

Exposing White Fragility and White Emotionalities in *Hello Privilege. It's Me, Chelsea*

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ABSTRACT: In a society steeped in media, teacher educators receive an education inside and outside the classroom. Thus, we aim to engage in critical race media literacy through an analysis of *Hello Privilege. It's Me, Chelsea*. We do so through a frame of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) and white emotionalities (Matias, 2016). In this article, we argue that it is vital to disrupt and challenge notions of white supremacy and whiteness by highlighting examples of white fragility and white emotionalities in the media to make visible what often operates as invisible in society.

KEYWORDS: media literacy; white fragility; white emotionalities; teacher education; white privilege

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While many in academic circles have recognized the historical and social construction of whiteness for some time, its inclusion in common, mainstream discussions about race has been a more recent phenomenon (Emba, 2016; Gowland, 2018; Rankine, 2019). With the Black Lives Matter protests and the recent insurrection by domestic white

supremacist terrorists at the U.S. Capitol, racism has been at the forefront of U.S. discourse recent years. It remains abundantly clear that our society still needs to grapple with the issue that W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the first scholars of whiteness, deemed “the problem of the color line” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3).

For white¹ people, who have been raised to ignore white privilege and white supremacy, having conversations about race can seem uncomfortable, resulting in forms of resistance. In the opening of her recent documentary, Chelsea Handler (2019) states, “I want to be a better white person to people of color, without making it a thing.” Nothing about racism has been comfortable for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), so to turn the tides by naming white supremacy and the love of power as the root cause cannot possibly be comfortable. As educators, we have to make it “a thing.” Our aim in this article is to show how engaging in conversations centering race with a single documentary can open channels for antiracist teacher education.

We affirm the numerous studies highlighting ways in which white preservice teachers (PST) resist antiracist pedagogy within teacher education programs (Busey & Vickery, 2018, Dunn et al., 2014; Matias et al., 2016; Smith & Crowley, 2015), and we agree with the shortcomings of white privilege pedagogy (WPP) (e.g., Lensmire et al., 2013). In this moment of amplified racial justice dialogue in our nation, many white people are moving from a color-evasive stance (Annamma et. al, 2017) to one of acknowledging racism. There are vast examples of white privilege confessions flooding social media, yet critiques of this antiracist performativity abound (e.g., Phillips, 2020). Similarly, in teacher education, we recognize the need for PSTs to not only name whiteness, but to critically reflect on its deep roots in their socialized lives.

We, the authors, are teacher educators committed to preparing PSTs who will seek to establish equitable and racially just classrooms for all students. We propose engaging in critical race media literacy (CRML) with PSTs by viewing the Netflix documentary, *Hello, Privilege. It's Me, Chelsea* to disrupt whiteness in teacher education. The documentary is valuable in identifying how white people enact white fragility and white emotionalities when confronted with discussions of racism, antiracism, white supremacy, and power. Unlike Handler's (2019) hope of “not making it a thing,” a critical viewing of the documentary provides an avenue to examine how whiteness works. Identifying as two white women (Mary, Sara), one Black man (LaGarrett), and one white man (Greg), we come to this work recognizing our need and responsibility to investigate our relationship with whiteness. Before engaging with the proposed documentary critique, we (Mary, Sara, and Greg) had to interrogate the ways in which we enact white fragility and white emotionalities in our lives, and we posed the suggested questions from this article to ourselves prior to engaging with PSTs. This ongoing internal work is a requirement for teacher educators who desire to challenge whiteness through antiracist pedagogies.

Matias and DiAngelo (2013) purport that the first step in disrupting whiteness is to recognize it and to name it. Research depicts varying forms of white resistance, or fragility, within teacher education courses highlighting racism and white supremacy (e.g., Smith & Crowley, 2015). PSTs claim their innocence (Orozco & Diaz, 2016), hold to their beliefs of individual racism as opposed to systemic racism (Flynn, 2015), and position themselves as good white people (Helms, 2017) who are part of a post-racial society (Cho, 2011). White PSTs need to recognize they have been socialized in whiteness and

their socialized response of white fragility and underlying white emotionalities cause psychological violence to BIPOC. Through the documentary, teacher educators can name these emotions and behaviors on the screen, providing an avenue for reckoning with the ways in which whiteness is playing out in the teacher preparation program and the K-12 classroom.

In this article, we begin by highlighting the importance of enacting CRML practices in today's teacher education classrooms. Second, we explain our theoretical framing of the documentary by leaning specifically on DiAngelo's (2018) conception of white fragility and Matias's (2016) notion of white emotionalities. Third, we outline three specific scenes from the documentary as a starting point for engaging in CRML. Finally, we highlight the merits of using white fragility and white emotionalities as key components to disrupting whiteness in teacher education in order for PSTs to move toward antiracist pedagogy.

