UNDERGRADUATES’ RETROSPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC
DISHONESTY AS GIFTED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who supported and encouraged me during the past three plus years. More specifically, I dedicate this work to my wife, Ashley, my daughter, Sophie, and my son, Tucker for encouraging me during this time. Sophie and Tucker, I hope my pursuits within higher education leaves a lasting impression on you both. Ashley, words can never capture how much I appreciate your understanding through this journey. Regardless, thank you for everything.
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ABSTRACT

Don Edwin Jenrette III
UNDERGRADUATES’ RETROSPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AS GIFTED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
Under the direction of GERI COLLINS, Ed.D.

Research shows that gifted high school students engage in academically dishonest behavior. Likewise, research shows that individuals can use neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957) to rationalize academic dishonesty. This study was to investigate how undergraduates, who are former gifted high school students, can rationalize academically dishonest behavior by using neutralization techniques identified chronologically by Sykes and Mata (1957), Klockars (1974), Minor (1981), Benson (1985), Cromwell & Thurman (2003), and Coleman (2006) in a high school setting. Likewise, this investigation was conducted to uncover any novel neutralization techniques for cheating, issues that could lead to academic dishonesty and procedures, and instructions that could promote academic integrity in a high school setting.

This mixed-methods study used a quantitative online survey and semi-structured interviews focusing on neutralization techniques to rationalize academic dishonesty.
The participants were undergraduates reflecting on their experiences as gifted high school students. Ultimately, 127 undergraduates from a private university in Georgia provided their degree of agreement with 19 neutralization statements that correspond to neutralization techniques identified by Sykes and Matza’s (1957), Klockars (1974), and Minor (1981). Four respondents agreed to be interviewed. These qualitative interviews focused on all identified and any novel neutralization techniques used to rationalize academic dishonesty.

This study revealed that gifted high school students could use all identified neutralization techniques to rationalize academic dishonesty. Three previously unidentified neutralization techniques to rationalize academic dishonesty were identified. Furthermore, issues that could lead to academic dishonesty and procedures and instructions could promote academic integrity were identified. The findings support the need for curriculum and instruction that promotes academic integrity among gifted high school students.

Recommendations for further research include the extent of drift (Matza, 1964) experienced by gifted high school students, if non-gifted students use the newly identified neutralization techniques, when do students first use neutralization techniques to rationalize academic dishonesty, desensitization to academic dishonesty, moral development, investigating the relationship of one’s mindset and their tendencies to neutralize and/or engage in academically dishonest behavior, and a focus on more qualitative research to investigate multiple aspects of academic dishonesty at all levels.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

On the first day of a new school year I make it a point to identify to my gifted high school students the various behaviors that are considered academically dishonest or cheating. Yet, two weeks into a recent school year I discovered a student looking multiple times at his classmate’s test answers with prolonged gazes. I asked him to stay after class. When stating that I suspected him of cheating based on his inappropriate eye movements, he adamantly denied this accusation. Regardless of whether he was in fact looking on his classmate’s answers or not, I stated that I would pass his name on to the school administrators that are assigned to handle issues of academic dishonesty. Again, he politely denied that he was cheating on this test. Shortly thereafter, I sent him on to his next class. That afternoon I returned to my classroom to find that same student was waiting to speak with me about my accusation. This student wanted to reassure me that he did not cheat on today’s test. I entertained his claim for a few minutes and told him that his name will be passed on to the appropriate administrator. Finally, the student went home. A few minutes after I arrived the next morning to my classroom, the student showed up at my door unexpectedly. One could probably guess what this student said to me. Like before, this student denied any cheating.

I began to ask myself several questions. Was this student actually honest? Was he in fact not cheating? More questions quickly came to my mind.
Was this student lying to me? Was this student in apparent denial of his cheating ways? Was this student consciously aware of his denial even though he actually was academically dishonest? Was this student rationalizing or justifying his cheating behavior? After briefly explaining the situation via email to an administrator, I spoke with her about the situation and the student. I learned that the administrator had to deal with this same student for cheating during the previous school year. Moreover, during that previous incident, this student denied the accusations even after the seemingly undeniable evidence was presented. Comparable to the preceding year’s incident, this student bombarded the accusing teacher several times about his claim of innocence. It had gotten to a point that the administrator had to tell the student to stop visiting the teacher to discuss the incident.

I have dealt with academic dishonesty many times before this more recent incident (Jenrette, 2015). Regardless, these questions still linger. Are students deceiving faculty and administrators by adamantly denying any wrongdoing when they were in fact cheating? Furthermore, if this is true, how do these students allow themselves to deny this reality? Likewise, are students rationalizing their academically dishonest behavior? If these students are rationalizing or justifying their cheating behavior, what allows these students to accept their cheating behaviors? According to my experience, having to deal with academic dishonesty can be all too common for educators. This nuisance in education is an aspect that needs to be addressed and investigated in order to, understand, prevent, or reduce its presence.
This study intends to assist me as well as other teachers and administrators in answering some of these questions. Even if this student was cheating, how can a person deny this reality? On the other hand, if this student was cheating and admitted his guilt, could the student still justify or rationalize this behavior that has been identified as cheating? Can students rationalize academically dishonest behavior in various manners? What issues contribute to cheating and neutralizing? Similarly, what forms of instruction can promote academic integrity? To address the significance of this study, this investigation will assist in shedding some light on the gifted high school student’s ability to deny or rationalize his or her academically dishonest behaviors.

As a result, this investigation will be a mixed-methods study that focuses on the retrospective experiences of undergraduates as gifted high school students through an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and member checking to understand this group’s denial and rationalization tendencies associated with academic dishonesty. I have chosen to investigate the retrospective perceptions of undergraduates as gifted high school students for several reasons. These reasons include the supporting scholarship that claims that cheating is prevalent among high school students (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Brandes, 1986; Schab, 1991; Wangaard & Stephens, 2011), the supporting literature that highlights the presence of academic dishonesty among gifted and high achieving high school students (Abilock, 2009; Geddes, 2011; Taylor, Progrebin, & Dodge, 2002), to further discredit the myth that only low performing students cheat (Challenge Success, 2012), and the lack of scholarship that explicitly investigates the neutralizing techniques used by gifted students at any level. In this study I seek to
answer the following research questions. Primary question: How can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? Secondary questions: 1. What previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? 2. If there are any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used by undergraduates to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior as gifted high school students, what are these techniques? 3. What aspects of school or classroom culture do former gifted high school students say contribute to academic dishonesty? 4. How do former gifted high school students say teachers and schools can encourage academic integrity?

