ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN THE DIGITAL AGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
RURAL HIGH SCHOOL GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN SOUTHWEST OHIO:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Nathan Churchell Hamblin

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. Academic dishonesty in the digital age is defined as student use of digital technologies to receive credit for academic work beyond their own ability or their willingness to attempt said work. The guiding research questions formulated investigate four areas of the phenomenon that include how teachers experience academic dishonesty, how they define it, how their role has evolved, and the connection of this experience to their pedagogy. The foundational theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) experiential learning theory (ELT), including the newly expanded Educator Role Profile and the Nine Style Learning Cycle (Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014), as it provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of teachers as they learn, grow, and develop, concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age. I elected to use purposeful sampling to select 13 referred participants who shared the common experience of academic dishonesty in the digital age. The study incorporated multiple means of data collection (individual interviews, one survey/questionnaire, document analysis, and focus group discussions). Data collection occurred principally through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to capture the collective voice of the participants. I incorporated an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) strategy. Five interconnected themes emerged: (a) Purposeful Pedagogy, (b) Culturally Conditioned, (c) Blurred Lines, (d) Knowing Their Voice, and (e) Clarity and Consequences.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, digital age classroom, 21st century learning, rural high school, faculty perspective, experiential learning, educator role, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, IPA.
Dedication

For Kimberly, who inspired me to finish what I started and walking with me along this journey. For Logan, who inspired me to look with fresh eyes. Both for whom I love dearly and am eternally grateful.
Acknowledgments

Like Joseph in the book of Genesis, my journey down this educational path has been a long one. Joseph did not immediately know the purpose or role he was called to because such an understanding needs time to grow and develop. It has only been a recent event that I had my ‘Egypt moment.’ Like Joseph, as I look back over my journey after twenty-five plus years as a teacher, I better understand God’s activity in my life. I want to thank Him for setting my feet on this path and guiding me all along the way. The completion of this dissertation process could not have been possible without you, Lord. I give you all the honor and glory!

Also, for all who have provided assistance, guidance, support, and encouragement along each step along of this ‘Joseph Journey’ – thank you!

To my wife, Kimberly: You put up with so much. I love you to the moon and back!
To my great-nephew, Logan: Without you, buddy, this may just never have happened.
To my parents, Ray & Mary Hamblin: Dad, I sure miss you! And, yes, mom, I am still in school!
To Dr. Frederick Milacci: Your challenges and encouragement pushed me forward.
To Dr. Christopher Clark, Dr. Connie Locklear, and Dr. Alan Wimberly: Your guidance as chair and committee members strengthened me as a researcher and writer.
To my wonder twins, Patricia Massengale and Kyle Shugart: Your enduring friendship and support since that first intensive is beyond measure.
To Dr. Tom Romano: Reminding me, after all these years, to Write What Matters.
To so many others: my TVS family, my church family, The Well, . . .
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List of Abbreviations

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
Kimberly-Logan Learning Region 4 (KLLR-4)
Kolb Educator Role Profile (KERP)
Kolb Learning Style Inventory (LSI)
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
Peoples County Consortium LEA (PCCLEA)
Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to explore high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age among students in grades 9-12 at Kimberly-Logan Learning Region 4 (KLLR-4), a pseudonym for a nine-county region in southwest Ohio comprised of 68 districts, 27 classified as rural (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). The problem that spurred the research for this study was the lack of qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding this phenomenon. The central audience for this research will be those within the sphere of secondary education, specifically those interested in how 21st century technologies further complicate the issue of academic dishonesty. The theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT, including the newly expanded Educator Roles and the Nine Style Learning Cycle (Kolb et al., 2014), as it provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of teachers as they learn, grow, and develop concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age.

This chapter presents a background of academic dishonesty in the digital age and how the research related to the researcher. The chapter also describes the problem, purpose, and significance of the study. The research questions driving this hermeneutical phenomenological study include:

- How do high school general education teachers experience academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?
• How do the participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the digital age?
• How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?

The chapter closes with definitions used throughout the study.

**Background**

A little over a half century ago, Bowers (1964) published the first of its kind large-scale study on academic dishonesty. In that research, Bowers discovered that approximately 75% of college students participated in some form of academic dishonesty. Thirty years later, McCabe and Treviño (1997) replicated the research. Although the researchers only observed a modest increase in overall cheating since Bowers’ study, McCabe and Treviño discovered significant increases in the most explicit forms of academic dishonesty. Research since McCabe and Treviño further establishes that there is a recognized problem regarding academic dishonesty, starting as early as the primary grades, that influences academic integrity throughout an individual’s post-secondary education and career (Brown-Wright et al., 2013; Elliott, Deal, & Hendryx, 2014; Galloway, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield, 2001; Schmelkin, Gilbert, & Silva, 2010). Academic dishonesty is not a new phenomenon. However, the normalization of such behavior appears to be mounting (Galloway, 2012; Molnar, 2015). There is a need to understand if this trend will continue.

Recent studies testify to this normalization, revealing that 80% or more of students admit to at least one act of academic dishonesty within the past year (Elliott et al., 2014; Galloway, 2012; Kauffman & Young, 2015). Furthering the depth of the nature of academic dishonesty,
research indicates that it is a multifaceted and multimodal phenomenon embedded within a high achievement culture (Galloway, 2012; Josien, & Broderick, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Schmelkin et al., 2010). However, such context seems to indicate that no single demographic reveals the nature and need for academic dishonesty. In fact, research indicates that to fully understand the phenomenon, one must move beyond the demographics, delving further into the psychological aspects of the decision-making (Brown-Wright et al., 2013; Galloway, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng, Othman, D'Silva, & Omar, 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014).

Further complicating this issue are 21st century technologies. Today’s students were born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives – radically changing their thinking and learning (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole, Swartz, & Shelley, 2014; Nelson, Nelson, & Tichenor, 2013; Stogner, Miller, & Marcum, 2013; Wang, Hsu, Campbell, Coster, & Longhurst, 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). Within such a digital age, there would be an assumed impact of the technology on the academic dishonesty phenomenon among students. In fact, research indicates that a large number of students, upwards of 80% in some cases, use technology to engage in academic dishonesty (Charles, 2012; Kaufman & Young, 2015; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013). However, the incorporation of 21st century technologies into student learning has blurred the lines for students on what is considered academic dishonesty since they consider the use of such technology as legitimate learning tools, thus changing the dynamics of the classroom in the digital age (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014).

Although research indicated a rise in academic dishonesty, students do not view themselves as dishonest, and their acceptance of academic dishonesty is declining (Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013). In fact, both teacher and student alike have an interest in addressing
academic dishonesty, especially in light of how the digital age has affected how learning occurs in the 21st century classroom (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Galloway, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001). Further research indicated academic dishonesty is managed through proper attention given to the supporting factors, pointing to the classroom teacher providing students the needed strategies to successfully employ technologies in an honest way (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013). The role of the classroom teacher cannot be understated. Students’ perceptions of their teachers and a positive classroom environment can aid in combating the academic dishonesty phenomenon (Minckler, 2013; Peklaj, Kalin, Pecjak, Zuljan, & Levpuscek, 2012; Ruppert & Green, 2012; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Wei, Chestnut, Barnard-Brak, & Schmidt, 2014).

The rural school setting does not change the expectations within a school system regarding success and academic integrity. In fact, the rural educational setting provides its own unique and complex circumstances (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox, Angelis, Baker, & Lawson, 2014). Although the incorporation of technology within the classroom better prepares students for the 21st century (Jones, Fox, & Levin, 2011), often students and teachers in rural settings are at a disadvantage when it comes to access to educational resources, including technology (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Brown, 2010; Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Lin, Isernhagen, Scherz, & Denner, 2014; Shoulders & Krei, 2015; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). School districts, regardless of their typology, now have greater emphasis on success, the use of 21st century technologies as well academic integrity due to the high expectations like that of the College- and Career-Ready Standards (Achieve, Inc., 2016; Ohio Department of
Although there has been other research since Bowers (1964), there is a call for further focus and research to provide a meaningful pedagogical framework in which to address the academic dishonesty phenomenon (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013). As indicated by the research, such a framework is effectively addressed at the institutional level where a comprehensive plan of moral development may be established that is proactive in preventing academic dishonesty (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013).

The foundation of this framework resides in the classroom of the teacher, where they foster integrity through establishing an honor community through their unique assignments, technology tools, clear communication of expectations, and providing students an environment where they get an accurate understanding of the behavior of their peers (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013). With such an emphasis on the 21st century classroom educator to help deter the phenomenon of academic dishonesty, there is a lack of research that focuses on the secondary level (Charles, 2012; Evering & Moorman, 2012; Ma, Wan, & Lu, 2008; Sorgo, Vavdi, Ciglar, & Kralj, 2015; Sureda-Negre, Comas-Forgas, & Oliver-Trobat, 2015; Ukpebor & Ogbebor, 2013).

One cannot overstate the importance of understanding academic dishonesty in the digital age. The use of technology as legitimate learning tools has changed the dynamic in the 21st century classroom. The pillars on which a meaningful pedagogical framework addresses the academic dishonesty phenomenon resides within the experiences of the classroom teacher. It is through these experiences with the changing dynamic in the 21st century classroom, and how they view and voice such experiences, that should provide the needed insight to establish such a pedagogical framework. The problem is there are few qualitative studies that provide a voice for
the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding academic
dishonesty in the digital age. This study sought to address that issue.

**Situation to Self**

Growing up in a strict religious home with rural roots left no room for the tolerance for
cheating and lying. My parents taught and reinforced principles of honesty and truth with the
Bible and discipline – if needed. This moral code followed me throughout school. I would not
allow myself to cheat, nor did I let any of my classmates cheat from me. I can recall at one point
in my high school career purposely placing wrong answers on a test because I knew the student
next to me was copying. I changed them back once the other student finished and put their head
down. Even then, due to my upbringing, I knew deep down that academic dishonesty takes
credit away from those who truthfully earned it through their own hard work and creativity
(Dowling, 2003). Now, after more than two decades as a high school teacher, I find academic
dishonesty has not subsided. In fact, I agree with McCabe and Katz (2009) when they stated that
students today have a higher level of moral flexibility. However, I do not place the blame
squarely on the shoulders of the youth. As a veteran of the classroom, I know that academic
dishonesty is rare in classrooms where learning is relevant, engaging, and where teachers
communicate with students, developing positive relationships (Broeckelman-Post, 2008; Kohn,
2008; Richardson & Arker, 2010; Rosile, 2007; Strom & Strom, 2007a, 2007b).

In addition, two recent events occurred that disrupted my understanding of my own
pedagogical practices. The first I call the ‘Logan Effect’ in tribute to my great-nephew Logan.
He was not yet four years old when he asked for my smart phone. He then proceeded to operate
it faster and with greater proficiency than I had encountered with many adults. This was a gut
check for me concerning the reality of how education must change to meet the needs of the 21st
century learner. Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2011) described those like Logan as the digital natives who have become a disruption within education. This disruption is due to what Wimberley (2016) ascribed as learners who “are different from any previous generation of learners” (p. 68) that “swipe away and move through technology in every area of life” (p. 25). However, with this ‘Logan Effect’ experience, I was convinced that the pedagogical framework that meets the needs of the digital natives allow them “to learn in ways that correspond with how their brains are wired to learn” (Christensen et al., 2011, p. 84).

The second event, like the first, was a large dose of reality to the changing dynamics of the classroom in the digital age. I call it the ‘Kimberly Effect’ in tribute to my wife Kim, a computer programmer who works in the public sector. She recently encountered a situation at her work that reinforced the words of Armstrong (2014), “Technology . . . is changing the way many students learn” (p. 40). She was attempting to answer several questions that she considered difficult or questioned her own answer. During this process, she used her phone to contact me via text to discuss the questions. Between the two of us, using our own understanding and the power of the internet, she was able to answer the required questions. It was at the end of this event that I realized, as a teacher if I had viewed this taking place in my classroom, I may very well have considered it cheating. However, I knew it to be using technology in collaboration to aid learning. This ‘Kimberly Effect’ experience reminded me that students often “[point] to the ‘real world’ where accessing all available resources to solve a problem was the norm, suggesting that instructors should recognize that and adapt their expectations of what is and is not acceptable behavior in the courses they teach” (Cole et al., 2014, p. 35).
Such events like these reinforce what other teachers and students call for – a reasonable and balanced perspective on the 21st century classroom (Armstrong, 2014; Charles, 2012; Crook, 2012; Galloway, 2012; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Yong & Gates, 2014). As Christensen et al. (2011) noted, “Educators, like the rest of us, tend to resist major change. But this shift in the learning platform, if managed correctly – which means disruptively – is not a threat. It is an opportunity” (p. 112). This shift, the changing of the dynamics of the classroom in the digital age, further highlights the importance of understanding academic dishonesty in the digital age from the perspective of the classroom teacher.

To explore the experiences of rural high school teachers who have recently encountered academic dishonesty in the digital age, I approached this study with a social constructivist frame of reference in which individuals seek understanding of the world they live in through their interactions with it (Creswell, 2013). In addition, my approach throughout the study was based upon the ontological. This philosophical assumption allowed me to explore the multiple realities shared by participants, including their differing experiences and perspectives to develop themes (Creswell, 2013) and to grasp an understanding of the phenomenon that was being studied (Van Manen, 1990). The participants in this study were general education high school teachers within the KLLR-4, a pseudonym for a nine-county region in southwest Ohio comprised of 68 districts, 27 classified as rural (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a), who recently shared the common experience of academic dishonesty in the digital age. The individual participants’ experiences of this phenomenon were central to the study.

Within such a study as this, Creswell (2013) noted that not only is it a “description, but it is also an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of
the lived experiences” (p. 80). My background, including personal, cultural, and historical experiences shape my interpretation throughout the study. My intent was to interpret the experiences of the participants while acknowledging my own biases concerning the phenomenon through reflexivity and the bracketing process. As Creswell (2013) described, bracketing enabled me to “set aside [my] experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (p. 80). Reflexivity, on the other hand, enabled me to understand further the effects my experiences had on my own research, “as well as how these might be minimized where possible” (Clancy, 2013, p. 15). As noted by Krefting (1991), reflexivity “may alter the way that [researchers] collects the data or approaches the analysis to enhance the credibility of the research” (pp. 218-219).

In choosing a research design to explore experiences of a common phenomenon, I decided on a hermeneutical phenomenology as I attempted to interpret and make sense of the teachers’ experiences as expressed by the teachers. By using a hermeneutical phenomenology design, I was able to be both descriptive and interpretive in my attempt to give voice to the pedagogical experiences of the participants. Such a design enabled me, as noted by van Manen (1990), to “be attentive to how things appear . . . to let things speak for themselves” (p. 180) while acknowledging, “that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena” (p. 180). Hermeneutical phenomenology, as set forth by van Manen (1990), enabled me to maintain “a view of pedagogy as an expression of the whole” (p. 7) while searching for the “fullness of living” (p. 12).

**Problem Statement**

Research demonstrates that there is an established problem of academic dishonesty, starting as early as the primary schools, that influences academic integrity throughout an
individual’s post-secondary education and career (Brown-Wright et al., 2013; Elliott et al., 2014; Galloway, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Schmelkin et al., 2010). Further complicating this issue are 21st century technologies. Today’s students were born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives – radically changing their thinking and learning (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). Previous research indicated academic dishonesty is managed through proper attention given to the supporting factors, pointing to the classroom teacher, where they foster integrity through their unique assignments, technology tools, clear communication of expectations, and providing students an environment where they get an accurate understanding of the honesty behavior with their peers (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013). The rural school setting does not change the expectations within a school system regarding the phenomenon of integrity. In fact, complex and varied circumstances come with the rural educational setting (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). The problem is there are few qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. For the study, I generally defined academic dishonesty in the digital age as student use of digital technologies to receive credit for academic work beyond their own ability or their willingness to attempt said work (Bowers, 1964; Brown-Wright et al., 2013;
The theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT, including the newly expanded Educator Roles and the Nine Style Learning Cycle (Kolb et al., 2014), as it provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of teachers as they learn, grow, and develop concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age.

**Significance of the Study**

Decade’s worth of research establishes that there is a recognized problem of academic dishonesty that influences academic integrity throughout an individual’s education and career (Bowers, 1964; Brown-Wright et al., 2013; Elliott et al., 2014; Galloway, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Schmelkin et al., 2010). With each new study comes a call for further research to provide an understanding of the academic dishonesty phenomenon (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013). The empirical contribution of this study is that it may provide a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers in regard to academic dishonesty in the digital age. Using hermeneutical phenomenology, I hoped to fill a gap within the literature on academic dishonesty through my attempts to interpret and make sense of the teacher’s experiences with the phenomenon as expressed by the teachers (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; van Manen, 2014).

The participants in this study were general education high school teachers within the KLLR-4, a pseudonym for a nine-county region in southwest Ohio comprised of 68 districts, 27 classified as rural (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a), who recently shared the common experience of academic dishonesty in the digital age. The KLLR-4 is a collaboration of community
stakeholders (parents, families, businesses, community members and leaders, teachers, and school districts) with a common vision of graduating all students who are College- and Career-Ready (Achieve, Inc., 2016; Ohio Department of Education, 2015b; United States Department of Education, 2010). The practical contribution of this study is that stakeholders could use the results of this study to evaluate better the viability of their vision of infusing technology and establishing technology policies for students to use in developing 21st century skills with academic integrity (Gregg et al., 2012). This study could further assist other teachers in understanding academic dishonesty in the digital age.

The rationale for the study was to gain a better understanding of academic dishonesty, specifically in the digital age, by looking to those who can effectively deal with the phenomenon, the classroom teacher, as they provide students the needed strategies to successfully employ technologies in an honest way (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al. 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013). I attempted to interpret and make sense of teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age; this study will hopefully supply a voice to educators on a wider scale, providing a meaningful pedagogical framework in addressing the phenomenon (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013).

The theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT, including the newly expanded Educator Roles and the Nine Style Learning Cycle (Kolb et al, 2014), as it provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of teachers as they learn, grow, and develop concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age. ELT defines learning as a process of creating knowledge through the transformation of experience, providing a complex and realistic model for guiding pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014; Kolb, 2015). As such,
the theoretical contribution of this study is that Kolb’s (2015) ELT provides a framework that places academic dishonesty in the digital age in the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences thus laying the groundwork for further theoretical consideration to study the implications in greater detail. Furthermore, the recently developed Educator Role Profile (KERP) established a dynamic matching model of their roles within their educational experiences for educators (Kolb et al., 2014).

**Figure 1.** Phenomenological research design visual.

Hermeneutical phenomenology, as noted by van Manen (1990), maintains “a view of pedagogy as an expression of the whole” (p. 7) while searching for the “fullness of living” (p. 12). Employing the specific phenomenological method known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) provided a method to achieve this goal. IPA provided the flexibility to work with each participant to gain a thick and rich understanding into the phenomenon. The development of IPA occurred in 1996 as a qualitative approach centered in psychology, exploring how people ascribe meaning to their experiences as they interact with the environment (Smith et al., 2009). As such, by using this phenomenological research design as shown in Figure 1, I hoped to capture the essence of the lived experiences of rural general
education high school teachers regarding the academic dishonesty phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. The research questions were formulated to investigate four areas of the phenomenon including how teachers experience academic dishonesty, how they define it, how their role has evolved, and their connection between their experience and their pedagogy. For these reasons, the following central research question served as the guiding question for this study.

**RQ1:** How do high school general education teachers describe their experience with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?

As noted earlier, the rationale for the study was to gain a better understanding of academic dishonesty in the digital age by looking to the classroom teacher as they provide students the needed strategies to successfully employ technologies in an honest way (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013). In conjunction with that, a rural school setting does not change expectations, so the academic dishonesty phenomenon in the digital age becomes even more multifaceted within such an environment (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). Therefore, this question provided an opening to learn more about how the rural classroom teacher experiences the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

The sub-questions to support the central research question are as follows:
RQ2: How do participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the digital age?

Research indicated it is the classroom teacher that effectively deals with the academic dishonesty phenomenon by fostering integrity through unique assignments, how they use technology tools, their clear communication of expectations, and by providing students an environment where they get an accurate understanding of the honesty behavior with their peers (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013). As such, it is imperative to understand how the classroom teacher perceives academic dishonesty in the digital age. Therefore, this question provided a means to learn more about how the rural classroom teacher describes the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

RQ3: How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?

As stated previously, Kolb’s (2015) ELT guided this study. Such a theoretical framework describes learning as a process where the transformation of experience creates meaning, which in turn provides an accurate model for guiding pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). As such, it is imperative to have an understanding of the classroom teachers’ “experience[s] with awareness to create meaning and make choices” (Kolb, 2015, p. 338) regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age. Therefore, this question sought to learn more about how the rural classroom teacher describes how their role has evolved with their experience with the academic dishonesty phenomenon.
Definitions

1. **Academic dishonesty** – Although there does not appear to be a widely accepted definition of what constitutes academic dishonesty in the literature (Burris, McGoldrick, & Schuhmann, 2007; McCabe et al., 2001), for the purposes of this study, academic dishonesty will be generally defined as student use of digital technologies or any other type of unauthorized assistance to receive credit for academic work beyond their own ability or their willingness to attempt (Molnar, 2015; Schmelkin et al., 2010).

2. **Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)** – educational theory with intellectual origins in the experiential works of prominent 20th century scholars that defines learning as a process where transformation of experience creates knowledge (Kolb, 2015).

3. **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)** - developed in 1996 as a qualitative approach centered in psychology that explores how people ascribe meaning to their experiences as they interact with the environment (Smith et al., 2009).


5. **Peoples County Consortium LEA (PCCLE)** - a pseudonym of a countywide learning collaborative made up of the five county school districts with a common goal learning initiative of graduating all students who are College- and Career-Ready (Gregg et al., 2012).

**Summary**

This chapter outlined the background of the problem. The phenomenon of academic dishonesty in the digital age was defined, and I presented the theoretical framework. I evaluated the existing research and demonstrated the research gap in the body of literature. Additionally, I presented the study and situation to self. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio and the connection between their experience with academic dishonesty and their pedagogy. Along with presenting the significance of the study, I provided a brief discussion on the theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions as well. These three areas will be more thoroughly, explicitly, and discretely addressed in Chapter Five. Research questions were formulated to investigate four areas of the phenomenon including how teachers experience academic dishonesty, how they define it, how their role has evolved, and the connection between their experience with academic dishonesty and their pedagogy. The research plan was outlined and justified, and I provided definitions that applied to this study and substantiated by literature.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

From the very first large-scale study published by Bowers (1964), research concerning academic dishonesty focused on individual/contextual/situational factors, underlying psychological motives and student perceptions regarding the academic dishonesty phenomenon (Imram & Nordin, 2013; Liebler, 2012; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001; Schuhmann, Burrus, Barber, Graham, & Eliak, 2013; Wei et al., 2014). Since the start of the 21st century, a third wave of digital natives (Wang et al., 2014) entering classrooms has further complicated this phenomenon. To these students technology is part of their daily lives and has profoundly transformed their thinking and learning (Abersek & Abersek, 2012; Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Bates, 2013; Charles, 2012; Christensen et al., 2011; Cole et al., 2014; Hamlen, 2012; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe, & Terry, 2013; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; Nelson et al., 2013; Ng, 2012; Sheppard & Brown, 2014; Stogner et al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014; Zhao, 2015). They often meet with 20th century pedagogy that is out of touch with their learning modality (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Bates, 2013; Charles, 2012; Christensen et al., 2011; Hamlen, 2012; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014).

Placing this scenario within a rural school setting does not change pedagogical expectations. As noted by Brann-Barrett (2014), in describing how rural communities are both local and global, state, “As one of the most technologically connected generations, young people are on the cutting edge of the local-global citizenry” (p. 78). Often viewed as an obstacle within educational research, the distinctive rural culture is more than just a setting—it is also an untapped opportunity for pedagogical insight (Burton, Brown, & Johnson, 2013; Roberts, 2014;
Tiecken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). Although often mismeasured (Donehower, 2014) and assumed static (Anderson & Lonsdale, 2014), the complexities that come with the rural educational environment make the academic dishonesty phenomenon in the digital age even more multifaceted (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). As noted by Roberts (2014), this is highlighting the “rural difference, recognition that the rural is a distinct educational context” (p. 139).

There is a concentration of research on academic dishonesty at the post-secondary level with few qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of high school teachers regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age. The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. This chapter provides a review of the literature related to this research study. It begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework for this study followed by a review of the literature related to academic dishonesty, the digital age classroom, the context of the classroom teacher, and the recognition that the rural influence is a distinct educational environment. The chapter concludes with a summary of how the literature provided a context for the current study.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT, including the newly expanded Educator Roles and the Nine Style Learning Cycle (Kolb et al, 2014), as it provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of teachers as they learn, grow, and develop concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age. As noted by Kolb (2015), everyone enters learning “situations with an already-developed learning style” (p. 281). The major implication of ELT
within education is it provides a pedagogical framework that enables learners to develop and use all learning styles, promoting deeper learning (Kolb, 2015).