Literature Review

There is a solid foundation of scholarship establishing the history of whiteness and the role white supremacy has played in U.S. history and discourse. Roediger (1991, 2005) writes about the formation and social construction of the white race as various ethnicities assimilated to the white ways of doing things. Ethnic groups were invited to the "white" group by ascribing to the ideology of white supremacy and adopting the ways of whiteness. Helms (2017) defines whiteness as the "overt and subliminal socialization processes and practices, power structures, laws, privileges, and life experiences that favor the White racial group over all others" (p. 718). To begin dismantling such hegemony, Helms (2017) states we must "name the wrong" (p. 719). Scholarship shows current practices of naming white supremacy, race, and racism within teacher education classrooms. In reviewing this foundational literature, we first highlight manifestations of resistance to the acknowledgement of whiteness in teacher education, problematize white privilege pedagogy, and, finally, emphasize the utility of CRML for antiracist education.

Whiteness in Teacher Education

Scholarship across the U.S. and Canada shows the varied forms of resistance white PSTs enact during conversations of race and racism. These racist reactions are intensified with teacher educators of color (e.g., Dunn et al., 2014; Michie, 2007). Cho (2011) discusses the risk scholars of color take when addressing race and racism with PSTs, particularly noting ways in which students claim to live in a post-racial society, thereby believing "they bear no responsibility toward" racism (p. 38). This racist resistance is framed in different ways. Solomon et al. (2005) cite three specific strategies students use to avoid having such conversations around privilege and race as "ideological incongruence, liberalist notions of individualism and meritocracy, and the negation of white capital" (p. 147). Their findings suggest a need for teacher educators to provide spaces for PSTs to identify their emotions and denial or deflection when facing white privilege and the myth of meritocracy. Similarly, Matias (2016) and Matias et al. (2016)

cite several instances in which students exhibit white emotionalities and the dangers of sentimentalizing understandings of race and racism. PSTs can position themselves as victims and avoid confronting their whiteness by attempting to hide behind claims of ignorance (Garrett & Segall, 2013, McVee, 2014), innocence (Orozco & Diaz, 2016), white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), white fatigue (Flynn, 2015), and silence (DiAngelo, 2012; Mazzei, 2008). Such frames serve as an important reference for teacher educators when engaging in conversations around race and racism with white PSTs.

More specifically, Smith and Crowley (2015) focus on one particular teacher candidate who exhibited many different forms of “pushback and possibility” (p. 20), such as explicitly denying race aside subtle forms of resistance, substituting a safer topic, historicizing racism, invoking feelings of guilt, and taking on a complaint orientation allowing for the teaching of racism only to allow students to err grievances (p. 22). This example affirms the need for PSTs to not only name whiteness but critically reflect on its deep roots in their socialized lives. One instructional approach many teacher educators utilize in attempting to disrupt whiteness is white privilege pedagogy, commonly known as WPP.

White Privilege Pedagogy

In the early 1990s, white privilege became a common lens used to teach about racism (Margolin, 2015). Peggy McIntosh’s (1989) seminal article, “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” was foundational to this new focus. Through McIntosh’s examples, white privilege pedagogy was a mainstay in social justice work (Crowley & Smith, 2020). WPP involves using instructional strategies, such as a privilege walk (e.g., Peacer Learner, 2016), to illuminate how white people benefit from privileges in our society due to their race. With WPP, there is a focus on how systemic racism benefits white people as opposed to examining the harm it causes BIPOC (Logue, 2005; Margolin, 2015).

WPP became popular within teacher education as a way to encourage white PSTs to recognize their place in a racialized society while attempting to reduce the common resistance of PSTs through an array of individualized privilege examples. Although commonly practiced, WPP fails to lead to antiracism as it is decontextualized, steeped in racial liberalism, and dismisses intersections of identities (Crowley & Smith, 2020). Lensmire et al. (2013) calls Peggy McIntosh’s (1989) well-known work highlighting evidence of her white privilege as a “synecdoche [stand in] for all the antiracist work to be done” (p. 411). Teacher educators may be misled to believe that using this strategy achieves the end-goal of antiracism. Yet, scholars suggest that using such a list to call white privilege into focus is only the prologue to what is really needed in antiracist work. Further, Levine-Rasky (2000) claims that a focus on white privilege is only calling for a confession in order to be called antiracist, falling short of questioning the socially constructed nature of racism (p. 274). In order to make change and accomplish antiracist work, Lensmire et al. (2013) states white people must not only acknowledge white privilege but know its origins. While it is problematic to focus solely on individual acts of racism or individualized privilege, it is also problematic to essentialize any group. Based on Crenshaw’s (1991) work in intersectionality, we know that considering any identity –

whether sexuality, gender, race, or another dimension – by itself cannot account for dynamics experienced in society. White privilege pedagogy takes an anti-intersectional approach, which essentializes the experiences in all racial groups (Crowley & Smith, 2020). Instead, we must consider the combination and interaction of identities holistically. hooks (2003) echoes this call with specific attention to race and gender, and Levine-Rasky (2011) focuses on the intersectionality of whiteness and class.

