THE EXPERIENCE OF *MEXICANA* UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT RENTERS IN
HUNTINGTON PARK AND SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in
Chicano and Chicana Studies

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May 2013
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My biggest motivators mis chiquitas: nopilhuan Tlapiani y Ixayahuani—you both are my inspiration to finish. Thank you to my family always reminding me of this goal, and I would especially like to thank my mom and a mi Tio Rafael with all their support with my girls.

I would also like to thank my committee members for all of their support in guiding my research. Tlazocamatli to mis tres compañeras who took the time to read through the countless drafts and give me feedback. Lastly, I would like to thank the participants in this study; your courage, and experiences are essential in understanding our continued struggle to bring equity in housing.

I hope all reflect on our housing crisis to promote more research and advocacy to create housing equity to all.
DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the generation of my girls and their future seven generations; may they hold the desire to improve their communities and always work as a collective to systemically change the world we live in. Always looking at space as sacred, remembering the struggles of the past seven generations in striving to secure a better future.

May we all recognize a central theme throughout—that land and the struggle for equal access to this region of Los Angeles is a continued struggle of Mexicanas/os and others. We must always recognize we are all borrowing this land and space. Lastly, in recognition of the daily struggles of mis Compañeras/os striving to learn, organize and create systemic change for our community and all the future seeds, our struggles will be recognized and rewarded.

Nahuatl: Nicpohuaz inhualaliz in nocoltzin ihuan in nocihtzin inin tlacopa. (I will tell of the arrival of my grandfather and my grandmother here towards this land: Apache: Onawa Ela (Wide awake earth))
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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCE OF MEXICANA UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT RENTERS IN HUNTINGTON PARK AND SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES

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This study analyzes the economic challenges and legal issues experienced by Mexicana undocumented renters in the areas of Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles. This thesis evaluates economic challenges, legal issues, and disparate treatment within code enforcement as it relates to housing conditions for undocumented Mexicana renters. Current literature refers to housing inequalities for poor communities of color, including Latinos/as, however there is an absence of literature focusing on the undocumented Mexicana renter experience. Beginning with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and moving into our current housing crisis, this study found that displacement and disparate treatment continues to exist within the undocumented Mexicana renter’s experience.
CHAPTER 1
Introduction

The individuals…deprived of housing by municipal ordinances targeting undocumented immigrants are not asking any unit of government to provide them with housing. Nor are they asking private individuals to supply them with housing free of charge. They are simply attempting to procure housing for themselves at their own expense, on the private market. An analogy between food and housing, both basic necessities, might be instructive here: Even though many people in America may believe that unauthorized immigrants should not be eligible for food stamps, how many would argue that they should be prohibited from buying food? There is something particularly inhuman about legal regime that prevents people from obtaining shelter, even those who are illegally present in the country (Oliveri, 2009, p.108).

As this quote illustrates, housing is a basic necessity for everyone. It is within the founding principles of this country, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and while it is a challenge for many, it is a greater challenge in poverty-ridden undocumented communities. In choosing a place to reside, many factors must be considered, including the cost of rent, proximity to work, and the safety of the surrounding neighborhood. Unfortunately, with increasing rental costs, the housing shortage, and an overall decline in household incomes, more and more households are doubling up (Bender, 2010). Space then becomes more limited in highly concentrated communities and households, especially homes designed for single-family occupancy (Bobo, Oliver, Johnson Jr., & Valenzuela Jr., 2000; Valenzuela & Gonzalez, 2000).
Los Angeles neighborhoods are increasingly multicultural, multi-ethnic, and include residents with varying types of legal status. Across the board, regardless of ethnic background, legal status, and class divisions, most people consider finding accessible, affordable, and safe housing a top priority. Therefore, considering housing is a basic need and human right, an important question must be posed: why are housing disparities so apparent in poorer neighborhoods? A 2005 housing study, by Ross and Turner, links household economic status with housing inequalities and suggests that less affluent communities face greater housing inequalities.

**Purpose of Study**

This study explores the experiences of undocumented *Mexicana* immigrant renters in the communities of Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles. Previous research supports the concept that communities facing economic inequalities and legal disparities have greater challenges in accessing equitable rental housing in urban settings. However, there is a lack of research focusing on the undocumented immigrant renter experience. Secondly, this thesis will assess if disparate treatment applies within the role of municipal code regulations and code enforcement procedures. Lastly, this study will assess the impact of the housing crisis on the targeted renter population in the communities of Huntington
Park and South Central Los Angeles. This is done by interviewing four undocumented immigrant renters, recording their rental experience, and comparing the findings of this sample against data obtained in previous research.

**Rationale**

The rationale for this study is to analyze previous research and determine how it applies to the selected sample, identifying if disparate treatment is evident in the undocumented *Mexicana* immigrant experience in these communities. In order to understand the legal challenges of an undocumented immigrant renter, it is important to view the political atmosphere surrounding illegal immigration in the United States.

**Background**

Living in a global, multi-ethnic, multi-status community, “of the ten million residents in Los Angeles County, almost half (47.3 percent) are Latino. Latino/as increasingly are an immigrant population, with some 40 percent of the population foreign born” (Bender, 2010, p.6). The growth of the Latino/a population is partly contributed by Mexican migration to the Untied States that has significantly risen since the 1970’s (Bender, 2010). “The 2000 census counted 8.8 million persons born in Mexico and living in the United States” (Reimers, 2005, p.101).” According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 11.7 million
persons born in Mexico were living in the United States. With these figures, immigration
has been a constant political issue. This data illustrates why immigrants are used as
scapegoats and publically attacked by politicians. This has been a scare tactic consistently
utilized in the immigration debate, as Acuña notes in Occupied America (2004):

Racists create an illusion that immigrants take away jobs and are a drag on the
economy. It matters little that the census showed that “Latino men continue to be
more likely than White or Black men to be working or looking for work.” They
exaggerate the reasons that Latinos use emergency health care, forgetting that
Latinos do so because they have no health insurance. ‘American’ employers refuse
to pay the cost of social production (p. 411-412).

While Census figures show increasing numbers of immigrants residing in the United States,
creating fear amongst “Americans,” other research demonstrates immigrant populations are
not always undocumented. According to the Immigration Policy Center, “only about 40
percent of Latinos are foreign-born and fewer than half of these are undocumented”
(Esbenshade et al., 2007, p.3). In addition, recent data (Passel & Cohn, 2013), indicates post
2007 migration of “new unauthorized immigrants coming plummeted and, for a couple of
years, the numbers leaving the U.S. may have gone up too” (p.4). However, the
apprehension and detention of foreign nationals has been on the rise (Hoefer, Rytina, &
Baker, 2012). Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), whose function is to identify
illegal aliens within the United States, regulate the apprehension process. ICE houses two
departments, Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) and Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO). Annual reports conducted by the Department of Homeland Security document that of the 642,000 foreign nationals apprehended, 76 percent were of Mexican origin (Simanski & Sapp, 2012). Furthermore, undocumented Mexican nationals made up 75 percent of the population deported in 2011 (Simanski & Sapp, 2012). The numbers in these reports may be one reason why native-born populations fear undocumented immigrants and strive to limit their ability to become citizens (Acuña, 2004).

The legalization process embedded within current immigration policy forces many immigrants to navigate a complex and stringent system where many immigrants get lumped into one category by some U.S. born nationals and are often criminalized through their classification as illegal aliens therefore making it acceptable to treat them as subhuman. A study by Esbenshade et al. (2007) highlights the complexity within immigration policy and the legalization process, as many Mexican nationals and other immigrants spend years maneuvering through the system to obtain legal residency. Post September 11th, 2001, many resident applications were put on hold and allowed to lapse due to the move to secure our borders, causing immigration reform to ultimately come to a halt (Esbenshade et al., 2007). The only population that has made strides in immigration reform is the undocumented
student who arrived to the United States prior to the age of 16. Under President Obama’s
defered deportation for applicable students under the Dream Act, it can be argued that this is
a temporary fix and only includes a small percentage of the undocumented population. A

*Huffington Post* article claims:

The administration earlier tried to clarify its immigration enforcement policies in a
June memo, which specifically recommended prosecutorial discretion. That memo
cited the possibility of considering whether a person under removal proceedings
would otherwise be eligible for the DREAM Act, an un-passed bill that would allow
some undocumented young people to gain legal status in exchange for two years of
college or military service (Foley, 2011).

Current immigration policy has yet to find a permanent solution for many undocumented
immigrants trying to contribute to a changing economy and abide by a new legal and social
system. The lack of progress in addressing immigration reform is evidence of a broken
system.

Especially in our current economic crisis, and within a state of strong legal
enforcement pertaining to unauthorized immigrants, a fear apparatus is also spreading
throughout undocumented communities. As the nativist Republican agenda fuels their
political will towards blaming the Obama administration for the economic recession, and
immigrant advocates call on Obama for immigration reform, there is a constant blame
game, where immigrants are targeted as the ones stealing American jobs, relying on
government aid, and causing the housing shortage. The treatment of undocumented immigrants is often aggressively combative, from the migrating process to the accessing of basic human rights and services. This unjust treatment then drives the political climate and fuels anti-immigrant policies motivated by fear.

Today, anti-immigrant sentiments are spreading like wildfire, from Arizona through the Midwest, and from the San Diego border to Florida. The influx of anti-immigrant policies currently passed and proposed by the Republican Party is evidence that there is a move to target undocumented immigrants as the scapegoats for our economic crisis. These policies include California’s 1994, Proposition 187, HR 4437, in 2005, the infamous Arizona bill 1070, and Florida’s recent attempt to attack US born children of undocumented immigrants by proposing to eliminate the earned child tax refund for their minors. As we look at two of the most impactful anti-immigrant policies, Proposition 187 and SB 1070, we find a move towards promoting the criminalization of a group of working class taxpayers. Both Proposition 187, the ‘Save our State’ initiative, and Arizona’s 2010, Senate Bill (SB) 1070, the ‘Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act’, deny civil liberties to the immigrant population. While Proposition 187 was deemed unconstitutional after its passage, it attempted to attack the education, healthcare, and welfare benefits of illegal
immigrants. Mirroring Proposition 187, Arizona successfully passed SB 1070 and created a police state. “SB 1070 makes it unlawful to be in Arizona without proper immigration papers, and thus supports racial profiling in a state with a 30% Hispanic population and a 12% Hispanic voter component.” (Hussain, 2010, p.11) Police are empowered to enforce the law, which puts the burden on the individual to prove his or her legal residency thereby resulting in institutional racism (Hussain, 2010). These national, anti-immigrant policies create a culture of repression within the undocumented immigrant population, spark national attention, and create uproar amongst immigrant advocates.

Unfortunately, similar anti-immigrant policies are transmitted into local municipal codes and code enforcement procedures, a less blatant form of repression. In Los Angeles for example, local police departments are working in conjunction with Homeland security to further the criminalization of undocumented immigrants and infringe on their civil liberties by cracking down and impounding cars belonging to undocumented drivers, forcing them to pay major fines in order to recover their vehicles. These policies reinforce the legal disparities faced by undocumented immigrants. As noted by Esbenshade (2007) et al., local anti-immigrant ordinances foster unfair treatment: “ordinance supporters often equate ‘illegal immigrants’ with all immigrants or Latinos. (p.1). In 2009 Rigel Oliveri
explored the Anti-Ilegal Immigrant (AII) ordinances discriminating against undocumented renters in accessing rental housing. Policies which limit the rights of undocumented immigrants under fair housing laws do this by pushing English-only policies, imposing restrictions on allowing illegal immigrants to rent, and penalizing owners for allowing immigrants as renters. Access to dignified housing conditions in an immigrant-dominated community is further challenged by the lack of code enforcement in these communities resulting in second-class services to Mexican undocumented immigrants. Similar anti-Mexican sentiment is reflected today through local housing ordinances where (AII) ordinances are proposed in local City ballot initiatives that infringe on the Fair Housing Act for undocumented immigrants. Prior studies (Oliveri, 2009) have assessed the impact of anti-illegal immigrant ordinances in local city housing municipalities, such as San Bernardino. The city’s ordinance mirrored Proposition 187, in that its purpose aimed “to restrict day-labor activity and fine businesses that employed undocumented immigrants and landlords that rented to them" (Esbenshade, et al., p. 9). Ultimately the measure made it to the local city ballot, but it was not passed.

Shortly after San Bernardino’s ordinance, a similar one was proposed in Escondido, California, where undocumented immigrants were labeled as terrorists utilizing post 9/11
scare tactics. “[Landlords] and property managers throughout the country have been developing new security procedures to protect their buildings and residents…” (Esbenshade et al., 2007, p.12). After an uproar from community activists, along with a lawsuit, the city council withdrew this ordinance and “in response to Escondido’s actions, the California legislature considered a bill prohibiting localities from passing housing ordinances targeting undocumented immigrants” (Esbenshade, J. et al., p.13). These AII housing ordinances restrict rights to accessing fair housing among undocumented immigrants.

While the City of Huntington Park and the community of South Central Los Angeles, do not have AII ordinances present within their municipal codes, one of this study’s aims is to investigate and assess if the municipal code housing regulations and code enforcement procedures subscribe disparate treatment to Mexican undocumented immigrant renters. A pre-investigation indicates that there are some questionable regulations found in the City of Huntington Park municipal code that may be examples of disparate treatment.

These national and local anti-immigrant policies can be classified as disparate treatment. Therefore, this study is investigating if discriminatory treatment is found within the municipal code regulations and the procedures for code enforcement inspection processes amongst undocumented immigrant renters. For the purpose of this study,
disparate treatment will be defined as “proven intentional discrimination” (Belton, 2005, p. 438).

