

Housing as a Human Right vs. Housing as a Commodity:  
A closer look at landlord-tenant relations in Long Beach, California

By

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THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Community Development

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

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2020

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

While this journey has come to a close, I am forever grateful for the learning opportunities, newly formed friendships, and mentorship I acquired all throughout graduate school. First, I would like to give an immense thank you to my thesis committee for their role in my personal and academic development – Steve Wheeler, Jonathan London, and Rob Wiener. You have all been incredibly patient, encouraging, and helpful through all the stages of my research. Next, I would like to thank our Graduate Program Coordinator, Carrie Armstrong-Ruport, for her constant support and guidance from beginning to end. Finally, I could not have made it this far without the emotional support from my cohort, significant other, and family. It is without doubt that in future reflections of this chapter of my life, I will be filled with feelings of nostalgia and gratitude for the wonderful path it has led me to.

## **ABSTRACT**

Landlords (housing providers) and tenants (renters) are in a transactive partnership with opposing interests – landlords invest in properties and seek to maximize their profits, while tenants pay rent for their housing and in return, expect decent living conditions conducive to a good quality of life. This research examines the state of landlord-tenant relations during a period of increasing tenant protections in Long Beach, California. The passage of AB 1482, the California Tenant Protections Act of 2019 protects California tenants through the enactment of a statewide rent cap of up to 10% and just-cause eviction for tenants in “good standing”. By gathering both landlord and tenant perspectives in a majority renter city, this project sought to understand the complexities of the landlord-tenant relationship and find common ground during a period of increasing tenant protections.

My findings indicate an unclear or inconsistent mode of communication with landlords from the tenant perspective which may play a role in creating or contributing to the tension felt between landlords and tenants. As a response to increasing tenant protections and with the desire of holding on to their investments and maximizing their profits, I find that landlords set stricter guidelines in the tenant selection processes, potentially inhibiting access to adequate and affordable housing in the long run. If the city of Long Beach were to more explicitly support housing advocates in the successful launch of a city-wide tenant union, implement local guidelines that prioritize the provision of affordable housing and create robust tenant protection policies that address housing insecurity and ensure ethical practices by landlords, then the landlord-tenant relationship may alleviate itself from some of the tension and may make progress towards a healthier, more positive landlord-tenant relationship.

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## **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

In a time of rising rents and high costs of living, housing stability is a difficult status to procure. Low-income individuals and families are disproportionately affected with regards to affordable, decent quality housing. It is common for these individuals and families to have very limited affordable housing options in the private rental housing market, let alone have an opportunity to secure a publicly funded unit. According to Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the general recommendation is to allocate thirty percent of one's monthly income towards housing expenses in order to allow for a safety net of savings. However, the current housing climate does not align with those expectations. Under this standard, a full-time worker who lives in a major city in California and earns minimum wage would only be able to afford to rent a private room. My research examines the current state of the landlord-tenant relationship and identifies points of tension using interviews with landlords and tenants in Long Beach. This case study analysis highlights the preliminary impacts of increasing tenant protections on the landlord-tenant relationship and how it may influence housing access in the long run.

Current work in the field of housing studies often focuses on one of two topics: limitations of housing programs (including public housing) or the detrimental impacts of gentrification. Scholarly work on landlord-tenant relations was most prevalent from the late 60s to the late 90s and has not reappeared to the same extent. While it is critical to examine housing programs and gentrification as it has only gained more relevance, it is also important to pay close attention to the changing state of landlord-tenant relations in tight housing market conditions—in fact, these topics are not mutually exclusive. By examining the landlord-tenant relationship in a majority renter city during a period of increasing tenant protections, we may be able to comprehensively understand barriers to housing security on the ground level.

## 1.1 Research Site

Long Beach, California, is located in Los Angeles County and has been informally regarded as the last affordable beach city (with regards to residential rentals). With its total population at 467,354, approximately 60% are renters (American Community Survey, 2018). Long Beach is a unique site to examine landlord-tenant relations because of its changing and complicated housing policy climate. In August of 2019, the City of Long Beach passed its first ever tenant protection policy – the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance, also known as TRAO. This was considered a “tenant win” for housing agencies since it assured several tenants financial assistance if given a notice to vacate or a rent increase greater than 10%. Soon after implementation of TRAO, there was discussion about a statewide tenant protection policy (AB 1482) that would offer additional relief to tenants in the form of a rent cap and just cause eviction. AB 1482 passed and was set to become effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. TRAO was short-lived as the Long Beach City Council agreed to repeal it, citing that the state act (AB 1482) superseded the local ordinance (Ruiz, 2019). In a period of a few months, Long Beach went from having a strong local ordinance that protected renters back to having no local tenant protections. After seeing a rise in notices to vacate for “Substantial Remodel[ing]” purposes in January, newly-appointed councilwoman Mary Zendejas (with support from other councilmembers) drafted and passed an emergency ordinance (Long Beach Municipal Code Chapter 8.99) that requires property owners to obtain permits for renovations prior to serving tenants the notices to vacate (Rivera, 2020). LBMC Chapter 8.99 is a significant step forward for Long Beach and potentially other majority renter cities in California as it begins to address limitations of AB 1482.

## **1.2 Fair Housing Act of 1968**

Addison (2017) provides an overview and historical analysis on the effects of discriminatory laws and practices on the city of Long Beach. Addison's archival research finds that the placement, availability, and requirements of public housing projects in the 1950s were a critical driving force of segregation and marginalization of the Black population in Long Beach. Furthermore, the Rumford Act of 1963 was a critical law that passed in California making any form of discrimination in the sale or rental of private housing illegal. In 1964 however, Proposition 14 (spearheaded by California Real Estate Association – as of 1975, the same organization operates under the name: California Association of Realtors) passed which nullified the Rumford Act and consequently allowed discriminatory practices such as blockbusting to resume until it was deemed unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court in 1966.

In the first year that Proposition 14 was in effect, a new form of segregation and disinvestment emerged that prompted the creation of a non-profit organization, Fair Housing Foundation (FHF) in Long Beach in 1964 (has since expanded to service Los Angeles County and Orange County). Tenant mobilization by Long Beach residents and aid from FHF helped lead to the dismissal of Proposition 14 in 1966. Specifically, tenant activists accused California realtors of residential segregation on the West and North sides of Long Beach. In 1968, the Civil Rights Act of 1968, included elements called the Fair Housing Act which involved updates to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit housing discrimination in the United States. The Fair Housing Act however, has not drastically improved housing conditions due to the lack of compliance, weak enforcement, and last but not least: its neutral stance on the intersection between race and class (McGhee, 2018). Fast forward to the last decade, Long Beach has prioritized the development of market-rate housing and business interests over the rising need of

affordable housing throughout the city and strong local tenant protections. A pattern that has persisted over time and at various levels is the representation of interests of those with power and resources.

### **1.3 Tenant Protection Act of 2019 (AB 1482)**

AB 1482, officially known as the Tenant Protection Act of 2019, officially passed on October 8, 2019 with an implementation date of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. The two main features of AB 1482 are a rent cap of up to 10% and just cause eviction for the state of California (Mitchell, 2019). This set of tenant protections only applies to tenants who have lived in their unit for at least one year and have abided by their rental agreements. Tenants who have lived in their units for at least one year must legally receive notices at least 60 days in advance (includes notice to vacate/notice of lease termination) in comparison to shorter-term tenants who are only required to receive 30-day notices.

AB 1482 protects qualifying tenants from rental increases exceeding 10%. Specifically, landlords may not increase the rent more than 5% plus the percentage change in the cost of living (Consumer Price Index) for that area or 10%, whichever is lower. A landlord is allowed to increase the rent a maximum of two times over the course of a year, but it must not exceed the rent cap. Although AB 1482 did not become effective until January 1<sup>st</sup> of 2020, the rent cap provision is retroactive starting from March 15, 2019 but it does not require the landlord to pay their tenants back if they previously agreed to the rent increase and started paying the increased rental amount.

Just cause eviction refers to two types: at-fault just cause and no-fault just cause. At-fault just cause does not include relocation assistance and a landlord may proceed with the tenancy termination as normal if a tenant has defaulted in the payment of rent, breached a signed rental

lease agreement, and/or failed to follow through with a planned move-out (initiated by the tenant and notified to the landlord). No-fault just cause requires the landlord to make a payment to the tenant in the form of relocation assistance. It is under these circumstances that tenants are entitled to relocation assistance amounting to one month's rent: if a landlord substantially remodels the property, decides to occupy a unit (commonly referred to as "landlord move-in"), withdraws their property from the rental market, or has a tenant who receives a governmental agency order to vacate the property.

In other words, AB 1482 allows landlords to issue notices to vacate if they are planning to substantially remodel their units. At the beginning of the year, the city of Long Beach experienced a high volume of tenants receiving notices to vacate due to the substantial rehabilitation clause but these notices were voided by city officials. The Long Beach City Council partnered with tenant advocacy organizations in passing and creating an ordinance that required Long Beach landlords to submit proof such as a valid permit before issuing notices to their tenants. Long Beach was the first city in California to address a loophole of AB 1482.

AB 1482, like several past and current public policies, has limitations and is not completely absolved from unintended consequences. Public policies from the past are not so different from today – it is not uncommon for policies to refrain from explicit and implicit bias. The next section will examine literature on the complexities of the landlord-tenant relationship and public policy impacts on housing access for renters.

## **PART 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Private landlords hold a large portion of the housing stock and in many cities, there are more renters than there are homeowners. Low-income renters, although possibly eligible for some form of rental assistance, are usually unable to benefit from housing programs due to insufficient funds at the local, state, and federal levels (Rothstein, 2017; Desmond, 2016). On the other hand, affordable housing developments are associated with long (or even closed) waiting lists due to the limited existences of such developments and the low rates of tenant turnover. Therefore, low-income renters tend to turn to the private rental housing market for their housing needs and consequently enter a transactive relationship with their landlord.

The landlord-tenant relationship is not that different from what it was in the past. While there are more protections in place for renters than before, Madden and Marcuse (2016) argue that current political and economic structures are still in favor of elite interests which explains why there has been slow progress towards equitable opportunities. DiPasquale (2011) furthers that argument by stating that the federal policy response to housing has “focused almost exclusively on homeownership” (DiPasquale, 2011, p. 64). The resources available and public policies in place that protect homeowners significantly outnumber tenant protections. The role of government in advancing tenant rights has been minimal and there is an acknowledged need for elected officials to target scarce federal resources to meet policy objectives granting renters more protections (DiPasquale, 2011).