Handler's (2019) documentary is an example of WPP in the form of media. At first glance, it may seem a useful educational tool, yet WPP is flawed. In moving away from WPP, teacher educators seek other anti-racist pedagogies to educate PSTs on white supremacy and systemic racism. One pedagogy will not be sufficient in achieving antiracist education, but teacher educators will need to pull from multiple tools to support this work. We move forward by suggesting CRML as one such pedagogical tool in antiracist teacher education, and, later, we discuss how CRML can be used as a way to critically analyze Handler's documentary with PSTs.

Critical Race Media Literacy

One way to instruct PSTs about whiteness, inequity, and injustice is through the use of film. Understanding media creates "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1980) that reify the normalization of whiteness and racist stereotypes of BIPOC; we recognize the power in "provid[ing] a heuristic to students to be able to read race" in the media (King, 2017, p. 34). Through this process, PSTs can learn to better understand how media is used to maintain the dominant culture (Adorno, 1991; Giroux, 2004), impacting the ways in which they view themselves, their students, and the role of schools.

Freire (1971) says students should be able to read the world as well as the word. To answer this call, many scholars push to engage in critical media literacy (Agodzo, 2016; Kellner & Share, 2005; Tisdell, 2007, 2008). Kellner and Share (2005) advocate for critical media pedagogies that would teach students how to recognize the messages constructed within media, to see how media reproduces power, and to use media for social activism. Specifically focusing on the ways in which media produces racialized stereotypic images of Chicano/as and African Americans, Yosso (2002) lays the foundation of CRML as a fusion of critical race theory and Freire's critical consciousness. In practice, CRML gives individuals language and tools to articulate how the media perpetuates simplistic, deficit-minded, and homogenous portrayals of minoritized groups (Shear, 2018; Shohat & Stam, 1994).

In a study with graduate students, Joanou (2017) notes that, by engaging in critical media literacy, specifically around notions of race and privilege, the students are better equipped to engage in race conscious conversations and to challenge their own racial privileges. Recently, scholars highlight the implementation of CRML to guide Korean female high school students to recognize racism and sexism within film (Cho & Johnson, 2020), to critique civic agency within picture books (Rodríguez & Vickery, 2020), and to facilitate student agency in creating their own cultural narratives and political identities (Chang, 2020). Thus, "CRML offers a frame through which teachers and students can

confront racist, colonial, classist, ableist, and heteronormative representations in media; interrogate the messages represented in problematic media messages; and navigate the complexities of representation in the classroom and society” (Hawkman & Shear, 2020, p. 2). In this article, we describe how teacher educators can use CRML to make whiteness visible to PSTs through complicating the intended messages within the documentary, *Hello Privilege*.

Theoretical Framework

Racism is ever-present in U.S. society (Bell, 1993; Kendi, 2019; Omi & Winant, 1993). It is embedded into our systems, legislation, policies, and schooling; yet it often remains avoided in conversations by white people in most settings. Annamma et al. (2017) describe a “color-evasiveness” where whites actively avoid the acknowledgement of race and “willfully ignore the experiences of people of color” (p. 156), which is built through the normalizing of whiteness as the cultural standard (Leonardo, 2009). We have seen color-evasiveness and resistance when working with white PSTs. For instance, Sara recently sat with a small group of PSTs who were discussing chapters in Takaki’s (2012) *A Different Mirror for Young People*. Takaki wrote the text as a way to highlight counter-narratives throughout U.S. history. The PSTs discuss egregious examples of racism in historical accounts of enslavement and invasion of Indigenous lands. As the PSTs talk about the book chapters, they quickly shift to a progress narrative, which works to excuse their complicity in racism today. Sara challenges this narrative by naming ways in which racism has taken on different forms today but not simply “gotten better.” As she contradicts their narratives, some students nod and others become silent. Here, the action of silence is a mechanism used to avoid the recognition of racism’s presence in U.S. society.