The development and presentation of ELT occurred just over 30 years ago and had intellectual origins in the experiential works of prominent scholars such as Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). ELT builds on the following six propositions shared by these scholars:

1. Learning conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
2. All learning is re-learning.
3. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.
5. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment.
6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge.

(Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015)

ELT is not without its detractors. Freedman and Stumpf (1978), in examining the Learning Style Inventory (LSI), state that it is “an example of a worthwhile idea which has some theoretic value but has been operationalized too soon” (p. 280). An academic publication exchange between the authors and Kolb began that lasted several years (Freedman & Stumpf, 1978; Freedman & Stumpf, 1980; Kolb, 1981; Stumpf & Freedman, 1981). Since 1971, researchers have written over 3,900 papers, conducted research studies, and refereed articles and dissertations on Kolb, ELT, and the LSI (Kolb & Kolb, 2015). This cacophony of voices demonstrates how influential the theory put forth by Kolb remains despite criticism (Bergsteiner
& Avery, 2014; Bergsteiner, Avery, & Neumann, 2010; Hopkins, 1993; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015; Manolis, Burns, Assudani, & Chinta, 2013; Peterson, DeCato, & Kolb, 2015). The most recent literature includes over 300 studies, articles, and dissertations, of which the vast majority placed Kolb, ELT, and the LSI within a positive pedagogical light (Kolb & Kolb, 2015).

ELT provides self-awareness for both the learner and the teacher that increases pedagogical efficiency (Al-Qahtani & Al-Gahtani, 2014; Azer, Guerrero, & Walsh, 2013; Baasanjav, 2013; Damrongpanit, 2014; Finch, Peacock, Lazdowski, & Hwang, 2015; Kolb & Peterson, 2013; Lee & Lee, 2013; O'Leary & Stewart, 2013; Peterson et al., 2015; Rangel et al., 2015; Thomas & Gentzler, 2013). This self-awareness pedagogy is what Kolb (2015) referred to as deliberate experiential learning – “experiencing with awareness to create meaning and make choices” (p. 338). ELT provides a vivid framework in which to understand learning (Baasanjav, 2013; Cameron, Mulholland, & Branson, 2013; Chen et al., 2013; Clark, Threeton, & Ewing, 2014; Dernova, 2015; Finch et al., 2015; Hwang, Chiu, & Chen, 2014; Hwang, Sung, Hung, & Huang, 2013; Kolb & Peterson, 2013; Konak, Clark, & Nasereddin, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2013; Rangel et al., 2015; Thomas & Gentzler, 2013; Williams, Brown, & Etherington, 2013). This framework, as noted by Kolb (2015), provides opportunities for the lifelong learner as they “understand and adapt . . . through deliberate experiential learning” (p. 335). ELT affords the teacher as learner a framework in their attempt to grasp and transform through their experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age.

Kolb (2015) stated in his latest text, “Experiential learning theory has been widely accepted as a useful framework for learner-centered educational innovation, including instructional design, curriculum development, and life-long learning” (p. xxv). ELT defines learning as a process where transformation of experience creates knowledge, providing a
complex and realistic model for guiding pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). Learning is a transaction between the learner and the environment – a “learning space [that includes] physical, cultural, institutional, social, and psychological aspects” (Kolb, 2015, p. 288). As such, I believe ELT afforded a theoretical framework in which to examine the academic dishonesty in the digital age phenomenon in that it provided a holistic model of the learning process and a multilinear model of adult development (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015).

Within ELT, Kolb (2015) described the process by which an individual socializes into a profession as an “intense experience that instills not only knowledge and skills but also fundamental reorientation of one’s identity . . . a professional identity” (p. 261). For the teacher, this professional identity begins to develop as they first enter their educational “Learning Spaces” (Kolb, 2015, p. 288). The teachers’ learning spaces consist of more than brick and mortar but include “physical, cultural, institutional, social, and psychological aspects” (Kolb, 2015, p. 288) which come together to shape the professional identity of each teacher. ELT describes learning as the transaction between the individual and this environment (Kolb, 2015). For the teacher, their position in this learning space defines “their experiences and thus defines their ‘reality’” (Kolb, 2015, p. 289).

The professional identity that teachers develop due to their experiences encounters a problem due to the “nature of professional careers in a rapidly changing society” (Kolb, 2015, p. 262). Such is the case for the teacher in the 21st century classroom where the digital age, as Giddens (1991) asserted, “eclipse[s] the reality” (as cited in Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2014, p. 49) within their learning spaces. What is more, teachers enter their learning space with an “already-developed learning style” (Kolb, 2105, p. 281), adding to the intensity of the
experiences encountered. Kolb (2015) asserted it is through the transformation of such experiences that learning will occur (p. 49). Learning arises for the teacher “from the resolution of creative tension” (Kolb, 2015, p. 51) as they spiral through the four learning modes of ELT.

As high school general education teachers experience academic dishonesty in the digital age, they will enter into a “recursive process that is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned” (Kolb, 2015, p. 51). Spiraling through the experiential learning cycle modes of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation, teachers will learn and adapt their professional identity due to the perception they have of academic dishonesty in the digital age. As stated by Kolb (2015), “One’s position in [such a] learning space defines their experience and thus defines their ‘reality’” (p. 291). The learning style of each person (Kolb, 2015) determines what this position is. Understanding with what learning styles, what role, high school general education teachers experience academic dishonesty in the digital age provided insight into their position in this learning space, thus providing a perspective on how their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice.

Academics and educators acknowledge ELT learning styles as fundamental concepts towards understanding and explaining human learning behavior (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). The use of the Kolb’s LSI is widespread, as is addressing the criticism of its validity (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb & Kolb, 2013; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). Furthermore, the recently developed Kolb KERP establishes a dynamic matching model of educators’ roles within their educational experiences (Kolb et al., 2014). Using the KERP in conjunction with the ELT learning styles, the educator has a dynamic model to guide practice within the educational experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). Such a model provides the learner an awareness that enables an epistemological shift in their understanding (Doos,
Johansson, & Wilhelmson, 2014; Groves, Leflay, Smith, Bowd, & Barber, 2013). The KERP provided a descriptive framework that gives voice to each educator’s lived experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age within the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences in their learning space (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015; van Manen, 1990). As such, Kolb’s (2015) ELT provided a framework that placed academic dishonesty in the digital age in the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences.

The successful teacher, according to Kolb (2015), organizes and spirals their pedagogical activities “in such a manner that they address all four learning modes – experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting” (p. 301). The Teaching and Learning Spiral of ELT provides a framework that enables “higher level learning and to transfer knowledge to other contexts” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302). For the teachers experiencing academic dishonesty in the context of the digital age, “successive iterations” (Kolb, 2015, p. 186) through the learning spiral, touching base at experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting, creates a change in their professional identity as their role evolves within the broader pedagogical context. However, as Kolb et al. (2014) discovered, teachers tend to teach the way they learn. Understanding the preferred role of the teacher as they progress through the learning spiral will provide insight into how they describe their experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age.

Kolb (2015) stated the role of the teacher “is a patterned set of behaviors that emerge in response to the learning environment” (p. 303). KERP was designed to aid teachers in their understanding of their “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) and guide them through the learning spiral. The KERP identifies/describes four roles in which teachers use to “maximize learning” (Kolb, 2015, p. 304) as they spiral through four modes of ELT. Those roles include:

- The Facilitator. This role maintains a warm affirming style that emphasizes an
inside-out learning style;

- The Expert. This role is a reflective, authoritative style that systemically analyzes and organizes content;
- The Evaluator. This role incorporates a results-oriented style that structures performance objectives for learning;
- The Coach. This role applies a collaborative style to apply knowledge, often creating development plans and feedback plans (adapted from Kolb et al., 2014, p. 220).

Figure 2. Personal KERP survey results (Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc. 2013b).

Each of these roles has the teacher engaging the learning spiral in “a unique manner, using one mode of grasping experience and one mode of transforming experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 303). The roles are not fixed but resemble “a habit of learning” (Kolb, 2015, p. 304) nurtured in teachers though their experiences and choices in the development of their professional identity. Due to such experiences and choices, teachers will have a “definite preference for one or two roles over the others” (Kolb, 2015, p. 305). Per my own results, the dominant preferences
for me are the Expert Role and Coach Role as depicted in Figure 2.

Such role preferences provide the “entry point through which learners enter a particular learning space” (Kolb, 2015, p. 305). The learning space for this study is the general education teachers’ classroom in rural districts in southwest Ohio. The KERP provided this study a gateway of understanding on the entry point each teacher takes into the learning space of academic dishonesty in the digital age. Kolb’s ELT, including the newly expanded Educator Roles, provided an ideal framework in which to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio.

Related Literature

As previously noted, there is a concentration of research on academic dishonesty at the post-secondary level with few qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of high school teachers regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age. The purpose of this section is to provide a tight synthesis of previous research while linking it to this study. It begins with a review of the literature related to academic dishonesty then moves on to the digital age classroom, the context of the classroom teacher, and finally, to the recognition that the rural influence is a distinct educational environment.

Academic Dishonesty

The headlines of the May 11, 2016, article reads, “High-tech devices take cheating to new level in Thai schools” (Associated Press, 2016). During the May seventh and eighth medical school admission tests for Rangsit University in Thailand, several students were caught using “‘smart’ glasses and smartwatches . . . to cheat” (Storm, 2016, para. 2) on those tests, in real time. The dean of the University, Arthrit Ourairat, posted a picture of the smart devices on
Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/arhit.ourairat.9/posts/1012866002136568). Because of this incident, students are now met with much higher security at testing sites and could face possible prison time if caught cheating (Asian Correspondent, 2016; Wee, 2016). However, this incident did not come without warning. Counter (2014) described in their headline that, “With shrinking wireless devices, online classes and the emergence of wearable technology, it’s easier than ever to cheat.” Academic dishonesty is not a new problem, but there are now “New frontiers in high-tech cheating” (Counter, 2014, para. 1) and a greater need to understand the phenomenon.

Academic dishonesty among students is not a new topic of research. Drake (1941) reported 76 years ago that by the mid-20th century, there were significant amounts of research on the topic. From the first large-scale study published on academic dishonesty, Bowers (1964) noted that “A bibliography comprising over 400 references to newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and books dealing with the problem of academic dishonesty [had] been compiled” (p. 5). At the conclusion of that study, the author put forth that there are numerous situational and contextual factors that influence students’ decisions on cheating (Bowers, 1964). The decades following Drake and Bowers saw an increase in the research conducted concerning academic dishonesty, focusing on those situational and contextual factors (Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001).

The most prominent voice, and oft-cited source, within the research concerning academic dishonesty, is that of Donald L. McCabe – referred to as the “founding father” of academic integrity research (Todd, 2014). The roughly three decades of research by McCabe has created concern among educational circles because, as Todd (2014) stated, “McCabe’s research has raised concerns that if students will cheat for grades, their cavalier attitudes about integrity could
carry over to other areas of their lives” (para. 4). McCabe noted the one phrase from students that distressed him the most after the many years of research concerning academic dishonesty is, “It’s no big deal” (Todd, 2014, para. 2). It is with that concern that this literature review will begin its review of the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

During the early ‘90s, McCabe (1993) examined academic dishonesty from the perspective of faculty. In this study, McCabe (1993) noted most previous research on academic dishonesty focused on individual characteristics of the cheater or with situational and institutional attributes. The most important finding from this study, according to the researcher, is faculty who observe students cheating are typically reluctant to report the issue, generally wanting to deal directly with the student (McCabe, 1993). In the decades since this study, further research confirms this attitude (Beasley, 2014; Elliot et al., 2014; Frenken, 2013; Imram & Nordin, 2013; Jurdi, Hage, & Chow, 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014).

In the years since Drake (1941), Bowers (1964), and McCabe (1993), the rate of academic dishonesty has not subsided (Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006; Elliot et al., 2014; Galloway, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; Jurdi et al., 2012; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe, 2001; McCabe et al., 2001; Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014). Recent studies have sought to more fully understand academic dishonesty by moving away from the demographic predictors to understanding the psychological and social/contextual connections (Brown-Wright et al., 2013; Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Griffin, Bolkan, & Goodboy, 2015; Hamlen, 2012; Imram & Nordin, 2013; Kauffman & Young, 2015; MacGregor & Stuebs, 2012; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Olafson, Schraw, Nadelson, Nadelson, & Kehrwald, 2013; Patall & Leach, 2015; Schmelkin et al., 2010;
In those early studies, students participating in academic dishonesty believed it to be a normal practice with few consequences (McCabe, 1999) while thrusting the blame on others—even faculty (McCabe, 1993; McCabe, 1999). However, those same students note the need to establish a dialogue between faculty and students to help create an environment of honesty and integrity (McCabe, 1993; McCabe, 1999). Later research reinforces this notion that faculty and students alike are concerned with academic dishonesty (Galloway, 2012; Jurdi et al., 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014). Although the concern is there, various forms of academic dishonesty have radically increased since those first studies (Elliott et al., 2014; Estep & Olsen, 2011; Galloway, 2012; Hamlen, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; Jurdi et al., 2012; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001; Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Thomas & Sassi, 2011).

McCabe (1999) noted, “Information technologies have opened up new opportunities for academic dishonesty” (p. 683). With the exponential rise in digital technology, this is truer now than when first stated over 18 years ago. The digital-native students of today think and learn differently than the traditional mindset, thus giving rise to e-cheating, which is almost double the rate of normal academic dishonesty (Armstrong, 2014; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Hamlen, 2012; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; Nelson et al., 2013; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et
al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). The digital age’s impact on academic dishonesty is of critical consideration. However, recent studies indicate academic dishonesty, including within the digital age, is best managed through proper attention given to the supporting factors, pointing to the classroom teacher to pursue the needed strategies within the proper context (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013).

In the period from those reports of Drake (1941), Bowers (1964), and McCabe (1993), the predominant area of research on academic dishonesty has concentrated on the post-secondary level. Few have provided a voice for the lived experiences of those involved with the phenomenon at the high school level, teacher, and students alike. McCabe, in a study from 1999 and then in again from 2001, provided a glimpse of the experiences of the high school student regarding academic dishonesty. Within these two studies, in speaking to high school students across the country, the author found that although many believed it to be wrong, students felt the need to cheat while primarily shifting the blame elsewhere (McCabe, 1999: McCabe, 2001). Further complicating this issue are 21st-century technologies. As McCabe (2001) noted, the digital age “raises new and significant problems for both students and teachers” (para. 15) with regards to the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

**The Digital Age Classroom**

Today’s students were born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives – radically changing their thinking and learning (Abersek & Abersek, 2012; Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Bates, 2013; Charles, 2012; Christensen et al., 2011; Cole et al., 2014; Hamlen; 2012; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; Kereluik et al., 2013; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; Nelson et al., 2013; Ng, 2012; Sheppard & Brown, 2014; Stogner et al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012;
Within such a digital age, there would be an assumed impact of the technology infusion in the classroom, for teaching, learning, or personal use, on the academic dishonesty phenomenon among students. In fact, research indicates that a large number of students, upwards of 80% in some cases, use technology to engage in academic dishonesty (Charles, 2012; Kaufman & Young, 2015; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013). However, the incorporation of 21st century technologies into student learning has blurred the lines for students on what is considered academic dishonesty since they consider the use of such technology as legitimate learning tools, thus changing the dynamics of the classroom in the digital age (Armstrong, 2014; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014).

In that 2014 interview, McCabe, the “founding father” of research on academic integrity, lamentably admitted his most recent research indicates little has changed regarding student attitudes and practices in regard to academic dishonesty and the influx of the digital age only offers new ways for students to cheat (Todd, 2014). This wave of technology, as research indicates, has dramatically changed the very nature of everyday life (Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Christensen et al., 2011; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). This dramatic shift touches the world of teaching and learning with the rise of the digital age classroom.

At the end of the 20th century, McCabe (1999) soberly forecasted the rise of the digital age would only pave the way for further academic dishonesty among students. Recent studies further this thought, indicating 21st century technologies have changed the power dynamics in the classroom in that it has transformed how students think and learn (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Bates, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Hamlen, 2012; Kereluik et al., 2013; Ng,
The digital age has become a “disruptive innovation” (Christensen et al., 2011) within the educational system, creating an environment in which the digital natives sitting in the classroom view paper, pencil, and textbooks as out of touch with their daily lives (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Bates, 2013; Charles, 2012; Christensen et al., 2011; Hamlen, 2012; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). This concern, in turn, translates back to the forewarning that McCabe (1999) gave almost two decades ago – “[Digital] technologies have opened up new opportunities for academic dishonesty” (p. 683).

Now, at a time when the classroom is seeing the third generation of digital natives (Wang et al., 2014), the familiarity these students have with the technology does not translate well into information literacy and academic pursuits in those same classrooms (Bates, 2013; Charles, 2012; Hamlen, 2012; Kereluik et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). This problem is due in part from the disconnect students experience of their own personal use of technology for predominantly recreational pursuits versus that for academic purposes (Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). This disconnect may come from the lack of 21st century teaching models for the digital natives to experience (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; Wang et al., 2014). As Yong and Gates (2014) described it:

When today’s students come into the classroom - instead of copying down notes written on the whiteboard, they are more likely now to take a snapshot using their smart phone or tablet PC; instead of having face-to-face conversation in the class, they post their updates and messages to Facebook; instead of going to the library to search for information, they use Google to search the Internet. (p. 102)
This radically new way of thinking and learning that Yong and Gates (2014) describe also affects how students view academic dishonesty. With access to such a broad swath of data and information with digital media, especially using their preferred mobile devices, the understanding of what is considered academic dishonesty for students has become complex (Charles, 2012; Nelson et al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012; Yong & Gates, 2014). The students of the digital age view the use of the technology, often accessing web-based resources, as legitimate learning tools and not academic dishonesty (Atif, 2013; Cole et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). Students do not view themselves as dishonest, pointing to this as normal in the ‘real world,’ and that it is up to the educators to adjust (Cole et al., 2014; McCabe, 1999; Nelson et al., 2013). This mindset, in conjunction with the informal learning, learned through gaming and social media technologies has facilitated academic dishonesty (Cole et al., 2014; Hamlen, 2013; Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Stogner et al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012).

Recent studies indicated that academic dishonesty has increased, with digital based cheating being at almost double the pace of increase as traditional cheating practices (Hamlen, 2013; Josien & Broderick, 2013; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001; Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Stogner et al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012). The majority of this research on academic dishonesty with the use of digital technologies has focused predominantly on the post-secondary level. The studies acknowledged that academic dishonesty is an issue within the elementary and high schools, eventually bringing such culture to higher education (Nelson et al., 2013; Stogner et al., 2013), but few studies have provided a voice for the lived experiences of those involved with the phenomenon at the primary and secondary levels, teacher, and students alike. Such research on academic dishonesty is needed to shed light on the
phenomenon for as McCabe noted in a recent interview, “Students aren’t admitting to [cheating] as much and they’re doing things (taking material off the Internet) that they don’t consider to be cheating” (Todd, 2014, para. 9).

**The Teacher in Context**

Teacher and student alike have an interest in addressing this rise in academic dishonesty, especially in light of how the digital age has affected how learning occurs in the 21st century classroom (Armstrong, 2014; Charles, 2012; Galloway, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001). In contrast, recent research indicates, “a positive trend in student perceptions of academic dishonesty” (Molnar, 2015, p. 144), with today’s students finding “academic dishonesty less acceptable than those students of five or more years ago” (Molnar, 2015, p. 144). However, the same research indicates a significant rise in such behaviors as copying written homework or looking off of someone’s exam (Molnar, 2015). Such findings may be due to students not viewing themselves as dishonest, or not agreeing with defined academic dishonesty, or even to their unwillingness to report such behavior (Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013). The role of the classroom teacher cannot be understated. Further, research indicated managing such academic dishonesty occurs through proper attention being given to the supporting factors, pointing to the classroom teacher to provide students the needed environment and strategies to successfully combat the academic dishonesty phenomenon (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Minckler, 2013; Peklaj et al., 2012; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014).

Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2014) noted the research of Giddens (1991), who described how the digital age is increasing at such a pace that it “eclipse[s] the reality of relationship between time and place . . . affect[ing] pre-existing social practices and modes of behavior” (p.
49). The same is true for the classroom. Education must change to meet the needs of the 21st century learners of the digital age who have become a disruption within education (Christensen et al., 2011). Such a disruption reinforces what teachers and students call for – a reasonable and balanced perspective on the 21st century classroom (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Crook, 2012; Galloway, 2012; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Yong & Gates, 2014). This highlights the need for a better understanding of academic dishonesty in the digital age by looking to the classroom teachers’ “experience[s] with awareness to create meaning and make choices” (Kolb, 2015, p. 338) as they provide students the needed strategies to successfully employ technologies in an honest way (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013).

Early research pointed to the teacher in the context of the classroom, shaping the culture of the classroom through their pedagogical practices, addresses the academic dishonesty phenomenon most effectively (McCabe, 1993; McCabe, 1999; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001). However, some of that same early research indicates educators are reluctant to try to stem this phenomenon even though they have an interest in addressing it (McCabe, 1993; McCabe et al., 2001). Recent research confirms this mindset (Elliot et al., 2014; Frenken, 2013; Imram & Nordin, 2013; Jurdı et al., 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014). With the exponential rise in digital technology and the increase in academic dishonesty (Hamlen, 2013; Josien & Broderick, 2013; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001; Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Stogner et al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012), understanding the teacher in context of academic dishonesty in the digital age is deemed ever more crucial.
Students entering today’s classroom were born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives – radically changing their thinking and learning (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). However, they often work with teachers that have noteworthy generational differences in their experiences with the same 21st century technologies, and who are reluctant to adapt. Thus, not supporting a positive environment where academic dishonesty in the digital age is effectively reduced (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Christensen et al., 2011; Cole et al., 2014; Peklaj et al., 2012; Pounder, 2014). In such non-engaging environments, today’s digital natives choose not to learn within the traditional pedagogy, turning to academic dishonesty out of a sense of justice (Egbert & Roe, 2014; Imram & Nordin, 2013; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; MacGregor & Stuebs, 2012; Olafson et al., 2013; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011).

The conflicting differences found within the 21st century classroom provides opportunities for experiential learning to take place for the educator as they attempt to understand and adapt to the new circumstances they experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). As noted by Cooper (2013), today’s educators who are “seeking to increase engagement must look beyond the traits of the individual students to also consider the nature of the teaching practices” (p. 392). This transformational experience provides a complex and realistic model for guiding pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). Research indicated that educators who reflect on their teaching practices in regards to student behaviors and preferred learning environments, and act upon it, provide educational motivation for both students and themselves (Abersek & Abersek, 2012; Cooper, 2013; Corso et al., 2013; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; Lawlor et al., 2015; Minckler, 2013; O’Sullivan, 2015; Roorda et al.,
2011; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Washor & Mojkowski, 2014; Williford, Maier, Downer, Pianta, & Howes, 2011; Wimberley, 2014). Using such guided pedagogy, the teachers provide proper attention to the underlying psychological motives and supporting factors of this phenomenon thus creating an environment in which the students are less likely to participate in academic dishonesty (Corso et al., 2013; Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; Karanezi & Rapti, 2015; Peklaj et al., 2012; Pounder, 2014; Roorda et al., 2011; Wismath, 2013).

With each study since those reports of Drake (1941), Bowers (1964), and McCabe (1993), there has been a call for further focus and research to provide a meaningful framework and delineation of academic dishonesty (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013). The digital age, as McCabe (1999) forewarned, only paved the way for further academic dishonesty among students. With such emphasis on the 21st century classroom educator to curb this phenomenon, the problem is that the majority of this research concerning the role of the teacher in context and academic dishonesty has focused predominantly on the post-secondary level. The studies acknowledged that academic dishonesty is an issue, pointing to the educators to develop the strategies to manage the phenomenon (Charles, 2012; Kereluik et al., 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Roorda et al., 2011; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Zhao, 2015), but few studies have provided a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding this phenomenon. Such research sheds new light on the academic dishonesty in the digital age.

**Rural Influence**

Rural schools are typically the centerpiece of the community in which they serve, an institution connecting generations of families (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Lin et al., 2014; Wilcox et al., 2014; Witte & Sheridan, 2011). As Tieken (2014) noted in her recent work, *Why Rural
“Schools Matter,” “[the rural school] is more than a job or an institution; it’s an identity” (p. 65).

