

**Name:** Claire Sabbe

**Major(s) and Concentration:** Sociology; Education Studies (Intersectionality within Education Policy)

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**1) What is your proposed research question, and how is it significant to educational studies, broadly defined?**

*Be sure to phrase your idea as a researchable question or a testable hypothesis. Educational Studies is broadly defined as schooling and its relationship to society, and/or learning processes, and/or youth development.*

The challenges of curriculum gaps alongside struggles to creatively engage students are widespread. Simultaneously, marketplaces of digital teacher resources have become popular. The most prominent of these marketplaces is Teachers Pay Teachers. Similar to platforms like Etsy, and EBay, Teachers Pay Teachers allows users to post content from lesson plans, worksheets, and creative activities to classroom decor. Most of this content is monetized, although generally at a price point below \$10. The promotion of content aligns with the phenomena of “teacherpreneurs”, and teacher influencers. Sellers can provide a biography, and generally provide a free sample of their work. Users are able to leave reviews, engage in Q&As within a specific listing, and follow content creators. In contrast, the Open Educational Resource Commons does not utilize a paywall. This platform also allows for the submission of content, and primarily features lesson plans. While OER also allows for reviews they appear to be utilized significantly less than Teachers Pay Teachers. In assessing the potential benefits of these digital teacher resources the question arises: *What content on Teachers Pay Teachers is reflective of educational curricular standards? To what extent does the content promote traditional pedagogy vs. culturally relevant pedagogy?*

**2) What courses, experiences, and/or readings inspired you to choose this question?**

*You may draw upon prior courses, community-learning experiences, internships, and be sure to include at least two secondary sources (articles or books), explain how they are relevant to your thinking, and cite them using any academic citation system.*

In Race, Class, and Education Policy, the value of ethnic studies was discussed. Through the class research project, I was able to investigate the ways in which Connecticut educators incorporated the histories of people of color into their teaching. Combining this experience with the discussions of educational technology in Educational Leadership for Change sparked my curiosity surrounding the potential benefits and harms of a platform such as Teachers Pay Teachers. That being said, I became aware of Teachers Pay Teachers through social media, largely because of “teacherpreneurs” themselves. Some relevant sources to this study include works by Ladson-Billings who coined the term culturally relevant pedagogy, which emphasizes cultural competency and the value of students having the opportunity to connect material to their particular cultural context. I have also included other articles which discuss the phenomenon of Teachers Pay Teachers, both from the perspectives of content creators and consumers, as well as the credibility and quality of content on marketplaces such as Teachers Pay Teachers.

References:

Carpenter, Jeffery P., and Catharyn C. Shelton. 2021. “Educators’ Perspectives on and Motivations for Using an Online Education Marketplace.” *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*. doi:10.1080/15391523.2022.2119452.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 1995. “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.” *American Educational Research Journal* 32(3):465-491. doi:10.3102/00028312032003465.

Shelton, Catharyn C., and Leanna M. Archambault. “Who Are Online Teacherpreneurs and What Do They Do? A Survey of Content Creators on TeachersPayTeachers.com.” 2019. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* (51)4:398-414. doi:10.1080/15391523.2019.1666757.

Shelton, Catharyn C., Matthew J. Koehler, Spencer P. Greenhalgh, and Jeffrey P. Carpenter. 2022. “Lifting the veil on TeachersPayTeachers.com: an investigation of educational marketplace offerings and downloads.” *Learning, Media and Technology* (47)2:268-287. doi:10.1080/17439884.2021.1961148.

Other Relevant Sources:

- Teachers Pay Teachers: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com>
- Open Educational Resource Commons: <https://www.oercommons.org>

**3) What prior training do you have in research methods to answer this question?**

*Describe relevant skills you gained in Research Methods or Research Project courses.*

In the Community Action Gateway Course, Building Knowledge, I gained experience in in-depth interviewing; I was able to build upon these skills in Education for Change, and in Race, Class, and Educational Policy where I continued to conduct, transcribe, and learned to code interviews based on participant responses. Lastly, in Statistics for the Social Sciences and in Sociology of Education, I developed quantitative data analysis skills as well as familiarity with the programs Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

**4) What primary sources and methods will you use to answer your research question?**

*Your senior thesis must extend beyond secondary sources, and base your findings on primary sources and methods, including:*

- *qualitative research, such as interviewing or ethnography (where the interview transcripts and/or detailed field notes serve as primary sources) or content analysis*
- *quantitative research, such as analyzing a dataset (the primary source), which you could construct on your own (via surveys, etc.) or obtain from open data repositories*
- *historical research, such as analyzing change & continuity over time through archival documents, periodicals, visual images, oral histories, etc.*
- *or other appropriate research methods w/ primary sources (ask faculty for guidance)*

*Be specific: Describe how you will collect primary sources to answer your question in part 1*

The primary method I will employ to answer my research question will be content analysis. To narrow the content I will be exploring I will apply the filters of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, within the category of “Social Studies—History” to select a small sample of the content featured on the

marketplace. Within these results I will more broadly consider the source of the material (e.g. credibility, biography, number of followers), the ratings and reviews, the discussion in the question and answer section if applicable. Next, I will closely examine the content of the resource. I will define culturally relevant pedagogy and list key elements which could determine if material posted would be considered culturally relevant. I also may examine the social media content educators, who utilize their platforms who sell their resources via Teachers Pay Teachers which reflect culturally responsive pedagogy.

**5) Will your thesis require a review by the Trinity Institutional Review Board (IRB)?**

*Read the [Trinity IRB definitions](#) and explain if your study will require you to submit a full application. But do not submit an IRB application until the Educ 400 instructor approves it.*

I do not plan to apply for IRB approval.

**6) Will your thesis require in-person access to a school or community organization?**

*If yes, then provide the name and affiliation of the community partner you have contacted who is willing to work with you. You must paste a copy of the email and contact info you have received from this person before you will receive a PIN to enroll in Educ 400.*

*Reminder: If the pandemic continues, consider the possibility that some schools or community organizations may not be able to host researchers in-person, so you may need to provide alternative methods for socially-distant or virtual data collection.*

No, my current plan does not involve any in person elements.