrarian labor force. Aside from these many ideas on race and race relations, for the purposes of this essay, three racial concepts will suffice.

This essay employs racial formation theory as a means to explain the creation of race and racial meaning as it relates to blacks and whites in America. The theory of racial formation was developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant. Their initial publication of this idea covers the process of racialization in America from the post-Civil Rights era up to 1984 (Omi & Winant, 1984). Years later the authors edited and republished an expanded version of this concept, extending their racial analysis across three decades (Omi & Winant, 1994). The latter version will be the primary source for this discussion.

The authors claim that a “race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 198). To paraphrase, race is an ideology that gives meaning to social relations between different human groups. Unlike ideological frameworks, racial formation theory does not subscribe to the idea that race is nebulous, primarily because racial categorization has real world consequences. It also avoids the static view of race as a fixed entity.

In fact, racial formation is defined as a “sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, *transformed*, and *destroyed*” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 199, emphasis added). According to Omi and Winant (1994), this amorphous racial identity forms via micro and macro-level racial projects. Racial projects are society-level (micro) and state-funded (macro) processes that determine how resources (i.e. education, jobs, housing, etc.) are allocating (or not) along racial lines. Omi and Winant (1994) state that the day-to-day social interactions that occur amongst racialized groups result in the creation of preconceived notions (i.e. stereotypes) about one another. These personally held stereotypes, whether good or bad, inform racial groups how they should associate with one another. These notions also influence processes at the macro-level (i.e. public policy and laws).

Bonilla-Silva (1997) furthers this debate and argues that the social structure of America is built upon a racial hierarchy that solidifies racial stereotypes over time. In an article that would later contribute a chapter to the text *White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, Bonilla-Silva (1997) posits that racialized social systems are “...societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially

structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races” (p. 469). In such societies the racialized group designated as superior is rewarded with more of these economic, political, social, and ideological benefits. In America, this stratification has historically been between whites (dominant race) and blacks (inferior race). This imbalanced group categorization and signification inevitably leads to group contestation over resources, which may be overt or covert, individual, group-wide, or institutional. Another term for this strife between super and sub-ordinate races is racism.

In their collaborative effort, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton (1967) define racism as “the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of *subordinating* a racial group and remaining control over them” (1967, p. 3) [No emphasis added]. These decisions and policies that delegate control occur on two levels and manifest differently.

Group Racism is a more overt and observable form of prejudice that occurs between individuals and relates well to Omi and Winant’s (1994) discussion of micro-level race creating projects that take place at the society level. Examples of group racism were prevalent during the Civil Rights Movement as African Americans were physically attacked by the white populace and white law enforcement (Franklin, 1969). However, since the passage of Civil Rights legislation the prevalence of this overt form of racism has waned and been substituted in large part a more subtle form of racial discrimination.

At the institutional level anti-black attitudes become covert and pervasive insinuating all aspects of social institutions (i.e. schools, businesses, law enforcement agencies). Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) contend that institutional racism occurs in a

tertiary; it develops politically, economically, and socially. Poor political representation is one example of these processes that African Americans experience. Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) debate that in the rare case that black politicians are elected to office they do not have the interests of black constituents in mind. Economically, businesses that take financial resources from black communities yet fail to impart any substantial commodities are, yet, another example of institutional bias. These institutions include liquor stores, pawn shops, and grocery stores with sub-par produce. Lastly, African Americans experience social barriers as they are excluded from various educational and housing opportunities within society (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967).

The importance of these three frameworks is that together they illustrate that races in America are created socio-historically and exist on a hierarchal tier. Furthermore, the facilitation of social relations based upon these ranks produce stereotypes about the racialized other that effect how individuals act against the one another within communities and institutions. For the purposes of this research, the racialized others are African American.

Moreover, these concepts declare that there are also social and political barriers that all African Americans as racialized minorities must confront both in their everyday interactions and in various institutional situations with whites. As a result, they show that barriers to land tenure faced by African American farmers are likely to exceed the purely economic constraints presented by some studies (Schweninger, 1986; USCCR, 1982).

CHAPTER III

Review of Literature

The black farmer in the United States has nearly disappeared and the black population in rural farm areas may soon follow. On the average, black farms are small and concentrated in areas where cotton and tobacco are still the chief crops. Their operators are old and there is a marked exodus of young farmers. Farming in the United States will soon be an occupation relegated to whites. Prospects for revival of black farming are very slight. In retrospect it appears that World War II and the social and technological changes that came with it sounded the knell for the small farmer. *Among these the black is simply the first to go.* (Wadley & Lee, 1974, p. 283)
[Emphasis added]

The statement is from a study by Wadley and Lee (1974) on the disappearance of black farmers from America's agricultural landscape. In their assessment, various economic factors assisted in the attenuation of African Americans farmers. There is an on-going debate as to the cause of black land loss. Researchers continue to speculate over two dominant arguments that have emerged regarding this subject. The first argument is that black land loss results from a series of economic factors that include reliance on cash crops, economies of scale, and access to expensive mechanized equipment. Though compelling, these do not account for the rate of land loss among African Americans blacks. Thus, other analysts argue that social factors (i.e. racial discrimination) have led to land loss among rural black. Lastly, there exist a peripheral debate that state that black land loss is increasing due to the sale of heir property by young black landowners.

The following review will present each of these perspectives regarding the loss of black. Although it is improbable to cover the literature on this subject in its totality, this study will attempt to provide a concise review of previous studies.

The Economics of Black Land Loss

Land loss among farmers is an issue that is systemic to American agriculture for decades, affecting white and black farmers (Wood & Gilbert, 2000). Historically, for white farmers, the transition from subsistence to commercial farmers, which required the use of debt capital, increased reliance on farm machinery and large land acreages combined with low commodity returns and governmental programs that catered to the large operators contributed to their decline (Berry, 1986). Similarly, a substantial amount of research on black farmers indicates that economic factors are the primary concern of this group.

In his sociological study of rural African Americans in Georgia's Black Belt, Raper (1936) concerned himself with the economics of black land loss in Greene County. Between the years of 1921 and 1927, land loss among black landholders increased in this region. According to Raper (1936), this decline was the result of indebtedness and the voracious affects of the Mexican boll weevil, which devoured cotton plants all across the South. He also discovered that land loss was more common among larger landowners than small and mid-sized farm operators. He explains:

In short, the small owner kept his land in spite of the boll weevil, deflation, and bank failure because he was not entirely dependent upon the products of his farm to satisfy his creditors. When the large owner did not receive enough money from his cotton to satisfy his creditors, the land he gave as security for his borrowings was lost (p. 115).

According to Raper (1936) small landholders, due to the limited amount of land they were had to tend, were afforded additional to time earn off-farm income. Large landowners had no such time to earn outside income, because the majority of their productive energy was required to maintain their large acreages.

Years later, Schweninger (1989) attributed black land loss to America's industrial economy during the World War I and the widespread agricultural depression within the South accompanying this era. Stagnate commodity returns resulted in rampant foreclosures throughout the South causing black farmers to loss and leave their farmland for economic security in Northern and Western states. Though New Deal subsidy programs existed for farmers, Schweninger (1989) mentions the majority of these benefits went to large-scale farm operations, missing small-scale black farmers. Resolute in his stance on the subject, Schweninger writes, "Economic opportunity, more than racial discrimination, has been primarily responsible for the recent decline in [black] farm ownership" (1989, p. 55).

In an assessment of African American farmers of the Civil Rights Era, Jones (1953) argued that the challenge for black farmers included conditions that "will have their effects on several classes of farm people" (p. 332). In essence, the problems that black farmers faced were economic issues and affected many rural people. Jones (1953) also states that the true test for black farmers in retaining land rest on their ability to produce sufficient wages from small landholdings, how they fared against economic competition with other farmers, and their ability to acclimate to advancing technologies in the agricultural industry. In a separate study, Brown, Dagher, and McDowell (1992) presented a tertiary of to the loss of black landownership. For these researchers,

production challenges, marketing strategies, and governmental policies were the primary impediments for black farmers.

Commercial analyses have also appeared in studies performed by the federal government. The United States Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) (1982) undertook a massive statistical analysis of the social and economic state of African American farmers. Aware of the fact that this group had been in steady decline since the first half of the 20th century, the USCCR report sought to uncover the major contributing factors to this regression in landholdings.

According to the USCCR (1982) racial discrimination as a barrier to the socio-economic advancement of black farmers landowners was a part of the country's racial history, not its present. Instead, contemporary influences to black land loss were the result of economies of scale due to machineries, the impact of technology on production, lending practices, and tax benefits which were more beneficial towards large scale operations (USCCR, 1982). In addition, the relatively small landholdings of African American farmers were considered as hurdles to their financial stability.

In yet another federal study, Reynolds (2002) references the historical discrimination faced by black farmers, however, he presents the focus of this study in an economically. Understanding the historical importance of black-owned and operated farm cooperatives to the fiscal success of black farmers, Reynolds (2002) suggests the use of this model by the USDA to encourage land tenure among black farmers.

Although economics of scale and technological advances are seen as contributors to the longstanding decline of black farmers and black-owned farmland, some researchers state that economics alone cannot possibly account for the large discrepancies in land loss

that exist between white and black landholders. Therefore, in order to assess this problem appropriately, some researchers believe the center of analysis should be the presence and impact of racial discrimination on black farmers.

The Affects of Group Racism on Black Landownership

One of the earliest inquiries into the study of rural black landholders is W.E.B. DuBois' (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk* where he devotes two in-depth chapters to observing black tenant farmers and landholders nearly three decades following Emancipation. DuBois' (1903) first-hand observation of the asphyxiating social conditions of black farmers in Georgia's Black Belt during Jim Crow led him to question, "Can we establish a mass of black laborers and artisans and *landholders* in the South who, by law and opinion, have absolutely no voice in shaping the laws under which they live in work?" (p. 175) [Emphasis added]. From his travels, DuBois (1903) discovered that many of the men he encountered suffered from discrimination daily. Having never received formal teaching following Emancipation many of these men remained uneducated and illiterate, which contributed to their position as landless tenants. These men, captured by a sharecropping system that often resembled debt peonage were deliberately kept from owning land. DuBois (1903) laments:

I have seen in the Black Belt of Georgia, an ignorant, honest Negro buy and pay for a farm in installments three separate times, and then in the face of law and decency the enterprising Russian Jew who sold it to him pocketed money and deed and left the black man landless, to labor on his on land for thirty cents a day. (1903, p. 170)

Here racism and a paucity of education combined to retard black tenant farmers in the South from becoming landholders. However, challenging the socio-economic

conditions were during this era, black did acquire farmland. From the mid to the late 1800s African Americans in Dougherty County accumulated some 15,000 acres land and 185 landholders (DuBois, 1903).

