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Housing instability amongst takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

Although awareness and understanding of LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of homelessness are rising, their broader housing experiences remain under-researched. This paper uses qualitative interview data to explore takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing instability in Aotearoa New Zealand. In expanding the focus to housing instability, this paper explores how LGBTIQ+ people experience and navigate the housing system, which sheds light on the upstream factors that contribute to the disproportionately high rates of homelessness amongst LGBTIQ+ communities worldwide. A reflexive thematic analysis of the data generated four themes to takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing instability; personal experiences are political, survival within inequitable systems is nuanced, instability is relational, and selfhood is mediated through instability. These results highlight the impact of policy and structural failures on LGBTIQ+ communities.

KEYWORDS
Aotearoa New Zealand, housing, instability, LGBT, residential alienation

Public Significance Statement

Housing instability is a significant issue amongst LGBTIQ+ communities, and sheds light on the factors contributing to disproportionate rates of homelessness amongst these communities. For participants, their experiences of housing instability were part of wider political choices and structures, which resulted in nuanced survival tactics. Instability was a deeply relational experience, and participants' selfhood was mediated through their experiences of housing instability.

INTRODUCTION

Housing instability has numerous negative impacts on health and wellbeing, as well as social and educational outcomes (Gultekin & Brush, 2017; Jacoby et al., 2017; Kull et al., 2016; Nathan et al., 2019). There are a multitude of social, structural, and biographical factors that contribute to housing instability, including poverty, trauma and violence, changes in household structure, employment, poor quality housing, discrimination, unaffordable housing, under-regulation of the private rental market, and neighborhood quality (Cox et al., 2019; Desmond & Perkins, 2014; Jamison, 2018; O'Campo et al., 2016; Ziol-Guest & Mckenna, 2014). Housing instability disrupts one's sense of security and community belonging, as well as weakening self-esteem and self-determination (Byrne & McArdle, 2022; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Hiscock et al., 2001; Holdsworth, 2011; Hulse & Milligan, 2014; McArdle & Byrne, 2022).

Housing instability is defined and measured in many different ways, particularly in the quantitative literature (Cox et al., 2019). Often, the focus is on a person's housing situation/s within a narrow timeframe, or on situations that would be classified as homelessness (such as couch surfing, doubling up, and living in campgrounds and garages), particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand (henceforth Aotearoa, the Indigenous te reo Māori name, where this research is situated) where the official definition is a broad one (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). Others simply use the terms "homelessness" and "housing instability" interchangeably. Although homelessness certainly can be classified as instability, I argue that housing instability is broader than homelessness, and as such, using the two terms interchangeably is not useful. I propose that instead, **housing instability be considered in line with understandings of "housing security" and a lack of "secure occupancy"; that housing instability includes homelessness, forced moves, periods of high residential mobility, trouble finding housing, difficulties paying for housing, and a *felt* sense of instability and insecurity** (Hulse & Milligan, 2014). Housing instability, in this instance, thus refers to both experienced and felt instability throughout time. Such an understanding is thus in line with a "Big Q" qualitative research approach (see below). This research focuses specifically on takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing instability. The acronym LGBTIQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other minority genders and sexual orientations. The word takatāpui historically translates to "intimate partner of the same sex," and is widely used among LGBTIQ+ Māori (the Indigenous people of Aotearoa) as both an identity in and of itself, to describe their sexuality and/or gender in culturally appropriate ways, and as an umbrella term which embraces all Māori with diverse sexualities, gender identities, and sex characteristics (Kerekere, 2017).

Aotearoa has high rates of residential mobility, renting, and insecurity of tenure (Chisholm et al., 2017; Marek et al., 2023; Nathan et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2021; Statistics New Zealand, 2021a). Roughly one third of households are renting, and renters move more frequently than owner-occupiers — those moving between rentals primarily do so due to their tenancy being ended by their landlord (Statistics New Zealand, 2021a). High rates of residential mobility are linked with socioemotional and behavioral difficulties in children, and children in low socioeconomic areas have a higher number of moves than those in wealthier areas (Nathan et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2021). Māori have higher rates of residential mobility than non-Māori, and greater frequency of moves increases one's baseline stress levels (Cheung & Wong, 2022; Marek et al., 2023). Renters, particularly those who experience eviction, have poorer health than owner-occupiers (Chisholm et al., 2021; Pledger et al., 2019). Qualitative research shows the complexity of mobility and housing choices, the numerous difficulties renters face in the private rental market, the importance of tenant advocates, and the role of narratives in achieving changes to rental policy (Bierre et al., 2010; Bierre & Howden-Chapman, 2020; Chisholm, 2016; Chisholm et al., 2017; James et al., 2022; Serjeant et al., 2022; Toy-Cronin & Bierre, 2022; Winstanley et al., 2002).

Existing international literature on LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing instability is somewhat fragmented, with most taking a quantitative approach, and focusing primarily on different forms of homelessness, rather than housing instability more broadly. However, we can see that housing instability is a key part of the queer experience. These studies report links between unstable housing and poverty, poor mental and physical health outcomes, violence, and experiences of discrimination and stigma (Beltran et al., 2019; Cusack et al., 2022; Felt et al., 2023; Krause et al., 2016; LoSchiavo et al., 2020). Transgender and gender-diverse communities are particularly impacted by housing instability and intersectional economic precarity (Glick et al., 2019, 2020; Kattari et al., 2016; Langowski et al., 2018). Several important European studies explore the role of inadequate institutional rights and support structures (e.g., welfare states) in LGBTIQ+ people's housing trajectories, showing that inadequate welfare states which rely on the family to provide support, and thus marginalize LGBTIQ+ people, require coping strategies such as having to live in undesirable neighborhoods, drawing on solidarity networks, and alternative housing models such as squatting (Dagkouli-Kyriakoglou, 2021; Di Feliciantonio & Dagkouly-Kyriakoglou, 2022; Pettas et al., 2022; Yılmaz & Göçmen, 2016). Other research highlights LGBTIQ+ older adults' housing precarity as they age (Alba et al., 2019; Redden et al., 2023; Savage & Barringer, 2021).

Additionally, LGBTIQ+ communities are vastly over-represented in homelessness statistics — in part, as a consequence of housing instability (Fraser et al., 2019; McCann & Brown, 2019; McCarthy & Parr, 2022), face discrimination and stigma in the private rental sector (Friedman et al., 2013; Kattari et al., 2016; Langowski et al., 2018; Schwegman, 2019), and are more likely to be renters who struggle with housing costs and are dissatisfied with their housing (Grant et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2021). Closer to home, research from Australia reveals that LGBTIQ+ youth who are trans and gender diverse, racial minorities, disabled, and from religious backgrounds have higher odds of experiencing homelessness (Lim et al., 2023). Other Australian research explores couch-surfing as a specific form of homelessness that LGBTIQ+ youth experience, illustrating how it differs from rough sleeping, its link to prior child safety involvement, the reluctance of youth to seek support from services or name couch-surfing as homelessness, and the demography of who is couch-surfing compared to rough sleeping (Hail-Jares, 2023; Hail-Jares et al., 2021; Hail-Jares & Vichta-Ohlsen, 2023).

Takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ New Zealanders are more likely to be younger, disabled, earning lower incomes, renting, and living in poor-quality housing (Statistics New Zealand, 2021b). They experience high rates of homelessness and housing deprivation (Clark et al., 2021; Fraser et al., 2022; Veale et al., 2019). One study showed a significant relationship between homelessness and expe-

riences of state care, involuntary mobility, and housing discrimination amongst takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ youth (Fraser et al., 2022). Of the respondents, 56% had experienced involuntary mobility, 55% had experienced housing-related discrimination, and they had an average of seven lifetime moves each (Fraser et al., 2022). Qualitative research on takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ homelessness reveals the role of instability in family relationships, finances, and housing; difficulty in accessing housing; social system failures that result in limited autonomy; the role of stigma and shame; and survival strategies (Fraser et al., 2021, 2023b, 2023a, 2024).

This paper expands our understanding of housing instability for takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people, as well as shedding further light on how marginalized groups in Aotearoa experience the housing system and its many failings. This research aimed to explore takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing instability in Aotearoa to better understand their housing trajectories on the whole and their place within the Aotearoa housing market. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with 20 takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people across Aotearoa, I explore their experiences of housing instability and its role in their lives. Utilizing reflexive Thematic Analysis, I discuss how these experiences are political and relational, and illustrate how housing instability results in nuanced survival tactics, and an altered, richer, sense of self.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This research was conducted as part of my postdoctoral fellowship, which investigated takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing instability in Aotearoa. Ethics approval was granted by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, reference 21/134. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people living in Aotearoa about their experiences of housing instability. I analyzed the data using reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun et al., 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b, 2023b; Clarke & Braun, 2018). Specifically, I took a "Big Q" qualitative approach, which emphasizes researcher subjectivity as a resource for research, and sees meaning and knowledge as contextually situated and partial (Braun & Clarke, 2021a,b). I took an experiential approach to reflexive Thematic Analysis, specifically one underpinned by the critical paradigm, which allows the researcher's values to be central to the task at hand (Morrow, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). I am a White queer and non-binary public health academic, with a background in political science. I was raised by a single mother, and experienced considerable housing instability in my childhood and teen years. I consider myself to be a scholar-activist. Such a position enables me to connect and empathize with my participants, and makes me acutely aware of the power dynamics in how I frame results and discuss participants' experiences. I am especially cautious about ensuring I do not stigmatize or judge my participants. Furthermore, it helps me to articulate difficult concepts and experiences in ways that participants might not have; for example, I felt confident in the analysis presented in the Selfhood is Mediated by Instability theme because it both aligned with my data, and my own experiences.

Participants and recruitment

Participants were recruited via my professional networks, social media, and a database from a survey of mine on LGBTIQ+ housing of participants who had agreed to be contacted about participating in future research. This latter method was the most successful form of recruit-

ment. Recruitment materials invited participants who identified as takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ and had experienced housing instability "such as moving house frequently, staying with friends, living in boarding houses, and having trouble paying rent." Materials also specified that I am a member of the LGBTIQ+ community. There was no set metric to determine housing instability, due to a lack of consensus in the literature and the qualitative nature of this research.

I conducted 19 interviews with 20 people living in Aotearoa who were part of the takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ community, and self-identified as having experienced housing instability. One interview was with a couple who spoke of both their individual and shared experiences. I conducted interviews remotely via Zoom and phone calls, due to COVID-19 restrictions, in March 2022. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company, and I later checked over them to ensure accuracy. This was particularly useful for phrases and terms specific to the LGBTIQ+ community, which were often transcribed incorrectly, presumably due to a lack of transcriber familiarity with the topic. This also enabled further familiarization with the data.

Participant demographics are shown below in Table 1. All names are pseudonyms. Participants were aged from their 20s to 50s, with most in their 30s. They described their sexual orientation and gender identities in a range of ways; I have included specific phrases where participants described themselves in nuanced ways. Most participants were Pākehā/New Zealand European. Both Abigail and Merril noted that they have Māori whakapapa/genealogy, but neither felt comfortable having their ethnicity listed as Māori because they have limited knowledge and connection to that part of their ancestry as a result of colonization. I do not report iwi/tribal affiliations for Māori participants due to the smallness of the community and resulting confidentiality concerns. Participants were located throughout Aotearoa; most were in Wellington/Te Whanganui-a-Tara, with others in Auckland/Tāmaki Makaurau, Dunedin/Ōtepoti, Rotorua, and other small towns predominantly throughout the North Island/Te Ika-a-Māui. Ten participants self-identified as having a disability of some kind. I asked all participants about their pronouns to ensure accuracy. Some specified that they use multiple differing pronouns; in these cases, I use the first ones they listed to avoid confusion for the reader.

Data analysis

Following data familiarization, coding began. Coding was both a deductive and inductive process; theoretical frameworks of capital (Bourdieu, 2001), power (Lukes, 2005), stigma (Goffman, 1963), and agency (Parsell et al., 2014) underpinned some of the codes generated, while I generated other codes inductively from the data (Braun et al., 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021b). Codes were both latent and semantic; initial codes were primarily semantic; as I became more familiar with the data, more latent codes were ascribed, particularly ones that reflected the theoretical underpinnings of this research (Braun et al., 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021a). Moving into theme generation, codes were collated for potential themes in "theme piles," with data extracts re-read, and notes taken, to consider whether these initial clusters would provide a coherent explanation of the data. I undertook this process several times to explore different ways of understanding and analyzing the data, and to generate provisional themes that were sufficiently rich and not simply topic summaries (Braun & Clarke, 2023b). Alongside this, I mapped out each set of provisional themes to visualize how they were linked. Once I settled upon themes, I wrote definitions for each; this process involved re-reading the data extracts to help clarify the scope and focus of each theme

TABLE 1 Participant demographics.