However, there is a deficiency of rural educational research (Azano, 2014; Bailey, 2013; Burton et al., 2013; Hardré & Hennessey, 2013; Howley, Howley, & Yahn, 2014; Tieken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). What research is available tends to marginalize rural life and individuals, casting a negative light on the people and places, often portraying the rurality as the problem that needs to be fixed (Azano, 2014; Bailey, 2013; Burton et al., 2013; Howley et al., 2014; Koziol et al., 2015; Tieken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). As noted earlier, the rural educational environment is regularly viewed as static (Anderson & Lonsdale, 2014) and all too often mismeasured (Donehower, 2014). Within educational research, as ascribed by Azano (2014), “Rural is the neglected ‘R’ in culturally relevant pedagogy” (p. 62). There is a call for relevant research aimed at the rural influence in education (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Koziol et al., 2015; Tieken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). As Donehower (2014) described, “In the United States, ‘rural’ is a slippery term in the demographic sense” (p. 168). However, defining rural is critical for conducting educational research because, as one researcher stated, “Choosing a rural definition influences the entire scope of a study” (Koziel, et al., 2015, p. 2). Conducting research from the “standpoint of the rural” (Roberts, 2014, p. 135) establishes a rural definition. Such a standpoint enables research that “values the situatedness and subjectivity of rural places and rural meanings” (Roberts, 2014, p. 145).

Although there exists no universal definition for rural, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provided one for rural education when it revised its definitions in 2006 of schools based on new classification system that relies less on population size and county boundaries than proximity to urbanized areas (NCES, n.d.). Accordingly, the NCES defined rural schools into three subcategories (fringe, distant, remote) based on their location to centers
of urban areas (NCES, n.d.). The state of Ohio, with the 2013 School Districts Typology, defined rural education school districts to be “High Student Poverty & Small Student Population [or] Average Student Poverty & Very Small Student Population” (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Based on the NCES definition, there are close to 10 million students enrolled in rural school districts, comprising over 20% of all public schools (Johnson et al., 2014). Within the state of Ohio, the rural student population is the fourth highest among the 50 states, with more than one in four Ohio students enrolled in a rural school (Johnson et al., 2014). Moreover, the rural school enrollment continues to outgrow non-rural enrollment (Johnson et al., 2014). As such, the call for relevant research targeting the rural influence in education is well justified.

The rural school classification does not change the expectations within a school system. In fact, with the complex and varied circumstances that come with rural educational settings, unique circumstances due to these locations and socioeconomics exist (Azano, 2014; Bailey, 2013; Fishman, 2015; Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Koziol et al., 2015; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Tieken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014; Wilcox et al., 2014). Such unique circumstances often find students and teachers at a loss when it comes to access to educational resources, including technology (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Bailey, 2013; Brown, 2010; Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Lin et al., 2014; Plopper & Conaway, 2013; Shoulders & Krei, 2015; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). Combine with that the greater emphasis on success and academic integrity that come with the high expectations of the College- and Career-Ready Standards (Achieve, Inc., 2016; Ohio Department of Education, 2015b; United States Department of Education, 2010). As one researcher phrased it, “The rural story in America is a complicated one” (Azano, 2014, p. 65). For the rural school districts,
which defines the very identity of the community, success under such complex and demanding conditions is vital for the well-being of the region (Hendrickson, 2012; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Tiecken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014).

Rural school districts, and the communities they serve, all share unique characteristics that provide a distinctiveness from their urban/suburban counterparts (Burton et al., 2013; Fishman, 2015; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Tiecken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). Some consider this distinctiveness as an obstacle within educational research, but it provides an untapped opportunity for pedagogical insight (Burton et al., 2013; Tiecken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2015). Examination of academic dishonesty in the digital age from the perspective of those within the rural school districts provided needed insight from a rural standpoint (Roberts, 2014) by repositioning the perspective to within the rural community (Henderson & Lennon, 2014). With research indicating perceptions of academic dishonesty are culturally conditioned (Heckler & Forde, 2014); there is a gap of understanding regarding the phenomenon within the rural communities. Similar research indicates the role of the researcher needs to be focused on “participation and partnerships” (Hamm, 2014, p. 88) within the rural community that they find similitude due to their “rural background, rural experiences and rural stories that resonate with potential research respondents” (Bartholomaeus, Halsey, & Corbett, 2014, p. 60). This most recent literature analysis provides the lens by which to give voice to the lived experiences of rural high school general education teachers regarding the academic dishonesty phenomenon (Donehower, 2014; Hamm, 2014; van Manen, 1990).

The available research on rural schools points to a sense of family among staff and students (Bailey, 2013; Klar & Brewer, 2014). This feeling may come from the school being the centerpiece of the community, connecting the generations, and providing a cultural identity
(Hassel & Dean, 2015; Lin et al., 2014; Tieken, 2014; Wilcox et al., 2014; Witte & Sheridan, 2011). Within this educational family, the research indicated the classroom teacher to be the linchpin for the success of students in rural education (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Hardré & Hennessey, 2013; Hendrickson, 2012; Klar & Brewer, 2014; Wilcox et al., 2014). Research also indicated these same teachers are different from their urban/suburban counterparts, being professionally isolated and at times not highly qualified (Burton et al., 2013; Fishman, 2015). However, it is the rural classroom teacher, with their unique insight into the complex challenges of the rural educational experience, which is best able to provide a voice for the lived experiences and perceived need for pedagogical change regarding academic dishonesty (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Hardré & Hennessey, 2013; Hendrickson, 2012; Klar & Brewer, 2014; Tiecken, 2014; Wilcox et al., 2014; White & Corbett, 2014).

The call for further educational research within the rural setting specifies exactly the type needed. The traditional approach to research would not provide an authentic look into the culture nor dispel myths regarding its distinctiveness (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Fishman, 2015; Hardré & Hennessey, 2013; Tieken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). As one report indicates, “Engaging rurality is apparently not easy” (Howley et al., 2014). Those calling for this exploration describe the best means to engage the rurality will build upon a relationship where research conducted focuses for and not on rural education, providing an appropriate narrative (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Koziol et al., 2015; Teiken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). Furthering this thought, Brann-Barrett (2014) stated the “work of researchers is best rooted in the communities they aim to serve” (p. 75). As such, qualitative research commits to process, and researchers strongly recommend engagement to deepen the theoretical and pedagogical discussion of rural education (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Hamm, 2014;
Koziol et al., 2015; Teiken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014).

It is in light of these unique circumstances that academic dishonesty in the digital age needs exploration within the rural setting. In so doing, it demonstrates the relevance of rurality by providing application and understanding to a wider pedagogical audience (Burton et al., 2013; Tiecken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). As noted, there are few studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding this phenomenon. Such qualitative research sheds light on the academic dishonesty phenomenon in the digital age, filling a gap in the research by turning up the volume on these voices (Gristy, 2014).

**Summary**

Decade’s worth of research establishes there is a recognized problem of academic dishonesty that influences academic integrity throughout an individual’s education and career (Bowers, 1964; Brown-Wright et al., 2013; Elliott et al., 2014; Galloway, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Schmelkin et al., 2010). More recent research validates there is an established problem of academic dishonesty, starting as early as the primary schools, that influences academic integrity throughout an individual’s post-secondary education and career (Brown-Wright et al., 2013; Elliott et al., 2014; Galloway, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Schmelkin et al., 2010).

The rise of 21st century technologies further complicates the academic dishonesty phenomenon. Today’s students were born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives – radically changing their thinking and learning (Armstrong, 2014; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Yong & Gates, 2014). Research indicates academic dishonesty is best managed through proper attention given to the classroom teacher incorporating needed strategies such as unique assignments, proper
technology tool use, clear communication of expectations, and providing students an environment where they get an accurate understanding of the honest academic behavior (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013).

The rural school setting does not change the expectations within a school system regarding academic integrity. Although recent research speaks to the digital divide that may exist within the rural setting (Armstrong, 2014; Dornisch, 2013; Hassel & Dean, 2015; Wang et al., 2014), it is acknowledged that the 21st century learner is a “technology connected generation” (Brann-Barret, 2014), even within the rural classroom. With the recognition that the “rural influence” (Roberts, 2014, p. 139) is a distinct educational environment where shifting situations come with the “intensity of rurality” (Darling, 2014, p. 153), the academic dishonesty phenomenon in the digital age becomes even more complex (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). As such, an investigation into the rural general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age will deepen the theoretical and pedagogical discussion of the academic dishonesty phenomenon by providing the research a rural standpoint (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Koziol et al., 2015; Roberts, 2014; Teiken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014).

As noted earlier, today’s educators are considering the nature of their teaching as they attempt to engage students in the digital age (Cooper, 2013). The entry point each teacher takes into that process of understanding provides clarity. Through the guiding theory of Kolb’s (2015) ELT, including the newly expanded Educator Roles and the Nine Style Learning Cycle, the researcher is provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of rural general education high school teachers as they learn, grow, and develop concerning academic dishonesty.
in the digital age. This transformational experience provides a complex and realistic model for
guiding pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015) as well as providing a
voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding
academic dishonesty in the digital age. As such, this research may fill the gap in the literature
regarding this phenomenon.

Within this chapter, I outlined a review of the literature related to this study. I also
explored the phenomenon of interest academic dishonesty in the digital age within the theoretical
framework of ELT. Whereas the purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological was to
describe high school general education teachers’ experiences in southwest Ohio concerning this
phenomenon, this chapter provided a review of the literature related to academic dishonesty,
technology infusion with teaching and learning, the context of the classroom teacher, and rural
education. The chapter concluded with a summary of how current literature provides a context
to fill the needed gap of few qualitative studies providing a voice for the lived experiences of
high school teachers regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The intent of this study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. At the outset of the research, I defined academic dishonesty in the digital age as student use of digital technologies to receive credit for academic work beyond their own ability or their willingness to attempt said work. My desire was to provide a rich and descriptive voice for the general education teachers’ shared experiences with the phenomenon. As such, I employed a hermeneutical phenomenology with its emphasis on “lived experience . . . and interpreting the ‘texts’ of life” (Creswell, 2013, p. 79). The theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT as it provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of teachers as they learn, grow, and develop concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age.

This chapter includes a description of the research design and explains the rationale for such a choice. It provides a description of the participants and the sampling techniques used to select them for the study. Additionally, it explains the researcher’s role in the study, the data collection process, instruments used (Kolb, 2015) as well as a description of the IPA process used in data analysis. Finally, a presentation puts forth a discussion of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Design

As noted earlier, the call for further educational research within the rural setting specifies qualitative research that is committed to process and engagement to deepen the theoretical and pedagogical discussion of rural education (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Hamm, 2014; Koziol et al., 2015; Teiken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). Phenomenology, as described by van
Manen (1990), “is a systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience” (p. 10). This is what van Manen (1990) referred to as the “essence or nature of an experience” (p. 10). As such, I chose a phenomenological research design due to this study examining the lived experiences of rural general education teachers concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age to capture the essence of the experience.

Phenomenology is not meant to provide a generalizable theory, but rather insights into the world experienced (van Manen, 1990). Within a phenomenological research design, regarding perception as the primary source of knowledge, I could focus “less on the interpretations . . . and more on a description of the experiences of participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). Thus, the first-hand accounts of lived experiences of teachers concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age validate a phenomenological research design. Using hermeneutical phenomenology, I attempted to interpret and make sense of the teachers’ experiences of the academic dishonesty in the digital age as expressed by the teachers by “looking and describing and then looking again and describing again” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90), focusing “on understanding [them] within the context of their lifeworld” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 201). It is within hermeneutical phenomenology that the research can be both descriptive and interpretive as it “attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 11).

Hermeneutical phenomenology, as noted by van Manen (1990), maintains “a view of pedagogy as an expression of the whole” (p. 7) while searching for the “fullness of living” (p. 12). Employing the specific phenomenological method known as IPA provided a method to achieve this goal. IPA provided the flexibility to work with each participant to gain a thick and rich understanding into the phenomenon. The development of IPA occurred in 1996 as a
qualitative approach centered in psychology, exploring how people ascribe meaning to their experiences as they interact with the environment (Smith et al., 2009).

**Research Questions**

**RQ1:** How do high school general education teachers describe their experience with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?

**RQ2:** How do participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the digital age?

**RQ3:** How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?

**Setting**

As cited previously, research into the rural general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age will deepen the theoretical and pedagogical discussion of the academic dishonesty phenomenon by providing the research a rural standpoint (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Koziol et al., 2015; Roberts, 2014; Teiken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). The “work of researchers [being] rooted in the communities they aim to serve” (Brann-Barrett, 2014, p. 75) captured this rural standpoint. Thus, I incorporated purposeful sampling to select the setting for this study as it “focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 273). As noted by Patton (2002), “Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 273). Creswell (2013) also stated that such a selection method will “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156). As such, it is through purposeful sampling that I gained insight and in-depth
understanding of the academic dishonesty phenomenon in the rural setting that was central to this study.

The setting purposely chosen for the study is the KLLR-4, a pseudonym for a nine-county region in southwest Ohio comprised of 68 districts, 27 classified as rural (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). The state of Ohio consists of 609 districts with 38% classified as rural (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). The KLLR-4 make-up approximately 11% of Ohio’s rural school districts (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). With determining in advance that a rural standpoint is need for this study, the KLLR-4 provided the information-rich setting to “purposely inform an understanding” (Creswell, 2013) of the central research guiding question for this study.

The schools within KLLR-4 range in classification from all four major groupings in the Ohio typology: Rural, Small Town, Urban, and Suburban (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Ohio separates each major grouping into two subgroupings as identified in Table 1. At the center of KLLR-4 is Ohio’s sixth largest city (Ohio Demographics, 2016), within a county that has only one rural district out of 16 districts (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). Approximately 81% of the KLLR-4 rural districts reside in only four of the nine KLLR-4 counties (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). As such, the KLLR-4 provided an opportunity for maximum variation sampling (Creswell, 2013; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) due to the range in classification from all four major groupings in the Ohio typology. Enabling such a sampling at the start of the study maximized differences, accurately reflecting and respecting the different perspectives (Creswell,
The classification of the districts selected for the study includes “Rural - High Student Poverty & Small Student Population” or “Rural - Average Student Poverty & Very Small Student Population” (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Like myself, many of the teachers within the KLLR-4 districts can look upon the rural
landscape outside their classroom window, dotted with barns and silos as large farm fields butt up against sports fields as shown in Figure 3. As noted previously, Creswell (2013) stated that a study such as this is “an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences” (p. 80). As such, my background, including personal, cultural, and historical experiences shaped my interpretation throughout the study. The Rural or Small-town typologies of Ohio schools shaped the majority of my educational life, as student and as teacher. I fully acknowledge my affinity for rurality that my background instilled and the “personal connection with rural places, spaces, and people” (Bartholomaeus et al., 2014, p. 59) when choosing to conduct research within the KLLR-4 districts. I am familiar with the setting and sites of KLLR-4, having been an educator within two of the districts in the region over the span of 13 years. I also have worked closely with several educational and governing bodies within KLLR-4 throughout my tenure as an educator as a teacher.

![Figure 3. Typical rural landscape outside a classroom window (Hamblin, 2016).](image)
Those two districts put forth a common goal of graduating all students who are College- and Career-Ready through a learning initiative designed by the Peoples County Consortium LEA (PCCLEA), a pseudonym of a countywide learning collaborative made up of the five county school districts (Gregg et al., 2012). A pillar of that initiative was the implementation of personalized learning through models of best practice through the incorporation of 21st century technology (Gregg et al., 2012). As such, the districts concentrate their efforts on infusing technology and establishing technology policies for students to use in developing 21st century skills with academic integrity (Gregg et al., 2012). Such initiatives exist throughout the state of Ohio due to uniform statewide standards for College- and Career-Readiness (Achieve, Inc., 2016; Ohio Department of Education, 2015b; United States Department of Education, 2010). It was due to my experiences within the two districts of the KLLR-4, where technology integration, student use of technology, and academic dishonesty were topics discussed regularly among staff members due to such learning initiatives that I purposefully chose the KLLR-4 districts for this study. These districts, with their history and present pedagogical initiatives, provide information-rich cases that should provide a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age.

The two districts in which I was a teacher were not part of the study serves as one measure to bracket my personal experiences and views. Bracketing, as described by van Manen (1990), is the “act of suspending one’s various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world” (p. 175). According to Moustakas (1994), this ensured the experiences are “perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (p. 34). However, as Creswell (2013) noted, “Perhaps we need a new definition of . . . bracketing” (p. 83). As noted, I employed the specific hermeneutical phenomenological method known as IPA. Although
bracketing is an essential part of the IPA process (Smith et al., 2009), it is a process that “can only be partially achieved” (Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015, p. 67) since it will be difficult to bracket my preconceptions until I actually engage with the data. As van Manen (1990) asked, “But how does one put out of play everything one knows about an experience that one has selected for study?” (p. 47). It is due to this inability to separate oneself within hermeneutical IPA that I chose not to include the two districts in which I was a teacher as part of the study. In so doing, I was able to suspend my own personal experiences and views to see the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding academic dishonesty phenomenon.

**Participants**

In accordance with the IPA process, I selected the 13 participants on the basis that they “grant . . . access to a particular perspective” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49) of shared experiences on a specific phenomenon and thus represent a “perspective, rather than a population” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49). In this study, the participants represent the perspective of general education high school teachers in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. The study incorporated purposeful sampling to obtain 13 participants who shared the common experience (Creswell, 2013) of academic dishonesty in the digital age.

I solicited referrals of potential participants from administrators within the KLLR-4 secondary schools based on their knowledge of discipline referral records. As noted by Smith (2004), “It is only possible to do the detailed, nuanced analysis associated with IPA on a small sample” (p. 42). Due to the small sample needed for IPA, I began with a select few (10-15) referred participants willing to participate from the general education high school teachers of the selected districts. Per Creswell (2013), I determined “in advance . . . criteria that differentiate[d]
the sites [and] participants” (pp. 156-157) in order to obtain maximum variation. As such, participants ranged in ethnic and gender differences as per each district within KLLR-4.

Sampling in phenomenology, as noted by van Manen (2014), means, “participants are selected based on their knowledge and verbal eloquence to describe a group or (sub)culture to which they belong” (p. 353). With that understanding, throughout the initial interviews of participants, I incorporated snowball sampling to identify “cases of interest from [teachers] who know [teachers] who knows what cases are information-rich” (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). This strategy continued until no additional meaning was obtained, thus reaching saturation.

**Procedures**

First, I submitted the proposal for research and secured Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The second layer of approval was that of the KLLR-4. The purpose of the study and the data collection procedures were explained thoroughly to the administrators of the participating KLLR-4 districts. After obtaining approval of the IRB (see Appendix A), districts, and administrators, I employed snowball sampling to identify potential participants recommended by administrators within the KLLR-4 secondary schools with knowledge of information-rich cases concerning the academic dishonesty phenomenon. There were 13 general education high school teachers who consented to participate in the study (see Appendix B). I first administered Kolb’s Educator Role Profile Inventory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015) to each participant to provide a descriptive framework for each educator’s lived experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age within the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences (van Manen, 1990). Upon completion of the inventory, I conducted a semi-structured, open-ended interview with each participant one-on-one once (Creswell, 2013). Each face-to-face interview was digitally recorded and transcribed by a
professional transcriptionist (Creswell, 2013).

During the interview process, I requested participation in a focus group of the KLLR-4 participants. Upon obtaining the focus group, I conducted a semi-structured, open-ended interview to gain group-level data (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). The focus group interview was also digitally recorded and transcribed (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, upon obtaining permission (Creswell, 2013), I reviewed discipline referral records within each participant’s building.

**The Researcher’s Role**

I am quite familiar with the setting and sites of the KLLR-4. I chose the districts due to their information-rich nature concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age. I have been an educator within two of the KLLR-4 districts over the span of 13 years, and have worked closely with several educational and governing bodies within KLLR-4 district throughout my tenure as an educator. Within those two districts, technology integration, student use of technology, and academic dishonesty were topics regularly discussed among staff members, including myself. These discussions were due in part to the learning initiative designed by the Peoples County Consortium LEA (PCCLEA), which called for the implementation of personalized learning through models of best practice through the incorporation of 21st century technology (Gregg et al., 2012). As such, the teachers within the districts made efforts to infuse technology within their pedagogical practices enable students to develop 21st century skills with academic integrity (Gregg et al., 2012). As noted earlier, the two districts in which I was a teacher was not part of the study as one measure to bracket my personal experiences and views. However, it was difficult to suspend my own personal experiences and views (Rodham et al., 2015) until I actually engaged with the participants. As van Manen (1990) states, “If we simply try to forget
or ignore what we already ‘know’, we might find that the presupposition persistently creep back into our reflections’” (p. 47). Thus, in my role as the researcher who is actively aware of my own personal preconception and their possible influence on this study (Clancy, 2013; Rodham et al., 2015; Shaw, 2010), I maintained a reflective journal in another effort to bracket my perceptions and bias throughout the study (see Appendix E).

To explore the experiences of general education high school teachers who have recently encountered academic dishonesty in the digital age, I approached this study with a social constructivist frame of reference in which I “seek understanding of the world in which [I] live and work” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). The participants in this study were general education high school teachers of the KLLR-4, a pseudonym for a nine-county region in southwest Ohio comprised of 68 districts, with 27 classified as rural (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a), who recently shared the common experience of academic dishonesty in the digital age. The 13 individual participants’ experiences of this phenomenon are central to the study.

My background, including my personal, cultural, and historical experiences shaped my interpretation of the study. A hermeneutical phenomenology allowed the research to adjust to my growing understanding of the experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age (van Manen, 2014) while enabling me to integrate my own views, predispositions, and presuppositions in the interpretative process (Milacci, 2003). My intent was to interpret the experiences of the participants while acknowledging my own biases concerning the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In choosing a research design to explore experiences of a common phenomenon, I decided on a hermeneutical phenomenology as I attempted to interpret and make sense of the teacher’s experiences as expressed by the teachers (Smith et al., 2009; van Manen,
2014). By using the hermeneutical approach, I could be both descriptive and interpretive in my attempt to give voice to the pedagogical experiences of the participants as an “expression of the whole” (van Manen, 1990, p. 7).

**Data Collection**

To triangulate and ensure a trustworthy interpretation of the data, I used multiple means of data collection. Whereas the purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to explore high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age, I employed IPA, which provided the flexibility to work with each participant to gain a thick and rich understanding into the phenomenon. Participants had the opportunity to speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length (Smith et al., 2009).

Principally, I collected data through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews in order to capture the collective voice of the participants (Creswell, 2013). However, all data collection procedures for this study included: (a) interviews, (b) one survey/questionnaire, (c) document analysis and (d) focus group discussions. All participants completed a preliminary questionnaire before the focus group interview. Data collection concluded with a document analysis of records and questionnaire results.

**Interviews**

Following the guidelines of IPA established by Smith et al. (2009), open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were developed to explore the extensive topic of academic dishonesty in the digital age (see Appendix C). The goal of each interview was to understand the lived experience of the rural general education teacher regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age phenomenon. I developed interview questions in order to establish rapport with the
participants and thus enable participants to provide a detailed account of their experiences with the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). I addressed face validity for the questions by developing the interview questions from within existing literature (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007). Before the initial interviews began, the interview questions were provided to experts in the field and my dissertation committee for content validity and ease of understanding (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007). Slight adjustments to the interview questions based on feedback occurred before piloting.

I piloted the proposed questions with two non-participants. This review and piloting process ensured that the interview questions were clear and precise (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007).

In developing the interview protocol, I adopted a semi-structured interview process in which “Interviews with an interview guide containing primarily open-ended questions or probes that can be modified for each interview” (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, n.d., p. 116). Open-ended questions focus on understanding the experiences of the participants while allowing them to expand on their previous comments (Creswell, 2013; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, n.d.), without making “too many assumptions about the participant’s experiences or concerns, or lead them towards particular answers” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 60). Thus, the interview protocol consists of 12 open-ended questions that supported the three research questions along with possible follow-up questions or prompts for explanation and clarification. I designed semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix C) to explore the lived experience of the rural general educations teacher regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age phenomenon. The development of interview questions occurred while being mindful of the original research questions to connect to those research questions (van Manen, 1990). Semi-structured interviews were conducted one-on-one with each teacher once (Creswell, 2013). I conducted each interview at each participant’s respective school, in a place of their choosing. Individual
interview sessions were scheduled for a minimum 60 to 90 minutes, and digitally recorded on multiple devices for redundancy (i.e. through a microphone on my laptop, through a microphone on my smartphone, and a digital voice recorder). A professional transcriptionist transcribed the interviews (Creswell, 2013).