DiAngelo (2018) explains that white people in the U.S. exist in segregated spaces and live in a society built upon white supremacy. They are “insulated from racial stress,” and any time they experience racial discomfort, it feels intolerable (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 2). Because white people lack “racial stamina” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 2) to withstand the disruption of their racial equilibrium, they respond with defensive and evasive maneuvers to restabilize the equilibrium. DiAngelo names this phenomenon *white fragility*. Examples of white fragility include emotional responses such as anger, guilt, and fear, along with behaviors like defensiveness, arguing, and silence. Sara describes silence as a behavior her PSTs display once they experience racial discomfort. The PSTs respond with white fragility as they did not know (and/or refuse) to wrestle with the reality of racism today.

In working to understand white fragility, DiAngelo (2018) references Bourdieu’s (1993) theory of habitus. Bourdieu describes habitus as a socialized frame of mind, created through continued and repeated interactions between actors and structures – in this case within a white dominated society. This socialization can be unconscious among white people, who maintain privilege and power within U.S. society. DiAngelo (2011) explains, “white fragility may be conceptualized as a product of the habitus, a response or ‘condition’ produced and reproduced by the continual social and material advantages of the white structural position” (p. 58). The cycle of racial stress, defensive moves, and

reinstatement of white racial equilibrium becomes the normed and coded response of white people when confronted with racial discomfort.

Considering white fragility and how it has been socialized into white culture, Matias (2016) provides deeper theorization as to why it happens and how it is deeply rooted into the psyche of white individuals. Similar to white fragility, Matias et al. (2016) describe common white emotions expressed by white students in their teacher education classrooms. Matias explains white emotions as the surface response, or using an analogy, the tip of an iceberg one sees above water (Matias et al., 2019). The white emotions of anger or guilt are simply the outward expressions of an underlying white emotionality such as shame. The white emotionalities are the bulk of the iceberg beneath the surface that must be acknowledged in order to deal with the white emotions or white fragility.

Thandeka (1999) describes the cost of whiteness to white people. When one is complicit in maintaining white supremacy, they are supporting the dehumanization of BIPOC while also chipping away at their own humanity, as it is not human to tear down other humans. This lack of wholeness generates white emotionalities (Matias, 2016), which produce white emotions in response to racial stress. Narcissism is one example of a white emotionality. Matias (2016) describes common reactions of white audience members when she gives talks about whiteness. She usually sees the white emotions of guilt, helplessness, self-victimization, and blatant disrespect. For instance, white audience members who express the white emotion of guilt focus solely on feeling bad for the racism and white supremacy that has just been named and explained during the talk. In order to evade this racial discomfort, as they lack the racial stamina to sit with it, they point to any antiracist work they have done and any social justice movements they have been a part of. All of this “guilt,” inevitably, refocuses the conversation on themselves thus recentering whiteness in a talk about disrupting it - the white emotionality of narcissism.

Discussing white fragility and white emotionalities, we want to reiterate the violence caused by both. DiAngelo (2018) states, “the effects of [white people’s] responses are not fragile at all; they are quite powerful because they take advantage of historical and institutional power and control” which maintains a “sociology of dominance” that creates unjust and psychologically violent conditions for BIPOC (p. 112). The purpose of this article is not to recenter the experiences of white PSTs, but instead, we want to name the common responses they have when learning about whiteness and antiracism. We acknowledge the critique that recognition of white fragility alone will not dismantle racist structures and has the potential to encourage navel gazing of white people, yet we know that white PSTs must wrestle with the ways they embody whiteness, including in their emotions and emotionalities. As Love (2019) states, “White folx cannot be coconspirators until they deal with the emotionality of being white” (p. 144).

Documentary

In *Hello Privilege* (2019), Chelsea Handler interviews family and friends, “regular” white folks, fellow comedians, and scholars and activists of racial justice to explore how

white privilege impacts American culture and how she has personally benefited from it in her life and career. Traveling across the country, her interviews attempt to address white privilege and other connective issues like mass incarceration, racial violence, and disenfranchisement using humor. Handler discusses her personal life and the mistakes that she has made through a racial lens. The film highlights the history of the struggle for racial justice and equality while also providing understanding of how and why America's problem with race is ingrained into our everyday lives.

As scholars of teacher education, we feel that this film provides both an opportunity and a cautionary tale for addressing issues of whiteness in our classrooms as we help students to further develop their racialized identities. We select particular scenes from the film that most typify the confrontation and confusion around white privilege. Although Handler created *Hello Privilege* (2019) as an act of "wanting to be a better white person," the documentary is problematic, upholding many "factors that inculcate white fragility" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 54) without recognizing it. The documentary gives teacher educators a concrete media example to show PSTs the enactment of white fragility and white emotionalities as they are happening with both the creator of the documentary, Chelsea Handler, and the guests highlighted in the documentary.

