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Chicago Prize Hoops: Guiding At-Risk Youth to Build Stronger Communities

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Imagine growing up in a neighborhood where an invite to any local event forced you consider which route to take in order to avoid gang territories and any potential violent conflict. Imagine not being able to go to your neighborhood’s local park because gang members regularly hang out there and your parents fear they might harm you or befriend you. Now, imagine being so familiar with the sound of gunshots at night near your home that it does not even startle you when you hear it. How would those kinds of experiences shape you? Would you be in the position you are now?

This is the reality that many Chicagoans face day in and day out. These problems are particularly prevalent in low-income, predominately minority neighborhoods, and they serve only to impede the growth of these neighborhoods’ youth and ultimately the communities in which they live. The concept of Community Economic Development (CED) and the various organizations that advance CED, including nonprofit organizations, seek to correct these ills and to improve these communities. Chicago Prize Hoops (CPH), a nonprofit organization based in Pilsen and cofounded by the authors, implements a dual program to help mitigate some of the risk factors associated with youth crime and violence and poor academic performance. However, despite the efforts of nonprofit organizations such as CPH and other organizations that advance CED, there are many policy issues that continue to impede the development of low-income communities.
This article discusses CPH's opportunity for impact by addressing the following topics:

1. The CED movement;
2. The advancement of CED by organizations such as CPH; and
3. Policy issues relating to the risk factors that CPH seeks to address, including those risk factors relating to youth crime and violence and poor academic performance.

AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CPH falls under the umbrella of CED. CED is a term that does not have a set definition. It is a strategy to improve low-income communities through a variety of economic activities and programs, such as the development of affordable housing, job training and placement, and small business development. There are many forms of CED, but the common elements consist of the development of housing, jobs or business opportunities for low-income people in which a nonprofit organization plays a lead role and has accountability to the communities they serve.¹

The concept of CED has been influenced by the likes of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, and the CED movement has gone through different stages over the last few decades. Support for the current movement has seen a rise as support for traditional welfare and public housing programs have decreased. Further, the current movement is fueled by a couple trends: the decentralization of public administration and the development of local markets along paths that provide the community with desirable benefits.²

² Id. at 2.
A Brief History of Community Economic Development

The underpinnings of the current CED movement can be traced as far back as Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. Although the two late 19th and 20th century leaders of the African American community disagreed on strategies to achieve political and economic progress for newly freed African-American slaves, they both advocated the importance of black business creation and expansion. Among other methods, Washington sought black advancement through a rigorous curriculum of vocational skills training in trades that he felt were most likely to help African Americans generate wealth. DuBois believed in a traditional educational curriculum, which he thought would shape "exceptional" African Americans into leaders the black community needed. Later in his career, DuBois advocated for economic nationalist principles, including black economic independence and black entrepreneurship. Business development in black communities was a key concern for these figures and other African American leaders (such as Marcus Garvey), and to this day activists and scholars advocate these economic nationalist principles.

Many of the key issues that the current CED movement seeks to address took shape after World War II from 1945 to 1964. The tale we often hear about this period is one of economic prosperity, higher car and home ownership and the expansion of highways and suburbs. However, the rapid movement of people, jobs and infrastructure to the suburbs and the disinvestment in inner-city neighborhoods contributed to severe economic and racial disparities in income, wealth, opportunity and health. Some of the specific social inequities that resulted around the country, and which remain prevalent today, include increased

4 Id.
urban poverty, inadequate housing, reduction in employment opportunities and loss of locally owned businesses.⁵

These economic and racial disparities are a direct result of government policies and programs. For instance, federal housing policy has historically focused on single-family homes in the suburbs while redlining minority households out of opportunities and failing to provide sufficient affordable housing in urban neighborhoods. Another example is transportation policy, which has focused on freeways and car-related development rather than mass urban transportation. These represent a couple examples of a "process and pattern that has isolated low-income communities and excluded residents from the opportunities, services, and resources within the rest of the region."⁶

The Civil Rights Movement, which was born during the post-war period, also helped to shape the current CED movement. Civil Rights leaders championed economic nationalism like Washington and DuBois. However, these leaders also emphasized legal equality and political power for African Americans to combat economic and racial disparities. For instance, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. presided over the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which launched the Poor People's Movement in 1968. Dr. King demanded Congress to pass an economic bill of rights, which included a commitment to full employment, decent pay and more low-income housing.⁷ This focus on economic issues was highlighted by other civil rights organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

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⁶ Id. at 317.

⁷ Roger A. Clay, Jr. is the President of the Insight Center for Community Economic Development in Oakland, California. Susan R. Jones is a Professor of Clinical Law and the Director of the Small Business and Community Economic Development Clinic at the Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics of the George Washington University Law School.
As a result of the efforts of Civil Rights leaders, the federal government created social policy programs in the 1950s and 1960s with different approaches than those of earlier decades. Roger A. Clay, Jr. and Susan R. Jones explained, “While urban renewal initiatives had taken place in earlier decades, the 1950s and 1960s ushered in specific policy frameworks targeted at geographically defined communities, aimed to redress concentrated poverty and urban disinvestment.”8 In 1964, the federal government passed the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) and the Community Action Program (CAP). CAP delegated authority to local community organizations to conduct education, job training, housing, health, social services and economic development programs. CAP also sought to attract maximum community participation so that community residents would have greater control over antipoverty strategies.9 The common element of federal government legislation during this period was the delegation of authority from the federal government to the states or local community organizations. This era gave rise to government programs such as the 1966 Model Cities Program and the Community Development Block Grant Program. This era also gave rise to important CED activities such as the Community Development Corporation (“CDC”), which seeks to create jobs in low-income communities.10 The following era, from the late 1970s to 1990s, saw a big shift.