Pseudonym	Pronouns	Age	Takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ identities	Ethnicity
Abigail	she/her	20s	Lesbian, transgender woman	Scottish, Pākehā
Amelia	they/them	30s	Non-binary, bisexual	Pākehā
Carey	she/they	30s	Queer, gender is fluid/unsure	Pākehā
Charlie	he/they	30s	Bisexual, ambisexual, transgender man	European, Pākehā
Darby	she/Darby	20s	Lesbian, "transfem Darby gendered transgender woman but not"	German
Ellis	they/them	20s	Gay, queer, non-binary	Pākehā
Ethan	he/him	30s	Gay	German, Native American, Pākehā
Hazel	she/her	30s	Queer	Pākehā, Irish, Scottish, English
Josh	he/him	20s	Transgender man, heterosexual, "retired lesbian"	White South African
Kāhu	they/them	50s	Takatāpui, "gender-bending queer as fuck"	Māori, Chinese, English, Korean
Kaia	she/her	30s	Transgender woman, bisexual	Māori, Pākehā, Irish
Luong	he/him	20s	Gay, queer	Vietnamese
Merril	she/they	30s	Queer, non-binary	Pākehā
Oliver	he/him	20s	Gay	Pākehā
Rangi	they/he	20s	Takatāpui, non-binary	Māori, Pākehā
Riley	she/her	30s	Lesbian, "woman but not, woman extra"	Pākehā
Sarah	they/she	20s	Agender, bisexual	Pākehā
Sean	he/him	40s	Dislikes labels, but described himself as gay and "more female than male"	Irish
Stephanie	she/her	30s	Transgender woman, queer	Pākehā, European
Tāmati	he/him	40s	Takatāpui	Māori

and ensure that they provided a rich analytic narrative of the data (Braun et al., 2016). After these definitions were written, I refined the names of each theme to ensure they sufficiently conveyed the meaning behind each one (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

I move on now to the analysis and discussion of the data. These are presented concurrently in accordance with best practices for reflexive Thematic Analysis to ensure depth of interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2023a). Four themes were generated from the data. These are: personal experiences are political experiences, survival within inequitable systems is nuanced, instability is relational, and selfhood is mediated through instability. Although each theme stands on its own in presenting a central idea, they are intertwined and share connections that are emphasized throughout.

Personal experiences are political experiences

Participants shared how their experiences were the result of political and policy decisions; for some, this was an explicit understanding of how politics, power, and norms shaped their everyday experiences. For others, this was not overtly stated as being political, but their discussions of their experiences still spoke to the relevance of politics and policy in the everyday. This theme emphasizes that we cannot understand housing instability—particularly in takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ communities—without exploring the structural factors and power dynamics at play, and how politics manifests on the individual level. This theme draws attention to how the housing crisis in Aotearoa is a political choice, as well as the politicized nature of being part of a marginalized community.

Multiple participants explicitly spoke about the politicized nature of housing in Aotearoa, articulating the importance of housing in both their own, and others', lives, and linking it to structural and political concerns more broadly. For instance, before sharing her own experiences, Stephanie introduced herself by noting:

> "For me, it's like [my] number one concern for what's happening in Aotearoa really…when you identify what those other extreme like, social concerns are…they're all really intersectional with housing…housing is really the root of a lot of this country's problems. So, it can't be understated really, in terms of like how significant it is for the lives of people in this country…there's so many things that have to change really before some of those broader and interconnected social issues can be addressed."

Here, she is placing her, and her wider community's, experiences in their broader social and political contexts. Stephanie's words reference the importance and centrality of the home for individual and collective wellbeing, and the ability of housing insecurity to aggravate struggles in other domains of life (Madden & Marcuse, 2016). She expressed frustration at the political, economic, and social norms that need addressing for people to achieve and maintain secure occupancy (Byrne & McArdle, 2022; Hulse & Milligan, 2014), and an awareness of the positive flow-on impacts this will have on other social issues.

Similarly, other participants illustrated how decades of policy and legislation have perpetuated unequal power dynamics between landlords and tenants, resulting in poor-quality housing for tenants (Bierre et al., 2007). For example, Abigail discussed how, despite the recent Healthy Homes Guarantee Act (2017), it is still difficult for renters to obtain secure, healthy, housing.

> "The Healthy Homes Standard isn't being enforced, and when it is enforced then the rents just skyrocket…the houses that people live in…aren't up to standard.…the housing situation in New Zealand Aotearoa is just complete hogshit. All of it. All of it up and down the country, landlords, you know, own too much of the property value, property, and then they don't repair [them]…People can't live in security, safety or healthy, or health, because it's just the houses they're in are just, you know, quite terrible."

There is a wealth of research evidencing the poor-quality housing in Aotearoa, particularly amongst renters (Fyfe et al., 2020; Howden-Chapman et al., 2007, 2023; Pierse et al., 2020; Riggs et al., 2021; Viggers et al., 2021). Renters are more likely to live in housing that is damp, cold,

moldy, and in need of repair than owner-occupiers (Statistics New Zealand, 2021a). Additionally, landlords do not systematically maintain their rental properties, or put money aside for repairs (Saville-Smith & Fraser, 2004). Poor maintenance can be seen as a daily reminder of landlords' power over tenants, and the symbolic violence of being deemed unworthy (Soaita & McKee, 2019). Abigail identifies that this a consequence of unequal power relations and political choices. She specifically focuses on the lack of enforcement and regulatory oversight of the Healthy Homes Standards set out in the Healthy Homes Guarantee Act (2017). Central government does not collect data on how many properties are compliant with the Standards, assessments do not have to be carried out by a third party, and the processes around proactive assessments are unclear; thus putting the onus on tenants to report non-compliance (Ensor, 2023; Small, 2022). Between May 2022, and May 2023, only 921 compliance checks were carried out; 625 of which were proactive ones—indicating a low level of monitoring given roughly one third of Aotearoa households are renting (Ensor, 2023; Statistics New Zealand, 2021a). These are political choices. Although the Sixth Labor Government (who introduced the standards and were in power when these interviews were conducted) undoubtedly attempted to improve renting, outcomes for renters have not yet materially improved (Bierre & Howden-Chapman, 2022). Landlords maintain the balance of power, and the rental market is afforded a sense of reverence (Bierre & Howden-Chapman, 2022).

Although these political and structural lenses helped participants to make sense of their housing experiences in a wider context, they also contributed to feelings of powerlessness. Kāhu articulated this poignantly, saying:

> "I really felt like I had a noose around my throat all the time and I had to jump through these hoops, but I had to be grateful that at least I had a roof over my head. I was, but having to jump through those [hoops], to live through that oppression, dehumanised me."

For them, awareness and understanding of the intersecting marginalization they faced of being Māori, takatāpui, and in a body that is generally perceived to be female,[1] resulted in a deep and enduring sense of being dehumanized by both the systems they were coming up against and on a relational level with their various landlords. The limited agency afforded to them in the rental market felt like an ever-present "noose" that was at risk of tightening; housing instability was a constant, looming, threat. Kāhu identified a common contradiction in the private rental market; that tenants are expected to be grateful to have housing, even when it is inadequate and hard to obtain. This further entrenches the framing of private landlords as "everymen" and "mum and dad investors" who are simply working with market demands to provide an essential public service, without whom there would be insufficient housing—not as people who are extracting rents out of a fundamental human right (Bierre et al., 2010; Grohmann, 2021; Hulse et al., 2020). As we can see, emphasis on the benign—and sometimes "benevolent"— role of landlords leaves tenants feeling dehumanized and powerless.

