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To cite this article: Philippa Carr, Simon Goodman, Adam Jowett & Jackie Abell (30 Jun 2025): Exploring how entertainment documentaries construct London to account for the residence of the international super-rich in the “hostile environment” for migrants, Qualitative Research in Psychology, DOI: [10.1080/14780887.2025.2525856](https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2025.2525856)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2025.2525856>



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Exploring how entertainment documentaries construct London to account for the residence of the international super-rich in the “hostile environment” for migrants

Philippa Carr ^a, Simon Goodman ^b, Adam Jowett ^c, and Jackie Abell ^d

^aSchool of Social Sciences, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK; ^bSchool of Applied Social Sciences, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK; ^cSchool of Business and Science, University of Law, London, UK; ^dCentre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

ABSTRACT

Unlike poorer migrant groups, governments offer visa inducements to attract wealthy individuals into a country. However, super-rich migrants’ impact on the UK has been shown to be negative. This research explored how entertainment documentaries account for super-rich individuals residing in London. Discursive Social Psychology was used to analyse 2490 min of programmes from non-subscription UK terrestrial channels broadcast throughout 2016 in the UK using the term ‘super-rich’. Within the programmes, London was constructed as a (1) playground, (2) safe space and (3) place of economic opportunity. The super-rich were positioned as good migrants who have integrated into society. By drawing upon human rights arguments within the broadcasts, London was constructed as a safe haven. The construction of super-rich migrants formed a stark contrast to poorer groups who contribute more to the economy yet are targeted by hostile immigration policy and media reporting.


KEYWORDS

Discursive social psychology; migration; super-rich; television; wealth inequality

Introduction

This paper explores the construction of the international super-rich residing in London in entertainment documentaries. As a genre, the programmes can be viewed as a cultural product to explore how extremely wealthy people are positioned in media discourse (Carr 2020) to warrant the presence of the international super-rich in London despite their negative impact. In London, wealthy residents are displaced by the super-rich (Glucksberg 2016), and housing is scarce for poorer groups on welfare benefits and/or in precarious employment (Watt 2021). Despite the negative effects of wealth inequality, countries compete to attract super-rich individuals with investment visa opportunities (Migration Advisory Committee 2014), known as ‘golden

CONTACT Philippa Carr  philippa2.carr@uwe.ac.uk  School of Social Sciences, University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY, UK

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2025.2525856>

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visas' (Gaspar and Ampudia de Haro 2020). That said, countries are under pressure to close golden visa schemes due to money laundering concerns and their illegitimate use for accessing other nations (Pavlidis 2021). Until 2021, the UK had a tier 1 (investor) visa that required a minimum of £2 m of disposable funds for investment purposes (Home Office 2019). This was replaced by the Innovator Founder visa requiring applicants to be active within their business (Home Office 2023a). A review of tier 1 (investor) visas found no benefit to the UK economy from the activities of visa recipients except for professional services providing investment advice and independent schools (Migration Advisory Committee 2014). This contrasts with the evidence for immigration showing a positive effect on the economy and playing an important role in areas such as healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2020). Most migrants are of working age and able to contribute to the economy through tax (Vargas-Silva 2016). Arguments that poorer immigrant groups such as asylum seekers are attracted to the UK for welfare payments, labelled the pull factor, have been discredited as migrants lack knowledge of the availability of public funds and are drawn by other factors (Mayblin 2016). Poorer migrant groups contribute to society through tax and labour to deliver public services (Vargas-Silva 2016) yet are confronted with more barriers than the super-rich migrants in accessing the UK. This paper explores how super-rich migrants residing in London are constructed by the media, given their relatively small positive contribution to the UK economy and public sector compared to poorer migrant groups.

Attraction of London to the international super-rich

Entertainment documentaries provide an opportunity to explore how changing patterns of super-rich migration are constructed in the media and account for the attraction of London as a place. There is limited data about the nationality and residence of wealthy migrants residing in the UK (Advani, Bangham, and Leslie 2021) although Advani et al. (2022) explored demographic data of people with non-domiciled (non-doms) status for tax purposes from 2001 to 2018. The vast majority of non-doms are extremely wealthy and born outside the UK. To gain non-dom status, a person must evidence that they are resident in the UK but it is not considered to be their permanent home. The top places of origin for non-doms are India, Western Europe, USA and other English-speaking countries such as South Africa and Australia. Over the period of Advani et al. (2022) analysis, the number of non-doms from the USA decreased while non-doms from China and India increased. The UK has been viewed as a centre for the European super-rich (Hugrée, Penissat, and Spire 2020). However, the focus of Brexit on decreasing financial regulation while the EU is concerned with increased regulation for tax havens could lead

to migratory changes (Ryder 2024) with increased numbers of super-rich migrants from outside the European Union.

The attraction of favourable tax arrangements in increasing migration is questioned as Friedman et al. (2024) interviews with wealthy people residing in the UK found that speakers did not view tax policy as their initial priority in deciding upon their place of residence. Instead, speakers identified housing, finance sector, private schools and hospitals in addition to high culture as pull factors for being based in the UK. In particular, London was constructed as being able to provide all these amenities to wealthy residents with easy access to high cultural spaces such as the opera that was not available elsewhere. For this reason, Bullough (2022) calls the UK the ‘butler to the world’ (p. 3) as extremely wealthy people use it as a place to access services conveniently. This paper provides an opportunity to build on previous research to examine how media discourse such as entertainment documentaries construct the attraction of London to the super-rich.