Most African Americans who were able to purchase land exhibited certain traits. Generally, black landholders of this era were wage earners before purchasing their land. In addition, the majority of these landholders were single, educated, and shrewd businessmen (DuBois, 1903). Raper (1936) notes that many black landholders in Georgia's Southern counties bought their lands from white landowners, purchased the least desirable lands, were required to pay for land at a quicker rate than whites. Most importantly, they were acceptable to the white community.

The importance of the image of blacks to the white community should not be understated. Raper (1936) reminds his readers:

The Negro buys land only when some white man will sell it to *him*. Just because a white man has land for sale does not mean that a Negro, even the one most liked and respected by him, can buy it even if he has the money. Whether a particular Negro can buy a particular tract of land depends upon its location, its economic and emotional value to the white owner and other white people, the Negro's cash and credit resources, and, doubtless most important of all, his personal qualities in the light of the local attitude: He must be acceptable. (p. 122) [No emphasis added]

Personal accounts of the racially motivated impediments to black landownership appear consistently throughout African American literature. In his autobiography, Nate Shaw (1974) recalls his boyhood experiences watching his father's life as a sharecropper. Nate spoke of his father's reoccurring financial woes due to unscrupulous white creditors who constructed work contracts that kept him an indebted tenant farmer. In *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Anne Moody (1968) remembers the racially motivated obstacles

faced by her stepfather as he was swindled in his attempts to attain suitable farmland for his family.

Unfortunately, these attitudes against the attempts of African Americans to own land have not died. In a recent publication, hooks (2008) discusses the chicanery and white sponsorship required in her initial purchase of land in rural Appalachia due to the persistence of racism in the region. She says, “When I first purchased land in the Kentucky hills, I was a silent partner with a white male friend. We did not know whether or not the owner of the property would have been prejudiced against black folks, but we chose not to openly disclose our partnership until all transactions were completed” (p. 51). hooks (2008) rejoinders, underlining the centrality of race in the purchase of rural property. She writes, “Many of my white friends who own land in the Kentucky hills are gay yet their gayness is not initially visible, and shared whiteness makes it possible for them to move into areas that remain closed to black folk because of prejudice” (p. 51). This form of racial discrimination helps explain the deterrents to the acquisition of land by blacks; yet, it does not explain why land tenure for African Americans has been so challenging to uphold. Reports illustrate that institutional racism contributes to the disenfranchisement of African Americans from retaining their status as landowners.

Exclusion of Blacks from County, State, & Federal Programs: Institutional Racism

The previous section undertook the issue of group racism within communities and the affects it has on the ability of African Americans to acquire farmland. This section deals with literature that argues that institutional racial bias has aided in the decline of land loss among the black landholders. The United States Commission on Civil Rights

(USCCR, 1967) first assessed the potential for racial discrimination within federal farm subsidy program in their, *Equal Opportunity in Federally Assisted Agricultural Programs in Georgia*. Created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the purpose of the USCCR is to investigate incidents of discrimination and violation of equal protection by federal agencies and to present reports from these investigations to the President and the U.S. Congress. In response to 23 complaints filed by black farmers in Georgia, the USCCR (1967) made inquiries into the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) and the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service (GCES). Their report indicated that large disparities in service existed between blacks and whites in state and county employment, technical assistance, participation in 4-H Clubs, home economics programs, and FmHA loan assistance programs.

Four types of loans were available through the FmHA loan assistance program: operating, emergency, rural housing, and farm ownership loans. Racial preference by the FmHA was found to have greatly affected the number and amount of loans received by black farmers and prospective landowners. In respect to operating loans (i.e. funds for equipment, seeds, livestock, technical assistance, etc.), between the years of 1964 and 1966, there were significant differences in the allotment of funds to white and black farmers. White farmers were the recipients of 6,389 operating loans compared to 1,738 loans received by black farmers. The financial equivalent of operating loans for white farmers equaled \$14,501, nearly twice as much as the \$7,761 afforded to black farmers.

In the same three year time span, white farmers received 1,380 farm ownership loans totaling \$35,840. Black farmers received 120 loans for a total of \$29,263, a difference of approximately \$6,000. On first glance, this numerical scale would seem to

be an improvement compared to the disbursement of operating loans; however, of the farm ownership loans appropriated only 120 black potential owners were the recipients of these funds compared to 1,380 white farmers. The results of this selection process are a concentration of farmland among a few eligible farmers, which relegates the number of black landholders in Georgia counties to a select few.

The USCCR (1967) conclude their report by stating that the FmHA and the GCES used discriminatory patterns in their decisions to provide farm subsidies to black farmers and potential landholders. In response to these violations, the USCCR provided a number of recommendations for the FmHA and the GCES to implement in order for these agencies to adhere to recent Civil Rights legislation. Unfortunately, racism permeated the USDA from barnyard to boardroom.

In an October 1976, issue of TIME magazine former Secretary of Agriculture, Earl L. Butz was recorded spouting racist comments regarding African Americans. While on a commercial flight Secretary Butz was asked why former President Lincoln's administration had not been able to garner a stronger black vote, the former Secretary of Agriculture responded, stating that only thing the "coloreds" wanted in life were good sex, loose fitting shoes, and a heated restroom¹. Following the publishing of these statements Butz promptly resigned from his position as Secretary of Agriculture; however, again the USDA's issues with race relations were exposed.

In 1997, an unprecedented class action lawsuit (Pigford, et al., v. Glickman, 1997) was levied against then Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman. Better known as the

¹ Time Magazine. (1976). *The nation: Exit Earl, not laughing*. Retrieved, from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,946703,00.html>.

Pigford case, this lawsuit was the collaborative effort of 401 black farmers from throughout the Southern and Mid-Western states. The plaintiffs' allegations were twofold. The plaintiffs argued that agencies under the umbrella of the USDA used racial bias in their decision to approve black farmers into USDA subsidy programs. (b) The claimants declared that once informed of these problems, Secretary of Agriculture Glickman also declared to properly investigate and redress these issues. After the case has made headlines, former Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman created the Civil Rights Action Team (CRAT).

One of the aims of CRAT (1997) was to take an invasive look into the USDA's history of subsidy negotiations with African American farmers. Their purpose was to determine whether racial discrimination was indeed a factor in black farmers participation in USDA programs. Twelve listening sessions were deployed at 11 locations throughout the country. The experiences of USDA constituents and employees were recorded regarding any civil rights violations by the FmHA and local Cooperative Extension Service agencies.

The CRAT report found that managers and supervisors were not held accountable for civil rights violations against minority farmers. Several respondents stated that many county officials deliberately excluded minority farmers from receiving federal assistance and other resources. One minority farmer stated that local farm committees have the power to bestow "fortune" or "foreclosure" upon small-scale farmers (Civil Rights Action Team, 1997, p. 7). Following these recorded accounts of corruptions within the ranks of the USDA interest in this subject has intensified.

In a joint approach, Wood and Gilbert (2000) revisited the work of Pfeffer and Gilbert (1989) in their study of black farmers of the Mississippi Delta. Pfeffer and Gilbert (1989) questioned the economic ramifications for white farmers in the Cornbelt and Delta regions who participated in federal farm programs during the 1980s. Their study deliberately excluded African American farmers from analysis. Therefore, Wood and Gilbert (2000) directed their collective interest towards determining if changes in landownership retention had occurred over time (1982-1992) with African American farmers in Delta County, Mississippi.

The study found that contrary to national trends, between 1982 and 1992, the number of black farmers in this region decreased at a measured rate. Also, the amount of black-owned farmland increased quicker than those reported by national data sets (Wood & Gilbert, 2000; USCCR, 1982). Despite their relative success in retaining land, participants claimed to have experienced racial discrimination by members of their local FmHA in their attempts to gain operating loans. Their issue with the FmHA was not a matter of *if* they would be approved for a loan in so much as *when* they would receive the loans. In this time sensitive industry, delaying one's planting season can present significant setbacks to production and revenue.

In an earlier study of African Americans in the Upper South, Nesbitt (1979) found that patterns of exclusion from governmental programs contributed to the decline of black farmers in Promise Land, Tennessee. He recites, "The various resources that were supposed to be available to all farmers via federal, state, and county cooperatives never became a reality for the black farmers and homeowners of Promise Land" (p. 76). Exclusion from participation in federal programs is what prompted Booker T.

Washington, George Washington Carver, and the Tuskegee Institute to introduce a black cooperative extension system into the Black Belt South. Moreover, with the use of the Jesup Wagon (a mobile agricultural school) and help from black farm agents black farmers finally began to receive the services that white farm agents would not provide them (Mayberry, 1989). Recent studies continue to assess the impact that exclusion from federal assistance has on small-scale black farmers.

Grim (1995) illustrates that the politics of racial exclusion from assistance programs made available to white farmers compounded the difficulties faced by small-scale black farmers. In a later study, Grim (1996) provides a more extensive and direct analysis of African American participation in the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), federal agencies whose responsibility it is to improve the livelihood of farmers and rural communities.

Grim (1996) discovers that between the years of 1964-1990 African Americans were withheld from subsidy programs. Even following the passage of the Civil Rights Act, black participation in subsidy programs lagged behind that of white producers. Furthermore, the election of African Americans to FmHA and ASCS county committees paled in comparison to whites, which Grim (1996) asserts contributes to the low enrollment of African Americans into subsidy programs.

More recently, Harris (2008) sought to understand how race was perceived within the Cooperative Extension Service. Her study states that the unfair institutional policies and procedures utilized by Southern extension services were the outgrowth of racist ideologies regarding African Americans. Harris (2008) states:

...the popular belief in African-American inferiority and pragmatic political compromises aimed at creating a bureaucracy serving the nation's agricultural

constituency and ensuring its longevity, led to a conscious marginalization of African-American interests within the program. Federal extension officials not only tolerated, but actively supported, discrimination within the southern branches of the service. (p. 193)

Harris' (2008) argument is that African Americans were never intended to be employed as extension agents, and when they were hired as such following the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, they were done so as mere tokens in compliance with federal regulations. The same sentiment applies to African American applicants to government-sponsored subsidy programs.