**Statement of Problem**

Previous studies have covered the economic inequalities within an urban setting focused on the Latino/a community in accessing equity in housing. Ross and Turner (2005) and Oliveri (2009) introduce disparate treatment of Latino renters compared to Anglo renters as they assessed access to housing inspections and disparate inequalities within some municipal housing codes. Bender’s (2010) study included the immigrant experience and addressed legal challenges. The significant gap in these studies is the exclusion of the undocumented immigrant renter experience. Additionally, the literature does not include many studies that measure if disparate treatment is found within municipal housing code regulations and code enforcement procedures. Therefore, this study is designed to address the economic disparities and legal challenges faced by Mexican, undocumented immigrant renters in two Southern California communities to determine if disparate treatment is evident in their experience.

**Significance of Study**
The aim of this study is to document current housing trends and inequalities among a growing marginalized community in Los Angeles and make recommendations that start a dialogue in an effort to make possible changes in housing policy for all renters to have equal access rental housing. Additionally, it will share stories documenting a sample of four undocumented *Mexicana* renters in two Los Angeles County communities. It brings voice and validation to an oppressed and silenced community and serves as a tool for empowerment for communities who share similar experiences.

**Methods and Procedures**

Although, the classification subscribed to “by the United States Department of Homeland Security to describe foreign-born undocumented non-residents is unauthorized immigrant resident” (Hoefer et al., 2012), the official terminology used for classification purposes is illegal alien resident (DeRobles, 2011). This study will refer to this population as undocumented, *Mexicana* immigrant renters.

Interviews will be conducted and compared to trends in racial and class discrimination found in previous studies documenting economic disparities and legal challenges in urban minority settings. This small sample of undocumented *Mexicana* renters in Huntington Park and South Los Angeles will reveal their rental experiences. These
interviews will document if this sample experienced common legal challenges, economic disparities, and identify if disparate treatment was experienced through interactions with code enforcement procedures and/or property managers/property owners in their rental experiences. The methods that will be used include: analyzing the trends identified in previous studies; documenting housing inequalities within economically disenfranchised minority and immigrant communities; and compare if these findings are similar among undocumented immigrant Mexican renter experiences in the small sample used for this study. Interviews will also be coupled with research done via email correspondence to code enforcement directors, and planning department officials within each city to further understand the function of the municipal code and code enforcement procedures.

The participants for this study were randomly selected from a pool of individuals who meet the following criteria: female, Mexican born, undocumented, between the ages of 21 to 41, and who are current renters in the targeted areas. These 60-minute audiotaped, open-ended question interviews contextualize the participants experience through narrative testimonials and highlight if common themes were experienced amongst the participants. Analysis will be provided to determine if disparate treatment is evident in accessing affordable, dignified housing within this targeted sample.
CHAPTER 2
Literature Review

Previous research has covered housing inequalities in the context of race and economic segregation by examining the experience of African Americans and Latinos/as in urban settings in Los Angeles. However, there is a lack of literature focused on the realities of the undocumented immigrant renter experience, in particular undocumented Mexicanas. Therefore, the literature review will cover significant studies by Bobo, Oliver, Johnson Jr., and Valenzuela Jr. (2000); Valenzuela Jr. and Gonzalez (2000); and Bender (2010) that have highlighted economic inequalities, geographic discrimination and disparate treatment in housing conditions of Latino/as and African American urban communities. Studies by Bender (2010) and Oliveri (2009) do mention the undocumented immigrant experience but do not include personal accounts or extensive studies focused on renters from this population, rather they call for further study on this hard to reach population. Research by Bobo et al. (2000), Bender (2010), and Valenzuela Jr. and Gonzalez (2000) has linked communities living in high poverty areas with densely immigrant-populated neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are filled with deteriorated, overcrowded, and under-serviced housing. Bobo et al. (2000), Bender (2010), Charles (2000) and Valenzuela Jr. and Gonzalez (2000) agree that there is an absence of research regarding the experiences of undocumented
immigrant Latinos. “[These] studies have also done an inadequate job of accounting for the degree to which characteristics specific to immigrants influence racial attitudes” (Charles, 2000, p.63). While some studies do look at immigrants they do not include the undocumented immigrant rental housing experience.

Discrimination in rental housing among Latino/as and African Americans residing in urban neighborhoods has been examined, and researchers have identified a trend in economic racial segregation with housing disparities (Valenzuela Jr. and Gonzalez, 2000; Bobo et al, 2000; Bender, 2010). Research by Grant (2000) and Charles (2000) associated economics with racial segregation among African American and Latino/a urban communities. They observed both African Americans and Latinos are found to be the most isolated in the low-income areas of Los Angeles County. For example, in the community of South Central, the 1980’s brought a high influx of migration from Latin America, which lead White and African American residents to relocate to other parts of Los Angeles. Their relocation has been labeled as “white flight” (Grant, 2000, p.73) and is indicative of one type of racial discrimination. The research highlights that the transformation of communities is attributed to the influx of immigrants posing a new form of urban inequality.
Charles (2000) then provides evidence, in an overview of housing studies conducted from 1989 to 2000, that demonstrates continued housing discrimination amongst both Black and Latinos in the rental market in Los Angeles. Charles (2000) concludes that discrimination by race is a key factor in the housing market. Three types of discrimination were identified: 1) Latino/a and African American renters encounter racial discrimination 50% of the time they speak with property owners or managers; 2) the racial discrimination is not blatant; and 3) rates of racial discrimination have not improved over time (Charles, 2000). Racial discrimination, is still prevalent amongst African Americans, but is found to be steadily increasing within the Latino/a community.

Furthermore, accessing affordable, decent housing remains a challenge in this economic recession, as more and more families are struggling to afford the rising cost of rent. A 2005 housing study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition found “only 6.2 million affordable rentals were available to serve the nine million renter households classified as extremely low income” (Bender, 2005 p.156). This study identified limited availability in accessing a two-bedroom apartment for people earning minimum wage. Bender’s (2005) research adds to the ongoing argument that undocumented communities live below the poverty line and cannot afford nor are eligible for low-income housing.
programs. While undocumented immigrants pay into the economic system, through taxes, they do not benefit in any way when trying to access affordable, dignified housing.

Additionally, it can also be argued that all undocumented immigrants pay sales tax, which contributes, to the local economy. Although people perceive the underground cash economy to be beneficial to the undocumented worker, it is more beneficial for the employer who reaps economic benefits by not paying medical insurance, livable wages, or employer taxes. The undocumented worker pays into a tax system without earning social security credits or any benefits for their labor.

Bender (2010) and Oliveri (2009) include immigrants, both documented and undocumented, in their studies highlighting disparate treatment and reveal legal limitations and disparate housing conditions. Legal disparities are a barrier for many undocumented immigrants seeking decent housing throughout the United States. These policies restrict the rights of undocumented immigrants under fair housing laws by pushing English-only policies, imposing restrictions on immigrant renters, and penalizing owners for allowing immigrants as renters (Oliveri, 2009). Additionally, poor rental-dominated communities tend to confront issues of overcrowding and violence, as well as economic and environmental racism within their neighborhoods (Donahoe, 2005; Esbenshade et al, 2007).
Donahoe (2005) and Sides (2003), identify links between communities with economic disparities coupled with racial discrimination and environmentally hazardous housing. In assessing the research findings highlighted in previous studies, one common theme was a relationship between poor ethnic urban communities facing inequitable housing conditions and encountering violations to fair housing laws at high levels (Donahoe, 2005; Sides, 2003; Bender, 2010).

Disparate treatment in fair housing regulations was identified by the City of Los Angeles (2005) and Ross and Turner (2005). Their fair housing research has connected greater levels of housing code complaints with no housing inspections conducted among Latino/a renters. A study conducted by the City of Los Angeles (2005), *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*, found an overall trend; the highest volume of calls regarding questions of housing were from the areas of Hollywood/ East Los Angeles and South Los Angeles. In examining previous housing research, which viewed accessibility in rental housing options, access to inspection information and disparate treatment in relation to maintenance and fair housing access for Latinos/as demonstrated an absence of the undocumented Latino/a renter population.
In a study conducted by Ross and Turner (2005), they measured the disparate treatment of Latino renters compared to Anglo renters. Their findings consisted of access to housing availability and inspection notification. They found Latinos/as still encounter higher levels of negative treatment compared to Anglos in seeking rental housing. The two most problematic areas were in housing inspection and availability. Latinos were more likely to be told the unit was not available, and their choices were limited when accessing rental units. While African Americans have seen a decrease in unfair treatment when accessing rental units and inspections, Latinos/as have not seen a decline. Although this study did not include undocumented Latino/as, it does suggest that undocumented Latino/as suffer the same discrimination or more.

Further examination of the current rental housing conditions of immigrant communities in urban settings in Los Angeles is needed to determine if disparate treatment is perpetuated. Based on the housing studies identified in this thesis, there is a gap in the exposure of the testimonials of undocumented immigrant Mexicana renters Los Angeles. Considering the large number of immigrants in the communities of Huntington Park and South Los Angeles, the experiences of a small sample of these communities is important to share so that a dialogue on addressing inequity as it relates to rental housing can be
initiated. Although there have been small strides within the past three decades, generally, undocumented individuals continue to struggle in accessing decent housing and social needs.

The next section will move toward a theoretical mode by delving into a critical analysis of the instability of capitalism and its relation to the housing crisis. In particular, the housing crisis will be examined through a historical trajectory, from post-1848 to the housing crisis in the 21st century. More specifically this section will focus on the political climate and foreclosures, and how they directly affect the immigrant renter. Lastly, the experiences’ of renters in Huntington Park and South Los Angeles will be examined.
CHAPTER 3
The Housing Crisis: Undocumented *Mexicana* Immigrant Renters in Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles

Introduction

In four respective sections this chapter will present: (1) a historical trajectory of the land ownership and displacement; (2) a discussion of capitalism and its instability; (3) a discussion of the current housing crisis; and (4) a case study of the undocumented *Mexicana* immigrant renter experience based on four interviews.

Historical/ Political Overview and Critical Analysis

Since this thesis exposes the undocumented, *Mexicana* immigrant renter experience, a historical discussion on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and its breach to the displacement of indigenous communities and their land in California, to the displacement of Mexican *Californios*, specifically in the Los Angeles region, will be discussed.

Historically, Mexicans have been connected to the Southwest as national residents or as immigrants residing within this region of the United States since the 1820’s. According to Juan Gonzalez (2000), “Mexicans, in fact, have lived ‘here’ since before there was a Mexico or a United States. And they have been immigrating to this country almost from its inception” (Gonzalez, 2000, p.96). This region of the southwest represents a lineage of connection to our ancestors, generations of labor, and a history of resistance.
(Griswold del Castillo, 1979; Estrada, 2008 & Bender, 2010). For Mexicans, a connection to the United States is embedded within the culture.

Land and access to property rights is significant for the Mexican culture and has historically been a political issue for displacement of Mexicans in the United States. Looking at property rights from a political-historical context, researchers agree that Latinos have been disconnected to accessing property in the southwest due to the nativist challenge, since the mid 1800’s, to promote exclusionary practices that limited Mexicans’ access to property and land rights (Acuña, 2004; Bender, 2010; Estrada, 2008; and Griswold del Castillo, 1979).

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was one of the first land treaties between the U.S. and Mexico. According to Bender (2010):

As a negotiation to the ending of the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe was signed on February 2, 1848. This treaty confirmed that the United States was authorized to obtain the lands of Texas, New Mexico and California. In return Mexico was to retain everything south of the Rio Grande. The United States agreed to make cash payment of $15,000,000 to the Mexican government and to assume $3,250,000 in claims that United States citizens had against that government. For a total of $18,250,000- less than last years budget- Mexico territory was reduced by half (p. 18-19).

The treaty was supposed to guarantee land entitlement to Mexicans “to the same extent…if the said territories had remained within the limits of Mexico” (Bender, p. 19). Ultimately
the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was breached and set precedent for displacement and housing inequalities for Mexicans residing in California.

The breach of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo led to economic exclusionary practices and infringement on property rights for the Mexican and Mexican American population (Acuña, 2004; Griswold del Castillo, 1979; Bender 2010). California began to establish exclusionary practices for property rights of Mexicans on the legalities of three main factors: 1) the legal exclusion of Natives as considered under the 1849 California’s Constitution definition of non-personhood; 2) restricting property rights based on legal status; and 3) limiting Mexicans’ participation in the economy or political power in California (Estrada, 2008).

One of the initial consequences of the breach of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was the infringement on property rights of native populations within the Southwest. The struggles of indigenous communities, such as the Yaanga nation, must be given recognition (Estrada, 2008). It must be noted that Spanish Colonial land acquisition infringed on the freedom, dignity, and human rights of this first nation. Acuña (2004) documents examples of the laws established throughout the nineteenth century that discriminated against indigenous women based on the color of their skin by Anglos and some Mexicans. They
were subjected to slave status or made simple property. Acuña (2004) highlights historic case outcomes that set a precedent for legalizing the occupation of the land that systemically ghettoized these indigenous communities:

In 1886 the California Supreme Court, in *Thompson v. Doaksum*, ruled that land held by indigenous people during the Mexican period and not claimed by the Land Law of 1851 was public domain. In *Botiller v. Dominguez* (1889), the highest court in the land ruled that indigenous claims by title or occupancy were invalid if not previously legally confirmed. These laws were passed to segregate Native Americans legally and enslave them. (Acuña, p. 144-145).