Example Scenes

Using *Hello Privilege* as an instructional tool, we highlight four specific scenes which illustrate how Chelsea Handler or the participants react in ways that exemplify white fragility, white emotionalities, and the intersectional nature of privilege. These analyses can serve as a guide for teacher educators using CRML to disrupt whiteness by naming it in each scene described below. This approach heeds the criticism of white privilege pedagogy and requires PSTs to intentionally consider how whiteness is enacted.

Scenes: Attending Oktoberfest & Conversing with White Conservative, Republican Women

Within just two scenes, we see several examples of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) in the forms of countering, exaggerations, minimizations, as well as claims of meritocracy, colorblindness, and reverse racism. Such reactions serve several functions, according to DiAngelo (2018). She cites reactions that pertain to these specific scenes, including maintaining white solidarity, closing off self-reflection, trivializing racism, protecting white privilege, and silencing the discussion (p. 122).

In Georgia, at an Oktoberfest celebration, Handler interviews six white individuals asking generally "do you think white privilege exists?" to provide a survey of responses. Four answer "no," one answers, "I wouldn't know;" and the last answers, "it's not non-existent" but not something she sees "commonly." When Handler asked the white man who does not believe white privilege exists about voter suppression, he says, "it's all fake news." He then proceeds to minimize the barriers to voting by saying you can vote as

long as you can spell your name and know your address and your birth date. His comment serves to not only minimize barriers but trivialize the painful reality of racism and lack of privilege. A second man justifies his claim that white privilege is non-existent by saying that he grew up in a neighborhood playing with Black kids and does not “see them any different.” Such a statement exhibits color-evasive discourses and serves to “exempt the person from any responsibility for or participation in the problem” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 78). A third individual claims that she did not have privilege as a white woman any more than “the other guys...Black, white, Hispanic.” While this could be an example of resistance based on class-based differences and intersectionality, at surface-level, it appears she is claiming to not see white privilege benefitting her own life or that she firmly believes in meritocracy (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 66). Handler applauds the final interviewee for saying he would not know whether he is privileged as a white man because he is white. However, whiteness still seems to be operating as invisible in his mind. His statement may reflect a greater awareness than the others interviewed, but it is still unclear that he recognizes the benefits he receives from being white. By not engaging and by rejecting “self-reflection” (p. 119), this man protects his white privilege. In each of these interviews, grounds for critique are laid by each interviewee; however, Handler allows whiteness to remain invisible by not probing deeper in this interview.

Later, Handler interviews four self-identified Republican, conservative women in Orange County, California, at a private residence. The topic of this conversation, again, is whether they think white privilege exists. The reactions in this scene provide further evidence of what DiAngelo (2018) conceptualizes as white fragility: “responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy” (p. 2). This five-minute long scene exemplifies participants presenting counterarguments, defending beliefs of meritocracy, claiming reverse racism, and protecting the idea that they are good white people. Kathy, a Republican activist, claims that she never thought about privilege before. Garrett and Segall (2013) would call this response of ignorance a form of resistance. Kathy adds what Matias (2016) might call an example of self-victimization in the statement: “white privilege didn’t give me any jobs...and I’m a woman in Republican politics, but I didn’t get anywhere by being white and having privilege.” She rather claims to be a victim, having to work extra hard as a woman. While that may be true, she deflects from the topic of white privilege by claiming to be a victim. Later in the conversation, she states that white people do not have privilege but that “Blacks have dis-privilege.” Through these statements, she distances herself from being called a bad white person, existing as part of a racial structure, and positions herself as innocent.

Another woman, Molly, claims that all people have privileges of some sort, not just white people. By using air quotes with her hands when saying “white privilege,” Molly denies the reality of white privilege and “seeks absolution” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 119) from this system by saying that privileges are afforded to all races, genders, and religions. Handler immediately follows by asking what privileges she thinks BIPOC have, and two other women quickly refer to college admission and hiring. Such claims attempt to cite instances of reverse racism in which white people claim to be disadvantaged for no reason. With such quick exchanges in a ten-minute time frame, these two scenes include numerous examples of white fragility, more than we highlight here. However, just

highlighting a few examples are helpful for getting conversations started and working towards PSTs' recognition of white fragility in action.

Scene: Visiting Ex-boyfriend

The premise of *Hello Privilege* is that Chelsea Handler has had a realization of her white privilege and has set off on an endeavor to educate herself. She wants to learn how to be a better white person and to inform other white people of white privilege through the documentary. Simultaneously, she attempts to enact a sense of caring about BIPOC, particularly Black people, in the documentary. Within teacher education, there is a call for teachers to authentically care for their students (Nieto, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). An emotion of care is a socially acceptable and expected response to issues of injustice and to people who have been historically marginalized; yet, these emotions need investigation as they often are only surface emotional façades. Matias et al. (2016) explains, "racialised sentimentalisation is a process where Whites can profess one emotion as a way to suppress those emotions that may indict them for being a racist" (p. 9).