Impact of super-rich migration to London

Unlike other groups who have been found to be beneficial to society, the enhanced mobility of the super-rich is particularly damaging on the availability of affordable housing for other groups due to their spending on real estate. London has been identified as a central location for wealthy individuals who are attracted to international cities (Fernandez, Hofman, and Aalbers 2016). Additionally, London real estate is used by the super-rich to protect themselves from political and economic risks in other countries (Badarinza and Ramadorai 2018). Whilst the super-rich can afford to mitigate risk to their capital by purchasing property in London, poorer groups fall under increasing pressure as rents become less affordable and local authorities have fewer resources (Rugg 2016). Traditionally the wealthy resided in the West End of London, the recent development of super prime and prime real estate has extended the presence of the extremely wealthy into the North and South of the city (Atkinson 2021). Given this pressure on the availability of affordable housing, there is a need to explore how the super-rich account for their concentration within locations such as London.

Construction of the super-rich in entertainment documentaries

Entertainment documentaries offer a window into the otherwise very private lives of the super-rich (Thurlow and Jaworski 2017). Extremely wealthy people have the option of living separately to other groups and maintaining low visibility (Urry 2014). Television broadcasts allow researchers to explore the construction of groups (Abell and Stokoe 2001) and entertainment documentaries place the viewer in the position of a voyeur (Feltwell et al. 2017). While

news programming gives wealth inequality a low profile (Edelman 2001), entertainment documentaries allow the researcher to examine how wealth inequality is warranted as banal under the guise of entertainment (Carr 2020). Entertainment documentaries also facilitate examination of how the super-rich are constructed to viewers and how their wealth is accounted for, despite the damaging impact of wealth inequality (Goodman, Carr, and Abell 2022). This genre of programming can be analysed as a form of political communication (Carr 2020), often reifying the illusion of meritocracy in the UK (Carr et al. 2023). Programmes featuring people with extreme wealth have global aspirational appeal (Boyle and Kelly 2012), promoting inequality while constructing the status of the super-rich as desirable (Mack 2023). Entertainment documentaries display the super-rich's consumption of luxury goods, legitimizing purchases as the just rewards of hard work (Littler 2018; Marwick 2015). Portrayed as harder working than most, the super-rich are constructed within entertainment documentaries as more driven and representative of the meritocratic values of the UK (Carr et al. 2021, 2023).

Migration to the UK and hostile environment policy

Current UK immigration policy is characterized by the hostile environment and changes made post-Brexit. The term 'hostile environment' coined by then UK government Home Secretary (2010–16) Theresa May originates from a Telegraph interview where she stated her determination to lower immigration (Kirkup and Winnett 2012). The hostile environment concept has been defined as delegating responsibility for immigration enforcement away from civil servants in the Home Office and onto the public in other roles who facilitate access to goods and services in people's everyday lives (Griffiths and Yeo 2021). This level of enforcement is extensive and can cover activities such as enrolling on a course, obtaining accommodation, and opening a bank account.

Post-Brexit UK immigration policy no longer differentiates between EU and non-EU visa applications and instead uses a points-based system that is argued to be more efficient (Home Office 2020). While the revised policy focuses on the UK's need for skilled workers and economic benefits, Filauri, Gockeli, and Pazzona (2023) state that this approach is skewed towards benefitting London and the financial sector rather than the nation as a whole. The use of wages as an indicator of skill level means that other parts of the UK and industries with lower salaries cannot meet the income threshold unless a role is listed as a shortage occupation. Despite these changes, net migration to the UK has continued to increase with 1.2 million entering of which 606,000 people remained in the UK in 2022 (Office of National Statistics 2023). During this period, migration for humanitarian reasons increased while people entering the UK for educational reasons

decreased. The Illegal Migration Act (2023) limits the ability of people to enter the UK via so-called irregular methods such as small boats, to legally obtain a right to remain. In the year ending March 2023, 53062 people arrived via irregular methods with the most frequent countries of origin being Afghanistan (28%) and Albania (20%) (Home Office 2023b). The number of visas awarded for investor categories that attract wealthier individuals has increased from 4362 awarded in 2017 to 8343 in the year ending March 2023, with a 95% acceptance rate (Home Office 2023c). In contrast to conditions placed on other migrants, the Innovator Founder visa allows applicants to have additional sources of employment, study and have family members join them in the UK (Home Office 2023a). Unlike poorer groups, the super-rich are less likely to need services where they may encounter hostile environment policies or restrictions on their activities while in the UK. Given that poorer groups offer a greater benefit to the UK, there is a need to consider how the media accounts for the residence of the super-rich as their property purchases restrict the availability of affordable housing and have a limited contribution to the economy.

Constructing migrants using discursive and rhetorical approaches

Discursive and rhetorical approaches have been adopted to research the construction of refugees and migrants in relation to obtaining residence and citizenship. These approaches to psychological research are social constructionist, placing a focus on the outcome of individual discourse (Burr 2015). Discursive Psychology (DP) explores how people use talk about psychological concepts such as identity in addition to how individuals manage their accountability (Edwards and Potter 1992). The evolution of DP to Discursive Social Psychology (DSP) (Wetherell 1998) draws upon Billig's (1991) rhetorical psychology to consider such talk within its broader rhetorical context. This approach allows for the role of context and ideology in talk to be acknowledged and explored (Augoustinos 2013; Edley and Wetherell 1997) such as the underlying neoliberalism underlying discourse about the super-rich and wealth inequality in entertainment documentaries (Carr 2023). A DSP approach allows the interactional context of the data can be acknowledged while recognising wider ideological concerns (Gibson 2015).