Participants also highlighted the political nature of being members of marginalized communities—particularly in relation to the housing market. They understood that their experiences of housing instability, and the housing market more broadly, were underscored by their takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ identities, as well as other marginalized spaces they occupied. For

[1] This is how Kāhu described themself several times.

instance, the below quote from Carey illustrates how being queer (and subsequently having financial support from her parents severed after coming out), made it harder for her and her wife to obtain housing at a time when the market was particularly stressed:

> "…it was a high point of flat shortages…we couldn't really compete with people that had, like, their parent's support…my dad once said to me after I came out 'I'm worried about you because everyone that…you'll ever need to get some kind of like business approval from, or try and get a job from, is going to look like me and think like me.' And that might have been [a] super pessimistic…mean thing he said to try and keep pressuring me into being straight. But it was a little bit like that…"

Carey was aware that her difficulties in obtaining housing were not due to any personal failings, but rather, were due to her status as a queer person with no familial support. Both she and her father were cognizant that, for the most part, people in positions of power are not queer, and often have biases—whether conscious or unconscious—against takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people. For Carey's father, however, this concern about the difficulties his child would face manifested in a desire for her to "conform"; perhaps because he felt this was too great a barrier to fully dismantle during his daughter's lifetime. Although Carey disagreed with this solution and decided not to remain closeted, she clearly agreed that this concern was warranted; her experiences in the housing market highlighted the power imbalances that takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people regularly face.

Another way the political nature of marginalization was highlighted was through an articulation of the impact of discrimination in multiple areas of life. For example, Riley noted that:

> "…there's so much discrimination about queer people. We're—we're often on, you know, lower incomes and there is often a lot of mental health issues…there just seems to be a real like a typical queer flatting situation that [the house] is more run down and so people see queer people and they're just like oh no you just—you're just going to have the place run down."

Here, Riley highlights the cumulative effect that discrimination can have, rippling out across multiple areas of a person's life. The way Riley has framed these experiences—as the result of discrimination against queer people—reiterates findings from England (2022) who reports that a wider queer framing allows people to understand their housing struggles as the result of structural oppression, rather than individual failure; giving their struggles wider meaning. This also echoes Aotearoa's research which demonstrates how discrimination in the housing market can result in people being forced to rent poor-quality housing, which has flow-on effects on health, well-being, and community connectedness (Bierre et al., 2010). Naming these structural, political, issues was a form of identity work for Riley; it supported her in the "process of understanding being in a heteronormative world" (Matthews et al., 2019, p. 238). Articulating the struggles they faced as political challenges placed participants' experiences in their wider social and cultural contexts.

Participants' experiences were intersectional; they faced multiple lines of marginalization, which was reflected in various ways. Sarah highlighted how political and policy decisions in the social welfare system make people—particularly women and gender-diverse people—vulnerable to financial enmeshment and abuse:

> "I never felt like I could rely on him for money. I tried to explain that dynamic to them [WINZ] and like they were like… 'he earns like $110,000 a year, you're fine' and I'm like 'I'm not though… like you just have no understanding of like the feminist need to not be reliant on a man for money… you're asking me to be financially dependent on someone who is statistically—statistically more likely to harm me, great, thank you.'"

Here, Sarah was describing how they had been relying on a partner for financial support at a time when they were unemployed. They had been wanting to leave the relationship but were unable to get financial support from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ, the government social welfare provider) due to strict eligibility criteria for those who are in relationships. Current eligibility criteria are based on a couple's joint income where people are considered partnered; however, relationships are defined arbitrarily and with little consistency (Fletcher, 2018; Healey & Curtin, 2019; Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019).

As Sarah alluded to, such a policy presupposes that one's partner is willing to financially support them—thus making them entirely dependent on their partner, which adds an additional layer of difficulty when leaving unhealthy and abusive relationships. Although Sarah's relationship was not abusive, they were cognizant that this was not always the case. The Government-mandated Welfare Expert Advisory Group's comprehensive 2019 review of the welfare system showed that it is not fulfilling its purpose in numerous ways, particularly emphasizing issues around relationship status and eligibility criteria; none of their wide-ranging recommendations have yet been fully implemented (Neuwelt-Kearns et al., 2021; Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019) . When discussing their experiences with WINZ, many participants referenced this review and their frustration that despite commissioning the review, the then-Government had proceeded to ignore the bulk of its recommendations; clearly linking their personal experiences to political choices.

Interactions with the state, particularly when seeking support, were also shaped by political norms and policies regarding citizenship status. Several participants spoke of their difficulties in accessing financial and housing-related support as non-citizens. For instance, Luong said:

> "I was really, really isolated like I… couldn't get support from anyone… a lot of times it kind of feels like… if you run into problems you cannot solve, then you don't deserve to be here in the first place… it does come from this mindset that only… deserving people get to, I don't know, get to be citizens… [and] enjoy the privilege of having social—of social security."

Luong had come to Aotearoa as an international student and faced numerous difficulties due to his lack of citizenship—particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. He attempted to seek support from both WINZ and non-government organizations but was repeatedly turned away due to his lack of citizenship and presumed level of need. Such experiences speak to political and policy discourses of the desirable migrant; neoliberal discourses of migration have placed an emphasis on the economic "value" and independence of migrants (Simon-Kumar, 2014, 2015, 2019). Policy has focused on attracting "highly skilled" and "high-value" migrants who provide substantial economic contributions to Aotearoa; as such, those who are unable to contribute in these ways are easily presented as failed subjects, as we see here with Luong (Simon-Kumar, 2015, 2019). As this section has shown, participants were aware of the political processes that marginalized them, both through their various marginalized identities, but also through the structure of the housing market in Aotearoa.

Survival within inequitable systems is nuanced

Surviving inequitable systems was central to all participants' experiences of housing instability. Survival manifested in numerous ways and spoke to the different levels of agency available to participants. Instability was presented as something to survive; by challenging it, by accepting it, and by working within the structural constraints they were subjected to. Survival was nuanced, and although it enabled participants to cope with difficult circumstances, it sometimes came with negative consequences. In these situations, participants made the decision that the necessity of survival outweighed the consequences of the tactics they employed.

One of the ways participants sought to survive inequitable structures was through challenging the power dynamics and instability they were subjected to, and expressing the limited agency available to them. One way this manifested was by standing up to landlords and property managers (third-party contractors who manage rental properties on behalf of landlords) when their rights were not being met. For example, the only way Tāmati was ever able to get necessary maintenance done on properties he rented was to be persistent in raising them with his landlords and property managers:

> "…They realised I wasn't gonna shut up. Exactly, you know, I wasn't gonna shut my mouth or keep quiet, I was going to carry on and on."

For many participants, asserting their rights and attempting to hold their landlords accountable was a key mode of survival. Doing so allowed them to express their voice (Chisholm et al., 2016), and maintain a sense of agency and dignity in situations that could easily lessen them. Agitating for their rights and fair treatment is often a renter's tactic of last resort that takes a considerable emotional toll (Waldron, 2024).