### **2.1 Power and Conflict**

Upon a tenant’s entrance into the private rental housing market, they are often met with restrictions as delineated in a rental lease agreement or contract. In this contractual relationship, Vaughn (1968) argues that low-income tenants are *powerless* in the landlord-tenant relationship.

In his one-year ethnography of an apartment complex in Columbus, Ohio, Vaughn finds that tenants lack trust in their landlords and fear exploitation from them. Dillahun et al. (2010) argue that landlord-tenant conflicts stem from an imbalance of *power*. Under the threat of eviction, Garboden and Rosen (2019) explain the relationship as hierarchical, where the tenant is a “debtor” and the landlord is seen as a “creditor.” The landlord's role of collecting monthly rent from a tenant in exchange for a dwelling gives landlords decision-making power and unregulated freedoms in many aspects including but not limited to setting the rental amount, housing amenities (or lack of), tenant selection, duration of the tenancy, etc. In a rental agreement, tenants agree to the terms set by landlords and if a landlord believes that a tenant is breaking any of the rules, then that is sufficient grounds to start the process of terminating that tenancy.

## **2.2 Rental Housing Market**

The rental housing market is the only viable option for people who are unable to pursue the American dream of becoming homeowners. It is the only affordable choice for many households – the rental housing market is indispensable for this reason (Blanco and Razu, 2019). In the context of rental housing, public choice theory explains that landlords are fully entitled to the rents they set and collect because of their contribution to the provision of housing (Kattenberg, 2014). On the other hand, political economists argue that rent is socially created and landlords should not appropriate rent to the point of exploitation as it leads to major social inequities (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2017). Owusu-Ansah et al. (2017) argue that rental housing dynamics can be best explained through the lens of political economy, whereby rent is considered a collective contribution between landlords and tenants and therefore rent “must be returned to the nation state to be put to collective purposes” (p. 939). In the context of Ghana, the authors show that location, rather than quality of housing, determines rental values supporting

the claim that rent is socially generated by the public (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2017). The argument made by political economists in the context of rental housing considers the social impacts to society while public choice theory views the provision of housing outside of the public sector as necessary and fulfilling a public need.

Housing market conditions have the potential to change the dynamics of landlord-tenant relations. Dreier (1982) discusses the implications of extremely tight housing market conditions. He states that a rental housing shortage provides landlords with little to no incentive to follow landlord-tenant laws due to the increased demand. Furthermore, renters who are looking to move encounter limited housing options (Drier, 1982). It is also in this climate that low-income renters are likely to experience a form or multiple forms of housing insecurity. Housing insecurity refers to “limited or uncertain access or availability of stable, safe, adequate and affordable housing” and may come in different forms: housing stability, housing affordability, neighborhood safety, neighborhood quality, and homelessness (Cox et al., 2017). In *In Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis*, Madden and Marcuse (2016) ascribe a political label to the housing market and balance of power between landlords and tenants—“what the free market boosters ignore is the question of power” (p. 27). According to Madden and Marcuse (2016), profits derived from property investments are problematic in that it supersedes the needs of residents. The root of the problem is the commodification of housing; they propose an increased stock of public and/or cooperative housing, separate from the speculative market (Madden and Marcuse, 2016).

Along with housing market conditions, scholars identify other important factors influencing landlord-tenant relations. Keller (1988) posits that there are three factors affecting the landlord-tenant relationship: housing market status, socioeconomic status, and existing laws. In conversation with Dreier (1982), Keller (1988) argues that there is a small stock of affordable

housing, which discourages low-income households already paying affordable rents to move elsewhere. Affordability takes precedence for low-income earners; having a multitude of housing options is a luxury that most residents with limited financial means cannot afford to experience (Rosenblatt and Deluca, 2012). The living conditions that many low-income households endure in order to stay in their affordable places highlights the difficulty in moving to a more suitable place. A 2013 Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on the Long Beach Housing Element identifies exposure to noise, toxins, pollution, allergens, mold, extreme temperatures, hazards associated with poorly constructed or maintained homes as potential issues when living in substandard housing. The HIA includes survey data (2013) of prevalent housing problems as reported by renters which include issues with pests (64.2%) and water damage/leaks/mold (42.5%). Furthermore, the HIA finds that the lower the rent (per zip code), the lower life expectancy, higher rates of hospitalization, as well as higher rates of child obesity that residents in those zip codes are subject to experience (Long Beach Housing Element HIA, 2013).

Lastly, Keller (1988) states that the existence of landlord-tenant laws does not adequately address the imbalance of power between landlords and tenants. In other words, the passage of tenant protection policies or pro-tenant laws does not facilitate more equitable distribution of power between landlords and tenants implying that more work needs to be accomplished at a broader scale that puts the needs of renters at the forefront. Keller (1988) supports earlier work of long-time housing scholar, Peter Dreier where he argues that the bias of landlord-tenant laws in the United States reflects the political weakness of tenants (Dreier, 1982). The bias of landlord-tenant laws refers to more protections in place for the landlord than the tenant. Community organizing groups have been successful in making lasting change as they advocate for systematic change in favor of the larger community through local empowerment. Speer and

Christens (2012) posit that community organizing efforts through mobilization and continuous presence both in the community as well as in political spaces is needed in order to achieve successful and sustainable local community change. Community organizing is critical for addressing community concerns and works towards aligning public policies to address the specific needs of communities.

### **2.3 Housing Discrimination**

Cities with a majority of renters are often associated with issues of residential segregation. Briggs (2005) notes two types of residential segregation: racial and economic residential segregation. The difference between the two is that racial residential segregation is based on ascribed characteristics and economic residential segregation refers to achieved status (Briggs, 2005). In both cases, many neighborhoods have been and continue to be homogenous in terms of economic and racial characteristics. Racism has played a significant role in shaping housing policy and facilitating the emergence and maintenance of residential segregation (Rothstein, 2017; Coats, 2014; Hernandez, 2009). In *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Richard Rothstein discusses the lingering effects of past overt and subtle racialized housing policies and criticizes federal housing programs for not sufficiently promoting integration (Rothstein, 2017). Rothstein posits that the residential segregation many cities are currently facing is a result from “systematic and forceful” policy, or segregation “de jure: segregation by law and public policy” (Rothstein, 2017). Sociologist William J. Wilson would not entirely agree with Rothstein’s main argument and rather has stated that pointing to race as the root of the problem is overly simplistic (Wilson, 1987). While race certainly plays a role, there are other factors that are also important to consider such as demographic shifts, population changes, and class transformation (Wilson, 1987). While

Rothstein and Wilson differ in how to efficiently address the problem of residential segregation, they both agree that access to certain neighborhoods vary by racial and socioeconomic circumstances.

Private landlords also play a critical role in deciding where people live and cannot live. In a 2018 study, Cunningham et al. assess housing choice voucher (HCV) (commonly referred to as Section 8) denial rates in major US cities. Housing voucher denial rates were the highest in Fort Worth, Texas at 78%, and the city of Los Angeles, California came second at 76%. These cases emphasize how challenging it is for low-income tenants to obtain housing with a voucher. Cunningham et al. (2018) conclude that landlords and property managers ultimately have the power to provide increased access to housing options but may also use that power to constrain housing options for financially disadvantaged groups. Rosen (2014) uncovered discriminatory practices by landlords participating in the HCV program that at a larger scale contributed to poverty concentration and racial segregation. Since private landlords hold a large portion of the housing stock and have customized tenant selection processes, they have the power to control what type of people live in certain areas.

## **2.4 Gentrification and Displacement**

Gentrification and displacement are not mutually exclusive terms: they go hand-in-hand in explaining changing phenomena at the neighborhood level. In their extensive literature on gentrification and displacement, Zuk et al. (2015) examine all research on the topic and draw major conclusions including, “gentrification, at a minimum, leads to exclusionary displacement and may push out renters as well” and that displacement takes many different forms (Zuk et al., 2015, p. 28). Displacement occurs when residents experience evictions (direct) or unaffordable rent increases (indirect) (Newman and Wyly, 2006; Marcuse, 1985; Smith and Debres, 1984).

Smith and Debres (1984) note the difference between displacement due to disinvestment or reinvestment but also acknowledge that many situations consist of both; for example, landlords who ignore maintenance requests and/or harass tenants but then sell the building to developers are disinvesting in their properties yet reinvesting through the sale. Increasing the rental amounts and issuing evictions or discontinuing lease terms are all actions landlords can take that facilitate direct and indirect displacement. However, strong tenant protection policies such as rent control and just cause eviction have the potential to limit displacement. Without adequate housing regulations and continuing research on displacement mitigation, there are no other sustainable remedies on the issue of displacement that several vulnerable communities face (Zuk et al., 2015).

## **2.5 Housing Policy Impacts**

The role of government, at various levels (local, state, federal) have contrasting impacts on certain groups. In their discussion of the foreclosure crisis and the impacts on the rental housing market, DiPasquale (2011) notes that governmental involvement at the federal level has centered on the goal of ensuring safe and affordable housing options for vulnerable populations (low-income households, the elderly, and disabled). However, that goal is left unfulfilled partly due to the federal government enacting policies that put homeowners' interests above renters, "homeownership subsidies are entitlements while subsidies for renters are discretionary" (DiPasquale, 2011, p. 67). Renters are unable to receive benefits that homeowners are automatically guaranteed and entitled to, instead, renters must acclimate themselves to current market conditions and know how to navigate local housing issues. DiPasquale (2011) proposes putting rental and owner-occupied housing on "a level playing field" as a solution to increasing housing access to all households regardless of income brackets.

At the state level, housing policies should implement more specific and sustainable strategies that address the needs of the state (i.e. tackling homelessness)—various stakeholder groups are involved in the research and policymaking stages in an effort to create a robust policy that addresses the state’s pressing needs. A report by the Turner Center for Housing Innovation at UC Berkeley (2019) assesses the potential impacts of Assembly Bill 1482 and highlights stakeholder concerns surrounding a reduction in housing production and a proclivity to increase rents--both of these concerns can be classified as unintended consequences of a rent cap if they persistently occur. The report, however, concludes that in its current legal writing, AB 1482, addresses these concerns as the bill excludes newer buildings and explains that raising rents over the market rate would not benefit the landlord as turnover and vacancy costs would likely increase (Turner Center for Housing Innovation, 2019). While this report considers various factors and utilizes case study analyses, it does not consider the fact that landlords may become inclined to regularly increase their rents (when some may have previously never thought to do so) as a protective mechanism against more regulative policy.