Research on refugees and migrants that adopt a discursive and rhetorical approach has focused on poorer groups rather than those individuals who have the means to access investor visas. Goodman et al. (2015) found that migrants are constructed as an economic and cultural risk to British society, unable to integrate into society and contribute in a positive way. By constructing migrants as being undeserving of citizenship or residence arrangements based on their work status (Andreouli and Dashtipour 2014), accusations that such claims are founded on racism can be avoided (Goodman and Burke

2010). Asylum seeker and refugee migration warranted for economic reasons is constructed as bogus in contrast to safety reasons that are constructed as genuine (Lynn and Lea 2003). Given the negative construction of economic motivations for migration in media discourse, there is a need to explore how the migration of the international super-rich is accounted for in entertainment documentaries. Considering the construction of the global super-rich as migrants provides an opportunity to examine how wealthier groups are positioned and how their potential contribution to British society is negotiated within the programmes.

Research exploring the construction of migration involves examining discourse about place and identity. The concept of place identity was developed to address the neglect of location and spaces in social psychology (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983). Place identity is used widely and eclectically in social scientific research (Peng, Strijker, and Wu 2020). Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) viewed place identity as formed of individual cognition about a location. Dixon and Durrheim (2000) critiqued this definition as too individualistic stating that place identity is socially constructed through talk. Discourse categorizing migrants as deserving or undeserving also involves discourse about the place where an individual's identity is, or should be, situated. Place and identity form an important part of individuals belonging to their local community (Korpela 1989). As such, place becomes a discursive resource in people's talk (Dixon and Durrheim 2000) allowing individuals to claim legitimacy for their presence within a particular space, and to deny access to others.

Refugees used place identity in their talk to construct their host nation as comfortable and their nation of origin as unsafe (Kirkwood, McKinlay, and McVittie 2013). This forms an argument drawing upon human rights (van Dijk 2000) that warrants refugees as requiring a safe haven (Every and Augoustinos 2008). Therefore, talk about location forms an important part of individual identity and arguments to cross national borders legally. Given super-rich individuals' movement is not usually focused on their personal safety, there is a need to explore how wealthy people residing in a host nation, are legitimized as they have a limited economic contribution and do not work in the public sector like poorer migrants.

Previous discursive research exploring the presence of refugees and asylum seekers in UK newspapers shows how they construct the public as opposed to migration (Goodman and Kirkwood 2019). News articles negotiate the dilemma around offering protection for refugees and asylum seekers, and the need for the UK to have a secure border (Parker et al. 2021). Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon (2017) found that the publication of images in British newspapers of Alan Kurdi, a dead three-year-old boy who drowned on a Turkish beach in 2015, led to more positive talk focused on protecting refugees. However, the categorization of refugees in UK newspapers later

became related to terrorism highlighting the dominance of arguments placed on national security and not people's human rights. Arguments about safety can also be found in Martikainen and Sakki's (2024) visual rhetorical approach that examined how photos in Finnish newspapers humanized Ukrainian refugees. They found images of individuals as opposed to crowds of humanized refugees, constructing them as equal to the viewer and suffering. Sambaraju and Shrikant (2023) found that Ukrainian refugees are positioned as unproblematic and warranted as vulnerable in their host country. Entertainment documentaries provide an opportunity to build upon our understanding of how visual media representations can be used to construct differing group of refugees. This genre of programming allows us to consider how migration is warranted for wealthier groups in television broadcasts formed of fast paced and edited moving images.

This paper addresses an important gap in qualitative DSP research on migrants in the UK and how talk about place is managed. By focusing on UK television documentaries of super-rich migrants in London, we can consider how wealthier groups are constructed as migrants and positioned as residents in the UK. Given that previous research has found that refugees and asylum seekers are positioned as an economic risk, the paper will further our social psychological understanding of how wealthier groups are constructed in media discourse about migration. In the broad context of meritocracy and the inequality in how different migrant groups are assessed for entry into the UK, we explore how entertainment documentaries construct London and how place identity is warranted to legitimize the wealth and residence of the super-rich.

Method

Data

The corpus was formed of 2490-min hours of UK terrestrial television broadcast in 2016 featuring 41 programmes with the term 'super-rich' in their title or transcript (see Appendix 1). The data were found using BoB (Box of Broadcasts) that is provided by Learning on Screen's portal through the British Universities Film and Video Council (2018). There was a subgenre of programmes within the corpus that focused on the super-rich residing in London although the international super-rich are featured across the corpus. Programmes that were historical, fictional or about ecology were excluded. The term super-rich is commonly used in television programming after being established as a category for extremely wealthy people in the BBC's super-rich season of 5 broadcasts in 2015 (Mumford and Wardell 2015). Given the size of the corpus, super-rich is a recognised term for popular entertainment documentaries on terrestrial channels. While viewing television broadcasts in real

time is in decline, content such as entertainment documentaries is increasingly watched on demand services and short-form videos through social media channels (Office for Communications 2023). Programmes within the data such as the series *Eamonn and Ruth: How the other half lives* attract over 1 million viewers on their first airing and are regularly featured in the weekly BARB (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board 2018) top 30 for Channel 5 (see Appendix 1). The period chosen, 2016, is also the year after the death of Alan Kurdi, an incident that was featured in news headlines and sparked psychological research interest (Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon 2017; Smith 2015). While the programmes were being broadcast, there was ongoing debate about immigration in the UK as part of media coverage of the period before and after the Brexit referendum. Goodman and Narang (2019) found that prejudiced talk about child refugees was used as a justification for voting for Brexit. This data provides an opportunity to examine how the international super-rich account for their wealth and residency in London during the same period.