A similar tactic participants employed was to work within the constraints of the inequitable systems they were trying to survive. For instance, Ethan shared how his code-switching would change between contexts:

> "Your code-switches are based on who you're…interviewing for. Like, the—the first property manager I had in the flat downstairs, it was just a average dude, so, I, like, masc'd up a bit, I, like, lowered my voice…Whereas the manager here, there's, like, this, like, American women who, like, has, like, long nails, like, huge hair, so…now I'm code-switching in the other way. So, I'm like playing up a bit, so, like, I seem fun and appealing and kind of onto it in a way that appeals to her."

Many participants shared how they would code-switch and hide their identities when looking for housing (Fraser et al., 2021). This quote illustrates the nuance in this; participants did not have to always alter their behavior to avoid discrimination, but could also play into certain stereotypes that people in positions of power held about takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people, thus performing the "ideal" queer person. By understanding and acknowledging the constraints he faced in the housing market, Ethan was able to adapt to them to secure and maintain housing. Bate (2020) proposes that to fully understand housing security, we must look at the search process more closely. Doing so allows us to consider a tenant's ability to participate effectively in housing markets, including exercising autonomy over their housing, and to further understand housing security across the life course (Bate, 2020).

Further evidence of the nuance of survival came from examples wherein participants had accepted, as much as they were able to, the power imbalances and inequities they faced. For many, this looked like an acceptance of poor-quality housing:

> "…when we're already got a lot, got a lot in our life that we are tryna to wade our way through, it's hard to find the energy to take on just one more fight, one more battle. So, I didn't have hot water for almost ten years…I didn't have it in me anymore, one more battle…I couldn't find the space to take on my landlords about no hot water."

This example from Kāhu shows that this acceptance was not inherently passive, or devoid of choice; it contained nuance. They were able to consider their options, and the energy required to enact them, and made the micro-decision that despite the difficulties it posed, living without hot water was the option that suited them the most at that moment in time. This evidences the "bandwidth tax" that people living in poverty face; the cognitive load required to navigate poverty results in less attention and energy able to be given to less-pressing, or future, concerns (Mani et al., 2013; Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013; Shah et al., 2012). Such a bandwidth tax also applies to other forms of marginalization—like LGBTIQ+ identity, or ethnicity. Although Kāhu did not specify exactly what it was they were "wading" through, it could have also equally been the marginalization they faced as a takatāpui person in a hetero- and cis-normative colonized culture. It is likely the intersection of these multiple facets combined to create the conditions that left them unable to challenge their landlords. Thus, the cumulative impact of inequitable social and economic systems that marginalize people in multiple ways results in trade-offs whereby people seemingly accept poor conditions.

Participants also shared how they would begrudgingly accept sub-standard conditions as the consequences of challenging them posed too big a risk. Sean noted how the risk of losing housing was such a concern that he would not report any issues in a property:

> "[Our apartment] isn't up to housing standards…me and my partner are not prepared to report that because the consequences are way too big. We also know that if we went looking for something and there's something on the market that a) may not be up to scratch, the fear is that if you report anything that's not right…you're going to be stung for it, you're going to be thrown out your neck…"

Surviving a housing market designed to provide landlords with a disproportionate amount of power resulted in Sean undertaking what Power and Gillon (2022) term performance of the ideal tenant. In situations such as this, tenants are unable to express either their voice or exit, instead expressing "loyalty" (Chisholm et al., 2016) to perform the ideal tenant so that they can retain their housing (McKee et al., 2020; Power & Gillon, 2022). Performing the ideal tenant was often more subtle than simply not raising issues with landlords; Sean, for example, discussed how he would also do minor repairs to the home himself, not only so he would not have to raise issues with his landlord, but so that the landlord could not later claim he had damaged the house or failed to look after it. The importance of being housed, let alone feeling secure in a tenancy, results in renters having to make often uncomfortable trade-offs, such as accepting poor-quality rentals. Aotearoa data shows that this is a common experience for renters; fear of evictions and rent increases, as well as not wanting to affect their relationships with their landlords, and a belief that nothing will change all prevent tenants from raising issues with their landlords (Chisholm et al., 2017; Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2022).

Although survival activities enabled participants to meet their needs to the best of their abilities, they sometimes had unintended negative consequences. Kāhu shared one such experience:

> "Eventually my Pākehā mate did the ringing around on my behalf, it got so bad, and she kind of, like, broke the ice for a potential landlord to meet me. And I—I will forever be thankful that she did that…but it was very dehumanising to have a white, a white woman's voice clear the way for me."

Although drawing on their social capital enabled Kāhu to secure viewings for rental properties, it also left them feeling othered by a housing market that enables landlords to act out racist prejudices. The racial biases of landlords are well-documented in the international literature (Gaddis & Ghoshal, 2020; Hogan & Berry, 2011; Moritz & Manger, 2022; Wolifson et al., 2023). Prospective tenants with seemingly ethnic/racialized names are more frequently turned down when seeking housing (Hogan & Berry, 2011). In Aotearoa, those who self-report as being visibly Māori report greater difficulties in the housing market than Māori who do not perceive themselves to be visibly Māori (Houkamau & Sibley, 2015). Kāhu faced these exact difficulties while searching for housing, and as a survival tactic had their Pākehā friend secure viewings for them. However, this was not as straightforward a solution as it initially seemed to Kāhu; it left them feeling dehumanized and othered as a consequence of trying to work within the constraints of a racist housing market. The housing system encompasses not only dwellings and policy but also extends to relationships such as those with landlords, real estate agents, and other inhabitants, as well as the search process (Bate, 2020; Raynor & Frichot, 2022). This section has illustrated the nuances of surviving inequitable systems; that survival-related decisions are rarely straightforward, and are often subtle, with sometimes unintended consequences.

Instability is relational

Housing instability was relational; primarily, relationships made participants vulnerable to, or further entrenched, housing instability. The first way this manifested was through unequal power relationships with landlords, property managers, and real estate agents. The power that such people had over participants and their housing security meant that participants were hyper-aware of the need to keep these relationships in good stead. The second way the relationality of housing instability manifested was through volatile relationships with flatmates, partners, and family. When these relationships became volatile, or broke down, participants' housing became particularly unstable and precarious. In rarer instances, supportive relationships and community care acted as a protective factor against housing instability.

One of the clearest examples of the relationality of instability came from participants' discussions of the power imbalances between them, as renters, and landlords, property managers, and real estate agents. This was evident before, during, and after their tenancies. Ellis spoke to the inherent power imbalance in Aotearoa's rental sector:

> "And then, I guess because it's a position of power as well. When they're in your home, and you're just kind of like, waiting, while they [are] looking around and inspecting everything. It's kinda like, what could happen, what could go wrong, what could go right, just a lot of uncertainty, I guess."

