

Mentorship Matters

A case study of a Pembroke
farming cooperative

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Introduction:

- Why we researched:
 - Research proposal project that has morphed into something much bigger.
 - *When Helping Hurts* – Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert
 - Firm belief in community sustainability
 - Desired to research the impact of mentorship and relationships.
- What is a Farming Cooperative?
 - Farmers working together to support their own community.
 - Improving farming practices through education and trainings.
 - Building a relationship not a business



What is Pembroke?

- Small rural town located 30 minutes outside of Kankakee
- Population of 2,208
- Median age: 37.8
- Unemployment rate: 11.4%
- 80% of the population is African American
- Nearest school is 20 minute drive



Income

\$13,874

Per capita income

about half the amount in Kankakee County: \$25,111

about two-fifths of the amount in Illinois: \$31,502

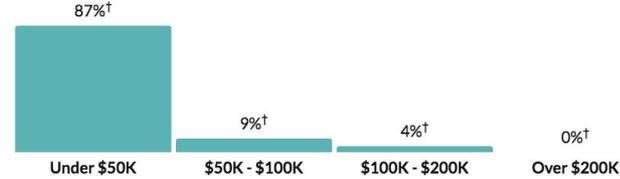
\$26,687

Median household income

about half the amount in Kankakee County: \$54,697

about half the amount in Illinois: \$59,196

Household income



[Show data / Embed](#)

Poverty

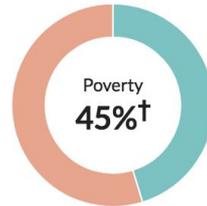
31.5%

Persons below poverty line

about double the rate in Kankakee County: 15.7%

more than double the rate in Illinois: 14%

Children (Under 18)



■ Poverty
■ Non-poverty

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Seniors (65 and over)



■ Poverty
■ Non-poverty

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Clientele & History

- Pembroke sold to freed slaves by white people.
- In the early 1980's banks gave out loans with certain criteria.
- However, the bank would eventually repossess the farmland when farmers went bankrupt or died in debt.
- Eleven families are involved in the Farming Cooperative.



Agency Context

Pembroke Farming Family Association

- Began in 1992 by Johari Cole-Kweli and local leaders.
- **Mission:** to build a community-based food system that would facilitate progress in community development by using sustainable farming practices.
- **Vision:** to unite farming families in the community and become a key component of the emerging local food systems developing across the state of Illinois.



Problem:

- New objective of building a food processing plant in Pembroke
 - However, there is hesitation to move forward because of the cultural beliefs about safety in small-scale farming.
- Farmers unwilling to engage due to fear of bankruptcy
- Failure of the farming cooperative would have long term detrimental effects on the community, as learned helplessness would be reinforced.