Analytic procedure

The analysis used a DSP-influenced Discourse Analysis framework that provides the opportunity to consider how migrants are positioned in the programmes in talk about place and identity (Goodman and Kirkwood 2019). Subject positions allow the exploration of how talk is used to construct identities and how speakers draw upon ideology (Edley 2001). The exploration of subject positions in DSP examines how speakers construct their interest with variations in their talk and manage accountability (Wetherell 1998). Angermuller (2018) states that subject positions have an evaluative function as talk constructs social order producing and maintaining inequalities. Subject positions within the programmes can be analysed to explore how the international super-rich are warranted and how their positioning maintains inequality of access to national borders.

The first author used a basic notation that included italics for voiceovers and narration (see Appendix 2), a common feature in documentaries, where footage of speakers is edited with other clips. Using a basic transcript allows a focus on the broader context of the interaction. The first author selected examples of talk that included the international super-rich talking about their experiences of residing in the London. All of the authors were involved in the analysis of the examples and cooperated throughout the analytic process. The authors considered their reflexive positions and explored any differences in their interpretation of the data by revisiting the extracts to consider the evidence for their claims.

Sakki and Pettersson's (2016) three step procedure to consider the construction of migrants was incorporated into the analytic process: 'analysis of

content', 'analysis of form' and 'analysis of function' (p. 160). The extracts were then analysed, initially exploring the analysis of content to examine how the global super-rich and their residence in London are constructed within the programmes. This phase of the analysis incorporates the analyses of form and function and generated initial findings around the construction of London as a playground, use of talk about safety and extremely wealthy migrants being constructed as more driven. The analysis of form examined how rhetorical strategies typically used by poorer migrant groups identified in the literature such as place-identity (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983) featured within the broadcasts. When analysing rhetorical strategies, the authors looked at how the programmes constructed London and the countries of origin of super-rich people featured exploring the action orientation and use of variation in talking about the differing locations. By analysing the construction of place-identity within entertainment documentaries, the authors could explore whether rhetorical strategies used by poorer migrant groups were used. Finally, the analysis of function considered the role of entertainment documentaries as they have previously been identified as a form of political communication. This draws upon neoliberal ideology that is used to warrant wealth inequality as banal in addition to right-wing discourse that warrants poorer migrant groups as a threat. The construction of subject positions within media productions are used to reproduce inequality (Angermuller 2018).

Later, phases of the analysis involved focusing on editing and visual features such as whether the focus was on the speaker talking to the camera or other clips were edited into the segment. Entertainment documentaries can include voiceovers, titles to differentiate different segments of the programme plus the individuals featured doing different activities and moving between locations. Considering the role of editing within the examples examined how the narration is used to support or undermine claims made by speakers. This phase of analysis allowed the authors to further explore how the international super-rich are positioned within the programmes and how they are constructed as migrants. Previous analysis of entertainment documentaries featuring the super-rich found that 'strategic ambiguity' (Condor, Tileagă, and Billig 2013) was used through the editing to construct vague arguments to challenge inequality that was warranted as an everyday assumption (Carr et al. 2021). The extracts chosen to evidence the findings represent examples of dominant discourses constructing London as a place within the data that reflect DSP's interest in recurring repertoires (Wiggins 2017).

Findings

Within the programmes, London is constructed as a (1) playground, (2) safe space and (3) place of economic opportunity. Foreign wealthy

people in London are represented positively throughout the corpus as good migrants to account for their residence. This differs from negative talk in the media about poorer migrant groups (Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon 2017) as discourse about extremely wealthy people positions them as integrated into British society and not navigating a hostile environment. The international super-rich are warranted as economically active and English speaking; qualities that allow speakers to construct themselves as a low economic and cultural risk. Talk about tax avoidance is minimized as super-rich individuals are constructed as being at risk in their country of origin. Place identity draws upon arguments about safety that are used by refugees and asylum seekers to legitimize the presence of the super-rich in London.

London constructed as a playground for the super-rich

The first extract is taken from *Lagos to London: Britain's New Super-Rich* broadcast on Channel 4, a programme that explores the lifestyle of super-rich Nigerian people who live in both capital cities. This features sisters, Temi (T) and Cuppy (C) with a narrator (N) discussing their love of London and in particular, the appeal of London to the super-rich. The extract includes footage of the sisters in their apartment overlooking Tower Bridge and separately talking directly to the camera. The narration and voiceovers are accompanied by footage of Harrods, the Knightsbridge area and the family's social media posts.

Extract one:

1.	N:	<i>We follow a new generation of Nigerian elites as they live,</i>
2.		<i>work and party between Lagos and London.</i>
3.		Titles
4.	C:	<i>((in apartment)) I don't think I'm used to opening champagne</i>
5.		<i>by myself. Close your eyes a minute, ok? Oh. It's happening.</i>
6.		Uh, ow!
7.	N:	<i>Educated at one of England's most expensive private schools,</i>
8.		<i>23-year-old Cuppy and 19-year-old sister, Temi are heiresses</i>
9.		<i>to a billion-dollar fortune</i>
10.	T:	Health and wealth
11.	C:	Health and wealth and happiness
12.	T:	Oh look at that
13.	C:	<i>((to camera)) London for me is one of the best cities in the</i>
14.		<i>world. I love love love being in places around Knightsbridge</i>
15.		<i>which is where our family home is we go to Harrods a lot in</i>
16.		<i>there. They sell cars in there which is crazy. We go to the arts</i>
17.		<i>club a super amazing private members club great food, great</i>
18.		<i>atmosphere</i>
19.	T:	<i>((to camera)) We go to Dubai, we go to Paris but we always</i>
20.		<i>come back to London. Here you have the</i>
21.		<i>luxury shopping, the luxury cars, you have luxury homes so it's really like a</i>
22.		<i>playground here. You spend the money you worked hard</i>
23.		<i>making</i>

(Continued)

(Continued).