Each interview began with an icebreaker question. According to Milacci (2015), icebreaker questions continue to build a rapport following initial contact. The design of question two and question three established the parameters for the qualifications for the study and demographic information. The development of questions four through ten, in accordance with the IPA process, provided the flexibility to explore the lived experiences of each participant as they develop their ideas and express their concerns with the phenomenon of academic dishonesty in the digital age (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 1990). Question 11 and question 12 afforded participants the opportunity to provide additional information that they felt necessary to clarify their experiences related academic dishonesty in the digital age.

**Surveys/Questionnaires**

As noted by Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (n.d.), surveys are a viable method of data collection that “capture[s] a moment” (p. 144) by “gathering information from individuals using a questionnaire” (p. 143) that “generate[s] standardized, quantifiable, empirical data—as well as some qualitative data” (p. 143). As such, before the focus group interview, all participants completed the free, online Kolb KERP through Experienced Based Learning Systems, Inc. (http://survey.learningfromexperience.com), founded by David and Alice Kolb (Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013a). KERP is a holistic typology of educator roles based on ELT (Kolb, 2015).

This holistic typology describes four roles educators take on as they help learners
maximize learning by moving through the experiential learning cycle of ELT (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). The KERP instrument directions asks participants to choose the item in a pair that best represents their role preference in 32 actual educational situations (Kolb, 2015). This self-reporting instrument is “based on the assumption that preferences for teaching roles emerge from a combination of beliefs about teaching and learning, goals for the educational process, preferred teaching style, and instructional practices” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302).

The KERP instrument was developed based on educational research with a total of 96 items on a 7-point Likert scale with the final questionnaire being administered to a group of 50 human resource specialists (Kolb et al., 2014). The developers used the Cronbach’s alpha to select the 15 items that best represented each of the four roles (Kolb et al., 2014). The developers structured the KERP instrument in a forced-choice paired comparison series of 30 items with each item comparison corresponding to one of four educator roles (Kolb et al., 2014). The results of an administration of the instrument to a normative sample of 222 teachers from four different groups of educators: management, judicial, retirement, and K-12 (Kolb et al., 2014) establish the validity and reliability of the KERP scores. The scores demonstrate highly significant relationships between the learning styles and teaching approaches within ELT (Kolb et al., 2014). In addition, developers computed split-half reliability scores for each role preference and the four combination scores (Kolb et al., 2014). The scores for the role preference were reflective of the normative sample with the four combination scores having strong coefficients (Kolb et al., 2014).

The Kolb (2014) ELT learning styles are acknowledged and extensively used by academics and educators as a fundamental theory towards understanding and explaining human
learning behavior (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). Furthermore, the recently developed KERP establishes for educators a dynamic matching model of their roles within their educational experiences (Kolb et al., 2014). Successful educators, as noted by Kolb (2015), “organize their educational activities in such a manner that they address all four learning modes – experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting” (p. 301). Using the Educator Role Profile in conjunction with the ELT learning styles, the educator has a dynamic model to guide practice within their educational experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015).

ELT describes the teaching/learning paradigm as “something educators do with learners in the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences” (Kolb, 2015, p. 300).

Academic dishonesty is a shared experience in the 21st century classroom. As such, the KERP will be used primarily as a means of providing a more in-depth description of the participants and thus a descriptive framework that gives voice to each educator’s lived experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age within the context of those meaningful relationships and shared experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015; van Manen, 1990).

**Document Analysis**

As noted by Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (n.d.), document analysis is one leg of the triangulation process that “Provides deeper insight into a phenomenon” (p. 162). Analyzing public records is a credible means of this type of data collection (Creswell, 2013). From a qualitative perspective, to fully grasp the significance of such documents, the researcher “needs to study the context in which [they were] produced” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 292). As such, once upon permission from the participating KLLR-4 administrators (Creswell, 2013), I reviewed discipline referral records to acquire the occurrences of recorded academic dishonesty educators had within their respective buildings. Special attention was given to the “digital divide”
(Armstrong, 2014; Dornisch, 2013; Hassel & Dean, 2015; Wang et al., 2014) that may exist within the discipline referral records in regard to academic dishonesty. Each school developed their own discipline referral records but do have minor differences.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups provide an opportunity for the researcher to interact with multiple participants at the same time to gather group level data (Patton, 2015). Focus groups produce deeper and richer insight due to the synergism created by individuals with similar interests discussing a topic of mutual interest data, “yield[ing] the best information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 164). Due to the need for a small sample for the nuanced analysis associated with IPA (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009), I began with four referred participants willing to participate from the general education high school teachers of the selected districts. The focus group questions (see Appendix D) were developed in order to establish rapport with the focus group (Smith et al., 2009), enabling participants to provide a detailed account of their experiences with the KERP and the phenomenon. I developed the interview questions while being mindful of the original research questions to connect to those research questions (van Manen, 1990).

I addressed face validity for the focus group questions by developing the focus group questions from within existing literature (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007). Before the focus group began, I provided the questions to the same reviewers used in reviewing the interview questions for content validity and ease of understanding (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007). Adjustments to the focus group questions based upon feedback occurred before piloting. I piloted the proposed questions with the same two non-participants as the interview questions. This review and piloting process ensured that the focus group questions were clear and precise (Creswell, 2013; Gall et al., 2007).
There was one focus group, consisting of four teachers from the participating KLLR-4 districts who agreed to participate during the initial interview. The focus group protocol consisted of 10 open-ended questions that support the three research questions along with possible follow-up questions or prompts for explanation and clarification. I designed the semi-structured focus group questions (see Appendix D) to explore the lived experience of the rural general educations teacher in regard to academic dishonesty in the digital age phenomenon. I conducted a semi-structured interview with the focus group once (Patton, 2015). The interview was conducted at an agreed upon location within the KLLR-4, in a classroom of one of the districts. The group interview session was scheduled for a minimum 45 to 60 minutes, digitally recorded on multiple devices, and transcribed (Creswell, 2013) by a professional transcriptionist.

Each interview began with an icebreaker question (Milacci, 2015). The purpose was to begin to build a rapport among participants. In addition, the design of question one established the parameters for the demographic information. The development of questions three through nine derived from the perspective of the KERP interpretive report (Kolb, 2010), in accordance with the IPA process, to explore the educator role that each participant enters their “learning space” (Kolb, 2015, p. 288) as provided by the phenomenon of academic dishonesty in the digital age. Question 10 afforded participants the opportunity to provide additional information that they feel necessary to clarify their experiences related KERP and academic dishonesty in the digital age.

Data Analysis

For this study, I used a thematic analysis to provide a “Phenomenological lived-experience description” (van Manen, 2014, p. 221) from the participants’ experiences. The method of data analysis was IPA (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is a double hermeneutic process that
emphasizes the researcher trying to make sense of participants making sense of their experience (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The goal of IPA is to move from specific, individual experiences on to a shared experience of the larger group (Smith et al., 2009). This process was accomplished through the dual role of the researcher engaging systematic sense-making skills as I attempted to make sense of participants making sense of their experience (Rodham et al., 2015; Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Bracketing was an essential part of the IPA process (Smith et al., 2009), however, “it [was] difficult to bracket preconceptions until one has actually engaged with the data” (Rodham et al., 2015, p. 61). As such, it was essential “to engage in reflexivity and to become mindful of [my] role” (Rodham et al., 2015, p. 62). As described by Shaw (2010), reflexivity is “an explicit evaluation of the self” (p. 234). Reflexivity is unlike bracketing, in that the researcher sets aside preconceived ideas and is actively aware of these preconceptions and the potential influence they may have (Clancy, 2013; Rodham et al., 2015; Shaw, 2010). Reflexivity thus became a key research practice of the IPA method as it “is linked to the quality and credibility of research” (Clancy, 2013, p. 14).

The development of IPA occurred in 1996 as a qualitative approach centered in psychology that explores how people ascribe meaning to their experiences as they interact with the environment (Smith et al., 2009). Although those that developed the process acknowledge it is a challenging and complex process, they do states, “there is no clear right or wrong way of conducting this sort of analysis” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 80). The steps in conducting the IPA process are: (a) reading and re-reading, (b) initial noting, (c) developing themes, (d) searching for connections across themes, (e) moving to the next case, and (f) looking for patterns across cases (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). The initial four steps of an IPA analysis involve
immersing oneself in the data of a single case, starting with the most data rich interview (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009).

The first step of the IPA was to read and re-read the transcribed interview to ensure that the participant became the focus of analysis. Within step two, initial noting took place through the examination of content and language. Moving to step three, development of themes occurred as I moved from the transcript to focus on the initial noting from the previous step (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). In step four, I searched for connections across themes found in step three by the inspecting the most interesting and important features of the participants’ experiences (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). At step five, I moved to the next case, repeating steps one through four. At step six, I looked for patterns across case themes to dig for overarching themes within the study - a common view of the larger group experience (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009).

Atlas.Ti, Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS), was used throughout the process. QDAS programs help a researcher organize qualitative data files. As such, after transcription of interviews, responses were uploaded to Atlas.Ti to analyze for trends based on key words and phrases throughout all interviews. I grouped, analyzed, and coded repeated words and phrases for deeper understanding. Although the QDAS program helped throughout the process, it was I, as the researcher, who inductively and deductively interpreted and made sense of the data.

**Trustworthiness**

Hermeneutical phenomenology regards perception as the primary source of knowledge concerning first-hand accounts of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). As such, in my attempt to interpret and make sense of these lived experiences, it was necessary that I established rigorous guidelines to ensure trustworthiness. Therefore, trustworthiness was established and maintained throughout the study by my commitment to the research practices of the IPA process.
The issue of trustworthiness within this IPA study was dependent on my ability to describe the experiences of participants accurately while acknowledging their own preconceptions (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 1990). However, Krefting (1991) noted, “Not all qualitative research can be assessed with the same strategies” (p. 214). Thus to “ensure rigor without sacrificing the relevance” (Krefting, 1991, p. 215), I followed the Guba (1981) model of trustworthiness of qualitative research. This model identifies four principles for trustworthiness: truth-value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). This study incorporated the specific strategies described under the four qualitative criteria for trustworthiness from Guba’s model. Using the IPA process and the Guba model, the readers of this study will have a means to assess the value of the findings.

Credibility

When findings accurately describe reality, then credibility is established, but this is dependent on the richness of the information gathered through the analytical abilities of the researcher (Patton, 2015). As such, I incorporated triangulation by using multiple sources of data to minimize distortion and to give deeper insight into the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Krefting, 1991). As noted by Krefting (1991), triangulation confirms “the completeness with which the phenomenon of interest was addressed” (p. 219) and thus provides one avenue of credibility.

As noted earlier, I maintained a reflective journal (see Appendix E) in another effort to bracket my preconceptions throughout the study. Reflexivity is an essential part of the IPA process (Clancy, 2013; Rodham et al., 2015) and the Guba (1981) model. As noted by Krefting (1991), through the reflective journaling, “the researcher may alter the way that he or she collects the data or approaches the analysis to enhance the credibility of the research” (pp. 218-219).
Credibility was further established using member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings (Creswell, 2013; Krefting, 1991). I shared with participants the collected data, analysis, my interpretations, and conclusions. As Krefting (1991) stated, the use of “member checking decreases the chances of misrepresentation” (p. 219), providing further credibility to the study.

A final method employed was peer debriefing (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Discussion of the “research process and findings with impartial colleagues who have experience with qualitative methods” (Krefting, 1991, p. 219) enhanced the credibility of the study by keeping me honest in the process (Creswell, 2013; Krefting, 1991).

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability, similar to reliability in quantitative studies, speaks to the consistency of the findings and the ability of other researchers arriving at similar results (Gall et al., 2007). As noted within the Guba (1981) model, dependability within qualitative research “relates to the consistency of findings” (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). As such, I provided “the exact methods of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation” (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). The six steps of IPA, a process that would be considered “auditable” (Krefting, 1991, p. 221), accomplished this.

Dependability was further established by incorporating a “code-recode procedure” (Krefting, 1991, p. 221) throughout the analysis. After the initial coding during the IPA process, I waited for at least three days, then returned and recoded the data and compared the results. As discussed earlier, the use of triangulation strengthened the dependability of the study. Through triangulation, rich detail about the context and setting of the study (Creswell, 2013) confirmed “the completeness with which the phenomenon of interest was addressed” (Krefting, 1991, p. 219).
Confirmability, similar to objectivity in quantitative studies, speaks to findings being undistorted the biases of the researcher (Clark, 2013; Gall et al., 2007). To establish the confirmability of the study according to the Guba (1981) model involved an external auditor. For this, I employed an individual who has experience with qualitative methods to attempt to “follow through the natural history or progression of events [of this study] to try to understand how and why decisions were made” (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). The purpose of an external auditor was to check if another researcher would arrive a similar conclusion under comparable process and context.

I used triangulation and reflexivity throughout the study. Triangulation strengthened the confirmability of the study using “multiple methods, data sources, and theoretical perspectives [to test] the strength of the researcher’s idea” (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). Reflexivity enhanced confirmability by enabling me to be actively aware of my preconceptions and the potential influence they may have, thus reducing researcher bias (Clancy, 2013; Rodham et al., 2015; Shaw, 2010; van Manen, 1990).

**Transferability**

Transferability speaks to the possibility that findings in one context applies to another context, as within quantitative studies where investigation provides the ability for other researchers to arrive at similar results (Gall et al., 2007). Within qualitative research, as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), “it is the researcher’s job to provide an index of transferability” (p. 221). Krefting (1991) also noted, “A key factor in the transferability of the data, then, is the representativeness of the informants for that particular group” (p. 220). Within this hermeneutical phenomenology, I was both descriptive and interpretive as I attempted to interpret
and make sense of the teachers’ lived experiences. IPA provided the flexibility to work with each participant to gain such thick and rich data that was sufficient for comparison and analysis.

Within this study, transferability was further maintained through the aforementioned reflexivity and peer debriefing. As discussed earlier, the reflexivity and peer debriefing processes enabled me to be actively aware of my preconceptions and the potential influence they may have, keeping me honest to the process.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues for this study were at a minimum. The ethical issues under consideration included: (a) confidentiality, (b) security of data, (c) influence, and (d) debriefing (Creswell, 2013). Pseudonyms for site and participants accounted for confidentiality (Creswell, 2013). I ensured the security of data using password protected electronic files and a locked cabinet for paper files for the space of three years (Creswell, 2013). For influence considerations (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, n.d.), although I have been an educator within two of the districts over the space of 13 years, I have not held a supervisory or authority position over participants. For debriefing purposes, peer debriefing occurred at the conclusion of the study to minimize any potential bias that I as the researcher might have as the human instrument of the research (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, n.d.).

**Summary**

Within this chapter, I outlined and justified a description of the research design. Also, I provided a description of the participants and the sampling techniques used. Additionally, I explained the researcher’s role in the study, the data collection process, instruments used (Kolb, 2015), and described the IPA process used in the data analysis. Finally, I discussed trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The intent of this study was to describe high school
general education teachers’ experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. Using hermeneutical phenomenology as outlined within this chapter, this study will fill a gap in the literature on academic dishonesty as I attempted to interpret and make sense of the teacher’s experiences with the phenomenon as expressed by the teachers (Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 2014).
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. Chapter Four is an extensive chapter that consists of three sections: (a) an overview of the chapter, (b) a rich description of each individual who participated in the study (using pseudonyms), and (c) a discussion of the results organized thematically and concluding by clearly answering the research questions.

The problem that spurred the research for this study was the lack of qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers regarding this phenomenon. The three research questions that were the driving force for this study included:

- How do high school general education teachers experience academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?
- How do the participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the digital age?
- How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?

Kolb’s (2015) ELT provided the framework to place academic dishonesty in the digital age in the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences thus laying the groundwork for further theoretical consideration to study the implications in greater detail.
With the framework established, and following the guidelines of IPA established by Smith et al. (2009), open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were used to explore the extensive topic of academic dishonesty in the digital age in both individual, face-to-face interviews (see Appendix C) and in the focus group interview (see Appendix D). General education teachers from rural school districts in southwest Ohio who shared the common experience of academic dishonesty in the digital age were invited to participate in this study. Digital recordings and transcriptions of the 13 face-to-face interviews and one focus group interview, as well as review of each participant’s KERP results and the discipline referral records within each participant’s building, provided thick and rich data that was sufficient for comparison and analysis.

Participants in this study were asked to describe their lived experiences and perceptions as they developed their ideas and expressed their concerns (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 1990) with the phenomenon of academic dishonesty in the digital age. Data analysis, using IPA (Smith et al., 2009), resulted in the identification of themes across all data collection methods: face-to-face interviews, participants’ KERP results, discipline referral records, and focus group interview. The steps used in conducting IPA process were: (a) reading and re-reading, (b) initial noting, (c) developing themes, (d) searching for connections across themes, (e) moving to the next case, and (f) looking for patterns across cases (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). The initial four steps of an IPA analysis involved immersing myself in the data of a single case, starting with the most data rich interview (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009).

The themes identified in this phenomenological study may provide educators with a clearly identified idea of what academic dishonesty in today’s classroom should look like as well as the challenges they may face in such an environment. Such themes may provide insight for
school administrators to develop working educational plans that include defined processes, purposes, and parameters best suited to the 21st century classroom.

Participants

As noted previously, the setting purposely chosen for the study is the KLLR-4, a pseudonym for a nine-county region in southwest Ohio comprised of 68 districts, with 27 classified as rural (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Using this as a guide, I solicited administrator permission for participation from all 27 districts within the KLLR-4 secondary schools. Of the districts contacted, only 10 responded wanting additional information. Four districts out of those 10 agreed to participate in the study, representing four of the nine-county KLLR-4 regions in southwest Ohio.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Schools Background Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Foley High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 indicates, the four districts are grouped under rural with a typology code 1 within Ohio’s School Districts Typology (Ohio Department of Education, 2015a; Ohio Department of Education, 2017). This code places the four districts among 124 Ohio school districts characterized as “Rural - High Student Poverty & Small Student Population” (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Pseudonyms, rather than actual names, upheld the confidentiality of the participating schools.
At the start, I solicited referrals of potential participants from administrators of the four KLLR-4 secondary schools based on their knowledge of discipline referral records. A total of 82 potential participants met the criteria of general education high school teachers within KLLR-4 who shared the common experience of academic dishonesty in the digital age. Initial contact with the teachers included an e-mail requesting participation prior to setting up interview sessions. Thirteen teachers volunteered to participate in the study (see Table 3). Interviews took place over the span of three months. Pseudonyms, rather than actual names, upheld the confidentiality of the participating teachers.

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>F&amp;C Science</td>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allie</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beau</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailee</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>James Foley High School</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payton</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>James Foley High School</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mean Score  |              |                           | 11.8                |

As Table 3 indicates, participants of this study offered a wide-range of experience. As such, the participants provided for a maximum variation sampling. The mean years of experience for all thirteen participants was 11.8 years teaching in the high school classroom, with several having work experiences outside of the traditional high school setting. The range in classroom experience stretched from just two years in the classroom up to 20 years. The content
areas of the teachers were varied and diverse, with only those teaching English representing the largest portion at four teachers. All participants were Caucasian. There were four male teachers and nine female teachers. Enabling such a sampling at the start of the study maximized differences while accurately reflecting and respecting the different perspectives.

Upon receiving permission from the four participating KLLR-4 administrators, I reviewed discipline referral records to acquire the occurrences of recorded academic dishonesty educators had within their respective buildings. I gave special attention to the “digital divide” that existed within the discipline referral records regarding academic dishonesty. Although each of the 13 participants reported experiencing academic dishonesty within their classroom, the information found in Table 4 indicates a low percentage within each district of actual reporting concerning academic dishonesty discipline referrals. This low percentage could be attributed to the nature of how each participant handled such occurrence. As one participant stated, “I take care of it in-house, and then I let [the] principal know this was an issue” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017). This situation was commonly reported among all 13 participants.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Discipline Referrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>Gentry</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Foley High School</td>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
<td>Peoples</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Academic Dishonesty Discipline Referrals are percentages of total referrals

Prior to the face-to-face interviews, participants completed the online KERP to provide a descriptive framework for each educator’s lived experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age within the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences. The results of the KERP (see Table 5) were shared during the face-to-face interview as well as e-mailed to me.
I then conducted the semi-structured interviews at each participant’s respective school, in a place of their choosing. These were conducted either at the end of the school day or during the participant’s planning period. I digitally recorded each interview on multiple devices for redundancy (i.e. through a microphone on my laptop, through a microphone on my smartphone, and a digital voice recorder) and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.

Table 5

**KERP Scores for Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Evaluator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allie</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beau</td>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chyann</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailee</td>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Murdoch High School</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>James Foley High School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payton</td>
<td>James Foley High School</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne</td>
<td>Gordon Hill High School</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>N.C. Hiro High School</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>25.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously mentioned, Kolb’s (2015) ELT affords the teacher as learner a framework in their attempt to grasp and transform through their experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age. The KERP was designed to aid teachers in their understanding of their “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) and guide them through the ELT learning spiral. The inclusion of each participant’s’ KERP results provided an understanding with what learning style and what role each experienced academic dishonesty in the digital age, and thus, insight into how their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice due to these experiences. Those roles include:
• The Facilitator. This role maintains a warm affirming style that emphasizes an inside-out learning style;

• The Expert. This role is a reflective, authoritative style that systemically analyzes and organizes content;

• The Evaluator. This role incorporates a results-oriented style that structures performance objectives for learning;

• The Coach. This role applies a collaborative style to apply knowledge, often creating development plans and feedback plans (adapted from Kolb et al., 2014, p. 220).

The following provides a thick, rich description of each of the 13 participants informing the research for the interviews and focus groups process. The participants presented here as I was introduced to each via the order of the interview schedule. This information will give the reader a view of each participant as I also encountered them, hopefully providing a glimpse of my perspective. All quotes from the participants are presented verbatim, which included verbal and grammatical errors in speech and writing to accurately portray each participant’s voices. The reader will also find that some participants provided a stronger voice than others throughout the study.

Audrey

Audrey was an 11-year veteran of the classroom. At the time of this study, she was in her second year as a history teacher at Gordon Hill High School in Wayne County at the outskirts of Ohio’s sixth largest city (Ohio Demographics, 2016). Gordon Hill High School is the only rural district out of 16 districts in Wayne County (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). Prior to teaching at Gordon Hill High School, Audrey taught for nine years at a high school in western Kentucky. Regarding choosing to become a teacher, she stated,
I was trying to find something else I loved, which was always history, but I never thought I had the patience to be a teacher. But then I’ve had some really great history teachers my last couple years of high school, and was like, OK, maybe I can do this. (Audrey, interview, January 10, 2017)

Audrey’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of Coach/Evaluator with a 65% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to describe themselves as, “believing learning occurs best in a real-life context so I create a challenging environment where learners demonstrate quality work and develop commitment to personal achievement” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). In reviewing her results, Audrey emphatically stated several times that, “I’m not surprised by my results at all” (Interview, January 10, 2017).

As her Coach/Evaluator role portrays, Audrey described her role in the classroom as that of, “Let me figure out what your strengths and your weaknesses are, we’ll build on those weaknesses by using those strengths” (Interview, January 10, 2017). This portrayal, in turn, frames her view regarding academic dishonesty. Audrey stated, “But just the extremes that [students] will go instead of just doing it themselves, baffles me every time” (Interview, January 10, 2017). She further described that “It’s definitely, I think, easier for them to cheat now because they are so much more technologically advanced than they were eleven years ago” (Audrey, interview, January 10, 2017). However, true to her Coach/Evaluator role, Audrey ascribed that those in education need to be more proactive regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age – stating, with a laugh, “I have to be more creative than they are” (Interview, January 10, 2017).
Suzanne

Suzanne was also at Gordon Hill High School. She has been in the science classroom for all 11 years of her experience as an educator. Prior to coming to Gordon Hill High School, as she noted, “I was actually in the medical field before I became a teacher. I was in the lab setting . . . I was an electrophysiologist” (Suzanne, interview, January 17, 2017). She spent time in an operating room and a lab. However, she reached a point in which she asked, “I’ve got this degree, um, what else can I do with it?” (Suzanne, interview, January 17, 2017). When a friend suggested going into teaching, she decided to explore the field by observing several teachers in the region. It was then she realized, “I like this, I could do this” (Suzanne, interview, January 17, 2017). Suzanne then went back to school, completing here masters, and receiving licensure.

