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'All of a sudden for no reason they've been displaced': Constructing the 'contingent refugee' in early media reports on the Ukrainian refugees

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Abstract

This paper analyzes descriptions of Ukrainian refugees in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Findings of previous research on news media descriptions of refugees point to problematic descriptions of refugees that downgrade their deservingness of refuge and treat refugee status as an inherent feature of fleeing individuals instead of as contingent on external circumstances. However, there is a widespread perception that Ukrainian refugees are being reported on in a more positive light. We therefore examine how news media describe these refugees. Our corpus includes English media news coverage from February 25, 2022, to March 25, 2022, the initial period of the invasion. A discursive psychological analysis of news interactions where hosts elicit information from correspondents about current ongoings with Ukrainian refugees shows that Ukrainian refugees are constructed as vulnerable, and their actions are treated as reasonable given the situation. These descriptions construct Ukrainian refugees as those who are only contingently refugees and legitimate help-giving by other parties. Our findings, therefore, highlight distinct, previously unanalyzed ways that refugees are constructed: contingent refugees. We discuss implications of our findings for understanding refugee inclusion and exclusion.

KEYWORDS
contingent refugees, discursive psychology, good refugee, Ukrainian refugees

BACKGROUND

The ready accommodation and inclusion of refugees is a rare occurrence in our contemporary world. Surprising as this maybe those who are fleeing from war, persecution, or uninhabitable climate are rarely welcomed with open arms and given shelter, especially in the more well-to-do parts of world. Discursive psychologists examine this in terms of justifying the exclusion or limited inclusion of help given to refugees (for a review see Sambaraju & McVittie, 2017; Sambaraju et al., 2017). In this paper, we focus then on a curious case where help and inclusion is straightforwardly offered: refugees fleeing Ukraine or what we are calling 'Ukrainian refugees'. We focus on the routine descriptions of Ukrainian refugees in mainstream news media coverage of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainian refugees began fleeing to neighbouring European countries after Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022, which shows no signs of abating. As of March 2023, The United Nations Refugee Agency (2023) reported that almost 8 million Ukrainian refugees have fled to neighbouring European countries. Our examination focuses on how descriptions of these refugees and the possible issues that they might bring-up in news coverage about Ukrainian refugees.

Constructions of refugees in news media

Media coverage of refugees and their concerns in western contexts has been widely identified as offering severely problematic versions of refugees to legitimize limited inclusion and other forms of support. This is especially concerning given that refugees, by definition, are people who have been forced to flee their home countries due to dangerous, life-threatening circumstances that are out of their control, and often caused by the arrival nations themselves. Refugees are also legal immigrants, receiving government approval from arrival nations before entering. Politician and news media discourse that negatively characterize and exclude refugees often address or justify reasons for exclusion (Sambaraju & McVittie, 2017; Sambaraju et al., 2017). A ready warrant for exclusion needs justification either in terms of categorizing refugees as undeserving or treating inclusion efforts as overwhelming in the face of what is involved in giving refuge.

Discursive researchers have shown that constructions of refugees are made in ways to offer unfavourable inferences about them, such as that they are incompetent, a burden on the economy, criminal, or a threat to the national integrity of arrival places (Abid et al., 2017; Sambaraju & McVittie, 2017; Sambaraju et al., 2017; Burke & Goodman, 2012; Kirkwood, 2017; Leudar et al., 2008; Parker, 2017). They do so primarily through the discursive practice of categorization, where they name social categories in talk (e.g., refugee, migrant, volunteer, civilian) and attach descriptions to these categories (e.g., 'bogus', 'liars', 'stealing our jobs') that then constitute and re-constitute common-sense knowledge about refugees, members of arrival nations, and their relationship. Terms such as 'illegal refugee', 'bogus refugee', or debating whether refugees are 'genuine refugees' questioned the legitimacy of refugee status and present them as not necessarily deserving shelter or aid (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Goodman & Speer, 2007). Some of these evaluations invite direct inferences of racism or xenophobia (Burke & Goodman, 2012), whereas others are seemingly accepted as valid concerns in sheltering refugees (Lynn & Lea, 2003). Generally, these descriptions construct refugees as a 'them' distinct from an 'us' (those in the arrival nation) and therefore not entitled to the same rights as citizens.

Studies have also noted ways that national and cultural factors are used as resources for 'us' versus 'them' constructions. Discursive researchers argue that constructing divisions based on cultural or national characteristics reproduces a sense of national (un)belonging for refugees. As banal ways of constituting an 'us' and 'them', nations serve as implicit and persuasive resources for othering refugees (Billig, 1995; Gale, 2004). For example, Eberl et al. (2018) noted that those from Eastern Europe were presented as an economic threat for apparent impact on jobs and welfare, while non-Europeans were presented as inimical to the culture of the arrival countries in European news media.

In Australian media, refugees from Southeast Asia and places in Africa are routinely described in problematic ways. Hanson-Easey and Augoustinos (2010) argue that descriptions such as that the refugees are 'boat people' or 'illegal' work to *other* refugees (also see: O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007). Descriptions of refugees from Muslim background were made to treat them as culturally 'other' to a White Australia (Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005; Itaoui & Dunn, 2017). Although these news media discourses do not overtly mention 'race' during these descriptions, these kinds of practices have been documented as racist practices (Every & Augoustinos, 2007), ones that are steeped in postcolonial relations among European and African and Asian nations and often designedly defeasible to avoid social stigmas associated with seeming racist (Durrheim et al., 2011). Furthermore, some studies illustrate how members' themselves – politicians and the public – orient to these types of discourses as racist (Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Goodman & Burke, 2010). What makes these constructions of refugees negative is also the minimal reference to the reasons why they were fleeing: war, conflict, or adverse climate. The minimal focus on these aspects leaves only the impact on the arrival nation as the relevant frame for considering refuge.

Good refugees

The negative constructions of refugees are compounded by descriptions 'good' refugees as legitimately needing to seek refuge, contributing to the nation economically post-arrival, and integrating culturally into the arrival nation (Gabriel & Harding, 2016). For example, Goodman and Kirkwood's (2019) analysis of UK news media coverage of refugee integration showed how media reports hold refugees and asylum-seekers themselves responsible for complete integration and not the communities into which they arrive. In contexts like the United States, 'good' refugees are those fit the 'model minority' expectations through accepting the narrative of the 'American Dream' (Le Espiritu, 2014). Closely allied to this is the idea that 'good' refugees are averse to political representation or assertion of agency (Fiske, 2016) and give up their religious and cultural practices (Bowskill et al., 2007). Hetz (2022) shows that for Cambodian and Hazara refugees in Australia, the idea of the 'good refugee' is treated as important for their belonging in Australia. Refugee interviewees demonstrated deservingness of being a 'good' refugee in terms of wanting to integrate and participate in the Australian society and willing to forego a political voice and presence. Being a 'good' refugee is then a concern for refugees themselves (also see Yap et al., 2011).