24.	N:	<i>Both Dad Femi and Mum Nana are wealthy entrepreneurs.</i>
25.		<i>He's a multi-million-dollar oil tycoon and she's big in dry</i>
26.		<i>cleaning. The family live what Nigerians call the shuttle life</i>
27.		<i>getting between properties in New York, Dubai, Abuja and</i>
28.		<i>Lagos. And when they're in London they're just a stone's</i>
29.		<i>throw away from Harrods living in a £35 million two-storey</i>
30.		<i>apartment</i>

Cuppy and Temi are introduced as educated in the UK (*'Educated at one of England's most expensive private schools'* (7)). This warrants the sisters as having a privileged status and already integrated into UK society. Cuppy constructs the appeal of London (*'one of the best cities in the world'* (13–14)) with talk about the high-end shopping and leisure activities available that involve the repetition of 'love' for emphasis (14). The use of list construction (Jefferson 1990) involving highly desirable and affluent locations, including Knightsbridge and Harrods, allows Cuppy to warrant the appeal of London. The use of editing to show footage of Harrods towards the end of this talk further evidences her claim. This segment positions London as a place for luxury consumption with disadvantaged parts of London that may be recognizable to viewers absent from the footage. The wealth inequality present within London and lack of footage of disadvantaged areas forms a rhetorical absence (Billig and Marinho 2017) constructing London as a place for the super-rich. Temi focuses on the family's hypermobility (*'We go to Dubai, we go to Paris but we always come back to London'* (19–20)). She further emphasizes the sisters' high-end lifestyle with a three-part list repeatedly referring to luxury (*'Here you have the luxury shopping, the luxury cars, you have luxury homes'* (20–21)). Temi uses a 'work hard, play hard' interpretative repertoire (Carr et al. 2021) that is delivered directly to the camera (*'so it's really like a playground here. You spend the money you worked hard making'* (21–23)). Interpretative repertoires are the 'building blocks' of talk, formed of everyday assumptions and are used to construct accounts (Wetherell and Potter 1988, 172). Thus, the sisters are positioned as playgirls and constructed as deserving of their leisure time in London because of their work ethic drawing upon an 'effortfulness' interpretative repertoire (Gibson 2009). However, the narration downgrades Temi and Cuppy's personal status by referring to their parent's wealth (*'Both Dad Femi and Mum Nana are wealthy entrepreneurs. He's a multi-million-dollar oil tycoon and she's big in dry cleaning'* (24–26)). The editing of the extract challenges Temi and Cuppy's construction of themselves as deserving migrants by questioning their effortfulness through the use of strategic ambiguity in the narration, positioning them as heirs who have merely inherited their privilege. This challenge

through the narration is supported through showing Temi and Cuppy in a leisure environment in their home.

London as a safe space

In extracts two and three, the appeal of London is depicted as a safer environment. In extract two, Emin Agalorov (E), ‘heir to a property empire’ talks to Ruth Langsford (R) in *Eamonn and Ruth: How the Other Half Lives* broadcast (series one, episode one) on Channel 5. This extract allows us to explore how super-rich individuals are attracted to the UK due to its political system.

Extract two:

1.	R:	So many Russians, Eastern Europeans, especially wealthy
2.		ones, seem to congregate in London, they love London. What
3.		is it about this place? Why not Paris, New York or Madrid?
4.	E:	First of all, English is the common language. The tax issues
5.		(.) the comfort. A lot of Russians fled here that have problems
6.		with the Russian government and er it just became I think the
7.		place where people wanna reside. Although I think London
8.		on one hand is overrated because it's very expensive and I
9.		think that's because the richest people gathered in London.

Emin in extract two constructs the UK as a safe place for wealthy people because of its political governance. He accounts for the presence of super-rich Russians in the UK using a three-part list (‘First of all, English is the common language. The tax issues (.) the comfort’ (4–5)). The pause (5) indicates that accounting for super-rich migration based on tax policy is more controversial. Friedman et al. (2024) found that wealthy individuals in the UK considered tax avoidance through moving to a tax haven as a challenge to their positive moral identity. Emin is required to manage his position through talk about safety to minimize the role of tax avoidance in accounting for his residence in the UK. However, there is a challenge to Emin’s construction of Russia as unsafe later in the programme where viewers are shown Eamonn Holmes viewing his luxury mansion in Russia. While the programme was broadcast after the initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014, this is prior to the introduction of sanctions being applied to wealthy Russian people in the UK on 31st December 2020 (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office 2024). By referring to ‘comfort’ (5) and legitimizing the presence of wealthy people as political refugees (5–7), he also questions the desirability of the location on the basis of its expense (‘Although I think London on one hand is overrated because it’s very expensive and I think that’s because the richest people gathered in London’ (7–9)). This type of talk is contentious for refugee migrants who avoid talking negatively about their host (Kirkwood 2012). Earlier in the programme, the narration informs viewers that the interview is taking place in Emin’s suite at a luxury hotel costing

£10,000 per night. While this may support his warranting of London as expensive, the excessive consumption constructed within the segment challenges his evaluation of London in his talk. Despite the costs, super-rich people are constructed within the programmes as attracted to the UK and London because of its political climate and the freedom of expression that this offers. Subsequent to this segment within the programme, viewers are shown Emin's video and at a promotional event for his music career. This contrasts with Emin's talk about the need for safety for the Russian super-rich as his motivation to be in the UK is constructed as having a career-based motivation that involves leisure activities such as drinking alcohol.