The shift to market-based CED started in the 1980s under the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. The two administrations emphasized cutting back government services, which resulted in significant cutbacks to government-sponsored antipoverty programs and other welfare programs such as food stamps, housing assistance and Medicaid. The Reagan Administration was committed to providing benefits to corporations and upper-income Americans with the belief that

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8 Roger A. Clay, Jr. & Susan R. Jones, supra note 3, at 6.
9 Id. at 7.
10 Id. at 7-8.
these benefits would help consumers by lowering the costs of goods and by boosting the demand for employees. In practice, these policies led to greater income disparities. However, this focus on market-based principles was also embraced by the presidents that followed, namely Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The idea of shaping market forces to create positive, community-wide change has carried over to the current CED movement. The movement grew from the idea that markets in low-income communities function poorly and will only secure long-term benefits through economic stimulation. The current CED movement is concerned with community building as well as improving community life beyond the purely economic. The movement has responded to urban poverty through activities such as job training programs, small business support and building and managing affordable housing.

CED THROUGH THE LENS OF A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, CHICAGO PRIZE HOOPS

The essence of our work with Chicago Prize Hoops ("CPH") is building social capital in the communities we serve. Social capital, in this context, means helping to bring community members together to work more effectively towards shared objectives. While we serve but a limited number of community

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11 Id. at 9.
12 Id. at 10.
13 Id. at 11.
14 Smith, supra note 5, at 320-21.
15 Dana A. Thompson, The Role of Nonprofits in CED, in BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR ADVOCATES, LAWYERS, AND POLICYMAKERS 75 (Roger A. Clay, Jr. and Susan R. Jones, eds., 2009).
16 See id. at 74-75 (explaining, "Social capital explains how individuals, entities, neighborhoods, and other associations of people use social contacts to attain positive results." She adds, "[C]ommunity-based organizations are ideal institutions to build social capital in underserved communities because
members, we strive to create positive bonds among our participants—who are youth from the communities—and their families with whom we interact regularly. The culture of positive peer pressure that is developed on the basketball court and in the classroom helps to create trust and build strong connections that extend beyond the gym and classroom. We hope to shape these bonds into positive action by involving participants’ families more in their children’s academic, social and emotional development. Building trust and strong connections are also important due to the heightened risk that these kids, who live in gang-infested neighborhoods, might otherwise see one another as foe rather than friend at some point in the future.

CPH is but one actor in the far larger CED movement. An organization such as CPH certainly will not turn these communities’ misfortunes around on its own, but it does play a role in reaching their desired destinations. We complement other CED activities such as workforce development and small business development, which are more beneficial to a community that has a high percentage of residents with a basic education.\(^{17}\) In addition to helping our participants gain a basic education, we are encouraging them to reach higher education through a variety of methods such as college visits and assistance with the high school and college admissions process. Further, we push our participants to consider a range of professions and trades by bringing in speakers from different walks of life and, in our upcoming session, we have other activities planned such as career exploration workshops.

of these organizations’ unique understanding of these communities’ attributes”\(^{\text{”)}}\).


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The Role of Nonprofit Organizations in CED

“My brother is involved in a gang. He has been shot at our front door. There are always shootings in the neighborhood. I wake up in the middle of night hearing a few bullets go off and I just go back to sleep. It’s normal. It’s not shocking either, I’m used to hearing bullets go off at night.” – Ms. Ceja

Ms. Ceja is a long time resident of the Pilsen neighborhood in Chicago. She emigrated from Mexico with her family when she was in third grade. Her two older brothers joined a local gang during high school. Their involvement created safety risks for themselves and their families, prompting Ms. Ceja to avoid certain groups of people and areas in the neighborhood. In her opinion, joining a gang is a decision influenced by friends and lack of parental oversight. She recalls her brothers joining gangs because their childhood friends joined gangs first. The friends who were given more freedom by their parents or who were not closely monitored by their parents were typically the ones who eventually joined gangs, including her brothers. Ms. Ceja, who now has a teenage son herself, supervises him closely: she does not let him walk around in the neighborhood or go to a friend’s house alone, he is not allowed to play at the neighborhood park, and he cannot walk to school. She knows too much about the neighborhood to let him walk anywhere by himself.

The high crime rate in most predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods throughout the country is not news to anyone. Research shows half of all gang members are of Hispanic or Latino

18 Interview with Janet Ceja, Member of Chicago Prize Hoops in Illinois (Jan. 21, 2014) (Ms. Ceja’s son is an active member of Chicago Prize Hoops. She is life-long resident of Pilsen, and has experienced first-hand the violence plaguing her neighborhood and the social effects of living in a low-income neighborhood).
There are countless theories as to the causes or factors that contribute to the high crime rates in these neighborhoods including racial demographics, low socioeconomic status, low education and residential instability, to list a few. On the same note, there are countless theories as to what some of the solutions are, namely promoting higher education, drawing awareness to drug and gang violence, and bringing neighbors together to work towards a common good, also known as collective efficacy.

However, the tougher questions are those asking how to implement those ideas into the complexities and variations of real life. How do you promote higher education at home (where it matters most)? How do you bring untrusting and fearful neighbors together to increase collective efficacy and address head-on the dangers of gang violence? How do schools, parents and the community at large address drug transactions in their neighborhoods that are operated by gangs and likely controlled by the Mexican or Colombian cartels?

While CPH as an organization does not propose to offer the ultimate answers to these questions, it does work towards reme-

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20 Robert J. Sampson et. al. Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy, 277 SCIENCE 918 (1997) (defining collective efficacy as social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene and regulate its members according to desired common values, to realize collective-as opposed to forced- goals. A multilevel analyses of 343 Chicago neighborhoods demonstrated that collective efficacy is positively associated with neighborhood reliability and negatively associated with variations in neighborhood violence).

