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What is Home? Creating a Psychological-Based Framework of Home With Basic Psychological Needs Theory

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Abstract

While psychologists regularly study the home environment, they less often study home as a concept, despite the benefits that psychology can both receive from and give to the study of home. The psychological well-being of many peoples cannot be understood without recognizing their integral relation with the concept of home. Likewise, several questions remain in the study of home without unifying answers, including the most essential: What is home? And why is home important to the self? To resolve these tensions, we integrate the qualitative methodologies of metasynthesis and the integrative review to apply basic psychological needs theory and create a psychological-based framework of home. We argue that dwellings satisfy basic physical needs, whereas homes also satisfy basic psychological needs. We use scholarship on home and examples in popular media to argue that prior conceptualizations of home align with the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. At the same time, we incorporate need strength to argue that not all needs are necessary for a dwelling to be a home, but it instead depends on the needs that the inhabitant values at a given time. We lastly suggest that home can be unmade by the frustration of basic psychological needs. By achieving these goals, we provide a unifying framework for the study of home, enabling a multitude of avenues for the study of home in psychology. We also provide

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Data Availability Statement included at the end of the article

considerations for the importance of our integrative qualitative review methodology, which can be adapted to investigate similarly important research questions in psychology.

Keywords
Home, dwelling, basic psychological needs theory, need strength, well-being

While a dwelling is a physical setting that enables certain essential functions (e.g., eating, sleeping, and safety), home is an ambiguous and debated concept generally referring to a dwelling with certain psychological and symbolic capacities (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Douglas, 1991; Easthope, 2004; Parsell, 2012; Saunders, 1989; Saunders & Williams, 1988). The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts altered the intimate relation between people and home. Spending more time in their dwellings (due to social distancing and shifts in work modalities) caused people to reexamine the purpose and capabilities of home, questioning its functional, psychological, and symbolic capacities (Azevedo et al., 2022; Byrne, 2020; Parsell & Pawson, 2022). Increases in house prices worldwide have also caused more people to reevaluate the possibility of home ownership for themselves, often resulting in the dream of homeownership to be perceived as forever out of reach (Hess et al., 2022; Lawson et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2022). Even still, the number of economic migrants continues to grow, causing people to search for new dwellings with aspirations of home after theirs have become financially inhospitable (Jacobs, 2023; Lombard, 2021; Romoli et al., 2022). Each of these changes has well-documented psychological impacts; home, the prospect of home, and the loss of home have powerful influences on well-being (Bratt, 2002; Clapham et al., 2018; Easthope, 2014; Pohl et al., 2022).

Psychologists regularly study the home environment, especially whether certain dwelling characteristics influence child development (Berk, 2015; Davis-Kean, 2005; Graham et al., 2015) and whether remaining at home benefits late-life care (Fonad et al., 2006; Lane et al., 2020; Zarghami et al., 2019); however, psychologists less often study home as a concept, which is most frequently a focal topic in the interdisciplinary discipline of housing studies[1] (Meers, 2021; Parsell, 2012; Parsell & Pawson, 2022; Saunders, 1989). A premier journal of this field, *Housing Studies*, lists in their "Aims and Scope" that, "Contributions to the journal reflect the interdisciplinary nature of housing research and are drawn from many different disciplines including, political science, urban studies, history, social administration, sociology, geography, law, planning and economics" (p. 1). Psychology is notably absent from this list, despite the benefits that psychology can both receive from and give to the study of home.

A newly married couple may craft their dwelling to create a new home; a marginalized young adult may discover home for the first time by finding an accepting community; and a migrant traveler may question whether home will ever be found again. Without understanding their integral relation with the concept of home, the

psychological well-being of these people cannot be truly understood. At the same time, several unanswered questions linger in housing studies about home, including the most essential – what is home? Competing conceptualizations with differing characteristics have been proposed, in part because the meaning of home is idiosyncratic (Abu-Ghazzeh, 1997; Lewin, 2001; Ozaki, 2002). Many conceptualizations likewise do not provide justifications for the joint association of their characteristics, causing uncertainty regarding why certain characteristics are included and others are not (Heywood, 2005; Mallett, 2004; Meers, 2021; Smith, 1994; Somerville, 1989). Across these scholarly conversations, authors have also stressed that extant theory has not identified explanatory mechanisms for the benefits of home, despite its known importance (Clark, 2021; Mallett, 2004; Ruonavaara, 2018; Soleimani & Gharehbaglou, 2023). In addition to "What is home?", the question of "Why is home important to the self?" remains without a unifying answer.

In the current article, we resolve these tensions by developing a psychological-based framework of home. We use basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2022) to argue that dwellings (which may or may not be homes) satisfy basic physical needs, whereas homes satisfy basic psychological needs. We align characteristics of home proposed in housing studies and associated disciplines (e.g., political science, history, sociology, geography, law, and economics) with the needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. By doing so, our framework integrates previously proposed characteristics of home, providing a justification for their joint association, and suggests that homes are beneficial to the self through basic psychological need satisfaction. Further, we use need strength to reflect the idiosyncratic nature of homes. People differ regarding the extent that certain needs are essential to developing feelings of home, which causes meanings of home to be personal. Lastly, we discuss how unmaking home can be understood via BPNT, showing that our perspective is useful for interpreting both the creation and loss of home. Throughout these efforts, we reference salient examples in literature, theater, and film to solidify these connections, as popular media is a valuable mirror that depicts (and may implicitly perpetuate) real phenomenon as they occur.[2] We also incorporate scholarship from diasporic studies, disability studies, queer studies, and intersectional studies (Fortier, 2001; Gorter, 2017; Heywood, 2005; Hsu, 2022), as scholars in these fields have discussed the meaning of home for historically marginalized populations that are often more likely to experience precarity in their living situations. Via our efforts, we support that our theoretical lens is useful for understanding home across varied contexts.

By achieving these goals, the current article provides many contributions to the study of psychology and home. First, we show that the characteristics of home identified across a multitude of conceptualizations align with the psychological needs of BPNT, which integrates extant proposals and provides inclusion criteria and boundaries for the characteristics of home. In doing so, we provide a psychological answer to the question: what is and what is not home? Second, our framework provides a lens to understand how the concept of home influences well-being, answering the

question: why is home important to the self? The satisfaction of basic psychological needs has empirically supported effects on the self with known explanatory mechanisms, which are integrated with the concept and study of home. Third, our framework enables meanings of home to be personalized by incorporating need strength, resolving disagreements in the present literature due to the idiosyncratic nature of home. Fourth, our framework opens a multitude of novel directions for future research integrating psychology and housing studies, in part due to the widespread application of BPNT. BPNT has been linked with many other theories to understand motivation and well-being, which could now be linked with home. Fifth, our framework can spark investigations with marginalized populations. Future researchers can better model the psychological effects of home precarity and determine which needs may be left unsatisfied for those without a home, enabling more equitable scholarship.

Background

Laying the Foundation

In developing our psychological-based framework, we underwent a systematic approach to identify and interpret relevant sources that discussed meanings and characteristics of home, as we intended to create a framework that effectively encapsulated all conceptualizations of home widespread in the current literature. We followed modern recommendations for integrative reviews and metasyntheses, as these approaches were most relevant to our objectives at hand (Johnson, 2021; Snyder, 2019; Uttley et al., 2023; Walsh & Downe, 2005; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). Supplemental Appendix 1 includes complete information about our search, coding, and interpretation procedures. It also provides figures that detail these procedures, such as our PRISMA flow diagram (Stovold et al., 2014). Our efforts included searches of related terms in multiple meta-databases, inspections of articles published in five relevant outlets, and backwards- and forward-searches of prominent sources discovered via our other search efforts. From these systematic procedures, we identified 9189 potentially relevant sources (after removing duplicates). By coding these sources for relevance, we identified 602 sources that discussed the meaning and characteristics of home. We focus on these sources in creating our psychological-based framework, but our efforts were also informed by broader works beyond these sources alone.

Our methodological approach is among the most verifiable and robust to ensure that collected sources are representative of cultural variations and diverse perspectives in the current literature. Typical discussions of home utilize traditional theorizing approaches, which rely on applying theoretical lenses without a systematic methodology to review and incorporate extant literature. Our approach instead leverages a systematic methodology to identify our initial scope of literature to review and produce our narrower scope to interpret. The scope of both initially reviewed and final included sources is larger than even considered in most meta-analyses and systematic literature reviews, which emphasizes our ability to consider a wide scope of literature that may

represent diverse perspectives. It is also much larger than the reference lists of published sources that discuss conceptualizations of home, again suggesting that the present article is successful in considering diverse perspectives via our systematic approach.

Our Supplemental Materials includes the final list of included sources. From the titles alone, over 50 countries were studied in these sources. Many also represented expatriates in a variety of settings, including Ecuadorians in Europe, Filipinos in Japan, Iranians in Sweden, Iraqis in Denmark, and New Zealanders in the United Kingdom. Further, many different peoples were included in these sources, as many titles referred to investigating specific populations. Many of these titles also referenced intersectional populations, including transgender and queer Asian Americans, queer men of color, people with mental illness experiencing homelessness, immigrants engaged in sex work, mothers living with HIV, and queer people experiencing homelessness. From these varied countries and populations referenced in titles alone, it is apparent that our procedures were able to identify a scope of literature representing diverse perspectives on home. As our work is derived from these sources discussing varied populations, our proposed framework recognizes these diverse perspectives on home, providing support that often-marginalized perspectives are represented in our proposals.