In addition to warranting the UK as safe politically, super-rich individuals also construct the UK as safer for their personal safety in extract three. Cuppy (C), featured in extract one, discusses her personal safety arrangements whilst being a passenger in a car in Lagos in *Lagos to London: Britain's New Super-Rich* in a segment that also features the narrator (N). The footage shows a clip of the road outside, with Cuppy talking in the car.

Extract three:

1.	N:	<i>Cuppy is heading home to prepare for tonight's live performance on national TV.</i>
2.		
3.	C:	Yeah, I'm almost there. Ok ok all right Bye. I don't think Lagos
4.		roads are created for sports cars. Even in the jeep it's a bit of a
5.		bump. This is a bulletproof car you know, you're in a box and
6.		it's (.). There's something a bit (.). about it you know? A lot of
7.		security (.3) ((close up)) You know, it is one of those situations
8.		where you never know, and it just stems from my dad, you know
9.		(.) my dad is one of those better to be safe than sorry people and
10.		at least you know you're safe. You know you're in here and
11.		Nigeria did have a big crime problem we had a burglary problem
12.		kidnapping problem was absolutely huge. <i>In London it's</i>
13.		<i>absolute bliss because I can walk down Brompton Road not a</i>
14.		<i>worry in the world.</i> In Lagos, I can't just be like, 'Guys, I'll be
15.		back in two hours'. No. I've got to go with people I've got to
16.		have security. My Dad's got to know where I am. It's a lot no
17.		other one of my DJ friends needs security so it's kind of his
18.		fault. Pay for it! (h)

In extract three, Cuppy talks about her car to construct the differences in her personal safety in Lagos and London (5–7). Contrasts (Edwards and Potter 1992) are used here to warrant Cuppy's argument that constructs London as a safer location. A further contrast is provided to the affluent areas of London featured in the programme as Cuppy is shown being driven past a highly populated area with less affluent housing and piles of rubble at the side of the road. While Cuppy is shown at her home in Lagos later in the segment, this is presented as a wealthy environment with domestic staff providing her lunch and styling her hair. 'You know'

(Östman 1981) as a discourse marker indicates that the audience is already aware of the speaker’s claims about the differences in personal safety. The risk to herself in Nigeria is a common place assumption. She evidences this by talking about the previous crime rates in Nigeria (‘Nigeria did have a big crime problem we had a burglary problem kidnapping problem was absolutely huge’ (11–13)) and the impact this has on personal freedoms (‘In Lagos, I can’t just be like, “Guys, I’ll be back in two hours”. No. I’ve got to go with people I’ve got to have security’ (14–16)). By using a close-up of Cuppy from line 7 onwards featuring her rubbing her eyes, the editing of this section portrays her as emotional and affected by the risk of crime. This is contrasted with London as safer accompanied by footage of the view of Lagos outside the car (‘*In London it’s absolute bliss because I can walk down Brompton Road not a worry in the world*’ (13–14)). Cuppy’s use of contrast draws upon discourse used to construct refugees as being unsafe in their country of origin (Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon 2017). However, unlike refugees who are unable to work, Cuppy is not restricted in her ability to work or international movements. Hence, wealth is warranted as a burden as Cuppy draws upon norms of safety and freedom of movement to account for life in London.

London as an economic opportunity

In extract four, Wendy Yu (W) with the Narrator (N) discuss Wendy receiving an award for her work in *Britain’s Billionaire Migrants* shown on Channel 4. Earlier in the programme, the narrator states that ‘*Wendy has chosen London as her new home*’. This segment edits clips of Wendy at the award ceremony and going home before showing footage of China during the final turn by the narrator and the people featured in the programme. The extract examines how super-rich migrants are driven to legitimize their presence in the UK.

Extract four:

1.	N:	<i>Wendy tells her father she’s the Young Achiever of The Year (.) but his response is typical.</i>
2.		
3.	W:	<i>My dad said to me, ‘It’s just a (.) very small thing in your</i>
4.		<i>lifelong journey (h) you should be more focused on what</i>
5.		<i>you’re going to achieve. It’s just a very small thing in your</i>
6.		<i>life’ (.) Yeah.</i>
7.	N:	<i>It looks like Wendy may never get the praise she craves from</i>
8.		<i>her father but perhaps this is the Chinese way (.) to keep</i>
9.		<i>striving for more.</i>
10.	W:	<i>Oops, sorry, you’ve stepped on (.) It’s all right.</i>
11.	N:	<i>The new Chinese super-rich have certainly not adopted the</i>
12.		<i>British sense of entitlement for some this relentless quest to</i>
13.		<i>succeed has lifted China out of extreme poverty to make it an</i>
14.		<i>economic superpower in only a few decades. Now more and</i>
15.		<i>more Chinese are heading to Britain not just to enjoy the</i>
16.		<i>social freedom the West offers but like many before them to</i>
17.		<i>grow their fortune and bring more money into our own coffers.</i>