These laws laid a foundation to legalize exclusionary practices for all Mexicans, including the *Californios*.

As the state of California underwent legal, political, and economic reconstruction, *Californio* landlords engaged in practices used to further promote a system of exclusion of indigenous people. Acuña (2004) explains that in the 1849 constitutional convention in Monterey, *Californios* had a chance to unite as a political force in order to maintain their rights to political power within the state of California. However, they “believed that they differed from the *cholo* masses (pejorative term for low-caste Mexicans) [and] rationalized that they had more in common with those of a lighter skin hue” (Acuña, 2004, p.131). They also believed taxes would be generated by commercial goods rather than property taxes for the land (Acuña, 2004). Their colonized mentality ultimately resulted in Mexicans losing
the opportunity to be a force within the political agenda, as well as an ability to be economic stakeholders.

The change in ownership for Mexicans residing in what now is considered the U.S. meant getting accustomed to abiding by new codes, especially land registration, property tax regulations, and new inheritance laws. There was also confusion due to language barriers that lead to abuses in the property registration process and ownership disputes.

Gonzalez (2000) contends:

The new codes were promulgated and administered in English—a language the *Mexicano* majority did not understand—and by lawyers, sheriffs, and judges who could always count on the U.S. Army to enforce Anglo’s interpretation whenever a dispute arose (p. 99).

Therefore, due to intimidation factors and the lack of resources for the community to voice any opposition, this allowed property owners to continue with land accumulation without resistance.

In the aftermath of the breach of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Mexican-American population, were subject to systematic exclusionary practices, which could be classified today as disparate treatment. Examples of these exclusionary practices included questioning the validity of Mexican land grants by Anglo-squatters in 1851 and campaigns to impose new property tax laws and discredit previous land grants protected under the
Treaty (Griswold del Castillo, 1979). These legal battles between Mexican rancheros and Anglo squatters were based on monetary greed, as the land in the northern area was considered a wealthy investment. This was exemplified through law enforcement upholding trespassing laws when Mexicans were in violation of them and not upholding these laws when Anglo squatters were in violation. This selective enforcement is a prime example of disparate treatment.

In California, disregard for the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo attributed to property loss and a decline in population for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Additionally, an increase in the Anglo population made them the majority after 1860. Subsequently, this caused a decline and low retention rate of indigenous peoples, native Californios, and Mexican immigrants. The lack of implementation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo caused a displacement of many Mexicans from their properties throughout California, due to language barriers, adjusting to new authorities/ legal systems, and facing economic disparities.

The remaining Mexican population in California faced modification of past land grants, resulting in a change in the housing climate that set precedence for housing displacement and inequalities in conditions among poor communities. In the community of
Huntington Park, Griswold del Castillo (1979) and Donahoe (2005) provide a historical account of economic displacement. The majority of the land was used by rancheros for agricultural purposes, but due to the rise in property taxes and a dependence on high interest loans, many rancheros lost their property (Donahoe, 2005). Donahoe (2005) documents how Manifest Destiny was carried out in southeast Los Angeles (previously known as Rancho San Antonio), the region now known as Huntington Park. The Lugo family owned rancho San Antonio until the 1870’s. From 1840-1870, due to economic hardship and the increasing costs of property taxes, the Lugo’s lost most their land (Donahoe, 2005).

In the greater Los Angeles area, Estrada (2008) documents that early demographics were predominantly Mexican, with the use of Spanish as a common language. By the late 1800’s through the early 1900’s there was a greater influx of the Mexican population in Los Angeles due to increased migration because of the need for cheap labor caused by railroad expansion (Griswold del Castillo, 1979). Within the railroad industry expansion, Mexican men were the primary labor force in the Los Angeles, specifically in the community of Watts. At this time, Mexicans were the most profitable labor force (Griswold del Castillo, 1979; Monroy, 1999). For example, of the 4,000 employees employed with the Los Angeles Railroad Company, 1,200 were Mexicans (Monroy, 1999). “According to the 1910
California Immigration Commission report, Mexicans earned 25 percent less compared to non-Mexicans, [while] Greeks and Japanese laborers earned slightly higher than Mexican laborers” (Monroy, 1999, p.99). This demand for cheap labor increased Mexican migration, which in turn forced Mexicans to accept inadequate housing conditions, as these families depended on housing close the labor camps.

Migrating to a new community with new laws and policies made it difficult for Mexicans to exercise their ability to access decent equitable housing. Low wages promoted economic hardships, furthering class division for immigrant communities. Mexican and Chinese immigrants occupied the first slums of Los Angeles. There was overcrowding and inhabitable conditions with hardly any code enforcement. A precedent for disparate treatment was established by limiting the choice of housing for these early immigrant communities (Monroy, 1999).

These early immigrants often settled in the heart of Los Angeles known as Sonoratown, known today as the Placita Olvera. Conditions were overcrowded and not adequate for children. “Sometimes a family might have a whole two-room, makeshift building to itself, but usually at least two families, broadly understood, crowded into a shack” (Monroy, 1999, p.17). While these conditions were filled to capacity, this colonia
was a close-knit community that had cultural wealth, as it preserved the history and
housing in the Sonoratown neighborhood to Indian reservations, or ghettos, in that it
“marked the advent of the modern era in which disparate people, now spatially separated,
experienced and imagined the events of the city in sharply different ways [hence causing]
the advent of segregation” (Monroy, 1999, p.14). Mexican immigrants were isolated
because even the blueprint of streets leading in and of the LA Plaza were limited, creating
an invisible, inaccessible community. Monroy (1999) affirms, “An outside description of
the Macy Street District, adjacent to the plaza, evokes this impression of simultaneous
rootedness and isolation” (p.14). The streets were maze-like, where of the 27 total streets,
only seven led out and only four connected to nearby communities (Monroy, 1999).

By putting Monroy’s (1999) research in a current context, isolation continues in
low-income, ethnic communities. This spatial segregation is indicative of class divisions
and disparate treatment in accessing equitable housing, thereby creating social stratification.
Usually economic earnings are connected to accessing more prestigious housing, which lays
a foundation for Mexicanas to be sub par economically because they are forced to live in
temporary housing that is dictated by income.
Thus, it can be argued that Mexican immigrants have contributed to this economy from early migration to the modern-day, 21st century capitalist structure. Many receive less than a livable wage with inadequate access to dignified housing. The next section will discuss the instability of capitalism of the United States in context as a capitalist system driven by monetary gain. As an example, capitalism promotes a culture of land acquisition and creates an excess of wealth for affluent and politically established communities. This is an underlining systemic problem that sustains a wealth gap between communities earning the top 1% of profits versus the other 99% of population.

**Instability of Capitalism and Its Impact on the Housing Market**

Immigrant labor has always been critical to the Market’s prosperity. The Market recruits it, exploits it, abuses it, divides it, and then ships it back home when no longer needed. Only by reining in that Market, by challenging its relentless grasp, by humbling its colossal power, can Latinos in this country move from incremental to qualitative progress, only then can they shatter the caste system to which they have been relegated (Gonzalez, 2003, p. 273).

The above reference by Juan Gonzalez (2003) captures the essence of the exploitation of the market on the backs of immigrant labor, therefore continuing a systemic oppression of Latino/a immigrants, especially those who are undocumented. In order to analyze how this global market affects Latinos/as in the United States, specifically focusing on *Mexicana* undocumented immigrants in Huntington Park and South Central Los
Angeles, an analysis of capitalism and its instability is necessary. First a brief introduction of capitalism will be presented.

As we currently understand it, capitalism has undergone a history of transformation from its origins. Economist Richard Wolff (2012) provides a historical trajectory from the inception of capitalism to the modern day. He defines capitalism based on “Marx’s basic analysis of capitalism in terms of production and distribution of the surplus” (Wolff, 2012, p.104). Through this analysis, Wolff (2012) argues that the essential problems with surplus capitalism are the systemic privatization of capital. Political theorists, such as Marx and Keynes, projected this capitalistic instability (Wolff, 2012). David Harvey (2000) provides a theoretical discussion referring to Marx’s Manifesto as establishing an analytical discourse for the crisis of capitalism. In Harvey’s examination of Marx’s theories, he suggests that Marx anticipated a potential for an economic crisis due to an over abundance of production that would result in an increase in inequality. Harvey (2000) notes that when communities are faced with more poverty and struggle in their efforts to meet basic social necessities, ultimately the wealthy will fall into self-destruction.

Harvey (2000) questions how the bourgeoisie can overcome this crisis and highlights contradictions within the Manifesto. He, critiques the Manifesto as subscribing to
typical discourses and not including what Harvey (2000) labeled as a “spatial fix.” Harvey (2000) defines “spatial fix” as economic wealth concentrated within one region. The abundance of wealth is tied to one’s global location, and with an imbalance of certain regions and social groups obtaining this wealth, historically global class divisions have been created (Harvey, 2000). Harvey (2000) further asserts “how the bourgeoisie both creates and destroys the geographical foundations- ecological, spatial, and cultural- of its activities, building a world in its image” (p. 23). This is one reason immigrants migrate to other countries for social mobility, as in the move Mexicanas make when they migrate to the United States.

Another layer of capitalism’s negativity is its spatial affects on the environment, by means of creating imbalance and destroying the land. It is Harvey’s (2010) classification as human nature or “second nature,” where human action has been a destructive force to the land. Harvey (2010) asserts, “Over the three centuries marked by the rise of capitalism, the rate and spread of creative destruction on the land has increased enormously” (p.185). Harvey (2010) goes further in stating, “the deeper meanings that people assign to their relationship to the land, to place, home and practices of dwellings are perpetually at odds with the crass commercialism of land and property markets” (p.192). Harvey (2010)
exemplifies this occupation of personalized space as “place-making,” a concept that our
home/cities belong to people rather than “capitalist developers” who seek to accumulate the
land. Therefore, when a company goes to a country and destroys land because of economic
gain, it causes that community to migrate and seek opportunities in other countries.
Residents are forced to move to other regions where land can be accumulated as property.

Upon arrival to a country such as the United States, immigrants seek the “American
dream,” which encompasses the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
However, when they get here they encounter a system where there is a conflict between the
sovereign nation and the individual “endowed with a sovereign right to pursue profit”
(Harvey, 2010, p.199). In following Harvey’s (2010) assertion one step further, within this
free market, individuals with excessive wealth can ultimately dominate the market, creating
a divide, where communities have limited access because of their economic status. When
these few wealthy individuals run the market, they are not always inclusive of the majority
of the population, resulting in a political machine controlled by individuals without
restrictions. Two years prior to the housing crash, there was a boom in the economy, but it
was a credit economy. An example of this is financial institutions (hedge funds) that
them amassed vast fortunes (more than $1 billion in personal remuneration a year for several of them in 2007 and 2008, and as much as $3 billion for the top earners)” (p.21).

These mass wealth accumulations are examples of the previous research by Harvey (2010), Gonzalez (2003) and Wolff (2012) where an untamed, unstable market is deemed for collapse.

The lack of restrictions is evident in the foreclosure crisis of 2007 where a major disruption to our economic system marked a downturn in the housing market. This housing crisis hit in record numbers with a higher concentration in working-class, urban ethnic communities:

By the end of 2007, nearly 2 million people had lost their homes and 4 million more were in danger of foreclosures. Housing values plummeted almost everywhere across the US and many households found themselves owing more on their house than they were worth. This set in motion a downward spiral of foreclosures that depressed housing values even further (Harvey, 2010, p.1-2).

This crisis intensified by the autumn of 2008 with high interest rates on subprime loans, sparking a major global bank crisis where conglomerate bank mergers occurred. This became known as the “subprime mortgage crisis.” The severity of this crisis had not been seen since 1945. “Global credit markets froze as did most lending worldwide” (Harvey, 2010, p.4). Wealthy bank stakeholders consequently felt the wrath of their risky investments and found themselves scrambling to recover from loan losses (Harvey, 2010). This allowed
shareholders of major mortgage institutions, infamous lenders, like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, as well-known banks and AIG, a major insurance carrier for the banks, to demand a government bail-out to “restore confidence” to Americans in the financial system (Harvey, 2010). Leading this demand were representatives from Goldman Sachs. With a request for a $700 billion bail-out, they threatened to overtake the world market. “It seemed like Wall Street had launched a financial coup against the government and the people of the United States” (Harvey, 2010, p.5).

As a response, a few short weeks later, then President George W. Bush succumbed to the demand of these unscrupulous vultures. “President George Bush caved in and the money was sent flooding off, without any controls whatsoever, to all those financial institutions ‘deemed too big to fail’” (Harvey, 2010, p.5). This bailout was intended to be a fast-track recovery for the financial system. However, the credit market remained stagnant, housing construction halted, housing prices continued to plunge, and major factory closures sparked skyrocketing unemployment rates by the end of 2008. The American consumer did not reap the same benefits as these big bankers, as no bailout was given to ordinary citizens. This caused a lack of consumer confidence in the financial market and set policy to help the wealthiest individuals recover and initiate a “trickle down economy” (Harvey, 2010).
While the corporates on Wall Street, and big banks were getting bailed out of the public sector, small business, and the working poor were left to recover without bailouts. According to an article in the *Monthly Review*, the income trend analysis for December 2011 noted that the rising cost of living, coupled with a lack of government safety nets has forced nearly 50% of Americans into poverty (Tabb, 2012). Census data shows the decline in the middle class is contributed to by rising unemployment and idle wages (Tabb, 2012). With a shrinking middle class and staggering wages, one can only wonder how a “trickle-down” economy affects marginalized communities, such as undocumented individuals who usually live at the poverty level or below. If everyone can be affected by the rise in living costs, then that would include the undocumented community, which in turn would affect their ability to sustain basic living expenses.