21 Jason McGahan Sinaloa Cartel Loves Selling Drugs in Chicago, CHI. MAGAZINE (Sept. 2013), available at http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/October-2013/Sinaloa-Cartel/index.php?cparticle=1&siarticle=0#artanc (listing several factors why Chicago is the “home port” of the Mexican drug cartels, including Chicago’s large Hispanic immigrant population. The Chicago neighborhoods of Pilsen and Little Village, which are more than 80% Hispanic, are the axis drug distributions in Chicago).
dying these issues by targeting at-risk youth. Community or non-profit organizations are able to implement possible solutions to the low-education and high-crime rates that plague these communities. For example, CPH emphasizes academic development and higher education in an attempt to ameliorate the current situation for at-risk youths. Similar community organizations that specifically target at-risk youth have the ability to make significant changes to crime-ridden neighborhoods by facilitating after-school activities, offering drug abuse education and helping parents monitor their academic performance, among other key strategies.

Historically, the criminal justice system and schools lead the charge to help at-risk youth, but they cannot bear the burden alone. The criminal justice system is not working effectively for Hispanic youth.22 Similarly, the public education system cannot bear the burden of addressing these issues plaguing at-risk youth and are failing as the primary institutions offering gang-prevention and intervention programs. While schools offer gang resistance education and training, drug abuse resistance education, gang prevention or intervention through targeted outreach, afterschool programs and zero-tolerance policies, the resources are scarce. Therefore the impact is limited as minimal resources strain the number, availability and quality of after-school programs. As such, nonprofits and community organizations need to fill in the gaps that the public education and criminal justice system seek to narrow.

Nonprofit and community organizations can reach a large percentage of youth and families across school district lines and into areas where after-school programs are unavailable. Re-

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22 ILL. CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY RESEARCH & ANALYSIS UNIT, JUVENILE RECIDIVISM IN ILLINOIS: EXPLORING YOUTH RE-ARREST AND RE-INCARCERATION (2012) available at http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/ResearchReports/IDJJ_ReCIDivism_Delinquents_082012.pdf_reports/idj_recidivism_delinquents_082012.pdf (Hispanic juvenile delinquents are nearly twice as likely as whites to be re-arrested within three years).
search has shown that what students do with their time after school is directly linked with their academic achievement and can influence their success.\textsuperscript{23} Community or nonprofit organizations can implement principles or lessons that are taught to students during school outside of school boundaries such as anti-gang involvement, prevention of drug use and academic development. They can provide youth with academic, social and emotional support through various workshops and activities. For example, CPH implements workshops that help students with homework, high school applications and curriculum and college preparation.

Crime-ridden, Hispanic neighborhoods would greatly benefit from the creation of nonprofit or other community organizations; specifically, from organizations that target academic development for at-risk children, promote parent involvement in their children’s lives and encourage collective efficacy as it relates to supervising children and maintaining public order. As explained below, by emphasizing academic development and parent involvement, children will be guided away from gang violence and steered towards higher education. Therefore, nonprofit and community organizations should emphasize academic development and parent involvement in order to be effective in these neighborhoods.

\textit{The Historical and Present-Day Issues of Latino Academic Development}

“My parents encouraged me to go to school as a child, but they never mentioned going to a university.” – Ms. Ceja

The education crisis facing Hispanics on a national scale cannot be underestimated, especially because education levels, socioeconomic levels and crime rates are intertwined. For example, in 1997 and again in 2007, Hispanic youth had high school dropout rates of 25% and 21%, respectively, which was more than any other racial group in the United States.24 In 2007, the dropout rate for Hispanics born outside the United States was 34%, which was more than the 11% dropout rate for Hispanics born in the United States.25

From a historical standpoint, the underrepresentation of Latino youth in school achievement such as high school and college graduation rates are a reflection of the social, economic and political barriers Latino students had to face in the past in the United States. For example, in the Southwest and Midwestern regions, Mexican American children were discriminated outright and segregated as they were forced into “Mexican” classrooms or schools as a result of color of law (mere appearance of the law) or custom during the early 1900’s.26 Mexican American children were not only segregated in some elementary schools, but they were also barred from attending predominantly white high schools.27 While parents made successful challenges to evince these practices via protests, public demands and lawsuits, schools used the “special language needs” of Spanish-speaking children as a pretext for continued segregation in elementary schools.28

The practices of excluding children into Mexican schools and prohibiting their admittance into certain high schools prevented

24 Id. at 94.
25 Id. at 98.
28 Id. at 312.
many Mexican American students from pursuing higher education. For example, by the 1920's, only 1% of undergraduates in Texas universities were of Mexican descent.\textsuperscript{29} In fact, for most Mexican American students during the 1930's, eighth grade was the highest level reached due to segregation, racism and a political economy that was based on cheap agricultural labor of Mexicans.\textsuperscript{30} By the 1950's, the number of Latinos enrolled in college steadily increased as Mexican American veterans used the GI bill to attend college; however, discriminatory practices against Mexican American veterans continued to limit their presence in higher education institutions as Latinos comprised fewer than 6% of first-year college students in the Southwest.\textsuperscript{31}

In addition to the discriminatory practices, the inability to afford higher education also hindered many Latino students from pursuing higher education during the mid-century. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Higher Education Act, which provided federal financial assistance for higher education to low-income students. The measure was a significant step towards higher education for Latino students. In fact, while President Johnson signed the Act, he was quoted as saying, "I shall never forget the faces of the boys and girls in that little Welhausen Mexican School, and I remember even yet the pain of realizing and knowing then that college was closed to practically every one of those children because they were too poor."\textsuperscript{32} Unfortunately, the resulting increase of the Latino population in higher education stemming from the Higher Education Act took a step backwards in the 1980's. During this time, the number of Latino youth admitted into college remained disproportionately smaller compared to white or African American youth, partly