Before discussing BPNT, it is also necessary to clarify certain terms. A house is a permanent structure with a single set of inhabitants, such as a family, wherein a structure is a physical enclosure that can be used for any array of purposes (e.g., residence, commerce, etc.). Historically, Western scholars have referred to houses as the default living structure (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Meers, 2021; Parsell & Pawson, 2022), but recent authors have increasingly recognized the limitations in this assumption. Most families worldwide do not live in a house (Oliver, 2003), especially houses that adhere to Western norms (e.g., large with a yard). Authors have gradually used the term dwelling to refer more generally to a relatively permanent place of residence. A dwelling may be a house, but it can also be an apartment, hut, caravan, or multitude of other structures. We use the term dwelling rather than house due to the inclusivity of its usage.

A home may be a dwelling, but the two terms are certainly not synonymous in either scholarly or lay language. For instance, common clichés like "a house is not a home" clearly demonstrate that people perceive differences between a home and a dwelling; however, the precise nature of this difference is debated (Parsell, 2012; Saunders, 1989; Saunders & Williams, 1988). We presently describe a home as a dwelling with certain psychological and symbolic capacities, and we expand upon this definition in our continuation of the current article below.

Further, some related terms are misnomers. Unhoused and homeless refer to people without a dwelling. People may have a dwelling but not have a house and/or feel without a home (Nóżka, 2020). We refer to people without a dwelling to reference typical usages of people that are unhoused or homeless. Housing insecure suffers from similar concerns, as it is used to describe people with tentative or unstable living arrangements. A person may not have a house or apartment (i.e., housing) but they may

not be housing insecure. We instead use the term dwelling insecure. Household refers to the residents of a dwelling, but these people do not need to live in a house. A household can live in any dwelling, and we instead use the term inhabitants.

It should be noted that these definitions are scholarly rather than legal. Housing studies scholars rarely use legal definitions because these differ between countries and even within different government entities of the same country. Tsukerman et al. (2021) highlighted that the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Education, and Department of Health and Human Services in the United States each have different federal definitions for youth without a dwelling. Applying legal definitions in scholarly work does not address issues of ambiguity – it exacerbates them. With our key terms defined, we transition to discussing BPNT.

Basic Psychological Needs Theory

Self-determination theory is a macro theory of motivation because it broadly details human functioning via a multitude of diverse proposals that identify personal and contextual antecedents and their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes associated with innate growth tendencies and psychological needs (Ntoumanis et al., 2021; Roth et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Ryan et al., 2021). Few – if any – theories in psychology are as broad as self-determination theory, and perhaps for this reason, the proposals of self-determination theory have been distilled into a set of six minitheories. All six minitheories are rarely applied in distinct manners within a single article, but authors instead discuss the minitheory relevant to their arguments. In the current article, we expand upon the minitheory of BPNT; however, we also suggest that all aspects of self-determination theory can inform our understanding of home, and all six minitheories should be used to draw novel insights about home in future research.

BPNT is among the most supported theories in the social sciences, as a multitude of meta-analyses that have demonstrated support for its tenets across cultural and social contexts (Ryan et al., 2022; Slemp et al., 2024; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Based on a strict set of nine criteria (Vansteenkiste et al., 2023), BPNT proposes the existence of three qualifying basic psychological needs, which are the needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2019, 2022; Ryan et al., 2021; Vansteenkiste et al., 2023). The need for autonomy refers to the desire to have control over one's life and to act as one intends to act. People generally desire to choose both their short-term momentary behaviors and long-term life paths, and they want to believe that their actions are chosen by themselves rather than other people, such as parents or even society. The need for relatedness refers to the desire to engage with and reciprocally care for others. People generally want to feel social bonds and emotional closeness with others, and they need to feel that others actively care for them. The need for competence refers to the desire to experience mastery. People generally want to believe that they are capable, both in general activities and specific activities personally important to them.

People across contexts broadly experience beneficial outcomes when these needs are fulfilled, such as heightened motivation and goal striving, improved psychological and emotional well-being, and increased adaptive and advantageous behaviors; and they experience detrimental outcomes when these needs are frustrated, such as psychopathology, dysfunctional coping strategies, and maladaptive behaviors (Donald et al., 2020; Good et al., 2022; Ntoumanis et al., 2021). People also proactively strive to fulfill these three needs due to their benefits to human functioning, searching for specific contexts that uniquely satisfy each of these needs (Bakker & van Woerkom, 2017; Gagné et al., 2022; Reeve, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For instance, people often seek new jobs when their current workplace is insufficient at fulfilling their needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Urbanaviciute et al., 2018; Van den Broeck et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding these three needs can inform a great deal of the human experience, and we presently argue that it can be utilized to define the meaning of dwellings and home.

Dwellings and Basic Physical Needs. Drive-based and need-based theories (Herzberg, 2017; Hull, 1943; Seward, 1956) consider basic physical needs to be food, water, air, sleep, safety, and other necessary "inputs to survive and to be physically healthy" (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020, p. 13). Basic physical needs are excluded from BPNT, but their centrality to many drive-based and needs-based theories has forced authors to grapple with their association to BPNT (Chen et al., 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon et al., 2001; Tay & Diener, 2011). BPNT focuses on growth needs that stem from inherent desires for self-improvement and development (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2022). People are proactive and continuously strive towards fulfilling these basic psychological needs, causing these needs to be associated with intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Alternatively, basic physical needs are reactive and become "salient and operative when unfulfilled, with their salience again waning when satisfied" (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020, p. 13). Ryan and Deci (2000) draw from Maslow (1943) to associate basic physical needs with deficit motives, which are a "compensatory formation of the psyche in response to basic need deficits" (p. 325). These arguments demonstrate a conceptual distinction between basic psychological needs and basic physical needs. Basic psychological needs deal with "the health and growth of the self", whereas basic physical needs are "essential for survival" and deal with "the health and growth of tissues and bones" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 325).

Definitions of dwellings proposed by scholars of housing studies and beyond closely correspond to basic physical needs. Within housing studies, the popular definition of Coolen and Meesters (2012) considers a dwelling to be "a system of settings, being a subsystem of the environment, that affords certain systems of functions. . .compris[ing] activity systems, such as eating, sleeping, relaxing, and entertaining family and friends, but may also include socio-psychological functions, for example family life, safety, and privacy." Often referenced more broadly, Heidegger conceptualizes a dwelling as "the most primitive drawing of a line that produces an inside opposed to an outside" (cited in Wigley, 1993, p. 104), which is regularly quoted to emphasize the necessary functions

of privacy and place that dwellings provide. At a most basic level, dwellings are often considered to be constructed physically, whereas homes are often considered to be constructed ideologically and conceptually (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Clark, 2021; Nevalainen, 2021; Mallett, 2004). This dichotomy emphasizes that dwellings satisfy physical necessities of human functioning (e.g., "the growth of tissues and bones"), whereas homes go beyond the physical (e.g., "the health and growth of the self") (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The parallelism between physical needs and psychological needs with dwellings and homes is not accidental or incidental. Different terms emerge for interrelated, seemingly synonymous concepts because each subtly divergent label signifies and conveys distinct meanings; "structure", "dwelling", and "home" represent different concepts across a vast number of languages, indicating that they each serve different personal functions for the self. We argue that the primary distinction of a dwelling is that it satisfies basic physical needs of its inhabitants, which is reflected in the definitions above. The importance of fulfilling basic physical needs caused cultures and their people to develop this term, as dwellings are necessary for survival. This distinction distinguishes dwellings from structures more generally, but it also does not exclude a home from being a dwelling. Therefore, we propose the following because of the commonalities between basic physical needs and definitions of dwellings:

Proposition 1: Dwellings are structures of residence that satisfy basic physical needs.

Two further distinctions should be made regarding this association. The exclusion of basic physical needs from BPNT does not indicate that dwellings are irrelevant to the concept of home. Homes are dwellings, and any structure must satisfy the qualifications of a dwelling to be considered a home (Douglas, 1991; Meers, 2021; Parsell & Pawson, 2022; Saunders & Williams, 1988). Also, basic physical needs have associations with basic physiological needs that are not explicitly modeled by BPNT. Basic psychological need frustration is subsequently associated with basic physical need frustration (Deci & Ryan, 2013; Martela & Ryan, 2020; Ryan, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). For instance, the frustration of autonomy, relatedness, and competence needs is associated with the dysregulation of sleeping and eating (Campbell et al., 2015, 2018; Tavernier et al., 2019). We discuss possible interactions between the requirements of dwellings (i.e., basic physical need satisfaction) and home (i.e., basic psychological need satisfaction) in the future directions section of our discussion.

With these two aspects noted, we now discuss home and basic psychological needs.