Subprime lending was one avenue that attracted working-class families to access the real estate market, as it was perceived as a method to gain economic stability. An April 2000 study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) found subprime lending most often occurred in poor, ethnic communities versus affluent Anglo communities. Los Angeles had the leading percentage of subprime refinance lending nationwide. Of the 80% total of nationwide subprime loans, a staggering 70% were from
Los Angeles (HUD, 2000). This data reflects that communities within Los Angeles, such as South Central Los Angeles, “disproportionately rely on subprime lenders for refinance credit” (HUD, 2000, p.5). Blacks and Hispanics were equally affected by high subprime lending and refinancing rates, as “Subprime refinance loans accounted for at least 25 percent of the refinancing mortgages in 110-117 census tracts that comprise… South Central Los Angeles” (HUD, 2000, p.6).

While the foreclosure crisis has in fact crossed ethnic lines throughout the nation, Bender (2010) documents a higher concentration of ‘subprime mortgage lending’ in urban, poor Latino/a and African American communities in comparison to others. These subprime loans were an avenue for many working-class renters to enter the homebuyer market, and the incentives included low-payments and low interest rates that persuaded many Latino/a communities into the buyers market. Large lending institutions, such as Countrywide, lead campaigns that targeted a Spanish-speaking community to access such subprime loans (Bender, 2010). Many of these subprime loans were given out under predatory terms that were especially unfavorable to the unsuspecting borrowers. “[While] these subprime loans did significantly increase the rate of Latino/a homeownership, [they] consequently contributed to the rapid foreclosure market due to unsecured high interest loans” (Bender,
of Los Angeles, vacancy rates for multi-family housing saw the highest increase from July 2006 at 3.9% to July 2010 reaching 5.5%. Even some lending companies, such as New Century, who opened their doors and sponsored a discussion of Latino/a advocates to discuss immediate socio-economic issues, underwent bankruptcy in 2007 (Bender, 2010).

There were several reactions to subprime lending. On one front, November 2008, marked a historic campaign and election of African-American, Barack Obama, who grew-up working class. His campaign promise for ‘Change’ was the hope for much of the 99% of Americans facing great economic challenges due to the economic crisis and housing crash. Obama entered office in the midst of this financial crisis, promising more transparency and advocating to bail out the average ‘Joe and Jean’ suffering from the foreclosure crisis.

However, President Obama assigned his ‘buddies from Wall Street’ to assure accountability in the financial market (Harvey, 2010). Many felt that invested advisors could not provide fair, financial oversight to restore this market (Harvey, 2010). Harvey asserts efforts to ensure “the balance of class forces…depends upon the degree to which the mass population rises and says, ‘Enough is enough, let’s change this system’” (Harvey, 2010, p.12). The recovery period was stagnant and ignited activism and critical discussion on the instability.
of capitalism by the Occupy Movement (Foster & Maghoff, 2012). According to Foster and Maghoff (2012) the current Occupy Movement has shed light on the widening gap between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population.

In our current state of the housing crisis, stringent lending regulations favor private investors. They were more likely to qualify for foreclosed properties, which allowed hedge funds and/or major investors, i.e. banks, to purchase these profitable properties (Lazo, 2013). Private equity firms are also gathering their economic wealth to invest in purchasing foreclosed properties that are currently found in low-income, ethnic communities (Lazo, 2013). This ties back to Harvey’s (2000) theory of a “spatial fix” demonstrating that property ownership is moving toward a privatized accumulation where wealth continues to be sustained amongst a selected few.

In placing Harvey’s (2000) “spatial fix” theory in the context of the current rental market in poor communities, like Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles, with higher rates of foreclosures and equity firm take-overs in rental properties, a path is forged for the commercialization of rental costs that surpasses market value and stretches renters’ thinning resources. In contextualizing this concept, Harvey raises an important question, “So are our cities designed for people or for profits?” (Harvey, 2010, p.193) As previously
noted at the beginning of this section, there is an intrinsic conflict between government controls and private enterprise within a capitalist market (Harvey, 2010). Given that private investors have not been restricted in their buying power to purchase properties in excess amounts, they can ultimately control the housing market by determining real estate prices (Lazo, 2013). In the event these properties enter the rental market, prices may skyrocket, resulting in profits for the wealthy and economic hardship for the poor. In a community with a lot of renters, it could be argued that they are contributing to the city but reap few benefits. “Territory and place have always been used by the institutions to organize populations and power relations” (Harvey, 2010, p.194). In a city like Huntington Park, many of the property owners reside outside of the city limits and their profits from the rents are being spent elsewhere. Ultimately, this is why impoverished communities with higher rental populations remain lower income, creating systemic class divisions that limit social mobility in a caste-like fashion. In terms of the undocumented, *Mexicana*, immigrant, social mobility becomes an even greater challenge.

**The Housing Crisis of the 21st Century: A Closer Examination of Economics and Rental Conditions in Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles**

The housing crisis of the 21st century has significantly transformed and impacted the way in which the housing market operates. By using the instability of the housing market as
the context, factors and conditions facing undocumented *Mexicana* immigrant renters will be investigated. More specifically, this section will highlight economic disparities and disparate housing conditions for the undocumented, *Mexicana* immigrant renter in Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles.

In order to contextualize the housing crisis in the targeted city of Huntington Park, we will briefly look at the intensity of the foreclosure crisis within the community. An October 2012 report from the *Gateway Cities Council of Governments* [GCCG] documents high rates of foreclosure proceedings in the City of Huntington Park for the first quarter period of 2010; notices of sales and defaults reached their highest peak. Foreclosure proceedings skyrocketed from less than 50 homes, at the end of the third quarter of 2007, to just under 150 units one year later (GCCG, 2012). This data shows increasing foreclosure rates in this study’s renter dominant, low-income, ethnic community. This results in a problematic situation where higher vacancy rates are found in these low-income communities. Data by Baker (2009) suggests that rental housing vacancy rates reached an all-time peak in 2009, in terms of both the rental and real estate markets, with a 10.1% rental vacancy rate and 2.9% home-ownership vacancy rate. This suggests that homes are sitting uninhabited, making it attractive for private investors to profit. This also creates less
affordable housing options, and the costs of rent and living expenses rise due to limited options.

In Latino/a concentrated communities, such as Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles, a further consequence of property sitting uninhabited and being transferred from investor to investor are poor housing conditions due to a lack of maintenance:

Many working-class and low-income Latinos face severe problems in obtaining “safe, sanitary, and decent” housing. Recent research shows that Hispanics are more likely than other Americans to live in substandard housing and to experience overcrowding. The percentage of Latinos with “worst case housing needs” has raised dramatically in recent years (Bobo 2000, p. 255).

This data supports Baker (2009) and Foster and Magdoff (2012) suggestions that the burst of the housing crisis has resulted in a space of displacement and an increase in housing code violations. In order to determine if code enforcement procedures are disparate, a questionnaire was sent via email to both City of Huntington Park and City of Los Angeles housing department representatives to investigate code enforcement procedures. Responses were received from City of Huntington Park housing representatives and answers reinforced that: 1) corrections to housing violations can take days to months to correct; and 2) code violations corrections for properties in any stage of foreclosure proceedings that are in transitional ownership periods (i.e., going from one owner to another) cannot be enforced until ownership is established. These answers allude to systemic regulations that can
contribute to deteriorating housing conditions, essentially furthering the overall community image/impression a dilapidated community. By spreading ‘ownership’ to an array of global lenders (Lazo, 2013) accountability for proper maintenance of properties becomes limited (Baker, 2009; Bender, 2010; Foster & Magdoff, 2012). The lack of code enforcement regulations then leads to disparate treatment in housing conditions, which is further intensified by the economic status of documented and undocumented immigrants.

Overall, U.S. family net worth from the period between 2007 through 2010 has decreased (Bender, 2010). In focusing on Latinos/as (whether they are immigrant or native-born), research highlights they earn less than Anglo workers (Bobo et al., 2000). In 2006, the median household income for Latinos/as was $37,800, compared to $52,400 for Anglos (Bender, 2010). “Almost half (48 percent) of individual Latino/a workers earn $20,000 or less annually” (Bobo et al., 2000, p.63). The wage gap has persisted for decades, as has the corresponding homeownership gap between Anglo and Latino/ families (Bobo et al., 2000).

A closer examination of the targeted population for this thesis shows undocumented Mexican immigrants have the highest poverty rates (Bender, 2010). The chart below documents the trends in the income gap between native-born, Mexican immigrants and undocumented, Mexican immigrants:
Figure 1 reports poverty for legal and illegal Mexican immigrants and their U.S.-born children*

![Bar chart showing poverty rates](chart.png)

*Chart adapted from the *Center for Immigration Studies*

This chart shows undocumented communities face economic scarcity and impoverishment, with approximately 71% near poverty and 33% in poverty. This data reinforces that Mexican undocumented immigrants fit into economic disparities, thereby, showing an inability for this population to rent in affluent communities. However, the chart does show potential for second and third generations to move away from high poverty levels.

Adapting to a new economy and establishing a sustainable economic status for recent undocumented Mexican immigrants is a great challenge.

Age of migration is also a significant factor in determining higher rates and longevity of poverty rates among undocumented immigrants:
Moreover, Mexican immigrants who arrived 21 to 30 years ago are 43 years old on average, 8 years older than the average native. Mexican immigrants who arrived more than 30 years ago are 58 years old on average, 23 years older than the average native. This is important because income generally rises with age and workforce experience. The graph shows that the increase in years of residency provides the undocumented immigrant with more “confidence,” such as advocating for better housing, kinships, and establishing a rental history. Estimates find that immigrants overall have a greater challenge compared to native born Mexicans because of age of migration and experience. It can be argued that in terms of
more established communities, they can better access services or maneuver through the
system.

Undocumented immigrants face a disproportionate challenge in accessing
employment opportunities, as they have to adjust to a new system. Research claims that
nativity and ethnicity are indicators of wealth. In comparing Whites, Blacks, and native and
foreign-born Asians and Latinos, the group identified as the most economically
marginalized is the foreign-born Latino (Grant, 2000). A 1987 study reports a trend in wage
instability among native and foreign-born Asians and Latinos. It demonstrated that foreign-
born Latinas compared to native-born Latinas saw a decline in their median income by
$1500 and are the lowest paid in the county as compared to Anglos and other ethnic groups
(Grant, 2000, p.64). Considering the research data documenting economic disparities within
a triple oppressed community, foreign born immigrant Latinas’ have the lowest wages at a
rapid decline compared to other immigrant and ethnic groups. Researchers document that
the population is transforming due in part to the high migration from Latin America settling
throughout Los Angeles; like any other immigrant community, socio-economic status varies
based on earnings (Valenzuela Jr. & Gonzalez, 2000, p. 251). Evidence indicates most
foreign born migrating from Latin America earn below a livable wage (Valenzuela Jr. &
Gonzalez, 2000; Bobo et al., 2000; Grant, 2000). Therefore, increasing costs of living and a decrease in wages causes limited social mobility for this population. Their economic contributions are significant, considering this population’s wages are the lowest in the country within the wage gap. This could result in very limited housing options for low-income communities settling in dense, affordable, renter-dominant neighborhoods. As mentioned before Mexican undocumented immigrants have been marginalized to undesirable areas by U.S. nativists to ensure that “they” stay where they belong.

**Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles Rental Housing: Documenting the Testimonials of Four Undocumented *Mexicana* Renter Experiences**

The following testimonials are renters in the communities of South Central Los Angeles and Huntington Park. In order to protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms were given when documenting their personal stories and rental experiences.

These stories will be divided in two-subcategories by community, as there were two participants from each of these communities. The information will be displayed by first providing a narrative of each personal testimony and the experiences of *Mexicana* undocumented renters in these two neighborhoods. This allows us to gather data and open a path for discussion that is inclusive of undocumented, immigrant renters.

*South Central Los Angeles renter stories of migration and adaptation*
Esperanza is a 30 year-old single mother of two young children, who maintains her household on a full-time, minimum wage factory job. She migrated with her family to the United States from Puebla, Mexico at the very young age of eight years old. Migrating as an elementary school student in the 1990’s, she recalls her migration experience and adaptation to the United States as being good and not identifying major problems. Since arriving to this country she has remained a long-time resident of South Central Los Angeles because her family settled there, and this was the only familiar place to her.

Amelia, a 23 year-old wife and mother of two, also supports her family on a full-time, minimum wage factory job. However, she describes her migration experience to the United States in a different light than Esperanza. Amelia was born in Oaxaca, Oaxaca where she lived until the age of 13. In 2003, when she migrated as a pre-adolescent girl to South Central Los Angeles with her family, she found the process a bit more difficult.

Amelia shares:

I was 13 years old. Well, it wasn’t difficult but it wasn’t economically easy. [Migration] took like one or two weeks.

Amelia explains that her family migrated for economic reasons, because there was a lack of work in Mexico: “Well economically, there was not a lot of money because the work was low.”
Esperanza and Amelia settled in South Central Los Angeles for different reasons. South Central Los Angeles was the only familiar place for Esperanza, whereas for Amelia it was to access affordable rent.

Esperanza: Well, we decided to settle in South Central Los Angeles because we did not know of any other place.