\textsuperscript{29} Id. at 315.
\textsuperscript{30} See Ruben Donato, The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans During the Civil Rights Era (1997).
\textsuperscript{32} Id. at 481
due to severe tax cuts and reduced support for student grants under the Ronald Reagan Administration.\textsuperscript{33}

Presently, Latino students continue to experience several forms of educational and political backlash in the local, state and federal levels. One instance is the English-only movement in which numerous school districts and states call for the prohibition of bilingual education programs, which will prevent a smooth transition for Spanish-speaking children into the English-only curriculum. Recently, Arizona was the scene of a second instance of educational backlash for Mexican American students. The Arizona state legislature passed a law banning the Mexican American Studies Program in 2010, despite student protests and evidence demonstrating that the ethnic studies program increased high school graduation rates and was positively associated with high student achievement.\textsuperscript{34} A lawsuit ensued challenging the law on constitutional grounds as a violation of students’ freedom of speech rights. In 2013, the law was declared constitutional by a federal district judge, despite the judge’s suspicion that “the Latino population was improperly targeted.”\textsuperscript{35}

At the federal level, the stalemate of immigration reform and Congress’ failure to pass the Development, Relief, and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act since 2001 represents a series of educational barriers for undocumented Latino students. The federal DREAM Act would defer deportation proceedings to undocumented minors who immigrated to the country under the age of 16 and would allow them to enroll in college or enlist in the military and obtain a pathway to permanent residency.

\textsuperscript{33} MacDonald, supra note 28 at 320.


Fortunately, as of 2012, 13 states, including Illinois, have passed their own forms of the DREAM Act in which a common feature of the Acts allows undocumented minors to pay in-state tuition versus international student tuition.36

The educational and political setbacks of Latino students and the low education levels for the Latino population are particularly problematic because education levels are largely associated with future economic development and crime involvement. According to the United States Census, during the years 2007 through 2011, the Hispanic population had a poverty rate of roughly 23%, which was about nine percentage points higher than the overall U.S. rate.37 Emphasizing higher education in today's youth and ensuring successful completion will directly impact and lower future poverty rates.

Higher education levels largely determine "personal success and well-being in the labor market, social and family life, personal physical and mental health and civic participation."38 Further, higher education levels will also decrease future gang involvement and high crime rates.39 Research demonstrates that future gang members perform poorly in elementary school and generally have low levels of commitment and involvement in

36 MacDonald, supra note 28 at 321.
39 Lance Lochner & Enrico Moretti The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports, 94 The American Economic Review 155 (2004) (conducted a study concluding that schooling significantly reduces criminal activity; specifically, a one year increase in the average years of schooling completed reduces violent crime by almost 30%, motor vehicle theft by 20%, arson by 13%, and burglary and larceny by about 6%).
In other words, students who attend school regularly and graduate from high school are much less likely to become involved in violence. Therefore, significant focus must be placed on academic development.

Furthermore, parental involvement in children’s education is vital for academic success. According to the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, children who are “parented appropriately are more likely to graduate from high school—which drastically reduces their chances of being involved in violence—and are less likely to be incarcerated.”

CED organizations must particularly emphasize the importance of parental involvement in the children’s education to Spanish-speaking parents who also have low levels of education. Both the language barrier and low education level presents several challenges for schools, parents and children alike.

Low education levels pose significant obstacles in the quality and degree of parental involvement in children’s academic development. Studies draw a strong correlation between parents’ education levels and their children’s educational experience, educational attainment and academic achievement. The problems that many parents with low education face are best articulated by Ms. Ceja. She stated, “My husband does not help the kids with their homework because he speaks very little English and his highest education is sixth grade. He also doesn’t communicate with the teachers or the school because he speaks very little English.”

Parents with low levels of education coupled with language barriers have a difficult time helping their children with their homework and are less aware of the expectations students must meet in order to advance academically. The language barrier is a significant obstacle to effective communication between parents

Howell, supra note 20.

NAT’L FORUM ON YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION, CITY OF CHICAGO YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN (2012).

AUD & KEWALRAMANI, supra note 24.
and schools. Due to the fact that Spanish-speaking parents do not understand English or speak very little English, they are vulnerable to alienation from the schools and are not as involved in their child’s education. The lack of communication between parents and teachers prevents them from effectively assessing a child’s academic needs and ensuring that the child is given proper academic guidance, both at home and school. As Ms. Ceja explained, the language barrier prevents Spanish-speaking parents from providing assistance with their child’s homework. As such, children with Spanish-speaking parents face the daunting task of completing their homework by themselves without further assistance outside of classroom lessons.

The communication gap must be narrowed, as the disadvantage it imposes on children is tremendous. Schools should send correspondence to parents with important information about their child’s academic progress in Spanish or have Spanish-speaking staff available. Studies have suggested that when school administrators, teachers and counselors strive to communicate with Latino families, Spanish-speaking families are more likely to become involved with the school.43

Nonprofits and community organizations are ideal institutions to improve the various issues that Hispanic parents and children must overcome with respect to academic development and minimal parental involvement. Organizations that offer tutoring services and instill helpful study habits provide major contributions towards enhancing children’s academic development. For instance, research shows that completion of homework has a positive effect on academic achievement, especially with high school students.44 Moreover, providing homework help to children with

Spanish-speaking parents assist parents who are unable to help their children because of the language barrier.