Home and Basic Psychological Needs. BPNT proposes that people experience positive psychological and emotional states when their basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence are satisfied, and they experience poor well-being when these needs are frustrated (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2022). For this reason, people proactively strive to discover environments that promote the satisfaction

and reduce the frustration of basic psychological needs, and they will go to great lengths to do so (Gagné, 2014; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Vallerand et al., 2008). We argue that a primary environment that enables the satisfaction of basic psychological needs is home, and the satisfaction of psychological needs differentiates a home from only a dwelling.

This perspective is regularly implied in housing studies. Authors often suggest that positive well-being results when the conditions of home are satisfied (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Parsell & Pawson, 2022). Somerville (1992) and Gurney (1997), for example, both considered home to be associated with powerful positive psychological and emotional states, including love, intimacy, warmth, and relaxation. These benefits cause people to continuously strive towards finding home, no matter how dire their circumstances. Fortier (2001) describes queer migrations, wherein people seek home in accepting communities away from a "heterosexist, homophobic world" (p. 412); Heywood (2005) depicts the extensive efforts that many people must endure to modify their dwellings to restore a sense of home after disability has taken it away; and Parsell (2012) portrays the manners that people sleeping rough develop a sense of home when they are residing in the most precarious of dwellings. Thus, much like research has shown regarding the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, scholars of housing studies have supported that home produces heightened well-being, causing people to continuously seek home.

Other authors have directly stated that home is associated with needs, sometimes calling for the application of psychological theory to understand how meanings of home are constructed. Dickens (1989) recognized that home satisfies certain essential desires, calling for researchers to apply modern psychological theory that integrates issues of "class, culture, and social processes" (p. 236). Heywood (2005) stated that, "Clearly, whatever meaning 'home' has reflects the human psyche and human needs in general. But, it seems that the term 'meaning of home' represents a specific, significant combination of human needs." While relatively few authors have heeded calls to apply psychological theory to study home, associating needs with extant scholarship in housing studies is not a foreign concept, which facilitates its present application.

Given these commonalities, we argue that the primary distinction of home is its capacity to fulfill basic psychological needs, which like dwellings, caused a multitude of cultures to develop a unique word for home. The basic psychological need fulfillment of homes can cause its inhabitants to grow and thrive, and people seek to fulfill these needs when they are frustrated. Creating the term "home" enables people to identify and express why they may feel their needs being frustrated and subsequent urge to fulfill these needs by discovering a new home. The distinction of home separates it from both structures and dwellings more generally, although homes are also structures and dwellings (Figure 1). In turn, this inherently indicates that homes satisfy basic physical needs, as they are dwellings, in addition to satisfying basic psychological needs, which separates them from being a dwelling alone. Therefore, we propose that:

Proposition 2: Homes are dwellings that satisfy basic psychological needs.

Further, housing studies has long recognized that home is multidimensional, multifaceted, and multilevel (Barrie, 2017; Coolen & Meesters, 2012; Romoli et al., 2022; Somerville, 1997). Authors often made this argument to reconcile differences in conceptualizations of home, proposing that each perspective is correct in its own manner; these competing perspectives may partially apply across all people, or they may each apply to a subset of people. Similarly, authors have differed on whether meanings of home are constructed by individuals, families, cultures, or other social units. Considering home to be a multilevel phenomenon enables its meaning to simultaneously arise from multiple conceptual levels. We adapt these arguments to suggest that no one need is sufficient in explaining the meaning of home; a combination of needs is instead necessary, causing home to be multifaceted and multidimensional. We also discuss how these needs are influenced by multiple conceptual levels (e.g., individual, family, culture), causing home to be multilevel. In doing so, we use BPNT to argue that needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence determine home, and each incur effects arising from multiple conceptual levels.

Home and Competence. The earliest discussions of home often mused on its symbolic capabilities, considering it to be an intimate expression of the self (Cooper, 1974; Madigan & Munro, 1996; Malkawi & Al-Qudah, 2003). These sources regularly

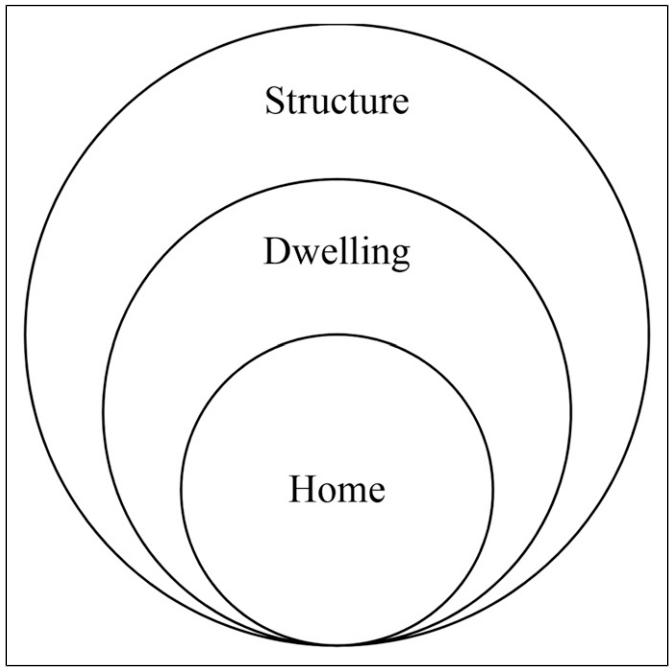

Figure 1. Visual representation of structure, dwelling, and home.

considered home to be a primary signifier of status and achievement, and they discussed how the private space has a very public function (Mallett, 2004). While these early authors focused on Western conceptualizations of home (i.e., large with a yard), more recent authors have recognized that homes still carry similar symbolic capital, even when the meaning of home has broadened beyond traditional Western conceptualizations (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Wyder, 2019). Homes of all types are still viewed as extensions of the self, and they are (for better or worse) considered to be signifiers of status and achievement.

The symbolic capital of home is reflected in the great lengths that people endure to stage their home. People spend a large portion of their salary on objects that do little to provide for basic physical needs in attempts to craft their home to reflect themselves – or idealized versions of themselves. In turn, guests are expected to complement these features of home as indirect ways to praise the inhabitant. Lawrence (1987) deftly drew these connections by stating,

> House plants, interior decoration, and personal possessions enable people both to articulate their personal and group identity and reflect their self-esteem. . .[Inhabitants] create physical settings, like the stage of a theater, where they intend to act according to specific psychological goals about the present and future stages of their life (p.161).

The earliest psychologists also considered home to be an extension of the self. In taking the symbolic nature of home quite literally, Carl Jung dreamed of a house wherein each floor symbolically represented his psyche. Stricken by his dream, Jung postulated that homes more broadly are representations of the psyche, and he proceeded to build a house with each room representing a facet of himself, materializing the symbolism of his dreamed home (Barrie, 2017).

The symbolic association of home with the self can be seen in Romantic fiction, perhaps demonstrating how the symbolic nature of home is reinforced through story (Buttimer, 2015; Després, 1991). As discussed by Barrie (2017), the home was often utilized by Jane Austen to demonstrate how her protagonists came to a deeper understanding of their suitors. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Barrie writes that, "variety of houses are cast as characters that express certain aspects of their inhabitants and their place in the cultural hierarchy" (2017, p. 31). The protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, initially shuns her suitor, Fitzwilliam Darcy, believing him to be arrogant and haughty. When visiting his country estate, Pemberley, she drastically changes her opinion of him. Ms Bennett admires the splendor of the house, finding it to be "handsome" and views it "with admiration of his taste" (Barrie, 2017, p. 31). Its indulgent characteristics reinforce the effusive comments of the housekeeper regarding Mr Darcy's "'sweet-tempered' and 'generous-hearted' character" (Barrie, 2017, p. 31), causing Ms Bennet to become quite fond of Mr Darcy and regret previously shunning him. This revelation occurs without the presence of Mr Darcy himself, demonstrating the powerful capabilities of home in expressing even the most personal details of the inhabitant's character. The turn of character also implies that Austen assumed that her readers would

accept the symbolic nature of home as a reflection of oneself, suggesting that this integral function of home occurs outside of literature alone.

In discussing home as an extension of the self, it is necessary to highlight that men and women are symbolically associated with different aspects of home (Davidson, 2011; Douglas, 1991; Saunders & Williams, 1988). Historically, men are more symbolically associated with the external appearances of their dwelling, whereas women are more symbolically associated with internal appearances. Whether due to or because of this, these symbolic associations correspond to the housekeeping typically associated with men and women. Men are more likely to attend to the outside of dwellings, such as mowing grass; and women are more likely to attend to inside of dwellings, such as cleaning (Davidson, 2011; Saunders & Williams, 1988).

A great deal of popular media and academic literature has explicated how the symbolic nature of home can be problematic, especially the associations with gender (Aghacy, 2001; Douglas, 1991; Lynch, 2005). Popular media often depict gendered representations of women who dread others judging the interior of their homes, frantically cleaning before their arrival. This tension is sometimes depicted between characters, such as the popular TV show, *Everybody Loves Raymond*. A primary character, Debra, is often verbally derided by her mother-in-law, Marie, despite Debra's house appearing as tidy as Marie's house. This tension is intended to be comedic because of its oxymoronic nature, but it is also intended to be relatable through the universal association of home with the self. Likewise, men are often depicted as fretting over others judging the exterior of their homes, going to extreme lengths in December to light their home. Perhaps the most widely recognized representation of this trope is *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. The main character, Clark Griswold, causes the entire city to lose power due to his excessive holiday decorations, producing comedic effects by exaggerating this widely felt tension. While often presented in a comedic manner, these examples reflect the stress that people can feel from their houses being judged by others – and in turn, themselves being judged.