On the just cause eviction front, Been and Glashausser (2009) state that tenant protection laws may result in unintended consequences affecting the availability and quality of rental housing. The authors call for an evaluation of potential long-term consequences associated with increasing tenant protections. Specifically, the authors posit that new tenant protections may have disproportionate effects on tenants who are low-income and/or have bad credit, “if eviction is more difficult or costly, landlords may fear renting to tenants they perceive as risky” potentially reducing affordable housing options for certain groups (Been and Glasshauser, 2009, p. 23). It is crucial to closely follow and evaluate the progress of such policies so as to benefit more people.

While the housing choice voucher program is federally funded and may be carried over throughout different municipalities, many cities have local ordinances in place to tackle their local housing crises. Tenants Together, a statewide tenant advocacy organization based in California argue that although state and federal housing policies are essential to combatting housing issues, it is through local ordinances and localized tenant unions that housing justice for vulnerable groups can be achieved (Arreola, 2019). However, Greif (2018) proves otherwise in the case of Cleveland, Ohio where she performed an ethnographic study on 57 small and medium-sized landlords over the course of two years. Greif found that well-intentioned city regulations “paradoxically reinforce problems of housing insecurity and community decline” – one example included the changes landlords make in response to city regulations such as purposefully switching from yearly leases to month-to-month leases which may instill fear in long-term tenants (Greif, 2018 p. 1). Longer term leases are a proven tool for building stable, long-term communities (DiPasquale, 2011). Moreover, there have been cases where landlords anonymously report themselves to code enforcement for not following habitability guidelines in order to remove tenants (Desmond and Valdez, 2012). If not all working together to address the housing crisis, local, state, and federal housing policies may have unintended consequences that have the potential to cause more harm than what was originally intended.

## **PART 3: METHODOLOGY**

This research incorporates elements of community-based participatory research (CBPR). So often have communities been disempowered by researchers who extract data without genuinely engaging with the community and offering sustainable resources in return. In the realm of this work, community-based participatory research refers to inclusivity and active engagement with and for the community. The role of the researcher in CBPR is to build partnerships and build bridges to aid the community in the direction they feel is best (Mendez, Zaldivar, and Deeb-Sossa, 2019).

Knowing that I would be in direct and frequent contact with my own community, I wanted to put my learnings about CBPR into practice. Of the nine principles of CBPR as listed by Israel et al. (2005), I implemented principles 1, (acknowledge community as a unit of identity) 2 (build on strengths and resources within the community), 4 (foster co-learning and capacity building among partners), 5 (integrate and achieve a balance between knowledge generation and intervention for the mutual benefit of all partners), and 8 (disseminate results to all partners and involve them in the wider dissemination of results). First and foremost, I could no longer associate communities with needing empowerment or help, rather I trained myself to see them as experts who already hold the knowledge and assets to address issues of importance (Israel et al., 2005). I did not have subjects, rather research participants already holding knowledge. By viewing my community of interest as inspired by CBPR, I became connected to my topic of improving tenants' housing status at a more personal level.

### **3.1 Positionality**

My background as a Latina growing up in a single-parent household has played a large role in guiding me to the field of housing as it pertains to access to housing and housing security.

My first living arrangement with my mother consisted of a private room rental in a shared apartment and was followed by a small, but our own one-bedroom apartment—in both cases she had to contend with annual rent increases. In 2011, my mother’s dream of becoming a homeowner was realized in the form of a quaint two-bedroom house with a backyard. Having started out as housing insecure in the rental housing market to paying an affordable mortgage (below market rate rent) has helped me gain a deeper understanding of the limited housing options that certain, but a large majority of households continue to face. I fully recognize that my mother’s case is unusual especially in this housing climate and that it is more common for households now to be displaced and have no other options but to downsize and/or relocate to unfamiliar, more affordable areas. It remains a personal mission of mine to increase housing access for low-income households so that they experience a more pleasant search and procurement of housing that meets their needs and desires.

The chosen community of interest – the city of Long Beach – is one that I am personally connected to. Although I would consider myself an “insider,” I have not been physically present in my community for over six years due to being away for school. My ties to Long Beach were strictly familial and social before I started a summer internship for a tenant advocacy group. Working with my community for the first time around issues of housing was eye-opening and transformative. I learned the value of building community and holding space for them as they shared their struggles surrounding housing stability. Tenants would share their personal stories with us and being a listening ear was not enough – I felt a personal obligation to address their concerns but could not do nearly as much as the non-profit had limited resources. While we did provide advice and a directory of resources, tenants would still have to navigate other agencies in order for their concerns to be fully addressed.

I attempted to operate on a platform of cultural humility, which encompasses a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critique, constant revision of power imbalances, and maintenance of mutually respectful and dynamic partnerships (Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998). Although the short timeline of my work does not allow it to be labeled as CBPR, my long-term role will continue to be rooted in CBPR as I will carry this with me post-graduate school and into my career as a housing advocate.

### **3.2 Data Collection and Method of Analysis**

I completed a summer internship at a tenant advocacy group, Housing Long Beach, and was involved in bringing awareness around housing justice to the community. My role as a community organizing intern included learning about local, state, and federal landlord-tenant laws, attending community meetings, creating tenant brochures in accessible language, and advising tenants on a myriad of housing issues. Housing Long Beach holds monthly Renter Dispute Clinics, where renters are given advice on any habitability issues or instances of landlord harassment/retaliation they may be experiencing. I utilized this time to learn more about the housing justice movement as well as gain a community perspective on tenants' rights.

My experience as a community organizing intern informed the questions that I would eventually ask landlords and tenants in the next phase of my research: data collection (refer to appendix C and D for questions asked from each group). Prior to the recruitment of participants needed for data collection, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of California, Davis. I conducted a total of 19 semi-structured interviews with landlords and tenants (9 landlords and 10 tenants) from December 2019 to early March 2020 (refer to appendix A and B for interviewee descriptions). I recruited the participants via convenience sampling and snowballing methods. The convenience sampling method consisted of

posting recruitment flyers (refer to appendix E and F) on a Facebook page named Long Beach, Calif. and on the NextDoor application (allows neighbors to connect and keep each other informed on local events at the neighborhood level). Of the 19 total participants, three were recruited through a snowballing method which subsequently created two linked pairs (two landlords referred me to two of their respective tenants) and a tenant active in the fight for housing justice (referred by a community organizer).

The interviews ran for approximately an hour and included a different set of questions for landlords and tenants. I received research funding for the data collection and analysis stages of my research and compensated tenants a \$25 gift card of their choice. I asked landlords questions around their role, responsibilities and relationships with tenants whereas with tenants, the questions involved their rental housing trajectory and relationships with landlords. I took quick notes while I interviewed the research participants and immediately after the interview, I further organized my notes in a clear fashion to be able to refer to them at a later date. My process of analyzing the interview data included a manual coding scheme of looking for patterns across questions and subsequently, creating themes that represented important findings.

Apart from interviewing landlords and tenants, my research question requires close analysis of the California Tenant Protection Act of 2019 (AB 1482). In the realm of policy research, Majchrzak and Markus (2014) recommend synthesizing existing evidence and obtaining new evidence prior to making new policy directives. I obtained new evidence through the interviews with landlords and tenants and closely examined the contents and implications of the bill by reading the legal document (as well as interpretations of it). Policy recommendations are informed by the data derived from the one-on-one interviews and analysis of AB 1482.

Moreover, the findings from the data collection processes were written in accessible language for community distribution.

### **3.3 Landlord and Tenant Backgrounds**

The demographics of my landlord participant pool varied in some characteristics such as gender, length of occupation and landlord type (part-time/full-time and number of properties owned/managed) but family history of property ownership was a common finding in the sample pool. The nine landlords interviewed included one full-time property manager who owns her property management company, three full-time landlords, and five part-time landlords. The other occupations that the part-time landlords held consisted of construction management, liability mitigation, physical therapy, salon services, and elementary school teaching. Moreover, the number of units owned by each landlord varied significantly from living in a duplex and renting out a back unit (small) to owning several properties all throughout the city of Long Beach (large). Two landlords rented out one unit, four landlords rented a four-plex, and the remaining three owned and/or managed over 10 units. More than half of all the landlord participants reported having family history of property ownership (landlord parents) which was typically revealed when asked about their pathway to becoming a landlord. For a more specific description of each landlord, please refer to the appendix A.

The tenants I interviewed came from a diverse range of backgrounds in terms of socioeconomic status, physical ability, housing stability, and type of living arrangement. Half of the tenants were spending between 20-30% of their earnings on rent, which meets U.S. housing affordability standards. However, one of these tenants shared having experienced homelessness in the past and another mentioned needing to work two jobs in order to have a safety net. The other half of tenants could be classified as being housing-cost burdened, spending greater than

30% of their income on rent. One tenant required an ADA compliant unit as she was wheelchair-bound at the time of the interview. Four tenants had exceptionally long tenancies where they have only moved once or twice in the last ten years. The rest have lived in four to seven places in the last ten years. Three tenants were dependent on roommates to be able to afford their rent; two were a household size of 1; five were living with their partner and/or children. While the sample size of ten tenants is small, the multitude of different tenant circumstances is important to emphasize.

## **PART 4: FINDINGS**

The data I collected highlighted several dimensions of the landlord-tenant relationship in Long Beach, California. In general, landlords and tenants have different understandings and assumptions of the current housing crisis which contributes to the tension felt between them. The first two sections begin by exploring how landlords and tenants (separately) contextualize increasing tenant protections and deal with issues that are seemingly out of their control. The final section includes an analysis of the legislative document (AB 1482) supplemented with interpretations from other agencies.

### **4.1 Landlord Interviews**

Many of the landlords I interviewed agreed that their role is centered around the tenant experience. According to seven of nine landlords, the landlord-tenant transaction should result in proper upkeep of the property and individual units. These seven landlords noted that they strive to create a welcoming space for all tenants, but most were not specific in how they would create and maintain these spaces. The property manager I interviewed (L1) stated that one of her roles was piecing together communities; she perceived each apartment complex as a community. L7 in particular noted that his main and only role was to “not bother his tenants” and did so by treating them as his neighbors. Four of the nine landlords lived alongside their tenants but proximity to tenants by itself was not indicative of a more positive landlord-tenant relationship. A few landlords mentioned how their units must be decent enough for them to want to live in, if needed. On the contrary, a couple landlords stated that their main responsibilities strictly include meeting financial and fiscal needs such as maintaining full occupancy, covering the mortgage, taxes and fees, as well as having a safety net for maintenance costs. While most agreed that in general, landlords need to meet the needs of the tenants with regards to habitability and the

promotion of peace with and amongst tenants in a complex, only a few landlords provided examples and thoroughly explained how they were creating welcoming spaces.