In addition to improving academic development, organizations can prepare both students and parents to plan for higher education. In 2010, 87% of Hispanics believe it is extremely important to have a college degree, and 94% expect their own children to go to college.45 While cultural recognition of the importance of higher education is present, only 13% of Hispanics have a college degree in the United States.46

Further, organizations can help lessen the risk factors that prevent youth from pursuing higher education by providing the necessary resources to plan for college admissions. For example, organizations can introduce students to the idea of higher education during middle school in order to prepare a high school curriculum that places them on a path to college such as taking advanced placement courses. Similarly, community or nonprofit organizations can hold informative sessions that explain to parents the importance of a strong academic curriculum and grades in high school for college admissions and scholarship purposes. In addition, the organizations can assist students with college and scholarship applications as well as educate both students and parents with the different options to finance college tuition.

In reflecting on the high value of education among Hispanic families, Ms. Ceja explained a common theme that is present in many Hispanic households. She commented, “When it comes to college, I feel unprepared and uninformed about the college process for my children. If there were workshops offered that provided guidance for the college admissions process, we would definitely do whatever we can to attend those workshops.” Therefore community organizations and nonprofits should place the value in higher education that is present in the Hispanic

46 Id. at 11, 13.
community into a plan of action that makes higher education a reality. Nonprofit organizations have the ability to change the mindset from higher education as an obstacle that should or possibly could be achieved to a plan that is expected and will be achieved.

Community and nonprofit organizations can also facilitate communication between children, parents and school faculty. Organizations can provide workshops to help parents communicate with children who are exhibiting delinquent behaviors at home and school. In addition, community and nonprofit organizations must foster communications between parents and schools, especially with parents who are immigrants. Organizations can communicate with parents and teachers in order to bridge the gap and language barriers. Due to the fact that language barriers hinder access to education, civic engagement and communication with schools, organizations can help by providing workshops to Spanish-speaking parents to improve English proficiency. While schools found in Hispanic neighborhoods are starting to staff their faculty with Spanish-speaking teachers and administrators, this only solves a temporary problem while the children are enrolled in that particular school. The parents must be fully prepared and informed to be involved with their children’s college admissions process.

Case in Point: Chicago Prize Hoops

CPH is a newly formed nonprofit organization located in the Chicago neighborhood of Pilsen. CPH provides a unique, dual program to its participants: an academic development program and a basketball-training program. The mission of CPH is to provide at-risk male youth who live in crime-ridden neighborhoods with the necessary resources to obtain a college education. Generally speaking, youths possess certain risk factors when social forces push youth towards gangs or crime involve-
ment.47 Some of the risk factors that predict juvenile delinquency and gang membership include: individual risk factors such as antisocial behavior or alcohol and drug abuse; family risk factors such as weaknesses in family structure or financial stress; school risk factors such as poor school performance or school climate; peer group risk factors such as association with juvenile delinquents; and community risk factors such as high-crime and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.48 CPH seeks to help its members successfully overcome these risk factors that are presented to them on an individual, familial and social standpoint.

The academic program aims to develop children’s academic skills through mentorship, tutoring services and help with homework from college students and graduate students. The program also features a “seed series” which consists of bringing in speakers from a variety of fields, including police officers, former DEA agents, nutritionists, lawyers and radio DJs. Rightfully titled, the seed series seeks to plant a seed of encouragement and motivation in the minds of the participants. CPH invites the speakers to discuss different topics geared towards improving quality of life and education by promoting eating healthy, staying away from gangs, abstaining from drug use and the importance of higher education.

The academic program prepares both students and parents to plan for financing college tuition and for the college application process. The basketball program implements important life values through intense physical training that is transferrable to every aspect of the youth’s life. Not only are participants taught how to master the fundamentals of basketball, CPH staff also imparts the values of teamwork, individual and group accountability, patience, overcoming loss, leadership and dedication. Ms. Ceja enrolled her son in CPH because she knew he would re-
ceive help with his homework and would be physically active by playing basketball. She added:

I think programs like CPH are helpful because it keeps the kids off the streets and away from gangs and drugs. It also keeps them involved in something they enjoy. I feel comfortable with enrolling him because I know he’s safe, he’s having fun, he’s healthy, and he’s distracted; the organization prevents him from wanting to seek fun in the streets. What’s great about CPH is that Miguel is enthusiastic to participate. His character has changed and his grades have improved. I don’t know of any other organizations that are structured like CPH that combines basketball training with academic help; there should be more programs like CPH.

In short, community and nonprofit organizations like CPH have the potential to remedy the significant obstacles and disadvantages facing Latino and Hispanic at-risk youth. These organizations can provide at-risk youth with the necessary resources to overcome the risk factors they must confront in every aspect of their life. Additionally, organizations can facilitate greater parental involvement in the children’s education to ensure higher education is achieved. As part of the larger CED movement, the efforts of community and nonprofit organizations to ensure that at-risk youth obtain higher education will necessarily benefit the community at large.

**Policy Issues Underlying CPH’s Mission**

A few key issues underlying our work are youth crime and violence and academic development. We have a unique understanding of these issues and their impact on the communities we serve. They are problems that are directly tied not only to the health of the communities we serve, but also to their quality of life and potential growth. Our program aims to rectify these
problems. However, greater change with more far-reaching impact can be achieved through policy reform.

**Remedies for Youth Crime and Violence**

The key question that should guide the development or evaluation of any program aimed at preventing youth crime and violence is, “does the program address the root causes of youth crime and violence?” More specifically, we ask whether the program helps to diminish the risk factors for youth violence at the community, family, school, peer group and individual levels and whether it improves the quality of life for the most distressed community members. Programs designed to prevent early onset of violent offending and reduce early aggressive behavior should address risk factors relating to neighborhoods, families and children.

Further, a Seattle study cited in the United States Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency’s August 2000 report demonstrates that risk factors for gang membership span all major risk factor domains, which are community, school, peer group, family and individual characteristics.