Among the most discussed academic critiques of the symbolic nature of home discusses the "tyranny of the home" (Douglas, 1991, p. 287). This critique highlights that home as an extension of the self causes its inhabitants to become tethered to it, much like the comedic examples above felt tethered to the roles they must occupy in relation to their houses. Its inhabitants cannot escape the judgmental gaze of the neighborhood, and their self-worth becomes inexplicably intertwined with the home appearance. This pressure is exaggerated for women, as they are more often expected to be homemakers than men, causing their public self-worth to be almost entirely equated to the quality of their home (Friedan, 2010). This, in turn, causes women to focus their energies on their home rather than activities that can result in upward social mobility, such as joining the workforce or taking part in political matters.

These arguments demonstrate that home is regularly perceived as an extension of the self and a reflection of competence, for better or worse. Due to these integrational dynamics of home, we argue that a sense of home can arise when a dwelling satisfies the inhabitants' need for competence. The need for competence is associated with desires

for mastery and effectiveness in valued activities, and people have an inherent need to feel that they are skilled at personally important activities (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2022). The need for competence is often studied in relation to occupations, as people often experience a great deal of satisfaction when they feel that they are good at their employment (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Kovjanic et al., 2012). It can also be reflected in hobbies, as people similarly experience improved well-being when they excel at activities otherwise intended for enjoyment alone (Hewett et al., 2017). Because home is often perceived as an extension of the self, people may experience similar benefits when they feel that their dwelling symbolically represents their competence to others. In turn, the positive psychological states produced by the dwelling may form a sense of home.

Although a dwelling may satisfy other basic psychological needs, it may never become a home if its inhabitants feel it is a poor reflection of themselves. The inhabitant may consciously and/or subconsciously distance themselves from their dwelling, and they may even perform behaviors to disassociate themselves from their dwelling, such as rarely inviting company. On the other hand, an inhabitant may be more receptive to considering a dwelling as a home if they feel it reflects them well, whether accurate or inflating. That is, a person may have their need for competence satisfied if they believe that their home demonstrates their actual worth and values, but they may also have their need fulfilled if they believe their home presents themselves better than their true self. This latter circumstance may be even more likely to produce a sense of home, as it may elevate their status in the community by presenting their ideal or ought rather than actual self (as defined by self-discrepancy theory; Higgins, 1987, 1989; Mason et al., 2019). In turn, the inhabitant may cognitively identify themselves in relation to their home, and they may perform more behaviors to reinforce this integration, such as hosting others to visit.

Further, the "tyranny of home" may reflect the great lengths that people may endure to preserve their needs. Although most researchers study the benefit of need satisfaction, people may become reliant on the sources that fulfill their needs. For instance, an employee may remain in their job because they feel skilled at it (e.g., entrenchment), despite it failing to fulfill other physical and psychological needs (Carson & Carson, 1997; Carson et al., 1995). Those who may become problematically tethered to their home may feel that satisfying their need for competence cannot be effectively achieved via means beyond their dwelling, causing them to devote significant energies to maintaining their feeling of home even when it becomes difficult or unrewarding. These occurrences may occur on a widescale scope given the cultural expectations of a certain time or place, such that broader society at a given time may be more or less centered around the symbolic role of home in representations of the self (discussed below). Due to these associations between home and expressions of the self, we propose the following:

Proposition 3: Homes are dwellings that satisfy the need for competence.

Home and Autonomy. The separation of the public and private domains has often been considered the key defining characteristic of home, with authors often referring to concepts like freedom, control, and independence to describe how a home is distinguished from other structures (Darke, 2002; Kellett & Moore, 2003; Smith 1994). Parsell (2012) perhaps most directly describes the conceptualizations of home as control by stating, "Home as control is perhaps best thought about as a physical place – a place required to realize a desired or expected way of living" (p. 160). Indeed, home enables the inhabitant greater freedom of action, whether due to privacy or permitted agency itself. People can choose which actions to perform because, in part, a home protects them from the judgement of the outside world, as social norms in most societies include actions that are permitted at home but not in public. Lounging or becoming too relaxed, for instance, is approved of in the private sphere, but it produces strange looks from others when done in the public sphere (in addition to potential concerns regarding personal safety).

Likewise, homes provide a space in which the inhabitants can claim ownership, allowing them to craft their world as they see fit (Clark & Kearns, 2012; Easthope et al., 2015; Kleinhans & Elsinga, 2010). For example, Bhatti and Church (2004) supported that gardens can have a powerful impact on the meaning of home for those in 20th century Britian, finding that control over private spaces enables inhabitants to navigate social and environmental paradoxes of modern life. These gardens could not be crafted in public spaces as inhabitants may otherwise desire, given that the broader community may perceive such actions as taking advantage of communal resources. Further, the garden has posed similar implications for Black communities throughout American history. The personal and environmental impacts of cultivation practices and associated scholarship have often been overlooked in favor of their social implications, but recent authors have drawn greater attention to the entirety of Black environmental thought (Gaál-Szabó, 2021; Glave, 2010; Smith, 2021). These authors argue that Black communities have a long history of unique environmental perspective and activism, and their (physical and interpersonal) cultivation practices have enabled Black communities to realize, rationalize, and reconstruct their positioning in the natural and social world. These practices would not be possible without control over private spaces, and therefore a sense of control is often essential for a dwelling to be a home – whether it is provided via a sense of privacy or not.

Attacking the autonomy of home is also a primary method that oppressors have sought to dehumanize the oppressed (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Delphy, 2016; Feagin, 2013). Enslavers almost universally prevent those who are enslaved from exerting control over their dwellings, and subjugated people are often denied these essential human desires through slightly more indirect means, such as insufficient wages that prevent time or resources to perform preferred behaviors at home. The resilience of the human spirit and essential necessity of home, however, has caused oppressed peoples throughout time and place to find ways to exert control in even the most inhospitable of homes. Drawing from Wolff (1929), Walker (1984) reflects on "the ways in which creativity of Black women in the past lived on despite centuries of suppression" by

detailing, "different forms of creative expression and the ways in which they are closely bound up with domestic life" (Blunt & Dowling, 2022, p. 53). As detailed by Blunt and Dowling,

> [Walker] writes about seeing a quilt on display at the Smithsonian Institute by an anonymous Black woman in Alabama, a hundred years before, who used rags and scraps of cloth that were the only materials that she could afford and expressed her creativity through the only medium that her position in society allowed her to use. (2022, p. 53).

The capability to pursue creative endeavors such as these demonstrates that home permits autonomy that is not afforded by the public sphere, which is a key attribute that may separate a dwelling from a home. That is, a structure may remain a dwelling if its inhabitant(s) feel that they are unable to enact their preferred behaviors, whereas it may become a home if they can.

Authors have also increasingly recognized that home is closely tied to the autonomy and freedom provided by and from the broader community, with a particular focus on perceptions of home by LGBTQ+ young adults (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014; McCarthy & Parr, 2022; Tunåker, 2015). These young adults may lose their sense of home as they transition through their formative years, as they may feel that they cannot be their authentic selves – especially if their dwelling coinhabitants are unaccepting. When these young adults are able to choose a dwelling of their own, however, they may regain their sense of home because their new locations may enable them to express their authentic selves. By doing so, they can regain their sense of autonomy and control over their own lives – rather than conforming to the beliefs of others (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014; Matthews & Poyner, 2019; Tunåker, 2015).

These observations together indicate that home has been argued to reflect human's inherent need to find structure in the randomness of the world – to craft a space that caters to our needs rather than remains indifferent (Harries, 1998). In so, this argument suggests that home is inherently tied to the need for autonomy, which refers to a desire for independence, freedom, and control (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2022). This desire includes control over daily activities, such as choosing outfits or meals, but it also includes control over life trajectories, such as careers or even destiny. Due to this inherent need to feel control, people experience improved outcomes (e.g., well-being) when they experience control, and they experience detrimental outcomes when they do not (Gagné, 2003; Reis et al., 2000; Yu et al., 2018).

Furthermore, intrinsic motivation is the inner incentive or drive to perform a behavior due to the inherent satisfaction from the activity itself, which is often contrasted with extrinsic motivation, the incentive or drive to perform a behavior due to rewards outside of the activity itself (Roth et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Ryan et al., 2021). In accordance with self-determination theory (the macro theory containing BPNT), people are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation when they feel in control of their actions (Guay et al., 2001; Pulfrey et al., 2013), and they are more likely to experience extrinsic motivation when they do not (Rigby et al., 1992; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). In

turn, fulfilling the need for autonomy not only benefits well-being, but it is also pivotal in the performance of behaviors ranging from the essential to inconsequential. This dual need for autonomy resembles prior arguments for home. That is, the control provided by home is necessary for people to maintain motivation to enact their longer life trajectories, but it also reduces strain associated with decisions in daily life. Home may not only provide a space to perform actions, such as gardening, but it may also heighten inhabitants' motivation to perform these behaviors more so than a dwelling alone. Thus, satisfying the need for control via home may produce beneficial effects on both well-being and motivation, which may explain the autonomously-driven behaviors often discussed in housing studies.