Other work illustrates how a singular, sympathetic event can shift the constructions of refugees more positively. Goodman et al. (2017) shows how, while initial UK news media coverage of the 2015 European refugee 'crisis' categorized those coming to Europe as 'migrants' who do not need to come to Europe, subsequent descriptions were made in ways to treat those migrants as deserving. The turning point in this coverage revolved around the death of a three-year-old child Alan Kurdi on the shores of Turkey. Parker et al. (2018) show how this much reported incident in the European and international press, was central to the construction of the 'refugee crisis' as a pressing issue for Europe(ans). Such constructions however are neither stable nor universal. Sambaraju and McVittie (2017) and Sambaraju et al. (2017) show that while the inclusion of refugees was treated as the norm during the 'crisis', elected representatives of Ireland could frame their responsibility for helping refugees as only one part among a transnational effort by the European Union. This allowed them to legitimately offer minimal effort in helping refugees. Thus, even though there are positive characterizations of 'good' refugees, these characterizations are heavily fluid and impermanent, and can mitigate issues in offering limited inclusion.

However, constructions of 'good' refugees often serve as a resource for criticizing other refugees who do not meet these standards (e.g., who have not acculturated appropriately, do not have extremely sympathetic stories, who are politically active in their arrival nations, etc.). These constructions of refugees are important, in part, because of their consequences for political and policy decisions about refugees (Lynn & Lea, 2003; Nguyen & McCallum, 2016; Van Dijk, 2019). News media characterizations contribute to constituting common-sense knowledge about refugees as negative, with only

individual 'good' exceptions – which in turn allows government representatives to more easily justify policies that exclude, or restrictively include, refugees as citizens in arrival nations (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Lynn & Lea, 2003; Teo, 2000).

Overall, research shows that refugees (and migrants and asylum-seekers) are routinely treated as underserving of refuge—that is they perhaps are not 'really' refugees. The othering is made in ways to suggest their refuge-seeking is a routine aspect of their lives and not a product of external circumstances. Their refugee status is seen as a routine feature of those individuals. It is this focus on constructions of refugees that animates our present study.

Present study

The above findings resonate with news coverage of Ukrainian refugees in two ways. First is the ready accommodation and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees and second is the relevance of the Whiteness of Ukrainian refugees. This is particularly the case when extensive research has noted how Western[1] news media coverage characterizes African and Asian refugees in problematic ways all the while orienting to these positions as racist (Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010). However, some scholars and journalists have pointed to coverage of Ukrainian refugees as distinct because these refugees are being characterized positively (Bayoumi, 2022; Johnson et al., 2022; MacLeod, 2022). These journalists argue that this positive coverage reflects the embeddedness of racism in mainstream news media, citing as evidence instances where reporters state that Ukrainian refugees are more civilized than previous refugees (e.g., refugees from North Africa and the Middle East) and are more similar to the Europeans in countries to which they flee (Bayoumi, 2022; Johnson et al., 2022; MacLeod, 2022). Indeed historically refugees fleeing USSR/Russia at the time of Cold War were positively received by those in Western Europe (Taylor, 2015). Together then the favourable descriptions of refugees from Ukraine deserves a close examination.

We take-up in this study through a close discursive examination of routine coverage of Ukrainian refugees to examine their non-negative constructions. As of March 2023, The United Nations Refugee Agency (2023) reported that almost 8 million Ukrainian refugees have fled to neighbouring European countries. In some ways, news coverage of Ukrainian refugees is typical: it is packaged as part of a broader report about the ongoing invasion and is often referenced as the "humanitarian angle" of the invasion. It is this that motivates our present paper, where we wish to examine descriptions of refugees and the efforts made towards their inclusion in the context of Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent refugee concerns. Specifically, we ask how are refugees described in ways that readily legitimize their inclusion?

METHOD

For this paper, we took a discursive psychological examination of naturally occurring talk in news media. The general stance of discursive psychology is the re-specification of concepts central to psychology (e.g., attitudes, personality, and emotions) from intra-personal or cognitive constructs to discursive practices (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Instead of treating inclusion or exclusion of refugees as an outcome of individual attitudes towards refugee others, discursive researchers treat the constructions of refugees (or others) as providing the justification or legitimation for their exclusion. In that, researchers do not entertain a distinction between the 'object' and one's disposition to it (Billig). Similarly, we examines the discursive constructions of refugees to examine how their inclusion is legitimized.

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[1]We use the term 'Western' here to refer to media agencies that are based in and are local to Europe, The United States, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand.

Data and participants

The data for this study are media reports of Ukrainian refugees in the early stages of the Russian occupation of Ukraine. The purpose of our data selection was twofold. First, we aimed to create a corpus of 'typical, routine' coverage of Ukrainian refugees. We did so through searching a freely available online archive of news broadcast accessed via The Internet Archive (https://archive.org/). The archive was accessed on authors' respective computers over April 17–28, 2022. We used the search terms 'Ukraine' + 'Refugee' for 6 randomly selected dates over a period of one month, between February 25 and March 25 for select news channels in English, thus ensuring that our data overtly addressed or used the categorization "refugee". This design also allowed for randomly accessing reportage of the unfolding war, which was round the clock and took up extensive coverage space across various media. The search resulted in several hits for each of the dates. To further fine tune our search, we selected 10 hits for each of the dates resulting in 60 hits as our corpus. The hits included news reports featuring monologues from reporters on the ground, interactions between news program hosts in news agency studios and narrative coverage, narrative coverage involving several participants, interviews with guests in the studio, and interviews with agents 'on the ground' in areas surrounding Ukraine.