Suzanne’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of Evaluator/Coach with a 63% combined preference. Although this is similar to Audrey, Suzanne’s dominant role by a significant percentage is that of Evaluator. Educators within this role incorporate a results-oriented style that structures performance objectives for learning (adapted from Kolb et al., 2014, p. 220) and like it when learners adhere to rules and procedures (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). Suzanne was at first surprised by her results. However, after further thought, she related that with

the amount of standardized testing, . . . the high stakes testing . . . the students are going through . . . I had been conditioned to basically teach as . . . I’m giving a test . . . that makes complete sense when you think about, it was all about evaluation. (Interview, January 10, 2017).
Suzanne further elaborated that, “I think [the KERP results] fluctuate with your career . . . the more mature of a teacher you are, the closer you're gonna get to that 25% . . . I think that you grow in your career” (Interview, January 10, 2017).

In turning to academic dishonesty, Suzanne continued with the growth theme. She stated that

I think as long as you grow as a teacher with the technology, as long as you keep up with it, you can keep up with your students and you can catch, you know, you can catch the academic dishonesty. (Interview, January 10, 2017)

Elaborating further, Suzanne described that

Teachers have one of those jobs that you are continuously learning, and education's continuously changing . . . You have to continually change . . . the more you keep up with stuff, with all of the pedagogy and all of the new techniques, the, the better you will be at catching academic dishonesty because, you'll be right there with them. (Interview, January 10, 2017).

It is at this point that one can hear the Coach role arise in Suzanne’s voice as she invokes a collaborative style to apply the knowledge for growth. As she ascribed it, “You just have to grow with your kids, you have, you have to keep yourself young” (Suzanne, interview, January 10, 2017).

Abby

Abby was a 12-year veteran of the classroom. At the time of this study, she was in her fifth year as a Family and Consumer Science teacher at N.C. Hiro High School in Peoples County at the edge of the Ohio and Indiana border. Abby also had taken 10 years away from education to focus on raising her children. Prior to teaching at N.C. Hiro High School, Abby
taught for five years at a suburban high school in Wayne County classified as a district of low student poverty and average student population size (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Of course, N.C. Hiro High School is classified as rural with high student poverty and small student population (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Regarding this transition, Abby stated it “was kinda coming home in a way” (Interview, January 24, 2017). Abby also has her children in the district.

Abby’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of Coach/Facilitator with a 65% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to describe themselves as, “believing learning occurs best in a real-life context where I am able to encourage learners to pursue the development of their interests and a commitment to personal achievement” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). In reviewing her results, Abby stated that she was not surprised and that “my field tends to lead to a more relationship, empathetic, and, you know, relating to students and what students really need for real life” (Interview, January 24, 2017).

In reflecting on how her pedagogy has changed with the rise of technology, Abby stated, “I always think, ‘Well, what if they had this question when they were out in the world, on their own?’” (Interview, January 24, 2017). This thought process is in line with what her Coach/Facilitator role depicted. It also frames how Abby approaches academic dishonesty in the digital age. She described technology usage as second nature to both teacher and student and that we as educators, “need be a little more diligent and watching” (Abby, interview, January 10, 2017). She further stated that it, “Makes our job a little bit harder sometimes” (Abby, interview, January 24, 2017) and that “you have to know your students better” (Abby, interview, January 24, 2017). However, near the end of the interview, as she reflected on recommendations on how
to address academic dishonesty in the digital age, Abby stated, “I think it’s kind of an interesting concept of, I mean how you go about changing this is difficult. And I, I mean, I do think it is a mind set and a culture thing” (Interview, January 24, 2017).

Emma

Emma was also at N.C. Hiro High School. She has been in the foreign language department for all 20 years of her experience as a French teacher. Prior to coming to N.C. Hiro High School, as she noted, “So for ten years before I came here, actually longer than ten years. I was out of public school teaching, I was a stay at home mom” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). However, during those years she also worked as an adjunct instructor for several universities. Emma also spent time in Europe as an instructor and interpreter. Upon returning to the States, she spent two years as a long-term sub before finally going back to get a Master of Education, she remarked, “I really wanted to make sure it was what I was going to do” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). As she laughingly stated, “I tried to not be a teacher, it didn’t work” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017).

Emma’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of Coach/Facilitator with a 65% combined preference. Although her results exactly mirror that of Abby’s, Emma’s go-to role would be that of Facilitator, her secondary of the two roles. This is not surprising to Emma. As she attested, the professors within her graduate training in education pounded, “You want to facilitate, facilitate, facilitate” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). The individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to, “provide a safe space for learners to develop a lifelong love of learning” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). This can be seen when Emma described her own classroom as a “no
stress class. And so, so, because of that, there is a closeness that occurs in my classes” (Interview, January 24, 2017).

In discussing academic dishonesty, Emma continued in her facilitator role as she described that “in my class, I try to make it the safe place for them to admit that they don’t know something. I’d rather them admit ignorance than be dishonest” (Interview, January 24, 2017). Emphasizing this even further, she stated, “There’s not a lot of distance between teacher-student relationships in my class because I want them to be comfortable” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). In turning to the role technology plays in her pedagogy, Emma ascribed that “it is a great ancillary to my teaching, but not a necessity” (Interview, January 24, 2017). Regarding how technology has changed academic dishonesty, Emma said that “it’s become easier and more, um, sly” (Interview, January 24, 2017). However, true to her Coach/Facilitator role, Emma put forth, “So I tend to find myself teaching people how to be more self-reliant without technology, cause I think it’s important” (Interview, January 24, 2017).

Chyann

It was a return to Gordon Hill High School where I sat down with Chyann in her Business Technology classroom. At the time of this study, she had been in the classroom for 11 years after leaving her position as an accountant. However, as she attested, “I probably been in education for about thirteen years now [but] subbing is nowhere near the representative of what you actually see in the classroom” (Chyann, interview, February 28, 2017). Although being an accountant prior to coming to Gordon Hill High School, Chyann noted,

I actually started off in education, found out how much, you know, I, at, at nineteen when you find out how much somebody’s going to make and your like, ‘Oh!’ And so, I switched, chased the money, was never really satisfied. (interview, February 28, 2017).
Now, as a veteran educator after alternative licensure, she emphatically stated, “I knew I wanted to do this” (Chyann, interview, February 28, 2017).

Chyann’s KERP results demonstrated that her role in the classroom to be that of Coach/Expert with a 65% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to describe themselves as, “believing learning occurs best in a real-life context where I model how an expert thinks to develop learners’ commitment to personal achievement” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). In reviewing her results, Chyann stated that they accurately described her but believes the results are evolving. This is due to, as she stated, “Because I think that you continue to learn” (Chyann, interview, January 28, 2017). Elaborating further, Chyann asserted, “In your job, in this job, it changes - it always changes” (Chyann, interview, January 28, 2017).

With being the Business Technology, teacher and her classroom being a computer lab, we turned our focus to how her definition/description of academic dishonesty changed with the increase in use of technology. Chyann was quick to respond, “Um, my definition is the same. The ease that it can happen is change . . . is where the change has come” (Chyann, interview, January 28, 2017). Emphasizing this even further, she stated, “It’s easier, it’s easier to cheat” (Chyann, interview, January 28, 2017). In regard to today’s students’ perspective on academic dishonesty, she shared that, “They think if it’s out there its ok to use it” (Chyann, interview, January 28, 2017). Expanding on the topic, Chyann suggested, “I think you have to be, if you’re going to use technology in your classroom, you have to be more aware of what your students are doing” (Interview, January 28, 2017). However, Chyann believed education needs to be more personal, stating, “So there has to be less technology in some cases, and more face-to-face interaction with these kids” (Interview, January 28, 2017).
Ryan

Ryan was also at Gordon Hill High School. He has been in the math classroom for all nine years of his experience as an educator. However, it would be easy to describe Ryan’s experience in education to span a lifetime. He comes from a teaching family. Ryan described instances of being in his brother’s seventh grade classroom, even stating, “He caught me copying somebody’s homework one day when he walked in . . . (laughing) then came home and told my Mom, and I got grounded” (Interview, March 1, 2017). Ryan’s mother retired from teaching just a few years prior to the interview. She had taught high school mathematics in neighboring People County - in the same school in which Ryan attended and graduated.

Ryan’s KERP results revealed his role in the classroom to be that of Evaluator/Expert/Facilitator with an 84% combined preference. This is the first instance in which one of the educators being interviewed had three roles so close together. In reviewing Ryan’s history, being raised in a teaching family, this result is not surprising. Ryan readily agreed, stating he was not surprised by the results. In fact, he described himself as one who likes “rules and procedures and creating a challenging environment where they need to demonstrate quality work . . . trying to help learners develop a lifelong love of learning” (Interview, March 1, 2017). The very words with such a “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) would be apt to describe themselves. Although he does not view such results as concrete, Ryan stated, “I think it will change a little bit. Um, after being nine years in though, it probably isn’t going to change a whole lot” (Interview, March 1, 2017).

In discussing academic dishonesty in the digital age, Ryan acknowledged that cheating is easier with the rise of technology. However, true to his Evaluator/Expert/Facilitator role, Ryan acknowledged he was at times torn in how to handle such situations. As he described, “I used to
think of that as, you know, if you’re copying homework, well that’s dishonest and you’re, you’re cheating . . . if you’re cheating it’s a zero, I don’t care what the reason is” (Ryan, interview, March 1, 2017). However, he went on further to say, “That probably might have shut down that kid in the future in my class and not tried anymore” (Ryan, interview, March 1, 2017). Ryan stated that now the biggest issue is, “Why you are doing that?” (Interview, March 1, 2017). Ryan elaborated further, stating, “I don’t know if there’s a single thing that you could push for with technology in academic [dishonesty] because it’s kind of a case-by-case basis” (Interview, March 1, 2017).

**Hunter**

Hunter was a 20-year veteran of the classroom. He was an Engineering Design instructor at Murdoch High School via the Lawba Technology and Career Development Center. Murdoch High School is located in Lawba County and is one of only two rural schools remaining in the county (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). Prior to coming to Murdoch High School, Hunter described himself as, “tool and die by trade” (Interview, March 13, 2017). Hunter spent 17 years in manufacturing, working as a foreman at a small tool and die shop. As he stated, “My trade is like a dying trade almost because everybody wants their kids to be doctors, lawyers, you know, all that. They don’t understand that manufacturing and stuff is what made this country great” (Hunter, interview, March 13, 2017). After being told he would be a great teacher, and that schools like Lawba Tech taught “manufacturing and stuff” (Interview, March 13, 2017), Hunter interviewed for an opening. As he described his hiring, “They were looking for somebody that would come in and, uh, not just teach the kids but show them what’s out in the real world - what’s really, you know, what I call real world stuff” (Hunter, interview, March 13, 2017).
Hunter’s KERP results revealed his role in the classroom to be that of Coach/Evaluator with a 63% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to describe themselves as, “believing learning occurs best in a real-life context so I create a challenging environment where learners demonstrate quality work and develop commitment to personal achievement” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). In reviewing his results, Hunter found them interesting but also stated, “I believe you have to change with the times if your students are going to keep pace with all the new technologies” (Interview, March 13, 2017).

As his Coach/Evaluator role portrays, Hunter described his role in the classroom as that of "That’s the other thing too in the real world . . . " (Interview, March 13, 2017) as he shifts students’ focus to what they encounter beyond high school. It is this type of instruction that he stated, “in the world now, people aren’t teaching the young anymore . . . which is sad because, uh, our soul is our knowledge that we pass down to the next generation” (Hunter, interview, March 13, 2017). This, in turn, frames his view in regard to academic dishonesty. Hunter stated, “Until they get away from test scores to grade a student's ability there will be cheating. If they could score students ability in real world situations and how they perform under stress, it would be hard to cheat” (Interview, March 13, 2017). However, as he noted further, “Everything changes except for school . . . we’re not doing our kids justice, is the way I believe, in how we’re teaching them” (Hunter, interview, March 13, 2017).

Hailee

Hailee was also at Murdoch High School. She has been an English teacher for 11 years. While as an undergraduate at a local university, Hailee spent two years as a teaching assistant. She noted early on in the interview that, “I always wanted to be a teacher, I had an aptitude for
reading from a very young age, and um, I always wanted to talk to kids about books” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017). However, as she clarified, “I didn’t like children, so I knew I wanted high school students . . . so I was the second grader that said I wanted to teach high school English” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017). Although Hailee graduated from one of the largest districts in Lawba County, he stated, “I didn’t thrive necessarily in that large setting like that, so I was very happy to have wound up at Murdoch . . . I like the freedom here” (Interview, March 13, 2017).

Hailee’s KERP results were unique. While they indicated her role in the classroom to be that of Facilitator/Expert with a 71% combined preference, her clear dominant role would be that of Facilitator at a 44% preference. This did not surprise Hailee at all. As she stated, “I see myself as a Facilitator. I don’t see myself as a Teacher . . . if that makes sense” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017). Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) would be apt to state, “Although I require learners to read the literature critically, I provide a safe space for learners to talk about their thoughts and feelings – a place where I encourage learners to pursue the development of their interests” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). As a caveat toward Hailee’s strong preference for the Facilitator role, one she readily affirmed, she maintained a warm affirming style that emphasized an inside-out learning style (adapted from Kolb et al., 2014, p. 220). As she concluded, “I revel in the awkward, and so, um, I don’t, I don’t see my style changing that much” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017).

As her dominant Facilitator role would indicate, Hailee described Murdoch High School and her time there as one that, “in small schools you form personal relationships, I think, much more easily than what you do at these larger schools . . . And so, um, I, I do have really close
relationships outside of school with my kids” (Interview, March 13, 2017). This framed Hailee’s outlook on academic dishonesty. As she described, “Catching plagiarism here is so common place that it’s actually, unfortunately, not really that big of deal . . . we have never failed a student because of plagiarism” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017). However, as she noted, “I know my kids’ writing. I know my kids’ writing very well” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017). Elaborating on this further she stated, “I always fall back on the relationship, that, that for me, um, is, is the strength . . . it always starts with a personal relationship” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017).

Beau

Beau was the third and final participant from Murdoch High School. He comes from a family of educators and has been a history teacher for nine years. Although he jokingly said ‘SUMMER!’ when asked why he became a teacher, Beau went further, to state:

No, um, I just, I enjoy the . . . I call it the “I got it” moment . . . when you see a kid, where, you know, you’re working on a hard concept or hard idea, things like that, and then they stumble upon it - figure it out for themselves. Or you say something that finally just triggers that light switch, and they light up and they’re proud of themselves because they understand it, and that, you know, that moment of “I got it!” – [that] is why, you know. (Interview, March 13, 2017)

Beau’s KERP results revealed his role in the classroom to be that of Expert/Evaluator with a 59% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to state they, “model by demonstration how an expert thinks by creating a challenging environment where learners demonstrate quality work and read critically” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). The results did not surprise
Beau as he walked through the descriptions and percentages of each role with me, stating, “It kind of sounds about right” (Interview, March 13, 2017). Although he was reluctant to forecast how these roles would be in the future, he was quick to interject that since his college years, “It has changed for sure” (Beau, interview, March 13, 2017). He was also quick to add that his pedagogy had also changed “dramatically” (Beau, interview, March 13, 2017) in those nine years since college.

As the discussion turned to the digital age, Beau described “[technology] makes teaching a hundred times easier, because it’s, I mean, book versus computer. Which holds more content?” (Interview, March 13, 2017). He went on further, stating,

It does take a little bit more planning and things like that . . . but I think it’s made teaching reach further and more effective, if done properly, and I, you know, I’m still, . . .

I’m still trying to learn how to do that myself. (Beau, interview, March 13, 2017)

Opening up further, Beau stated, “I’m, I’m transitioning, I’m trying to figure out what the, you know I obviously get we need this technology, but what does this technology look like in the classroom?” (Interview, March 13, 2017). In turning to academic dishonesty in the digital age, Beau commented that

Academic dishonesty, as with technology, I think that we will always be behind with that as teachers, as a society, because . . . kids are innovators . . . kids are smart, they’re going to find new and creative ways to cheat. (Interview, March 13, 2017)

However, as he elaborated, “I think that if we, as educators, actually put forth the effort to follow through with it, then you’ll see the, uh, the academic dishonesty go down” (Beau, interview, March 13, 2017).
Sydney

Sydney was the third and final participant from N.C. Hiro High School. An English teacher that was only in her second year of teaching, her enthusiasm for her career choice was evident. This passion was heard in her voice as she stated, “I loved being in the classroom. I just love the classroom environment; I love learning environment . . . I just, I love everything about teaching, so um, yeah” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017). Sydney stated she started her career a little late, spending “six years of undergrad and then [completing] a master’s year as well” (Interview, March 16, 2017). Both of her two years of experience have been at N.C. Hiro High School.

Sydney’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of Facilitator/Evaluator with a 59% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to state they, “encourage learners to pursue the development of their interests by creating a challenging environment where they demonstrate quality work but that provides a safe place for the learner to express their thoughts and feelings” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). As she reflected on her results, Sydney stated, “From what I’m finding, that doesn’t seem to be a surprise” (Interview, March 16, 2017). Elaborating further, she described that her dominant roles, Facilitator and Evaluator, “They kind of go hand in hand” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017). However, Sydney interjected, “Oh . . . I feel like you’re always flexible as an educator. If you’re concrete as an educator, you’re not a good educator” (Interview, March 16, 2017).

When our discussion turned to how technology has affected academic dishonesty, Sydney was quick to respond, “Making it worse . . . [where students] just want to take so many shortcuts” (Interview, March 13, 2017). As she would state later, “It makes my job harder, um,
because I feel like it’s something that you have to keep coming back to it very often” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017). Sydney stated her method of combating this as, “Kind of on the ground, as I’m teaching, per say” (Interview, March 13, 2017), describing conferencing with each student throughout the writing process as well as preloading them with structured scaffolding guidelines. However, she laughingly stated, “Well there an, there is an issue with ‘Am I doing this work for them?’ [and] ‘Are they, can they be autonomous and be academically honest?’” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017). Questions in which she readily replied, “I don’t know” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017).

Allie

Allie was the fifth and final participant from Gordon Hill High School. At the time of this study, Allie was an English teacher in her third year of teaching at this school on the outskirts of Ohio’s sixth largest city (Ohio Demographics, 2016). However, she had a total of eight years in the classroom. Prior to teaching at Gordon Hill High School, Allie taught at two additional districts that were classified as “Urban – High Student Poverty” (2013 School District Typology, 2014). She also spent two additional years teaching at a local university. When asked why she became a teacher, Allie stated, “So I, um, wanted to get into something more socially conscience . . . and I really like English, reading, writing . . . so then I decided the teaching route for high school” (Interview, March 20, 2017).

Allie’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of a balanced one. Her preferences were almost equal, with only six points separating her top role preference of Coach with the lowest, Expert. This is unique among the participants. However, Allie is not surprised. As she quipped, “I saw the value, for the most part, in [each role], so I just tried to think of what I would try to do naturally” (Allie, interview, March 20, 2017). Individuals with this “preferred
educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) situation are apt to flow from a warm affirming style to a reflective, authoritative style to that of a results oriented style or even a collaborative style (adapted from Kolb et al., 2014, p. 220). As she reflected on her results, Allie stated that such roles are developing and may even be influenced by the “culture of the school building . . . probably” (Interview, March 20, 2017).

In turning to academic dishonesty, Allie described her view as “probably purposeful is the way I deal with it” (Interview, March 20, 2017). Expounding, she stated, that students today “they’re dishonest without knowing it a lot . . . I think most of the time it’s by accident” (Allie, Interview, March 20, 2017). Further on, Allie attributed such academic dishonesty to “either laziness, like intentional plagiarism sometimes is laziness, [or] a lot of times [it] is not knowing, and then sometimes is just panicking because you don’t know if you’re doing it right” (Interview, March 20, 2017). However, Allie advocated making such situations as teachable moments, stating, “Then it becomes a teaching thing as opposed to a punishing thing. Because I feel like that’s where a lot of our stuff gets wrong is we’re punishing instead of teaching” (Interview, March 20, 2017).

Payton

Payton was a 15-year veteran of the classroom. At the time of this study, he was a math teacher at James Foley High School in Spemica County on the outskirts of a small town that straddles the Ohio and Indiana state line. Payton’s undergraduate work was not in education but the field of engineering physics. Payton shared about a time during his graduate program, “I was granted a teaching assistantship, and after one year of graduate work I was on academic probation because so much energy was put into my teaching” (Interview, March 23, 2017). That
was his “ah-ha” moment when Payton asked himself, “‘Why do I not just go and get the certification so I can be in the classroom?’” (Interview, March 23, 2017).

Payton’s KERP results revealed his role in the classroom to be that of Evaluator/Expert with a 75% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to describe their classroom as, “a challenging environment where I demonstrate how an expert thinks and learners demonstrate quality work while adhering to rules and procedures” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). In reviewing his results, Payton expressed surprise, stating, “I was a bit shocked that the Expert wasn’t the high one” (Interview, March 23, 2017). Payton’s results were unique in that his Facilitator role – the role that maintains a warm affirming style (adapted from Kolb et al., 2014, p. 220) – stood at only 3%. Payton acknowledged this result, even attesting that, “I sometimes question myself on how effective I am as an educator” (Interview, March 23, 2017).

As we turned to academic dishonesty and the effect technology has on it, Payton revealed the character of his Evaluator/Expert role as he put forth, “And that’s where I struggle some with knowing what is math education supposed to look like today” (Interview, March 23, 2017). He went on further, stating,

You know, I’ve always been one to be reflective. . . [so] in the realm of mathematics education, what I would have ten years ago viewed as academic dishonesty, I’m not as . . . I’m less hesitant to view it as academic dishonesty [today]. (Payton, interview, March 23, 2017)

Clarifying, Payton stated,

I don’t view that as academic dishonesty anymore because I’m not asking the same questions . . . so, I guess, I feel like I’ve changed my type of questions so that what I have
used to have viewed as academic dishonesty, is kind of, uh, a moot point. (Interview, March 23, 2017)

**Madison**

Madison was the second and final participant from James Foley High School. An English teacher in her 15th year, coming in to the district the same time as Payton. Madison was from a family of educators. As she described, “My father was a guidance counselor after being a math and history teacher for several years and my mother was language arts” (Madison, interview, March 23, 2017). Although having this rich heritage in teaching, Madison stated,

I actually started off as a social work major until the end of my junior year. Um, and then I had an internship there at a children’s services . . . got two emotionally, uh, involved . . . so I realized that I was going to have to switch my major. (Interview, March 23, 2017)

It was then that she turned back to education. However, Madison recognized that “[a]ctually social work comes in to play quite a bit, actually” as a teacher.

Madison’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of a Facilitator/Evaluator with a 66% combined preference. Individuals with this “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) are apt to state they, “encourage learners to pursue the development of their interests by creating a challenging environment where they demonstrate quality work but that provides a safe place for the learner to express their thoughts and feelings” (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). As she reflected on her results, Sydney stated, “I was a little surprised by my KERP results” (Interview, March 23, 2017). Elaborating further, she described that her dominant role of Facilitator was not the surprise but that of Evaluator. As she stated, “I would have guessed myself to be more of a facilitator and a coach,
when in fact the coach role was my lowest score” (Madison, interview, March 23, 2017). In fact, Madison’s Coach role score was unique among the participants in that it was only at 9%.

When asked how her dominate KERP role influenced her pedagogically, Madison stated, “I definitely do believe that my dominate KERP role of facilitator helps to explain my thoughts and views on academic dishonesty” (Interview, March 23, 2017). Elaborating, Madison stated, I have always felt that as a teacher, I need to gain a rapport with my students and an understanding of their learning styles and individual situations [and thus] student[s] will, more often than not, perform better academically in my classroom. (Interview, March 23, 2017)

When academic dishonesty occurs in her class, Madison stated, “I tend to feel hurt when a student takes advantage of that trust [because they are] personally insulting me and damaging the rapport and respect we have built” (Interview, March 23, 2017).

Focus Group

During the interview process, I requested participation in a focus group of the KLLR-4 participants. All 13 participants agreed they would be willing to participate. Due to the need for a small sample for the nuanced analysis associated with IPA (Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009), I invited four of the participants willing to participate, a representative of each of the participating KLLR-4 districts. The focus group provided an opportunity for me to interact with multiple participants at the same time to produce deeper and richer insight. The insight was due to the synergism created by individuals with similar interests discussing a topic of mutual interest data. I chose to bring together those participants that provided a unique perspective to the study based on their KERP results or years of experience as compiled in Figure 4.
The four participants included:

- Hailee, the English teacher with 11 years of classroom experience from Murdoch High School;
- Payton, the Mathematics teacher with 15 years of classroom experience from James Foley High School;
- Sydney, the English teacher with two years of classroom experience from N.C. Hiro High School; and
- Allie, the English teacher with eight years of classroom experience from Gordon Hill High School.