Scholarship on BPNT has also increasingly tied the need for autonomy to the expression of personal identities (Legate et al., 2012; Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Weinstein et al., 2012, 2017). These authors propose that desires for independence and freedom are perhaps most strongly associated with the need for people to "express themselves authentically and fully and to behave in accord with their values, interests and beliefs" (Legate et al., 2019, p. 2), which includes the public expression of sexual identities. It is well-known that stifling the expression of sexual identities generally results in reduced well-being, whereas expressing these identities generally results in improved well-being (if accepted by others) (Legate et al., 2012; Weinstein et al., 2012, 2017). Recent authors have suggested that these benefits are due to satisfying the need for autonomy; those who are able to express their identities gain a sense of control over their personal and public lives, whereas those who cannot feel the imposition of external regulation (Legate et al., 2019; Ryan et al., 2017; Ryan & Ryan, 2019). Research has also shown that autonomy-supportive parenting styles that encourage children to be themselves improves child well-being, but it also develops resources in children to be more comfortable with their identities and more resilient to negative interactions based on their identity (Legate et al., 2019; Weinstein et al., 2012). Those in autonomy-supportive environments as adults are also more likely to disclose their sexual identities and experience greater well-being, especially for those who experience internalized homophobia (Ryan et al., 2017). Therefore, associations between the need for autonomy and personal identities are evident during the entire lifespan.

These treatments of the need for autonomy closely resemble arguments regarding the meaning of home as a dwelling for personal control and expression. Home can provide a place for a person to control their lives. This control includes daily routines, as inhabitants have privacy from the outside world to make their personal decisions; and it also includes broader life trajectories, as home can provide stability and geographic opportunities for inhabitants to pursue their desires. Home can also enable someone to express their identities, fulfilling a deep sense of autonomy. When a dwelling satisfies these varied functions and fulfills the need for autonomy, we argue that the beneficial ramifications cause it to be transformed into a home, similar to our arguments regarding satisfying the needs for relatedness and competence. Thus, we propose:

Proposition 4: Homes are dwellings that satisfy the need for autonomy.

Home and Relatedness. For many, home is determined by family. Children and teenagers typically consider the dwelling of their parents to be home; young adults may struggle with the concept of home after moving out, as they may still have a primary attachment to their childhood dwelling; and adults may finally feel at home again when they create a family of their own (Grzeskowiak et al., 2006; Romoli et al., 2022). The association of family and home is common in housing studies, and Mallett (2004) noted that "Some authors, so-called traditionalists, suggest that the link between home and family is so strong that the terms are almost interchangeable. . .Without the family, a home is 'only a house'" (p. 73). The determination of home by family alone does pose concerns. Critics of this perspective argue that it is instilled in Western, white, middle-class, heterosexual notions, as it is premised on the nuclear family (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Hooks, 2014; Kaika, 2004; Wardhaugh, 1999). Associating home with family excludes those who may have differing familial structures than the Western, white, middle-class, heterosexual nuclear family, despite home being a ubiquitous experience seen across cultures and contexts (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Mallett, 2004; Saunders & Williams, 1988). This association also problematically implies that someone leaving an abusive familial environment may be unable to find home again (Hill, 1991; Porteous & Smith, 2001). Scholars should instead consider relations with coinhabitants more generally, which could include family, roommates, or a multitude of other people.

Regardless of whether considering family alone or coinhabitants more broadly, these perspectives indicate that relations with those that share a dwelling is important for determining home for many people, which is also reflected in ample examples within popular media. The popular Disney film, *Encanto*, directly ties these concepts together. The Madrigal family live in a magical, seemingly sentient house with a spiritual connection to them; however, the house begins to crack and falter as conflict arises within the Madrigal family, resulting in the house collapsing when the family bonds appear to reach a breaking point. Ultimately, the family achieves a happy ending when they resolve their disagreements, resulting in the house being reconstructed along with their family dynamic. From these scholarly conversations and popular media representations, homes seem to provide privacy that enables inhabitants to develop a sense of intimacy, engaging in routines that are protected from the outside world (Daniels, 2015; Pallasmaa, 1995; Waitt & Gorman-Murray, 2007). In turn, people develop feelings of friendship and love that become associated with the dwelling itself, transforming it into a home.

Further, relations with people outside the dwelling strongly influence constructions of home (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2017; Sarason, 1974). It is common in many cultures for people to reside near the dwellings of family members, and members of these cultures may feel that they are unable to find a home without nearby family (Cardinali et al., 2022; Young, 2005). Beyond family, extensive scholarship has discussed how neighborly neighbors can enhance perceptions of home — and how unneighborly neighbors can unmake feelings of home (Bell, 2013; Cheshire et al., 2021; Mechlenborg, 2022). Even more broadly, neighborhoods and cultures are often essential to feeling connected, especially for those with stigmatized

identities. For instance, Fortier (2001) discussed the concept of queer migration, wherein queer young adults leave their childhood dwellings and families to discover accepting communities. In doing so, these young adults find home for perhaps the first time, embodying the concept of homecoming to create a queer diaspora. Schimel (1997) describes the experience of discovering these "mini-Zions" as, "our visits feel like a return home, even if we've never set foot there before" (p. 167). These examples provide concrete evidence that people outside the dwelling are also essential to creating a sense of home.

These relationships tie very closely to satisfying the need for relatedness, which is associated with the desire to engage with and reciprocally care for others (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2022). Empirical research on BPNT has supported that relations with cohabitants are among the most important to satisfying the need for relatedness (Hanke et al., 2016; Kasser & Ryan, 1999; Lin, 2016), and people are provided the opportunity to care for others and receive care from others in living together. Studies have even supported that a primary determinant of suicidal ideation and behaviors is the perception that someone does not engage in reciprocal care (Gratz et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2018). Breadwinners that lose their job often feel that they can no longer provide sufficient care for their family, and they may develop thoughts of suicide due to the loss of reciprocal care although they are still loved.

Broader connections may also develop a sense of home because they satisfy the need to belong. Research has repeatedly supported that connections with neighbors, co-workers, or even society can develop a sense of belongingness, indicating that this sense is not developed via coinhabitants alone (Reich et al., 2018; Van Prooijen et al., 2004; Watt & Badger, 2009). This sense of belongingness can be developed with relatively few indirections, indicating that the perception of connectedness is often more important than actual connectedness (Howard et al., 2020; Yang & Treadway, 2018). In turn, satisfying this need causes heightened well-being, which is resilient across contexts and cultures (Malone et al., 2012; Verhagen et al., 2018). These dynamics have especially been supported with marginalized populations when relocating to a welcoming community, which results in a plethora of psychological and physiological benefits (Barr et al., 2016; Yıldırım et al., 2022). When people feel that their dwelling aids in satisfying their need to belong via connections with the broader community, they may gradually perceive their dwelling as a home due to its significant personal benefits. Therefore, we propose:

Proposition 5: Homes are dwellings that satisfy the need for relatedness.

Home and Need Strength. We have argued that a sense of home is developed when a dwelling aids in satisfying basic psychological needs by drawing parallels between arguments regarding the meaning of home and BPNT. In these prior arguments, however, authors have proposed a wide multitude of characteristics that they consider to be the primary determinant of home, and they rarely – if ever – incorporate characteristics associated with all three needs in creating their

conceptualizations of home. These variations in conceptualizations of home have been well documented (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Meers, 2021; Parsell & Pawson, 2022; Somerville, 1997), as they have produced significant disagreements between authors. Even so, these significant disparities between the defining characteristics of home have cast doubt on the cumulative validity of extant scholarship on home, as it could be argued that there is relatively modest consensus between authors. It should therefore be questioned whether a certain aspect of home is indeed *the* primary defining characteristic, causing some authors to be correct and others incorrect in their assertions.

We argue that no aspect of home is the primary defining characteristic, and instead all scholars have been correct in their assertions. More specifically, we argue that certain needs are more or less salient for specific people at particular times, and these prior authors may have been describing the requisite needs for their specific population or context when detailing their conceptualization of home. We incorporate the concept of need strength to make this argument.

Needs do not affect people identically. Some people are more sensitive to competency, others relatedness, and others autonomy. Need strength captures this individual difference in sensitivities to needs, and it refers to the extent that a specific need is relevant, important, desirable, or valuable to an individual (Prentice et al., 2019; Schürmann et al., 2022). Those high in the need strength for relatedness, for example, would be more sensitive to threats to their need for relatedness, such as perceiving themselves as becoming an outsider to the workplace ingroup. Those high in need strength are also sensitive to positive influences on those needs. Using the same example, those high in the need strength for relatedness would experience heightened beneficial outcomes from being invited to a get-together after work by their coworkers.