Each of these studies show that institutionalized racial discrimination within federally-sponsored programs seriously affected the employment of blacks as farm agents, the information farmers received regarding farm technologies and techniques, and the quantity and quality of black participation within farm programs and local farm committees.

Throughout history, economic and social factors have placed undue burden upon black landowners. Now a new argument has arose within the discourse on black land loss. These studies blame black land loss to the sell of heir property by young rural African Americans.

Intestate and Partition Sales of Black Farmland

The sale of heir property has become critical to the land loss debate. Intestate secession is the legal term for the transfer of property to the heirs of a deceased individual without a living will (Fellows, Simon, & Rau, 1978). For many African Americans this law comes with various rules, which most are unaware of, rules that become ever-present in cases where multiple heirs inherit one land base. Craig-Taylor (2000) argues that a

historic and deep-seeded distrust for court systems has influenced African Americans to bestow their land to heirs via the intestate system. Without a living will, authorities divide property among numerous descendants; a protocol that Craig-Taylor (2000) asserts has contributes greatly to the loss of black farmland.

Mitchell (2001) agrees that a paucity of living wills and reliance on intestate laws, without proper knowledge of them hamper black land tenure. A problem with the intestate heir system is that each recipient retains a right to force a sale of the whole property to receive their particularly interest in the land. Mitchell (2001) and Craig-Taylor (2000) agree that policymakers are partially responsible for assisting black landholders by creating policies that protect heirs from unethical partition sales.

More recently, Dyer (2007) assessed the impact of tax and partition sales on land retention in two rural Alabama counties. Of the recipients of heir property she interviewed none had created a legal will, though all stated having plans to do so. Despite the land loss issues presented with partition sells of heir property, Dyer (2007) discovered in her study that respondents who lived on heir property with family members, embodied a sense of “communal solidarity” (p. 113), an aspect of intestate heir property that is essential in order for the system to be equitable to all parties involved.

Similar to Mitchell (2001) and Craig-Taylor (2000), Dyer (2007) believes that policymakers should assist in changing this inconsistent system of land tenure. However, she also acknowledges the impact that community-based organizations may have on protecting heirs of intestate succession by educating these landowners about real estates processes and laws. Real estate matters are not only affecting this group of Black landowners.

Survival Strategies for Black Farmers

Given the dire nature of black landownership, some researchers are calling for inventive methods in order to maintain black landownership and increase the number of black farmers. More than a decade before the USDA's Civil Rights Action Team (1997) report called for initiatives to address the decline of black farmers, Lyson (1980) actively sought to bolster the number of black farmers by identifying ways to influence the recruitment of future black farmers. He concluded that black youth from farming families and households where the primary income was from farm labor were more likely to become farmers or enter a farming industry than those from non-farming families.

In *Who Owns the Land?: Agricultural Land Ownership by Race/Ethnicity* Gilbert, Wood, and Sharp (2002) are interested in the number of black landholders in America. The authors prefer to retrieve their statistics from the USDA's Agriculture Economics and Landownership Survey (AELOS) rather than the U.S. Census of Agriculture, because "the Census of Agriculture studies farmers whereas the AELOS studies agricultural land owners" (Gilbert, Wood, & Sharp, 2002, p. 56). The AELOS study has shows that not all black landowners are farmers. At the time of the study, there were more black landowners (approximately 68,000 more) than black farmers. According to the researchers, this discovery was an opportunity to motivate and assist thousands of black landowners to return to or enter the agricultural business as farmers.

That same year, the USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service interrogated the influence that local farm cooperatives may have on the success of black farms in order "...to gain a more complete understanding of the historic processes and unique challenges that have faced black farmers as they have tried to gain operating

independence and viability through cooperative tools” (Reynolds, 2002, p. 17). Due to racial segregation in the South, most African American farmers created their own cooperatives as alternative sources of funding and support. (Mayberry, 1989) Given the historical importance and success of local farm cooperatives in addressing the needs of black farmers, the USDA’s rural development program surmised that government-led cooperative programs would be promising in promoting value-added commodities (i.e. vegetables instead of non-food mono-crops) and establishing marketing tools to aid in recruiting potential young black farmers (Reynolds, 2002). Other initiatives have sought to diversify and increase the productivity of black farmers.

Bandeale and Hayes (2006) reported the results of training sessions implemented as a part of the Southern Food System Education Consortium (SFSEC) information session. This conference was designed to inform black farmers of the ecological and economic benefits of growing certified organic produce. At the time of this session, there were no black certified organic farmers in Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, or South Carolina. These workshops resulted in the certification of black farmers in each of these states.

In a later publication Bandeale (2009) questioned the long-standing connection between black farmers and sustainable agricultural techniques tracing the importance of African American land culture from its African heritage onward highlighting the work of the Tuskegee Institute and the intellectual tenacity of George Washington Carver as key figures in the history of African American agriculture. Regarding the underutilization of organic/sustainable agriculture and the opportunities it entails, Bandeale states, “Recent consumer demand for local and organic produce along with the growth of farmers’

markets are trends that are worthy of consideration as [black] farmers seek alternatives to more conventional production of agronomic crops” (2009, p. 88). These are just some of the issues discussed in the discourse on black farmers.

This purpose of this literature review was to present the prominent arguments concerning factors that contribute to land loss. The longstanding arguments contend that economies and scale and exclusion from federal, state, and county programs due to institutionalized racial bias have contributed to the historical decline of landownership among African Americans. This review also discovered a growing amount of research that contributes black land loss to intestate and partition sales of rural property by young black heirs. Lastly, this assessment briefly addressed alternative studies of black farmers, which attempt to redress the precipitous decline of ownership among this group. With a foundation for black land loss established, this study will proceed to a discussion of the methodological focus of this research.

CHAPTER IV

Methodology

Research Objective

This study examines the experiences and perspectives of black landowners in Kentucky regarding factors that contribute to land loss. Previous studies into this subject have separated these factors into two major competing arguments. The first case contends that the current barrier to the loss of landownership by African Americans results from economics of small-scale farming, that is, size and type, farm production, access to mechanized equipment, and access to financial capital. These writings propose that the inability of African Americans to compete economically due to small farm size has rendered these farmers an endangered group (Schweninger, 1986; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982).

The second argument concerns racial discrimination. This literature analyzes land ownership and land loss at two levels. The first level argues that group racism contributed to a historical separation of African Americans from landownership in an attempt to keep blacks as land less, farm laborers on the property of whites (Daniel, 1973; DuBois, 1903; Raper, 1936; Shaw, 1974). The second level analysis focuses on institutional bias and argues that this covert form of racial discrimination has aided the loss of landownership among rural blacks (Civil Rights Action Team, 1997; Pigford, et al., v. Glickman, 1997).

Historically, African Americans were excluded from equal participation in various federal, state, and county programs as patrons and employees. This exclusion also occurred at local agricultural committees and significantly limited African American's access to resources that may have assisted in the development of their farm operations (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967).

Research Questions

Prior research identifies both economic and social contributors to black land loss. However, they rarely include the lived experiences and personal perceptions of African American farmers. As a result, this study seeks to answer two questions:

- ***What are the social and economic experiences of black farmers in Kentucky?***
- ***What are the perceptions of black farmers regarding the factors that have contributed to black land loss?***

Theoretical Framework

This study incorporates selected race-based frameworks (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Omi & Winant, 1994) to analyze the experiences of black farmers in Kentucky. Multiple racial concepts are incorporated into this study, because no one framework provides a sufficient overview of race and racism in America. The purposes of these theories are to lay a foundation for understanding the formation, categorization, and stratification of races, specifically, blacks and whites, in America. These ideas are relevant to this study on African Americans and land loss, because previous studies argue that racial discrimination has aided the loss of landownership

among black farmers (Civil Rights Action Team, 1997; Harris, 2008; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967).

Method

This exploratory study adopts a qualitative research approach in which in-depth interviews are used to collect data. When using this approach researchers attempt to discover unknown aspects about small groups rather than large populations (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Dentzner, 1995). Qualitative research as an interdisciplinary approach has proven to be important to various research projects including feminist studies (Madriz, 2003) and black studies (Asante, 2006; Cazenave, 1983).

When using interviewing methods it is important that the researcher understands and remembers that the experiences of research participants are instrumental to the research. Warren (2002) believes the purpose of qualitative interviews is to derive interpretations not facts. For this to occur, interviewees must be “meaning makers” who have agency in the interview process (2002, p. 83). Therefore, qualitative interviewing, in this study consist of a continuum of questioning and listening in order to understand the lives of the black farmers and how they make meaning of their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the experiences and perspectives of the black farmers. Field studies have shown to be important (McGee & Boone, 1976; Pennick, Gray, & Thomas, 2009) in gathering the perspectives of black farmers from various regions throughout the country, because they produce specific and influential findings that could not be captured using quantitative techniques. Furthermore, additional literature has incorporated qualitative methods to study other issues of agricultural land

use as well as the attitudes of farmers in Kentucky (Collins, Stephenson, Skees, & Swanson, 1990; Coughenour & Gabbard, 1977; Swanson & Maurer, 1983; Swigart & Barnhart, 1982). However, very few of these prior studies have targeted African American farms and farmers in Kentucky (Hughes & Edmiston, 1983).

Research Sample & Sampling Procedure

Six participants (four males, two females) contributed to this study. The minimum age for participation in this study was 18. There was no maximum age for participation. Research participants were selected using two methods: a convenience sample and a snowball sample. Three participants were gathered using a convenience sampling model. This method of sample selection refers to a sample pool that the researcher gathers simultaneously at a convenient location or event. This method can also be implemented using individuals with which the researcher has a level of familiarity. In either case, the selection process is simplified (Patton, 2002). In this study the participants selected using this process were contacted at the 2009 Small, Limited Resource, Minority Farmers Conference held November 17-19, 2009. Each year Kentucky State University's (KSU) Cooperative Extension facilitates this event in Frankfort, Kentucky.¹

Ten potential participants were chosen from the 2009 Minority, Limited Resource Farmer Conference. Names, phone numbers, and/or addresses were collected by the researcher. During casual conversation, the researcher expressed an interest in the

¹ This annual conference is a time in which minority farmers present their ideas and grievances, exchange knowledge of productive farm practices, tour and learn of successful farms, and are informed of technological advances in the farming industry. This gathering also serves as an informal homecoming for minority farmers throughout Kentucky to re-convene with one another.

