

# Uprooting Weeds: Exploring the Links Between Structural Inequalities and Stressors Among Black Women Farmers in the United States

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## Background

Black women in American agriculture have a complex history, from being valuable but mistreated labor during slavery to facing ongoing challenges today. Despite a peak in their numbers in 1920, there are now just about 41,000 black farmers, with 12,000 being black women. This decline reflects broader trends in farming. Black women farmers face barriers like land access, credit, and discrimination, leading to lower socioeconomic mobility and health outcomes. Mental health risks are high, with agriculture being the 9th highest industry for suicide rates. More research on their experiences and well-being is crucial for equity in farming. There's a lack of peer-reviewed studies on this in the Southern U.S., making qualitative research essential to understanding their daily challenges and motivations.

## Methods

Literature Review

Interviews with 10 Black Women Farmers

Coding and Analyzing for Themes

## Results

Theme	Quote(s)
Concurrence of Biases and Discrimination	<i>"My fellow farmers, they don't see women as equals. I have a real problem with that"</i>
Resource and Support Scarcity in Economic Hardship	<i>"In certain areas or counties like resource offices will reach out to people and they won't do that for the black farmers or like they're more selective about who they reach out to like ohh this is the deadline for a grant."</i>
Balancing Strength and Self-Doubt	<i>"I'm a strong black woman. I just, I just don't like it"</i>
Creating Community Liberation	<i>"It (farming) is not just for healthy food in and of itself. But it's about a healthy food system, you know. And so in that whole system of who gets to grow the food and make up that, you know a thriving, living off of it, you know, who gets to access and eat the food, and where is it going to and what communities in which communities. So it's part of them that bigger system. That it's not just like an individual decision for our economic prosperity"</i>

## Research Agenda

To analyze the possible stressors that are prominent for black women farmers in correlation to current structural inequalities, this research study aims to address the following questions:

- How does the history of discriminatory lending practices affect black farmers' access to the food markets?

*Ultimately the goal of this study is to raise awareness of the challenges facing black women farmers in the agriculture sector.*

Figure#1 Code Map- Themes and Subthemes

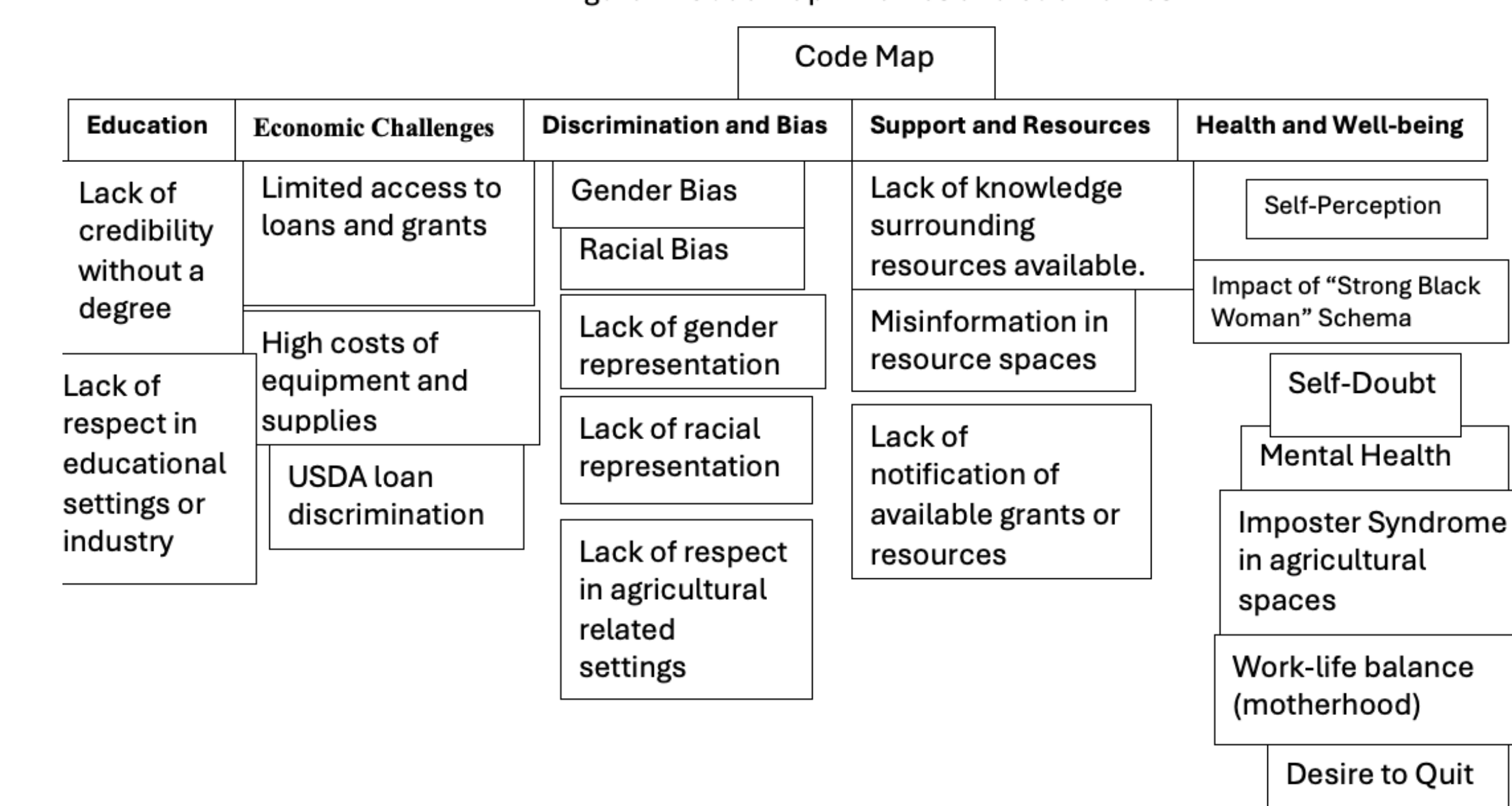


Table 1. Anonymized Characteristics of 10 Black Women Farmers

Label	Geographic Location	Farming Operation Type	Years of Experience
Farmer A	South Carolina Midland Region	Small-scale Organic	14-16 years
Farmer B	North Carolina Eastern Region	Small Scale Family Farm	4 years
Farmer C	North Carolina Southwest Region	Small Scale Family Farm	30+ years
Farmer D	Virginia Northern Region	Small Scale Family Farm	11 years
Farmer E	Virginia Central Region	Small Scale Organic	20 years
Farmer F	North Carolina Eastern Region	Small Scale Family Farm	30+ years
Farmer G	North Carolina South Easter Region	Small Scale Family Farm	10 years
Farmer H	North Carolina South Easter Region	Small Scale Family Farm	30+ years
Farmer I	North Carolina Northeastern Region	Small Scale Family Farm	4-5 years
Farmer J	North Carolina South Easter Region	Small Scale Family Farm	2- 3 years

## Findings

- Lack of representation poses a bigger social justice issue of why farming isn't accessible for all communities
- Persistent challenges expressed included limited support, and capital, and knowledge access persist as key barriers for Black women farmers.
- An attack on representation is an attack on sustainability of the food system
- Black women face stressors of self doubt, discrimination, and economic hardship that are exacerbated by lack of support within the agricultural system
- Participants' varied backgrounds and motivations contribute to a nuanced understanding of their resilience and challenges.