Amelia: Well it was a lot of work for my parents at first because we are a lot in the family and the reason why we came to South Central Los Angeles is because supposedly the rent was less expensive.

City of Huntington Park renter stories of migration and adaptation

Josefina is 32 years old, and she migrated from Naucalpan, Juárez to the United States with her husband and two children when she was 29. Josefina describes her migration process as “challenging and lengthy.” Maria shared a different migration testament, coming from Acapulco de Guerrero, México to the United States at the young age of nine. She has vague recollections of her migrating experience and did not understand why her parents decided to leave Mexico; in retrospect she did not feel that there was reason to migrate.

Adapting to a new country and obtaining employment was priority for Josefina. She completed an educational program that awarded her skills that she could apply in the workforce. She was under the impression that her educational experience and labor skills would secure her similar labor opportunities as she had in Mexico. In Mexico she was
employed as an Exclusive Secretary for exterior relations. Her husband also had a good job however they wanted to migrate north in attempt to reach economic mobility. Josefina says, “Well we weren’t very well off but we really didn’t suffer economically a lot my husband had a good job.”

As an employee at a factory, earning minimum wage to help with maintaining her household, she expresses frustration in not being able to apply her studies from Mexico here in the United States. Josefina expresses her disappointment when she arrived to the United States and how she could not access a job in an office as a secretary like she had in Mexico because of the language barrier:

Josefina: I took care of my children, and I finished my career of executive secretary, and I was working as the secretary for External Relations and that was what I was working as. When I came here to this country it was difficult because well aquí no me vale lo que ya habia estudiado, como as de cuenta que no estudie nada (here what I studied in my country Mexico wasn’t valid). Over here it was like I didn’t study anything. First the language, here if one does not know English one does not know anything and well this was very difficult. I wanted to get here and get into an office job as a secretary, but no, I didn’t have the language and this was difficult.

Similar to the experience of Esperanza and Amelia, Josefina and Maria expressed their challenges in adjusting to a new language, culture and lifestyle when migrating to the United States, they expressed they had no real support network. Settling in a different community, let alone coming from another county without anyone to lend support for
understanding new laws and policies, makes it challenging for someone who is unfamiliar with a new system and has to maneuver through it. The lack of a support network to assist them in accessing work and housing was a common factor across all four participants based on their testimonies. This lack of comunidad (community) made it difficult for them to find a place to reside or understand the process of accessing rental housing in a different country. Esperanza says it best when she says, “No! We did not receive any help, no information from no one. Well with the help of other families [in the community] we were able to adapt to the community.”

Josefina describes that searching for rental housing was a challenge because there were no real organizations or information readily available to them. Josefina explained she resorted to staying with a friend of her husband to be able to search for work. When this was not working out, they quickly relocated to Huntington Park because her husband’s family was already settled there and this was a support network for them.

Josefina: No, only us, my brother-in-law told us where to go what parts that really wasn’t any good information. Well with the help of other family members, we were able to adapt to this community…Ahh no!! It was very difficult first the change in schools and well a little difficult because we didn’t know anyone.

Amelia: No!! Nothing! No help!
Maria: Umm… From what I know no, because it is like one just arrives here. My Aunt was the one first to go and she well like she was the only close family she went and told us come over here and we will help each other out.

Maria who is now a 28 year-old, full-time housewife, lives with her husband and two children. She shows apparent concern for the welfare of her children and a desire to provide them with their basic needs and a great education. She tolerates abusive housing conditions to remain close to a school where she is happy with the educational opportunities for her children.

**Economic challenges**

In order to understand the degree of economic hardship the participants may or may not have encountered, the participants were asked a series of questions related to their household income and any economic challenges they have experienced. Specifically, participants were asked to describe their current household income and if it was a stable monthly amount, or if it varied depending on the work availability. If their income varied, they were also asked if they were ever late ever or unable to pay the rent and what types of consequences they experienced. The outcomes of these questions were that three of the participants expressed some of their economic struggles in maintaining full-time employment in this economic crisis, where at times they were not able to afford their family’s basic living expenses.
Maria and Josefina affirmed that having this instability in their monthly household income causes difficulties in paying rent on time. This instability of work for her husband has affected their ability to pay full rent, therefore resorting to inviting a friend to share the cost of rent in Huntington Park. Even considering searching for another rental unit poses some limitations for them. Josefina expresses:

Yes, (there are economic difficulties) because right now every month it is $1,000 and then this is a whole lot, if it is raised it is worse. Right now in where ever place that one goes and rents it is the deposit and the rent, if this one is difficult...

Two of the participants made a connection between working full-time or having to work over-time and the limitations in spending time with their children. While Esperanza is grateful for working full-time and over-time because there is an economic need to pay the rent, it sometimes conflicts with dedicating time for her family:

I earn minimum wage. While it varies depending on the job, we sometimes have a lot [of work] and sometimes very little, but we get paid minimum wage by the hour… yes [a rent increase] affected me a little because, well, my expenses were now more than before and I replaced other expenses like bills, and I needed to work more, and that sometimes affects the family. We dedicated less time to family.

Amelia says:

My (wages) are like $1,300 monthly. Well it varies depending on the work. I do work full time and he (my husband) at times he works and at time he doesn’t have work. At time it is very difficult because my children I have to discount a lot of thing right. But yes I always look for the manner to pay.
As a housewife and mother of a toddler and school age child, Maria’s role in the household is to ensure her family is in a safe and healthy environment in her home and in the surrounding apartment complex. Raising a growing family on an unstable single income, Maria finds herself confronted with economic struggles that are due to her husband being the sole income provider for the household, and this income is not stable; it depends on the availability of work. This instability of work was shared between all the participants:

Esperanza struggles to make ends meet living in an unstable economic climate and is challenged by increases in costs for basic living expenses. When asked if she had been late with the rent in the last six months and what reasons did she give to the owner, her response was, “Yes, because the work was slow.” This instability in the availability of full-time work resulted in Esperanza falling behind on her rent payment: “Yes there have been times that I have not had enough for the rent due to the work because the work was low and at times well it was not enough.”

Currently Maria is grateful that there is enough work for her husband, but understands that it can vary:

Well it is right now to spend them “para pasarlas” it is good because after the rent and all that at times there (money) left for food. But it is dependent on how big the work is if the work is good for us or if not well if it is a small job it is just enough for the rent.
A common trend found between participants was the need to share rental costs due to rent increases. In the case of Esperanza, she discussed that she had to share rent when her work was slow and because of the increasing rents. This economic burden encouraged Esperanza to ask her friend to live with her so the rent could be made: “Yes one time, I invited my friend to live with me so she can help at least a little with the rent.” This economic hardship was similar in the case of Amelia who expresses her household has two working families living there in order to pay for the cost of rent and living expenses. Amelia relates, “Yes, between two families. Then, we are 5 adults and 5 children.” Maria shared that one time she had to rely on a friend to make the rent. “Doubling up” was common across participants. They either were living with extended families or asked a friend move in to help with the rent at one time or another. Maria shares:

One time yes we had to invite a person (to move in) because we paid a lot for rent and we had to divide a two-bedroom because the house was big and a friend had to move I to help pay for the rent.

Now, Josefina and her family have settled into the community of Huntington Park and are able to share the rent in a small two-bedroom apartment with her brother-in-law. Josefina relates that in her household there are, “Five, my brother in law, my husband, my two sons and me.”
In this economy, these participants had at least one occasion where they could not pay the rent as struggling renters, and all but one did not depend on government aid to assist them. Even when facing economic hardships to pay for basic living expense, such as food for their children, these participants did not or rarely sought assistance from government aid programs. Only one time when it was absolutely necessary, Esperanza accessed government aid although she felt reluctant to request such services for her U.S. born children because of the fear of possible investigation. Amelia shared a similar experience in not requesting government assistance even in a time of need. Maria is not a recipient of any government cash aid. Although she may qualify, Maria feels intimidated to request these services for her U.S. born children, so she only receives WIC to supplement for her children’s basic food, like milk and eggs and access to healthy fruits and vegetables for them.

Esperanza: At this time I am not receiving, but at one point I did have to resort to food stamps “que acudir a estampillas” for the reason that sometimes, well one time they raised the rent and my work was low and I didn’t have enough funds for food for the children. Well one becomes scared right, or I feel I will be intimidated by other questions that one doesn’t want but they did give me assistance.

Maria: Well right now it is the WIC and no more for the children for their milk. It is the same, the fear that they want to refuse or after they want to look more into, if they ask a lot of things for rental, one says for that they loose more.
Another barrier Esperanza encountered was finding rental units that practiced disparate treatment based on family size and often discriminated against families with children:

Yes, in some occasions when they called me for the rent well they have asked how many are in total, how many children and they tell me that no, that we are too many or not the children because sometimes they write on the walls and then at times they don’t accept that (children), then I have to look at other places.

**Legal issues**

Legal status and the limitations in accessing rental housing for the four participants as undocumented Mexican female tenants were partly caused by the fear of investigation into their documentation as immigrants. Even when they felt the need to seek code enforcement to address repairs and maintenance, they were intimidated because of their legal status. When participants were asked questions about challenges in obtaining rental leases and if they felt discriminated against, all women responded that a major barrier was they did not have access to a social security number, and they did not have a way to verify their credit history. Esperanza conveyed her limitations in obtaining a rental contract because of her legal status. It was often a constraint when applying to places where they require a social security number or a credit check. This made her feel limited in her rental
options and sometimes left her with a feeling of frustration and not wanting to look any

further. Esperanza explains:

Well when I went to look for rentals for the first time, yes I was scared because

many asked if I had credit and a social security number so they could rent (to me).

Yes, because they wanted me to have a social security from there they would

check my record and for that reason I felt intimidated and it was better that I

didn’t go look for a rental.

Maria emphasizes the fact by stating that when applying for rental units, she encountered
discrimination based on her appearance. She further explains one of the biggest obstacles

was the prerequisite to have a social security or credit card and enough funds for the deposit

and credit checks:

Well it is like I said if someone does not have credit they don’t give them the

apartment. Then another thing is when they look at you and how we look and know

that we don’t have stable work they ask for check stubs and when we say we get

paid in cash, they change their expression (face) and come out with other things like

there are too many people and you can’t live here like that. Yes, when they ask for

your credit, your background check and all that, and apart from this it is more
difficult when they ask to pay $25, your social security, it is like a lot of

requirements to ask to rent an apartment.

Disparate treatment

Three different forms of disparate treatment were identified in this study. The first

form was an economic obligation to pay for their own repairs in regards to issues of

maintenance to the rental units. The second form consisted of undignified housing or slum

conditions that had limited access to community resources. Lastly, participants reported
feeling intimidated in reporting or filing formal complaints with housing enforcement due to possible interrogation. In comparing their current neighborhood of South Central Los Angeles where both women have settled and remained since their arrival to the community, Esperanza compared her neighborhood in Los Angeles to her country of origin Puebla, Mexico, whereas, Amelia compared her current neighborhood in South Central Los Angeles to a previous community in South Central Los Angeles. Amelia expresses she has experienced some small differences in environment:

Well there are differences where I lived before there was a lot more movement, a lot of noise, like a lot of robberies outside in the street. Until here it is more, a little more calm, it is not a lot like that, a lot of noise, violence all of that like there was before. A lot of police would come frequently and here well it is a little less. The housing over there was better but well it is almost the same. There is not a lot of differences it is almost the same.

Maria explains that the neighbors and rental unit environments where she is currently residing have changed in the past three years; people are now more isolated:

Well here with this rent, well yes it is a little bit more harder because when I first arrived here like three years later we were also in Huntington Park but like the people around us were more united they talked more, did things together and now here it is no like that each person with their things I think it is for the same reason of the owner it is like no body helps each other and we don’t talk to each other.

Maria expresses, while her current rental unit is not in the desired conditions or the rent is at times difficult, the location is convenient for her and in walking distance from a preferred school for her children. It is also close to the bus lines and local stores:
Good because we have everything here close by, the buses run each moment “y corren a cada ratito” as well in situations when stopping at places it is good but in other parts I think I feel that all the people from here help.

Even though Esperanza did not express that she felt that she had been excluded from housing based on her legal status or class, this was not always the case in her previous rental contract in South Central Los Angeles. The owner only provided the contract in English, and she had to ask a friend to assist her in translation. In this contract there were conditions the owner put where she felt that they violated her privacy:

For example the owner put that he can enter the apartment at whatever time and I was not in agreement with this because I believe he has to notify me before because perhaps I am showering or something when he enters and that is what I was not in agreement with. This contract was in English and I was looking for someone to help me read it.

However, she shares that there is now mutual agreement between both her and the owner.

Her current contract was provided in both English and Spanish, and the terms are reasonable for her:

Yes I have a rental contract now that I am living here in this place in South Central Los Angeles well everything is good in the contract, I was in agreement and so was the owner with the written contract. He once put this contract for one year and I asked him month to month and he approved it with certain conditions.

In terms of conditions, all participants experienced that they had to pay for maintenance out of their own pocket. Esperanza says:

Yes, well as an undocumented Mexican woman I feel limited at times. I am with fear or intimidated to look for help for my repairs, weather by telephone or any other
form for my repairs because one always fears they will ask for a social security and one does not have this.