As noted earlier, Hailee’s KERP results were unique. While they indicated her role in the classroom to be that of Facilitator/Expert with a 71% combined preference, her clear dominant role would be that of Facilitator at a 44% preference. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Hailee’s Evaluator role scored at a 9% preference. Hailee was also a strong voice among the

Figure 4. Focus group (adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b).
participants during the focus group interview, adhering to her dominant role through facilitating the conversation in the small group (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). However, in reflecting on this dominant role during the focus group discussions, Hailee stated,

The teacher who hired me and who left a couple of years after, she was very demanding - very challenging - and the kids respected her for an entirely different reason. But I also feel like she brought something to the department that now, with the department that we have in place, we’re lacking for whatever reason. So sometimes I wonder, ‘Am I not . . . am I too personal with my kids?’ (Interview, May 1, 2017)

Payton’s Evaluator role, on the other hand, scored at a 41% preference while his Facilitator role was at 3%. Payton’s full KERP results revealed an Evaluator/Expert combined role preference of 75%. Payton also provided a central voice throughout the focus group discussions, bringing an authoritative but reflective style that his leading KERP role portrays (as adapted from Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc., 2013b). In self-reflecting during the focus group interview, Payton revealed:

If the students want to learn, I think I have a lot to offer them. But now I have a majority of students that need a motivator, and I feel like I’m kind of treading water many days, and I am a lot more tired, even though I have fewer students now than I used to have.

I’m a lot more drained at the end of the day. I think it’s because I’m having to pull on an area that’s not a natural strength. (Interview, May 1, 2017)

In contrast to Hailee and Payton, Allie’s KERP results revealed her role in the classroom to be that of a balanced one. Her preferences were almost at equal standing among all four roles, which was unique among the 13 participants. This balance was readily witnessed throughout the
focus group session as Allie was more reserved, offering insight and commenting less often than Hailee and Payton. However, as her balance among the roles depicts, Allie’s additions to the group discussion were always measured and sound. As Allie even quipped in regard to this balance, “I feel like the environment is a huge factor in why I feel very even in all of these” (Interview, May 1, 2017). However, in reflecting on this within a classroom setting, Allie stated, “I would say that a negative, maybe, of all of this together is [that] I come off sometimes as wishy-washy . . . [that] I lack a lot of consistency for [students], which for freshmen, probably traumatizes them sometimes” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

Turning to Sydney, her full KERP results revealed a Facilitator/Evaluator combined role preference of 59%. Although there were no extremes in her KERP scores, nor a balance among the four roles, the uniqueness that Sydney brought to the focus group was that of an enthusiastic educator only in her second year of teaching. However, this youthfulness belied the depth of insight she offered to the group discussion. As an example, near the end of the focus group discussion when I asked if anyone had anything else to add, Sydney observed, “I think it was interesting that even though we’re all rural and all in different districts, many of you were saying things that I’ve had conversations with my co-workers about. It’s just interesting” (Interview, May 1, 2017). This insight was also witnessed as Sydney reflected on her Facilitator role:

I definitely feel like, because I’m a Facilitator, I do really value building relationships with [students] and I definitely think that I do build a really good relationship with them, and it is that kind of idea that they will be more willing to do something because they like me. But I also feel like, also as a Facilitator, that if you’re so close to the students, . . . they [have] no problem letting me know . . . I feel like if I was more of an Expert, they
wouldn’t dare to challenge me. A part of me feels like I want that a little bit more.

(Interview, May 1, 2017)

As previously noted, I chose to bring together these participants that provided a unique perspective to the study based on their KERP results or years of experience. As such, the make-up and chemistry of the four participants provided good roundtable discussions due to just looking at academic dishonesty in the digital age from the differing views. This focus group provided an opportunity for me to interact with multiple participants at the same time to produce deeper and richer insight due to the synergism created by individuals with similar interests discussing a topic of mutual interest data.

Results

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. The research questions driving this study included:

- How do high school general education teachers experience academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?
- How do the participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the digital age?
- How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?
After employing the specific hermeneutical phenomenological method known as IPA, initial coding occurred by hand. I waited for at least three days, then returned and recoded the data with the aid of the Atlas.Ti software (see Appendix F) and compared the results. Through this IPA process, five common and interconnected themes emerged. These themes were (a) Purposeful Pedagogy, (b) Culturally Conditioned, (c) Blurred Lines, (d) Knowing Their Voice, and (e) Clarity and Consequences as identified in Figure 5. In this section, I explored the characteristics of the themes. The following provides a thick and rich description of each theme through the voices of the 13 participants, illustrating each educator’s lived experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age within the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences. As noted previously, some participants provided a stronger voice than others throughout the study. Such strong voices added additional data to draw on, creating a somewhat unbalanced distribution of data attributed to each participant.
Theme 1: Purposeful pedagogy. The dominant theme to emerge from the data gathered during the interviews and the focus group session was what I categorized as purposeful pedagogy. In addressing academic dishonesty in the digital age, every participant spoke about the importance of being proactive and purposeful in structuring their classroom and instructional practices. The participants used terms such as accountable, creative, diligence, personalized, proactive, and purposeful in describing how their pedagogy has evolved due to 21st century technologies. The theme’s title was born out of such chief descriptors and to the research pointing to the teacher shaping the culture of the classroom through their pedagogical practices (McCabe, 1993; McCabe, 1999; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001).

As previously stated, one cannot overstate the importance of understanding academic dishonesty in the digital age. The use of technology as legitimate learning tools has changed the dynamic in the 21st century classroom. It is through the participants’ experiences with this changing dynamic, and how they voiced such experiences, that provided the awareness of the purposeful pedagogy theme. It is here that the research will turn up the volume on these voices, providing excerpts from the individual interviews and the focus group session.

In describing the evolution of their pedagogy due to the impact of the third wave of digital natives and 21st century technologies, the participants chiefly described the need to be proactive in methodology and practice. Audrey stated, “I definitely, outside when I’m planning things, [find myself] just being proactive in making my assignments” (Interview, January 10, 2017). Laughing, she exclaimed, “I have to be more creative than they are . . . [So] we have to just be so proactive” (Audrey, interview, January 10, 2017). Elaborating further, Audrey stated that being proactive by “just doing little things . . . where [the students] can see the difference” would go a long way in stemming the tide of academic dishonesty in the digital age.
Ryan, Suzanne, and Allie, all from the same district as Audrey, described the need to change toward proactive pedagogical practices. Ryan was emphatic about the positives of the rise in technology but that it also required him to be proactive and purposeful with lessons. As he described, “It’s a little tougher . . . with finding resources to use within your classroom that kids can’t then in turn find the answers to and then just, basically, just have all the right answers and copy down stuff” (Ryan, interview, March 1, 2017). Suzanne echoed such sentiment, describing the need for educators to do more pedagogical “footwork” and to “not [let] yourself become stagnant but grow with your kids - with your students” (Interview, January 10, 2017). Allie exclaimed that, “Purposeful is the way I deal with it” (Interview, March 20, 2017) as she described the details of personalizing assignments and being consistent in vocabulary and organization.

Such descriptors and recommendations were not lost on the other participants as their voices pointed to the need for purposeful pedagogy in addressing academic dishonesty in the digital age. In viewing the shifting dynamic in the 21st century classroom, Madison stated, “I was realizing as a veteran, if that’s what’s coming, boy, do we have to change!” (Interview, March 23, 2017). According to the participants, this change, this need for purposeful pedagogy, requires authenticity and to be “student-driven” (Chyann, interview, February 28, 2017). As Emma attested,

[academic dishonesty] happens most when there’s disinterest in the topic. They’re just trying to get it, get done. They don’t want to go and put any effort in. They just want to put down what needs to be done and get done with it. (Interview, January 24, 2017)

To counter such disinterest, educators “have to become more diligent” (Beau, interview, March 13, 2017) in their pedagogical practices - “be more purposeful in [their] assignments” (Allie,
However, diligence and purposefulness do not equate to rigidity. As Sydney indicated, “I feel like you’re always flexible as an educator. If you’re concrete as an educator, you’re not a good educator” (Interview, March 13, 2017). Such flexibility permits the classroom teacher to “make [learning] personal” (Chyann, interview, February 28, 2017) for the students and provides an avenue to incorporate “real-world stuff” (Hunter, interview, March 13, 2017). Not only does this purposeful pedagogy address the academic dishonesty in the digital age, but participants also believe it will foster “learners [to] develop a lifelong love of learning” (Ryan, interview, March 1, 2017).

During the focus group session, Allie put forth, “Knowledge is so accessible to them through technology. What responsibility, at least as an English teacher, do I have?” However, in answer to her own question, Allie described such purposeful pedagogy takes time, relating, “I think that takes a while to get to when you are teaching. And I think I’ve just been able to play more of that game the last couple years” (Interview, May 1, 2017). As previously detailed, I chose to bring together participants that provided a unique perspective to the study based on their KERP results or years of experience. As such, the four participants provided an insightful roundtable discussion that further established the purposeful pedagogy theme.

This focus group provided an opportunity to produce deeper and richer insight concerning the need to be proactive in methodology and practice due to the impact of 21st century technologies. Such purposefulness and diligence were evident in Allie’s words when she described a particular teaching practice as having been “in the works for almost a decade” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Elaborating later in the focus group discussion, Allie described that:

I know my strategies now. I know what has been working and doesn’t work. So then with all that time I used to spend on all of the other things, . . . now I can put more time
into ‘Oh, these kids are more interested in [a specific topic], so let’s bring something like that in.’ (Interview, May 1, 2017)

For Hailee, the use of technology as a legitimate learning tool has changed the dynamic in her 21st century classroom, describing that “So I encourage to use all the resources they have available to them, they just can’t steal them” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Hailee expanded further, stating, “I focus so much more on the process than what I do on the end product. Of course, I grade the end product but the end product, it feels, [is] almost like an afterthought - if that makes sense” (Interview, May 1, 2017). For Hailee, the accountability of such purposeful pedagogy lies with relationships. As she readily put forth, “I work really hard at relationships” (Hailee, interview, May 1, 2017). Going further, Hailee detailed, “I feel like in my district . . . if I’m going to get kids to work for me, it’s because they want to work for me” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

Allie characterized this evolution toward proactive pedagogical practices to combat academic dishonesty as a patchwork process. As she described, “patchworking . . . this idea of quilting together these quotes, and it is plagiarism, but it is actually a skill, so it’s a stepping stone to get where [students] need to be” (Allie, interview, May 1, 2017). In doing so, Allie stated, “It becomes more of like a championing of them in that realm. Because I do think they think we are looking for perfection” (Interview, May 1, 2017). This shifting dynamic, as Sydney pointed out, is “a big part . . . [of] the creativity aspect” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

Part of the proactive and purposeful process addressing academic dishonesty in the digital age described during the focus group discussions incorporated structure. As Sydney stated, “I think that the way I go about combating plagiarism is through creating a structure in which they cannot plagiarize, and enforcing that structure on them” (Interview, May 1, 2017). However,
when leaving the structure as an option, Sydney described that there was an increase in academic dishonesty (Interview, May 1, 2017). As Hailee detailed, “You can put all of those supports in place, but then if you don’t require it or you don’t mandate it, it falls back to they don’t really care to improve” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

The discussion turned to adaptation and diligence to counter this disinterest. As Payton described such, “I made a conscience choice” (Interview, May 1, 2017) in his classroom practices. He later elaborated further on his teaching practices, stating, “I’ve tried to change my expectation of what [content] looks like in light of what’s available with technology” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017). Waxing philosophical, Payton expounded, “The questioning needs to change, and, in my opinion, in the . . . education world. The way we frame questions, the way we word questions, is changing. Maybe it has changed and I’m just behind and haven’t changed” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

**Theme 2: Culturally Conditioned.** The second most dominant theme to emerge from the data gathered during the interviews and the focus group session was what I characterized as Culturally Conditioned. In addressing the shifting dynamic in their classrooms, every participant emphasized a need to recognize how the changing culture affects 21st century teaching and learning. As one participant described it, “I do think it is a mind set and a culture thing, and I don’t think it’s just in schools” (Abby, interview, January 24, 2017). Whether the participants pointed to the technology, the rural setting of their schools, or other influences, the conditions they faced in their classroom highlighted the changing culture. The theme’s title was born out of this outlook and to the research indicating perceptions of academic dishonesty are culturally conditioned (Heckler & Forde, 2014). This research will once again turn up the volume on the
participants’ voices, providing excerpts from the individual interviews and the focus group session as they described this culturally conditioned mindset.

In speaking to this changing culture that undergirds the academic dishonesty phenomenon, the participants first turn to their students, which is no surprise. As educators, this is an instinctive quality as they are the focus of our career choice. As such, Madison sadly noted, “The main disheartening thing that I see is it’s becoming more widely accepted among the students. It’s not a big deal to them.” (Interview, March 23, 2017). Audrey, in describing the nature of her students, stated, “Just the extremes that they will go instead of just doing it themselves baffles me every time” (Interview, January 10, 2017). Hailee described it as, “Kids think that if they don’t value it, it shouldn’t matter” (Interview, March 13, 2017). She laughingly added, “I think they’re counting on you to be as disinterested as what they are” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017).

Still focusing on the mindset of the students, Hailee described it as a “culture of procrastination” (Interview, March 13, 2017). Adding to that, she stated that today’s students, feel like they don’t need to go anywhere - they don’t need to plan ahead. They can do it all the day before because all of the information is available to them without waiting - no matter where they are. (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017)

Allie put it slightly differently. She described the rise in this culture of academic dishonesty as, “either laziness . . . and then sometimes [it] is just panicking because you don’t know if you’re doing it right so you think they said it better than you” (Interview, March 20, 2017). Madison reflected that “I think it really comes down to them - it’s so accepted. It’s just not a big deal amongst their peers, not at all” (Interview, March 23, 2017).
Today’s students were born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives. According to Hailee, it is this, “The rise in technology [that] has enabled this, this culture of procrastination” (Interview, March 13, 2017). Many of the participants reflected on the changing classroom culture due to 21st century technologies. As Ryan described, technology created an easy path to academic dishonesty in that it is “more easily accessible now to have your hands on other people’s work” (Interview, March 1, 2017). In the mind of today’s students, as Chyann attested to, believe, “If it’s out there, it’s ok to use it” (Interview, January 28, 2017).

Adding to the technology impact on academic dishonesty, Sydney related, “It has definitely contributed to it a lot. I mean, they just want to take so many shortcuts because everything’s at their fingertips” (Interview, March 16, 2017). Audrey, reflecting on her experience since entering the classroom, stated:

It's definitely, I think, easier for them to cheat now because they are so much more technologically advanced than they were eleven years ago. Their access to it is so different - almost all of our kids have a cell phone. So, they can either Google something for themselves or take a picture of it for a friend. (Interview, January 10, 2017)

Thus, a culture is created, according to Sydney, where “students who are academically dishonest . . . insist that they were not being academically dishonest. They genuinely feel like they were not being academically dishonest” (Interview, March 16, 2017). Adding to this, Beau stated:

As with academic dishonesty, as with technology, I think that we will always be behind with that as teachers . . . because . . . kids are innovators, kids are smart. They’re going to find new and creative ways to cheat. I mean, I remember when the mirror on your shoe and answers under your desk was creative. (Interview, March 13, 2017)
The complexities that come with the rural educational environment make the academic dishonesty in the digital age even more complex (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). In reflecting on the rurality, Sydney noted, “it’s definitely a different culture here than it was at my high school . . . the apathy level is a lot higher . . . there is a different atmosphere” (Interview, March 16, 2017). The participants were quick to reflect on this during the focus group session. Payton stated, “I think there is an ethic of what I like to call apathy in the district where I teach” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Sydney readily agreed, describing that in her district that there “is a certain level of apathy among certain populations of students that’s really hard to combat” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

With the focus group session remaining fixated on the rural influence, Hailee remarked, “I’ve been [at my school] 12 years, I am still not used to the rural school district” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Placing her focus beyond her students, Hailee looked to the parents; she stated, “There’s a lack of support at home, and that’s something I really struggle with” (Interview, May 1, 2017). As she noted, there have been many times in which she advocated for help at home with student learning but was met with, “No, that’s your job” (Interview, May 1, 2017). It is due to such occurrences, along with a lack of post-secondary interest, that prompted Sydney to state, “I think it does change the conversation though” (Interview, May 1, 2017). A conversation that quickly turned to poverty.

Allie described her district, “They’re in the second generation of poverty right now because of factories that have closed. And if you talk to people that have been there for a while, there’s been huge changes in the attitude about school” (Interview, May 1, 2017). All the participants readily agreed. Hailee added, “That whole mindset of poverty thing. Like the Ruby
Payne stuff” (Interview, May 1, 2017). It was this poverty mindset that Allie alluded to when stating:

I feel like hard work means something different to them . . . it doesn’t have to do with school and homework but it does have to do with their actual work job. It’s just a different set of priorities that if you don’t value in them, they’re not going to respect you back for that. (Interview, May 1, 2017)

It was Payne (2013) who stated, “The key to achievement for students from poverty is in creating relationships with them” (p. 101). It was this perspective that prompted Hailee to say, “I think that’s why I thrive in a small, [rural] district . . . for me, it’s about personal relationships and getting to know kids and really building into kids” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Sydney agreed, adding

I do really value building relationships with them and I definitely think that I do build a really good relationship with them . . . and it is that kind of idea that they will be more willing to do something because they like me. (Interview, May 1, 2017)

Allie, in reflecting on this culture, stated, “I feel like the biggest thing that rural kids connect to is being genuine” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

Theme 3: Blurred Lines. Elmore (2015) described the third generation of digital natives, Generation iY, as one in which views technology as “a tool and a fuel” (p. 38), “flock[ing] to new technologies, quickly becoming masters at interfacing with them 24/7” (p. 12). As such, the next theme that emerged from the data I could easily characterize as the eyeglasses with which to view the two dominant themes of Purposeful Pedagogy and Cultural Conditioning. The assimilation of 21st century technologies into society and the classroom has blurred the lines for staff and student alike concerning academic dishonesty since both consider
the use of such technology as legitimate learning tools (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014). It was due to such research, and the voices of the participants described below, that I labeled this theme as Blurred Lines.

The infusion of technology into the classroom for teaching and learning may have been best put by Madison when she stated, “It’s been wonderful - I was so excited. I mean, you know, the benefit academically is wonderful . . . to be able to use [the technology] in class but it’s also opened a whole new set of problems” (Interview, March 23, 2017). This new set of problems is what Sydney described as students, “just want[ing] to take so many shortcuts. Because everything’s at their fingertips . . . they just want to take shortcuts constantly. And if it’s not very immediately easy for them, they don’t really execute it” (Interview, March 16, 2017). In turn, this leads to students using that very technology for academic dishonesty. As Audrey put it, “So, I would say it's much easier for them to be academically dishonest now with technology. They’re good with it (laugh). They’re so good with it” (Interview, January 10, 2017).

Elaborating further on her own pedagogical skills, Audrey stated, “[if] my kids [are] capable of doing [their work] this well or did someone say it on the internet and they happened to find it. So, I don't know; I don't know (laughing)” (Interview, January 10, 2017). Expounding on this same questioning, Ryan claimed that:

It’s a little tougher too with finding resources to use within your classroom that kids can’t then in turn find the answers to and then just, basically just have all the right answers and copy down stuff. I mean, there’s stuff out there you can have every step shown. And then you ask the kid about it and they’re like, “I, I have no idea how I did that” (Ryan laughed). (Interview, March 1, 2017)
Maybe both educators laughing during their statements was due to nervousness. However, it seemed more related to their own uncertainty of the pedagogical situation – the gray/hazy area that the assimilation of 21st century technologies into the classroom has created. As Ryan noted concerning this blurred area of pedagogy:

That’s not going away . . . I don’t think that . . . I don’t think that part is ever going to go away with [technology] in the classroom . . . but with the academic dishonesty, I mean, I don’t know . . . because it’s kind of a case by case basis. (Interview, March 1, 2017)

Suzanne concurred, stating, “The temptation [for academic dishonesty] . . . it is easier to, you know, easier to do that, but kids have, they also have access to . . . more materials, so I don't know” (Interview, January 10, 2017).

In reviewing the ease of academic dishonesty in the digital age, Abby related, “I don’t know if the definition [has] changed so much [as] I think that the easiness of cheating has changed” (Interview, January 24, 2017). Going even further, she stated:

So, the ease of it has changed and I don’t think that students see that as wrong all the time, cause, you know, we’re trying to teach them [to] use your resources, use your technology, use these things. So, your teaching them to use it but then they don’t realize . . . there’s times you can’t use it, you have to learn the information - be accountable - and some don’t get that gap. (Abby, interview, January 24, 2017)

This gap – this gray/hazy area that the assimilation of 21st century technologies into the classroom has created – had some, like Emma, asking, “So is that academic dishonesty? . . . Is that cheating? . . . So where does the responsibility lie there?” (Interview, January 24, 2017). As she stated further, “See, that one is very hazy” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017).
Educators are not the only ones who find this haziness. As Sydney noted, “I have students who are academically dishonest who insist that they were not being academically dishonest. They genuinely feel like they were not being academically dishonest” (Interview, March 16, 2017). As Chyann stated, “[Students] think if it’s out there it’s ok to use it” (Interview, January 28, 2017). However, Chyann compromisingly put forth:

There’s a fine line between copying and working together. It’s hard to tell . . . that’s kind of a gray area right there. But I think we have to kind of live with it because we’re trying to teach these kids how to work together and collaborate so when they get out there in the real world, they can meet those expectations. (Interview, January 28, 2017)

The importance of this discussion on the assimilation of 21st century technologies into the classroom continued into the focus group session. In reviewing such technology, Sydney related, “I definitely see positives in it. There’s just such a wealth of information. It’s so easy for [students] to do research and it provides a lot more opportunities for them” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Payton, in describing his experiences since first starting, emphatically stated, “Technology has helped me out!” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Hailee even commented, “It’s even changed the way we have classroom discussions” (Interview, May 1, 2017) as she elaborated the use of the online environment to further classroom discussions.

The emphasis on a gray/hazy area with technology and academic dishonesty remained constant within the focus group session. As an example, Hailee described, “I encourage [students] to use all the resources they have available to them; they just can’t steal them” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Payton added, “I think these students are struggling at knowing, in some areas, what is dishonest and what is acceptable. And I feel like the digital age has kind of changed that definition a little bit” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Sydney touched further on this as
well when describing how the technology had allowed academic dishonesty within the work of her underclassmen, stating, it is, “something that is hard for them to understand” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Allie affirmed this notion, describing with her younger high school students, “I would say 95% of the time they really don’t know. So, I deal a lot more with just a naivete as opposed to actual hiding behavior” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

Payton described such an experience of blurred lines when explaining, “I’ve tried to change my expectation of what [learning] looks like in light of what’s available with technology” (Interview, May 1, 2017). As he put it, during a recent lesson in which he told his students that they would be able to use online resources, “[That it] was kind of eye-opening to me how they felt like they were cheating but yet I told them ‘this isn’t cheating in this context’” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017). This scenario deepened even further the words Allie expressed during the focus group session concerning the blurred lines that the assimilation of 21st century technologies into the classroom has created. As she asked it, “[since] knowledge is so accessible to them through technology. What responsibility, [as an educator], do I have?” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

Theme 4: Knowing Their Voice. The fourth theme to emerge from the data gathered during the interviews and the focus group session has at its core the student-teacher relationship. As already discussed, it was Payne (2013) who stated, “The key to achievement for students from poverty is in creating relationships with them” (p. 101). Similarly, Elmore (2015) described the 21st century learner as one that “hunger[s] more for relationship than for information” (p. 48). Being a veteran of the classroom, I know that academic dishonesty is rare in classrooms where learning is relevant, engaging, and where teachers communicate with students, developing positive relationships (Broeckelman-Post, 2008; Kohn, 2008; Richardson &
Arker, 2010; Rosile, 2007; Strom & Strom, 2007a, 2007b). The reader could easily view this fourth theme as the lifeblood to the previous three. It was due to the voices of past research and that of this study’s participants that I labeled this theme as Knowing Their Voice.

As previously stated, the role of the classroom teacher cannot be understated. Prior research indicates that academic dishonesty is an issue, pointing to the educators to develop the strategies to manage the phenomenon (Charles, 2012; Kereluik et al., 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Roorda et al., 2011; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Zhao, 2015). The key strategy in which the participants of this study gave voice to was that of relationships. Madison described this strategy well when she ascribed, “I have found that by gaining a student's trust and respect, that student will more often than not perform better academically in my classroom” (Interview, March 23, 2017). Going further, she stated, “In a way, I feel a student who is academically dishonest in my class is personally insulting me and damaging the rapport and respect we have built” (Madison, interview, March 23, 2017). Madison did not lose this sentiment on the other participants.

In describing the development of the strategies to manage the academic dishonesty in the digital age, Hailee stated,

I try [to] put in new methods of teaching . . . I try to stay on top of that, but for me, it’s, it always comes back to that personal application . . . I thrive on personal relationship.