African American presence in agriculture. Each potential participant was informed that the researcher of this study was a student at the University of Louisville working on a Master's Thesis in the Department of Pan-African Studies. They were asked whether they were interested in participating in the study and willing to do an interview. The researcher also explained that the purpose of this study would be to explore the experiences and perspectives of African American farmers in Kentucky regarding factors that contribute to the loss of landownership. At the initial meeting each contact appeared to be highly interested in participating in the interview process. As a result, the researcher was confident that the goal of interviewing ten research participants would be met.

The development of trusting relationships was essential to this study. Following the conference, the researcher continued periodic contact with the ten farmers. Aside from the initial meeting at the conference and occasion phone calls the researcher was invited to share Thanksgiving Day with one of the participants. This day was spent becoming acquainted with the participant and the participant's children, and grandchildren. The time spent in building a mutually trusting relationship helped to create a comfortable interview atmosphere.

Before conducting any research, the researcher had to receive approval from the University of Louisville's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This governing body is responsible for ensuring that any research conducted by a member of the university will not cause any undue physical and/or psychological harm to research participants. Approval to conduct this study was not received from the IRB until January 2010, two months after the conference ended. At this time, the researcher proceeded to contact farmers to schedule interview dates. Of the ten contacts made at the minority farmers'

conference only two agreed to participate in this study. A number of issues affected the number of participants in this study from the minority farmer conference.

First, the contact numbers of two young black farmers who are also brothers were no longer viable. The researcher called and discussed the subject of the study with another farmer. This contact expressed concern regarding the motive of the study and asked to view the interview instrument before he would agree to an interview. After allowing the farmer to review the interview instrument, he refused to join the study. The remainder of the five farmers did not respond to numerous attempts by the researcher to contact them via phone and lettered mail. This poor lack of response by potential participants prompted the researcher to implement a snowball sampling technique in order to increase the sample size of this research.

A snowball sampling method occurs when a researcher relies upon the network of their existing participants to gain access to additional participants (Denzin, 2008). For this inquiry, the researcher enlisted the assistance of the three participating farmers. Participant #5 directed the researcher to Participant's #3 and #1. Later, Participant #3 introduced the researcher to Participant #4. The combination of the connections gained using a snowball technique along with those acquired using convenience sampling increased the sample size to six participants. The researcher desired to increase the participant pool to include at least ten participants; however, time constraints required that the study proceed with six participants.

Research Terms

Throughout this study, the words “farmer” and “rural landowner” are used synonymously and alternately. Participants are referred to in this manner for two reasons. First, although not all of the participants in this study were presently farming, at one point in their history each participant did operate a farm. Secondly, every participant in this study owns property in a rural county in Kentucky. Therefore, when referring to research participants the word “farmer” connotes “landowner” and vice versa.

Interview Instrument and Procedure

Before implementation, the interview schedule was pre-tested in order to insure that the interview instrument adequately addressed the research objectives. The interview schedule consisted of seven subject areas. These sections were Family Demography, Land Tenure, Farm Practice, Farm Equipment, Sources of Information, Farm & Fiscal Management, Land Loss & Impact, and Race & Racism.²

The first section asked questions about the participant’s age, county of residence and landownership, and marital status. The section on land tenure was designed to gain an understanding of how the participants acquired their land and how long they have owned their. The section on farm practice was designed to learn the type of farming that each farmer conducted and was followed by a category on farm equipment. Sources of Information questions sought to discover where each farmer got their farm related information. Farm and fiscal management inquired into loan usage and account management. Land loss category interrogated the factors, which the participants believed

² See Appendix.

contributed to the loss of farmland. Lastly, the section on race and racism questioned whether these constructs had an impact on land loss among each farmer. This category also looked into whether race and racism affected the farm operations of each farmer.

A pre-test of the interview schedule was conducted with the daughter of a participant in this study. Although she is not a farmer, the pre-test participant is from a rural family and is familiar with farm procedures, farm terminology, farm credit, and land loss issues that many black farmers face. Following the pre-test, any necessary corrections were made to the interview schedule, which was then administered to the research participants.

For reasons of confidentiality, each interview, interview schedule, and transcribed interview received a numerical code (i.e. Participant #1, #2, #3, etc.). Where the names of participants or other individuals were stated during the interview process, real names were omitted in the reporting documents. All forms relating to the interviews are in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the researcher. Electronic forms and recordings pertinent to this research remain locked in the interviewer's password-protection personal computer.

Before each interview, respondents were required to read and sign an information release form. The release form offered the researcher permission to audio-record the interview sessions and to use the recorded sessions for the purposes of this study. The researcher conducted the first two interviews in the homes of the respondents. Participants #3, #4, and #6 were interviewed at public restaurants at lunch hours. The fifth interview was held in an office at a farmer's off-farm job. The time it took to conduct each interview ranged from forty-five minutes to one hour in length.

Findings & Analysis

The findings of this research are organized around the research objectives and major themes arising from the data. The race-based theoretical frameworks in chapter two are used to analyze the findings and understand the extent to which race and racism have played a role in black farmers' land loss in Kentucky. It is also used to analyze the perceptions of black farmers regarding the impact of these factors on farm decline.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is its small sample size. Six farmers are not enough participants to generalize the findings of this research to Kentucky's black farmers. If provided additional time, the number of participants in this study would have increased. Another limitation to this work is that many of the participants resided and farmed in Eastern Kentucky counties. Time and other resources permitting, an expanded study would have included additional participants throughout Northern, Southern, and Western regions of Kentucky. If increased in number and across location the study would have increased in reliability. The final limitation is a result of the researcher's inability to obtain young black farmers to participate in this research. This limitation excludes vital experiences and perceptions from the research that would have potentially added breadth to this study. Regardless of the small sample size and the limited variations in regional geography and age of farmer, these six farmers provide an entry point for understanding the lives and perspectives of black farmers in Kentucky.

CHAPTER V

Findings & Analysis

The purpose of this research was to discover the extent to which race and/or racism had an impact on the loss of landownership among African American farmers in Kentucky. In order to address this objective two research questions were developed: (1) What are the social and economic experiences of black farmers in Kentucky, (2) What are the perceptions of black farmers regarding the factors that have contributed to the loss of landownership among black farmers?

Participants

Six farmers were interviewed for this study. Four of six participants were farming at the time of this study. The remaining two participants were retired. Participant ages were upwards of 40 years with the oldest participant being 80 years of age. The average age of the six participants was 58.5 years. Participants resided in Madison, Clark, Jefferson, Woodford, and Shelby counties. The counties in which participants owned land included Powell, Clark, Woodford, and Shelby (see Table 5.1).

Three farmers had a high school diploma. Two participants completed one year of college coursework, and one participant had a Doctorate degree. There were three married participants, two single participants, and one widow. In each case, the

spouses and/or the participant maintained off-farm employment, which contributed to their household income. The children of the participants were also employed; however, none worked in a farming industry. The son of one participant was a former tobacco farmer. He left the farming business after the nation-wide tobacco buyout. The Tobacco Transition Payment Program supported by the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004 removed the quota system of tobacco production that had been in place since the New Deal.¹

Table 5.1

Participants	Sex		Age	Residence	Education		Marital Status	Children
	M	F			H/S	Univ.		
Participant #1	+		76	Madison County	+	1 yr	Married	Yes
Participant #2		+	80	Woodford County	+	N/A	Widowed	Yes
Participant #3	+		69	Clark County	+	N/A	Married	Yes
Participant #4	+		45	Clark County	+	N/A	Married	Yes
Participant #5		+	>40yr	Jefferson County	+	PhD	Single	Yes
Participant #6	+		47	Shelby County	+	1 yr	Single	Yes

LEGION

- (+) Category is applicable to the participant
- (>) Indicates greater than
- (N/A) Category does not apply to participant
- (yr) Abbreviation of the word “year”
- (1 yr) Participant completed one year of college
- (PhD) Participant earned a Doctorate degree

Profile of Farm Operation

At the time of this study, all but two participants were farming. The farmers raised cattle, hogs, corn, hay, tobacco, and timber, respectively (see Table 5.2). Each participant was a part-time subsistence farmer. The farmers in this study obtained information

¹ *Tobacco transition payment program*. Retrieved, April, 26, 2010, from <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=toba&topic=landing> (2010, January).

related to farming practices, farm technology, and financial assistance from various sources. These sources included black and white farmers, television programs, Cooperative Extension Services (CES), Farm Service Agency County Committees, and a Farm Bureau Committee.

Table 5.2

Participants	Type of Farming	Tenure	County	Farm-ing	Sources of Information	Off-Farm Job
Participant #1	Cattle, Corn, Hay	Own: 180	Powell County	No	Farmers, CES, FSACC	Yes
Participant #2	Cattle, Corn, Tobacco, Hay	Own: 65	Woodford Cty.	No	Farmers, CES	Yes
Participant #3	Cattle, Corn, Hay	Own: 30 Rent: 40	Clark County	Yes	Farmers	Yes
Participant #4	Cattle, Corn Hay	Own: 180 Rent: 20	Clark County	Yes	Farmers	Yes
Participant #5	Timber	Own: 15	Powell County	Yes	Farmers, CES	Yes
Participant #6	Cattle, Hay	Own: 3 Rent: 40	Shelby County	Yes	Farmers, CES, FBB, FSACC	Yes

LEGION

(CES) Cooperative Extension Service

(FBB) Farm Bureau Board

(FSACC) Farm Service Agency County Committee

Profile of Landownership

All farmers were landowners. Four of six farmers inherited their farmland from a family member. The remaining two participants purchased their farmland. These farmers supported their purchases with the assistance of loans from local banks and federal financiers. Three of the four participants that are presently farming also rented farmland. These rented lands contributed to their present farm operations.

In regards to inheritance, four farmers had legal wills and one farmer had listed her offspring as the executor of her estate (see Table 5.3). These farmers planned to deed

land to their children. The one participant who had not created a legal will understood the importance of creating this document, but had not put forth the time to develop one.