Scholars have found that white teachers can talk about caring for students of color yet hold an underlying racial disgust for them (Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Morales et al., 2019). As a basic definition, disgust is a strong distaste or revulsion of another (Ahmed, 2004; Matias, 2016). Since disgust towards BIPOC is socially unacceptable and can result in being called a "racist," there is often an emotional diminutive (Matias, 2016) response of voicing care and concern for BIPOC. Hence, disgust can be a white emotionality that is hidden by the observed surface-level white emotion of care or sympathy (Matias, 2016). In these instances, white people can appear to have empathy for the Other; yet, in this emotional act, they separate themselves (their purity) from those they feel sorry for (the disgusted) (Ahmed, 2004; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Matias, 2016). Since the sentimentalized versions of care are socially acceptable, white people are released from the responsibility of naming racism and disrupting their reification of white supremacy.

In the documentary, Handler exhibits the white emotionality of disgust in the scenes centered on Tyshawn, her ex-boyfriend, and his family. As a teenager, Handler disliked high school and began causing trouble at home. She moved to live with her brother in New Jersey where she started dating Tyshawn, began abusing drugs, and became pregnant. To begin this documentary scene, Handler reminisces with Jelly Roll, a white rapper, about her teenage and young adult years in New Jersey and she discusses her realization that the different experiences she and Tyshawn had with law enforcement were racialized. Tyshawn, a Black young man, was arrested for selling and using drugs, and Chelsea, a white young woman, was not, even though she used drugs with Tyshawn. In the scene where Handler returns to the same New Jersey neighborhood where she grew up, she begins the episode saying, "I got pregnant twice, and [Tyshawn] was a drug dealer . . . not a positive time in my life, and I think that is also why it is so hard to see him because it is a representative of that time where I was such a wreck as a teenager." In the setting of the scene, Handler returns to see Tyshawn because she supposedly cares for him and recognizes the racism that caused them to have different

experiences in high school, yet she immediately creates a space between them. This time in her life is the exception, a blip in her story, yet the arrest and drug use seem to be expected experiences for Tyshawn. Handler perpetuates a sense of concern with having this closeness to Tyshawn, exemplifying how “disgust comes to signify the danger of proximity with *them* (non-Whites), because they threaten to violate *our* space and *our* purity” (Matias, 2016, p. 27).

When Handler first sees Tyshawn, she says, in a high pitched voice, “It’s so sweet. Aww” and hugs him. After talking to Tyshawn about his experiences, Handler goes with him to see his mother and grandmother. As she enters their house, she exclaims, “I’m home!” and gives a bear hug to Tyshawn’s mother. Handler sits at the kitchen table with the family and asks questions about their stories. The scene is further set with light music portraying a sentimentalized caring of Handler regarding the family’s stories of redemption. Although Handler portrays a sense of care for Tyshawn and his family, there is an underlying distancing, a disgust, that her story is tied to theirs. On the surface, Handler wants to show her sense of empathy for Tyshawn and his family, yet her caring is void of action. It presents as acceptable, and even establishes a recognition of her white privilege, yet Handler does not delve into the emotional investments she has to whiteness nor does she attempt to challenge the systemic racism in policing and the justice system that she acknowledges in the scene. This tension between the white emotion of caring and the white emotionality of disgust is felt throughout the documentary and serves as a good example to interrogate with PSTs the racialized emotions of disgust as empty, superficial diminutives of caring because simply acknowledging privilege is not enough.

Scene: Pig-picking with Jelly Roll

A central discourse related to white privilege has been the case of poor white people. Poor whites are historical constructs who, throughout history, have been labeled as sandbillies, crackers, hillbillies, rednecks, clay-eaters, and worst of all, white trash (Isenberg, 2017; Wray, 2006). Scholars note that the term white trash probably originated from enslaved African Americans’ slang but has shifted towards the lexicon of the hierarchy of whiteness (Drinkard, 2014). White trash is a derogatory and racist term that also signifies how social class is measured within white communities. White trash are white persons who are poor, who live mostly in rural (sometimes urban) areas, and whose beliefs and value systems counter the mainstream. They are characterized as bigots, racists, culturally and socially backwards, miserable, dirty, uneducated, profane, violent, and drug addicts. White trash are contradictions to whiteness, as these stereotypes closely align with stereotypes reserved for Black and Brown people. Poor white people are considered degenerate white people who, as Wray (2006) and Drinkard (2014) note are “not quite white” or “not normal whites” because they are seen as biologically, morally, culturally and socially inferior within white racialized constructs. Opponents of white privilege, as a way to avoid acceptance and responsibility for white privilege, often argue that poor whites cannot hold privilege because they are historically marginalized.