Most of the times all the participants shared they found themselves having to pay out of their pocket for the repairs to their units where the owner failed to respond, because on a daily basis, they could not tolerate the conditions they were under. Esperanza shares:

   Well inside the property yes I have experienced at times the owner doesn’t want to make repairs, the owner wants one to repair (fix) from their own money and well outside, only sometimes, people throw a lot of trash. Well the same that I had to put (pay) out of my own pocket to fix certain repairs or animal infestations inside the household. Ah well only one time he didn’t want to fix the bathroom, he was fixing the roof well it took a lot of days to fix it and well I paid from my pocket and well it gets expensive so it economically effected me in personal and well I talked with the manager so he could discount the money from the rent but no, she did not agree to this.

Maria shared a similar experience with Esperanza:

   No! Like I have said if one can’t, if one wants to fix the unit they need to do it for their part, the only thing I have noticed here is that they haven’t raised the rent like other places, where every two months they want to raise the rent, here they haven’t raised the rent this is the only difference I have seen.

When she requested a rental discounted because of the repairs that she paid for, neither the owner of manager allowed this; they made her feel like if she fixed something in her unit, it was her choice and another financial burden she had to endure.

When Esperanza participated in systematic code enforcement housing inspections in her unit, she felt this process allowed her equal access to the inspection process that generally addressed issues that had in her tolerated in her unit:
Yes in one of my experiences as a tenant I had to put up with for months walls that had holes, some animals like cucarachas o chinches roaches or bedbugs or some other rodent, yes that is what I have had to put up with. Well yes in the area of South Central of Los Angeles I fortunately haven’t had to ask for any inspections, they have done it themselves and it seems that they do an inspection once a year and I was present when they did the inspection in my house and that helps greatly, because the situation in my house has changed they have made the owner repair and that he fix any disorder in the household I am in before I was there. Well one concern was that I didn’t ask any or that they were to ask for my information, but interest yes I was interested because at least they make the owner do something about infestation of roaches or any other rodent in the walls or mold or certain windows that weren’t right or with peeling paint, I am describing to you what were my interests then, which were that everything get fixed because I have two children right and I believe that health is important.

Only one participant expressed encountering unfairness and prejudice due to the size of her family. This limited their options to units that accepted children and did not charge extra based on how many people lived in the unit. Maria shared:

Well like I said that when were looking for a apartment they would say that no because we were too big and we would be problematic; one for having small (children) and because for other being big but always when they called they want to see everyone and they wanted to who you were, how you were, what kind of clothes you wore. Yes limited, because apart from this it also limited how many people can enter (the lease) and at times there was places that did not accept kids, even with one kid or two mostly the people didn’t want (to rent with) children.

Maria further expresses discrimination based on appearance:

Yes, like I said when one is going to apply to rent a place, they always want to know exactly how many people it is and at times when they want interview you they want all the people that are going to live there and to look how one looks, and if there are a lot [people] or they didn’t know that we were a lot of [people] and they put other things that they will see and we’ll call you later…I have a neighbor who
had two children and they charged her more for the children. They said it was because they use a lot of water and because the children are troublemakers and the owner has to make more repairs these are the excused they put.

When the following questions were posed on: What do think are the prevalent issues in your rental unit and community? Have you addressed these issues with the property owner or manager, and what was the response? Maria explains prevalent issues that have continued in her house are cockroach infestation, where the response from the property owner is to blame the tenant for the continuation of these issues.

Well the owner would tell us for example here there is a lot of cockroaches and other insects and she says: “ustedes son los cochinos, marranos que no limpian” you guys are the dirty pigs that don’t clean because her house there are no bugs so then she is saying one has to clean so they don’t have animals (bugs) in the house but well she doesn’t have to call us dirty pigs. When the code enforcement inspectors were here they talk to us with good intention, I don’t know why there were too many people inspecting but well overall it was good.

Maria reflects on her dissatisfaction with the treatment she receives from the owner, recalling a situation, which she felt, was too much and abusive from the part of the owner, she had no other avenue but to ask the police to intervene. Maria depicts her current rental experience and she portrays the negative relationship she has with the property owner.

Maria expresses:

Well she started to threaten, yes she is like that, well ultimately she hasn’t came but when she comes she always yelling, at first she wanted to enter when she wanted, but like one knows their rights they don’t let enter, but if one happens to opens the door. Well if she threaten, yes she threatened, yes well ultimately she hasn’t came but when she came it doesn’t matter she would always be yelling at first
she wanted to be entering because she said it was her right because she was the owners she could enter when she wanted. But like she knew if someone knew their rights they won’t let them enter but id one opens the door ok. Second she says that it is her voice but it does not matter she needs to see to talk with someone you need to lower your voice. With her yes, one time I had a problem with her, like how I put lights outside for Christmas she cut the lights outside and she said she had the right to take those things away because they were outside the house, and this is a problem where I had to call the police because she was threatening me a lot.

Maria and her family continue to this fear that is perpetuated by the increasing cost of rent and the instability of work. Understanding that while the rent hasn’t increased in her unit, she is all too familiar with rent increases living in Huntington Park. She explains:

Well yes, ultimately here in Huntington Park the truth is I have not seen them raise the rent frequently but yes in another place, at another unit yes almost every two months they would want to raise the rent for that reason we left there and they told us the rent was raised because they fix something and then one thing is not sufficient reason that the rent should be raise so frequent. Yes, because they didn’t raise it $10 or $20 they raised it $50 and up and that well is too much because they don’t even how do they say it 30- day notice but they give you less time. One takes it or leaves it.

Maria is content because she has not seen a rental increase but there is always a threat of one from the owner. She exclaims:

No, up to now there hasn’t been a rent increase, she says that she is going to raise [the rent] but she doesn’t even have a contract and I think it’s for this reason she can’t raise it. But she says she will raise it in the past three or four years, to everyone she has said that she would [evict], supposedly she said that with a clearing out [of tenants] and she will take out everybody to bring in new people, but she just verbally says this and after up till now nothing has happened.
In requesting repairs to the rental units all participants found that it was at times economically difficult because she was obligated to pay out of her pocket for repairs, the general attitude was if you want your units fixed up then do it yourself. If repairs were made to the rental units by the owner, it was often because of code enforcement, the interviews found out of the four participants, Maria found these repairs to be inadequate and temporary, therefore having these problems to continue. The owner would not be responsive at times because of personal illness. Maria spoke of the relationship between the owner and her as a tenant a relation that was at times problematic. Maria explains:

Well like I said only the water that keeps leaking when it rains then she patches it but she doesn’t patch it good and at times the bathroom toilet don’t flush good and this happens every so often, the ceiling and plumbing. Only when the inspectors were here they were fixing the unit but once the City of Huntington Park said ask for help because they always favor the owners like one time in Los Angeles they said you have the right for help because I remember one time we wanted to help but they said in Huntington Park it is not the same here and the owners have more rights. Yes I already told her, she even came and supposedly she repaired it, but like she doesn’t send a person that knows the problem, the repairs they do for us her grandsons [do] and they don’t know anything about construction, so then it is like “Mickey Mouse” they do what they want and that’s it.

Based on the four participants two women experienced access to housing inspections; in the case of Esperanza, she expresses the inspection process as a benefit,

No, in the time of living in the area of South Central Los Angeles there haven’t been raises (rent) for that reason there aren’t any problems with the owner or manager those have been my concerns and interests with the inspections of the city that have been done.
All the participants explained these repairs they paid out of their pocket could not even be discounted from the rent. As Maria explains:

Yes, I couldn’t discount what I spent [for repair out of pocket] from the rent. Well the only is she does not raise the rent because she does fix anything here, it is like I said she says: if your want to live good fix it yourself, for this reason if we want to fix anything it is better that we do it and pay out of our pocket, we fix the unit ourselves not really her.

There was a common fear in participating or engaging in a housing inspection, particularly in Huntington Park, Maria is often afraid to request a city code inspection because of the increasing cost of rent and the lack of tenant protections in the City of Huntington Park. Maria expresses:

Well yes because one want to fix things but at times the owner doesn’t want this and after she wants to evict one, the situation like I said to find other new apartment it is also very difficult so what one does is if they can help or resolve the problem or something it is better, it is like I said like right now that the owner hasn’t frequently came, so I don’t worry because she is not doing anything and well it is like I said it is more so I have everything close and for this [reason] I don’t want to move to another place. Some things not all, continues to be the same because if they are not behind them they forget.

Maria : Well right now they just say she is sick right now and she can’t come and I think it is for this because like I told you at least she would come once a month and recently she hasn’t came and I think for this reason that she is sick.

Maria shares that before the owner used to be more aggressive and creating problems but since she has not came around things are okay. Maria notes for the moment she is content because the owner hasn’t came around lately to harass or intimidate her, her location and
accessibility to the places she goes to on a daily basis is what deters her from considering looking elsewhere to move, therefore conforming to her conditions, she expresses:

Well like I said in the past she was troublemaker coming yelling, well also the inspection helped bring down but it doesn’t matter she still comes and yells but she hasn’t came you can say nothing new has happened. Only for the reason she hasn’t came over…Well in a time yes, but recently she hasn’t came then no. At first yes, but like to tolerate I have the school that I like close, so then this is what helps one out a lot and like I said if one does not have a car, well at least the stores and I have the clinic close. For this reason I don’t want to focus in leaving, but it is for right now that she hasn’t came it is good and this is the reason I haven’t said anything.

Maria expresses some potential problems she has run into with the system of making rent payments and not having a valid updated rental contract as she conveys how she obtained her rental agreement in Huntington Park. This system prevents the tenant any prove of completing with rental requirements, and not having a valid contract in place creates discrepancies in the responsibilities and rules of both the tenant and owner thereby perpetuating discrimination, because without prove of rental payment, the tenant looses their defense and the owner has the authority to charge a tenant for rent that may of already been paid. While the rental negotiation was conducted in Spanish the only information or type of rental agreement they received was the information about the account to deposit their rent, this is problematic as Maria notes there is no control of who is paying or not paying rent. She expresses:
Yes, but it wasn’t with the owner or manager it was with a man that was a tenant that lived here (other unit next to) before, he just told me when I will pay the rent, that my rent was to be paid every 1st of the month, this is the number of the account of the owner and this is how I pay the rent, we didn’t know what type of race “raza” the owner was or if they were a woman or a man and the truth is we didn’t know her, her name only because it was on the account we had to deposit the money into and the bank that all. Well we got to know until three months after we moved in, it happened like I said she came to see who was renting her apartment and entered [my apartment] like a owner because she said I am the owner and I can enter I only opened the door and she entered [without identifying herself] and I was left like what happened “y me quede como que paso…”

She goes on to state that how she pays her rent is problematic because there is no accountability or tracking for proof that her rent is paid:

Well with her we can’t, because we pay her [account] automatic in the bank, we don’t give her cash or personal checks, so then she can’t say that a [certain person] didn’t pay, because the bank can’t control what or who can’t deposit money. [When] we deposit the rent because she gave us her account number and we go top ay the bank and over there they give us a receipt of the deposit but really it doesn’t say what for this example we don’t have prove. It doesn’t say [name of who paid] it is for this reason you can say we don’t have any prove [that we paid]. I don’t, I pay [this account] with money order for this reason that they don’t give a other form of prove that shows we are paying the rent, but no, like I said we pay the bank and she does not have control of when or who has paid (the rent) it is like I said she has no control that yes [we paid] when she comes she says, I want you to leave [Yo]quiero que te vas but I said: if I go and deposit the rent in the bank you can’t evict us because we paid. She says like she doesn’t live close by she can’t come every time to give us prove that we paid.

Maria’s identified similarities in her position as an undocumented Mexican woman renter that the other participants also identified, the issues identified by the women were:

the language barrier; fear of interrogation; fear of retaliation. Maria illustrates:
Well yes because one always has to prepare for what is going to be asked or what their going ask for or someone from the office that speaks to us only in English and well we say the problems, but one doesn’t know is that a lot of times how to ask for or seek help and we can seek help.

Maria explains to her knowledge she has not confronted direct threats in reporting her to any government agency, however she note the owner has threatened her with a eviction. In her rental experience she has been apart of a complaint-based housing inspection that was issued building-wide due to many complaints and notes the experience with the inspectors and inspection was beneficial and an overall fair experience because violations in her unit were addressed, however this was temporary because there was no follow-up from the inspectors. Maria states, “What I know, what I remember for the most part this limitation hasn’t came. Yes, she threatened us that she would evict us.” Maria also relates:

Well like we haven’t looked for the police, I think that not too much. Well like this day that she came and they (police) were on our side, this helped but the police did help that is why we didn’t have anymore problem. The inspectors in a moment it was good they were here and when they came they talked to us, explained things, but really I don’t know why all the police, a lot of people well it was good, but there was not problems only with the owner. Well like I said [because] she hasn’t came, everything is good I think that not really. Well like that day that the police came and they were on our side well this helped, but it is almost all good. I say just leak [in the roof] and at times the bathroom [toilet] gets backed up. Only when they [the inspectors] were here they [the owners] were fixing at the time they said from the City of Huntington Park that [we] couldn’t ask for help because the law favors the owners unlike in Los Angeles the say that yes they give the right and help because I remember that one time we wanted that they helped us but they said here in Huntington Park it is not the same because they give favor the owner than the tenants.
Maria hasn’t noticed major changes in the maintenance of the properties in Huntington Park but she has noted the responsibility lies on the tenant for any repairs and where she is at there hasn’t been any rent increases. Maria has noted however, in her experience as renter in Huntington Park she has been affected by bank repositions in two properties in Huntington Park as a renter, she explicates her experiences and economic losses. Maria expresses:

In two places yes we had to leave because in one place “hasta” the owner lied and she was charging rent when she had time to leave the property and in another place we had to we had to leave because the bank wanted the house, we were unaware nada mas it only happened because one neighbor advised us in a discussion that we were paying the rent, then she asked if we were still paying her? We said yes,[she responded] but why if the owner here the woman told us that we had to move all your stuff by a certain time. One month or more we did not pay the rent because we were going to move but she the owner of the house, had us pay four months of rent when she didn’t have reason to charge us, for the help from the neighbor we found out that we need to move, like I said that this cause us to rent a garage and practically we were living in it, we did not have enough time to gather money to move to another place. Well yes we lost more than we gained in the place, only that the owner neglected that she received the money from us.