The level of the landlord's involvement in the tenant selection process seemed to be informed by previous experiences with tenants. More than half of the landlord participants indicated family history in property ownership (i.e. parents were landlords) and as a result of this history, many had a particular tenant selection process in place. Over half of all landlords have detached themselves from the tenant selection process in that they have a designated person handle the duties such as advertising, showing the unit, looking over applications, and making the final tenant selection. A handful of these landlords hired an assistant (realtor/real estate agent/property manager) after having a negative experience with a tenant. A long-time landlord (L2) was in charge of showing vacant units and selecting the final tenant for over 20 years but it was not until a year ago that she handed over those duties to her now-assistant. L2 shared that she started to doubt her ability to select "good" tenants after realizing how "easy it is to fake wage statements" and landlord references – "you need to be a private detective to be able to determine what is actually true information [in a rental application]." Another long-time landlord (L9) had a similar experience with his long-term tenant of 17 years who had lost his job and consequently started subleasing a bedroom (in order to pay the monthly rent) without his consent. After L9 had issued warning letters that did not result in correction, he hired a property management company to initiate the eviction process and has remained with them for convenience.

The more negative experiences landlords had with tenants, the more stringent the application criteria became. For example, a landlord who would have overlooked employment instability in the past but had issues with receiving payment from a tenant who lost their job

would now require future applicants to provide more details surrounding their employment along with wage statements. When asked about what matters the most in selecting an ideal tenant, L2 and L3 both stated that an ideal tenant would need to have a full-time professional job that requires them to leave their home so as to not cause too much wear and tear inside the unit. In other words, an application of a tenant who works from home and/or earns a minimum wage job (the latter was mentioned by L3) is not likely to be selected as the final tenant. On the other hand, the property manager (L1) understands that it is common for people to work remotely or have non-traditional jobs and in those cases, she requires those prospective tenants to provide the prior year's tax return along with three months of bank records. In another case, a landlord has gone as far as cross-checking the address associated with a tenant's credit report with the name of the current landlord (on the application) through the search of public records to verify the landlord reference. Either way, the landlords are responding to certain circumstances (employment in this example) by filtering out certain applicants or by requiring more documentation.

Besides having a stable employment history, most landlords agreed that their ideal tenant must have good credit and a stable rental history. Surprisingly, many landlords mentioned that criminal background was not a barrier unless the prospective tenant had a violent offense. One landlord in particular (L8) feels uneasy with the amount of information a tenant has to disclose in the application process, so he utilizes the most non-invasive site (cozy.co) when conducting a background and credit check. L8 will have his realtor refuse applicants with a violent offense and/or an eviction record. Landlords who set a minimum credit score as a qualifying factor cite that they are filtering out financially unstable tenants who are likely to default on rent – these landlords are larger property owners that charge market rate rent. Several landlords noted the

importance of a stable rental history. For example, a tenant who has an average tenancy of 1-2 years is not likely to be selected as the final tenant if compared to a tenant whose current housing arrangement is going on 10 years. Rather, most landlords prefer to see a stable rental history because to them, it is an indicator of a stable tenant in search for a long-term housing arrangement.

Several landlords, despite not having an extensive number of negative tenant experiences (some landlords had significantly more complaints about tenants than other landlords), have never considered renting out to housing program participants (i.e. housing choice voucher/section 8). Landlords with housing choice voucher tenants first have to sign paperwork and undergo an annual housing inspection verifying that the unit meets habitability standards. L3 stated that he would not rent out to section 8 recipients as he has “watched too much Judge Judy,” where there are several examples of section 8 tenants being labeled as problematic. With regards to the logistics behind housing programs, only two of nine had experience renting out to section 8 recipients. L2 who has rented out to three section 8 recipients in the past and no longer considers housing program participants, associates those reliant on section 8 with: bed bugs, drugs, mental illness, overcrowding, and illegal subletting. Specifically, L2 mentioned that “the mix [of section 8 recipients and non- section 8 recipients] is not good” because of her experience with one veteran who she said was threatening to kill his neighbors which she stated resulted in the loss of good tenants.

More than half of landlords interviewed agreed that housing programs are difficult to navigate and for the most part, are inconvenient due to the long, bureaucratic process (housing inspection), and short-term commitment (for specific programs such as 3 or 6-month rental assistance). Only two landlords (L5 and L6) felt compelled to gather more information and

become open to the idea of accepting housing program participants in the future. The property manager, L1, was the only one who has accepted and continues to accept section 8 recipients as long as they meet the rental criteria. Despite the passage of SB 329 (prohibits landlords from refusing housing program participant applications), almost all landlords continue to have reservations and are therefore, unlikely to select the housing program participant as the final tenant.

Most landlords are informed by the market in the surrounding neighborhood to determine the rental amount. Two small landlords, L5 and L7, however, charge below market-rate rents and do not foresee issuing rent increases to their tenants – L5 and L7 both hold professional occupations outside of their rental properties. Along with average rent for the area, landlords also take the condition of the unit into consideration when determining the rent. L2 prefers to keep all of her units in great condition, regularly remodels her units, and relies on the rental averages for the areas her properties are located in. L2 added that her tenants are paying what they were originally paying at the time of move-in, “I don’t like spending much time raising rents.” L1 prefers the rents to be slightly below the market to have a large enough pool of applicants which she claims is needed in order to select the “best” tenant. Although L8 charges market rent, he is sympathetic to life circumstances and does not charge late fees if rent is not paid by the 1<sup>st</sup>. Moreover, he reduces the rent by 50% in December for all his tenants and gives his tenants a \$100 gift card because he understands that families often incur additional costs (referring to the holidays) around this time. If landlords are charging market rate rent, there are ways to make tenants feel appreciated and seen.

L8, a long-time landlord shared the concept of “slumlord theory” which refers to the idea that landlords who are charging affordable rents simply cannot maintain their properties to safe

standards due to having such a small margin of profit. Slumlords are failing in fulfilling their duties which creates feelings of tension and resentment by the tenant. This presents an issue because low-income tenants are more likely to live in uninhabitable conditions but cannot afford to move without compromising an important feature such as being able to live in their own unit vs. the next affordable option: renting a room. While this may certainly be the case for some landlords charging low rents and ignoring maintenance requests, it is not for all. The three landlords who set their rents significantly below market have no issues with charging lower rents because to them, it guarantees stable tenants and less turnover. L5 charges \$1150 for a one-bedroom apartment which she stated was normal at the time of purchase and is not interested in raising the rent to current averages, "I'm not making a whole lot of money. As long as the rent is covering the mortgage, that is fine with me." In the case of L7, he disclosed that he charges a monthly rent of \$900 (for a spacious one-bedroom apartment with an office space) to all his tenants that he has had from 5 (newest) to 27 years (longest tenant). L7 stated that he has the luxury of being able to charge low rents since he purchased at a very reasonable price and has paid off his mortgage. What L5 and L7 have in common though is that they are considered small property owners, personally manage their rental properties, and both hold full-time occupations elsewhere. In the case for landlords that own several properties across the city, they did not express a desire to charge below market rents. It is possible for landlords to charge affordable rents (not dictated by the market) and adequately respond to maintenance requests, but it may be more complicated for landlords who are still paying off their mortgages and/or are motivated by profit maximization.

More landlords were against all or a part of AB 1482, the Tenant Protection Act of 2019. Four landlords were completely against AB 1482 and three landlords had mixed feelings about it (one landlord disagreeing with the rent cap and the other two against just-cause eviction). The

landlords against AB 1482 alluded to rent-controlled cities and the issues they are continuing to face as well as the possibility of a halt in the construction of housing. When asked about their feelings regarding TRAO (Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance) and AB 1482, L1, L2, and L3 all provided examples of measures they thought about taking or have already taken as a response to increasing tenant protections. L1 stated that as tenant laws tighten, so will the criteria when selecting tenants, “[leaving] little room for helping anybody.” L2 and L3 described more specific tactics revolving around hotel conversion and/or rent increases. When rent control for the City of Long Beach was actively being campaigned in hopes for the ballot measure to pass, L2 adjusted her rents in case it would pass and potentially limit her control of raising the rent. When the city announced the passage of TRAO in April of 2019, L2 decided to convert an apartment complex to a hotel before the implementation date of August 1, 2019. Although TRAO and AB 1482 are not applicable to him due to owning a duplex and living in one of the units, L3 mentioned that for the landlords it does apply to, they would have to raise their rents as a response to stricter regulations. Only two landlords were in full support of AB 1482, noting that it is important to have protections set in place for renters – both of these landlords expressed sympathy for renters and needed protections for vulnerable/housing-insecure tenants. While only three landlords (all of which are considered large property owners and are affiliated with property management companies) provided specific details on how tenant protections negatively affect how they run their business, most were against it due to it taking away some degree of their decision-making power now that they needed to meet regulations on raising rents and issuing notices to vacate.

Almost all landlords expressed frustration with the City of Long Beach, particularly with how local ordinances such as TRAO and the eviction moratorium labels landlords as the

problem. Many agreed that the city should more effectively handle the homelessness issue as well as provide landlords with more incentives so that they do not feel the need to issue rent increases. Several landlords brought up that the City of Long Beach should stop the building of luxury units, and instead build more affordable housing. All the landlords would like to see more stakeholders involved in addressing the local housing crisis.

The different characteristics of landlords – varying from number of properties owned, the extent to which the market informed rental amounts, whether or not they held other professional occupations, heavily determined their outlook on renters and perspectives of increasing tenant protections. A larger property owner is more likely to set the rent at or above market, hire a property management company who in turn implements strict tenant selection processes and be a full-time landlord not in full support of increasing tenant protections. Smaller property owners are more flexible with tenant circumstances (and therefore, are more likely to support increasing tenant protections) and application criteria, are more likely to charge below market rates and value long-term tenants, and the rents they receive can be considered supplemental income.