Table 5.3

Participants	Acquisition of Land	Financer of Purchased Land	County	Generations of Ownership	Legal Will
Participant #1	Inherited/Family Purchase	Local Bank	Powell	Three Generations	Yes
Participant #2	Inherited /Self-Purchase	Federal Land Bank	Woodford	Three Generations	Yes
Participant #3	Inherited	N/A	Clark	Two Generations	Yes
Participant #4	Self-Purchased	Farm Service Agency	Clark	One Generation	Yes
Participant #5	Inherited/Family Purchase	Self	Powell	Three Generations	Yes
Participant #6	Self-Purchased	Local Bank	Shelby	One Generation	No

LEGION

(N/A) Category does not apply to participant

Factors Contributing to Land Loss

Research on black land loss presents two main arguments. The first position states that economies of scale is the most salient contributor to loss of landownership among black farmers. (Schweninger, 1989; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1982). However, statistical data illustrates that among black and white farmers there is a vast racial disparity in rate of land loss (Wood & Gilbert, 2000). This study proposed policy changes for returning African American rural landowners (who are not counted by the Census of Agriculture) to farming. Additional studies posit that racial discrimination is an additional inhibitor of land loss among black farmers (Pigford, et al., v. Glickman, 1997; Civil Rights Action Team, 1997).

All of the participants in this study reported that neither economies of scale or racism contributed to black land loss. The importance of landownership for black farmers

was recognized and racism was identified as a factor that had to be negotiated in order to function as a farmer and landowner. However, four response patterns did emerge from this study. These trends were in regards to land ownership, land tenure, land loss, and uninterest in farming and rural lifestyles/migrations to urban centers.

Land Ownership Patterns

All six participants owned rural property. In addition to owning property, three participants rented farmland. These additional landholdings were used to support present farming operations. Two farmers were first generation owners of their land, which they self-purchased. With the assistance of a loan from a local bank, one of these farmers purchased a small parcel of land with a house attached. The other farmer used funds from the Farm Service Agency to purchase his farmland.

Each of the farmers believed that owning farmland was important for African Americans for various reasons. Similar to prior studies, the farmers attributed landownership as providing African Americans with a sense of achievement, human dignity and pride, empowerment, and contributed to healthy lifestyles (Brown, Christy, & Gebremedhin, 1994; Groger, 1987; Marable, 1979; McGee & Boone, 1976; Pennick, Gray, & Thomas, 2009). For example, one farmer stated that owning property offered rural blacks opportunities to participate in their local government. In his opinion, farm committees were more open to electing landholders as committee members. This participant served three terms as a minority advisor to his county's Farm Service Agency County Committee.

Another farmer believed that owning land gave African Americans more control over their food sources, and had the potential to reduce one's reliance on manufactured foodstuffs. This participant is currently retired from farming; yet, she plants and manages a vegetable garden each spring. A separate participant reported that land ownership has economic, ecological, and sentimental value. When asked if she believed owning land to be important, the participant responded:

Yes, extremely so. Well, landownership in America is uh, an indicator of wealth. [Landowning is important] because they're not making anymore land, and because we're, as African Americans are being rapidly separated from landownership.

Participant #5, age 40+, timber farmer/university professor

Another farmer reported that landowning is important, because it imbues a sense of pride.

Ah lord yes! You know when you own property... it gives you a feeling of accomplishment. You know that's something that, it's kind of like an education; nobody can take it away from you. Property owners... when you own something verses renting, you know that that's yours, and it gives you a sense of pride. And, like I said again, accomplishment. There's no better feeling than that. You know can't nobody come on you're property and tell you, 'You got to get out.' 'Hold on! This is mine!' Just like getting your first car that you bought and paid for. You get that sense of pride.

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

Land Tenure Patterns

Four of six participants inherited farmland from a family member, their father. The longest tenure of inherited land was three generations, and the shortest tenure was one generation. On average, inherited land had been in the families of these six participants for at least two generations. The oldest track of land was purchased by the grandfather of one of the farmers during Reconstruction. Recalling the history of her parcel of land, this farmer stated:

When my... my grandparents came out of slavery they bought this particular farm for twenty-five

dollars cash in hand in 1870. Thirty-five [acres]. It was considered poor land, thin soil. It wasn't highly valued. So, they were able to get it for a low price.

Participant #5, age 40+, timber farmer/university professor

The ability of this participant's grandfather to purchase land rested, chiefly, upon the land's poor soil, his access to liquid capital, and the undesirability of the land to the white landowners. Another farmer, within the same county, traced his farmland to purchases made by his grandfather following Emancipation and was astonished that his ancestor was able to acquire such a large quantity of land considering the turbulent racial climate of the era. Raper (1936) argued the desirability of the land to white landowners was a key factor in their decision to sell property to blacks.

Succession through bloodline was not the only example of land tenure found from this research. Another method of land tenure reported was the purchase of land from a family member. Three farmers implemented this landholding practice. Primarily, these purchases were made to keep land within their families; however, they also increased each farmer's farm size. One participant bought land adjacent to his inherited property from an uncle. The other two participants purchased their additional land from siblings.

The farmers believed that it was important to keep landownership among African Americans, as a result, most of the respondents drafted a legal will or a legal document that would transfer their estate to their children. The sixth farmer, when asked why he had not drafted a legal will, reported that it was due to "stupidity." He was aware of the importance of drafting a legal will; however, he had not put forth the effort to create one. The participant intended to create a legal will in the near future and list his children the recipients of his estate.

Land Loss Patterns

Three farmers experienced loss of landownership, having sold their property for ecological reasons or as for needed income. For example, in one case a portion of a participant's land had laid adjacent to a natural gas plant for years. In the 1990's, the farmer discovered that waste from the plant had polluted this portion of his property. This area was used to graze his cattle. It was also, where his family planted their annual vegetable garden. During this time, the first wife of the participant discovered that she had developed cancer. Her doctors attributed her illness to the contaminated food she and her family had consumed for years. Following a civil suit, the chemical plant and the participant settled out of court for an undisclosed amount of money. In addition, instead of attempting to absolve the land of its pollutants, the natural gas plant offered to purchase the land from the participant. Subsequently, the farmer sold the contaminated section of his land to the company. Some years later, the farmer's wife lost her battle with cancer.

The other way in which this farmer lost ownership of land was voluntary. On two separate occasions the participant sold plots of land to white homesteaders. Although the farmer stated that he would have preferred to sell the land to an African American, there were not any blacks in his county attempting to purchase land from him.

In two separate instances the inability of siblings to accumulate the revenue to own and maintain family farmland resulted in black land loss. The first of these two participants attempted to acquire land owned by his grandfather and his grandfather's siblings. He recalled that the female siblings were in support of his desire to acquire the land; however, his grandfather feared that a family dispute would ensue if he were

allowed to acquire all of the family property. This farmer recalled a conversation with his grandfather.

Well, I had a grandfather. My grandfather, [and his siblings] it was eight of them. They had a little 'ole farm up there round bout (inaudible). To make a long story short, I went to my grandfather, which was the oldest one, and asked him bout me going and buying, taking over (inaudible). And um he say, 'well, I don't know. There's more of 'em [siblings] in there besides me.' And, I say, 'I understand you got about three more sisters and one more brother.' And I went to them, and the sisters all agreed to it except him and the other brother.

Grandfather say, 'Well, If I let you go, then some of the others, some of the other grand kids are [going to] wanna come.' I tell him like this. I say, 'Granddad,' I say, 'I come to you first. Everybody was in agreeance with it except you.' I say, 'Well, let me do go. If I don't make it, then it's still yours. Take it back.' And, I hurry up and went down there to the bank in town and talk to [the] loan officer down there about buying the machinery [to farm the land]. They gone have a big auction up there and they gone sale my uncles stuff, and I was gone buy it. And, when they told me no they weren't go do it [give him the loan] that killed it [his attempt to acquire his grandfather's property]. He lived to be a hundred and four. When they sold that [land] and split the money up between them, they didn't get much more than eight thousand [dollars].

Participant #4, age 45, cattle/grain farmer

Without the capitol to purchase his uncle's equipment in order to farm his grandfather's land, this farmer was not able to support his argument to receive his family's property. Consequently, each of his elders sold their stake in the property and received no more than \$8,000 a piece for their land.

The second farmer also recalled the sale of farmland in his family's history. He remembers that there were landowners on either side (mother/father) of the family. His father's family discovered natural gas on their land in Southern Kentucky, which helped them retain their property. His mother's family, located in Central Kentucky, was not as fortunate.

There was land in Madcalf County, that uh, my [father's] family owned. Um, my family owned a farm down there and luckily my grandfather, they discovered natural gas on his property so his family were fortunate enough to have the finances and the revenue, there was no problem with them keeping the farm. My mom's family, they owned a big farm in Shelby County. When she was little itty-bitty and all her brothers were young, apparently, my grandfather on her side of the family died and she [his grandmother] had to bring the [inaudible] to Shelbyville. So, they had to up and go. But, you know... I think about it sometimes, because years later, I've always wanted a farm. You know? But I wasn't like all the little other kids round here that I grew up with. Their families had farms... So, you know you start out by working for somebody else. [You] take jobs here and there, you know, to get by. I've been

wanting my own place, hell, for years!

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

This farmer's mother and her male siblings were not old enough to assume the responsibilities of their family's large farm. As a result, his grandmother chose to sell the land and move to a city where she and her children would receive the support of family members. The affects of this land sale have carried over into the participant's adulthood and effected his participation in farming. Unlike many farmers, his family did not have the farmland for him to inherit. Therefore, he began his farm career working for white landowners, building his farm operation piece-by-piece. The loss of his family's farmland and his personal experiences as a farm laborer has influenced his perspective on how he feels about the possibility of his children becoming farmers.

...I'd be really thrilled. Because [of] what I've gone through to get where I am. To being able to help them, that would already give them the leg up... Cause I started out milking [cows] for a guy when I was in the eighth grade and now as far as having property I don't, I lease a farm from this guy's dad, but... all my equipment I have is paid for. So, they'll have the leg up.

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

These experiences show that although racism has not had a direct impact on the loss of landownership among these three farmers, the intersectionality of race and income may have had an impact. Land loss affected these farmers physically, emotionally, economically, and historically.

Lack of Interest among Black Heirs

Most of the participants in this study attributed the current loss of black-owned farmland to a lack of interest among young black heirs in farming and living rural lifestyles. Migration from rural to urban areas was identified as having an impact on loss

of landownership. For one farmer, the lack of interest in farming among his children is so serious that he has doubts about whether he will pass his family land to them. When asked if he has a legal will, the participant affirmed and included:

If I don't change my mind before then. You know why? I just imagine they'd sale it. I'd rather sale it, [and] just leave whatever I get out of it to them. They can divide the money up, cause they ain't going back out there. I know they ain't going back out there.