The second aim of our data analysis was to qualitatively examine descriptions of refugees in these data. To do so, we watched all the 60 news reports which ranged from 5 to 45 min in length and focused on those parts where the talk focused on the topic of refugees. Across our extracts, we noted the prominence of refugee characterizations that were used to legitimize, rather than undermine, help-giving. We selected 12 extracts that allowed us to more deeply explore this phenomenon. These extracts included live coverage involving interactions between the news hosts in studios and reports elsewhere or news reporters and other persons 'on the ground'. These extracts were qualitatively interesting as they show how refugee characterizations were developed as part of responses to questions about happenings in Ukraine and ways that these characterizations were collaboratively negotiated by the host and on the ground reporter. The four extracts we present in the analysis below allow us to best illustrate how Ukrainian refugees were characterized as contingent refugees, and how this in turn legitimized help-giving. Given that our analytic focus was descriptions refugees in relation to other parties and the practical concern of the readability of transcripts, the extracts were transcribed verbatim by three research assistants (hired just for this purpose) in line with Jeffersonian-Lite (Poland, 2012) transcription system.

Analytic procedure

The extracts were analysed using procedures of discursive psychology (Edwards, 2005; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wiggins & Potter, 2017). The analysis focused on practices of describing refugees, their troubles, and efforts at addressing these troubles. These practices were examined for how they constructed refugees, places and countries, the broader context of conflict, and the efforts taken-up for helping refugees. These constructions were also examined for their sequential location in terms of their location as questions or responses to questions. The focus was on how these constructions were used to develop inferences around the legitimacy of refuge-seeking and helping, and in so doing treat intergroup relations between Ukrainians and others in specific ways. Analysing categorization practices illustrates the sequential development of descriptions of refugees and ways that these descriptions are tied to moral evaluations of whether refugees are 'good', 'bad', or contingently so.

The analysis was conducted while attending to concerns over the nature of these interactions as a form of institutional talk: news media interactions (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). Thus, throughout our analysis we explain how the roles and obligations of institutional actors such as the host and reporter on the ground are relevant to interactional choices as well as the overarching orientation to shared institutional values such as framing reports as newsworthy and a maintenance of 'neutrality'. The analyses examined these data as news interviews that engage with and negotiate epistemic rights to knowledge about refugees and their troubles.

Reflexivity

We (the authors) are not refugees, but have experiences with being a migrant, or being treated as a migrant, in the countries where we live. Thus, we sympathize with the plight of refugees, and are particularly invested in the ways that their arrival into countries is described by the news media. Although our paper does highlight ways that the current Ukrainian refugees are being described in sympathetic ways by the news media, we acknowledge that their experiences are nevertheless extremely traumatic. Like all refugees, Ukrainians have been forced to flee through no fault of their own, but rather are casualties of war, where refugees are viewed as a small part of a larger political game, in this case between Russia and various Western powers.

Furthermore, we are both recognizable as people of colour, and this often plays a role in the ways people orient to us as migrants, foreigners, as members of the countries where we live, or not. Thus, we acknowledge the role that race might play in the descriptions of these refugees. Although we do not claim that our findings of positive descriptions about (White) Ukrainian refugees are an example of White privilege that perpetuates racism (i.e., these White refugees are being characterized positively whereas other Black and Brown refugees received negative characterizations), we do hope that this work can lead to future studies that can illuminate mundane ways that racism plays a role in the descriptions, and resulting treatment, of refugees. To that end, we hope that our findings about features of more positive descriptions can be used to develop a more equitable engagement with all refugees by news media.

ANALYSIS

In the four extracts analysed here, reporters narrate how Ukrainian refugees are arriving at neighbouring countries in Europe and ways they are received in these arrival countries. Analysis shows that descriptions of refugees' emotional and mental condition are made in ways to suggest that concerns of planning and future are beyond relevance for them and accommodation and relief are priorities. It is this that allows for legitimizing and favourably evaluating the efforts at helping and including refugees.

In Extract 1, descriptions of refugees are made to construct them as vulnerable and this is treated as bound to the forms of help and care that are offered by those in Poland and beyond. Extract 1 is from the news program titled 'The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer' broadcast by CNN on March 22, 2022.

Extract 1 – 'stories of trauma'
The host's question at line 1 orients to the reporter as having access to current ('today') information about refugees because of their geographical location: 'at the border'.

The reporter's response is focused on a particular aspect of the emotional status of refugees from Ukraine, namely their vulnerability. This is developed in relation to description of those fleeing at lines 3–9, facilities for those individuals at lines 9–17, and the efforts by people in Poland at lines 22–39.

First, the reporter constructs refugees in terms of the reasons for their fleeing: 'escaping' towns that were 'besieged'. This construction gives a ready reason why these refugees are fleeing, which is attributed to a problematic external event. What follows is a focus on one set of refugees and descriptions of them: 'women and children' (line 5). At lines 5–8, this set of refugees is described in terms of their possessions. First is a 'couple of suitcases', perhaps a 'pet' and 'whatever they've been able to grab', which suggest material goods and indicate a quick getaway. Second, however is reference to emotional loss 'extraordinary stories of trauma' in relation to who are 'left behind' (lines 7–8). The inclusion of this suggests a sustained connection with the places that they are fleeing.

This connection is explicated through ascribing features to 'women' and 'their children'. Treating them jointly leaves out the related category of adult men in the family: husband or father. This is subsequently specified in ways to give other inferences: 'their fighting aged men that continue to wage uh that war and try and defend Ukraine' (lines 13–14). The activities ascribed to 'fighting aged men' are

Host	So what are you hearing from the refugees at the border today?
Reporter	Ha-stories of their escape from so many of these besieged towns we've been following over the course of the last few days. People even at this late hour, it is after 10 pm local continue to arrive again Wolf as we've been seeing for the last few days. Women and their children with a couple of suitcases that they can carry. Often uh also uh a pet, whatever they've been able to grab as they leave. And of course, the extraordinary s-stories of the trauma that they carry with them of what they left behind. Their fighting aged men that continue to wage uh that war and try and defend Ukraine. I just wanna show you how well organized this medical crossing where they cross on foot is. There's an area for uh their pets as they arrive. Tents have been set up all along uh this walkway where they arrive, to try and give them comfort, to try and give children uh-uh a bit of candy, su-a bit of stuffed toy, something to say welcome uh to Poland. Extraordinary scenes, more than 2.1 million that have now crossed this particular border and it is of course Poland that has received the lion's share of those coming and 10 million displaced within the country. Uh 3 and a half million that have sought to flee altogether. It is on this country that that tremendous strain of welcoming an extraordinarily vulnerable group of people since by definition we're talking about women with their small children that are arriving with absolutely nothing and I'll just show you the border crossing itself from where even at this late hour Wolf, they continue to arrive. That is where they come carrying very little. Their trauma, their child, their pet and a suitcase and it continues even tonight after nearly a month of war Wolf
Host	Yeah you gotta give the Polish people so much credit, the people of the other neighboring countries as well for accepting these millions of Ukrainian refugees.

notably distinct to 'fleeing women and their children' and offer the inference that they are protecting Ukraine and fellow Ukrainians.