## **4.2 Tenant Interviews**

Half of all tenants interviewed are considered to be housing-cost burdened, spending anywhere over 30% of their total earnings on rent. Five tenants reported allocating anywhere from 50 to 100% of their income towards rental costs. When asked about the impacts that housing costs have on their lives, several responses included not being able to go on vacation and/or feeling stress and anxiety. T10 used the word *impotente*, which means powerless in Spanish; he feels stuck in that he is unable to have a safety net of any kind and is living paycheck

to paycheck. T3 associated feelings of stress/anxiety with not being able to find an affordable, accessible unit. Another tenant (T7) expressed that she would be homeless if it was not for her ex-husband's financial support. T9 mentioned that he is "living to work" instead of "working to live." T5 reports spending 100% of his earnings towards rent; he is enrolled as a graduate student at a nearby university and relies on food stamps for groceries. High housing costs have significant negative impacts on tenants' mental well-being resulting in feelings of stress, lack of agency, and general discontent.

Over the span of ten years, the majority of the tenants moved four to seven times, most of which were due to indirect displacement via a rent increase. T8's landlord notified him of renovations that would start taking place in August of 2019 (around the same time as TRAO implementation) resulting in a \$1000 or 55% monthly rent increase. T8 and his family simply could not afford the newly stated rent and had no other option but to move. Six months into his tenancy, T8 and his family have yet to fully unpack, he said "I don't like it as much as the last place [we were living at]. I don't like moving but I don't see myself living here for much longer." Two tenants were directly displaced as a result of the implementation of TRAO or AB 1482. T1 had been given a notice to vacate just days before TRAO came into effect and stated that he "understands why [his landlord] did so" alluding to the relocation fee that the landlord bypassed by issuing the notice before the implementation date. In the case of T7, she had been living in her previous residence for 22 years before she was given a 60-day notice to vacate by January 1<sup>st</sup>, which was when AB 1482 came into effect. Two tenants stated that habitability issues prompted the move to the current place. In all the cases but two (where T5 and T9 married and moved in with their partners), tenants involuntarily moved.

Half of the tenants interviewed reported a difficult time securing their current place in terms of the process noting that it was time-consuming, expensive since most had to pay multiple application fees, and difficult for those with lower credit scores. One tenant (T9) said it took him over two months and over \$300 in application fees to secure his unit. He noted that the process was overwhelming and frustrating in that he would view units, pay application fees and submit applications but would never hear back regarding the vacancies. The other half secured their current place without any issues due to having personal connections or what they referred to as luck. T7 said it all happened by “pure luck;” she was driving around the area she would hope to find something and did - she saw a for rent sign, applied, the landlord accepted her application and selected her as the final tenant. However, she is paying twice as much in rent compared to her previous place that she involuntarily left. Her disability prevents her from obtaining a full-time job and her part-time position at a grocery store does not fully cover the rent; 80% of her income goes to rent and her ex-husband helps with the remaining portion of the rent. T6 struggled in finding a decent two-bedroom unit (for herself and her daughter) that would overlook credit but writing a letter explaining the details of the bankruptcy in her credit report and coming prepared with all documentation to submit an application the day of the rental open house helped with securing her current residence. If not for having a network of connections or the time and resources to make a good first impression, tenants usually have little chance of securing units that suits their needs.

When asked about what they think a landlord’s main responsibilities are, most tenants said landlords need to properly maintain their units (routine and preventative maintenance) and make it an enjoyable atmosphere for all. A tenant expressed that landlords should not see or treat their tenants solely as a source of income. Another tenant (T6) stated that generally, renters are

treated as second class. T6 had previous experience with home ownership but lost that house after a divorce; she mentioned how the line of communication at her apartment complex was unclear and resulted in ignored maintenance requests. The tenant who spends 100% of his earnings towards rent and utilities (T5) explained that the monetary transaction from the tenant to the landlord should result in a habitable and enjoyable space for the tenant. However, this was not the case for T5 who has been experiencing issues with pests including rodents and cockroaches since he and his wife moved in less than one year ago. While exterminators have been sent out to the property, it continues to be an issue affecting his daily life. Several tenants provided recent, specific examples on how a landlord should not behave.

More than half of the tenants have never met their landlord and instead have only interacted with their property managers. Three tenants who have met their landlord before reported very limited interactions with them, stating that they purposefully try not to come into frequent contact with them—they do not want to give their landlords any trouble and/or are hesitant to report any issues that may lead them to problems. The one and only tenant (T3) who frequently interacts with his landlord reported an “overwhelmingly positive” relationship with him. T3 has lived in his unit for over 25 years and continues to pay the same rate of \$900 for a spacious, one-bedroom apartment that he has been able to customize to his liking and made completely his own. Having any in-person interactions with landlords was a rare finding.

The majority of the tenants interviewed were completely unaware of TRAO and AB 1482. The tenants reported not ever receiving an informational flyer from their landlords or property managers on TRAO, which was required by the city for landlords to do so. The few tenants who were aware of these policies had found out themselves. This was a surprising finding due to a handful of tenants evidently being displaced as a result of these policies

approaching implementation. It was not until after the fact or at the time of the interview that some tenants became aware of why they were ultimately displaced.

### **Analysis of AB 1482**

A stipulation of AB 1482 is that a landlord is now required to provide reason in any notice to terminate a tenancy. In a monthly renter dispute clinic organized by Housing Long Beach that took place last summer, a tenant devastatingly shared that she received a notice of termination after living in her unit for over 25 years. Staff reviewed the notice in hopes to find a discrepancy that would make the notice considered void, but it was completely valid and unfortunately, the landlord did not state the reason for why the tenancy was being terminated. Although at that time, it was not a legal requirement to give a tenant a reason for tenancy termination, this tenant was in pure shock and disbelief wondering what she did wrong after personally knowing the landlord and reporting a positive relationship with them.

With AB 1482 in place, instances such as the one just explained cannot occur so unprecedented and without an attempt at correction. The at-fault just cause provision gives tenants the opportunity to correct any behavior considered a “curable” lease violation, in an attempt to give tenants a second chance at remaining in their unit if desired. Unfortunately, AB 1482 did not come soon enough and the long-term tenant who received a notice towards the end of the summer was eventually displaced from her beloved home that she would have happily stayed for much longer if she had the opportunity.

The landlord family move-in clause is extended to the landlord’s family members (spouse, domestic partner, children, grandchildren, parents, or grandparents). The clause of landlord family move-in was also found in the local tenant relocation assistance ordinance (AB 1482) and appears to be commonly found in many local tenant protection policies. An issue with

the landlord family-move in clause is the lack of city regulation on how a landlord can truthfully confirm that a family member will be moving in. Details surrounding the amount of times a landlord can cite landlord family move-in or a process of verification are unclear.

In the case of a no-fault just cause, landlords have the option to either waive the rent for the final month of the tenancy or pay their tenant that same amount (one month's rent) within 15 days of issuing the notice of lease termination. However, some landlords require new tenants to pay two month's rent as security deposit – it is unclear how tenants in this circumstance would receive their relocation assistance since they have technically already paid for the last month of rent at move-in. If a tenant is entitled to relocation assistance but does not receive it within the specified timeframe or is not informed of the alternative option (waived final month), then the notice of termination is considered void. The landlord would have to start the process over again and issue a new 60-day notice of termination to the tenant.

In its current form, AB 1482 allows landlords to issue notices to vacate if they are planning to substantially rehabilitate the units (replacement or substantial modification of any structural, electrical, plumbing, or mechanical system that requires a permit) without having to pay a relocation fee. At the beginning of 2020, several Long Beach tenants received notices of termination where landlords were citing the substantial remodeling clause as the reason. Sufficient notices were given that it prompted housing advocates to bring this issue up to city council. On the city council meeting that took place on February 11, 2020, Long Beach City Council agreed to start drafting an ordinance that immediately canceled all notices to vacate under the substantial rehabilitation clause. Moreover, the ordinance will require landlords to submit proof such as a permit before issuing notices to tenants.

## PART 5: DISCUSSION

Aligning with Vaughn (1968), tenants continue to feel powerless in all stages of their tenancy. From having to co-sign due to not meeting the rental criteria (i.e. having a low credit score and/or not earning 2-3 times the rent) to involuntarily moving out, tenants generally feel a lack of control and independence in the process of tenancy. Vaughn (1968) argued that low-income tenants in particular feel powerless in the landlord-tenant relationship, however, I find that *any* tenant, regardless of their income bracket, holds feelings of uncertainty. Higher-income tenants noted fear in losing their current place that they are content with and envision themselves at for an indefinite amount of time. Several tenants of varying income levels reported *involuntarily* moving out of their previous living situation but tenants with higher incomes managed to find and secure their current dwelling in a quicker manner and with less associated stress in comparison to lower-income tenants.

Tenants reported feeling less than or as “second class” because of their renter status which supports literature on landlord-tenant relations. Most tenants reported never having met their landlord which creates an impersonal landlord-tenant relationship that may facilitate feelings of uncertainty for the tenant and indifference for the landlord who views their tenant(s) solely as sources of income. This finding in particular is absent from the housing literature and while the case of Long Beach is not representative of all majority renter cities, it does shed light on the increasing role of property management. Virtually all tenants have only ever met and interacted with property managers which essentially eliminates any opportunity for a positive relationship between landlord and tenant. It becomes difficult for tenants to establish rapport with landlords and nearly impossible for landlords to understand individual tenant circumstances. Being able to form a relationship with landlords is critical for tenants’ sense of housing stability

– a landlord who effectively communicates with their tenants, creates and maintains a comfortable and welcoming living arrangement, and fulfills their duties as a housing provider is less likely to view their tenants as second class.

My findings add to the literature on landlord-tenant conflict—low-income tenants have desires to move to a place that better suits their needs but are financially unable to and instead, may under report needed repairs or not request them at all in an effort to keep their status as an “ideal tenant,” protecting themselves from possible harassment and retaliation by landlords. Keller (1988) associates this phenomenon to low-income households’ inability to move. Low-income households are more likely to live in substandard housing conditions not conducive to a good quality of life and are unable to leave those conditions due to the high costs of moving and the low likelihood of finding more decent, affordable housing alternatives.

On top of the possibility of living in substandard housing detrimental to one’s health, low-income individuals and households have constant worries about involuntary displacement. Lower-income tenants were aware of the importance in having a back-up plan in the case that they are confronted with a notice to vacate but struggled to have a concrete plan set in place because they were already paying unaffordable rents. This aligns with Rosenblatt and Deluca (2012) who argued that low-income earners had less choices and that having several housing options to choose from is a “luxury.” If served with a notice to vacate, low-income tenants would likely have to downsize or move out of the city, potentially damaging existing social networks and negatively impacting tenants’ mental health.