They don't think [a]bout how hard daddy worked to try and hold on to it. See that's the reason I went back. I went back, cause well, daddy worked all his life to try and have a little piece of land. And I say, 'Imma hold on to this.' I just bought my bothers and sisters out.

Participant #3, age 69, cattle farmer

Some farmers offered their perspectives on why black heirs are uninterested in farming. One participant cited the alienation of black youth from this land-based culture as well as, historical markers as causes of the lack of interest in farming among black youth.

They don't see it as profitable. They don't see it as relevant or necessary. I think it's historic, umm, connotation, having African Americans and farming. The image of African Americans and the land are not positives. You know you think of slavery. You think of sharecropping. You think of poverty and need. You don't see it as a positive.

Participant #5, age 40+, timber farmer/university professor

According, to this participant the images that young black heirs have of farming and rural lifestyles are not positive. These images include the horrific enslavement of African Americans, the exploitation of free blacks under the sharecropping system, and the idea that farmers do not make money and are impoverished. These images encourage these young descendents to seek out other opportunities.

Another farmer supports this viewpoint and agrees that the evasion of black youth from farming and rural living is based on both psychological and economical reasons. He

lays part of this blame upon the parents of rural black youth, for not explaining the importance of landowning and self-sufficiency. He states:

Well, the mentality, for one thang, of our youth. The way I see it [is] their attention [span has] dropped. They just live for the day. They're not really thinking about where their food comes from, and I have to fault that on the parents... Well, that and they look at it [farming], and there's no money to be made. There's no living. It's not that they wouldn't want to do it... And you can't blame 'em. But, at the same time there's some out there that I know want to go into it. But, yet being able to... If a young man had to go borrow the money, buy the land, buy the stock, buy the seed, he'd never get back up. He gone be in the hole. He won't break even.

Participant #4, age 45, cattle/grain farmer

Though this farmer believes that there is a lack of interest among many black youth, he is hopeful and knowledgeable of the fact that some black youth are interested in farming; however, they face many barriers to fulfilling their dream of farming. Without inheriting land and equipment from family operations, this farmer believes that there is no way that a young black farmer would join the industry without accumulating an insurmountable amount of debt. Based on the experiences and perspective of this farmer, even if black youth desired to farm, the massive financial hurdles towards becoming a farmer, if one does not already have property and equipment, would keep them away from the farming industry.

The farmer's statements present an interesting perspective on the lack of interest of black youth in farming, and that is the impact and responsibility that African American parents have to impart an appreciation for their land that extends beyond mere economics. In some cases, black parents actively encouraged their youth to leave the farming and rural lifestyles, believing it was their responsibility to ensure that their offspring made a better life for themselves. For many African Americans a better life equaled an education and/or a job far from one's agricultural roots.

...one of the things people always said 'I want my kids to do better than me' so naturally you don't

want your kid doing it. You push them towards education and gettin' [inaudible]. Um, and you know those family farms that the blacks did own if you survived, not like my mom, that where her mother had to sell as an early age. If those kids were grown and their father still owned the farm they had already put in their kids to get off the farm, get the education, get you [a] good, decent education, because there's no money in it. [farming] And, I think those are some of the areas which are good points. They're really good points... I just don't think you know, we got away from it and we weren't ever looking back.

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

It may seem that today's land loss issues are but the repercussions of the advice of elderly blacks who desired for their children to leave the land, not because they wanted black youth to disconnect from the land. These elderly attempted to disconnect the youth from the discrimination, the hardships, and difficulties that came with being a black farmer.

Economies of Scale

Economies of scale did not contribute to land loss, not was it a factor for these six participants. This argument did not relate to the participants, because none of the farmers in this study were commercial farmers. Each participant was a part-time subsistence farmer. All six farmers and/or their spouses maintained off-farm employment throughout their tenure as farmers and relied upon off-farm income for the financial needs of their households. In addition to these realities, all but one participant believed it was not possible to support their family solely from farm labor unless the farmer operated large landholdings.

Though economies of scale did not apply to any of the farmers in this study, there was evidence that size of farm operation and type of farming did present obstacles to production and revenue for some farmers in this study. One participant spoke about the difficulty of producing and processing livestock due to a regulatory change in the slaughter of animals.

We used to kill hogs. Raise our own hogs and kill 'em. We got to the place now it's got too expensive to get 'em killed anymore. Course,...years ago they used to do it as a group. Hog killin' time several of 'em getting together and kill 'em, say on yo' place or his place. Well they got away from that. And they got it to the place now you have to take 'em to the slaughter house. And it' gotten so, this hog I had processed cost me \$209 dollars. And, that wasn't countin' the feed I put in it!

Participant #4, age 45, cattle/grain farmer

The rising cost of financial inputs due to a change in commercial processing procedures caused this small-scale farmer to cease his hog operation, because financial inputs began to outnumber his returns. Rather, nostalgically, he recalled a time when farmers would slaughter and cure their own animals during "hog killin' time;" however those methods are now outdated. During another exchange, the same participant discussed the trouble that his inability to produce significant financial returns from his part-time farm operation presents to payment of farm-related debts. This participant did not inherit farmland and had to acquire a farm loan from the Farm Service Agency to purchase his property, a decision he know regrets.

Nah, I purchased mine [farmland]. And I think I made the wrong decision for doing that... I can stay on it [his land] forty years. I'll be seventy years old and still wouldn't have it paid for just running cattle. Even if I put hogs back on it. But they din killed da tobacco. Tobacco was a cash crop in this area.

Participant #4, age 45, cattle/grain farmer

The small size of this farmer's farm operations along governmental policy that deregulated the growth of tobacco greatly affects his financial returns. This financial barrier also deepens his indebtedness.

There were other opinions regarding the profitability of farming. One for participants strongly believed that it farmers could survive financially from with assistance from governmental subsidies.

Oh yes! Oh yeah! You know especially, because like you said there're government subsidies and thangs that an individuals can get uh, and that help. You got disaster programs, uh, and all kinds of programs that's out there for the farmer. We had the ice storm. There's government money that can help offset your expenses from the storm debris removal. And there's all kinds of programs out there...

Just like, for example, dealing with the cattle. You have programs that will help you, uh, fifty-fifty matching if you want to put water on your property... they're wanting them out of those ponds now. They're putting those, uh, using city water. And the water, money to help you do those. There's money to help you put up your fencing. There's money to help you put up buildings on your property. There's money here in the county for dead animal removal if you have an animal that dies. So, there's all kinds of [money] out there. These grain farmers, there are disaster programs, uh if you have a drought, that will help offset your losses. There are disaster programs that help offset if you have floods. Um, there are, you know, there just so many programs out there.

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

Though this participant was adamant about the strengths of government subsidies, as he referenced successful farms in his county whose proprietors were full-time farmers, these individuals were managed large seven-figure grain operations. Therefore, even with governmental aid, it would appear, based upon the experiences of this participant that full-time farmers are commercial farmers.

The Impact of Racism on Farm Operations

Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) separate racism into two forms -- group and institutional. In this research, there were instances of institutional racism within private and governmental sectors; however, group racism as it is described by the racial literature (overt and violent) was not identified (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). If present, group racism was intertwined with institutional discrimination.

All but one participant believed that they had experienced racism during their tenure as farmers. Of those who encountered racism, none of the five participants stated that their encounters contributed to land loss on their farms. Nor did any of the farmers believe that their experiences with racism had any effect on their farm operations. Regardless of the claims, there was evidence that five of the six participants adopted

strategies to minimize the risks posed towards their farm operations by racism within their counties.

One participant recalled an experience he had with a white cattle auctioneer who attempted to purchase his cattle herd.

A friend of mine, he worked at the stockyards in Louisville. Me and my brother had five black Angus steers. Beautiful. The guy came out to my house to look at 'em. He offered me a price. I rejected em, because I knew it was cheaper than what the market price was. Rejected the price. Loaded 'em on the truck, sent them to his stock yards. I even got less for 'em than what he offered me. So, and this guy worked there, so I knew it had something to do with it. And I never forget that.

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

To counter-act the racism he experienced at this stockyard, the participant began shipping his cattle to a stockyard in Lexington. Another way in which this farmer negotiated racism was the addition of a white intermediary into his farm operation. This participant felt that the use of a white partner was so important for black farmers that he advised a black farmer and friend in his county to do the same.

... this is one of the things I tell John [black farmer], and John laughs at me, tells me I'm crazy. But I say, when I go to price a piece of equipment... [if] a black guy walks in, [and] a white guy walks in, the white guy is always gonna git treated. He's gonna git treated like royalty. Now, they're [store employees] gonna take people. You can be there first, but they're gonna take people in front of you. I say [to John], 'But, you know I got an ace in the hole.' He goes, 'What's that?' I say, 'The [white] guy that [I am] working with, he don't got a pot to piss in.' But he'll pull in and I say, 'I'm looking for this.' Well hell, he'll go from here to God's creation pricing equipment! He gets the best price.

... you know what's funny? When we go to pay for it, I go buy it with him. And they walk in, 'Well, how you doing Mr. Connelly [white friend]?' 'Oh, I'm fine.' He say, 'This is Henry [Participant #6].' 'Well, how you doing Henry?' 'I'm fine.' He goes, 'We're here to pick up such and such.' He say, 'It's for him [Participant #6]. He gone pay for it.' And that head snaps and I go over there and right that check. But the next time I go back, 'Well, Henry how you doing?! Can I do anything for you today?!' But, I say, 'John that's what you need.' He say, 'What?' I say, 'You need a white front man.' It's true. Cause, they're gonna deal with him different.

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

The participant believes that white privilege of this business partner influences whether he receives fair pricing from equipment dealers. Without this "white front man," the participant believes that he would be treated unfairly by the white attendants of his local

participant believes that he would be treated unfairly by the white attendants of his local farm equipment dealer. This farmer also uses his partner's white privilege to sell his cattle herd at a stockyard in Lexington to receive fair prices. Originally, he took his herd to this auction house to avoid the racism he faced at a stockyard in Louisville. However, it he met with the same treatment at the Lexington stockyard.

Other institutional barriers have confronted this farmer. He recalls his first attempt to acquire start-up capital from his local Farm Service Agency (FSA) to purchase farm equipment.

Uh, I first started out here at the Farm Service Agency. I took one of those uh, disadvantaged farmer loans. You see I was on the Farm Service Committee. But, even before I was on the committee I went out there and got the loan for my first piece of equipment. And that's what I used to buy my tractor from.