Renters are acutely aware of the power that landlords hold in their lives, and the fear and uncertainty this creates. The rental market is structured in a way to make all renters susceptible to housing insecurity; as Soaita and McKee (2019) explain, instability comes not only from the act of moving but also from landlords' power over tenants. Ellis prioritized maintaining a friendly relationship with their landlord; she was both their landlord and their flatmate's mother and would often blur the boundaries between the two. Ellis shared that when their landlord came to visit their flatmate—as her mother, not as her landlord—she would make comments about the house and how the tenants were living in it. These visits became a form of tenant surveillance. Lister (2005) shows that for younger renters, landlords frequently view their tenants as children, using both care and control to manage their tenant's behavior and further blur the boundaries between personal and legal/business relationships. In this case, where the landlord is the parent of a tenant, such boundaries become even murkier. This makes it difficult for tenants to know how to navigate landlord–tenant relationships and power dynamics, thus creating a deepened sense of uncertainty.

These power imbalances become more evident amongst marginalized groups, where discrimination is rife. The following quote from Sean shows how discrimination and power imbalances can manifest during the process of searching for a rental:

> "the ladies next door…were actually the landlords…we had become really close…But the agency didn't know that she was gay…[when we were moving out] she turned around and said to me…'it's really important that you know…when yous came to look at the house and they [the property managers] came and approached us and said that 'two guys want to move in next door but we know that you've got children, is it okay if we were to rent it to them'…she said that they were terrified about two men moving in next door while children was next door. And so, my heart sunk, I was devastated…But they were one of the biggest agencies so if you mess up one branch you will not get something else."

Here, we see an example of property managers wanting to use their power and not rent a property to two gay men based on discriminatory stereotypes. It was only due to the landlords exercising *their* power and over-riding this decision that Sean and his partner were able to rent the property. However, the final sentence of this quote shows the necessity of tenants maintaining a positive relationship with those who hold power over them. If Sean had complained to the real estate agency managing the property, he would have struggled to find housing in the future; the company managed a large proportion of the rentals in his city and would have likely been reluctant to rent to him again. This evidences Lukes' (2005) second dimension of power, wherein power is hidden; tenants do not raise issues with their landlords or property managers for fear of negative repercussions (Byrne & McArdle, 2022; Chisholm et al., 2020). In these cases, preserving power relations becomes key in maintaining some level of stability.

Volatile relationships were a key factor in participants' experiences of housing instability. When relationships both inside and outside of the home became volatile, it negatively impacted participants' feelings, and experienced, sense of stability. Flatting, or shared housing, is a particular site of vulnerability for instability; not only do people need to maintain good relationships with their landlords/property managers, but they also need to maintain relationships within the home. The under-regulated nature of flatting means that if relationships sour, people can find themselves abruptly needing to move (Bate, 2021). For example, Kaia shared stories of how quickly her relationships with her flatmates became a source of instability:

> "I brought a partner home. I wasn't like in the closet, but I never had the conversation and so I got outed and essentially got told I'd get killed if I didn't leave…And then I moved in with some other friends and then it became known what had happened at the previous place and I wasn't threatened but I was given the, 'Oh, it would be best if you moved on,' kind of conversation."

The volatility of flatting is a particular concern for those who occupy marginalized spaces and face discrimination in the housing market. At this point in time, Kaia had not begun to transition, or begin exploring or articulating her gender. Because of this, she was perceived as a gay man through her intimate relationships—which she concealed from those around her due to safety concerns. As this quote shows, these concerns were confirmed on multiple occasions. Much of the literature on LGBTIQ+ housing—particularly homelessness—focuses on how discrimination within the family home results in young people facing housing stress (Abramovich, 2012; Ecker, 2016; McCann & Brown, 2019). This is undoubtedly important but has left other living arrangements and structural factors under-explored (Spruce, 2024; Wheeler et al., 2017). There are several pieces of research that touch on homophobia and transphobia in shared housing (Glick et al., 2020; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019), but more research is needed to further explore how this contributes to homelessness, the support needs of people who face such discriminatory experiences, and how they can be prevented.

These safety concerns had a significant impact on the ways participants approached flatting. It made them wary of who they could trust and limited their housing options. Josh said:

> "I felt that my housing opportunities were limited to people who didn't want to hurt me and who didn't want to have a long discussion with me about my identity. I was just like, if anyone can be indifferent or nonchalant about my identity, then I would prefer to be around them because I don't have the energy…The times where it wasn't like that…I did feel constantly on edge…I was just wondering, when's the danger going to start and then maybe I'm being a little bit over-sensitive about this, and then I just gave it a few months and bang, the danger the starts. It has made me wary about trusting people…"

Flatting is generally thought to be a transitory phase that only young people undertake, and as such, is under-regulated in Aotearoa and beyond (Goodall et al., 2023). As we see, this poses problems, particularly around discrimination and safety concerns. The nature of living with strangers and not having any formal recourse when flatmates are discriminatory left participants in anticipation of danger in their home environments, particularly if they had previous negative experiences with flatmates. As flatting becomes more common and long-term, there is a need for greater policy that is specifically aimed at shared housing such as flatting, and which adequately understands its different iterations, tensions, and preferences; particularly so that different demographics are protected from discrimination within the household (Goodall et al., 2023; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). Such policy could include greater flexibility in tenants' ability to alter leases, complaint resolution services, and regulation of online search platforms to prevent discrimination (Goodall et al., 2023).

The volatility of flatting environments necessitated careful navigation of household relationships as to maintain stability. This was particularly evident in the way intra-community dynamics played out in households with multiple takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ residents. Ethan demonstrated this, saying:

> "I feel like being from small communities just they can really be, like, tinderboxes and, like, drama can just spread quite easily and explode. And often the home is kind of the casualty of it…at that last flat where I lived with a queer man in, like, quite close quarters, and, like, I had, like, known him for, like, ten years…it was a very rich tapestry of just negotiating our relationships to the other people in our lives who we've had relationships with…I don't think that's necessarily unique to queer people, but I think it—it becomes much more heightened because of the smallness and the tight-knit nature of the queer community."

Managing conflict is an important part of the flatting experience (Clark et al., 2020). Much of the literature on conflict in shared housing focuses primarily on household-related conflicts, such as cleanliness, use of space, health and safety, and intimate relationships (Clark et al., 2017, 2020; Holton, 2016; Raynor & Frichot, 2022). What this research shows, however, is that for takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ communities in particular, conflict can arise based on happenings outside of the home and broader community dynamics. The takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ community in Aotearoa is small, and often deeply political, which resulted in conflicts spilling into the home environment for several participants.