The extract constructs Wendy's father's reaction to her award as being underwhelming and unsurprising (3–5). The pause and laughter from Wendy marks this as being an unconventional parental response. The narration of this segment uses a disclaimer (*'but perhaps this is the Chinese way (.) to keep striving for more'* (8–9)) to construct Chinese people as more driven. Talk about drive is used to position the Chinese super-rich as having an increased work ethic. The segment initially features Wendy in a luxurious event space that has a red carpet and people drinking alcohol challenging the positioning of the Chinese super-rich as hard-working. Extremely wealthy Chinese people are warranted as harder-working and more driven than the British to acquire their wealth in the programme's narration (*'The new Chinese super-rich have certainly not adopted the British sense of entitlement'* (11–12)). A contrast (Edwards and Potter 1992) is used in the narration to draw upon differing categories to account for Chinese super-rich people's wealth and to construct them as deserving of their extreme wealth. Yet Wendy is shown prior to this statement as being helped into a car challenging the narration that constructs Wendy as unentitled (10). A further distinction warrants a contrast between 'new Chinese super-rich' in contrast to poorer groups migrating from China to the UK. Chinese super-rich people are constructed as more driven due to their *'relentless quest to succeed'* (12–13). This section of narration also draws on previous arguments on the UK as a safe place (*'not just to enjoy the social freedom the West offers'* (15–16)) but also an economic opportunity (*'but like many before them to grow their fortune and bring more money into our own coffers'* (16–17)). The narration constructs wealthy Chinese people as coming to the UK to acquire wealth for their own benefit. The narration uses a self-sufficient rhetorical argument; 'everybody can succeed if they try hard enough' (Wetherell and Potter 1992, p.177) to account for Chinese people residing in the UK for economic reasons. This argument contrasts with discourse accounting for the migration of poorer groups who are required to construct themselves as deserving through their economic contribution to society through work (Goodman et al. 2015). Earlier in the programme and towards the end of this extract, the viewer is shown workers in uniform doing physical labour at Wendy's father's factory. Yet, Wendy is shown briefly at a computer where she is positioned as an 'investor' constructing her labour as less strenuous with the majority of the programme showing Wendy in leisure environments. This demonstrates how entertainment documentaries use strategic ambiguity to challenge Wendy's position as a hard-working migrant.

Discussion

Entertainment documentaries construct London as appealing to the extremely wealthy. The positioning of the international super-rich residing in London as good migrants continues their access to London, maintains wealth inequality

and increases pressure on affordable housing. Extremely wealthy people within the programmes borrow features from talk used by refugees to legitimize their presence in the UK and warranting their country of origin as hazardous (Kirkwood, McKinlay, and McVittie 2013). In contrast, London is positioned as a safe place with social and economic freedoms. Within entertainment documentaries, talk about freedoms include the pursuit of a luxury lifestyle, excessive consumption, and favourable tax conditions. In contrast, their nation of origin is constructed as unsafe and their wealth as inviting increased risk. Their integration into the UK is facilitated by their wealth, willingness to work hard, and fluency in English that constructs London as a place of economic opportunity. As such, anti-migrant discourse, focused on migrants as a cultural and economic risk to society, is a rhetorical absence (Billig and Marinho 2017) within entertainment documentaries. Whilst the super-rich are constructed as economically active, the wealth generated is constructed as for their own benefit. This negates arguments used to justify the presence of poorer migrants who are required to justify their contribution to the UK economy.

Constructing London as a playground

While spaces are considered to be shaped by wealth (Knowles 2017), the use of categories in discourse legitimizes people's access to resources (McMahon 2015) and accounts for informal segregation (Dixon and Durrheim 2003). In London, spaces may appear accessible but their access is limited through the presence of staff and signage that may deter less affluent people from entering (Morales, Atkinson, and Higgins 2021). As a playground, places that are dominated by the super-rich such as Mayfair cater to their leisure (Knowles 2017). Within entertainment documentaries, extremely wealthy individuals use the construction of London as a playground to construct themselves as good migrants who are of benefit to society. Talk that uses a 'work hard, play hard' interpretative repertoire warrants speakers as deserving of their leisure time. By referring to common places such as Knightsbridge, a location that is publicly known to be sophisticated and frequented by the wealthy, the super-rich construct themselves as people who are well integrated into society and deserving of their position. Place identity involves talk about locations constructing individual identity (Dixon and Durrheim 2003). In extract one, Cuppy and Temi are positioned as hardworking to account for their presence in London that is warranted as a playground within the programmes. Here, subject positions use language to evaluate practices and maintain inequality (Angermüller 2018) upholding the dominant position of the super-rich. Talk that positions the extremely wealthy as deserving of their London playground draws upon neoliberal ideology that values individual free will to warrant their movement and constructs them as hardworking. Despite the negative impact

of the extremely wealthy in London and how their presence limits access to poorer groups, entertainment documentaries construct the international super-rich as deserving of their play.

The rhetorical absence of talk about poorer groups and disadvantaged areas within London highlights the disparity present within the programmes. Right-wing rhetoric positions London as unsafe such as through racialized discourse about knife crime (Williams and Squires 2021) and parts of London with Muslim communities as ‘no-go zones’ (for example, Batty 2024). Williams and Squires (2021) found that gentrification fragments working-class communities and limits access to the formal economy, particularly for young men of global majority heritage. In contrast, the use of positive talk about London counters immigration discourse that warrants migrants as a threat to society (Goodman et al. 2015). Entertainment documentaries use talk about place to warrant London as sophisticated and the super-rich as people who can integrate well into society to account for their residence.

Super-rich people as beneficial to the UK

Talk about the superior work-ethic of the migrant super-rich draws upon interpretative repertoires which constructs migrants as effortful and British people as idle (Gibson, Crossland, and Hamilton 2018). This counters anti-immigration talk that argues migrants are a drain on the economy (van Dijk 2000). In addition to this, talk about English as a lingua franca for extremely wealthy people negates the cultural risk of migrant integration whereby poorer migrants are often unable to participate in society as a result of their weak English language abilities (Goodman et al. 2015). The construction of the super-rich as enjoying life in the UK and driven to generate more wealth contradicts dominant arguments about migrants as a risk to society.