Landlords, on the other hand, generally feel that they are wrongfully accused for the regional housing crises that most of them state they have no direct control over. Even though landlords and tenants generally agreed on the primary roles of landlord (to properly maintain

units and to make it a comfortable stay for tenants), they have conflicting views on the broader implications regarding the provision of housing. Landlords understand their role in the lens of public choice theory as explained by Kattenberg (2014) and Grant (2011) in the rental housing context—landlords are filling a critical gap in the provision of housing during a housing shortage hence, they are fulfilling a “public need.” Tenants disagree that landlords are fulfilling a public need; rather, tenants feel a sense of exploitation because the rents they pay do not guarantee them residential stability, aligning closely with Owusu-Ansah et al. (2017) argument that rent is socially created and creates major social inequities. Several tenants have experienced a form of housing insecurity that has resulted in a general lack of trust in landlords and may view their landlords as profit motivated. From both perspectives, the privatization and commodification of housing creates tension between landlords and tenants as they have completely different understandings of and experiences in the rental housing market.

While landlords agree that they hold decision-making power, they seem to underestimate just how their individual contributions and ways in which they operate their business affect larger structures at play. Landlords fail to realize the magnitude by which the properties they own and operate within a private rental housing market play a large role in granting or denying access to certain segments of the population. This finding aligns with Cunningham et al. (2018) and Rothstein (2017) who argue that landlords and property managers may use their decision-making power in ways that restrict low-income tenants from having a range of viable housing options. It is important to mention that since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, Senate Bill 329 (SB 329) prohibits landlords from refusing applications HCV recipients (Mitchell, 2019) but it does not require the landlord to meet a minimum quota of housing program participants. My interviews that took place post-implementation call attention to a disregard of SB 329 by several landlords –

many implicitly stating that their tenant selection processes do not consider nor result in housing program participants as ideal, final selected tenants. SB 329 simply discourages landlords from discriminating against source of income – the lack of enforcement and regulation contributes to unequal housing access faced by low-income individuals and families.

Many landlords have set more stringent application criteria through the years and use their preconceived notions with regards to housing programs (such as Section 8) to create barriers for financially disadvantaged tenants. My findings did not suggest that in the broader picture, rental housing as operated by private landlords can lead to poverty concentration and racial segregation as Rosen (2014) concluded, but stringent rental application criteria and selective tenant selection processes could certainly advance structural racism in housing and create a climate in which tenants with marginalized backgrounds (as it pertains to race and class) are disproportionately affected by the regional housing crisis. Setting stringent application criteria that makes the process of obtaining a decent rental more costly, complicated and stressful for low-income tenants is a subtle method of keeping low-income people of color from living in neighborhoods full of amenities (good schools, transit networks, green spaces, etc.) while concentrating more impoverished individuals and households in publicly and privately disinvested areas.

A handful of landlords had the ability to charge below-market rents and consequently, had several long-term tenants while landlords who operated at a grander scale usually charged market rate (or above-market) and experienced more resident turnover. One way of keeping units habitable – a primary role of the landlord – is to remodel units, which usually conveniently occurs after a tenant (willingly or unwillingly) vacates a unit. The act of remodeling gives landlords a reason to charge higher rents – which brings relevance to Smith and Debres (1984)

who describe this phenomenon as displacement due to reinvestment. My findings further exemplify displacement due to reinvestment: in my case study, it only applied to tenants who were issued a notice to vacate (whether through a formal eviction or not at-fault lease termination) or a change in the lease (i.e. rent increase) that tenants could not afford. However, Smith and Debres (1984) do not consider opportunistic landlords who renovate as soon as a resident vacates a unit (willingly or unwillingly) – some landlords take advantage of the high demand and intend to gain profit. This finding shed light on modern day exclusionary housing practices which I will label unequal housing access due to opportunistic reinvestment – remodeling on grounds of gaining a larger share of profit is a form of investment that restricts the stock of affordable housing and consequently limits access to housing for low-income households.

All landlords that I interviewed explicitly stated or hinted towards a preference for tenants with stable rental history. I find that more often than not, tenants do not have control over the duration of their tenancy or the circumstances for which they would need to relocate. Landlords are likely filtering out applicants that had no other option but to move out of their previous residence because they were not prepared for an annual rent increase—which is considered indirect displacement (Newman and Wyly, 2006; Marcuse, 1985, Smith and Debres, 1984). Primarily focusing on the negative effects of evictions, Garboden et al. (2019) describe evictions as forced displacement however, my interviews with tenants highlighted rent increases (indirect displacement) resulted in them moving out against their will. My findings further indicate that indirectly displaced tenants suffer many of the same effects as those who have experienced evictions—they involuntarily move and struggle to obtain decent quality housing in their budget under a time period that does not usually exceed 60 days.

According to my findings, property owner interests continue to supersede those of renters (DiPasquale, 2011) and paradoxically, this disparity becomes even more apparent during a climate of increasing tenant protection policies. The concerns outlined in UC Berkeley's Turner Center for Housing Innovation report (2020) as they pertain to AB 1482 (reduction in housing production and a proclivity to increase the rents) can both be classified as potential unintended consequences. My findings emphasize the second unintended consequence – landlords are more likely to regularly increase the rents when they may have never previously thought to do so. However, this may be particularly representative of the City of Long Beach due to the timeline of the passage of tenant protection policies. Seeing a continuous rise in tenant rights within a short span of time potentially instills fear into the landlord and sets them into a protective mode against more regulative policies.

My finding that landlords respond to regulative housing policy by engaging in retaliatory methods is in alignment with Grief's (2018) argument that well-intentioned city regulations may actually intensify housing insecurity and overall community decline. My findings also provide support to Been and Glashauser (2009) who posit that tenant protections may result in unintended consequences, particularly having a greater negative impact on low-income households and/or those who have low credit scores. Those who struggle in finding a new home due to affordability or stringent application criteria are the first to feel the impacts of the unintended consequences from policies that state to have their interests in mind. Tenants, however, are more likely to not be aware of the protections in place as they are not properly informed. Not being fully aware of their increasing rights as a tenant is reflective of the lack of information being distributed to adequately inform renters.

## **PART 6: RECOMMENDATIONS**

The relationship between private landlords and tenants is a complicated one that involves conflicting understandings of how rental housing should be operated. The goal of this research was to examine both sides and propose recommendations that consider these perspectives with the long-term goal of increasing housing access for those disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis. I propose recommendations to four groups whose collaborative efforts are crucial to achieving housing justice: landlords, tenants, housing advocates, and policymakers and elected officials.

### **6.1 Recommendations for Tenants**

Tenants have the least amount of work to do – I find that they are generally not in control over their housing status and often live in uncertainty given their limited protections. The recommendations I propose are influenced by housing counselor workshops and my time spent as a community organizing intern at a tenant advocacy organization – Housing Long Beach.

- In searching and applying to places – tenants who feel that their wages or credit scores are too low should consider attaching recommendation letters from previous landlords and/or a one-page letter explaining why a landlord should look past their credit and/or income.
- It is important for tenants to establish a positive relationship with their landlord and/or property manager and keep all interactions civil. I refer to civil interactions as to having effective communication where the tenant feels comfortable approaching their landlord and the landlord is receptive to the tenants' concerns. All interactions, especially when requesting maintenance, should be taken note of by both parties including but not limited to type of request, request date, date of fulfillment, and quality of service (unacceptable/satisfactory and first-time/re-occurring).

- For any ignored maintenance request, the tenant may need to follow-up to ensure that their maintenance order was received. However, if the tenant is finding themselves constantly reminding their landlord and/or property manager, the tenant may benefit from visiting a tenant advocacy organization (at no cost to the tenant) to receive tailored advice on the situation.
- Tenants may find it beneficial to form friendships with their immediate neighbors and join a local tenant union. Networking with others and hearing about each other's experience as a renter is unifying and may facilitate change in housing policy at least at the local level.
- Joining a local tenant union and/or attending workshops hosted by tenant advocacy organizations will help tenants increase their knowledge of tenant rights. Having at least one appointed tenant union member per apartment complex (i.e. the tenant with the longest tenancy) at any given time may help the union with exposure and strength in numbers. Tenant unions are very active on the platform of local housing justice and any city that has a heavily involved tenant union is usually reflective of strong tenant protection policies.
- In the unfortunate case that a tenant receives an unprecedented notice to vacate, it is essential to discuss with neighbors to see if they also received a notice or if the tenant may have been unfairly targeted. If all tenants received a notice, but on different timelines which was the case for a tenant I interviewed, a discussion with the landlord as a large group would be the appropriate next step. If the tenant would like to fight for their right to stay, they should negotiate a plan with the landlord. If the landlord does not offer a resolution or does not agree to the meeting, then seeking advice from a tenant advocacy group may be the next best step. If the notice is valid and cannot be negotiated with the landlord, tenant advocacy

organizations may help in asking the landlord for an extension (i.e. a 90-day notice instead of the typical 60-day notice to vacate).

## **6.2 Recommendations for Landlords**

There is a lot that landlords and property managers could do to improve the overall housing conditions for renters while still successfully operating their respective businesses. Several of the recommendations proposed are direct suggestions from tenant interviewees.

- First, landlords must recognize that they are in positions of power – property (commercial and real estate) owners have historically been the ones to make decisions based on their private interests and persists to this day. The long-standing system of capitalism continues to reward those with financial capital and makes it difficult for low-wage earners of marginalized backgrounds to invest in property. Many people are renters not by choice but because they do not have the financial means to become homeowners. Once this is acknowledged and understood, landlords and property managers may find it easier to be more compassionate and understanding of tenant circumstances.
- Tenant selection processes should be streamlined to prioritize and give higher consideration to tenants in urgent situations. Given the state of housing, landlords should primarily consider applicants who are victims of displacement and may be at-risk of homelessness as final tenants.
- Landlords should re-evaluate their methods of advertisement so that it reaches more people, rather than targeting a very select few through online ads. Posting a for rent sign in the front yard will reach more people who may not be tech savvy. Partnering with non-profit housing organizations and offering them housing leads will help those most in need.