We propose that need strength influences which characteristics are most important in determining home. While characteristics associated with fulfilling the needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are believed to be generally important, the importance of fulfilling these needs may be different for everyone based on their need strength. A person with a strong need strength for competence, for instance, may develop a heightened sense of home if they perceive their dwelling as representing themselves well to the community. Therefore, need strength causes each person to potentially have a primary characteristic that defines home for them, but it also causes no characteristic to be the primary characteristic for everyone.

Further, geographic or cultural variations in meanings of home have been recognized in housing studies (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019; Sand, 2005; Saunders, 1989). As noted by Saunders and Williams (1988), "The home carries and denotes a great diversity of cultural meanings. These meanings differ within households, between households and between different societies and carry with them great significance" (p. 85). This recognition has, in part, caused housing studies scholars to dedicate efforts to decolonizing their work, although more efforts are certainly needed (Asher, 2009; Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Greenwood, 2019). Most housing studies articles focus on Western notions of home, often failing to consider how

home may be perceived differently across cultures. By decolonizing the housing studies literature, authors bring greater consideration to underdiscussed contexts. For instance, Asher (2009) directly grapples with how colonization and colonizing practices in scholarship effects "not only the occupation and material exploitation of one nation by another but also the shaping of discourses, educational structures, and individual psyches" to produce "contradictions of home" through enforced practices and beliefs of the colonizer (p. 2); whereas Blunt and Dowling (2022) provide detailed evidence and discussions regarding differences in considerations of homes by British colonizers and Indian citizens, highlighting how these disparities produced conflicts regarding such essential aspects of life as home. Investigations such as these reflect that meanings of home are culturally situated and not universal truths or constants.

Geographic and cultural variations in meanings of home also correspond to need strength. While need strength is an individual difference, its occurrence is not wholly idiosyncratic. Researchers have recently begun to investigate the external factors that may influence the development of need strength. For instance, Deng et al. (2023) found that the fulfillment of the need for autonomy influenced participants' autonomy need strength over the course of years, creating a reciprocal need cycle. These factors may also occur regionally or temporally, which would cause a group of people to develop similar need strengths. Notably, Chen et al. (2015) found sizable differences across four countries (USA, China, Peru, and Belgium) regarding need strength, encouraging future researchers to determine the causes for cultural differences in need strength. These regional and temporal differences in need strengths may be the cause of differing conceptualizations of home between scholars. Authors may have focused on a particular population in detailing their meaning of home, and this meaning could have been correct for that population due to their need strength. At the same time, this meaning may not generalize to all people because they may have different need strengths from regional or temporal variations in associated influences. As also recognized by housing studies scholars (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2019; Sand, 2005; Saunders, 1989), this suggests that meanings of home should be considered from multiple levels of analysis due to the influence of time and culture. Given these similarities between proposals within housing studies and the construct of need strength, we propose:

Proposition 6: Need strength determines the extent that satisfying each need causes a dwelling to be perceived as a home.

Before continuing, it should be recognized that the concept of need strength is a significant benefit of BPNT, as it enables significant flexibility in the theory's application (Chen et al., 2015; Prentice et al., 2019; Schürmann et al., 2022). As mentioned above, sensitivities to needs differ across cultural and social contexts. By incorporating need strength, BPNT can be reliability applied across these contexts, as the theory too recognizes that certain needs may be more or less pivotal across these cultural and social contexts. In turn, by leveraging BPNT to conceptualize home, our proposals are

likewise instilled with this strength in flexibility of application, and our conceptualization may also be reliability applied across cultural and social contexts by recognizing that certain needs may be more or less important for determining home for certain peoples. Therefore, using BPNT to conceptualize home enables our developed theoretical lens to be flexible enough to broadly apply across cultural and social contexts, likewise representing a significant strength of our proposals and conceptualization.

Unmaking Home. Scholars have historically been most interested in the meanings that define home, but authors have devoted increasing attention to unmaking home – the process that a dwelling loses its feeling of home (Baxter & Brickell, 2014; Cheshire et al., 2021; Nowicki, 2018). These authors have highlighted that notions of home are not permanent, and a multitude of potentially devastating experiences can deconstruct feelings of home – ranging from common to rare and widespread to personalized. These experiences have become more salient in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic impacts, and other detrimental events around the world.

Perhaps the most drastic manner that a home ceases to exist is domicide – the destruction of a dwelling (Nowicki, 2014; Porteous & Smith, 2001; Zhang, 2018). Domicide is often performed during genocides and cultural displacements, as it is used as a destructive tool for forced migration. Without a home to which to return, displaced people are often less likely to return to their homelands. Domicide can also occur on a smaller scale. Porteous and Smith (2001), in proposing the concept of domicide and discussing all its forms, highlight that domicide has been performed in interpersonal disputes, such that one person harms another by destroying their home. It is perhaps most common for this to occur when the parties involved are disputing over the ownership of the home, ultimately resulting in its destruction.

Homes can also be unmade in less dramatic and sometimes gradual events. Cheshire et al. (2021) qualitatively investigated the process that unneighborly neighbors can unmake home, causing once beloved spaced to no longer provide the emotional and symbolic satisfaction that it once did. These authors discuss how neighbors can unmake home by infringing upon its ability to provide haven, autonomy, and status. Likewise, Heywood (2005) discusses the process that people with a disability may find their dwelling to be unaccommodating and inhospitable, even if they may have once perceived it as a home, as their changing physical capabilities may require accommodations that the dwelling cannot provide. Those no longer able to ascend stairs, perhaps due to old age, may effectively have their house cut in half, greatly altering their capability to live as they please and subsequent psychological satisfaction from home.

Homes are also irrevocably linked to broader contexts, causing perceptions of homes to be tied to their environments (Pohl et al., 2022; Taylor, 1992; Tsukerman et al., 2021). When communities become gentrified, for instance, people often lose feelings of home although no changes may occur to their dwelling. Once-friendly surroundings may become foreign, and neighborly neighbors may be replaced with

strangers. From this gradual process, homes may revert to dwellings, as people may no longer have any attachment. Similarly, authors associate home with both personal and collective memory, and people may seek homes in adulthood with nostalgic resemblances for their former homes (Cardinali et al., 2022; Hansen & Hansen, 2023; Romoli et al., 2022). Memories change over time, however, and an inhabitant may perceive their dwelling to no longer match their ideal home even if it remains unchanged. In this way, changes to the inhabitant rather than the person can cause a home to revert to a dwelling.

While domicide is the destruction of home due to the removal of the dwelling, these other discussed instances of unmaking home could be conceptualized through the removal of basic psychological need fulfillment via BPNT (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2022). That is, homes may be unmade because they no longer satisfy the basic psychological needs of the inhabitant. Unneighborly neighbors may unmake home by removing the dwelling's capacity to satisfy the needs for autonomy and competence (Cheshire et al., 2021); those with physical disabilities may have home unmade for them if it no longer satisfies their need for autonomy, as they can no longer perform their desired behaviors (Heywood, 2005); homes in gentrified communities may be unmade by no longer fulfilling the need for relatedness (Pohl et al., 2022; Tsukerman et al., 2021); and changing memories may cause home to be unmade because they no longer resemble personal ideals that may otherwise satisfy any need (Cardinali et al., 2022; Romoli et al., 2022). Identifying the common theme among these different instances of unmaking home provides clarity to this literature, but it also identifies further instances that it can occur. Perhaps even more important, conceptualizing unmaking home through the removal of basic psychological need fulfillment can aid in understanding its more complex instances of its occurrence (Hansen & Hansen, 2023; Porteous & Smith, 2001; Taylor, 1992).

The association of homes with needs can be paradoxical, such that a dwelling can both fulfill and thwart a need simultaneously. For women, home has been described as a site of both containment and liberation (Blunt & Dowling, 2022), and a multitude of justifications can be provided for each term – too many to presently detail. A person could receive a deep fulfillment from perceiving their dwelling as a positive reflection of themselves, deriving great competence need satisfaction. At the same time, this person could also feel that their obligation to home restricts them from the public sphere, preventing them from demonstrating their greater potential to the world. In doing so, their dwelling could frustrate their competence need satisfaction, as they are unable to demonstrate their best selves. Such a situation could produce particularly volatile feelings regarding the dwelling, such that feelings of home may rise and fall depending on which aspect of the need for competence becomes most salient at a given time. In such an instance, the dwelling may oscillate between being and not being a home on a moment-by-moment basis, suggesting that unmaking home can occur over both long and short timespans.

Similarly, a dwelling can cause two different needs to conflict, which is exemplified in Michael R. Jackson's musical, *A Strange Loop*. The protagonist, Usher, raises fundamental conflicting tensions regarding home. In his childhood home, Usher's parents do not accept him for being queer. The musical grapples with the notion whether love for another is possible without accepting them, but Usher does feel that his parents care for him. In his adult home in New York, Usher feels that he can live as his authentic self and express his queer identity, which allows him to be a "big, black, and queer" man. But, he feels that New York is alienating and no one cares for him. These tensions reflect the frustration and fulfillment of the needs for belongingness and autonomy, clearly demonstrating that one need can be frustrated while the other the other fulfilled. This recurrent tension drives much of the narrative of *A Strange Loop*, as it causes uncertainty regarding how Usher can resolve his feelings of having no place to call home and ultimately find happiness. Therefore, changes to the satisfaction of needs – and even the conflicts that these changes produce – may result in the unmaking of home. We propose:

Proposition 7: While satisfying needs can cause a dwelling to become a home, need frustration can cause a home to become a dwelling.