The gendered ascription of activities—fleeing to women (and their children) and fighting to men—is treated as normative given that the country and its residents are facing occupation (also see: Baklacıoğlu & Kıvılcım, 2017). This partition of Ukrainians and ascribing distinct sets of activities to different sets of individuals does not treat Ukrainians as those who are leaving Ukraine and wanting to seek refuge elsewhere. Instead, this offers the inference that those coming to seek refuge are those who do not normatively resist invasion nor are expected to do so (women and children). This legitimizes their current status as those seeking refuge, ironically, by descriptions that emphasize their unexpected refugee-status.

Second, at lines 15–22, the reporter offers a witnessed description of facilities for those 'crossing on foot'. The description includes references to medical aid, aid for pets, and dedicated facilities for children.

Of note is the reference to facilities for 'pets' and 'candy and toys for children', which indicates the thoughtfulness, care, and thorough organization of reception for refugees. Further, this indicates that those arriving into Poland are vulnerable and need a variety of care—physical and mental.

The reporter characterizes this organization as intended to do 'welcoming' to Poland. This allows for hearing the reporter's evaluation of the set-up—'well organized'—and descriptions of 'welcome' as favourable dispositions of Polish people to those coming in from Ukraine. Through the ascription that Poland is receiving the majority ('lion's share'), the reporter evaluates Poland as burdened the most among other countries that are also receiving Ukrainian refugees. This burden is explicitly formulated as 'tremendous strain of welcoming' that is placed on this country (line 17). While this might give inferences that these inclusion efforts are trouble for those in Poland, the reporter neither makes this explicit nor offers any descriptions that might suggest that those in Poland might now not wish to continue such support.

Instead, descriptions of refugees as vulnerable is offered in ways to offset such imputations. The categorization 'women and their small children' is explicitly characterized as an 'extraordinarily vulnerable group of people' through ascribing to them a state of dispossession: 'arriving with absolutely nothing' (line 20). These descriptions then remove any possible account for not being able to provide inclusion.

The reporter continues constructing this group as vulnerable through ascribing activities (arriving 'at this late hour') and other features ('carrying very little': their trauma, child, pet, and suitcase) to indicate that they are not in a position to take care of themselves. Doing so treats it as relevant that the type of care needed is to cater to these issues. In describing the arrival of such refugees as at a late time in the night—'even at this late hour Wolf they continue to arrive' (line 21)—furthers the construction of them as desperate to flee. Juxtaposed to this, the description of the arrival as ongoing—'even tonight after nearly a month of war' (line 23)—indicates that refugees will require continual preparation from those in Poland.

To this, the host offers a favourable evaluation of Polish people in a gist formulation—'you gotta give the Polish people so much credit' (line 24). This evaluation is also extended to those in other countries: 'people of other neighboring countries'. The host then treats the issues as being adequately and straightforwardly addressed. The efforts at helping and aiding refugees are treated as appropriate and relevant in relation to the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees. What the analysis has shown here is that the warrant and legitimation of various forms of help and aid is brought off as a feature of who these refugees are and the reasons for their refuge-seeking. These constructions however treat the refugees as only accidentally refugees.

In Extract 2, the reporter ascribes other vulnerabilities to Ukrainian refugees that construct them as in a condition where they are yet to figure out what is to 'come next'. This is treated as the reason for offering specific forms of help to the refugees. Extract 2 is from the news program titled 'Deadline White House' broadcast by MSNBC on March 2, 2022.

Extract 2 – 'what's next'

The host geographically situates the reporter at the 'Ukrainian border' and temporally frames the report as referring to current goings-on. This highlights the relevance of the issues at hand as serious and related to crossing of Ukrainians into Poland to seek refuge. The host's question prioritizes the reporter's direct access ('you've seen tonight' (line 3)) to goings-on at the border over other forms of knowledge.

In response, the reporter treats as relevant that the refugee travels have been ongoing over a course of few days: 'over the past 6 days, day 7 now since this fighting began' (lines 4–5). The latter descriptor indicates that there is a reason for this fleeing, namely Russian invasion of Ukraine, indexed by the use of 'this'. The reporter constructs those seeking refuge as not fully capable of making clear sense of current or future goings-on (Extract 1). This involves descriptions of refugees that highlight the various ways they experience loss starting with a generic description of their loss in extreme ways: 'next to nothing'. This idiomatic descriptor (Drew & Holt, 1998) serves to legitimize the view that those fleeing had no scope to indulge in carrying possibly relevant belongings.

Next, the reporter furthers this view of immediate and haphazard fleeing through ascribing to them the loss of other related persons. Here, she offers examples of 'women and children' who have been

Host	Let's bring in NBC's Kelly Cobiella live from Poland near the Ukrainian border. You've done some extraordinary reporting on this, we-we we borrow it from other places and it's so nice to get to talk to you. Tell us what you've seen tonight.
Reporter	Well we've been watching this unfold over the past 6 days, day 7 now, since this fighting began. We've seen and heard the same stories sadly over and over again for the past 6 days. People coming with next to nothing, women and children leaving their uh fathers, their husbands, their parents often behind in Ukraine and some coming to say, look we're just, we're starting fresh. We don't, we don't quite know what to do or where to go. Many of them are stunned, they're shell shocked, they're confused, they can't quite believe uh what has happened and they're going through incredible long and at times terrifying journeys just to get to the border and the opening days of this Nicole, it was taking about 1-2 days to get across the busiest border crossing in Poland, the Medyka border crossing and people were standing in line uh lines that snakes back more than a mile uh just trying to get across the border. Uh there has been some progress in terms of just processing people Poland has has really stepped up, they've got this army of volunteers greeting people on this side a-and dozens of charities as well trying to find people places to stay. Polish people have opened their doors to refugees as well a-and giving them a-a place to sleep, a place to live uh while they figure out what's next for them a-and the European uh Union countries as well said to vote on a measure tomorrow to allow Ukrainian refugees, to claim asylum without filling out all the paperwork essentially. To live in European countries for the next three years and they'll be able to work and access services as well. Really, really crucial because these numbers are not slowing down, they're not abating at all. More than 800,000, really 900,000 people in just 7 days Nicole, looks like we'll be potentially at a million or close to a million by tomorrow. That's you know a million women and children who are trying to figure out what to do next. How to live in these next few days, few weeks. They don't know how long u-until this sorts itself out and they can hopefully be reunited with family members

forced to leave behind 'fathers, their husbands, their parents'. The use of these sets of categories indicates that the loss of the latter set means that those in the former set are left helpless. This gendered and infantilizing description furthers the construction of refugees as those who cannot help themselves (also see: Baklacıoğlu & Kıvılcım, 2017).