- Upon final selection of a tenant, landlords should notify the other applicants of their decision in a timely manner and offer to refund a portion or the entire cost of the application particularly for low-income earners. This would give low-income earners an opportunity to apply elsewhere. In order to minimize the overall costs associated with application fees, landlords should consider allowing tenants to bring in their own credit reports.
- Some examples of courteous actions that landlords can take to make their tenants feel better about their living situation are reducing the rent by a considerable amount during the holidays, being proactive about maintenance and repairs (regularly inspect property), allowing tenants to customize their apartments (for aesthetic and accessibility purposes), and/or offering and attending quarterly community-building events that include food and raffles, etc.
- Landlords should get to know and treat their tenants as if they were their neighbors, which may be the case anyway. It is critical for tenants to have the opportunity to not only meet their landlords, but to also relationship-build and find commonality.
- If the landlord is planning to evict a tenant or issue a notice to vacate, they should personally meet with the tenant and negotiate a plan (payment plan, extended time, discounted rent, etc.) that works for both parties. Even if the plan does not unfold and the landlord's only next step is to evict a tenant, the landlord should avoid going through formal eviction at all costs. Instead of paying court fees and other costs associated with eviction, the landlord can give some or all of those funds directly to the tenant and help with relocation with regards to finding a suitable, alternative dwelling.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Housing Advocates**

Housing advocates have led and are continuing to lead the effort towards housing justice in all of California. Grassroots community organizing at local and regional levels has proven to be effective in bringing renters across communities together and helping pass strong housing policies. Their work must be recognized and heavily taken into consideration when planning for the future – housing advocates are in direct contact with communities and are fully equipped to propose sustainable methods to addressing the housing crisis.

- Housing advocates should continue the work they are already doing and ensure that they are centering the needs of the community (i.e. receiving input from the community). Devising robust policies influenced by other cities across the world that would address issues cities are facing can lead to strong evidence-based proposals to City Council.
- It is crucial to collaborate and strategize with other stakeholder groups with the same mission of advancing tenant rights (i.e., non-profit organizations, social service organizations, affordable housing developers, city officials, etc.)—transparent communication is also key to strategizing and developing well-rounded plans. One way to do this is and include community at the same time is to create local tenant unions that meet on a regular basis and are in communication with other local tenant unions in surrounding areas.
- Housing advocates should actively participate in City Council and Planning Commission meetings and advocate for the development of affordable rental housing over market-rate housing and advancement of tenant rights at local, state, and federal levels.
- It is important for housing advocates and the organizations they represent to maintain a large presence at community events, so renters are aware of the resources available to them.

Sharing tenant stories is a powerful tool to spreading awareness and ways in which our system needs to be reformed.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Policymakers and Elected Officials**

Elected officials and policymakers have political power and access to the tools needed for long-deserved change in housing as experienced by renters. The following recommendations are only some ways in which policies can start to address unfair housing practices and propose progressive housing policies that can significantly reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of becoming homeless.

- When drafting and passing public policies, the needs of the majority (in this case: renters) need to be taken into consideration. More renters across the state can be protected if the Costa Hawkins Rental Housing Act is repealed. Repealing Costa Hawkins would allow for cities like Long Beach to pass vacancy control which helps keep units affordable after a tenant decides to vacate a unit.
- With regards to AB 1482 and tenant protection policies thereafter, proper and extensive evaluation methods starting three months before implementation should be in place to monitor suspicious activity by landlords. Specifically, city staff should track the number of evictions and partner with tenant advocacy groups to capture an accurate count of displacement not escalated to the courts.
- The high cost of living in California should also be taken into account when cities are entering contracts with housing developers – cities with affordable housing crises should prioritize development of affordable housing over market-rate housing.

- Having city staff collect survey data on renters and capture accurate percentages of income going towards housing costs by partnering with non-profits across the city can lead to greater efforts of establishing specific housing goals.
- If city staff collaborate with non-profits and create a Housing Needs Report (observe the data collectively and by census tracts for visualization purposes), they may realize just how much demand of affordable housing there is at a local level and this should hopefully prompt an urgent need for progress towards equitable access to housing. This could be the first step towards creating robust, but achievable goals such as requiring landlords to meet a quota of renting out to housing program participants (in partnership with the city or county's housing authority and non-profit housing organizations) or an in-lieu contribution to the city's housing trust fund or future housing bond.
- Current data on landlord-tenant relations, particularly at the local level is difficult to procure and may be non-existent in several cities. Data such as percent of rental properties being managed by property management companies and being able to see the trend overtime can help with a broader, more holistic understanding of the changing state of the landlord-tenant relationship. Property management companies that have been known to cause mass displacement should be audited and extensively reviewed to ensure the following of fair housing practices.
- Because every city has a fair housing authority, city staff should collect reports from these agencies to monitor common issues being faced by tenants and landlords. For example, if the number one reason for calling or visiting a Fair Housing branch in 2019 is issues regarding substandard conditions, or habitability concerns, then that city can create and implement

workshops that inform renters of their rights and the process of reporting unsafe living conditions as well as provide recommendations on resolving the issue.

- At the 2019 Housing California conference, a panel of housing experts suggested ways of streamlining tenant selection processes and mentioned a universal fee for applications. A universal rental application fee aimed at low-income tenants (could be in the form of a voucher) should be implemented in cities where vacancy rates are low and affordable housing is limited.
- Majority renter cities should expand their rental assistance programs to include scholarships or waivers that would offset application fees for lower-income individuals and families. In envisioning more sustainable, long-term steps for renters who are ready to permanently settle, homeownership assistance programs that are manageable and affordable should be made available for those who desire to transition into homeowners.
- Social housing should be considered. It is not a radical idea – according to a 2019 presentation by California Coalition for Rural Housing (CCRH), 3.5% of all homes in California are social housing units. Giving non-profit housing providers the financial ability to buy housing and operate it as social housing is a policy recommendation that may have the long-term potential of addressing the housing crisis by creating a more balanced and fair housing market for all.
- Rent control and affordable housing bonds have been recently proposed to Long Beach City Council but both did not gain enough support to pass as local ordinances – both of these should be revisited in upcoming ballots. Rent control that takes cost of living into account is needed to prevent mass displacement and for tenants to have affordable housing options.

Affordable housing bonds address housing shortages and provide steady funding for the creation of affordable housing outside of the private rental housing market.

- To combat substandard housing in Long Beach, the city may consider incentivizing landlords that rent their units at below-market rate with a maintenance budget to encourage needed remodeling of units. The maintenance budget could depend on the number of units the landlord owns. City staff could conduct a home assessment and make recommendations on what the funds can be spent on. The city could require invoices and follow-up home assessments in order to verify maintenance work completed. The budget may be replenished every five years to encourage a steady flow of decent living conditions.
- In thinking about Long Beach and promoting health for all of its residents, one pathway to approach a reduction on a form of housing insecurity (homelessness) is for Long Beach to adopt a Housing First model. A Housing First model promotes housing stability by offering permanent housing solutions and then dealing with the individual root causes of chronic homelessness. Several studies have found that a housing first approach is cost-effective and can help offset service costs. A housing first approach considers housing stability, health, and quality of life.

## **PART 7: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The field of housing has gained more recognition over the years due to the evolving housing crisis and while there are more tenant protections in place than in the past, the issues that low-income tenants continue to face have yet to be sufficiently addressed. Housing insecurity, specifically as it relates to access to decent and affordable housing, has persisted throughout time and disproportionately affects low-income people of color. There are actions that landlords can take right now to strengthen their relationships with tenants and lead the most vulnerable on a path towards housing stability. Although the interviews conducted revealed that a notable amount of the conflict between landlords and tenants stem from outdated, traditional beliefs. However, there is still hope for a better future given both parties understand each other's intentions and meet each other halfway. Tenants deserve peace of mind in their own homes and the act of paying rent and following common house rules should guarantee them residential stability. Landlords have invested significant resources into their businesses and should expect modest profit returns, but, it should be achieved in fair and ethical ways. After all, the relationship between landlords and tenants can be described as a partnership—one necessitates the other.

Due to the time constraints associated with graduate programs, there are limitations present in my research that include a non-representative sample of landlords and tenants and the lack of census data analysis. I conducted this research in a qualitative manner, but it can be strengthened by becoming a mixed methods study that considers several other variables such as evictions, change over time in property management, and cost of managing rental housing. The data collection stage ended in early March, prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would be of crucial importance for housing scholars to consider the long-term impacts of

COVID-19 on both landlords and tenants. Ongoing conversations surrounding canceling rent/abolishing landlords and rent forgiveness are becoming more commonplace and this may lead to significant changes in housing policy and reform in the rental housing market.

The landlord-tenant relationship is often depicted as villain-victim; however, I find that it is much more complex than that. Landlords are expected to have the resources to solve the housing crisis, but they cannot effectively run their businesses with pressure from varying jurisdiction levels. On the other hand, low-income tenants are the hardest-hit and often have to compromise features essential to their well-being in order to retain their housing. Both parties face difficult decisions but ultimately, framing housing as a human right and creating sustainable housing solutions resistive to market logics will lead to effective change. Strengthening landlord-tenant relations at the forefront and advocating for more progressive tenant protections at the local, state, and federal levels can lead us towards an equitable distribution of housing access and opportunities.

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## APPENDIX A

### Landlord Descriptions

- L-1: Female property manager that manages approximately 100 units (she owns her property management company) and considers herself a liberal democrat. Average rent for a 2-bedroom ranges from \$1,600 - \$1,950.
- L-2: Female property owner that owns 28 residential units, not including a 20-unit complex that is undergoing conversion to a hotel. Average rent for a 1-bedroom is \$1,750. \$1,200 for a studio.
- L-3: Male small property owner (elementary school teacher as his primary occupation) who owns a duplex and lives in the back unit, while renting out the front unit. Charges \$2,310 for a 2-bedroom unit.
- L-4: Male small property owner who owns four small units, and lives in one. Charges \$1,000 for a studio, \$1,100 - \$1,200 for the 2-bedroom units.
- L-5: Female small property owner that rents out a one-bedroom apartment/condo for \$1,150. She holds a full-time position as an occupational therapist.
- L-6: Female small property owner that owns a two-unit apartment complex behind her salon business. Chose not to disclose a specific rental amount but states that it is below the average rent.
- L-7: Long-time, male, small property owner that owns a five-unit complex (lives in one) as well as two single-family homes. Has always worked full-time in construction management but has just recently transitioned to part-time. Charges \$900 for one-bedroom (+ small office) unit, ranging between \$1,100 - \$1,250 for the two-bedroom houses.
- L-8: Male property owner who owns ten units. He works full-time yet is also directly responsible for all tenant maintenance requests. Charges \$1300 for a one-bedroom, \$1600 for two-bedrooms, and \$3000 for a three-bedroom.
- L-9: Male property owner who owns a four plex. He recently retired but hired a property management company two years ago. All of his units are 2 bedrooms, and charges \$2000.