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty among students from elementary to college has been a research interest for close to a century (Bowers, 1964; Bushway & Nash, 1977; Carter, 1929; Chisholm, 1992; Ding et al., 2014; Drake, 1941; Geddes, 2011; Ludeman, 1938; Schab, 1991). More so, Chisholm (1992) declares that “dishonesty is a problem endemic to the academy” (p. 271). Multiple investigations have revealed that many high school students admit to performing academically dishonest behavior, otherwise known as cheating (Geddes, 2011; McCabe, 1999; Schab, 1991; Strom & Strom, 2007). One study revealed that 95% of high school students reported that they performed academic cheating at least once within the last academic year (Wangaard & Stephens, 2011). Likewise, literature has focused on academic dishonesty among gifted and high achieving students (Abilock, 2009; Geddes, 2011; Taylor et al., 2002). Similarly,
Bushway and Nash (1977) acknowledge that both high achieving and low achieving students are at risk of cheating. However, there is a commonly held myth that “only kids who struggle in school cheat” (Challenge Success, 2012, p. 3). Scab (1991) has provided research findings to support the claim that poorer performing students are perceived to be more likely to cheat. Nevertheless, investigations into academic dishonesty among gifted and advanced students have to some degree discredited this myth (Geddes, 2011; Taylor et al., 2002). For instance, an investigation by Taylor et al. (2002) “shows that dishonest academic methods were frequently utilized by the elite high school students” (p. 407).

The current era of high-stakes testing and heavy competition for college admissions may attribute to cheating among the gifted and high achieving high school students. One can argue academic integrity is critical to education at all levels. Further, academic dishonesty can devalue or tarnish the educational experience. In turn, this behavior has the potential to devalue or tarnish any diploma from an institution where cheating occurs.

Another area of research concerning academic dishonesty includes the neutralization theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) to explain how individuals can justify their unconventional behaviors. This theory has been applied to students who can rationalize or justify cheating (Arvidson, 2004; LaBef, Clark, Haines, & Diekhoff, 1990; McCabe, 1992; Meng, Othman, D’Silva, & Omar, 2014; O’Rourke et al., 2010; Polding, 1995; Pulver & Diekhoff, 1999; Storch, Storch, & Clark, 2002; Taylor et al., 2002; Zito & McQuillan, 2011). The neutralization theory offered by Sykes and Matza (1957) suggests that juvenile delinquents experience shame or guilt after performing a criminal act. To neutralize the shame or guilt produced by these acts, the theory suggests that
these individuals provide rationalizations or justifications to neutralize these negative feelings. The five original neutralization techniques include denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Other scholars have extended the theory to include other techniques. These techniques include the denial of criminal intent, defense of necessity/competition, justification by comparison, denial of crime, everybody does it/diffusion of guilt (Benson, 1985), denial of the justice or necessity of the law, claim of entitlement (Coleman, 2006), justification by comparison, postponement (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003), the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974), and the defense of necessity (Minor, 1981).

In order to inform students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders about academic integrity and how to deter cheating, this investigation intends to explore academic dishonesty among former gifted high school students by using the neutralization theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) as the theoretical lens.

Theoretical Framework

The research focus of this investigation is to inquire into why and how high school students choose to perform academically dishonest behavior. More specifically, why and how do gifted high school students perform such behaviors? Further, how can this subpopulation of students justify or rationalize their academically dishonest behavior? A theory from sociology and criminology is guiding this research focus. Sykes and Matza (1957) presented five neutralization techniques that were commonly used by juvenile delinquents to rationalize and justify their criminal behavior.
more neutralization techniques were offered by later scholars (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981). This neutralization theory will be a lens to interpret the gifted students’ explanations for academically dishonest behavior. The following is a discussion of the constructivist paradigmatic view that is the foundation for this study.

There are major proponents of the constructivist paradigmatic view that are worthy of discussion. For the constructivist, Guba (1990) claims that “reality” exists only in the context of a mental framework (construct) for thinking about it” (p. 25). Finding a true or absolute reality or the ways the world truly works is not desired, if not impossible, by the constructivist. Next, the constructivist paradigmatic view asserts “no theory can ever be fully tested” (Guba, 1990, p. 25). Thus, no theory or explanation is absolute. However, the constructivist paradigm suggests that “reality” can be “seen” only through a window of theory” (Guba, 1990, p. 25). Proving a theory is not imperative due to the fact that there are too many theories from which to choose. To continue, the constructivist paradigm claims that reality, or the construction of reality, is value-laden. As with theory, reality can be viewed through a value window which will ultimately influence the construction of that reality (Guba, 1990). Another major proponent of the constructivist paradigmatic view offers that knowledge is a result between the inquirer and the inquired. As a result, knowledge is a construction by humans which constantly changes and is not universally true (Guba, 1990).

The following will provide the ontological, epistemological, and methodological views within the constructivist paradigmatic view. An ontology of paradigmatic view
answers the question “what is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Ontologically, the constructivist paradigmatic view focuses on relativism. Bisman and Highfield (2012) offers “the belief in, and acceptance of, multiple social realities leads to the conclusions that knowledge is relativistic (that is, knowledge and realities are time, space and context dependent)” (p. 6). In this sense, reality or better yet, realities, are multiple, cognitive constructions that are influenced experientially, socially, and historically. However, many of these cognitive constructions of reality are common among individuals and have been seen cross-culturally. A stance of relativism appears to be common when defining this paradigm’s ontology (Guba, 1990). More specifically, “realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them” (Guba, 1990, p. 27). In essence, reality is relative to the specific person or culture-sharing group.

Epistemologically speaking, paradigms seek to answer the question “what is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be-knower and what can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). The constructivist paradigmatic view offers that investigations are transactional and subjective. The researcher or investigator is interacting with the object under investigation. Likewise, through this interaction the findings are developed, created, or constructed. Guba (1990), to highlight the subjective nature in the paradigm, claims that the “inquirer and the inquired into are fused into a single (monastic) entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two” (p. 27).
The methodology of a paradigmatic view answers the question “how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). The constructivist paradigmatic view asserts that cognitive constructions can be elicited and further developed through interaction between or among the researcher and the participants. The methods used within this paradigm “should be naturalistic, and that interpretivism (rather than scientific methods and empiricism) is the appropriate frame through which to bring to light and explore these realities.” (Bisman & Highfield, 2012). These various constructions are analyzed with interpretivist techniques, such as hermeneutics and the dialectical approach. For instance,

the hermeneutic aspect consists in depicting individual constructions as accurately as possible, while the dialectical aspect consists of comparing and contrasting these existing individual (including the inquirer’s) constructions so that each respondent must confront the constructions of others and come to terms with them (Guba, 1990, p. 26).