Poor white people and their relationship with white privilege was the topic of an 8-minute segment where Chelsea and the white rapper Jelly Roll discuss the topic. The segment is filmed in Antioch, Tennessee, a suburb of Nashville where Chelsea walks into a Black barbershop (see racial signifiers such as an Afro pick, a haircut guide with Black men models, and a figurine of a Black man cutting another Black man's hair). Chelsea and Jelly Roll begin the conversation while he is getting his hair cut by his Black barber (Taiwo). After brief conversations about race and class, Jelly Roll invites Chelsea to a pig-picking/BBQ, where they continue the conversation with a racially mixed group. Throughout their conversation, a major theme develops: racial solidarity and discord between poor whites and Black people.

Jelly Roll identifies himself as the "king of white trash," which seems to serve as part of a rebellious identity that is meant to disassociate himself from mainstream white society as well as reframe the negativity of the term and shift its meaning to one of belonging and pride. He also reads Chelsea as the "white trash Oprah," a term of endearment meant to praise Handler's supposedly universal appeal or acceptance to mainstream society while keeping a level of authenticity that is attractive to those who identify as white trash. Chelsea seems to reluctantly accept the title, given her identity as a middle class Jewish woman; yet, Jelly Roll insists and makes poignant observations that her life history resembles white trash stereotypes such as her unruly teenage behavior, dating a drug dealer Black man, and her raunchy comedy. By calling her "high class white trash," he connects her sociocultural experiences with his, essentially reminding her of their socially-constructed identities despite her attempts at differentiating them based on behavior and economic status.

The "racial encounter" (Stevenson, 2014) between Chelsea and Jelly Roll is an important lesson that reminds us that white racialization is not monolithic. Chelsea's initial conversation with Jelly Roll is one that signifies both class and racial conflicts within whiteness. Non-poor white people have rarely recognized poor white people as equals. Even when poor white people gain some social status, it often serves non-poor white people's interests. Non-poor white people do not identify with poor whites, leaving poor whites to have more in common with (poor) Black people, which leads to a sort of racial solidarity between the two racialized rural groups.

Racial solidarity between Jelly Roll and his Black friends is evident in the documentary. When asked about his belief in white privilege, Jelly Roll describes his involvement in the drug court system, where he, a Black man, and a white man had similar charges. He explains that the white man with the most expensive lawyer gets off on probation. When referring to those who did not have white privilege, he uses the word, "we," and implies that he and the Black man do not have that privilege. Jelly Roll implies that he, as a poor white person, faces similar hardships to that of a Black person.

The documentary attempts to show how class and race intersect. Poor white people are left out in the margins, the forgotten class of people. The documentary wants to show the racial solidarity of white and Black people and that their experiences are similar. The documentary neglects, however, to illustrate Black voices in Antioch about their experiences with poor white people. That is an interesting juxtaposition given the screen time throughout the documentary of Black people discussing racism in America. Is the documentary indicating that racism and white privilege were absent in Antioch?

While poor white people experience systemic oppression, their oppression is not that of non-white people, a point made in the documentary by some white characters.

In many ways, excluding Black voices is both problematic and nuanced. It is problematic given the racial history of small towns and working class whites across the U.S. (Loewen, 2018) and because poor white male voices regarding racial solidarity with Black people are seen as the only legitimate voice. Centering poor white voices also nuances white privilege and racism where poor white people have been classified as the only racists. The documentary gives poor whites a voice that refutes the trope that middle class and formally educated whites are the only racially progressive white people. Yet, by ignoring Black voices, we do not see how poor whites are implicit in white supremacy and how their white privilege plays out in rural spaces.

Implications for Teacher Education

Chelsea Handler (2019) produced a documentary on white privilege and markets the documentary as her journey towards a racial awakening. While Handler seemingly attempts to engage in antiracist work, the documentary exemplifies many critiques of WPP (e.g., Lensmire et al. 2013) as Handler confesses the existence of white privilege yet evades the systemic and structural aspects of racism. Further, Handler does not delve into the work of naming how she is complicit in white supremacy nor does she do anything to disrupt and challenge racism. She simply states it exists, as if that is the essence and end goal of antiracism. As a recent Netflix documentary, PSTs may watch this documentary and other examples of white privilege confessions flooding social media yet be unable or unwilling to critique this type of antiracist performativity (Phillips, 2020). Though Handler (2019) based her documentary on white privilege, we are not recommending the documentary as a way to teach WPP. Instead, we believe teacher educators can use the documentary to help PSTs interrogate their own white fragility and white emotionalities. Specifically, we recommend using this documentary to point out the ways white people embody and emote whiteness through CRML-framing questions.