Extreme wealth in the UK is legitimized in talk by drawing upon meritocratic ideology (Carr et al. 2023). As the UK is constructed as an alleged meritocracy, entertainment documentaries account for the super-rich in London by warranting them as aligned with British values and integrated into society. The construction of the international super-rich as well integrated and hardworking, despite the role of privilege and inheritance for heirs, contrasts with poorer migrants who have been found to contribute more to the economy and public services such as the National Health Service. The presentation of Wendy Yu in extract 4 as a wealthy migrant in London draws upon discourse positioning Chinese people as good migrants (Pieke and Biao 2009). This derives from the US categorization of Asian people as a model minority and distinct from other minoritized groups (Suzuki 1977). In the UK, the Chinese community is presented as different to the White English and other minoritized communities (Archer and Francis 2005). The educational success of students of Chinese heritage is warranted as problematic and the

result of excessive parental pressure (Francis, Mau, and Archer 2017). Unlike other groups where educational success is accounted for by innate abilities (Walkerline 1990), educational attainment is constructed as the consequence of Chinese pupil's work ethic (Francis, Mau, and Archer 2017). Similarly, Wendy Yu's position is warranted as the result of her father's encouragement and her drive as opposed to her ability. Carr et al. (2021) found that the super-rich within entertainment documentaries are constructed as psychologically superior to account for their wealth. In contrast, Wendy Yu is positioned as being externally driven by parental pressure in line with Chinese success discourse.

Despite the international super-rich within the programmes being positioned as hard-working they are mostly shown in leisure environments, a strategy that questions the construction of their work ethic (Carr et al. 2023). Speakers within the broadcasts are viewed in work-related environments such as networking events and award ceremonies as in the final extract. However, these situations are not positioned as formal work environments and involve activities that are also present in leisure environments such as drinking alcohol and socializing.

Wealthy people's places of origin as unsafe

Arguments in favour of immigration into a host country typically emphasize human rights (van Dijk 2000). In these documentaries, the super-rich can cast themselves as ordinary people with everyday concerns about their safety in their country of origin. This draws upon individualistic ideology with regards to freedom of movement as a liberal ideal. Autonomy is a recognized norm, and talk about high tax rates for the wealthy emphasizes the importance of their free will in their role as wealth generators (Carr, Goodman, and Jowett 2018). Arguments are used about risks to the personal safety of extremely wealthy people in their country of origin to legitimize their residence in London and mobility by drawing on norms about autonomy. Talk about autonomy allows speakers to negotiate arguments about personal safety where the risks being managed do not necessarily meet the severity of the United Nations (1998) criteria for displaced people such as war.

Conclusion

Entertainment documentaries construct London as a playground, the global super-rich as having enhanced drive and dangerous countries of origins to account for their residence in London. Discourse about place identity accounts for individuals' passage through national borders and their integration into their new community. Subject positions evaluate the practices of the super-rich through discourse that constructs them more favourably to maintain the

status quo. Entertainment documentaries account for the residence of the super-rich in London by featuring discourse that uses self-sufficient rhetorical arguments drawing upon neoliberal ideology to emphasize the importance of individual effort and freedom. This contrasts with right-wing rhetoric about poorer migrant groups who are positioned as less economically active and a cultural threat. Entertainment documentaries constructing the super-rich as well integrated migrants ignore the damaging impact of wealth inequality in a hostile environment that is unwelcoming to poorer migrants who make a positive contribution to the UK.

Future research could explore how extremely wealthy people warrant their migration and how audiences react to the positioning of the super-rich and how they account for their residency in entertainment documentaries. Given that the visibility of the super-rich is restricted, the exploration of how extremely wealthy migrants are constructed in the media and presented to viewers is timely in a hostile environment post-Brexit in the UK with prejudicial talk about refugees. The paper contributes to Discursive Social Psychology by improving our understanding of how the international super-rich are positioned as good migrants despite their negative impact in London. In particular, this provides a contrast to the negative construction of refugees and asylum seekers in the media who are in need of a place of safety.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Philippa Carr is a Senior Lecturer in Qualitative Research Methods at the University of the West of England. She is interested in the use of Discursive Psychology to explore talk in the media about wealth inequality. Philippa's other research interests include how gender identity is constructed in talk about public toilets. At UWE Bristol, she is a lead for the Identities, Subjectivities, and Inequalities research theme in the Social Sciences Research Group. Philippa is a committee member of the British Psychological Society's Qualitative Methods in Psychology section.

Simon Goodman is an Associate Professor in Psychology at De Montfort University. He uses discursive and rhetorical psychology to address a number of issues including the discursive construction of asylum seekers and refugees, race talk and income inequality. He is co-author of *The Language of Asylum* published by Palgrave. He is the Critical Social Psychology section editor for the journal *Social and Personal Psychology Compass*.

Adam Jowett is Director of Psychology in the School of Business & Science at the University of Law. Much of his research focuses on social inequalities, with a particular focus on marginalised groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) individuals. Dr Jowett's previous work has critically examined the social construction of legal relationship recognition in the media and explored the rhetorical justification of marriage inequality in the media.

Jackie Abell is an Associate Professor in Psychology within the Centre for Agroecology, Water & Resilience situated at Coventry University. Her research interests centre around the application of social psychological knowledge to issues surrounding social inclusion, exclusion, environmental sustainability, and wildlife conservation. She is the lead author of the David Myers Social Psychology textbook and an Associate Editor for the British Journal of Social Psychology.

ORCID

Philippa Carr  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8503-6365>
 Simon Goodman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5007-3740>
 Adam Jowett  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7312-8484>
 Jackie Abell  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8891-7881>

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