49 See Abbe Smith, *They Dream of Growing Older: On Kids and Crime*, 36 B.C. L. REV. 953, 1016-17 (September 1995) (arguing, “To reduce juvenile crime and violence we must address the root causes. We must take steps to change the quality of life for so many kids residing in our nation’s cities”); Finn-Aage Esbensen, *Preventing Adolescent Gang Involvement*, U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Juvenile Justice Bulletin (2000) available at https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/182210.pdf (quoting J.F. Short, Jr. who stated, “Effective interventions at the individual level that seek to control violence... require that macro-level factors... be taken into consideration... Absent change in the macro-level forces associated with these conditions, vulnerable individuals will continue to be produced”).


The current policy of the City of Chicago can be found in the “City of Chicago Youth Violence Prevention Plan” (“Violence Prevention Plan”), which was released in 2013 by Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s administration in partnership with the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. The Violence Prevention Plan identifies numerous anti-violence measures the city is implementing. These measures are separated into three different categories that consist of prevention, intervention and response initiatives. Within each category, the City identifies its signature and aspirational initiatives, the former being key efforts already or soon to be underway and the latter being efforts still in development and requiring further planning or funding. Our analysis of the City’s policy on youth crime and violence are limited to its prevention and intervention strategies. It would be improper to consider the City of Chicago’s response initiatives to determine if they are addressing the root causes of youth violence because they are meant to address problems that arise after a violent act has occurred. While these types of initiatives are important, they are beyond the scope of this article.

According to the city’s plan, a couple of its most promising prevention initiatives include the Violence Reduction Strategy (“VRS”) led by the Chicago Police Department and the Youth Shooting Review (“The Review”), which is being housed at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. The VRS involves law enforcement, service providers and community members who deliver a unified message directly to a targeted group of known gang members in the area to stop the violence or face a unified

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52 The Violence Prevention Plan explains that prevention initiatives serve large populations at a low cost, and they typically reach individuals who are currently at a low risk of violence. Intervention initiatives aim to prevent individuals with a high risk of violence violent from materializing into violent action. Such initiatives are generally more costly and intensive, and they serve a smaller population than prevention initiatives. Response initiatives serve individuals who have been involved in violent acts. These initiatives serve the smallest population of the three categories, but they are also the most costly and intensive. NATIONAL FORUM ON YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION, supra note 42.
and targeted response from the Chicago Police Department and its federal partners. The Review seeks to better understand why youth shootings occur and how to prevent them. It brings together a diverse panel of government and nonprofit agencies that share and analyze data with the goal of identifying factors that lead up to specific youth shootings. Evidence-Based Home Visiting is one of the city’s aspirational initiatives, which would provide support and parenting training to low income, first-time mothers in order to help build strong child-parent relationships.\(^{53}\) Two other prevention initiatives listed in the plan include child-parent centers and family caseworkers.

Intervention initiatives highlighted in the plan include One Summer Chicago and One Summer Chicago Plus, Social Emotional Learning (“SEL”) programs and Safe Passage. The One Summer programs keep youth between the ages of 14 and 24 occupied during the summer months, when youth violence typically peaks. The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, which manages these programs, targets youth from high-crime neighborhoods, and it provides them with employment during the summer months. The State of Illinois established statewide SEL standards, which ensures all Illinois schools have services to help students develop strong social-emotional skills. Safe Passage is currently implemented at 35 high schools, and it involves community members who commit to monitoring pre-defined safe routes to keep students safe as they travel to and from school.\(^{54}\)

The trouble with the city’s plan on the topics of prevention and intervention initiatives is that it fails to demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing the underlying issues relating to crime and violence.\(^{55}\) There is no doubt that the strategies

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\(^{53}\) *Id.* at 18-20.

\(^{54}\) *Id.* at 21-25.

\(^{55}\) Mayor Emanuel writes that the Youth Violence Prevention Plan “will serve as a blueprint for [the City of Chicago’s] ongoing work to create a safe future for our youth and our communities.” *Id.* at 2.
being implemented are important, particularly as they relate to
the highest-risk youth who do not typically avail themselves of
government services (e.g., social and educational services). How-
However, the city’s plan would be far more effective in the long-
term if it prioritized addressing the risk factors that lead to vio-
* *
lent offenses rather than implementing strategies that merely re-
spond to violent offenders. For instance, while the VRS is an
important strategy, it does not attack the underlying risk factors
that cause a youth to become a violent offender. Rather, it
merely seeks to discourage groups of individuals who already
have a propensity for violence from engaging in future violence.
Further, the Review is not so much concerned with preventing
the early onset of violent offending as it is identifying patterns
that predict shootings, which, alone, does not stifle the develop-
ment of violent tendencies in youth. The Review also helps in
the development of strategies that respond to violent tenden-
cies, much like the Safe Passage initiative. While these are criti-
cal strategies to prevent and respond to repeat offenders, they
fall short of providing long-term solutions to youth violence be-
cause they do not address the root of the problem.

Preventing the early onset of violent offending requires the
City to more effectively address risk factors relating to families
and children, and the measures implemented should reach chil-
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56 The Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University (Bos-
ton) released a study in July 2013 relating to a summer employment program,
the Youth Violence Prevention Funder Learning Collaborative youth em-
ployment initiative, which parallels Chicago’s One Summer programs. The
study found that the work activities helped youth build occupational skills
and various soft skills. It also found that program participants were more
likely than their comparison group peers to experience improvement in risky,
deviant, or violent behaviors or to avoid a deterioration in such behaviors.