Last, she includes reports (Holt, 1996) of refugees indicating avowed helplessness: 'look we're just, we're starting fresh. We don't, we don't quite know what to do or where to go' (lines 9–11). Here the imputations of lack of knowledge indicates that inquiries about their plans and activities are misplaced (cf. Edwards, 2005). This version of refugees is complemented by descriptions of their mental states (Edwards, 2005), animated (Goffman, 1981) on their behalf: 'are stunned, they're shell shocked, they're confused, they can't quite believe uh what has happened' (lines 9–10). This set of descriptions is to offer the inference that those fleeing are not to be expected to have plans about their activities.

Juxtaposed to these descriptions is descriptions of the physical constraints refugees are navigating, which are subsequently described in terms of hardships in arriving at the Polish border, at lines 11–13. These descriptions construct Poland as a 'safe' place in contrast to Ukraine. Rather than efforts by the

refugees to develop a contrast between Ukraine and Poland as unsafe and safe spaces, the reporter herself offers descriptions that construct this distinction (cf. Goodman & Burke, 2010).

It is here that her descriptions of Polish efforts at sheltering refugees fit with the condition of refugees. At lines 15–18, the reporter lists various ways in which Poland and Polish people have put in efforts to secure the safety and well-being of refugees. Their efforts are evaluated favourably: 'really stepped up'. Her listing includes numerous activities like 'greeting people', 'trying to find people places to stay', 'open[ing] their doors to refugees' and 'giving them a place to sleep, a place to live'. These activities are attributed to categories, such as 'army of volunteers', 'dozens of charities', and 'Polish people'. Similar to Extract 1, these descriptions treat the help being given as arising from individuals in the arrival nations, rather than respective governments.

However, these descriptions of accommodating refugees are related to refugees' condition of being unable to plan: 'while they figure out what's next of them' (lines 18–19). In doing so, the reporter treats as priority establishing conditions that would address a concern for refugees, which is to figure out their future activities. This again mitigates possible further inquiries about refugees plans to migrate or take-up other activities.

It is in this context that descriptions of efforts by the European Union in dealing with legal and policy level activities are given: as 'to allow Ukrainian refugees to claim asylum without filling out all the paperwork' (lines 23–24). What is noteworthy is that the reporter treats these activities as being taken-up in the interest of a longer stay (next three years) for Ukrainians in European countries: 'to live' and 'they'll be able to work and access services'. Her favourable evaluation of such measures is tied to the projected increase in refugee numbers: 'we'll be potentially at a million or close to a million by tomorrow' (lines 27–28). In doing so, the reporter treats the inclusion of Ukrainians in Europe as unproblematic and welcomed by European states.

However, it is not merely the numbers that is given as the reason for a longer-term inclusion, but the descriptions of the conditions of these refugees. Aligning with her earlier descriptions of refugees, she re-introduces 'women and children' as a vulnerable set of refugees who are currently in limbo and in need of time and security to resolve their issues. The reporter's descriptions of refugees' minimal awareness of what to do 'next', 'how to live' in the near future, and the end of this invasion—'sorts itself out'—all treat refugees as in a passive condition with (cf. Extract 1) little resources to affect any outcomes in their own benefit, such as a return to more normal situation where they might be joined with their 'family members'. Further, the reporter ascribes to these refugees an unawareness of 'how long' these conditions might continue. This ascription again works to minimize concerns of placing demands or criteria on these refugees.

What then emerges is constructing refugees as those for whom considerations of future plans are not appropriate. Instead, refugees here are constructed as those for whom accommodation and support are primary at this point given their mental condition and vulnerability. This is seen in the favourable evaluations given to ongoing efforts at giving help.

In Extract 3, similar descriptions are offered to show that they are currently in a condition of 'not knowing' about their own present and future. This is used to legitimize the aid being given. While much of this is framed in terms of criticism of Russian actions, the focus is on how this criticism is relevant for refugee inclusion. Extract 1 is from the news program titled 'The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer' broadcast by CNN on March 24, 2022. The Reporter is in Lviv which is on the Ukrainian border and on the way for refugees to cross into Poland.

Extract 3 – 'they don't know'

The host's question sets-up a reportage about refugees 'fleeing the violence' in Ukraine that is about the struggles and troubles. This is seen through his evaluation of the violence as 'awful' and indexing the reporters' privileged access to specific features of those fleeing: 'you've seen the faces', 'you've seen the look' and 'the face of these Ukrainians fleeing the violence' (line 2). These features make salient experiential and possibly mental status as salient here.

The reportage centers the mental status of the refugees in ways to point to their strangeness of seeking refuge. Initially, the reporter offers a performative response—'I don't know' (line 1)—which is repaired (Schegloff et al., 1977) to a reporting of refugees' accounts. The reporter addresses the possible