So, uh, you know the funny thing about that? I was watching TV one night and I saw them talking bout this money for disadvantaged farmers. It was a [Kentucky Education Television] KET special. And it was actually talking bout black farmers and the decline of black farmers. And this was, God, years ago. And they talked bout the USDA in Washington, D.C. So, I went to work. I was in the police department, and I got the phone and I called. [I] got the number to the USDA in Washington, D.C. I called Washington, D.C., and I asked the question about the loans, so they referred me back [to his local FSA].

So, the funny thing about this, I had gone out there [FSA] before cause I heard the people [other farmers] borrowing money. So, I went out there before and uh, I had asked a question. And the guy just gave me a stack of papers, 'Here you go.' And that was it. So, after I saw this show and called Washington, D.C., and they told me where to go, I went back out there and I said uh, 'I just got off the phone with the guys from Washington, D.C., and I just want to come in here and check on these loans for disadvantaged farmers.' And when I said I got off the phone with Washington, D.C., 'Well, come on in. Let me help you fill out these papers.'

Participant #6, age 47, cattle farmer/property value administrator

Redressing the poor treatment he received on his first visit to the FSA office, this farmer contacted the federal office of the FSA in Washington, D.C. Once he made his local county office aware of his conversation with the national office, his treatment by the local FSA changed. According to this farmer, these experiences did not affect him or his farm operation negatively. In fact, in his opinion, his encounters with racism made him a better

farmer and business man, because they trained him to adapt his farm operations to avoid the pitfalls presented by racism within his county.

Racism at cattle auctions was a re-occurring theme within this study. A participant in a separate county states, that the social and economic exclusion he faces at cattle auctions is are racially motivated.

How [would] you feel being a black man having as good a cattle as everybody else. But, you settin' there. 'Mr. Wright! This Mr. Wright cattle! The price almost double. These a couple of Mr. Johnson ones. He's there in Clark County.' (Participant looks head side to side mimicking the action of the white buyers when his cattle comes to auction.) You set there. What can you do? They can do it so slick. They find fault. 'Ah, it got short legs! Hair ain't right on that thang!... They stand there hee-hawing around. They be laughing and joking.

Participant #3, age 69, cattle farmer

Encounters with institutionalized racial bias was customary among the farming operations of most these six participants. When asked how well her CES serviced her farm, one farmer noted, "They ain't do all that great." This same farmer informed the researcher that she and her late husband were involved with the civil suit *Pigford et al., v. Glickman*, which alleged that subsidy programs under the leadership of the USDA used racial bias in their treatment of African American farmers (*Pigford et al., v. Glickman*, 1997). This participant and her husband received a sum of \$50, 000 for the discrimination they endured from their county's CES. Like other participants, this farmer believed that the racism she experienced had no effect on her farming practices. Yet, she and her late husband's enrollment within this civil suit are indications of attempts to negotiate and combat institutionalized racism. By combating this racial bias, the participants are also acknowledging that in some manner, the discrimination has a negative impact on their lives.

Repeatedly, across various counties, racial discrimination emerged in various ways. Regarding the prices she receives for her timber, one participant stated:

I think it [racism] affects the price that I can get for my product, because you're dealing with, again, local politics. And, I think that the price that someone would be willing to give me is not the same that they would given, say, a white timber farmer. And, because I'm a woman I think there's a problem too. Because, they automatically assume you don't know the value of what you have. And, so it just requires a lot more study. You know I have to do a lot more calling around and comparison shopping before I actually sold timber.

Participant #5, age 40+, timber farmer/university professor

This farmer also believes that racism and local politics within her county were contributors to the illicit and excessive trespassing occurring on her farmland.

Uh, well for instance where I live is... a lot of land that is attached to the Daniel Boone forest and... we have a no trespassing sign, because we have a lot of wild game in the woods and people, even though it's fenced and it's marked, we have a great many people who come there to hunt. And, I think there's just an expectation that people, that because you're black people have a right to what you have. You know? Like you don't have right to tell people 'Don't trespass.' or 'This is my property.' It's almost, people, it seems to generate resentment when you say you're a [black] property owner or this is my property, because the land is very beautiful.

Participant #5, age 40+, timber farmer/university professor

In addition, to the offenses she faces from white residents who trespass unto her property, this farmer believes that her race also elicits a lack of response from her local law enforcement agency to her trespassing complaints. However, she laments that if the she or another African American were to trespass on the property of a white landowner to hunt, the law enforcement and the landowner would not tolerate the offense, and that the punishment would be swift and resolute.

The position of five of the six participant's who acknowledged racism as insiders within their communities has prompted the development of coping mechanisms to the institutionalized racism within their rural communities. Thus, when asked if the racism they faced affected them or their farming practices, each responded, no. However, the law suits, the use of white intermediary, trespass signs and complaints to local

enforcement, and contacting the national office of the FSA all clearly demonstrate that (a) The participants not only experienced racial discrimination, but that they and/or their farm operations were negatively impacted by these instances. (b) These coping mechanisms also illustrate that these participants instigated methods to negotiate and combat the racial discrimination they faced in order to minimize its impact on their farm practices.

These findings are extremely valuable, because they are proof of the agency within these five participants. The following section will conclude this exploratory study and provide avenues for future research. Furthermore, these findings illustrate that there are a myriad of factors that contribute to loss of landownership among these farmers, along with their perspective regarding other African American farmers. In addition, this research has shown that the dominant argument regarding economies of scale was not a factor in land loss for either of these participants. Furthermore, the farmers reported that racial discrimination did not have a direct impact on land loss. However, economic factors, due to farm size and type of farming along with racial discrimination did have an impact on the farm operations of the farmers.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

The purpose of study was to access the experiences and perspectives of black farmers in Kentucky concerning factors that contribute to the loss of landownership among this group. Previous research on African Americans and land loss rely heavily upon two arguments: (a) Economies of scale due to size and type of farming and access to capital and equipment facilitates black land loss, and (b) Exclusion from federal, state, and county programs, as a result of racial discrimination contributes to land loss black farmers. Previous studies incorporate both quantitative and qualitative techniques; however, few studies have taken into account the lived experiences and viewpoints of black farmers regarding this issue.

Six black farmers were questioned using a semi-structured interview instrument. Responses from these interviews indicated that racial discrimination was not believed to be a contributor to loss of farmland for these participants. On the other hand, economies of scale, a variable associated with full-time farmers, did not apply to these participants, because each respondent was a part-time subsistence farmer and relied on income from off-farm employment.

None of the participants associated loss of landownership among themselves or other African American farmers in their county with racial discrimination – group or

institutional. However, from descriptions of their experiences the farmers identified examples where institutional discrimination from federal, state, and county agencies did affect their farm operations and access to financial loans, information, and other resources. While farmers negotiated these forms of racism in order to maintain their farm operations and keep their land, the ability to negotiate group and institutional racism is something that the literature on the impact of racism on land loss does not account for.

Interesting findings also emerged on landownership patterns and patterns of land tenure. Each participant owned rural property and reported that landowning is important for African Americans. These responses were similar to previous studies that found African Americans, across generations, acknowledge the importance of owning rural land (McGee & Boone, 1976; Pennick, Gray, & Thomas, 2009). Owning rural property, for this group of black farmers, provided a sense of pride and accomplishment, as well as, the political empowerment that comes with being a property owner.

Cognizant of the importance of black landownership, each farmer took measures to protect this commodity. Most farmers inherited farmland from their fathers and had plans to transfer ownership of their property to their progeny through the creation of legal documents. Another method of land tenure among these farmers was the purchase of farmland from family members, so as to keep land within the family.

Lastly, though the respondents did not directly link racism to land loss, they did identify other factors, such as, real estate opportunities and lack of interest by young black heirs as contributing factors to land loss. According to the majority of participants, black youth were disconnected from the land and were more interested in living in urban centers. In their opinions, the lack of interest of these youth in living in rural areas and

earning a living from farming is a major contributor to the lack of continuance of blacks in farming, as well as, the decreasing ownership of farmland.

Though informative, these findings can not be generalized. A sample size of six participants is far too small to extrapolate to Kentucky, let alone black farmers throughout the United States. The only control for this study was age of participants (18 years) and race (African Americans). Another limitation to this study was the lack of variation in geographical regions. Participants owned property in Eastern Kentucky and in Central Kentucky. A greater representation within and across geographic regions would greatly strengthen the study's findings.

Implication for future research

The fact that neither economics of scale nor racism were identified as contributing to land loss by participants of this study indicates that an expanded study of black farmers in Kentucky is needed. An increase in the sample size of these participants would assist in developing generalizable findings and will help conclude whether or not economies of scale and/or racism are factors of land loss for black farmers throughout Kentucky. Moreover, the role of farmers in negotiating group and institutional racism and the impact of this act in the tenure of black farmers and ownership of black farmland in Kentucky and in the greater U.S., in general, requires further investigation. Also, the belief of the majority of participants that land loss results from a lack of interest among young rural blacks requires that further study is directed towards understanding the experiences and perspectives of rural black youth regarding farming and black land loss. Lastly, the

unwillingness of black farmers to participate in a study on land loss remains questionable as an area for future research.

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APPENDIX

Interview Instrument

FAMILY DEMOGRAPHY

1. Name _____ Date _____
2. Age _____
3. County of Residence _____
4. County of Landownership _____
4. Sex _____
5. What's your highest year of school completed?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
(primary) (high school) (college/university) (master's) (doctorate)
6. Marital Status

 ___ Married ___ Single ___ Widowed
 ___ Separated ___ Divorced
7. If married, does your wife work on the farm or have an off-farm job?

8. What's the highest year of school she completed?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
(primary) (high school) (college/university) (master's) (doctorate)
9. Do you have any children? Yes ___ No ___
 If yes, how many?

10. Do your children work on a farm or have off-farm employment?

 If employed on-farm, do they own or rent land? _____

11. How do you feel about your children farming or the possibility of them becoming a farmer?

12. Why do you think black youth are not farming?

Transition: In this next section I will ask you a few questions regarding your land.

LAND TENURE

1. Do you rent or own your land?

2. How many acres of land do you rent or own?

3. How did you acquire this land? (self-purchased, family-owned, etc.)

4. If self-purchased, how did you finance this purchase?

5. If family-owned, how many generations has your family had this land?

6. Are there any mineral deposits in your land (coal, oil, natural gas)?

Yes ___ No ___

7. Do you own the rights to these minerals? Yes ___ No ___

8. Do you have a will in place that will give legal ownership of your land to a family member?

Yes ___ No ___

If no, why do you not have a will?