Discussion

Our primary goal was to resolve tensions in the current literature by applying BPNT to develop a wholly psychological perspective of home, which provides significant contributions to housing studies, psychology, and their intersection. We proposed that a dwelling satisfies basic physical needs, and our application of BPNT supported that extant conceptualizations of home correspond to the basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. This application further supported that a dwelling is considered a home when it enables its inhabitants to satisfy both basic physical and psychological needs, but it also suggested that a dwelling does not need to simultaneously satisfy all three needs to be a home. Instead, the requisite needs depend on need strength, and the needs important to a person determine which need to be satisfied. Because the development of need strength is potentially influenced by a multitude of external influences, need strength may also justify both regional differences in meanings of home and differences in conceptualizations of home; prior authors may have created meanings based on a particular culture or time that was situated in their need strength. Lastly, we used BPNT to discuss how home can be unmade – through the thwarting of basic psychological needs. Achieving these goals provides many implications and directions for future research.

Implications and Future Research Directions

Extant research has identified a multitude of characteristics that are associated with either dwellings or homes, but authors have only intermittently produced a justification

as to why these characteristics are grouped together (Chambers, 2020; Mallett, 2004; Somerville, 1992). Like items in a proverbial junk drawer, they are often considered together because they are. Our application of BPNT, however, provides a novel theoretical justification, suggesting that the characteristics of a dwelling are those that contribute to basic physical needs and the characteristics of a home are those that contribute to basic psychological needs. By creating this demarcation, we provide a theoretical lens to understand the meaning of dwellings and home, but we perhaps more importantly also provide a theoretical lens to understand the broader dynamics of these concepts. Our recommended directions for future research stem from unfolding our proposals and applying BPNT more broadly to understand home, as we supported that the core of this theoretical perspective aligns with the many meanings of home.

We solely discussed the meaning of home as a dwelling, but home can be used in broader contexts. Notably, authors have recognized that home can be used as a verb rather than a noun, representing a personally meaningful action rather than a location (Basu, 2004; Gready, 1994; Tucker, 1994). For example, housing studies scholars have regularly discussed the process of "homecoming", when people strive to create or find a new home after being displaced; it is also common for people to state that they "feel at home" when finding another location, such as a friend's dwelling, that causes them to feel similarly to their own home. Via our applied theoretical lens, it could be argued that people are searching for dwellings that satisfy their basic psychological needs during the process of homecoming, and they have found a place (even if not their own dwelling) that satisfies their basic psychological needs when they express feeling at home. Future research should therefore assess whether the application of BPNT is appropriate for understanding methods that home can be an action.

Similarly, scholars often discuss broader conceptualizations of home, such as home as city or nation (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Kern, 2005; Klimasmith, 2005). Our application of BPNT may also apply to these broader conceptualizations, such that these larger locations may be perceived as home because their similarly fulfill basic psychological needs. For instance, a person may feel that New York City is their home – rather than a specific dwelling – because their friends and family still reside there. In this case, the person could feel that New York City itself satisfies their need for relatedness, causing them to have a generally positive affiliation with the city that they may not particularly share with any one dwelling within the city. This person may also take particular pride in understanding and adhering to the norms of New York City, causing them to be broadly perceived as a local. In turn, this may be a large source of satisfaction, because they may feel that it demonstrates their competence as a full-fledged New Yorker. In turn, this may cause the person to perceive New York City as home, because it fulfills their basic psychological needs. Future researchers should delve deeper, however, into whether our theoretical perspective holds across each of these alternative conceptualizations of home, as it presently cannot be assured to be a valid theoretical lens for these other perspectives.

Home is also used as an adjective, and many authors have discussed what makes a dwelling either unhomely or homely. These authors often note that spaces occupied by

those with precarious living arrangements are regularly unhomely, which could damage their well-being even when these spaces are a dwelling (Gedalof, 2007; Huq & Harwood, 2019). The characteristics that cause a place to be either unhomely or homely may be those that enable the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, potentially explaining their relations with well-being. At the same time, some characteristics such as comfort may more closely reflect basic physical needs, which draws attention to the importance of unpacking these proposals to determine whether alternative theoretical perspectives may be required to understand home as an adjective.

Beyond different meanings of home, scholars should also consider our arguments with different meanings of needs. We discussed the most common conceptualizations of our studied needs, but broader interpretations of these needs have been applied in prior research (Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). For instance, the need for relatedness could be considered to include connections with personal histories, familial histories, and the past in general (Reeve et al., 2018; Roche et al., 2018); people may satisfy their need for relatedness by adhering or performing their cultural traditions, as they feel that these traditions bring them closer to their ancestors. These alternative conceptualizations also align with prior proposals in housing studies. Many authors, for example, have suggested that home is defined by many people based on the dwelling's connection to their ancestral past, which may again represent a fulfillment of the need for relatedness causes a dwelling to become a home. For these reasons, we provide Figure 2 to summarize our proposals regarding the meaning of dwellings and home, and we provide example subdimensions for the three needs based on our arguments above. At the same time, we recognize that future research may broaden the interpretation of these needs.

It should also be recognized that the ability of BPNT – and subsequently our framework – to consider multiple meanings of needs is a strength, as it enables a flexibility to apply these perspectives across social and cultural contexts. In other words, our framework is flexible in understanding diverse perspectives on dwelling or home. At the same time, no treatment of any topic is entirely universal. Our systematic approach is more comprehensive than most treatments of home, and BPNT is among the most broadly supported theories of psychology (Ryan et al., 2022; Slemp et al., 2024; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). These two attributes together suggest that our study is built on a solid foundation, but it cannot be assumed that our results apply to all contexts. An ideal direction for future research is to empirically test our arguments across contexts. We expect these investigations to demonstrate the suitability of our framework across social and cultural contexts, but it may nevertheless show that certain basic psychological needs must be interpreted more broadly in specific contexts to fully understand meanings of home.

Authors are also continuously proposing that specific needs should be reconceptualized as basic psychological needs and therefore included in the scope of BPNT (González-Cutre et al., 2020; Martela & Ryan, 2020). While the scholarly consensus still solely considers the original three, it should be questioned whether broader needs contribute to meanings of home. For instance, researchers have identified the need for

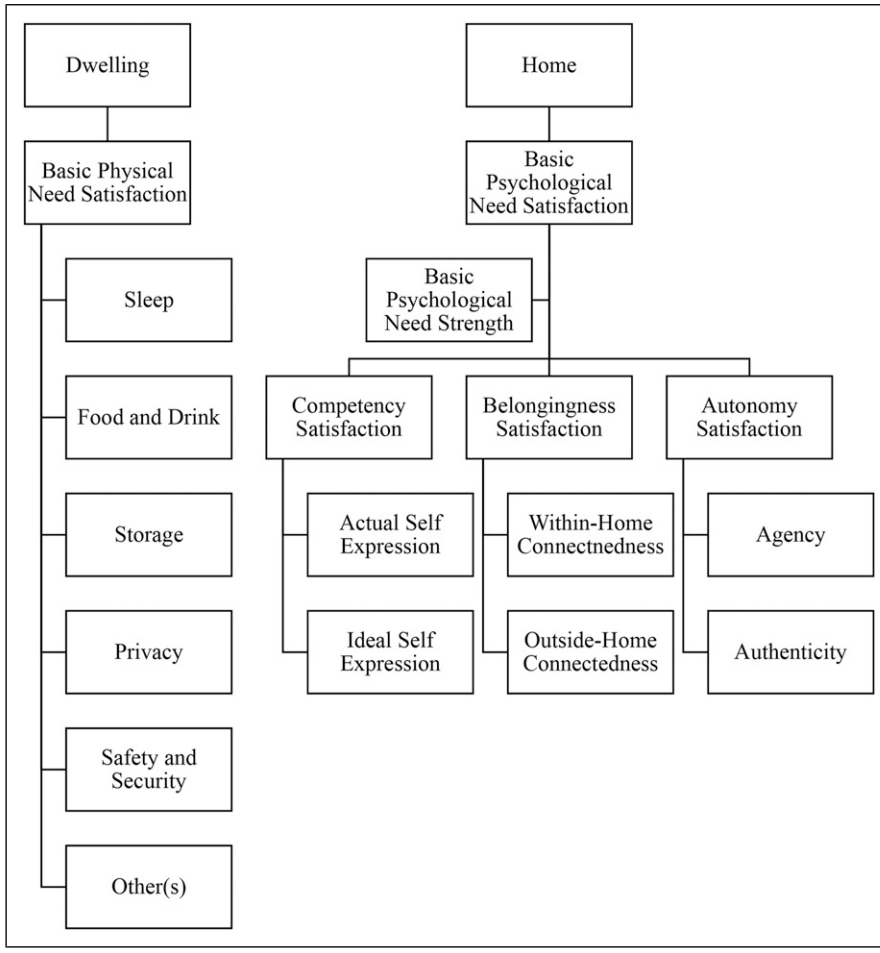

Figure 2. Theoretical model of proposals with example dimensions.

cognition as a supported individual difference that reflects the "tendency and enjoyment in seeking, evaluating, and integrating multiple relevant sources of information toward making sense of their surroundings" (Bauer & Stiner, 2020, p. 3122), which could partially explain why certain people prefer to live (and more likely to perceive dwellings as home) in either urban or rural communities. Those with a higher need for cognition may prefer the simulation of urban settings, whereas those with a lower need for cognition may prefer the peacefulness of rural settings. Similar arguments could be made for other needs like novelty (González-Cutre et al., 2020) and beneficence (Martela & Ryan, 2020).