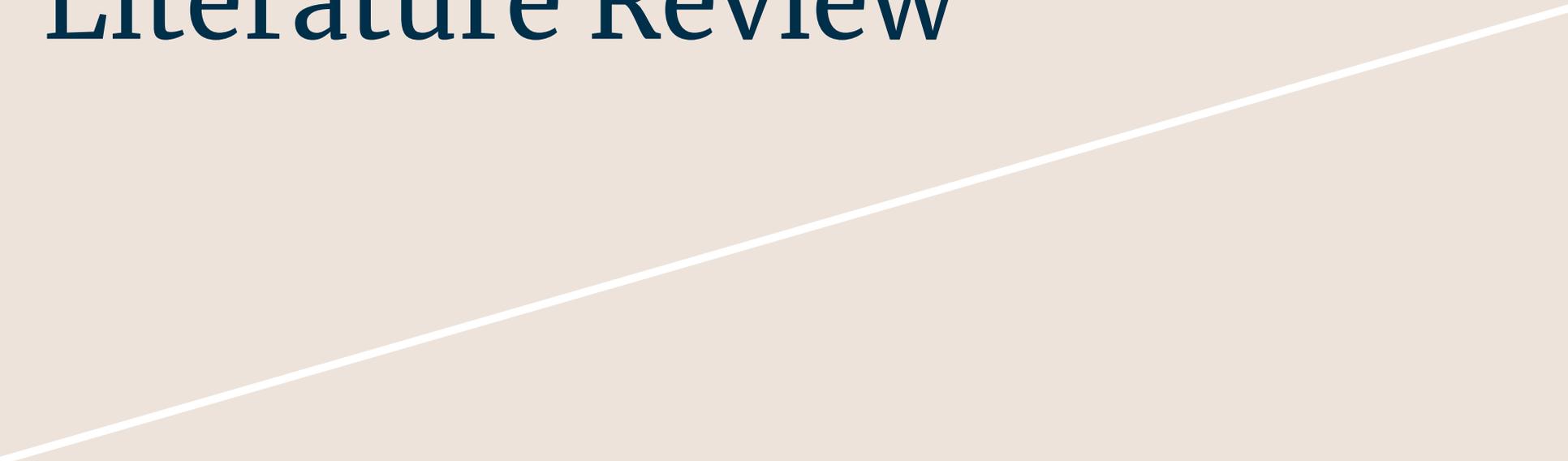
Research Question:

What are evidence based practices of successful farming cooperative models in similarly impoverished communities, which can be applied to the Pembroke farmsteads?

Independent variable: evidence based practice models of successful farming cooperatives

Dependent variable: economic development away from poverty in the community

Literature Review



Overview of Results

- Effective executive leadership
- Knowledge of diverse farming methods
- Awareness of governmental grants and wealth redistribution.
- Intergenerational replacement rates
- And, utilization of available community resources, such grain elevators

Literature Review

Nugussee, W.Z., Van Huylbroek, G., & Buysse, J. (2013). Determinants of rural people to join cooperatives in Northern Ethiopia. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 40(12), 1094-1107. doi:10.1108/IJSE-07-2012-0138

- Varied reasons for farming cooperatives
- Pembroke Farming Family Association

Satgar, V. (2011). Challenging the globalized agro-food complex: Farming cooperatives and the emerging solidarity economy alternative in South Africa. *The Journal of Labor and Society*, 14, 177-190. doi:

10.1111/j.1743-4580.2011.00331.x

- Study of farming cooperatives in impoverished, rural communities in South Africa
- Rate of successful new farming cooperatives in rural, impoverished communities is currently 12%
- Two Types of Ownership:
 - Worker-Producer Cooperatives
 - Worker-Owned Cooperatives

Literature Review Cont.

Tadele, G., & Gella, A.A. (2012). “A last resort and often not an option at all”: Farming and young people in Ethiopia, *IDS Bulletin*, 43(6), 33-43. doi:10.1111/j.1759-5436.2012.00377.x

- Farming and Education
- Strategies and initiatives

Vibert, E. (2016). Gender, resilience and resistance: South Africa's Hleketani community garden. *Journal Of Contemporary African*

Studies, 34(2), 252-267doi:10.1080/02589001.2016.1202508

- Grassroots women’s cooperative vegetable farm
- Hleketani Community Garden
- Value of collaboration and resilience was among the most significant characteristics needed in the cooperative members
- Core Concept: Training younger generations

Main Theme:

“Knowledge is Power”

- Evidence-based practice
- Education and awareness increases likelihood of success
- Mentorship as an effective intervention



Research Design

- Data Collection: seasonal pre/post-tests
- Limitations
 - Willingness to participate
 - Small sample size
- Ethical considerations: Cultural competence



(National Family Farm, 2011)

Future Implications:

Think Bigger

- Implementation of research
 - VanDrunen Farms
 - Green Tech Touch
 - Community Development Council
- Get involved!
 - Start with building relationships
 - Resource management
 - Time, Leadership , Skills
 - Knowledge is Power

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Questions?