Although relationships—particularly those within the takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ community—contributed to instability, they also alleviated it for some participants. Several participants spoke of drawing on their friendships and connections within the takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ community to find new flats, as well as temporary places to stay. For example, Josh noted:

> "Yeah, there were these really joyous moments where I could really receive from the community and receive from the world, and then these heart-wrenching moments where it was like this community is so messed up and hurt each other, but I would say, I never stray far from the queer community."

He shared how he drew on his personal relationships and wider community during times of need; to find temporary accommodation, for respite from unsafe housing situations, to find new flats, and to help him navigate other aspects of adulthood he was unfamiliar with, such as the social welfare and tax systems. He referred to these as "joyous moments" despite the hardships that precipitated them. Although individualistic modes of being position needing care as a moral failure, this quote shows us how the act of "care-receiving" (Tronto, 1993) can be a deeply fulfilling social experience that strengthens community ties. As Butler (2015) explains, "precarity exposes our sociality, the fragile and necessary dimensions of our interdependency" (p. 119). Drawing on social capital for support is a common phenomenon for LGBTIQ+ people experiencing homelessness, particularly from within the LGBTIQ+ community itself (DeChants et al., 2022; England, 2022; Glick et al., 2019, 2020; Pettas et al., 2022; Sakamoto et al., 2009; Shelton, 2016). LGBTIQ+ communities are adept at undertaking care work and mutual aid in the face of housing systems that do not meet their needs, understanding housing instability and homelessness as a routine and expected outcome of systemic exclusion (England, 2022; Pettas et al., 2022). This section has shown the relationality of housing instability; not just through relationships with peers, but also with power holders in the housing market, such as landlords, property managers, and real estate agents.

Selfhood is mediated through instability

For participants, their selfhood was mediated through instability. It shaped both their sense of self, and their presentation of the self. Instability had a profound effect on how participants viewed themselves and their place in the world, which often, in turn, shaped how they presented themselves. Instability shaped participants' understanding of themselves, and how they reacted to challenges and difficulties. Additionally, for some, instability resulted in a negative sense of self as a result of internalizing norms about the ideal life and what milestones they should be meeting at certain points in their life.

Housing instability significantly limited participants' ability to explore, understand, and express their sense of self. Kaia spoke of this poignantly:

> "I don't think I ever got used to stability…it kind of felt like the norm. I feel like the biggest impact it had on me is in terms of not really being able to do self-actualisation…kind of beyond that existential need. You're like shit, I need to, I need to make sure I've got somewhere to live…if it wasn't for a lot of those scenarios, I probably would have started my transition, like, ten years younger…I kind of had this, just this blur of fifteen years of my life that I don't get back…where there was no getting ahead, there was no working towards goals or having dreams or aspirations, you know? I kind of gave up on it, you know, until I could afford to live by myself and kind of be the master of my own fate…"

Chronic housing instability and a focus on survival prevented Kaia from being able to thrive and explore who she was. Instead, she felt as though she had 15 years of her life taken from her by the instability and homelessness she experienced. Homelessness and housing instability limit a person's autonomy and agency; they are often left with a constrained amount of micro agency as they navigate oppressive systems (Dawkins, 2017; McNaughton Nicholls, 2009; Parsell et al., 2014). We see that here, in Kaia's reference to not being able to work towards any goals. But perhaps more fundamentally, we see that instability limited Kaia's ability to do the essential self-actualization of exploring her gender, as well as identifying her dreams and aspirations. Early adulthood is often taken for granted as a time for young people to undertake self-exploration and develop their identities; however, working-class and economically precarious young people are denied such experiences (Côté, 2014; Silva, 2012). For transgender young people, early adulthood is frequently the point at which they begin to live openly in their authentic gender and begin their transitions thanks to the greater independence it affords them; they are able to risk facing negative reactions from family members when they are no longer reliant on family for necessities such as housing or financial support (Heiden-Rootes et al., 2023; Kade, 2021). Homelessness and housing instability can be a way for transgender young people to assert their identities and avoid risk and violence in the home (Shelton, 2016; Shelton et al., 2018). However, for people experiencing homelessness and instability who have not yet been able to identify and articulate their gender, such identity formation and expression are unavailable (Fraser et al., 2023b, 2024). The centrality of survival does not provide the space, time, and resources necessary for such identity work.

Housing instability had a considerable influence on how participants viewed themselves and their place in the world, thus shaping how they presented themselves in different settings. As discussed earlier, code-switching when looking for housing was common. However, instability

also shaped who participants were inside the home. For example, Ethan shared how his housing experiences had impacted the way he presented himself in his flats:

> "I absolutely felt, like, oh, like, I don't want to bring anyone home and, like, kind of bring that part of my life into this place. And because it's strangers and, like, like, I'm very comfortable and it's very obvious that I am a queer man…I, like, absolutely did have some hesitancy around kind of bringing the romantic part of my life into my home life in—in a place with strangers…I definitely had hangovers with that even when I was living with friends…I never thought of my—my house as a place where, like, romance happened…now I live alone and I'm just, like, yeah, that's fine."

This touches on the links between volatile relationships and instability: the need to sustain positive relationships with flatmates to maintain stability in the home shifted how Ethan viewed himself and his place in his home. As a result, he became uncomfortable bringing his romantic life into his home; a discomfort that has continued even as his living arrangements changed. Housing instability thus influences a person's ability to engage in home-making practices and create a comfortable queer home that reflects all aspects of their lives (Kentlyn, 2008; Pilkey, 2014).

Another way instability shaped participants' selfhood was through shaping their aspirations and goals. Several participants spoke about how their experiences of housing instability fostered a desire for homeownership. Hazel said:

> "I think my experience with the Tenancy Tribunal just made, made me a bit more aware of the importance of feeling safe, living safe[ly] in your home, and probably planted a seed of home ownership. But I had, I had no choice for a very long time of where, really, I was living. I was just making the best of the situations that, and options, that presented themselves…"

Hazel had been to the Tenancy Tribunal (a court which holds hearings to settle disputes between tenants and landlords) several times, and the stress of this, combined with the lack of agency she had over her living situations, made her long to own a home. Although participants generally spoke about experiences of instability in terms of moving frequently, interpersonal dynamics within their homes, and the powerlessness they felt as renters, Hazel predominantly spoke about instability as a lack of homeownership. For example, when I asked if she had faced discrimination in the housing market during the periods she had been moving frequently, she responded that "I haven't been able to put a foot really into the housing market to be discriminated against;" she did not consider the rental market to be part of the housing market. Homeownership was such a strong norm and aspiration for her that "buying the roof over my head has been front of mind for 5 years." The "normalisation of homeownership" (Mckee et al., 2017) in countries such as Aotearoa has a significant influence on the goals and preferences of those who experience housing instability (Bierre & Howden-Chapman, 2020). Furthermore, it often serves to reduce self-worth and moral dignity among those who are unable to access homeownership (Vassenden, 2014).