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low-income neighborhoods that lack jobs and where, too often, youth believe there are no real alternatives to engaging in illicit activities for income. The SEL standards, if they can be effectively implemented at inner-city schools, are also a great strategy. This strategy will help youth to develop social-emotional skills, which among other things, help to prevent or correct antisocial behavior.\[57\]

Chicago’s policy on youth crime and violence should focus on reaching a far greater percentage of its elementary students with afterschool programming than is currently being reached. Evidence suggests that afterschool and summer programs are important because they help boost overall improvements in math and academic development, reduce school absences and improve behaviors, all of which are risk factors associated with the early onset of violent offending.\[58\] Alternatively, lack of participation in an afterschool program is linked with lower grades, increased school-day absences and behavior problems.\[59\] In Illinois, roughly 363,000 kids, or 16% of all kids, participate in afterschool programs.\[60\] While there are no recent figures spe-

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57 See Howell, supra note 52, at 13-14 (explaining that one significant school risk factor is high levels of antisocial behavior and an important individual risk factor is early involvement in antisocial behavior).


59 Id.

pecific to Chicago, a 2010 report by Afterschool Alliance suggests that about a quarter of Chicago students participate in after-school programs. These numbers are presumably lower in low-income, Chicago neighborhoods since cost is a more significant barrier in these areas. The low participation numbers and the benefits that flow from participation in afterschool programs should push the City to allocate more funds towards afterschool programming and make it accessible for the most impoverished residents.

The city’s prevention efforts should also address childhood risk factors by focusing on parent training and childhood skills development prior to elementary school. A number of risk factors in childhood have been identified, including a history of antisocial behavior, poor family management, familial violence during infancy and childhood years and parental problem behaviors. Some characteristics protect against violent behavior such as a positive social orientation, a resilient temperament, warm and supportive relationships with family members or other adults and family norms that are opposed to crime and violence, while supportive of educational success and healthy development.

61 Id.
63 A report by the University of Chicago cites research from criminology and psychology, which show that aggressive or violent behavior at very young ages, as well as early academic problems, are predictive of violent behavior and other social problems later in life. Ander 10. Howell and Hawkins state, “Parent training can . . . serve to reduce the risks of poor family management practices and a child’s early aggressive behaviors and conduct problems.” James C. Howell & J. David Hawkins, Prevention of Youth Violence, 24 Crime & Just. 263, 280 (1998).
64 Id. at 276.
Chicago’s Violence Prevention Plan identifies Evidence-Based Home Visiting and Child-Parent Centers ("CPC") as two of its aspirational prevention initiatives, and these are exactly the kind of strategies that would address the risk factors mentioned above. Strategies that target at-risk youth at an early age by improving individual social skills training and assisting parents by developing parenting skills would help to stifle violent tendencies from developing in youth. However, the Violence Prevention Plan explains that as of 2010 just 8% of at-risk Chicago youth received home visiting services. The City should expand these types of services and increase their access to at-risk youth and their families.

Measures for Higher-Education Attainment

The underlying issues of access to higher education and academic development are the two driving forces for CPH’s academic program. All of the executive board members of CPH are first-generation college students who understand from experience the obstacles first-generation youth must overcome to succeed academically. One of the first challenges children of uneducated and low-income parents are faced with begins even before elementary school, as most families cannot afford the advantages of early childhood education. As explained below, research has confirmed the significant impact early childhood programs have to offer; however, these programs are largely unavailable to children of low-income families.

65 An example of such a program is the Montreal Preventative Treatment Program. It provided parent training and individual social skills training for boys ages seven to nine. Parents received training sessions that focused on monitoring their children's behavior, positive reinforcement, effective punishment, and managing family crises. The boys received training to improve social skills and self-control. An evaluation of the program showed less delinquency, drug abuse, and gang involvement at age fifteen. Howell, supra note 52, at 7.
Once the college application process begins, first-generation college students are starting one step behind their peers. Many first-generation students do not have the benefit of advanced financial planning for college. Parental guidance during the intricacies of the college application process and applying for financial aid is an advantage that simply does not exist for first-generation college students. These are only some of the issues that we kept in mind while structuring the academic program of CPH as well as language barriers, lack of communication between schools and parents, and social pressures that cause male youth to drop out of high school. Furthermore, the implementation of a well-organized and strong early childhood program, along with preparing youth and parents for higher education, remedies many of the overlapping issues.

**Early Childhood Education – The Chicago Child-Parent Centers**

Nationally, the United States is far behind the developed world with early childhood education enrollment, ranking 24th and 26th out of the 34 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Currently, the Chicago Public School system offers the federal and state-funded Child-Parent Centers (“CPC”) throughout low-income neighborhoods in Chicago. The program began in 1967 with high hopes and expectations to serve low-income children and their parents who were not being served by Head Start or similar programs. The program incorporates and requires parental involvement, which

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66 Travis Waldron, INFOGRAPHIC: United States Lags Other Countries on Preschool Investment, Enrollment, THINKPROGRESS (May 2, 2013, 11:15 AM), http://thinkprogress.org/education/2013/05/02/1953131/infographic-the-united-states-lags-other-countries-on-preschool-investment-enrollment/.

67 U.S. DEP’T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERV., OFFICE OF HEAD START available at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/about/head-start (Head Start is a federal early-childhood program that promotes school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development).
seeks to directly address the several risk factors of low-income parents. The activities with which parents are involved include helpful and informative sessions on child growth and development, literacy, parenting skills, health, safety and nutrition. The Child-Parent Centers’ emphasis of parent involvement is one of its strongest features.

Other strengths of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers program include its health and social services, small class sizes and curriculum that are tailored to seamlessly guide the children through the third grade. Specifically, the curriculum focuses on teacher-led, class instruction on basic skills in reading, language, and math. In order to evaluate the effects of CPC, the Chicago Longitudinal Study (CLS) followed a number of disadvantaged children who participated in the program through the age of 24. Generally, the CLS demonstrated that kindergartners enrolled in CPC had advanced cognitive readiness of about three months compared to nonparticipants. Additionally, the achievements in reading and math obtained by CPC participants remained statistically significant and meaningful through the sixth grade as they tested higher in reading and math compared to nonparticipants. Moreover, the students who graduated from the program attained higher levels of education and higher salaries than those who attended other early-childhood programs. Research also demonstrated that graduates had a higher chance of obtaining a skilled job, were less likely to have criminal records or abuse drugs, and lower rates of depression than nonparticipants.