By using these techniques or methods, the inquirer seeks an accepted construction, or constructions, that is more sophisticated than previous constructions.

Historical Context of Theoretical Framework

Mertens (2015) asserts that the constructivist paradigmatic view was developed from works by various philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Martin Heidegger. Specifically, Husserl’s phenomenology had a great impact on the development of the constructivist paradigmatic view. Husserl (1913/1982), in his book
Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, wrote “pure or transcendental phenomenology will become established, not as a science of matters of facts, but as a science of essences (as an “eidetic” science); it will become established as a science which exclusively seeks to ascertain “cognitions of essences” and no “matters of fact” whatever” (p. xx). This was a reaction to the dominant empirical approach of the positivism view in the early 1900’s. This philosophy focused on the individual experience. Likewise, Dilthey (1900/1972), in his book The Rise of Hermeneutics, focuses on hermeneutics as another attempt to battle against the positivist view in human science. Hermeneutics is a branch of knowledge for interpretation, specifically text. The author asserts “the ultimate goal of the hermeneutic process is to understand an author better than he understood himself. This is an idea which is the necessary consequence of the doctrine of unconscious creation” (Dilthey & Jameson, 1900/1972 p. 244). This interpretivist style of investigation has influenced the constructivist paradigmatic view. Heidegger (1953/1996)’s book Being and Time, Building off of Husserl’s and Dilthey’s work, discusses the concepts of meaning, understanding, and interpretation of existence and reality. Tepley (2014) offers that “the explicit goal of Heidegger’s Being and Time is to ‘work out’ the question of the meaning of being (Sein), or what it means for something to be or to exist” (p. 461). Accordingly, there are different types of being or existing.

More recent scholars have commented on the constructivist paradigmatic view. For example, Berger and Luckmann’s (1967/1991) The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge has greatly influenced the development and
popularity of the constructivist paradigmatic view. The authors claim that “everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world. As sociologists we take this reality as the object of our analyses” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967/1991, p. 33). Even more recently, Schwandt (2000) provides much commentary on the various approaches within the constructivist paradigmatic view. Specifically, this author describes the epistemological stances in qualitative inquiry. These stances include interpretivist, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. Schwandt (2000) asserts,

> human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. Furthermore, there is an inevitable historical and sociocultural dimension to this construction (p. 197).

It is clear that reality is constructed by humans in a social context according to the constructivist paradigmatic view.

A researcher must consider his or her world view when approaching a research topic. With this knowledge, using a constructivist paradigmatic view would be beneficial when discussing verbal rationalizations offered for academic dishonesty by former gifted high school students. Berger and Luckmann (1967/1991), emphasizing that knowledge is socially constructed, assert that “everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life” (p. 51-52). Language is a device by
which social interactions are performed, thus a device to develop or construct knowledge and reality. It is this very language produced by former gifted high school students that this study intends to analyze in order to develop a sophisticated understanding of reality held by this culture-sharing group.

From a constructivist perspective, the purpose of this study is to investigate these various justifications produced by former gifted high school students for academic dishonesty. By investigating these students’ explanations, this investigation plans to identify the various methods that allow these students to avoid guilt or blame which may perpetuate their ability to perform these academically dishonest behaviors. Using Sykes and Matza’s (1957) techniques of neutralization as a theoretical framework, the investigation will attempt to uncover if undergraduate students utilize any of these techniques to explain academically dishonest behavior in a high school setting. These neutralization techniques include denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemning the condemner, and the appeal to higher loyalties (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Later scholars have extended this theory to include denial of criminal intent, defense of necessity/competition, justification by comparison, denial of crime, everybody does it/diffusion of guilt (Benson, 1985), denial of the justice or necessity of the law, claim of entitlement (Coleman, 2006), justification by comparison, postponement (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003), the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974), and the defense of necessity (Minor, 1981). These later techniques, along with the original five techniques of neutralization, will form the lens in which this study will view the verbal
explanations that former gifted high school students summon when encountering academically dishonest behavior.

Ultimately, the purpose of the study is to investigate how undergraduates, former gifted high school students, can use these techniques of neutralization associated with academic dishonesty in a high school setting. Further, the purpose of the study will attempt to uncover any unidentified techniques of neutralization associated with academic dishonesty that are employed by this subpopulation of high school students. In order to identify or uncover the various techniques of neutralization, quantitative and qualitative methods were performed. Specifically, qualitative semi-structured interviews and a quantitative survey were used to identify or uncover any techniques of neutralization. The use of qualitative methods is common within the constructivist paradigmatic worldview (Mertens, 2015).

A mixed methods design (Mertens, 2015) was used in the study. For example, a cross-sectional survey design was employed prior to the semi-structured interviews. An online survey was provided to identify the neutralization tendencies of former gifted high school students in a high school setting. The respondents responded either strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree to the various neutralization statements for academic dishonesty. Statistical analysis included frequencies and percentages of the responses to neutralization statements. The interviewees were chosen based on the frequencies and percentages of their responses to the online survey. The qualitative element used an interpretive approach that addresses the research problem by investigating how individuals and groups ascribe meaning to events (Creswell, 2013).
Likewise, the interpretations of the qualitative interviews were presented to provide “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) of the individuals’ experiences and beliefs.

Additionally, a constructivist approach would be appropriate for such an investigation. Scott and Lyman’s (1968) discussion of accounts claims that an account is using a linguistic device when a behavior is being judged. The authors go on to assert that “we mean a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior – whether that behavior is his own or that of others” (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 46). There are two types of accounts: justifications and excuses. Focusing on one type of account, justifications are statements in which one accepts responsibility for the behavior, but ultimately denies the scornful nature connected with it. Sykes and Matza (1957) assert that denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties are relevant examples of justification. Scott and Lyman’s article moves on to discuss honoring or rejecting these accounts. These accounts are considered as either accepted or deemed unreasonable or illegitimate by society. The authors provide several examples of how a justification can be accepted by one group and not by another group. For example, “a drug addict may be able to justify his conduct to a bohemian world, but not to the courts” (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 53). It is evident that individuals use these linguistic devices, like justification, to construct a reality and members of society judge whether it is accepted or rejected.

Definition of Terms

*Neutralization* refers to mental or verbal rationalization techniques that allow an individual to comprehend and accept unconventional behaviors. For the purpose of this
Academic dishonesty or cheating refers to any attempt to get an inappropriate or unauthorized advantage in an academic setting (DiBartolo & Walsh, 2010; McCabe, 2009). The terms academic dishonesty and cheating are used interchangeably throughout this study. Geddes (2011) and McCabe (2009) provide wide-ranging lists of academically dishonest behaviors. This is not to say that the definition of academic dishonesty is limited to these listed behaviors. Equally, the researcher is aware that the individuals’ perceptions may influence their own definitions of academic dishonesty. Nevertheless, the lists provided by Geddes (2011) and McCabe (2009) assist in identifying what is considered academically dishonest within this study.