Host	Let's bring in CNN's Don Lemon he's joining us now from Lviv uh in Ukraine. Don you've seen the faces you've seen the look, uh the faces of these Ukrainians uh fleeing the violence which is so awful over there. What are the people over there telling you?
Reporter	I don't know. And I'm saying that to make a point, that's what they're saying to me Wolf is I don't know. They're conveying in their-with their words and with their emotions and their body language uncertainty because they don't know. Many of them have lived years and years in the same place and then all of a sudden for no reason they have been displaced their homes have been bombed uhm yu- you can understand sometimes when there's a natural disaster or hurricane, a storm of some sort an earthquake or what have you a fire but this is for no reason someone just decided to bomb their homes and take their loved ones and take everything they own but I tell you what Vladimir Putin Wolf may indeed occupy physically parts of this country but he will never be able to occupy the hearts of these people they don't want it they're not having it they say he's like an uh uh ex-lover that won't get the point and won't go away but they do not want him back they don't want it he will never be able to occupy their hearts eh-eh it's a resolve what I have noticed the most Wolf from the folks here it's their resolve and they're saying no matter what he does they are not going to accept it we spent the day with Jose Andres the chef, on the restaurant tour. He is feeding hundreds of thousands of people a day, a day. So helping these refugees and these displaced people uh and also even at the Polish Ukrainian border where the president will visit tomorrow he has a place there helping people so it's people helping people and the resolve of the folks that's what's happening here where we are that's what we're witnessing.
Host	Jose Andres is a really great guy Don Lemon thank you very much

hearing of his 'I do not know' response as arising from his interactional footing, as a respondent, and presents himself as the mere animator of refugees' accounts (Goffman, 1981): 'what they're saying to me Wolf is I don't know' (lines 8–9). In re-attributing the response 'I do not know' from himself to the refugees, the reporter indicates that the emotional status of those fleeing Ukraine is that of being confused or unsure about what is going on. What this does is to undermine any possible inquiries about what those fleeing might wish to do in the near or distant future (Edwards, 2005).

Reporting this condition as arising from refugees themselves treats refugees as in shock and unable to articulate their own positions. However, the reporter references other ways of knowing, which convey to him their status: 'words', 'emotions', 'body language' (lines 6–7). This is packaged as 'uncertainty'. It is this feature of refugees from Ukraine that is further explicated. First, the reporter descriptions of the reasons for and context of their departure from their 'homes'. The reporter develops the view that those trying to leave Ukraine are in a state where they are unable to make choices or plans, instead that

their departure was 'sudden' and 'for no reason' (line 9). In doing so, possible inquiries about plans or objectives are undermined and instead an alternative narrative about refugees is provided.

The reporter offers a narrative that focuses on reasons for refuge-seeking and possibilities for aid. At lines 10–13, the reporter narrates their displacement because of the Russian invasion in ways to relate this to 'natural disasters'. This is done to suggest that this displacement cannot be made sense of in the same ways as 'hurricanes', 'storm', 'an earthquake', or 'a fire' (lines 10–11). This list of events is treated as giving a legitimate reason for displacement in contrast to the Russian invasion, which in being characterized as 'no reason' suggests that the invasion is wholly illegitimate. The displacement itself is described as a consequence of a deliberate act of bombing of Ukrainian 'homes', the loss of 'their loved ones', and 'everything they own'. This other listing (Jefferson, 1990) constructs refugees as those who are left with very little and their lives completely changed in a short period of time. All of this works to explain why Ukrainian refugees are in shock.

The account about emotional status of those fleeing Ukraine is developed in another way at lines 13–20. At line 13, the reporter introduces views about Putin presented initially as his views (lines 13–15; 17–20) and then at lines 15–17 as arising from refugees. The first set ascribe a rejection of Putin's occupation through claims about a metaphorical resistance of an emotional ownership of their 'hearts' in contrast to the physical occupation of Ukraine. This is made explicit in ascribing to these refugees a rejection of Putin's occupation: 'they don't want it they're not having it'. This description constructs those fleeing Russian invasion as defiant and actively in opposition to the reasons for their fleeing. The relevance of this is in countering the rhetorical possibility that these refugees have 'given-up' and are permanently leaving Ukraine to other places.

At lines 15–17, this inference is furthered by reporting what Ukrainian refugees themselves have said – 'they say'. This reporting (Holt, 1996) involves characterizing Putin as an 'ex-lover' who is persistent, but nonetheless undesired. Further, the reporter ascribes to Ukrainian refugees other features, like those of perseverance in rejecting the occupation, that are packaged as 'resolve'. In doing this, the reporter treats the current fleeing as involving not only shock or desperation, but also defiance and resolve.

What all of this does is to present a complex view of Ukrainians fleeing Russian invasion. It treats Ukrainian refugees as only doing so because of the invasion without dimming their resolve. These descriptions then humanize Ukrainians in the context of fleeing from an invasion and attempting seeking refuge in another country (Kirkwood, 2017). The characterization removes any sense of charitable moral obligation and legitimizes help-giving and providing refuge. One instance of which is subsequently described at lines 20–21.

The reporter gives the example of a civilian 'Jose Andres', who is helping refugees in the form of offering food: 'feeding hundreds of thousands of people a day, a day'. The reporter gives another example of aid being given by the United States president at 'the Polish Ukrainian border', where refugees are being given unspecified forms of help. However, these forms of help-giving are characterized as 'people helping people'. This formulation, notably, does not include references to state action, largesse of individuals, or a sense of charitable giving. Instead, it treats those seeking refuge and those giving refuge as in a similar position.

Overall then descriptions of Ukrainian refugees are made in ways to develop a unique mental condition for them—a combination of shock and resolve. This works to side-step considerations of next steps and legitimize the aid being given to them. What is also seen is a ready affiliation of the reporter (and partially the host) with the positions and views of those fleeing Ukraine.

Thus far participants have treated the inclusion of refugees as legitimately required despite possible concerns with giving help. In Extract 4, possible problems with accommodating increasing numbers of refugees is the central concern that sets-up descriptions about the preparedness of EU and its member countries to receive Ukrainian refugees. Extract 4 is from the news program titled 'The DW_News' broadcast by Deutsche Welle News on February 25, 2022. While the Host is unnamed and Melinda Crate is the political correspondent and both are present in the studio.

Extract 4 – 'they're going to be here for a while'
Following a discussion on the war and possibilities for other parties to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the host introduces the issue of Ukrainian refugees as an important aspect of this invasion, in terms of a 'humanitarian situation'.