Josefina expresses the frustration in not is able to provide any proof of income or references that resulted in first not finding a place to rent. She expresses:

Yes, because how they would ask for work check stubs from both of us and some kind of prove that showed we were renting in another place and like we just arrived here and how they asked for the places we rented before, they didn’t rent to us in no place.

Josefina expresses that her economic situation is stable right now but even with her and her husband working full-time they still have to rely on extended family to complete the rent requirements. She exclaims that sharing rent creates an economic dependence on the
household to make the rent and there have been times where this hasn’t been met. Josefina expresses that she has confronted exclusion in housing base on her economic status more than anything else. Josefina expresses:

For the wages, because we don’t have a record (rental) and he worked first and I was not working and well the income wasn’t very high for this reason they did not rent to us. Josefina: No, one time what they asked of me if I was going to rent how much income did I have and the social security number they asked of me they asked this in the application, well we didn’t apply for this reason. Josefina: Yes because right now every month it is $1,000 then it is a lot bastante to pay and if they raise it is worse. Right now in whichever place that one is going to rent it is the deposit and the rent, yes this is very difficult. Yes one time, one time we couldn’t pay the rent [because] well we split the rent with my brother-in-law, in one occasion he was left within a week without work and then well it was more difficult because between my husband and me we couldn’t gather the money needed.

Josefina goes on to say:

No, well the stamps they would given to me because the children are from here, if not one has to work. A [solicitation] for an application came but I did not fill it out because more than anything they always ask for a social security [card].

When the question was posed to the participants if the past six months have you ever been late on your rent? If so what were the reasons provided to the manager, and did the owner’s representative agree to a verbal understanding to accept partial payment, and was this arrangement ever broken resulting in a lawsuit or eviction? The responses varied but all participants shared similarities, Josefina said it best when she expressed:

Well I don’t think so at times, yes I feel limited to ask for help. Well I don’t know where to go and when I get there at places and not knowing English, well less they understand ones (needs). They have never neglected [rent], for example when we rented in a other place we arrived with social security number of my the dad of my husband and for bringing in another person they raised our rent they said that if another person enters it was going to be $100 more and they would continue to
charge me with the rent increase even if. Well they would charge for this person entering and they would continue to reduce the $100.

Most of the experiences with obtaining a contract in Spanish or with the option of time so they can have it translated was not a problem for the participants. When asked: Did you negotiate the rental agreement verbally in Spanish and have you received a written contract in English? Have you been obligated to sign an agreement without a translation? Have you ever had a situation when the manger or owner refused to accept the rent? Can you talk about that? Josefina elaborates, “Well a written contract always they gave, [it] in the application, she had one. In English, we did not receive a contract in Spanish.” The participants with exception of one all agreed though they have not felt insulted by the owner or manager but they all shared that they have had to tolerate a housing issue needed to be repaired. When the participants were asked; what do you think are the prevalent issues in your rental unit and community? Have you addressed these issues with the property owner or manager, and what was the response? Josefina shares her experiences best:

For example one of the problems that we have is this market, ahh all that trash, and then with the second house it is with a lot of trash, the High School also throws a lot of trash, only one time the Street cleaner passes, only Wednesdays.

Josefina expresses

No, well at times we told them it is when you pass it smells very ugly or like that and they don’t come. Yes they take along time to come but days not months. When the plumbing was backed up they didn’t come in two days then yes everything was very ugly, yes in all the apartments. Well my husband paid the rent and he told them
they needed to fix some things that were bad here outside and they told him to wait right now that they didn’t have time that later after they would come and up to now a month has passed and they haven’t came [back]. We decided at times that if they are going to attend to us we would speak to them in the morning and the night to see if they are coming, but for many times we did not say anything.

Only two of the women participated in a housing inspection; they both share a common benefit, but in the case of Maria she explains the problems reoccurred because there was a lack of follow-up. As for Amelia and Josefina they shared that they have not experienced any housing inspection or known or this as an option.

Participants concluded the interview expressing their concerns to improve their housing and community in the following chapter these recommendations will be made along a presentation of the general findings and provide an analysis of the interviews; identifying common themes of first the interview if participants encountered any difficulties in their migration and adaptation; secondly, documenting their economic challenges; third it will identify their legal issues and lastly expose disparate treatment within this sample of undocumented immigrant renters. In addition to interview outcomes, a questionnaire was sent via email to housing officials in the cities of Los Angeles and Huntington Park in order to better understand policies and procedures related to city code enforcement practices and their roles and/or limitations when ensuring city-wide housing maintenance and accountability. Reference to the responses will be made in the following chapter to draw an
analysis based on the experiences of these renters to the policies and procedures of the city officials.
CHAPTER 4
Discussion and Recommendations

By discussing the anti-immigrant political climate, using the context of historical land displacement, the instability of capitalism, and our current housing crisis, this thesis sought to document and identify three factors that limit access for undocumented, *Mexicana* immigrant renter populations in Huntington Park and South Central Los Angeles: 1) economic challenges; 2) legal issues; and 3) disparate treatment in access to dignified housing. The interview results found three themes emerge: 1) low wages and limited access to full-time work created economic instability; 2) legal limitations resulted in limited housing options; and 3) disparate treatment practices imposed fear when tenants sought to address housing conditions.

All participants encountered economic instability. Due to economic hardships caused by the state of the economy and the rising cost of living, coupled with unsecure job options, all participants described a struggle to “make ends meet.” This finding supports research that shows low-income households face multiple challenges in accessing upward mobility (Bobo et al., 2000; Valenzuela & Gonzalez, 2000; Bender, 2010). A specific example is that three out of four interview participants were forced to live in mixed-family households in order to address basic living expenses (Bender, 2010). Two ways economic
viability can be fostered and sustained in low-income rental communities are through creating more access to affordable housing and implementing rent control policies, as seen in South Los Angeles.

The two main legal issues identified by participants were their lack of documentation and a fear of investigation into their legal status. In terms of documentation, the participants identified that because they did not have access to a social security card or number and credit history, this limited their access to housing options. While the literature did not address this in detail, Bender (2010) alluded to the ways policies exclude undocumented communities because of their legal status. This research demonstrates the need to investigate fair housing practices within undocumented communities.

As for legal status, participants felt fear to initiate complaint-based code enforcement procedures to address needed repairs. They were afraid of an investigation into their resident status and the possibility of retaliation, such as eviction. While research by Esbenshade et al. (2007) mentioned discrepancies within local housing enforcement in undocumented communities, it did not provide personal accounts of their experiences. As one participant recommended, tenants should not have to provide extensive documentation, such as check stubs or proof of residency, when applying for rental units; while this may not
be feasible for a landlord, interviews showed that the undocumented population in this study contributes to the cash economy through their labor and should be able to validate their work with written proof. Considering the 11.1 million people without documentation or work permits, they are contributing to the economy without being accounted for and suffer from legal barriers and imposed economic limitations in accessing housing (Passel & Cohn, 2013). Currently, the U.S. Senate is addressing immigration reform by negotiating legislation that will allow undocumented communities to access a “path to citizenship” (Passel & Cohn, 2013). However, advocates and researchers project that as the legislation stands, it may only include approximately 5 million unauthorized immigrant families with U.S. born children under 18 years of age (Passel & Cohn, 2013). While this legislation is a step towards incorporating a good portion of this invisible population into the mainstream economy, half of the undocumented population will still be excluded. Furthermore, if passed, this population may still be in limbo for five years while they wait to qualify. Ultimately, the participants from this study would benefit from having some way to validate their economic contributions through a fast-track system that gives them a temporary work permit to access more housing and labor opportunities. If better legislation was available,
fear would be reduced, and it would encourage this population to come out of the shadows and participate more in civil engagement.

Three main themes emerged when participants were asked about their rental experiences in terms of disparate treatment. Participants expressed that they were discriminated against based on race and appearance, they were obligated to maintain their rental units by paying “out of pocket” for repairs, and there was a lack of proactive code enforcement to ensure habitable housing. Two of the participants expressed that their physical appearance was a determining factor in being screened for rental units, and one of the tenants adamantly expressed owners were either unresponsive or provided excuses about the availability of rental units. As noted by Bender (2010), “societal impressions of Latino/as as dirty [and] poor stewards of… their homes” (p. 174) was a common perception. This perception was echoed by one participant when she expressed the landlord said, “You guys are the dirty pigs that don’t clean.” Research supports these attitudes, as it identifies racial exclusion and discrimination based on landlords’ perceptions of Latinos/as (Bender, 2010, Bobo et al., 2000, Sides, 2003, Valenzuela & Gonzalez, 2000). These attitudes violate The Fair Housing Act of 1965 that “made it illegal to discriminate in the sale or rental of housing based on grounds of race, color, religion or national origin” (Weil, 2007, p. 57).
This research highlighted racial attitudes and perceptions that were confirmed through personal accounts and shows the need for further research to determine if these attitudes are found on a greater scale. With a larger sample, research may identify if current fair housing laws address discrimination for undocumented communities.

The literature expresses that often times Latinos/as live in slum-like conditions (Acuña, 2004; Bender, 2010; Bobo et al., 2000; Estrada, 2008; Gonzalez, 2000; Griswold del Castillo, 1979; Monroy, 1999; Sides, 2003; Valenzuela Jr. & Gonzalez, 2000; Weil, 2007). Participants of this study confirmed these findings, as they live and/or have lived in deteriorating housing conditions. In addition, they expressed their obligation to pay for repairs if they wanted any. This is problematic because all tenants, regardless of status, pay rent and should be protected under California civil code regulations. Ultimately, there needs to be more owner accountability for property maintenance so violations do not persist.

While various fair housing organizations service the City and receive a percentage of referrals, these housing policies reinforce an anti-tenant rights environment where ‘fair housing regulations’ become a challenge to enforce because a lack of tenant/landlord protections and lack of enforcement of the California Civil Code tenant/landlord rights and
responsibilities. One solution can be more efficient code enforcement inspections and procedures within renter communities.

As this study demonstrated, code enforcement was absent in all but one case. In comparing the two cities, one participant from South Central Los Angeles expressed satisfaction with systematic inspections because rental violations, such as rodent infestation and peeling paint, were addressed in a timely manner. By contrast, in Huntington Park, one participant expressed that while code enforcement initially identified violations, there was no consistency in terms of follow-up to address them. The lack of consistent city inspections, or systematic code enforcement, and the lack of accountability on the part of the owner to address tenant concerns subscribe disparate treatment to Mexican undocumented immigrant renters. In addition, in a city such as Huntington Park, fear of retaliation was expressed as a factor in a complaint-based reporting system. Research by Weil (2007) and Oliveri (2009) support the lack of inclusion for undocumented communities in terms of upholding fair housing laws and protections. Even with the Fair Housing Act, access to knowledge of tenant rights and responsibilities is questionable among Mexican undocumented immigrant renters because their documentation status can be a factor that prevents them from accessing or exercising their rights.
Furthermore, this research also found conflicting information between tenants’ experiences with code enforcement and claims made by city code enforcement officials. Through email correspondence, City of Huntington Park officials stated there is currently a pro-active code enforcement program. However, Huntington Park tenant Maria disagreed, as she recommends stricter and more consistent code enforcement inspection practices, as an obligation for property-owners to maintain their rental properties and avoid the permanency of slum conditions. This supports research that shows rates of inspections are consistently lower amongst Latinos, thereby sustaining disparate treatment (Bobo et al., 2000; Grant, 2000; Ross & Turner, 2005; Valenzuela, Jr. & Gonzalez, 2000). The inconsistencies between tenants’ experiences and code enforcement responses call for more oversight and enforcement of fair housing procedures.

As noted above there is a persistence of slum conditions that ultimately supports Harvey’s (2000) notion of a “spatial fix,” in that systematically, by means of economics and status, poor communities are segregated into certain areas that are infused with violence and issues of overcrowding. Amelia from South Central Los Angeles describes high levels of violence, a loud neighborhood, and high rates of car robberies as persistent problems within her neighborhood. This affirms Bobo et al. (2000) and Valenzuela and Gonzalez’s (2000)
findings that show prevalent social issues are persistent in low-income areas. This is a form of oppression where undocumented communities are kept “where they belong.” Furthermore, in communities such as Huntington Park systematic “spatial fixes” are evident in the lack of foreclosure prevention programs and rental assistance for tenants. One participant from South Central expressed it best when she recommended collective community action and advocacy by building leadership from within the neighborhood to ensure housing rights and dignified conditions are inclusive of immigrant communities.

Although this sample is limited to four participants in two distinct urban communities in Los Angeles, it cannot be reflective of the entire population of *Mexicana* undocumented immigrant renters. It can however, be used as a case study that documents their rental experiences and associates these experiences with the gap in previous research. This study calls for future research and investigation on this topic with a larger sample population at the county, state, and federal levels to determine if disparate treatment in the rental market is a persistent pattern within undocumented, immigrant communities.