Gifted student refers to a “gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains” (NAGC, 2016, para. 5). Further, it refers to an individual that has been identified by his or her local school system as having these qualities. For the purpose of this study, gifted will be used interchangeably with gifted/talented/exceptional.

Limitations

Limitations, in a research study, “are the shortcomings, conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place restrictions on your methodology and conclusions” (Baltimore County Public Schools, 2010, para. 2). I am aware of the perform academically dishonest behavior has the potential to influence my interpretations.
within this study. As the investigator, I will attempt to remain attentive to the purpose of this study and refraining from presenting my bias.

Further, when surveys and interviews are used in a study there is a risk of dealing with information that may not reflect the participants’ truest perceptions. This is a concern when dealing with self-reporting. Due to the stigmatizing or controversial topic of academic dishonesty, some participants may be reluctant to divulge some information related to their perceptions. With that being said, the honesty of the participants is crucial to support the validity of this study. Another concern is related to sampling. Due to the controversial topic of academic dishonesty, some potential participants may avoid even participating in this study. As a result, participation in this study was contingent upon the participants’ willingness to offer their perceptions of academic dishonesty.

This study also includes retrospective self-reporting of attitudes and experiences focused on academic dishonesty in high school by undergraduate students. Although Schwarz (2004) acknowledges that self-report is the dominant method of data collection in the social and behavioral sciences, the author suggests that retrospective self-reporting has its flaws. For instance, retrospective self-reporting can result in reporting that aligns more with present behaviors and experiences than with the target time period (Schwarz, 2004). As a result, participants in this present investigation may offer perspectives that are more aligned to their present experiences in college and not high school. Another concern with a retrospective study is recall bias by the participants. Hassan (2005) asserts that recall bias, or the memory recall that deviates from the truth, “represents a major threat to the internal validity and credibility of studies using self-reported data” (p.
1). For whatever reason, the participants may report perspectives and experiences that are not truthful. Likewise, another limitation is relying on the participants to accurately self-identify as being former gifted high school students.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are “the boundaries that you have set for the study” (Baltimore County Public Schools, 2010, para. 5). This study was conducted in the southeastern United States. Moreover, this study focused on undergraduates’ retrospective perceptions of academic dishonesty as gifted high school students. The study did not focus on undergraduates’ perspective of academic dishonesty in college. Furthermore, this study did not focus on current gifted high school students’ perceptions of academic dishonesty. The scope of the study which is limited to former gifted high school students in Georgia can limit the transferability of its findings. However, “the researcher’s responsibility is to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make such a judgment” (Mertens, 2015, p. 271) related to transferability of any findings.

**Summary**

A literature review for this study will be provided in Chapter Two. More specifically, the literature review will discuss scholarship on the psychodynamic theory, criticism and scholarship on the neutralization theory, scholarship on the neutralization theory and academic dishonesty, researcher positionality, and scholarship on academic dishonesty among gifted high school students. The methodology for this investigation will be provided in Chapter Three. The methodology will discuss the rationale for the qualitative methodology, the participants and sampling techniques, the methods of data
collection, and the methods of data analysis. Chapter Four will consist of the research findings. For instance, neutralization themes and sample quotes will be provided. Lastly, Chapter Five will consist of discussions, conclusions, and recommendations related to the findings in this investigation.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The following research questions have guided this investigation. Primary question: How can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? Secondary questions: 1. What previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? 2. If there are any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used by undergraduates to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior as gifted high school students, what are these techniques? 3. What aspects of school or classroom culture do former gifted high school students say contribute to academic dishonesty? 4. How do former gifted high school students say teachers and schools can encourage academic integrity?

Multiple investigations have revealed that many high school students admit to performing academically dishonest behavior, otherwise known as cheating (Geddes, 2011; Wangaard & Stephens, 2011; McCabe, 1999; Schab, 1991; Strom & Strom, 2007). One study revealed that 95% of high school students reported that they performed academic cheating at least once within the last academic year (Wangaard & Stephens, 2011). Academic dishonesty among gifted high school students is comparable to other high school students (Geddes, 2011; Taylor et al., 2002).
Moreover, these gifted high school students appear to rationalize, justify, neutralize, or make excuses for their academically dishonest behaviors (Geddes, 2011; McCabe, 1999; Taylor et al., 2002). This study intends to investigate how gifted high school students explain or justify their and other gifted high school students’ academically dishonest behavior.

Creswell (2014) offers that inquirers can use theory in qualitative studies as broad explanation for people’s attitudes and behaviors within a culture-sharing group. One theory that has emerged to explain the students’ ability to perform academically dishonest behavior, yet avoid blame and guilt, is the neutralization theory developed by Sykes and Matza (1957). This theory from criminology and sociology has been a lens used to investigate neutralization of academic dishonesty over the years (Arvidson, 2004; LaBeff et al., 1990; McCabe, 1992; Meng, Othman, D'Silva, & Omar, 2014; O’Rourke et al., 2010; Polding, 1995; Pulver & Diekhoff, 1999; Storch et al., 2002; Taylor et al., 2002; Zito & McQuillan, 2011). The neutralization theory, originally suggested for juvenile delinquency and its later extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003, Klockars, 1974; Minors, 1981), will form the theoretical framework when investigating how gifted high school students can perform academically dishonest behavior. Likewise, the neutralization theory can be further supported by the defense mechanism of rationalization (Jones, 1908) found within the psychodynamic theory offered by such theorists as Sigmund Freud, Ernest Jones, and Anna Freud. Both of these theories will be defined and justified as the foundations of the theoretical framework.
This discussion of the theories that compose the theoretical framework will first focus on the psychodynamic theory and, more specifically, defense mechanisms. Secondly, the neutralization theory will be discussed further. The historical development and criticism of these theories will be discussed followed by a discussion on why these theories are appropriate for analyzing the gifted student’s perceptions for academically dishonest behavior.