Host	Um I do want to talk about the humanitarian situation in in Ukraine itself right now. It's something really important that I think we need to touch on. The fact that so many people are going to be leaving Ukraine- presumably leaving the country to escape this invasion. Um, the EU has said that it will assist Ukrainian refugees, uh but how prepared is Europe really to take in what could be many many more people who are fleeing this invasion?
Reporter	The president of the European Union Commission Ursula von der Leyen says that they do have a contingency plan in place that it's been negotiated in recent weeks as they prepared for this essentially uh worst case scenario that is unfolding, and we also know that the EU in interior ministers will be meeting tomorrow to discuss how to implement this plan. The EU has also put aside uh cash uh to help uh refugees and neighboring countries, as uh as you know, are already reporting very significant flows across their borders. That Slovakia, Moldova, uh Poland and Germany too is expecting that-that it will see a number of refugees come here, which is of course for many Germans awakening memories of the 2015 surge uh uh of refugees, primarily from Syria and the Middle East and Afghanistan that was one million that Germany took in. At the moment the United Nations is talking about numbers up to four million in total that could uh wind up leaving Ukraine uh Ukraine is a populous country and people are on the move all across the country. So it's a very-very uh dire ah auh uh situation that we may be looking at indeed. Uh Ob-obviously very very important to start preparing now, and by the way we're hearing that even here, Berlin Brandenburg, uh the neighboring region, that they are already uh putting into place shelters and looking at how to get refugees into jobs quickly, which means they clearly think they're going to be here for a while.
Host	All right, things are already kicking off. Reminder also that this is only just the beginning

At lines 4–5, the host's projection about refugee numbers—'the fact that so many people are going to be leaving Ukraine'—becomes the reason for posing questions about how 'Ukrainian refugees' will be accommodated and helped. Ascribing a reason for their seeking of refuge—'escape this invasion' (line 6)—legitimizes not only their 'fleeing' their country and seeking refuge, but also the requirement of humanitarian action to help them. Further, it treats their refuge-seeking as bound to the more immediate concerns over invasion. This much is similar to constructions seen in earlier extracts.

The host then reports the EU's offer to help, which is notable not only because the EU have reportedly offered help, but also because the EU is a trans-national institution reasonably expected to have more capacities for help and aid-giving than individual countries (cf. Sambaraju & McVittie, 2017; Sambaraju et al., 2017). The host's question develops doubt about the EU's offer through materializing the asks involved in 'assisting' refugees: 'taking in' a projected increasing amount of people fleeing over

time. This question design assumes, rather than questions if refugees should be helped, despite framing the possible inclusion of Ukrainian refugees as a problem.

The reporter's response primarily addresses the concern with possible rising numbers of refugees. Displaying expertise as a political correspondent, the reporter draws from multiple sources of evidence. First, the reporter indicates that the EU is aware of the seriousness of this situation. Using reported speech from the president of the EU Commission, the reporter indicates that the EU does have a 'contingency plan' (line 13) that is being actively developed and monitored: 'negotiated in recent weeks' (line 14); 'meeting tomorrow to discuss' (lines 17–18). The use of the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), 'worst case scenario' (line 15) also highlights Europe's awareness and preparedness. Second, the reporter offers a way that the EU is addressing immediate needs related to fleeing Ukrainians, which is to provide financial support to 'refugees' and 'neighbouring countries' that have reported already receiving significant numbers of refugees. Third, the EU is preparing for immediate future expectations from neighbouring countries, such as Slovakia, Moldova, and Poland.

Here the reporter introduces a similarity with another instance where Germany had offered refuge: 'the 2015 surge uh uh of refugees'. The description here specifies the origin of these refugees—'Syria', 'Middle East', and 'Afghanistan'—which three-part listing (Jefferson, 1990) points to a commonality of these refugees, in terms of that context in 2015. The description also treats the inclusion of these refugees as unproblematic. In doing so, the reporter treats this earlier instance as indicative of the capacities for Germany to accept refugees without serious concerns.

After reporting about the preparedness of the EU and its members States, the reporter discusses the scale of the problem, citing the United Nations' report of 'four million refugees' and aligning with the reporter that this is a 'dire' problem that needs preparation. This treats the problem as still evolving and unresolved. However, the narrative does not shift to descriptions of issues and concerns that those in Europe might have. Instead, the reporter treats it as a challenge that is to be addressed via specific measures being currently considered and possibly taken-up in the future. The reporter offers examples of efforts at managing refugees, such as sheltering them and allowing them to work. The reporter draws the inference that these efforts indicate a longer-term presence of those fleeing Ukraine in other parts of Europe, without treating this as a concern either for those refugees or those in other parts of Europe.

The host's uptake aligns with the reporter's response: first noting that the EU is preparing and second that the problem is ongoing. The reporter's account accepts that the problem is serious but does not treat it as the reason for possible restrictions in accepting refugees or limiting the form of inclusion to take place. Instead, the reporter's account treats inclusion itself as unproblematic and offers a range of ways in which inclusion efforts are being taken-up. It is striking across this extract that while the numbers of refugees are reported as high, this is not treated as a problem for inclusion (cf. Goodman & Burke, 2010).

DISCUSSION

The present analysis examined instances where help giving and inclusion of refugees were unproblematic, treated as expected, and evaluated highly favourably. We examined early news media reportage of Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russian invasion. While there are several implications, political and otherwise, of the refugee issues, we wish to discuss the features and relevance of the ready inclusion of Ukrainian refugees at this early stage of the Russian invasion. The analyses show that these descriptions construct Ukrainian refugees as contingent refugees, that is, as those who are only now forcefully seeking refuge and are otherwise not those refugees who might seek to relocate to other countries.

The analyses point to how these refugees as constructed as 'contingent' refugees, that is, those who are seeking refuge only in this instance and those who would otherwise not leave Ukraine. While much earlier research on refugee issues shows that refugees are routinely constructed in a range of problematic

ways to undermine their deservingness of refuge (Sambaraju & McVittie, 2017; Sambaraju et al., 2017), the present findings are unique in this and other aspects.

First, refugees are not described in unfavourable ways. Across the present data, and in our corpus, the descriptions are non-negative in a specific way: these avoid any inferences about Ukrainian refugees' desires to leave Ukraine or that this was ever a feature of those now fleeing Ukraine. Instead, these descriptions attribute to them mental states of being vulnerable, confused and not fully aware, unsure about the future, and traumatized. As discursive psychologists note descriptions and attributions of mental states orient to the accomplishment of specific action (Edwards, 2005; Edwards & Potter, 1992). Here, these work to delay and/or undermine possible concerns and inquiries over their plans or intentions. Instead, the focus is brought about on the unpreparedness of Ukrainian refugees.

The present descriptions of Ukrainian refugees treat this form of refuge-seeking as contingent and limited to the current circumstances: fleeing the Russian invasion. Across the extracts here and our corpus the reference to the Russian invasion works as an omni-relevant frame that offers ready explanations why Ukrainians are leaving Ukraine (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2003). Constructions of Ukrainian refugees treat them as vulnerable in their constitution and mental states. These constructions of refugees' mental states offer inferences around the novelty of their situation and consequently counter possibilities of treating them as knowing about travels across borders or making plans to arrive in another place to seek refuge.