However, the limited agency and chronic instability renters face did not result in such a strong desire for homeownership amongst all participants. For some, the way it contributed to their aspirations and values was by strengthening their desire to challenge and shift the norms of how the housing market currently operates and is experienced in Aotearoa. For example, Sarah said:

> "I automatically struggle in the housing market because like it's so against my morals…I'm an anarcho-communist…so in my day-to-day life I fuck with…like the idea of having flatmates for the rest of my life, or like living communally…there's independence but…you can work together on things and, you know, work collaboratively, that's great. The housing market is so like, antithetical, to like, queerdom."

Queerness offered a lens through which Sarah could challenge heteronormative ideals of home, and undertake the liberatory practice of envisioning what "residential belonging"—rather than "residential alienation" (Madden & Marcuse, 2016)—might look like (England, 2022; Matthews et al., 2019). For Sarah, this was communal living. Although research has shown that some prefer flatting/sharing housing due to the sociability, community, and alternative family-like ties it can offer, it remains only a secondary motivator for such living arrangements; economic considerations are the primary (Maalsen, 2019). However, as this quote shows, queerness and other political values challenge this norm of flatting as a temporary state. This reflects research from England (2022) which reveals how a queer lens can enable concrete utopias of housing and homelessness support to be realized within the trans community, particularly through mutual aid and community building. Throughout our interview, Sarah touched on the importance of both in realizing residential security and their housing aspirations but noted that they felt constrained in the extent they could provide mutual aid due to their deeply precarious financial situation. However, this significant constraint did not prevent them from undertaking mutual aid in small ways and continuing to re-imagine what a queered housing system might look like.

Interviewees' selfhood was also mediated through instability by way of weakening their self-esteem when they felt they were not meeting certain norms. In particular, when instability prevented participants from securing appropriate housing independently—such as temporarily living with family and friends or relying on family for financial support—their sense of self was lessened, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and shame. For example, Charlie said:

> "…I'm a 31-year-old guy and I was living in my friend's basement for probably three months…and relying on money from my parents to be able to pay for things…it doesn't go a long way to making you feel like a healthy functioning adult."

Charlie had internalized certain norms about what it means to be an adult, and as such, he struggled with decreased self-worth when he was unable to meet these norms. Financial independence is important in identity development among younger adults (Arnett, 2000). Furthermore, renting and other forms of temporary/insecure tenure inhibit identity building in "homeowner nations" such as Aotearoa (Vassenden, 2014). This combination of residential and financial insecurity made it difficult for Charlie to build his identity as a "healthy functioning adult." Similarly, while reflecting on temporarily living with extended family, Rangi noted:

> "I know that the period last year especially when I was like transient, it was just really rough…I got quite attached to my car, because it was like the only space that felt like mine…it definitely kind of feels like you're not fully doing real life until you've got a place to settle, if that makes sense?"

For them, such an unsettled, supposedly non-normative living situation was not "real life"; it was a state of limbo that prevented them from fully living the life they wanted. Insecure housing and

the "temporariness" it creates result in increased feelings of vulnerability and decreased control (Vassenden, 2014). Such insecure housing threatens one's "safety of future" (Vassenden, 2014) and ability to participate fully in their life due to the bandwidth tax required to navigate such situations (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). This section has shown how selfhood is mediated through instability; instability shapes a person's sense of self, but also experiences of instability are shaped by one's selfhood.

CONCLUSIONS

This research contributes to our understandings of two important issues; the ongoing marginalization of LGBTIQ+ people, and housing markets that fail to provide people with stable, appropriate, and healthy housing. The findings reveal that for takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people, their experiences of housing instability are inherently political, and the ways they navigate such experiences are complex and nuanced. Furthermore, the findings show that housing instability is a deeply social and relational experience, where takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ identities become central. Finally, housing instability has a bi-directional relationship with people's sense of self. This research complements a primarily quantitative body of literature; it is only a beginning. Further qualitative research is needed, such as that which excavates the role of power, to contribute to the "residential liberation" (Madden & Marcuse, 2016) of takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people and other marginalized groups.

This research has several strengths and limitations. In terms of limitations, the sample of participants is missing the voices of Pacific communities, and there were only three participants who were aged 40 and above, so the experiences of older age groups are limited. However, most participants being over the age of 30 is a strength of the research; much of the international literature on LGBTIQ+ housing focuses solely on those under the age of 25 (Ecker et al., 2017; McCarthy & Parr, 2022; Spruce, 2024). Another strength of the research is its contribution to articulating just how marginalization can occur in the housing market and the impact of this on a personal level. On an international level, it contributes to calls to better incorporate the political dimension of housing in housing studies (Bengtsson, 2009, 2012; Madden & Marcuse, 2016) through a specific focus on LGBTIQ+ communities, and on a national level it contributes to our knowledge of underresearched issues such as the relationship between the welfare state and housing experiences, the reality of insufficient tenure rights and protections for renters, and the effect of discrimination in the housing market.

In terms of structural reforms, there are several key changes that would serve to lessen some of the experiences described throughout this paper. As discussed, the power imbalances in the housing market are political choices. If we are to be serious about addressing marginalization within the housing system, strong political will is needed. Reforms, at a minimum, ought to include equalizing landlord–tenant relations; such as strengthening renters' rights, changing the mechanisms of the Tenancy Tribunal so that the onus of reporting does not lie with the tenant and that their privacy is protected, consistent and thorough enforcement and monitoring of the Healthy Homes Standards, and regulating property managers to further professionalize the sector. In addition to this, the welfare state needs to be reformed in alignment with the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's recommendations, including an immediate rise in benefit rates that provide people with the incomes needed to live healthy, fulfilling, lives. Advocacy groups supporting LGBTIQ+ communities, those on low incomes, and people struggling with their housing all need greater funding to carry out their important work.

In their influential book *In Defense of Housing*, Madden and Marcuse (2016) outline how the political dimension of housing is often overlooked, including a focus on the existence of housing problems as the concerns of specific populations within the context of an overall housing system that is presumed to be functioning relatively well. This is *not* the remit of this research. Although the takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ community is focused on as a group who face marginalization and alienation within existing housing systems, this paper highlights both the role of politics in shaping people's individual experiences, as well as how intersecting lines of marginalization manifest within inequitable systems. Many of the experiences and findings presented resonate beyond the takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ community. Oppression, power dynamics, and structural failures are not unique to takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people; other marginalized groups face similar experiences. Although this community certainly has unique experiences and specific needs, the broader applicability of these findings speaks to the need for intersectional, collaborative, solidarity that traverses multiple lines of disempowerment.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data (i.e., interview transcripts) cannot be shared due to confidentiality. The takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ community in Aotearoa is so small that anonymity cannot be guaranteed even when identifying information is removed from transcripts. Thus, data are unable to be made available in order to protect participants. Ethics requirements for this study stated that only the research team would have access to the transcripts. The University of Otago Human Ethics Committee gave ethics approval on this basis.

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