The Psychodynamic Theory

The psychodynamic theory is arguably the most well known theory of personality (Feist & Feist, 2001). This theory was largely pioneered by Sigmund Freud. Scholars such as Ernest Jones (1908) and Anna Freud (1966/1992) helped to further the scope and popularity of this theory. Sigmund Freud, a medical doctor, developed the psychodynamic theory through observations of individual’s suffering from hysteria and other disorders (Feist & Feist, 2001). He presented his perspective of personality within several books. This perspective presented various aspects of personality and the mind, such as the division of the conscious mind and unconscious mind, the struggle between the id, ego, and superego, and defense mechanisms, making this an enduring theory over the past 100 years. Freud (1923/2014), in *The Ego and the Id*, claimed “the division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premiss [sic] of psycho-analysis; and it alone makes it possible for psycho-analysis to understand the pathological processes in mental life” (p. 1651). The notion of the unconscious mind “was the real departure for the professionals of Freud’s day” (Ciccarelli & White, 2011, p. 439). In essence, there is a hidden aspect of the mind that influences behavior.
Further, the psychodynamic theory suggests that personality can be divided into three interacting parts. For example, “the ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions” (Freud, 1923/2014, p. 1655). Likewise, the superego, or “ego ideal answers to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man” (Freud, 1923/2014, p. 1659). The id represents the primitive or pleasure seeking aspects of personality (Ciccarelli & White, 2011). The id is the part of the personality that seeks to fulfill the individual’s need for instant gratification. The ego represents the aspect of personality that confronts reality. The ego seeks to address the reality principle, or the ability to satisfy the id in a socially acceptable manner. The superego is the moral foundation of the personality. The conscience, or a sense of right and wrong, is found in the superego. Altogether, there is a constant battle between these three aspects of the personality.

Another aspect of the psychodynamic theory is the concept of defense mechanisms. Rationalization, the first defense mechanism, was first highlighted in a seminal speech, *Rationalizations in Every-day Life*, by Ernest Jones (1908) presented at the Congress of Psychology. The speaker begins the speech by praising Sigmund Freud, a founding father of the psychodynamic theory, for his research of mental processes that are unconscious and largely unnoticed by the individual. Freud is celebrated for suggesting that unfathomable mental processes such as seemingly accidental behavior and content of dreams are actually related to feelings. These feelings could include anxiety, fear, guilt, and more. To summarize Freud’s understanding of certain mental processes, Jones (1908) asserts that there are “elaborate psychological mechanisms, the
effect of which is to conceal from the individual certain feeling processes which are often
of the highest significance to his whole mind” (p. 162). Not only is the individual
unaware of these mental processes, but if someone suggests that these psychological
mechanisms actually exist the individual is likely to deny these claims. This scholar
proposed,

everyone feels to have what may be called a theory of life, and particularly
a theory of himself. Everyone feels that as a rational creature he must be
able to give a connected, logical and continuous account of himself, his
conduct and opinions, and all his mental processes are unconsciously
manipulated and revised to that end. No one will admit that he ever
deliberately performed an irrational act, and any act that might appear so
is immediately justified by distorting the mental processes concerned and
providing a false explanation that has a plausible ring of rationality (Jones,
1908, p. 166).

These false explanations can be separated into two groups. The author describes one

group of false explanations as “evasions” (Jones, 1908, p. 166). These evasions refer to
the false explanations that the individual forms or constructs for private use. Conversely,
the other group of false explanations is referred to as “rationalisations [sic]” (Jones, 1908,
p. 166). These rationalizations are the false explanations that the individual forms or
constructs for public consumption. This defense mechanism allows for self-deception so
the individual can avoid any harmful thoughts or feelings that may develop due to
irrational behavior.
Anna Freud (1966/1992), expanding upon her father’s work, suggested that the ego undergoes, without notice, a process of defense when the individual encounters unpleasant thoughts, emotions, or experiences. A defense is used to “describe the ego's struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or affects” (Freud, 1966/1992, p. 42). In her book, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* [sic], she recognizes close to a dozen mechanisms of defense that the unconscious mind employs to avoid unbearable emotions that could be experienced by the ego. These defense mechanisms include, denial, reaction formation, rationalization, regression, repression, projection, sublimation, isolation, undoing, interjection, and displacement. As Anna Freud (1966/1992) asserts, “as a rule, the ego knows nothing of the rejection of the impulse or of the whole conflict which has resulted in the implanting of the new characteristic” (p. 9). In other words, this process of ego defense is largely unnoticed by the individual. However, it is believed that this process allows for the individual to fulfill some desires of the id while not appearing to fail according to the superego. This psychological defense mechanism allows the individual to deal “with stress through unconsciously distorting one’s perception of reality” (Ciccarelli & White, 2011, p. 439).

Denial, another defense mechanism, shapes the theoretical framework. According to Anna Freud (1966/1992), the denial of reality is commonplace among adults and children alike. For example, the “ego is free to get rid of unwelcome facts by denying them, while retaining its faculty of reality testing unimpaired” (Freud, 1966/1992, p. 83). If the individual encounters a stressful experience, the ego, unknowingly, rejects reality to avoid anxiety. It can be argued that denial of reality makes way for many of the other
mechanisms of defense. For instance, when analyzing the defense mechanism of rationalization, the individual must deny reality in some form in order to develop an alternate or false reality. Further, the “ego resorts to denial in order not to become aware of some painful impression” (Freud, 1966/1992, p. 89). The individual summons the defense mechanism of denial because some aspect of reality is threatening the ego.

The psychodynamic theory and Sigmund Freud’s research methods have been criticized. Feist and Feist (2001) provide a well-rounded summary of this criticism. From a purely scientific perspective, critics argue that the methods of investigation were too deductive and too subjective with limited regard to the scientific method. Likewise, the participants in his study were few and largely from upper-middle and upper socioeconomic classes. Furthermore, Freud did not quantify his research data, his observations were not conducted in controlled settings, and he employed the case study method almost exclusively. These perceived flaws in research design limit the ability for generalizability of these findings.

Despite these critiques, the defense mechanisms of rationalization and denial within the psychodynamic theory are strongly aligned with the constructivist paradigmatic view. Specifically, the gifted high school student that performs an academically dishonest behavior, an irrational act by most standards, may summon these evasions, to convince or deceive themselves through a mental justification. Similarly, these students may summon rationalizations to convince or deceive others through a verbal justification. The gifted high school student could construct these self-deceiving
realities, in an unconscious manner, which are often influenced by the culture-sharing group, or fellow gifted high school students.