Using King's (2017) framing of CRML questions aligned with critical media literacy's five main concepts, we suggest teacher educators begin with questions of how media perpetuates whiteness. For instance, "What media messages are often portrayed about white communities? Black communities? Latinx communities? Asian communities? Indigenous communities?" After introducing the documentary, PSTs could discuss the critical race theory tenet of interest convergence - the reality that any progress of civil rights for BIPOC only happens if white people benefit as well (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). One of King's (2017) CRML questions is, "What are the interest convergences of this [documentary]?" (p. 37). PSTs can investigate the fuller context of when and why Handler produced the documentary, as its inception developed soon after she was called out for racism with the publication of her book, *Uganda Be Kidding Me* (Handler, 2014). Once PSTs consider the authorship and possible underlying purposes of the documentary, they should begin viewing.

Throughout the documentary screening, teacher educators can stop after each highlighted scene to consider the content, audience, and formatting. The following are possible questions to discuss for each scene:

- Whose experiences are centered during the scene?
- What is the intended racialized message within the scene?
- Where do you see white fragility in action within this scene?
- What white emotions are conveyed in this scene? What underlying white emotionalities may these emotions be masking?
- What intersecting identities do you see at play in this scene (i.e., class, race, etc.)? And how are white emotions working to obscure these intersectionalities?

After viewing the documentary, teacher educators should facilitate discussion on the messages presented throughout the documentary (see Appendix for questions). Then, PSTs can critically reflect on ways in which they have enacted white fragility and white emotionalities in general (for white PSTs) and ways they have witnessed white emotionalities within schooling settings (for PSTs of color). Additionally, this exercise assists PSTs of color in identifying and naming what they have experienced in the educational setting and elsewhere. Moving beyond simple terminology of “racist” helps all PSTs to fully define the complexities of our racialized identities. For continued reflection, PSTs could conduct race conscious journaling (Milner, 2003) using the same questions recommended above as a structure for observation during their field placement assignments throughout the semester.

The development of antiracist educators is our goal within teacher education. This article represents one example of how to begin this work by allowing white PSTs to interrogate whiteness in the documentary and then in themselves. As Love (2019) notes, “Only after unpacking and interrogating Whiteness, White teachers—and, really, all teachers—must unpack how Whiteness functions in their lives; then they can stand in solidarity with their students’ communities for social change” (p. 75). Once PSTs can learn to interrogate white supremacy through such media as Handler’s documentary, teacher educators must facilitate continued learning activities where PSTs connect white supremacy with its effects in our nation and schools: structural and systemic racism. An important next step would be offering guidance for teaching from an antiracist frame. Preparing PSTs, who recognize white supremacy and racism and know how to challenge them, is difficult work. Our hope is for teacher educators to use this article as one pathway to begin the journey of dismantling white supremacy in our teacher education programs.

Notes

1. We follow the example Andrea Hawkman (2018) outlined for writing racialized words without capitalization. Hawkman states: “APA (2010) guidelines stipulate

that racial and ethnic groups are considered proper nouns and should be capitalized. However, in my opinion the decision to capitalize words such as Black, Blackness, People of Color, White, Whiteness, and White Supremacy is both personal and political. In choosing to capitalize the word white, in all of its forms, we reify its hegemonic status. Therefore, throughout this article I choose to utilize these racialized words without capitalization unless included in a direct-text citation.” Also see Bauder’s (2020) Associated Press article on this topic.

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Appendix

Facilitation Questions after Viewing Documentary:

- What is the message presented through Handler's documentary?
 - "What underlying message is being conveyed about racialized communities?" (King, 2017, p. 37)
 - How do schools send out problematic messages similar to Handler's?
- (To white preservice teachers:) In thinking about your own experiences, recall a time when you enacted white fragility.
 - Did you respond with white emotions? If so, why?
 - What was the impact of your white fragility?
 - What white emotionality may be the deeper reason for the display of stated surface emotion?
- (To PSTs of color:) In thinking about your own experiences, recall a time when you've witnessed and/or experienced white fragility enacted.
 - How did you respond? What was their response in return?
 - What was the impact of this interaction?
 - What role did white emotionality play in this experience?
- In thinking about your experiences in field placement schools, how have you seen white fragility and white emotionalities in the school/classroom?
 - If by a student, how did the teacher respond?
 - If you were the teacher, how could you respond?

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