Across these extracts their vulnerability is constructed in particular ways through the joint consideration of troubles for 'women and children'. These troubles were treated as requiring particular care and attention. In contrast, descriptions of 'men', in Extracts 1 and 2, indicate an ongoing engagement with Ukraine. The inference offered then is that it is only the vulnerable Ukrainians that are fleeing while the rest are fighting Russian invasion. This constructs Ukrainian refugees as only fleeing because they are vulnerable. Further, references to joining with the rest of their families attributes to refugees minimal desire to leave Ukraine permanently (Extract 1).

Second, descriptions of help giving are made in ways that do not bring up concerns over obligations for helping Ukrainian refugees. While giving help to those who are in need is normatively expected extensive research has shown the pervasive disincentive to giving help or refuge to refugees (Bowskill et al., 2007; Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Lynn & Lea, 2003). This goes together with how refugees are described and constructed. As noted earlier, refugees are routinely treated as undeserving of refuge, as illegitimate, and a threat to those in the arrival country (Goodman & Burke, 2010; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010). The constructions of Ukrainian refugees here then mitigate the normative expectation that refugees are to be given any form of help.

The present analyses show that giving shelter and help toUkrainian refugees is taken-for-granted. For instance, in Extract 4 the reporter points to similar practices of help-giving by Polish individuals alongside descriptions of broader EU-level aid. Interviewers, interviewees, and other news persons do not raise or receive questions on whether Poland, Hungary, the wider EU or any other entity should give aid or take-in refugees. Notably, across the extracts, and elsewhere in our data set, the actions of those giving help are highly favourably evaluated. The actions of individual residents in the arrival nations and broader organizations were lauded for their readiness to help Ukrainians in the shorter and longer terms. We are suggesting that these forms of characterizing the help and the evaluations are tied-in with the descriptions of Ukrainians, refugees, and their deservingness as refugees.

Overall the analyses show that constructions of Ukrainian refugees legitimize refuge-seeking and help giving through highlighting the contingent aspect of Ukrainian refugees. Instead of othering refugees as much of previous research highlights, media reportage about Ukrainian refugees in the present data treats them as similar to those in the arrival locations and elsewhere. Othering of refugees (and migrants and asylum-seekers) can be understood as taking place along a spectrum—at one end is the more direct forms of treating refugees as problematic for their negative characteristics (terrorism; thievery; riotousness; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010) and at the other are indirect ways (welfare and economy concerns; employment, and so on) ways (Burke & Goodman, 2012). Similar to these latter is also ascribing to refugees the desire to want to stay on in the arrival place and implying that refugees'

long term residence would threaten national identity (Rowe & O'Brien, 2014). What we offer as a frame for understanding these phenomena is to locate the present inclusion and the obverse exclusion along a *spectrum of othering*. Constructing refugees as 'contingent' or not, is at the more implicit end of the spectrum and accomplish inclusion in subtler ways.

Our findings show how news media treat refugees as similar to members of arrival countries through descriptions that construct the refugees as an outcome of immediately problematic circumstances, categorization work that highlights similarities and an imputed desire to 'return' to Ukraine. Although descriptions of refugees position them as distinct from members of arrival countries, the differences are described as a reasonable outcome of contingent circumstances, and similarities among refugees and arrivals are highlighted through other categorization work. These together minimize the 'otherness' of these refugees. In this way, descriptions of Ukrainian refugees can be seen as at a more inclusive end of the spectrum of othering.

Previous research shows that descriptions of refugees and help-giving in the news media relate to political and policy outcomes (Lynn & Lea, 2003; Nguyen & McCallum, 2016; Van Dijk, 2019). Taylor (2015) shows that historically those fleeing USSR in the cold war era were favourably treated in the UK and western Europe. It is to the great benefit of Ukrainians that countries in the EU, the UK, and the more distant countries like Australia and the US have put in place a range of policies that offer settlement and other benefits. While it is beyond the present paper to make a confirmatory connection between how refugees are constructed in media and the policies enacted, what the present analysis does show is that constructions of Ukrainian refugees as 'contingently refugees' was treated as the reason for offering them several forms of aid and settlement.

These constructions also relate to the deservingness of refugees. Research has identified discursive practices of constructing refugees as 'good' or deserving of refuge (Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Le Espiritu, 2014). What is notable in these constructions is their ultimate contribution to legitimating exclusion of refugees. In many of these studies, the constructions of 'good' or 'deserving' refugees is only made to justify the exclusion of those who are seeking refuge through the contrasting inference that these are undeserving or 'bogus' (Goodman et al., 2017; Lynn & Lea, 2003; Teo, 2000). Here however what we are suggesting is that the contingent aspect of Ukrainians implies that they are not those who would otherwise seek refuge. The construction of Ukrainian refugees as only contingently refugees, at the early stages of reporting, allows for an unquestioned provision of aid, accommodation, and refuge.

The strengths of this paper lie in the close analysis of descriptions as developed collaboratively by news media hosts and reporters. Precisely because of our data choices, we could identify that refugees in this case were treated as similar to those in the arrival countries and only contingently as refugees. However, there are some limitations of this research that can be addressed by future work. Future research can engage with the notion of the 'spectrum of othering' developed in this paper through examining other instances where refugee inclusion is salient. Our corpus consisted of data from the first month of the invasion where questions about the potential numbers of refugees and their management were at the forefront of news coverage. Future research could explore more recent coverage of Ukrainian refugees to see if and how news coverage concerns relating to refugees have shifted.

The Whiteness of refugees from Ukraine, while self-evident is not expressly indicated in any of these instances. It is then beyond the present paper to make claims about the role of race or Europeanness of Ukrainians as contributing to such favourable descriptions. What our findings do show is treating Ukrainian refugees as contingent refugees and as similar to those who are giving them help and shelter. These constructions allowed for legitimating giving refuge and possibilities for settlement. What we wish to argue for is a similar form of treating refugees across the board to allow for similar inclusive policies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Rahul Sambaraju: Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; methodology; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Natasha Shrikant:** Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; project administration; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The Authors declare no conflict of interest in the development and publication of this article. We would however like the readers to engage with our 'Reflexivity' section. We would like to offer sincere thanks to two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback and the editor for supporting our manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available in the public domain, accessed via The Internet Archive (https://archive.org/).

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