The Neutralization Theory

Like the defense mechanism of rationalization within the psychodynamic theory, the neutralization theory also suggests that the individual uses rationalization techniques to comprehend and accept his or her unconventional behaviors. The neutralization theory was originally conceived to explain unlawful behavior performed by juvenile delinquents. Answering “the question “why did they do it?” is central to the criminologist’s quest study” (Maruna & Copes, 2005, p. 221). To answer this question, Sykes and Matza (1957) offered a theory on juvenile delinquency. The seminal work, Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency, opens with several points made by the authors. The authors first assert that delinquent behavior is learned through social interaction and that there is evidence to suggest that many delinquents, in fact, do experience shame or guilt after performing delinquent behavior. Secondly, the article presents the idea that juvenile delinquents often show admiration for persons who follow the laws. Next, more evidence is provided to suggest that juvenile delinquents have a clear cut line between who can and cannot be victimized. Then, the authors claim that it is doubtful that many juvenile delinquents are resistant to conformity. They claim that family members, who may be engaged in illegal ventures, most likely agree with society that delinquency is wrong. The authors question the notion that students who are punished for delinquency will focus on being more careful not to be caught again. They
claim the delinquent is committed, in part, to the larger culture and not completely committed to a deviant subculture.

Morris Cohen, as cited by Sykes and Matza (1957), stated that “one of the most fascinating problems about human behavior is why men violate the laws in which they believe” (p. 666). The authors suggest that norms and values are qualified guidelines for behavior. These values and norms can be influenced by social circumstances, location, time, and individuals. Robin Williams Jr.’s term “flexibility” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 666) is also introduced to show that rules do not hold up in all conditions. Through flexibility, one can use defenses to crimes, such as drunkenness, self-defense, and insanity, to avoid negative consequences from society. These justifications are often referred to as rationalizations. For example, blaming others to avoid self-blame is often employed. There is evidence to support that these rationalizations may exist before the deviant behavior allowing the behavior to be possible. Through the rationalization process delinquents remain under the normative culture, but see some violations as acceptable in some circumstances.

These justifications are presented as techniques of neutralization. Sykes and Matza (1957) suggest five techniques of neutralization that include the denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. Denial of responsibility claims that “the delinquent can define himself as lacking responsibility for his deviant actions” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 667). Through the delinquent believing that he is not responsible for his actions, the delinquent can reduce the disapproval of himself and disapproval from others. It is not
difficult to recognize how the defense mechanisms of rationalization and denial within the psychodynamic theory are evident in such neutralizations as denial of responsibility, denial of injury, and denial of the victim. The authors even continue to describe these justifications as “rationalizations” and “defenses to crimes” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 666) such as pleas of drunkenness and necessity.

Justice Holmes, as cited by the authors, stated, “even a dog distinguishes between being stumbled over and being kicked” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 667). These scholars use this belief to show how modern society draws a line between which deviant acts were intentional and those deviant acts that are unintentional. However, techniques of neutralization extend further the claim that these acts are unintentional. Denial of responsibility asserts that deviant acts are caused by forces beyond the individual’s control. These forces may include deviant friends, uncompassionate parents, and impoverished neighborhoods. Delinquents may claim a billiard ball scenario to define himself as an individual that is “helplessly propelled into new situations” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 667). The environment, like a cue ball, acts upon the helpless individual. By having this concept, deviants are negating personal responsibility or accountability. It is a belief that responsibility is constructed by society and culture in which the individual lives. The deviant learns to believe that he or she is being acted upon by outside forces and this allows the juvenile to deviate from societal norms.

The second technique of neutralization is the denial of injury. Sykes and Matza (1957) first point out that criminal law has distinguished between “acts that are wrong in themselves and acts that are illegal but not immoral” (p. 667). The deviant can make a
similar distinction when judging his behavior. Through this evaluation, delinquents can judge behavior based on whether anyone was hurt or injured. The authors discuss the possible interpretation of vandalism, auto theft, and gang fighting. To the deviant the act of vandalism may be defined as simple mischief claiming that the property owner can afford for his or her property to be damaged or destroyed. The deviant may come to believe that the act of auto theft can be defined as simply borrowing the vehicle. In the same frame of mind, a gang fight can be defined as private skirmish between two consenting groups that does not involve the larger community. Sykes and Matza (1957) claim that the deviant “feels that his behavior does not really cause any great harm despite the fact that it runs counter to law” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). They also suggest that these deviant behaviors are simple extensions of common behaviors or practices.

The third technique of neutralization is denial of the victim. Sykes and Matza (1957) claim that even if responsibility is accepted by the delinquent, the delinquent could neutralize his actions by believing that “injury is not wrong in light of the circumstances” (p. 668). The deviant may claim that the injury is not truly an injury. The juvenile maybe even rationalize that the injury was justified as a form of appropriate punishment or retaliation. The authors suggest that the delinquent takes on the role of the “avenger and the victim is transformed into a wrong-doer” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). Additionally, the authors offer several examples of denial of the victim by discussing assaults on homosexuals, vandalism, and theft. Assaults on homosexuals can place” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). Vandalism can be neutralized by believing that
the act of vandalism was justifiable revenge toward a biased teacher. Theft can be neutralized by claiming that the behavior was justified due to the fact that the store owner is “crooked” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). The authors state that the deviant likens himself to Robin Hood, a person who seeks justice beyond the law. They further suggest that the victim is vaguely or no longer present revealing a “diminished awareness of the victim” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). This diminished awareness of a victim may influence the frequency of deviant behaviors.

The fourth technique of neutralization is the condemnation of the condemners. This technique suggests that the deviant “shifts the focus of attention from his own deviant acts to the motives and behaviors of those who disapprove of his violations” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). The condemners are believed to be seen as hypocrites by the condemned. The condemned can view police, teachers, and parents as targets of condemnation due to their roles of promoting social norms. The delinquent can view the police as corrupt and brutal in order to neutralize his or her own deviant acts. The deviant can believe that teachers show partiality toward other students in order to neutralize his own deviant acts. By believing that “parents always take it out on their children” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668), the condemned can neutralize his or her deviant behaviors. The authors assert that “by attacking others, the wrongfulness of his own behavior is more easily repressed or lost to view” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668).

The fifth technique of neutralization is the appeal to higher loyalties. This technique suggests that deviant behavior could “be neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of the smaller social groups to which the delinquent
belongs such as sibling pair, the gang, or the friendship clique” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 669). The authors point out that this doesn’t mean that the individual rejects the social norms. Rather, the individual views himself or herself as being plagued by a dilemma or quandary. To solve this problem, the deviant violates the law to prevent jeopardizing his or her well-established relationships. This neutralizing technique of appeal to higher loyalties suggests that “deviation from certain norms may occur not because the norms are rejected but because other norms, held to be more pressing or involving a higher loyalty, are accorded precedence” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 669). The authors claim that deviants can resolve the dilemma by believing that they must help a friend or a friend should never tell on another friend regardless of the consequences.