(Interview, March 13, 2017)

Suzanne emphasized this as well, describing that when students do original work, “they have to give it their own touch, their own voice” (Interview, January 10, 2017). Elaborating, she stated, “I as a teacher have developed a . . . relationship with those students, so I know their voice, their quirks, their syntax, . . . strengths, and weaknesses” (Suzanne, interview, January 10, 2017).
Abby equivocated, stating, “You have to know your students better [be]cause your like, ‘that does not sound like their work’” (Interview, January 24, 2017).

To foster such a relationship strategy, Emma explained, “[I tell my students], ‘This is a no stress class!’ And so, because of that, there is a closeness that occurs in our classes” (Interview, January 24, 2017). As she detailed, “In my class, they know me . . . there’s not a lot of distance between [in the] teacher-student relationship in my class” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). As other participants put it, such relationship building enables them to “hear those conversations” (Chyann, interview, February 28, 2017) while “combating plagiarism . . . on the ground” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017). Hailee framed it as, “I try [to] lean on that, you know, that little bit of personal connection piece. And I think sometimes . . . that’s effective” (Interview, March 13, 2017).

Within the focus group, the four participants once again put forth that the key strategy in which to combat academic dishonesty in the digital age was that of relationship building in the classroom. In reflecting how creating such relationships affected her pedagogy, Hailee stated, “I think that changes what you do in your classroom too. I give my kids a lot more grace” (Interview, May 1, 2017). It is this type of relational grace that Allie spoke of when she described telling her students, “So if you plagiarize, I actually don’t care as long as we can talk about why it’s plagiarism and you fix it” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

Not all the focus group participants found building relationships such an easy task. In reaction to the others’ discussion concerning this, Payton added:

Along those same lines, I don’t know . . . I’m in a rural school district and I understand that comment about you know the students - you know whose doing this, that, and the other. A lot of times I don’t. I’m clueless. (Interview, May 1, 2017)
However, he went on to say, “I’m thinking that’s something I maybe need to change. And if they feel like they know you, they might be more willing to do what you want them to do” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017). This speaks to the underlying factor to building relationships – to getting to know the voices of their student - motivation. Sydney reflected on this, stating:

I do really value building relationships with them and I definitely think that I do build a really good relationship with them . . . and it is that kind of idea that they will be more willing to do something because they like me. (Interview, May 1, 2017)

As noted by the several within the focus group, although building strong relationships with students provides a motivational influence, it is arduous. For Hailee, as she put it, “I work really hard at relationships” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Allie, in describing the end of a school week, stated, “Nothing’s available on Friday’s’ because you’re tired - because it takes so much energy . . . and that is part of your job at a rural school, I think” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Payton concurred, stating, “I’m a lot more drained at the end of the day. I think it’s because I’m having to pull on an area that’s not a natural strength” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

**Theme 5: Clarity and Consequences.** The fifth and final theme to emerge from the data speaks to what is needed moving forward concerning academic dishonesty with the changing the dynamic of the 21st century classroom. As already discussed, McCabe (2001) noted that the digital age “raises new and significant problems for both students and teachers” (para. 15) with regards to the academic dishonesty phenomenon. Throughout the interviews and the focus group session, participants would use words like accountability, consequences, common language/vocabulary, and commitment. Although there is not a widely accepted definition of what constitutes academic dishonesty (Burrus et al., 2007; McCabe et al., 2001), the participants
discussed wanting clarity concerning this issue. It was due to the voices of this concern, and the voices of past research, that I labeled this theme as Clarity and Consequences.

As mentioned at several points throughout this study, research cannot understate the role of the classroom teacher in regard to managing academic dishonesty. During the individual interviews, many of the participants described dealing with this phenomenon within their own classroom, or as Abby framed in, “I took care of it in-house and reported it too” (Interview, January 24, 2017). Sydney admonished that educators need to “be very consistent and very clear [and] teachers should definitely be leading by example” (Interview, March 13, 2017). However, as Payton noted concerning this scenario, “I guess it’s ridiculous to even think everybody’s always going to be on the same page” (Interview, March 23, 2017). It was out of this that the participants called for clarity and consensus.

Payton reflected on his previous statement then commented, “I guess we need clear guidelines on what we are supposed to be doing in education” (Interview, March 23, 2017). Hailee, emphasizing the need of this, stated, “I think it needs to be taken a lot more seriously . . . I think that there need to be very real consequences” (Interview, March 13, 2017). It was Abby who earlier warned, “I mean how you go about changing this is difficult . . . I do think it is a mind set and a culture thing” (Interview, January 24, 2017). Hunter agreed, commenting during his interview session, “We need to do something different in the school systems [but] I found out that in this teaching world if you want to change something, it is so slow” (Interview, March 13, 2017).

Throughout each session, this difficulty did not deter each participant’s call for uniformity on what academic dishonesty is in the digital age and what are the consequences for it. Audrey put forth “I definitely think that every school, or at least grade level or subject area, or
however they want to break it down, needs to have a definition . . . along with the consequences for it” (Interview, January 10, 2017). She emphatically added, “You have to target the parents also” (Audrey, interview, January 10, 2017). Madison even noted, “I think it needs to be something on . . . the state level or even at the national level that’s a universal rule” (Interview, March 23, 2017). Others touched on this universality, calling for “consistent vocabulary” (Allie, interview, March 20, 2017) and “common literature on it” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017).

During the focus group session, the discussions of this theme centered on the role of the classroom teacher managing academic dishonesty. The details that emerged from the discussions lingered on today’s student not having a clear understanding of academic dishonesty. Each of the participants shared their experiences with this. As Hailee put it, “I tell the kids if it’s not your own idea, if you didn’t arrive at that conclusion on your own, then you need to cite it . . . we struggle with the idea of citing ideas” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Sydney echoed this sentiment, stating that this is “something that is hard for them to understand” (Interview, May 1, 2017). It is due to this lack of understanding that caused Allie to attest, “In my experience, academic dishonesty is not intentional the majority of the time” (Interview, May 1, 2017). Re-emphasizing the need for clarity and a common definition, Payton ascribed, “I think these students are struggling at knowing, in some areas, what is dishonest and what is acceptable. And I feel like the digital age has kind of changed that definition a little bit” (Interview, May 1, 2017).

**Research Questions**

The three guiding research questions formulated for this study investigated four areas of the phenomenon that included how teachers experience academic dishonesty, how they define it, how their role has evolved, and the connection of this experience to their pedagogy. All five of
the emergent themes, being interconnected, gave guidance and insight to respond to the three research questions. Figure 6 illustrates the relationship of the research questions and the five common themes.

**Figure 6.** Research questions and themes relationship visual.

This section answers the three guiding research questions of the study while being mindful of this relationship.

**RQ1: How do high school general education teachers describe their experience with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?** As discussed in Chapter One, the rationale for this study was to gain a better understanding of academic dishonesty in the digital age by looking to the classroom teacher as they provide students the needed strategies to successfully employ technologies in an honest way (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013). The rural school setting does not change expectations; thus, the academic dishonesty phenomenon in the digital age becomes even
more multifaceted (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014). Therefore, this central research question provided an opening to learn more about how the rural classroom teacher experiences the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

As the “founding father” of academic integrity research (Todd, 2014) noted, the digital age “raises new and significant problems for both students and teachers” (McCabe, 2001, para. 15) with regard to the academic dishonesty in the 21st century classroom. Such was not lost on the 13 participants of the study. So, how do high school general education teachers describe their experience with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio? Maybe the words of one of the participants give an apt reply. In viewing the shifting dynamic in the 21st century classroom due to technology, one of the participants stated, “It’s been wonderful - I was so excited. I mean, you know, the benefit academically is wonderful . . . to be able to use [the technology] in class but it’s also opened a whole new set of problems” (Madison, interview, March 23, 2017). That ‘whole new set of problems’ lies in the blurred lines created for teacher and learner alike concerning academic dishonesty since both consider the use of such technology as legitimate learning tools (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014).

The experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age that the 13 participants of this study describe taking place in their rural school districts in southwest Ohio could easily be summed up as gray or hazy. As at least one participant admonished, “So is that academic dishonesty? . . . Is that cheating? . . . So where does the responsibility lie there? . . . See, that one is very hazy” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). All the participants admitted they regularly experienced academic dishonesty. However, each one described that it had evolved. As one attested, “The ease that it can happen [has] changed . . . it’s easier to cheat . . . the technology has
made it easier” (Chyann, interview, February 28, 2017). Not only has the integration of 21st
century technologies into the classroom made it easier, but it also has blurred the lines on
academic dishonesty.

The fact that these 13 participants were high school general education teachers in rural
school districts in southwest Ohio did not seem to change their outlook concerning academic
dishonesty in the digital age. They did, however, speak to their experiences with the apathy level
among students found in rural schools. Multiple of the participants reflected on this, noting it is
“really hard to combat” (Sydney, interview, May 1, 2017). Such levels of apathy lead students to
“think that if they don’t value it, it shouldn’t matter” (Hailee, Interview, March 13, 2017). This
apathy, according to the experiences of the participants, leads students to use the available
technology for academic dishonesty. However, one aspect within the rural schools found to be
an asset in dealing with this is relationships because, as one participant put it, “The biggest thing
that rural kids connect to is being genuine” (Allie, interview, May 1, 2017).

Whether the participants pointed to the technology, the rurality, or other influences, they
always described conditions regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age in terms of a
changing culture. A culture in which what is traditionally termed as academic dishonesty is
becoming more widely accepted among the students. This is due in part, according to the
experiences of the participants, to information being so readily available to students, where
“everything’s at their fingertips” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017). Additionally, “students
who are academically dishonest . . . genuinely feel like they were not being academically
dishonest” (Sydney, interview, March 16, 2017). Such experiences caused at least one
participant to attest to the struggle teachers and students face in defining academic dishonesty.
within such a cultural environment, stating, “I feel like the digital age has kind of changed that
definition a little bit” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017).

RQ2: How do participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the
digital age? As noted previously, research indicated it is the classroom teacher that effectively
deals with the academic dishonesty phenomenon by fostering integrity through unique
assignments, how they use technology tools, their clear communication of expectations, and by
providing students an environment where they get an accurate understanding of the honesty
behavior with their peers (McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013). As
such, it was needful to have a better understanding of how classroom teachers perceived
academic dishonesty in the digital age. Therefore, this sub-question in support of the central
research question provided a means to learn more about how the rural classroom teacher
described the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

Although a widely accepted definition of what constitutes academic dishonesty from
previous research does not exist (Burrus et al., 2007; McCabe et al., 2001), for the purposes of
this study, academic dishonesty was generally defined as student use of digital technologies or
any other type of unauthorized assistance to receive credit for academic work beyond their own
ability or their willingness to attempt (Molnar, 2015; Schmelkin et al., 2010). However, with
technology now considered a legitimate learning tool in the 21st century classroom, there has
been a call for definition and context of academic dishonesty within the digital age (McCabe et
al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Stogner et al., 2013). The 13 participants of this study also voiced
this request.

With a lack of definition and context, this research question focused in on what the 13
participants described as constituting academic dishonesty in the digital age in an effort to bring
about a definition – which they readily did. However, that description became blurred due to the incorporation of 21st century technologies into instruction and student learning. As one participant stated when attempting to define academic dishonesty, “I don’t know if the definition [has] changed so much [as] I think that the easiness of cheating has changed” (Abby, interview, January 10, 2017). A few of the participants were in consensus with this statement. Many of them, however, expressed that their description/definition of what constitutes academic dishonesty has changed due to the influx of technology into their classroom and their students’ lives. As previously mentioned, such experiences caused at least one participant to reflect, “I feel like the digital age has kind of changed that definition a little bit” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017).

As noted earlier, Elmore (2015) described those entering the 21st century classroom as a culture which views technology as “a tool and a fuel” (p. 38). Research indicated perceptions of academic dishonesty are culturally conditioned (Heckler & Forde, 2014). As such, the 13 participants described academic dishonesty in light of this culture they encounter on a daily basis. Their experiences detail of students using information that is available to them 24/7 - no matter where they are - creating an easy path to academic dishonesty. As one participant described it, the student culture of 21st century classroom believes “if it’s out there, it’s ok to use it” (Chyann, interview, January 28, 2017). Many of the participants demonstrated their concern on the commonality of the practice. One noted that “It’s so accepted. It’s just not a big deal amongst their peers, not at all” (Madison, interview, March 23, 2017). This echoes back to the words of McCabe, the “founding father” of academic integrity research (Todd, 2014), when he stated there was one phrase from students that distressed him the most after so many years of academic dishonesty research, “It’s no big deal” (Todd, 2014, para. 2).
Such concern spurned several participants to give a broad definition of academic dishonesty. Such definitions were generally put it in terms of, “academic dishonesty is anytime that you take credit for something that isn’t yours” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). Although a more specific definition did not emerge from the participants, a definite call for clear guidelines on academic dishonesty presented itself. The participants acknowledged the difficulty of such a measure but recognized the need to take it seriously. One even set forth that “it's a learning curve that gradually takes time” (Beau, interview, March 13, 2017). Their seriousness prompted another participant to share, “This study that you’re doing is probably going to make a pretty good thing because . . . we’re doing something wrong” (Hunter, interview, March 13, 2017).

**RQ3: How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?** With Kolb’s (2015) ELT guiding this study, it was imperative to have an understanding of the classroom teachers’ “experience[s] with awareness to create meaning and make choices” (Kolb, 2015, p. 338) regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age. Such a theoretical framework described learning as a process where the transformation of experience creates meaning, which in turn provides an accurate model for guiding pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015). As such, I designed this second sub-question in support of the central research question to learn more about how the rural classroom teacher described how their role has evolved with their experience with the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

The use of technology as a legitimate learning tool has changed the dynamic in the 21st century classroom – even within the rural schools. Elmore (2015) described the generation of students that today’s classroom educators encounter as one in which views technology as “a tool
and a fuel” (p. 38) and that “flock to new technologies” (p. 12). So, how do the 13 participants of this study describe the way their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practices due to these experiences? One of the participants viewing this shifting dynamic in the 21st century classroom summed it up as, “I was realizing as a veteran if that’s what’s coming, boy, do we have to change!” (Madison, interview, March 23, 2017). In relating the impact that 21st century technologies and academic dishonesty has had on their pedagogy, the participants chiefly described that it has become proactive in methodology and practice.

Being a veteran of the classroom, I am keenly aware the impact of a classroom where learning is relevant, engaging, and where teachers communicate with students, developing positive relationships (Broeckelman-Post, 2008; Kohn, 2008; Richardson & Arker, 2010; Rosile, 2007; Strom & Strom, 2007a, 2007b). The 13 participants shared experiences that vetted such insight. The descriptions that each participant provided of their experiences, along with recent research, point to the teacher shaping the culture of the classroom through their purposeful pedagogical practices (McCabe, 1993; McCabe, 1999; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001). As one participant elaborated, “I’ve tried to change my expectation of what [content] looks like in light of what’s available with technology” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017).

It was from the voices of the 13 participants, sharing their experiences based on the focus of this research question, which resulted in the emergent of the most dominant theme – purposeful pedagogy. In describing how their teaching practices have evolved due to the influence of 21st century technologies on academic dishonesty, the participants used wording such as accountable, creative, diligence, personalized, proactive, and purposeful. For the participants, not only has their evolving purposeful pedagogy addressed the academic dishonesty in the digital age, but they also expressed their belief that it has fostered “a lifelong love of
learning” (Ryan, interview, March 1, 2017) for their students. However, each participant expressed that the development of such proactive pedagogical practices was demanding and takes time. This revelation was clearly evident when a participant described that a specific teaching practice she developed had been “in the works for almost a decade” (Allie, interview, May 1, 2017).

As previously mentioned, the theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT which defined learning as a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, providing a complex and realistic model for guiding pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014; Kolb, 2015). As such, many of the participants reflected on the manner in which their role had evolved within their broader pedagogical practice through the lens of their KERP results. As one noted, “I feel like I’m kind of treading water many days . . . I think it’s because I’m having to pull on an area that’s not a natural strength” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017). Whereas another played to their strength, noting, “I always fall back on the relationship . . . that for me . . . is the strength” (Hailee, interview, March 13, 2017). However, no matter what KERP lens a participant used, each spoke that the broader pedagogical practices in education must evolve due to such experiences of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age. One of the participants reflected, “Maybe it has changed and I’m just behind” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017).

**Summary**

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. Within this chapter, I provided an extensive overview which detailed the purpose, problem, and process of the study. I also provided a thick and rich
description of each of 13 individuals who participated in the study (using pseudonyms).

Additionally, I included a detailed summary of the focus group session.

Using the thick and rich descriptions of the experiences each of 13 individuals shared, as well the focus groups session data, five common and interconnected themes emerged. Those themes were (a) Purposeful Pedagogy, (b) Culturally Conditioned, (c) Blurred Lines, (d) Knowing Their Voice, and (e) Clarity and Consequences. In this chapter, I provided an exploration of the characteristics of each theme. All five of the emergent themes gave guidance and insight to respond to the three research questions. Also in this chapter, I answered the three guiding research questions of the study while being mindful of this relationship. Those three guiding research questions included:

- How do high school general education teachers experience academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?
- How do the participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the digital age?
- How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. The problem that spurred the research for this study was the lack of qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences of rural general education high school teachers in regard to this phenomenon. My goal as the researcher was to turn up the volume on these voices and thus to fill a gap in the research.

Kolb’s (2015) ELT provided the framework to place academic dishonesty in the digital age in the context of meaningful relationships and shared experiences thus laying the groundwork for further theoretical consideration to study the implications in greater detail. Chapter Five consists of six sections: (a) an overview of the chapter, (b) a summary of the findings, (c) a discussion of the findings and the implications in light of the relevant literature and theory, (d) an implications section, (e) an outline of the study limitations, and (f) recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

After engaging the data with the specific hermeneutical phenomenological method known as IPA, five common and interconnected themes emerged. These themes were (a) Purposeful Pedagogy, (b) Culturally Conditioned, (c) Blurred Lines, (d) Knowing Their Voice, and (e) Clarity and Consequences. In this section, the study findings will be presented via a concise summary of the themes and through briefly answering each research question.
**Theme 1: Purposeful Pedagogy**

The first and most dominant theme to emerge from listening to the voices of the 13 teachers was purposeful pedagogy. In addressing academic dishonesty in the digital age, every educator pointed to the importance of being proactive and purposeful in structuring their classroom and instructional practices. Terms such as accountability, creativity, diligence, personalization, proactive, and purposeful were used by the teachers as they recounted how their pedagogy had evolved due to 21st century technologies. It is through the participants’ voiced experiences with such technology being used as legitimate learning tools, changing the dynamic in the 21st century classroom, that provided the awareness of the purposeful pedagogy theme.

Each of the 13 high school general education teachers, all from rural school districts in southwest Ohio, emphasized the need to be proactive in methodology and practice. This need for purposeful pedagogy, as described by the educators, requires authenticity, adaptation, diligence, and a student focus. Such a shift to meet the changing dynamic in their classroom, according to the educators, takes time and can be demanding. However, as they brought forth, the accountability measures of a purposeful pedagogy are found in the relationships that are formed to counter a disinterested and disengaged 21st century learner.

**Theme 2: Culturally Conditioned**

The second but no less important theme to emerge from the voices of the 13 teachers was of cultural conditioning. Each of the educators emphasized a need to recognize how a changing culture affects 21st century teaching and learning. Whether the teachers pointed to the technology, the rural setting of their schools, or other influences, the shifting dynamic they faced in their classrooms highlighted this changing culture. As no surprise, the teachers first turned to
their students. Each reflected on how students today, born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives, are culturally conditioned.

However, each of the 13 high school general education teachers went beyond the technology to speak to a cultural conditioning based upon rurality. They spoke to the level of apathy within the rural community which makes its way into the classroom and to lack of support found in the homes of their students. The teachers described a poverty mindset that brought changes to the attitudes on the importance of education. Similar to the first theme, the educators point to the importance of building strong, genuine relationships in their classrooms to counter this cultural conditioning.

**Theme 3: Blurred Lines**

The next theme that emerged from the collective voices of the 13 educators was that of blurred lines. I could easily characterize this theme as the eyeglasses with which to view the previous two themes. It is the very nature of the data found here that calls for clearer vision on the assimilation of 21st century technologies into the classroom as legitimate learning tools and its effects concerning academic dishonesty. Although each of the teachers described an excitement concerning the capabilities that technology brought to teaching and learning, all expressed uncertainty of the creation of the gray/hazy pedagogical situation. Thus, the uncertainty created by the incorporation of 21st century technologies into the classroom of these 13 educators blurred their vision to what now constitutes academic dishonesty and where their responsibilities lie as an educator.

**Theme 4: Knowing Their Voice**

The fourth theme, knowing their voice, emerged from the shared experiences of the 13 teachers and had at its core the student-teacher relationship mentioned in the first two themes. In
reflecting on this key strategy, the teachers described a pedagogical framework in their classrooms to engage with students in order listen to those conversations that guide instruction. Each of the educators put forth a need to change what they did in their classroom to hear the voices of their students – getting to know their touch. This engagement speaks to the underlying factor of building relationships – to getting to know the voices of their students - motivation. However, as noted by these 13 rural educators, building strong relationships with students provide a motivational influence within their student but is also pedagogically demanding and time-consuming. However, all attested to the need to knowing their students’ voices due to the changing climate of the 21st century classroom.

**Theme 5: Clarity and Consequences**

The final theme to emerge from the voices of the participating high school teachers spoke to what is needed moving forward concerning academic dishonesty within the changing dynamic of the 21st century classroom – clarity and consequences. Terms such as accountability, consequences, common language/vocabulary, and commitment were used by the educators as they discussed this need of clear understanding of academic dishonesty by staff and students alike. Although all the educators in the study acknowledged the difficulty of creating such change within our educational environment, this struggle did not deter their call for uniformity and clarity on what academic dishonesty means in the digital age and what the consequences should be for such activity.

**Research Questions**

The three guiding research questions formulated for this study investigated four areas of the phenomenon that included how teachers experience academic dishonesty, how they define it, how their role has evolved, and the connection of this experience to their pedagogy. The
interrelated nature of the five emergent themes provided guidance and insight to respond to the three research questions. Being mindful of this relationship, a brief answer for each research question follows.

**RQ1: How do high school general education teachers describe their experience with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio?** The experiences with academic dishonesty the 13 educators in this study describe taking place in their rural school districts could easily be summed up as gray or hazy. All the teachers acknowledged they regularly experienced academic dishonesty. However, each one detailed that the phenomenon had evolved. Such experiences are a result of the shifting dynamic in the 21st century classroom due to the use of technology as a legitimate learning tool. This technological shift has blurred the lines concerning academic dishonesty for teacher and learner alike. The 13 educators also described further complexity due to such experiences paired with a high apathy level among students found in rural schools.

Whether these 13 high school general education teachers pointed to the technology, the rurality, or other influences, the conditions they described experiencing in their classrooms concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age highlighted the changing culture. A culture in which the traditional sense of academic dishonesty has become more commonly accepted among the students. However, all the educators testified to the strength they found in building relationships with their students as a means to combat the changing culture. As each teacher gave witness to, academic dishonesty was rare once they had developed such positive relationships.

**RQ2: How do participants describe what constitutes academic dishonesty in the digital age?** With the lack of a widely accepted definition of what constitutes academic
dishonesty, this research question focused in on what the 13 participants described as constituting academic dishonesty in the digital age to bring about a definition. Many of them, however, expressed that their description/definition of what constitutes academic dishonesty had changed due to the flood of technology into their classroom and into their students’ lives. Their experiences detail students readily using such technology to obtain information that is available to them 24/7. Thus, their descriptions of what constitutes academic dishonesty became blurred.

Each of the participating teachers expressed their concern of academic dishonesty – or what has been traditionally labeled academic dishonesty – had become so common place within their rural school districts in southwest Ohio. Such concern caused the educators to put forth broad definitions of academic dishonesty which focused in on students taking credit for intellectual property that is not their own. Although a specific definition did not emerge from the 13 educators in this study, a definite call for clear guidelines on academic dishonesty presented itself. Each of the teachers acknowledged the difficulty of creating such measures but were insistent on the seriousness of the need.

**RQ3: How do participants describe the manner in which their role has evolved within their broader pedagogical practice with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age?** Each of the 13 high school general education teachers recognized that the use of technology as a legitimate teaching and learning tool had changed the dynamic in their 21st century classroom. In relating how the impact that such technologies and academic dishonesty have had on their pedagogy, the teachers unequivocally related that it had become proactive in methodology and practice. In describing this evolving role, the 13 educators used words such as accountable, creative, diligence, personalized, proactive, and purposeful.
The collective voice of the educators within this study expressed that the manner in which their pedagogical roles have evolved – still evolving – is a demanding process that takes time. They related that this move toward purposeful pedagogy required them to be diligent yet flexible, creative yet structured, student-driven yet leading by example. However, as the 13 educators attested, not only had this arduous path to purposeful pedagogy addressed the academic dishonesty in the digital age, they also voiced their belief that it had fostered a lifelong love of learning within their students.