9. Do you feel that owning land is important for African Americans?

Yes ___ No ___

If yes, why?

In no, why not?

Transition: The following questions are designed to help me understand how you use your land.

FARM PRACTICE (EMPLOYMENT)

1. Are you currently farming on your land? Yes ___ No ___
2. What commodities do you grow on the land (vegetables, livestock, trees, etc)?
 - a. Vegetables ___ b. Livestock ___ c. Timber ___
 - d. Cash Crop ___ d. Other ___
3. How many acres of this land are you using for each commodity?
 - a. Vegetables ___ b. Livestock ___ c. Timber ___
 - b. Cash Crop ___ d. Other ___
4. Do you practice crop rotation each season? Yes ___ No ___
5. Do you practice intercropping each season? Yes ___ No ___
6. Do you save seed stock from previous years for future planting or do you buy new seeds each year?
 Yes ___ No ___
7. If you purchase seeds each year, why?

8. Do you use fertilizers on your farm? Yes ___ No ___
9. How much would you estimate you spend in fertilizer?

10. Do you use herbicides or pesticides on your farm? Yes ___ No ___
11. How much would you estimate you spend in these chemicals?
12. How do you market the commodities from your farm?
 - a. Auction ___ b. Farmers' Market ___ c. Trade/Barter ___
 - d. Other ___
13. Do you assist other farmers with work on their land? Yes ___ No ___
 If yes, what type of assistance?

14. Do you have off-farm employment? Yes ___ No ___
 If yes, what is it?

15. Do you believe it is possible for a farmer to support a family solely on farm income?

Yes ___ No ___

Why/Why not?

Transition: Now I would like to ask a few questions about the types of farm implements you use?

FARM EQUIPMENT

1. What kinds of farm equipment do you use on your land?
a. Tractors ___ b. Plows ___ c. Horse/Mule ___ d. Combines ___
e. Other ___

2. Do you rent or own this equipment?
-

3. How did you acquire this equipment?
-

4. Do you borrow farm equipment from other farmers? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, what type of equipment?
-

5. Would you like to have additional farm equipment? Yes ___ No ___
If so, what kind?
-

6. What has been your main barrier in getting more equipment?
-

Transition: Now I will ask you some questions about where you get agricultural information.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. Is there a cooperative extension agent for your county? Yes ___ No ___
If no, what is the nearest extension agent nearby?
-

2. What type of relationship do you have with your local extension agent?
-

3. Have you received any agricultural training or financial counseling from your extension agent/service?
Yes ___ No ___

4. How do you learn of the services offered by the cooperative extension service or the USDA?

5. How often does your extension agent visit your farm?

6. How effective is your extension agent in assisting black farmers?

7. Do you believe that your extension agent/service treats black farmers differently than white farmers? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, how so?

8. In your opinion, how can your extension service help black farmers better?

9. Are you a member of a farm cooperative or farm association? \
Yes ___ No ___
If yes, which association and why?

10. How would you describe your relationship with this cooperative or association?

11. How long have you been a member of this association?

12. In your opinion, how helpful is this association in informing you of matters that effect farmers?

13. Do you share information with other farmers? Yes ___ No ___
If so, what type?

Transition: Here I will ask you some questions about the financial and management aspects of your farm

FARM & FISCAL MANAGEMENT

1. Is your farm incorporated into a recognized business? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, for how long and for what reason?

2. Do you have a production contract with a major food manufacturer (i.e. Tyson, etc.)?
If so, with which company and for how long?

(If no, skip questions 3-6)
3. What commodity are you contracted to produce?

4. How did you learn about contract work?

5. In your opinion, do you make a sufficient income contracting your labor?
Yes ___ No ___
6. Is contract farming common among black farmers? Yes ___ No ___
Why/why not?

7. Who manages the finances in your family (i.e. farm purchases, home purchases, record keeping, bill payment)?

8. About what percentage of your household income comes from farming?

9. About how much do you think you spend in a full season (planting and harvesting)?

10. Have you ever received a farm loan? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, from whom?
a. Local Bank ___ b. Federal Agency (i.e. FSA, FmHA, etc.) ___
c. Farm Cooperative ___ d. Credit Union ___ e. Other ___
11. How was the loan used?

12. In your opinion, do you often rely on credit to make purchases for your farm?
Yes ___ No ___

Transition: Land loss seems to be a big issue with black farmer. I would like to ask you some questions regarding this subject.

LAND LOSS & IMPACT

1. Are you aware that land loss is an issue for black farmers? Yes ___ No ___
2. Why do think black farmers are losing their farmland?
a. Racism ___ b. Foreclosure ___ c. Poor Farm Practices ___
d. Unpaid Loans ___ e. Disinterested Youth ___ f. Selling of Land ___
3. Do you know of any black farm families who have lost farmland?
Yes ___ No ___
If yes, why? Tax/Partition Sale ___ Foreclosure ___ Eminent Domain ___
Other ___

4. How has the loss of black farmland affected your community?

5. In your opinion, how can the loss of black-owned farmland be stopped?

Transition: Lastly, I would like to ask you a few questions about the effect race has on black farmers?

RACE

1. Do you think you have ever been discriminated against as a farmer, because of your race?
Yes ___ No ___
If yes, how so? _____
2. Do you think that being discriminated against affected your success as a farmer?
Yes ___ No ___
If yes, how so? _____
3. What type of relationship do you have with white farmers in your county?

4. Are there any questions that I did not ask that you feel are important to this discussion?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Willie Jamaal Wright
Department of Pan-African Studies, University of Louisville
444 Strickler Hall, Louisville, KY
email: willie_wright@hotmail.com cell: 832-274-8101

EDUCATION:

M.A., Pan-African Studies
University of Louisville – Coursework Completed May 2010
Anticipated Completion Date: May 2010 GPA: 3.84

B.A., Speech-Language Pathology
Concentration: Speech & Language Disorders
University of Houston – August 2007

INTERNATIONAL STUDY:

University of the West Indies - St. Augustine
St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago
Summer IV (2009)
Concentration: History and Culture
of Trinidad and Tobago

University of Ghana - Legon
Ghana, West Africa
Summer IV (2007)
Concentration: History and Culture of Ghana

L'Université Catholique de l'Ouest
Angers, France
Summer I (2007)
Concentration: Language and Culture of France

AWARDS & HONORS:

Academic Scholarship and Assistantship

- Pan-African Studies Department, Graduate Assistantship (Fall 2008 – Spring 2010)

- Kimberly McKnight Memorial Award (2009)
- Trinidad & Tobago Summer Study Scholarship (2009)
- National Council for Black Studies Conference Grant (2009)
- Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholarship (2007)
- Texas Association of Developing Colleges Scholarship (2007)
- Model African Union Conference Grant (2006)

Special Honors and Recognition

- Department of Arts & Sciences Dean's List, University of Louisville (2010)

CONFERENCES & PRESENTATIONS:

Conference Presentations

- National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), Atlanta, Georgia (March 2009)
"Re-establishing an Agent African American Land-based Culture"
- Graduate Student Research Symposium, University of Louisville (March 2009)
"Re-establishing an Agent African American Land-based Culture"
- Model African Union Conference, Washington, D.C. (2006) –
Model Ambassador to Cameroon

Panelist Presentations

- "Black Farmers and Land Loss in Kentucky" The Saturday Academy (April 2010)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Weed & Seed Program (January 2010)

- Assist in the presentation of the fundamentals of qualitative research City Council members and other city employees

Presbyterian Community Center, Assistant Garden Instructor (May 2009-July 2009)

- Assistant in the development of a classroom garden curriculum suitable for primary and secondary
- Assistant garden instructor in teaching of African American primary and secondary-aged children garden techniques
- Encourage healthy food choices among African American children
- Promote Smoketown Farmer's Market to residents of the Smoketown neighborhood

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

August 2009 - May 2010

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Pan-African Studies Department

University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky

- Conduct historical research to assist in the develop of presentations conducted by the Underground Railroad Institute (UGRRI)
- Provide research assistance for pension records of Kentucky-born soldiers of the 54th and 55th Massachusetts
- Provide research assistance for National Endowment for the Humanities grant
- Create and lead classroom discussions regarding Abolitionist movement in America
- Assist in the formation and administration of examinations
- Grade examinations and papers

August 2008 - May 2010

Graduate Research Assistant

Pan-African Studies Department

University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky

- Facilitate the coordination, production, and documentation of the Jan R. Carew memoir series
- Proctor undergraduate examinations
- Record and dictate poems, novels, and correspondences by Jan R. Carew
- Record interviews and conversations between Jan R. Carew and visitors
- Compile all audio recordings unto a CD-R for storage into the Jan R. Carew archives

February 2008 - July 2008

Farm Intern

Los Poblanos Organics Farm

Albuquerque, New Mexico

- Assist in the cultivation, planting, and harvesting of 10 acres of farmland
- Weed and fertilize crops using organic and sustainable methods
- Responsible for the safe operation of mechanized farm equipment (i.e. tractors, attachments, and trucks)
- Responsible for the health and maintenance of livestock (i.e. chickens and hogs)
- Clean and package produce in preparation of weekly Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- Manage at least one Farmer's Markets weekly

September 2007 - January 2008
Direct Care Counselor

Waldo Burton Memorial Boy's Home
New Orleans, Louisiana

- Counsel and support adolescent and teenage residents
- Oversee daily activities to include, but not limited to: morning chores, meal times, school attendance, study period compliance, and evening routines
- Provide behavior management for all residents
- Chaperon residents during off-sight activities
- Conduct weekly staff meetings to discuss the each child's socio-educational improvement

October 2003 - September 2007
Office Manager

YMCA Success by Six Program
Houston, Texas

- Schedule and coordinate Parent Education, Domestic Violence, and Substance Abuse classes
- Refer participants to agencies for additional support
- Manage fiscal affairs using (i.e. budget, petty cash, etc.)
- Record and report number of clients to the United Way and the YMCA of Greater Houston
- Create and file confidential forms regarding program participants
- Use of peripheral devices (i.e. fax, copier, telephone)
- Vendor at health and community fairs to promote interagency support and community involvement
- Attend quarterly staff development trainings