The article presents several slogans that allow the juvenile to justify the delinquent act showing further support for the claim that techniques of neutralization are rather common statements. Moreover, Sykes and Matza (1957) claim that “juvenile delinquents often appear to suffer from feelings of guilt and shame when called into account for their deviant behaviors” (p. 669). By using these techniques of neutralization, the individual lessens the restraints imposed by social norms. The authors recommend further research which addresses the prevalence of techniques of neutralization based on sex, age, ethnic group, and social class. They suggest that these techniques could be traced to the family. Lastly, the article recommends further research which investigates how these techniques apply to different types of delinquent behavior.
which investigates how these techniques apply to different types of delinquent behavior. Research on the delinquent behavior of academic dishonesty appears to fall within this recommendation.

Matza (1964), to add to the neutralization theory, suggests the notion of delinquency and drift. He asserts that “the delinquent transiently exists in a limbo between convention and crime, responding in turn to the demands of each, flirting now with one, now the other, but postponing commitment, evading decision” (Matza, 1964, p. 28). Matza (1964), referring to these delinquents as “drifters” (p. 29), claims that these individuals are influenced to perform deviant behaviors. The drifter, or delinquent, experiences gradual drift which is unrecognizable by the drifter. The first experiences may be accidental, yet this provides situations that allow for delinquent drift. Therefore, the delinquent “drifts between criminal and conventional action” (Matza, 1964, p. 28). Drift allows the individual to temporarily remove himself from the moral connection to law. The disconnection allows the individual to neutralize and drift. This drift, according to the author “makes delinquency possible or permissible by temporarily removing the restraints that ordinarily control members of society” (p. 181). However, the author notes that this neutralization and drift does not guarantee a delinquent behavior will be performed.

Criticism of the Neutralization Theory

In response to Sykes’s and Matza’s (1957) assertions, Hirschi (1969) addresses whether the juvenile delinquent neutralizes his or her behavior before or after the
unconventional behavior. In regards to the denial of responsibility, Hirschi (1969 asserts, the apparent methodological difficulty with this and several other techniques of neutralization, both at the level of on-the-spot observation and in the analysis of survey data, is that they may appear only after the delinquent act(s) in question has been committed. They may thus be seen as after-the-fact rationalizations rather than before-the-fact neutralizations (pp. 207-208).

Hirschi (1969) suggests that it is likely that deviant acts occur before any justification. Despite this assumption, he offers that the after-the-fact neutralization for one act maybe the very cause of the next unconventional act. Another critique is the notion that the denial of injury is arguably too close to the denial of the victim. However, clear distinctions between the two neutralization techniques are recognized by this critic.

Further, Hamlin (1988) argues that “techniques of neutralization are valuable tools for analyzing delinquent behavior, but not as they affect the breakdown of moral constraints” (p. 436). Regardless, these techniques are important for neutralizing or denying the guilt when one’s behavior is called into question. It is suggested that many adolescents do not define their actions in moral terms unless someone requires them to explain or justify their actions. Contrary to Matza’s (1964) interpretation, it is suggested that these neutralization techniques do not allow the juvenile delinquent to drift between conventional and deviant actions. Although, these techniques can be useful in analyzing the rationalizations offered by juvenile offenders when their actions are called into question.
Next, Landsheer, t’Hart, and Kox (1994) question one of the assumptions made by the neutralization theory. The authors highlight that delinquents differ from non-delinquents when rejecting conventional norms when performing deviant acts. Yet, their study of adolescent development reveals that delinquents and non-delinquents were equally not likely to accept behavior that causes physical damage to a familiar victim. This questions the foundations for denial of injury and more importantly denial of the victim. It appears that delinquents are less likely to commit a deviant act if the potential victim is well known.

Last, Topalli (2005) argues that the neutralization theory is limited to conventional society and should be expanded to apply to a street culture. In response to Matza’s (1964) commentary, Topalli (2005) claims that “the notion that drift can occur in both directions (from conventional to unconventional mindsets and vice versa) suggest that the dichotomy between conventional and unconventional attachment is artificial” (p. 823). As a result, this reconceptualization of the neutralization theory offers that drift allows the individual who is committed to conventional society and the individual who is committed to the street culture to engage in conventional and criminal behaviors without much guilt.

Scholarship on the Neutralization Theory

Liddick (2013) suggests that there are seven more techniques of neutralization in addition to the original five presented by Sykes and Matza (1957). Scholars have extended this theory to include rationalizations such as the denial of criminal intent, defense of necessity/competition, justification by comparison, denial of crime, everybody
does it/diffusion of guilt (Benson, 1985), denial of the justice or necessity of the law, claim of entitlement (Coleman, 2006), justification by comparison, postponement (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003), the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974), and the defense of necessity (Minor, 1981).

Benson’s (1985) study of convicted white-collar offenders offer five new rationalizations or neutralization techniques provided by these individuals to deny the criminality of their behaviors. The first rationalization was the denial of criminal intent. Benson (1985) claims “the most consistent and recurrent pattern in the interviews, though not present in all of them, was denial of criminal intent” (p. 589). In other words, majority of the offenders recognized that their behavior may be unlawful, but they commonly “denied that their actions were motivated by a guilty mind (Benson, 1985, p. 589).

Benson (1985) also assert the neutralization technique of the defense of necessity/competition. One offender convicted of antitrust violations offered “it was a way of doing business….it was a method of survival” (Benson, 1985, p. 591). Likewise, an offender can deliberately break the rules, even if he is likely to get caught, to prevent others from getting ahead or winning. The analogy of fouling a player in basketball to prevent the player from making the shot is offered to illustrate this competition element.

Some offenders used the justification by comparison according to Benson (1985). One antitrust violation offender claims “it wasn’t like sitting down and planning I’m going to rob this bank type of thing…it was just a common everyday way of doing business and surviving” (Benson, 1985, p. 593). This suggests that these white-collar
crimes, like antitrust violations, are different from street crimes, such as robbery. By highlighting these street crimes, the offender attempts to make his or her own criminal behavior appear less severe in comparison.

Furthermore, Benson (1985) suggests that offenders convicted of fraud or false statements were more likely to summon the denial of crime technique of neutralization. The results suggest that 70% of these offenders convicted of fraud or false statements asserted that they “were innocent of any crime, although each admitted that fraud had occurred” (Benson, 1985, p. 597). This is to suggest that these individuals are denying the fact that this behavior is indeed a crime in their opinion. Another offender claimed, “I personally felt that the only crime that I committed was not telling on these guys” (Benson, 1985, p. 597) and another offender claimed that he or she was “duped by others” (p. 597).

Benson (1985) also suggests the everybody does it/diffusion of guilt defense. Several tax violators claimed that everyone cheats on their taxes in some way. One tax violator stated, “everybody cheats on their income tax, 95% of the people. Even if it’s for ten dollars it’s the same principle” (Benson, 1985, p. 594). The common belief that cheating on taxes is widespread allows these offenders to diffuse the guilt of committing this crime to others. This is to suggest that these offenders are “no more guilty than most people” (Benson, 1985, p. 594).