**Discussion**

Previous research completed on academic dishonesty primarily concentrated on the post-secondary level with few qualitative studies providing a voice for the lived experiences of high school teachers in regard to academic dishonesty in the digital age. The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to fill that gap by describing high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. Kolb’s (2015) ELT guided this study, including the newly expanded Educator Roles and the Nine Style Learning Cycle (Kolb et al., 2014).

Multiple means of data collection were used in order to triangulate the data and ensure a trustworthy interpretation. IPA (Smith et al., 2009) was incorporated to provide the flexibility to work with each of the 13 educators to gain a thick and rich understanding of their experiences with the phenomenon. Each of the teachers had the opportunity to speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length (Smith et al., 2009). It is within the framework of the theoretical and empirical literature that I examine the results of the study below.
Theoretical

As noted previously, the theoretical framework that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT as it provided an ideal lens through which to view the experiences of the 13 educators as they shared their experiences of learning, growing, and developing concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age. The major implication of ELT within education is it provides a pedagogical framework that enables learners to develop and use all learning styles, promoting deeper learning (Kolb, 2015). ELT afforded each of the 13 teachers in this study as learner, a framework in their attempt to grasp and transform through their experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age.

The results of this study revealed what previous research had put forth, that ELT provides a vivid framework in which to understand learning (Baasanjav, 2013; Cameron et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2013; Clark et al., 2014; Dernova, 2015; Finch et al., 2015; Hwang et al., 2014; Hwang et al., 2013; Kolb & Peterson, 2013; Konak et al., 2014; Lee & Lee, 2013; Rangel et al., 2015; Thomas & Gentzler, 2013; Williams et al., 2013). Each of the 13 educators shared their experiences as the teacher becoming the learner in their attempt to grasp and transform through their experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age. Such shared experiences detailed a learning process for each educator where the transformation of experience created knowledge, providing them a complex and realistic model for guiding their own pedagogy (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb et al., 2014; Kolb, 2015).

Spiraling through the experiential learning cycle, teachers will learn and adapt their professional identity due to the perception they have of academic dishonesty in the digital age (Kolb, 2015). Understanding with what learning styles, what role, these 13 high school general education teachers experienced academic dishonesty in the digital age provided insight into how
their role had evolved within their broader pedagogical practices. The recently developed KERP afforded this study a gateway of understanding on the entry point each of the 13 teachers took into this experiential learning cycle as they shared their experiences of academic dishonesty in the digital age. The results of the study confirmed the theoretical assertion that through personal experiences and choices, teachers will have a “definite preference for one or two roles over the others” (Kolb, 2015, p. 305).

Through the awareness of the 13 participants, a novel aspect of this study concerning Kolb’s (2015) ELT came to light. It may be best said that they lacked familiarity of this theoretical framework, role profile typology, and the KERP instrument. However, although having no prior knowledge, each of the 13 educators highlighted they were not surprised by their KERP results. Furthermore, they acknowledged that their “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) accurately described what learning style(s) they used in their experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age.

As a point of reflexivity, I, too, was encouraged by this unique finding. Being aware of each educator’s KERP result as I went through the IPA analysis iterations, immersing myself in the data, to find their voiced experiences aligning with their preferred “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) was affirming. Such affirmation was not due to my own personal bias or experiences. Reflexivity and the bracketing process enabled me to keep a “fresh perspective” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80) throughout the study. However, this unique finding affirmed for me as the researcher that this study further confirmed that ELT provided a “useful framework for learner-centered educational innovation, including instructional design, curriculum development, and life-long learning” (Kolb, 2015, p. xxv) and provided support that the KERP established for
educators a dynamic matching model of their roles within their educational experiences (Kolb et al., 2014).

**Empirical**

**Academic Dishonesty.** In the years since the studies by Drake (1941), Bowers (1964), and McCabe (1993), research indicated that the rate of academic dishonesty has not subsided (Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006; Elliot et al., 2014; Galloway, 2012; Josien & Broderick, 2013; Jurdi et al., 2012; Khan & Balasubramanian, 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe, 2001; McCabe et al., 2001; Molnar, 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014). The results of this study confirmed this notion. Each of the 13 high school teachers described the phenomenon continues unabated, reporting that they encountered academic dishonesty regularly. However, as previous research indicated, these 13 educators were typically reluctant to report academic dishonesty, generally wanting to deal directly with the students in-house (Beasley, 2014; Elliot et al., 2014; Frenken, 2013; Imram & Nordin, 2013; Jurdi et al., 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe, 1993; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014).

Donald L. McCabe, referred to as the “founding father” of academic integrity research (Todd, 2014), stated the there was one phrase from students that distressed him the most after so many years of academic dishonesty research, “It’s no big deal” (Todd, 2014, para. 2). The collective voices of the teachers in this study reasserted that concern. Their shared experiences related students using information that is available to them 24/7 - no matter where they were - creating an easy path to academic dishonesty. With research indicating perceptions of academic dishonesty are culturally conditioned (Heckler & Forde, 2014), the results of this study reiterated and confirmed the notion of previous studies that speak to the concern on the commonality of the
practice (Galloway, 2012; Jurdi et al., 2012; Liebler, 2012; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Molnar; 2015; Nelson et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014).

**The Digital Age Classroom.** Recent studies indicate 21st century technologies have changed the power dynamics in the classroom in that it has transformed how students think and learn (Armstrong, 2014; Atif, 2013; Bates, 2013; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Hamlen, 2012; Kereluik et al., 2013; Ng, 2012; Stogner et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014, Yong & Gates, 2014). The results of this study confirmed such research. Each of the 13 teachers described this shifting dynamic in their classrooms as both exciting and concerning. Exciting in that 21st century technologies opened a whole new avenue of teaching and learning yet concerning in that a new set of problems come with it. A concern that McCabe (1999) gave almost two decades ago – “[Digital] technologies have opened up new opportunities for academic dishonesty” (p. 683).

This study confirmed previous research that described the incorporation of 21st century technologies into student learning blurred the lines for staff and students concerning academic dishonesty since both consider the use of such technology as a legitimate learning tool, thus changing the dynamics of the classroom (Armstrong, 2014; Charles, 2012; Cole et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014). Each of 13 high school general education teachers spoke to this concern – even questioning what is considered academic dishonesty in the digital age. This finding affirmed what previous research had forewarned. With access to such a broad swath of data and information with 21st century technologies, the understanding of what is considered academic dishonesty will become complex (Charles, 2012; Nelson et al., 2013; Walker & Townley, 2012; Yong & Gates, 2014).

**The Teacher in Context.** Previous research indicated the management of academic dishonesty requires proper attention being given to the supporting factors, pointing to the
classroom teacher to provide students the needed environment and strategies to successfully combat the academic dishonesty phenomenon (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015; Imram & Nordin, 2013; McCabe et al., 2001; Meng et al., 2014; Minckler, 2013; Peklaj et al., 2012; Sandoval-Lucero, 2014; Schmelkin et al., 2010; Stogner et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2014). The results of this study reinforce such research with the voices of the participating educators emphasizing that the role of the classroom teacher cannot be understated. Each of the participating educators spoke about the importance of being proactive and purposeful in structuring their classroom and instructional practices to shape the culture of the classroom to address academic dishonesty (McCabe, 1993; McCabe, 1999; McCabe & Treviño, 1997; McCabe et al., 2001).

A powerful piece that emerged from this study, maybe the most powerful, was the importance that each of the 13 teachers put on building relationships – to getting to know the voices of their students. This familiar thread could be found running through every aspect of the study as the educators pointed to the importance of building strong, genuine relationships in their classrooms to counter the culture they are facing within their 21st century classroom. This once again affirmed previous research that academic dishonesty is rare in classrooms where learning is relevant, engaging, and where teachers communicate with students, developing positive relationships (Broeckelman-Post, 2008; Kohn, 2008; Richardson & Arker, 2010; Rosile, 2007; Strom & Strom, 2007a, 2007b).

**Rural Influence.** Research had indicated, “Engaging rurality is apparently not easy” (Howley et al., 2014). I found this to be true in that many rural districts I reached out to were reluctant to even speak with me regarding the study. Similar research described the best means to engage the rurality builds upon relationships, where research conducted focuses for and not on rural education (Azano, 2014; Burton et al., 2013; Koziol et al., 2015; Teiken, 2014; White &
Corbett, 2014). This study affirmed such a notion whereas I had to rely heavily on such relationships within the community I serve (Brann-Barrett, 2014).

The “rural influence” (Roberts, 2014, p. 139) is a distinct educational environment where shifting situations come with the “intensity of rurality” (Darling, 2014, p. 153). The 13 rural classroom teachers attested to this as they shared their collective experiences. The educators described a ‘different culture’ within their rural districts. They spoke to a level of apathy within the rural communities that makes its way into the classroom. The teachers described a poverty mindset that brought changes to the attitudes on the importance of education within the communities and within their schools. Such shared experiences confirm previous research that the complexities that come with the rural educational environment make the academic dishonesty in the digital age even more complex (Hassel & Dean, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013; Wilcox et al., 2014).

Implications

The results of this study produced findings that have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for various stakeholders. The purpose of this section is to address the implications of this study and provide recommendations for these stakeholders.

Theoretical

The theory that guided this study was Kolb’s (2015) ELT as it provided the ideal lens through which to view the experiences of teachers as they learn, grow, and develop concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age. The successful teacher, according to Kolb (2015), organizes and spirals their pedagogical activities “in such a manner that they address all four learning modes – experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting” (p. 301). The 13 teachers in this study gave witness to “successive iterations” (Kolb, 2015, p. 186) through this learning spiral as
they shared their experiences of academic dishonesty in the context of the digital age, creating a change in their professional identity as their role evolved within the broader pedagogical context.

In addition, the Kolb’s KERP was designed to aid teachers in their understanding of their “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) and guide them through this learning spiral. Each of these roles, resembling “a habit of learning” (Kolb, 2015, p. 304), has the teacher engaging the learning spiral in “a unique manner, using one mode of grasping experience and one mode of transforming experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 303). The 13 educators from this study acknowledged that their “preferred educator role” (Kolb, 2015, p. 302) accurately described what learning style(s) they used in their experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age. As such, the theoretical implication of Kolb’s (2015) ELT, including the KERP, provides a meaningful pedagogical framework in addressing the academic dishonesty phenomenon.

Empirical

Academic dishonesty among students is not a new topic of research. However, a concentration of much of the research on academic dishonesty is at the post-secondary level with few qualitative studies that provided a voice for the lived experiences of high school teachers regarding academic dishonesty in the digital age. The significance of this study was that it provided that qualitative voice, focusing on the empirical research found within the areas of (a) Academic Dishonesty, (b) The Digital Age Classroom, (c) The Teacher in Context, and (d) Rural Influence.

The evidence and experiences provided by the participants of this study suggest that academic dishonesty continues unabated. However, the same evidence and experiences provided evidence that the incorporation of 21st century technologies into the classroom for teaching and learning has blurred the lines regarding what is considered academic dishonesty. The
implications of such findings are that academic dishonesty in the digital age is a gray/hazy area that needs defining.

The rationale for this study was to gain a better understanding of academic dishonesty in the digital age by looking to the classroom teacher as they provide students the needed strategies to successfully employ technologies in an honest way. The results of the study suggest that such a rationale was warranted. The evidence and experiences provided by the participants within this study suggested that the role of the classroom teacher is of greater importance in combating academic dishonesty within the changing the dynamic of the 21st century classroom. The implications of such findings are that to address academic dishonesty in the digital age, proactive and purposeful measures must be used in structuring classrooms and instructional practices.

Whereas previous research tended to marginalize rural life and individuals, often portraying the rurality as the problem that needs fixed, this study approached “rural [as] the neglected ‘R’ in culturally relevant pedagogy” (Azano, 2014, p. 62). The results of the study provided justification for such a course of action. The evidence and experiences provided by the participants in this study suggested that the rural influence on academic dishonesty in the digital age make the phenomenon even more complex and multifaceted. The implications of such findings point to the importance of building strong, genuine relationships in the rural classrooms to counter academic dishonesty in the digital age.

Practical

Whether the participants of this study pointed to the technology, the rurality, or other influences, the conditions they described experiencing in their classrooms concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age highlighted the changing culture. The evidence and experiences provided by the participants in this study suggested that this is a culture that views what is
traditionally termed as academic dishonesty as more widely accepted among the students. It is a
culture that has changed the dynamic of the 21st century classroom. The practical implications
of such findings are twofold.

First, with access to such a broad swath of data and information with 21st century
technologies, the understanding of what is considered academic dishonesty is of absolute
necessity. With technology now considered a legitimate learning tool in the 21st century
classroom, there is a need for a definition and context of academic dishonesty within the digital
age. As at least one participant of this study attested to the struggles teachers and students face
in defining academic dishonesty within such a cultural environment, stating, “I feel like the
digital age has kind of changed that definition a little bit” (Payton, interview, May 1, 2017). The
practical implications of this are that at some level – academia, K-12, state or national
departments of education - there is a need for a clear definition and practical guidelines
concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age.

Secondly, as this study and previous others demonstrate, students entering today’s
classrooms were born into a digital age where technology is part of their daily lives – radically
changing their thinking and learning. As such, there is a disconnect between such learners and
the traditional classrooms they are in - paving the way for academic dishonesty. The practical
implications of this are that classroom teachers need to be proactive and purposeful in structuring
their classroom and instructional practices - establishing learning that is relevant, engaging, and
where they communicate with students, developing positive relationships. In addition, at some
level – academia, K-12, state or national departments of education - there is a need for the
adoption of 21st century teaching/learning models that meet the learning schema of a radically
changing student demographic.
Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations of this phenomenological study relate to the research design that focuses on the shared lived experiences of rural high school general education teachers. This study utilized purposeful sampling to obtain 13 participants from rural districts in southwest Ohio who shared the common experience of academic dishonesty in the digital age (Creswell, 2013) thus providing a heterogeneous sampling based on the KLLR-4 setting/site (Ohio Department of Education, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). Thus, location and type of participants delimit this phenomenological study.

Certain limitations existed that impacted the validity and reliability in this phenomenological study. Utilizing a small, purposeful sample provided insights and in-depth understanding into the world experienced by a small number of individuals but also limits its generalizability to other populations (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990). In conjunction, all the districts involved with the study were classified as Rural-1 within the Ohio typology (Ohio Department of Education, 2014; Ohio Department of Education, 2015a). This inherently limits generalizability to other typologies. In addition, each of the educators who participated in the study volunteered to do so. Therefore, this study solely represented their voices and experiences. Finally, as an educator in the KLLR-4 region with an affinity for rurality, potential biases and perceptions I have may have influenced my interpretation of the data regardless of the bracketing and reflexivity process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the accumulated research since that first study by Bowers (1964), there is a need for further focus and research to provide a meaningful pedagogical framework in which to address the academic dishonesty phenomenon within the digital age. Furthermore, there has
been a lack of qualitative studies that provide a voice for the lived experiences concerning this phenomenon. This study adds to the body of literature that examines academic dishonesty in the digital age. However, additional qualitative research would provide rich and deeper insight into the phenomenon. Further research is also needed to provide a clear definition for and practical guidelines concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age.

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. As such, the study utilized a small, purposeful sample. As a result, further research is recommended in districts across the nation to determine the accuracy of this study through the examination of larger representative populations. I also recommend that not only qualitative studies be conducted in such cases but quantitative studies as well to test hypotheses and theories with such a larger population sample.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to give voice to the lived experiences of high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age in rural school districts in southwest Ohio. Using hermeneutical phenomenology, I could be both descriptive and interpretive in my attempt to interpret and make sense of the teacher’s experiences with the phenomenon as expressed by the teachers. Results of this study provided theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. This study offers three important and practical “take-aways” from its findings - a threefold cord approach to 21st century pedagogy.

With technology now considered a legitimate learning tool in the 21st century classroom, this study reinforced the call for a definition and context of academic dishonesty within the digital age. An anecdotal illustration to this necessity materialized during the very week in
which I was finishing the final chapter of this study. Recently, Student Problems shared on their Facebook timeline a video (https://www.facebook.com/StudentProblems/videos/1271709442955786) depicting a student deleting photos of notes from their phone after an exam. Many educators today, like one of the participants in this study, voice their concerns with similar situations like this with questions like, “So is that academic dishonesty? . . . Is that cheating? . . . So where does the responsibility lie there?” (Emma, interview, January 24, 2017). The first major “take-away” from this study is that there is a need for a clear definition and practical guidelines concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age.

Secondly, whether the participants of this study pointed to the technology, the rurality, or other influences, the conditions they described experiencing in their classrooms concerning academic dishonesty in the digital age was always placed in terms of a changing culture. A culture in which has changed the dynamic of the 21st century classroom. The second major “take-away” that this study provides is an impetus toward districts adopting a ‘living’ 21st century educational model that is both adaptable and responsive to this changing culture. It speaks to the classroom teacher becoming proactive and purposeful in structuring their classroom and instructional practices.

The third “take-away” from this study, maybe the most powerful, is the importance that the findings place on building relationships – to educators getting to know the voices of their students. This familiar thread could be found running through every aspect of the study as the educators repeatedly pointed to the importance of building strong, genuine relationships in their classrooms to counter the culture they are facing within their 21st century classroom. The findings from this study, particularly these three “take-aways,” reaffirms that academic
dishonesty is rare in classrooms where learning is relevant, engaging, and where teachers communicate with students, developing positive relationships (Broeckelman-Post, 2008; Kohn, 2008; Richardson & Arker, 2010; Rosile, 2007; Strom & Strom, 2007a, 2007b).
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval

November 29, 2016

Nathan Churchell Hamblin
IRB Approval 2662.112916: Academic Dishonesty in the Digital Age from the Perspective of Rural High School General Education Teachers in Southwest Ohio: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Nathan Churchell Hamblin,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
Appendix B: Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 11/29/2016 to 11/28/2017
Protocol # 2682.112916

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN THE DIGITAL AGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RURAL HIGH SCHOOL GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN SOUTHWEST OHIO:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
Nathan Churchill Hamblin
Liberty University
School of Education

Dear Participant: You are invited to be in a research study of academic dishonesty in the digital age. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a general high school teacher in rural Ohio. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Nathan Hamblin, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore high school general education teachers’ experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age among students in grades 9-12 at rural schools throughout southwest Ohio.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete the free, online Kolb’s Educator Role Profile Inventory at http://survey.learningfromexperience.com. The approximate time for completion is 15-20 minutes. Results will be shared and discussed during an optional focus group interview.

2. Participate in a semi-structured, open-ended interview. Each interview will be conducted at each participant’s respective school, in a place of their choosing. Each face-to-face interview will be digitally recorded. The approximate time for completion is 60-90 minutes. Pseudonyms will be used for participants and results will remain confidential. During the interview process, I will request participation in an optional focus group.

3. Participate in an optional, semi-structured, open-ended focus group interview. The interview will be conducted at an agreed upon location within the participating districts, in either a classroom or a conference room. The focus group interview will be digitally recorded. The approximate time for completion is 45-60 minutes. Pseudonyms will be used for participants and results will remain confidential.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life. By participating in this study, the participant may receive increased knowledge in regards to academic dishonesty in the digital age.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will receive a $10 gift card at the completion of the semi-structured, open-ended individual interview process. Participants will then receive an additional $10 gift card at the completion of the optional, semi-structured, open-ended focus group interview process. Compensation will not be pro-rated if a subject does not complete the study.
Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. We may share the data we collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if we share the data that we collect about you, we will remove any information that could identify you before we share it.

The records for this study will be kept private. Pseudonyms for site and participants account for confidentiality. The security of data will be ensured via password protected electronic files and a locked cabinet for paper files. Said files will only be accessible by the researcher and a professional transcriptionist. At the end of three years, all electronic files, including digital recordings, will be erased from all computers, and/or flash drives. All paper files will be burned.

Due to the nature of the focus group interview, I cannot assure participants that other members of the group will maintain their confidentiality and privacy.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or public school districts within southwest Ohio. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Nathan Hamblin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at or You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, Dr. Christopher Clark, at

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(Note: Do not agree to participate unless IRB approval information with current dates has been added to this document.)
☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

______________________________  ________________________
Signature                                                                 Date

______________________________  ________________________
Signature of Investigator        Date
Appendix C: Individual Interview Questions

Individual Interview, General Education Teachers

Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher? (ice breaker question)
2. What is your current job? (Please do not state your job location)
3. Describe a typical day of teaching?
4. Please share your KERP results as well as your reaction/thoughts to the experience and findings.
5. How do you define/describe academic dishonesty?
6. Describe your experiences with academic dishonesty.
7. How do you see your definition/description of academic dishonesty being framed by your dominate KERP roles?
8. How has your definition/description of academic dishonesty changed with the increase of technology usage by students?
9. Describe the specific experiences that you have had with academic dishonesty where technology was involved and how have you dealt with it.
10. Describe the manner in which your role has evolved within your broader pedagogical practices with this experience of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age.
11. What are your recommendations for how academic dishonesty in the digital age should be addressed?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you would like me to know about your experiences with academic dishonesty in the digital age?
Appendix D: Focus Group Interview Questions

Focus Group, General Education Teachers

Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. [ice breaker question] In what capacity have you worked, or presently work, with anyone else in the group? (Please do not state your job location)

2. As a group of high school general education teachers, how do you define/describe academic dishonesty?

3. How does your view of academic dishonesty change when technology/digital content is involved?

4. Turning to the KERP, did your results surprise you?

5. What do you believe to be the factors that determined your KERP results?

6. Describe the changes, if any, you would want to make in regard to these factors.

7. How is your view of academic dishonesty consistent or inconsistent with your KERP result?

8. How would each individual KERP role look at academic dishonesty differently, specifically with a focus on the increase in use of technology/digital content?

9. Using the KERP experience as a point of reference, describe the manner in which your role has evolved within your broader pedagogical practices with the experiences of academic dishonesty in today’s digital age.

10. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you would like me/the group to know about your experiences with KERP or academic dishonesty in the digital age?
November 29, 2016

- Received full IRB approval! Now to move forward with data gathering. Although I have maintained a journal throughout this process, this will mark the start of the reflective journal that I described in the manuscript. As I noted then, this will be done to bracket my preconceptions and biases throughout the study. This reflexivity journal will enable me to be actively aware of my own preconceptions and the influence they may have on the study.

As such, with the data gathering to soon begin, one preconception I do enter this study with is that academic dishonesty is in and of itself not the actual problem. Academic dishonesty, like a bad cough or runny nose, is just a symptom of a far greater problem. Previous research and my own experiences appear to support this. My research for this dissertation will hopefully shed light on this.
December 21, 2016

- After reaching out to multiple districts, multiple teachers finally received my first participants. In fact, my first interview will take place on January 10th. As a point of reflexivity, I want to bracket a concern in moving forward. I am having the participants complete the Kolb Experiential Role Profile in order to provide a descriptive framework as we look at academic dishonesty in the digital age. The KERP provides insight into the entry point each teacher takes into their learning space. What does my KERP results say about how I am entering the research? Although my strong Expert role will be of benefit, the low Facilitator (9%) concerns me. Will this inhibit data gathering? Time will tell but I will be mindful of this as I move forward.
April 2, 2017

- I have completed all 13 individual interviews - even decided on a focus group - contacting them yesterday. I reached out to those that would bring a unique perspective - those with a single digit KERP role, one who is almost even across all roles, and one who would be considered a member of the third wave of digital natives (only in her second year of teaching). Hopefully the focus group session will be completed by the end of the month. As a point of reflexivity, I do want to note my "inherent limitations" concerning interview skills. In listening through the recorded sessions while reading the transcribed interview, I discovered I have work to do in developing those skills. In moving forward to the focus group session, I will take specific measures to improve the process.
June 2, 2017

As I move through the data analysis, writing up the findings, I have noticed a trend. Although I have used the Atlas.ti software throughout the analysis, I have continued to dive back into the transcriptions and recordings with my own eyes—my own ears. Staying true to the IPA process, I have immersed myself in the data. At times, it seems swimming in an ocean of words. As a point of reflexivity, I want to state that part of me would like to just throw all the data into the software—let it bring forth the themes. That would be the mathematician speaking. If I truly wanted that, I would have chosen a quantitative study. However, I knew to truly find an answer it had to be qualitative. So, I will swim.
Appendix F: Theme Development Via Atlas.Ti Sample