The weaknesses to the program are also its challenges, which include a limited amount of resources and declining enrollment.

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69 Id.
70 Id.
71 Id.
Child-Parent Centers were faced with obstacles in the past years as the program was cut back due to school closings and budget issues. Interestingly, declining enrollment also contributed to the budget cuts and it remained as a challenge throughout its continued, albeit limited, implementation of the program. In 2004, the Chicago district closed eight of its 23 child-parent centers due to declining enrollment and lack of funding and cut full-day programs from many of the centers. The declining enrollment rates are particularly troublesome as studies consistently demonstrate that active participation in early childhood programs is strongly associated with higher educational attainment and with lower dropout rates.72

Fortunately, in 2011 CPC received additional federal funding and is currently embarking on expanding the program to include wider coverage of Chicago neighborhoods and reinforce current facilities. However, early childhood education programs like CPC require additional funding in order to operate effectively and yield favorable results. As such, the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois must place greater emphasis on expanding accessibility to early childhood education programs by providing more funding. They must not overlook the educational and economical benefits of early childhood education programs as the benefits to the community at large are far too great.

Moreover, the city as a whole must encourage its residents to participate in early childhood education. As part of CPC's expansion efforts, the Midwest Child-Parent Center Expansion Project spearheaded a study to increase enrollment. The Expansion Project cited three key components to increase daily attendance rates and decrease chronic absence rates in preschool students. They are full-day preschool classes, high parent involvement at home and school and incorporating a full-time

community outreach staff member. In further efforts to increase enrollment, Child-Parent centers should also reach out to the neighborhood in which it is located and increase awareness of its availability. As the Expansion Project suggests, a School-Community Representative is vital to bridging communication between the parents and the Centers in order to ensure daily attendance. The city should ensure that more school-community representatives are available in order to increase attendance and parent involvement.

**Aiding Low-Income Students to Enroll in College**

While early childhood education contributes to excellence at the elementary and high school levels, further attainment of higher education requires additional guidance. Presently, increasing college tuition, in conjunction with low socioeconomic status and lack of information about the college process, are among the many challenges that impede low-income youth from enrolling in higher education.

Financially, low-income students are unable to afford college tuition without accumulating high debt upon graduation. Moreover, students whose parents did not attend college are unlikely to plan for financing college years in advance due to lack of information. The reality is that this lack of information and access to resources is costing Hispanics on average about $11,400 in financial aid. Uneducated parents are also less likely to provide any practical guidance on filling out the myriad of financial aid forms or coming up with financial strategies to pay for college. Due to the lack of financial aid, "Hispanics are more likely to withdraw from college because of financial reasons more than

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any other [racial group], which is compounded by the lack of institutional financial support, and the demands of being a working student and having to supplement family income."75

Worse yet, some low-income families begin to face hardship before college admission when trying to pay for the application fees.

Additionally, parents who did not attend college are also less likely to provide advice and guidance on the application process itself, such as the personal statement, resume, and letters of recommendation. Studies have shown the strong association between parents' education and the likelihood of students enrolling in postsecondary education. For example, in 1992, 59% of high school graduates whose parents did not attend college went on to pursue a college degree. Whereas 93% of students whose parents had at least a bachelor's degree went on to college.76

Schools, postsecondary schools and communities have the ability to greatly narrow this gap by assisting parents and students with the necessary information.

In addition to the financial hurdles and lack of information, low-income students must overcome various administrative hurdles in order to be prepared for college enrollment. These administrative challenges include: (1) students' decisions based on misguided and negative perceptions about financial aid availability; (2) a high school's lack of preparation in distributing college and financial aid information; (3) student's inaccurate and untimely information about college admissions; (4) lack of one-on-one support and counseling with students aside from group seminars; (5) lack of individualized and continued support throughout the application process; and (6) parent's lack of in-

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75 Id.
76 U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., NAT’L CTR. FOR EDUC. STATISTICS, STUDENTS WHOSE PARENTS DID NOT GO TO COLLEGE: POSTSECONDARY ACCESS, PERSISTENCE, AND ATTAINMENT, supra note 45.
For the most part, these challenges are purely administrative and can be remedied by updating high school administrators with current and accurate information about the college and financial aid application process. Additional faculty training about the college and financial aid process is also necessary, as well as finding ways to efficiently filter this information to students and parents alike.

There are many cost-effective strategies that schools can implement in order to distribute college and financial aid information effectively. One strategy that can be implemented to distribute information is one-on-one counseling sessions with both the students and parents in addition to group sessions. Studies show that providing advice and guidance to students and parents with accurate information about the college application process, college costs and financial assistance can significantly impact college enrollment among disadvantaged students. Not only will providing information about colleges increase applications, but also informed students tend to have higher graduation rates.

CONCLUSION

CED is a strategy to improve community life in low-income communities. Organizations like CPH are among the various actors that seek to advance the CED movement in order to address the economic, racial and educational disparities that afflict

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low-income communities. By targeting at-risk youths, Chicago Prize Hoops mitigates some of the most prevalent risk factors associated with youth crime, violence and poor academic performance. While the efforts of nonprofit organizations such as CPH are not in vain, there are many policy issues that directly affect youth in low-income communities, and must be rectified by the cities and states in which they live. Nevertheless, CPH will continue to empower youth with the necessary resources and knowledge to improve their lives and, thereby, the community at large.

“The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.” –W.E.B. Dubois

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