## APPENDIX B

### Tenant Descriptions

- T-1: Single male tenant that works in healthcare management (full-time) from home. Has lived in six places in the last ten years and in his current home since August. Has a neutral relationship with landlord, does not report a lot of interaction. Currently, 20% of his individual earnings go towards rent and utilities. Decently happy with his living situation.
- T-2: Single female tenant that works as a bookkeeper from home (part-time) and is wheelchair-bound. Has lived in five places in the last ten years and in her current home for 1.5 years. Has a neutral relationship with property manager and does not interact with the landlord. Close to 50% of her earnings go towards rent and utilities – has to rent out 2<sup>nd</sup> bedroom. Unhappy with living situation.
- T-3: Single male tenant of L-7 that works for the City of Long Beach (full-time) and has lived in his current home for about 27 years. Has an “overwhelmingly positive” relationship with landlord. 19% of his earning go towards rent and utilities. Happy with his living situation.
- T-4: Female tenant who lives with her husband and works remotely from home as a director of partner programs (full-time) for a skin care business. She has lived in 4 places in the past ten years and has been living in her current home for 2 years. She and her husband have a positive relationship with their landlord. 20-25% of her earnings go towards rent and utilities. Decently happy with living situation.
- T-5: Male tenant who is going to graduate school full-time and works as a part-time graduate research assistant. He lives with his wife but in the past 10 years, he has lived in a total of 7 different places (mostly throughout college). Mostly positive engagement with property manager though sometimes it takes them a while to respond to maintenance requests, has never met landlord. 100% of his earnings go towards rent and utilities. Unhappy with living situation.
- T-6: Female tenant who lives with daughter and works in management (full-time) at a major retailer. She has lived in a total of 4 places in the last ten years and has been living in her current home for 3 years. Has never met landlord but has a neutral relationship with property management, complains about communication issues. 30% of her earnings go towards rent and utilities. Unhappy with living situation.
- T-7: Female tenant who lives with daughter and works part-time at a grocery store. She has lived at two places in the last ten years, in her current home since January 1<sup>st</sup> (displaced by AB 1482). She has a positive relationship with her current landlord and had a very negative relationship with past landlord. 80% of her earnings go towards rent and utilities, relies on disability income (SSDI) and child support from ex-husband. Happy

with living situation – feels very lucky despite paying more for the unit, “I am not religious, but this was a God thing.”

- T-8: Male tenant who lives with wife and daughter. Works two jobs – one as a carpenter and the other as a pizza delivery man. Has lived in three places in the last ten years, in his current place since August (was indirectly displaced due to increasing rent). Overall positive relationship with property manager, no interaction with landlord. Allocates about 50% of his earnings to rent and utilities. Unhappy with living situation – “We have yet to fully unpack. I am hesitant to hang up any picture frames. It just does not feel like home yet... It feels more temporary, a placeholder.”
- T-9: Male tenant who lives with wife and a friend in the 2<sup>nd</sup> bedroom. He works as a painter full-time and goes to school part-time. He has lived in five places in the last ten years and has lived in his current place for almost 2 years. Interacts mostly with the property manager and has mixed feelings towards him, rates his relationship with landlord as neutral. Between 30-50% (it ranges depending on job demand) of his earnings go towards rent and utilities. Pretty happy with current living situation.
- T-10: TBD Male tenant who lives with two roommates in a 2-bedroom apartment. He works as a trainer in a factory. He has lived in two places in the last ten years and has lived in his current place since August. He does not interact with the landlord as he is not officially on the lease but noted the landlord’s demeanor as playful and kind. However, he reported several habitability issues that need attention and have not been addressed by the landlord. Spends around 30% of his earnings towards rent and utilities. He is happier at this place but feels that he is far away from his ideal living situation.

## APPENDIX C

### Landlord Questionnaire

1. Career
  - a. What lead you to your career path as a landlord?
  - b. What steps did you take to become a landlord?
  - c. How long have you been a landlord for?
  - d. Is this your full-time job, or do you hold a position(s) elsewhere?
  - e. How would you define your role as a landlord?
  - f. What are some of the best parts and some of the worst parts of the job?
2. Unit Information
  - a. How many total units do you own?
  - b. What is the average rent for those units?
  - c. How is the total rental amount considered?
3. Application Process
  - a. Can you walk me through the regular process of tenant selection from advertising to final selection?
  - b. Who and what is involved?
  - c. What matters the most in selecting an ideal tenant?
4. Landlord-Tenant
  - a. What is your relationship with your tenants like?
  - b. Are there any recurrent problems that you experience from tenants? If so, what has been your response to those problems?
  - c. Do you have experience renting out to section 8/housing voucher recipients?
  - d. As a housing provider, what are your feelings regarding housing programs?
  - e. What are your thoughts on the Tenant Relocation Assistance Program that was recently passed here in Long Beach?
  - f. How do you respond to comments about increasing tenant protections in Long Beach?
5. Forward-looking
  - a. Given your role as a housing provider during a housing shortage, what would it take for there to be greater and equitable access to housing for low-income households here in Long Beach?

## APPENDIX D

### Tenant Questionnaire

1. Length of residents:
  - a. How long have you lived in Long Beach? / ¿Por cuanto tiempo ha vivido en Long Beach?
  - b. How long have you lived in your current home? / ¿Por cuanto tiempo ha vivido en su residencia actual?
  - c. How many places have you lived at in the past ten years? (An approximation is fine) / ¿En cuántos lugares ha vivido en los últimos diez años? (Una aproximación está bien)
2. Neighborhood
  - a. What are some of the best features of your neighborhood? / ¿Cuáles son algunas de las mejores características de su vecindario?
  - b. What improvements would you like to see in your neighborhood? / ¿Qué mejoras le gustaría ver en su vecindario?
3. Work
  - a. Where and what do you do for work? / ¿Dónde trabaja y qué es su título de trabajo?
  - b. Do you work full-time or part-time? / ¿Trabaja tiempo completo, o medio tiempo?
  - c. How long have you worked there? / ¿Por cuanto tiempo a trabajado en ese lugar?
  - d. How do you feel about working there? / ¿En genero, cómo se siente trabajando allí?
4. Household Demographics
  - a. Who do you live with? (Ages and relationships) / ¿Con quien vive? (Edades y relaciones)
  - b. Do you share financial responsibilities with them? (Only ask question if participant does not live alone and if that person(s) is over the age of 18) / ¿Comparte responsabilidades financieras con ellos?
5. Living Situation
  - a. What is your unit size? (Number of bedrooms and bathrooms) / ¿De cuantos recamaras y baños es su unidad?
  - b. How and in what ways does your place of residence contribute to your overall well-being? / ¿Cómo y de qué manera su lugar de residencia impacta su bienestar general?
  - c. What improvements to your home would you like to see that may have the potential to improve your overall well-being? / ¿Que mejoras a su hogar le gustaría ver que puedan tener el potencial de mejorar su bienestar?
6. Landlord-Tenant
  - a. How did you find this place? / ¿Cómo encontro su unidad?

- b. What prompted the move? / ¿Que provocó el movimiento a su unidad?
  - c. What was the application process like? / ¿Cómo fue el proceso de aplicación?
  - d. What would you say are the main responsibilities that every landlord should oblige to? / ¿Cuáles diría que son las responsabilidades principales a las que cada propietario debe comprometerse?
  - e. How often do you interact with your landlord? / ¿Con qué frecuencia interactúa con su propietario?
  - f. How positive or negative would you describe your interaction with your landlord? / ¿Qué tan positive o negative describiría su interacción con su propietario?
  - g. How adequately do they respond to maintenance requests? / ¿Qué tan adecuadamente responden a las solicitudes de mantenimiento?
7. Forward-looking
- a. What is your ideal living situation? This could be in terms of place (neighborhood/city), living conditions, levels of safety, proximity to work, rental amount paid, etc. / ¿Cuál es su situación ideal de vivienda? Esto podría ser en términos de lugar (vecindario/ciudad), condiciones de vivienda, niveles de seguridad, proximidad al trabajo, el aumento de renta pagada, etc.
  - b. According to research, ideally no more than thirty percent of your individual earnings (post-tax) should go towards housing costs (rent and utilities). How much of your earnings do you spend towards housing costs? / Los estudios indican que idealmente, no más del treinta por ciento de sus ganancias individuales (después de impuestos) deben destinarse a los costos de vivienda (renta y utilidades). ¿Cuánto de sus ganancias dedica a los costos de vivienda?
  - c. How would you describe the impacts that housing costs have in your life? / ¿Como describiría los impactos que los costos de la vivienda tienes en su vida?
  - d. Are there other forms of financial assistance that you rely on to cover your housing costs? (rental and/or public assistance) / ¿Existen otras formas de asistencia financiera en las que usted confía para cubrir sus costos de vivienda? (incluye renta y utilidades)
  - e. Is there anything else you would like to add? / ¿Ay algo mas que le gustaría agregar?

## APPENDIX E

### Landlord Recruitment Flyer



#### SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR A RESEARCH STUDY ON HOUSING IN LONG BEACH

*Study Title: Exploring  
the Landlord-Tenant  
Relationship*

To participate in this research, you must:

- be 18 years or older
- be an active landlord in Long Beach, California

Participation in this study involves a time commitment of one hour (maximum).

To sign up for or find out more information about this study, please contact Emma Portillo at (562) 270-4909 or by email at [erportillo@ucdavis.edu](mailto:erportillo@ucdavis.edu)

## APPENDIX F

### Renter Recruitment Flyer



#### SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR A RESEARCH STUDY ON HOUSING IN LONG BEACH

*Study Title: Exploring  
the Landlord-Tenant  
Relationship*

To participate in this research, you must:

- be 18 years or older
- be a renter in Long Beach, California
- be responsible for at least half the total rent amount

Participation in this study involves a time commitment of one hour (maximum) and a \$25 gift card of your choice for participation.

To sign up for or find out more information about this study, please contact Emma Portillo at (562) 270-4909 or by email at [erportillo@ucdavis.edu](mailto:erportillo@ucdavis.edu)