Ultimately, this research sought to include and give voice to the experiences of undocumented, *Mexicana*, immigrant renters. It aimed to determine if their experiences were similar to the literature that links economic disenfranchisement with higher levels of
housing disparities. This study found the link between economics and housing disparities is evident for the undocumented, *Mexicana*, immigrant renter. Historically, land displacement is embedded into the foundation of the Mexican experience in Los Angeles, and it continues today through forms of disparate treatment in the rental market. Altogether, the systematic root of capitalism forces economic segregation on communities seeking upward social mobility and results in limited access to economic sustainability, creating barriers for poor communities. This becomes and even greater challenge for the undocumented, immigrant, *Mexicana* renter. Under our current legislation, there may be some hope for a percentage of this population to incorporate into the system and benefit economically. Future research should follow this sample or similar populations to determine if these communities can obtain upward mobility and reach “the American dream.”
References


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APPENDIX A
Interview Questions: English and Spanish

Biographical Questions:
1) Where were you born and raised?
2) At what age did you migrate to the United States?
3) What were you doing in Mexico before migrating? (Did you work, or attend school, or were a homemaker? What was your economic situation in Mexico?).
4) What is your age and occupation?

Interview Questions that correspond to research question one:

1. When did you migrate to this country and how was the migration experience? When and why did you settle in Huntington Park or South Los Angeles? How did you find your rental unit, was it through online, public ads or family or friends?
2. How has your family’s adjustment been in this community? Did you or your family receive any support or information when settling here?
3. Where have you lived since you settled in the United States and how does your previous community compare to your current community? Are there more differences than similarities when comparing your previous and current housing situation? Can you expand on those differences?
4. When you were seeking a place to rent, can you tell me what were your challenges in obtaining a rental lease? Were there any experiences where you felt discriminated against, and if so please explain?

Interview Questions that correspond to research question two:

1. How many persons are in your household? Is the rent shared amongst the household?

2. Please describe your current household income and is this a stable monthly amount, or does it vary depending on the work availability? If it is not stable, have you ever been late or unable to pay the rent and what were the consequences? Do you or your domestic partner currently work full time?
3. Please explain if you have been excluded or denied housing based on your legal status or source of income. Have you ever been required to provide proof of legal status or been questioned about your place of employment for a rental application? Please explain the economic challenges that you and your family face due to the increasing rent in Huntington Park and South Los Angeles. Is there any government aid you or your family receives such as Cal Works, Social Security or Food Stamps? If not what prevents you from applying for such services?

4. In the past six months have you ever been late on your rent? If so what were the reasons provided to the manager, and did the owner’s representative agree to a verbal understanding to accept partial payment, and was this arrangement ever broken resulting in a lawsuit or eviction?

5. How has your rental experience been? Describe any tactics the landlord or manager has employed which resulted in an economic hardship for your family. Explain any forms of intimidation that the landlord or manager used against you that led you to relocate. Has the landlord or manager ever refused a money order as a form of rental payment, and if so has there been any question as to you’re payments for rent?

Interview Questions that correspond to research question three:

1. Do you feel, your status as an undocumented Mexican woman limits your ability to speak out or seek repairs when addressing home maintenance issues? Has anyone within your home or outside, i.e. neighbor, manager or owner threatened to call child services, ICE or the police on you?

2. Explain if you feel you have faced discrimination at the hands of a manager, landlord or a health or Code enforcement officer or police officer based of your language, race or legal status? If so, please expand on the actions taken against you and what were the outcomes?

3. Have you ever been denied housing due to the amount of people living in the household? Have you ever had to have extended family or friends move in due to high rental costs?

4. Has a manager or owner enforce overcrowding regulations on your household?

5. Explain the process you went through in obtaining a rental agreement?

6. Did you negotiate the rental agreement verbally in Spanish and have you received a written contract in English? Have you been obligated to sign an agreement without a translation? Have you ever had a situation when the manger or owner refused to accept the rent? Can you talk about that?
7. Since 2007, have you noticed any major changes in the maintenance of your rental property, and have you been a part of a bank reposition? If so, what were your benefits or losses?

8. What do think are the prevalent issues in your rental unit and community? Have you addressed these issues with the property owner or manager, and what was the response?

9. Please share any situation that has occurred concerning your rental unit when you have felt violated or abused? Is there any area of your housing unit that is need of a repair, which you had to tolerate for months or years, and if so please explain?

10. Is there a time where you participated in requesting an inspection of your home, and if so what was your common concern and did the inspection resolve the issues? After the inspection, was there any rent increases or any repercussions from the owner?

11. Is there anything you will like to share? What would be your recommendations that may be helpful in improving the housing situation in your community?

Español

Preguntas Biográficas:

1. ¿Dónde nació? ¿dónde creció?

2. ¿Qué edad tenía cuando emigró a los Estados Unidos?

3. ¿A que se dedicaba en México antes de emigrar a los Estados Unidos? (trabajar, atender a la escuela, cuidar el hogar, etc.) ¿Cuál era su situación económica en México?

4. ¿Cuál es su edad y ocupación?

Pregunta de investigación número uno: ¿Cuál es la tendencia en la desigualdad de la vivienda hacia las mujeres mexicanas indocumentadas que son inmigrante y que rentan en las comunidades del Sur Central Los Ángeles y la ciudad de Huntington Park?

Preguntas de entrevista que corresponden a la investigación numero uno.

1. ¿Cuándo emigró a este país? ¿Cómo fue su experiencia migratoria? ¿Cuándo y por qué decidió establecerse en Huntington Park y el Sur Central Los Ángeles? ¿Cómo se ha adaptado su familia a esta comunidad? ¿Recibieron apoyo o información al establecerse en la comunidad?

2. Nombre los lugares donde se ha establecido durante su estancia en los Estados Unidos. ¿Cómo se compara su comunidad previa con su estancia en su comunidad actual? ¿Hay más diferencias que similitudes al comparar su vivienda actual con la anterior? Explique detalladamente.
3. ¿Cuándo usted buscaba un lugar para alquilar, ¿cuáles fueron algunos desafíos para obtener un contrato de alquiler? ¿Hubo algún incidente donde usted se sintió discriminada? Por favor explique.
4. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar? ¿Se comparte la renta en su hogar?

Pregunta de investigación número dos: ¿Cuáles son los desafíos económicos y jurídicos que enfrenta la mujer inmigrante mexicana que es indocumentada al intentar obtener un contrato de alquiler?

Preguntas de entrevista que corresponden a la investigación número dos.

1. ¿Cuál es su ingreso actual? ¿Es un ingreso mensual estable o varía dependiendo de la disponibilidad de trabajo? Si su trabajo es inestable, ¿alguna vez ha ocasionado que usted no pueda pagar la renta de su hogar? Actualmente, ¿usted o su pareja trabaja de tiempo completo?
2. Por favor, explique si alguna vez ha sido excluido o negado vivienda basada en su estatus legal o su fuente de ingresos. ¿Alguna vez ha sido obligada a proveer un comprobante de su estatus legal o ha sido interrogada sobre su lugar de empleo para obtener una solicitud de alquiler?
3. Por favor explique lo siguiente: ¿cuáles son algunos de los desafíos económicos que usted y su familia afrontan debido a la renta creciente en Huntington Park y el Sur Central Los Ángeles? ¿Recibe alguna ayuda del gobierno (por ejemplo: Cal-Works, Seguro Social, estampillas, etc.)? Si no es así, ¿qué le impide solicitar estos servicios?
4. En los últimos seis meses, ¿ha pagado tarde su renta de inquilino? ¿Cuáles fueron las razones que le expuso al mánager? ¿Consintió el representante del dueño con el entendimiento verbal en aceptar el pago parcial?
5. Describa cualquier táctica que el propietario o el mánager hayan empleado que haya resultado en dificultades económicas para usted o su familia. Explique si hubo formas de intimidación que el propietario o mánager utilizó contra usted que la condujeron a reubicarse. ¿Alguna vez ha rechazado el propietario o mánager un giro postal como forma del pago de alquiler; si lo ha hecho, acaso cuestionó su forma de pago?

Pregunta de investigación número tres: ¿Qué desafíos afronta la mujer mexicana indocumentada en las comunidades de Huntington Park y Sur Central Los Ángeles al ejercer sus derechos y responsabilidades como inquilinas bajo los códigos locales de la vivienda en su comunidad?
Preguntas de entrevista que corresponden a la investigación numero tres.

1. ¿Siente que su estatus como una mujer mexicana indocumentada limita su capacidad para hablar o buscar ayuda en cuanto a reparaciones y cuestiones de mantenimiento del hogar? ¿Alguna vez alguien de su hogar o fuera de su hogar (vecino, propietario, mánager etc.) amenazó con reportarla a Servicios de Protección Infantil, ICE, o la policía?
2. ¿Siente que ha afrontado discriminación en las manos de un mánager, propietario, o gerente de salud/oficial/ policía basado en lenguaje, estatus legal, o raza? Explique detalladamente las consecuencias que sufrió por estas acciones.
3. ¿Alguna vez le han negado vivienda debido a la cantidad de personas que viven en el hogar? ¿Ha tenido que invitar a su vivienda a algún familiar o amigo debido a altos costos de renta?
4. ¿Han forzado normas debido al exceso de personas en su hogar?
5. Explique cómo fue el proceso de obtención de un contrato de alquiler/renta.
6. ¿Negoció el acuerdo de alquiler/renta verbalmente en español? ¿Recibió un contrato escrito en inglés? ¿Ha sido obligada a firmar un contrato de alquiler sin traducción? ¿Ha experimentado una situación donde el propietario o mánager se negó a aceptar el alquiler/renta? ¿Podría compartir su experiencia?
7. Desde el año 2007, ¿ha notado cambios importantes en el mantenimiento de su propiedad de alquiler? ¿ha sido parte de una reposición de banco? Si es así, ¿cuáles fueron sus beneficios o pérdidas?
8. ¿Cuáles son algunos problemas prevalentes en su unidad de renta y comunidad? ¿Se ha dirigido usted a estas cuestiones con el propietario o mánager? ¿cuál fue la respuesta que recibió?
9. Por favor relate cualquier situación que haya ocurrido en su unidad de alquiler/renta cuando se ha sentido insultada (abusada). ¿Hay alguna zona de su unidad de vivienda que se encuentra en necesidad de reparación y que ha tenido que soportar durante meses o años? Explique detalladamente.
10. ¿Alguna vez participó en la solicitud de inspección de su hogar? ¿Cuál era su mayor preocupación/interés? ¿resolvió sus preocupaciones/cuestiones la inspección? Después de la inspección, ¿hubo aumentos de alquiler/renta o cualquier repercusión del propietario/mánager?
11. ¿Hay algo adicional que le gustaría compartir? ¿Tiene recomendaciones que puedan ser útiles para mejorar la situación de la vivienda en su comunidad?
Appendix B
Questions For Code Enforcement and City Planning

1. What are the requirements and or procedures for the owner to placing their properties for rent?
2. When and what kind of remodeling projects requires the owner to obtain permits? Is there a cost?
3. Is there an ordinance that limits the amount of people living in the household per square feet of the rental unit?
4. In the event that a rental property is found to be inhabitable by the City Code Enforcement or LA County Department of Environmental Health is the landlord responsible for relocation assistance? If not, does the City assist these tenants?
5. What are the current city-funded programs that promote healthy housing and eliminate in home health hazards, can all low-income tenants access them?
6. Does the city offer low-income rental assistance programs, if so, what are the requirements in accessing them?
7. In the City of Huntington Park Housing Element, two main housing concerns were found; overcrowding and lack of maintenance to rental properties. Can you expand on the City’s plan to address these issues?
8. How has the foreclosure crisis affected the housing market in your city?
   Were there a high percentage of subprime loans administer in the purchasing of homes in your city?
9. What has the city done to address the foreclosure crisis in your municipality?
   What city-funded programs assist tenants with emergency rental assistance and what are the requirements in accessing them?
10. Can housing enforcement be done while the property is occupied by tenants and undergoing foreclosure procedures, what actions are taken?

In preliminary research, under the Huntington Park Municipal Code Section “H. Valid photo identification shall be required as a condition of tenant registration. A valid photo identification is a state issued driver’s license, a military identification card, an official state identification card or a Police Department registration card. Management shall post in the lobby/registration area signs declaring that photo identification is required for every tenant and that the registration information will be presented to the Police Department upon demand, and I. Management is to keep and maintain complete and accurate tenant
registration cards in duplicate, including photocopies of required photo identification. 

Registration information shall include the name of the tenant, unit number, rental rate, and vehicle type and vehicle license number. The duplicate copies of the registration cards shall be taken to the Police Department weekly. Registration information shall be provided to the Police Department upon demand” is this code enforced or has it been removed? 

11. Is there a registration fee to property owners established for rental units? 

12. Is your city Code Enforcement complaint-based and/ or systematic? Are there fees per inspection, if so what are they? 

13. Once inspection is conducted if violations are found how long does the owner have to comply? How many days or months will re-inspection take place? 

14. How many housing inspections are done on a monthly or annual basis? Of these inspections what are the percentage of properties that comply first re-inspection. 

ADDED 2/4/13 

15. What is the average, lowest and highest residential rent in the city? 

16. What is the protocol done when a resident (tenant) approaches your agency for tenant/ landlord disputes? 

17. In the event of a housing inspection and citations (or housing violations) are issued/ cited (to be) repaired what party is this disclosed to and what is the protocol to ensure the (violations) mitigated?