The potential for the inclusion of additional basic psychological needs represents an important strength of BPNT – and how theory is approached in the social sciences more broadly. Theoretical lenses derived from rigid perspectives lack the capability of being revised based on new evidence, preventing their refinement. Rigid theoretical lenses also suggest that the broader inclusion criteria for constructs and/or propositions were not derived, suggesting theoretical underdevelopment (Van Iddekinge et al., 2012). On the other hand, the potential to include additional basic psychological needs suggests that BPNT can be appropriately refined and incorporates inclusion criteria, which can also be said of our theoretical perspective because it is based on BPNT. Any newly derived basic psychological need could be seamlessly incorporated into our theoretical lens. Our proposals would remain consistent with the incorporation of additional needs, and the present proposals could provide guidance for the understanding and study of any newly added basic psychological needs. Future researchers should monitor developments to BPNT, and they should assess whether any new basic psychological needs are defining characteristics of home. Future researchers should also consider whether any defining characteristics of home are not represented by BPNT or associated with dwellings. While we expect any investigations to further support our proposals, these additional tests could identify boundary conditions on the generalizability of our theoretical perspective, and they could identify new basic psychological needs. Thus, the study of home may likewise inform BPNT.

Researchers could also investigate broader proposals of self-determination theory, as the association of home with perhaps its most central microtheory, BPNT, suggests that the application of other microtheories may be informative. Of note, many of the other microtheories propose that the need for autonomy is central in understanding human motivation (Ntoumanis et al., 2021; Roth et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2019; Ryan et al., 2021). The autonomy provided by home may be essential in driving humans to obtain their wants, as they may feel that their deeper needs are satisfied, and self-determination theory may be fruitful in understanding how home relates to broader navigations of life. Likewise, authors have used self-determination theory to propose interactions between basic psychological needs and basic physical needs, arguing that frustrating the former may result in frustrations to the latter. As homes (associated with basic psychological needs) are dwellings (associated with basic physical needs), understandings of home may be incomplete without considering these interactive effects.

In crafting these studies, researchers should remain cognizant that home means different things to different people (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Meers, 2021; Parsell & Pawson, 2022; Somerville, 1997). Any investigation is situated within the context being studied, and most studied populations are Western, Education, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) (Muthukrishna et al., 2020; Rad et al., 2018). By distinguishing home as the fulfillment of basic psychological needs, we identify a framework that can be both generalized and specified. At the same time, it cannot be assumed that the results from one context generalize to others.

The current review can serve as a guide for future articles attempting to summarize diverse literatures by integrating the integrative review and metasynthesis methodologies. As discussed in Supplemental Appendix 1, authors who have grappled with the concept of home adopt an array of methodological approaches and styles of inquiry – sometimes even within the same source (Walsh & Downe, 2005; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). While many guides exist for quantitative reviews, this methodological approach would be unable to synthesize these literatures because most of the studied sources do not include quantitative data. Likewise, adhering to a single review methodology would limit the insights derived from these rich discussions, as a single methodology would not permit the necessary flexibility to craft meaning from sources with such unique theoretical and epistemic perspectives. For this reason, we dedicated great efforts into determining the appropriate avenues to weave the integrative review and metasynthesis methodologies, which expands the methodological possibilities for future research.

Strengths and Limitations

BPNT is among the most supported theories in the social sciences, as its tenets have been supported across a multitude of meta-analyses that have demonstrated support for the theory across cultural and social contexts (Ryan et al., 2022; Slemp et al., 2024; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). A significant strength of our work is the incorporation of need strength by leveraging BPNT, such that our conceptualization can broadly apply across cultural and social contexts. We also provided initial support for this broad applicability, as our methodological approach incorporated 602 sources that represented a wide variety of cultural and social contexts. Nevertheless, no theory in the social sciences is guaranteed to be entirely universal. Future researchers should perform theoretical and empirical investigations testing the dynamics of our developed theoretical lens to assess its suitability across cultures. These studies may uncover boundary conditions to certain theoretical proposals, each of which could likewise produce several directions of future research. Therefore, testing our proposals across cultural and social contexts may provide immediate benefits and deeper theoretical understandings.

Further, we underwent extensive efforts to ensure that our conceptualization of home was not tautological. First, our proposals are falsifiable. Our proposals do not conceptualize home with vague terms or broad notions that cannot be tested. Instead, we identify specific mechanisms that lead to developing a sense of home, and these mechanisms can be tested in both theoretical discourse and empirical research. By identifying these mechanisms, we clarify the meaning of home, define the meaning of home, and explain how the meaning of home is developed. Second, the application of BPNT suggests that additional theoretical considerations associated with the theory can be incorporated into understandings of home. This indicates that the developed theoretical rationale is more than tautological, as it provides original and testable insights through the incorporation of novel theoretical perspectives – even beyond those that are discussed in the present manuscript. Third, our application of BPNT opens many directions for future research. If only tautological, our treatment of home would not

enable new directions to be taken in the study of home, as tautological reasoning does not lend itself for refinement or developments. Because our proposals lend themselves to a significant scope of future research, we provide further assurances that our treatment of home is not tautological. Nevertheless, further theoretical discourse is necessary to ensure that our proposals are not tautological, and future researchers should expand upon the theorical nuance in our proposals regarding home to ensure that they are not tautological. Thus, theoretical discussions are necessary beyond empirical studies alone to ensure that our theoretical lens is valid for understanding home.

Our theorizing leveraged salient examples in literature, theater, and film to derive our arguments. This approach was particularly important for our goals. Home has been studied across a wide range of disciplines, and these disciplines have a wide range of methodological approaches. By leveraging an approach that only incorporates insights from empirical studies, we would ignore the wide range of research in fields of study that do not leverage this approach. For this reason, it was essential to utilize an approach that accounts for the richness of observations across the many fields that investigate home. Leveraging these sources demonstrates how our applied theoretical rationale can produce an effective understanding of home that broadly applies across contexts. Perhaps even more important, a primary goal of the present work was to incorporate voices from less-recognized perspectives. Intersectional and marginalized people are less often represented in the social sciences (Muthukrishna et al., 2020; Rad et al., 2018), and many authors have called for the application of novel methodological approaches to represent their voices. The integrative review and metasynthesis approaches can heed these calls. Specifically, these approaches allow these perspectives to be included even if they are represented in sources that typically are not included in empirical investigations. Even yet, they can be included if they are included in sources commonly discussed in fields such as literary studies or media studies. Thus, it was necessary to leverage the insights provided on literature, theatre, and film from these sources to lift the voice of intersectional and marginalized people that may have otherwise remained unheard.

At the same time, it can never be guaranteed that all voices are entirely heard on any endeavor, and some readers may strictly prefer empirical approaches to deriving knowledge. We call on future authors to continuously reevaluate our framework, whether via theoretical discussions or empirical investigations. In doing so, these authors should strive to obtain diverse samples, such that they can demonstrate whether our framework is broadly applicable.

Conclusion

Few concepts are as important to well-being as home, which has caused scholars to continuously reflect on the meaning of home. The current article provides a novel psychological-based perspective of home, considering it to be a dwelling that satisfies basic psychological needs. Moving forward, researchers across all fields of study can adopt this definition to understand the deeper impacts of home even beyond those

already known, perhaps by exploring the broader considerations of BPNT. Therefore, the present discussion is believed to be the first of many on the treatment of home as the satisfaction of basic psychological needs.

Author note

Appendix A includes the full reporting of our review procedures. The current investigation was not preregistered.

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Our database of sources and coding results are provided in Supplemental Materials.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Our artificial dichotomization of "psychology" and "housing studies" implies wholly independent fields with clear boundaries. We recognize that this is not the case, but we use this terminology for the conciseness of language.
2. We recognize that readers firmly bound to scientism may disagree with the incorporation of these sources, but they are necessary for two primary reasons. First, home has been studied across a wide range of disciplines that utilize a wide range of methodologies. By only incorporates insights from empirical studies, we would ignore the wide range of research in disciplines that do not leverage this approach. By instead incorporating these broader sources, we ensure that insights on home derived from all disciplines (including literary studies and media studies, for example) are incorporated into our rationale and proposals. Second, we intended for our proposals to be broadly generalizable, including the representation of marginalized and intersectional populations. Authors have repeatedly recognized that these populations are often not represented in the social sciences (Muthukrishna et al., 2020; Rad et al., 2018), but sources leveraging broader methodologies are more likely to provide insights

regarding these populations. For this reason, referencing these sources can further support the generalizability of our work, as our proposals can include considerations representing these marginalized and intersectional populations by incorporating relevant sources from all disciplines.

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