Coleman (2006) suggests two more neutralization techniques commonly used by white collar criminals. These techniques include the claim of entitlement and denial of the justice or necessity of the law. The claim of entitlement is evident in Zeitlin (1971)
investigation of employees that steal from retail establishments. Some 18 employees that were recently fired for stealing summoned this rationalization. These individuals commonly looked at their criminal behavior as “a condition of employment” (Zeitlin, 1971, p. 26). Likewise, these employees offered “the store owed it to me,” or ‘I felt I deserved to get something additional for my work since I wasn’t getting paid enough’ (Zeitlin, 1971, p. 26). The offender may even refer to what is stolen as a benefit in the traditional sense of job benefits. These benefits could range from something trivial such as paper or paper clips to something more substantial such as merchandise or money. The offender justifies his or her criminal behavior by believing that he or she is entitled to, or deserves, these benefits within the job.

Similarly, Coleman (2006) suggests that white collar-criminals can employ the denial of the justice or necessity of the law technique of neutralization when justifying one’s behavior. Ball’s (1960) investigation of landlords that violated a legally set rent ceiling reveals the use of this technique. For example, “of the 179 violation cases in this class, 54.2 per cent of the landlord responses indicated that rent control was not necessary” (Ball, 1960, p. 604). Although this percentage is not significantly different than non-violation cases, it appears that landlords can justify higher rent on their proprieties regardless of government regulations.

Cromwell & Thurman (2003) interviewed convicted shoplifters and identified two additional techniques of neutralization. These authors identified the justification by comparison and postponement neutralization techniques. Cromwell & Thurman (2003) propose that individuals that employ the justification by comparison
rationalization attempt to protect their self-worth and avoid or limit guilt “by arguing that they could be worse or are not as bad as some others” (p. 546). This technique of neutralization tries to minimize the severity of the crime by comparing a lesser crime, such as shoplifting, to another more serious crime like assault or murder. One 40 year old male argued that “if I wasn’t boosting, I’d be robbing people and maybe somebody would get hurt or killed” (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003, p. 546). This rationalization attempts to minimize the crime through comparison. Another 37-year-old male asserted that “shoplifting be a little thing. Not a crime really” (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003, p. 546).

For the neutralization technique of postponement, Cromwell and Thurman (2003) claims that individuals call upon this technique when the individual “suppresses his or her guilt feeling- momentarily putting them out of mind to be dealt with at a later time” (p. 546). By not attending to the fact that a crime was committed, the shoplifter does not have to deal with the guilt that may accompany the thought of having performed an unconventional behavior. An 18-year-old male offered that “I just don’t think about it, I mean, if you think about it, it seems wrong, but you can ignore that feeling sometimes” (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003, p. 547). In essence, this neutralization technique has the individual pushing the unconventional event out of his or her consciousness. In turn, the individual avoids having a guilty mind. In a critiquing fashion, Minor (1981) discusses prior research that supports and challenges the neutralization theory in an attempt to rethink this theory. The critique highlights some of theoretical problems that limit Sykes and Matza’s theory. The author suggests other neutralization techniques that were not
recognized by Sykes and Matza (1957). One technique offered in this article is the defense of necessity. Minor (1981) explains this technique by stressing that “if any act is perceived as necessary, then one need not feel guilty about its commission, even if it is considered morally wrong in the abstract” (p. 298). To support this claim, the author provides several examples from a white-collar criminal in the business climate to examples in an abortion client. Minor continues on to suggest the metaphor of the ledger as another technique of neutralization. The critic provides an example of this technique from Klockars’ (1974) Vincent, who asserted,

\[
\text{sure I’ve done some bad things in my life, Who hasn’t?}
\]
\[
\text{Everybody’s got a skeleton in his closet somewhere. But}
\]
\[
\text{you gotta take into account all the good things I done too.}
\]
\[
\text{You take all the things I done in my life and put ‘em}
\]
\[
\text{together, no doubt about it. I gotta come out on the good}
\]
\[
\text{side (p. 151).}
\]

Minor (1981) presents this technique as good and bad acts counterbalancing one another. As a result, this technique allows the individual to indulge in some unconventional acts without guilt if one has an ample supply of conventional acts. Over the years, the neutralization theory has been applied to a variety of areas of research beyond juvenile delinquency and academic dishonesty. This theoretical lens has been applied to analyze rationalizations for religious dissonance among Mormons (Dunford & Kunz, 1973), abortion (Brennan, 1974; Sadati et al., 2014), white-collar crimes (Benson, 1985), unethical marketing (Vitell & Grove, 1987), genocide (Alvarez, 1997),
rape (Bohner et al., 1998), dog fighting (Forsyth & Evans, 1998), cannabis use (Peretti-Watel, 2003), criminal use of fireworks (Buzzel, 2005), identity theft (Copes, Vieraitis, & Jochum, 2007), criminal downloading of music (Ulsperger, Hodges, & Paul, 2010), and the Indian Removal from 1829-1831 (Keeton, 2012). The following discussion will provide the scholarship that uses the neutralization theory to explore the rationalizations for academic dishonesty.

Academic Dishonesty and the Neutralization Theory

Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, and Clark (1986) appear to be some of the first researchers to explicitly investigate the connection between academic dishonesty and the neutralization techniques presented by Sykes and Matza (1957). Several hundred college students completed a questionnaire about self-reported rates of cheating, cheating perceptions and attitudes toward others that cheat, a set of hypothetical situations of neutralization, and effectiveness of cheating deterrents. It was revealed that over half of the respondents reported cheating in some form during that academic year. Additionally, the responses reveal students who show high levels of neutralization are quite deterred from cheating by institutional consequence such as being dropped from the course and receiving an F if they were caught cheating. On the other hand, those students who show high levels of neutralization are not easily deterred by disapproval from friends and guilt related to cheating. As a result, the researchers argue that high neutralizers function at a low level of moral development because these individuals are more concerned with fear of punishment and disapproval of authority figures.
With a focus on ethics and college cheating, LaBeff et al. (1990) had undergraduates answer questions about academic cheating within the last year. Analyzing the narratives provided by the students, justifications of cheating could be classified into three of the five neutralization techniques. Denial of responsibility was discovered to be the most common response for cheating. One student justified cheating by stating “I was working forty plus hours a week and we had a lot to read for that day. I just couldn’t get it all in…. I’m not saying cheating is okay, sometimes you just have to” (LaBeff et al., 1990, p. 193). The authors also highlighted a unique take on denial of responsibility. A student claimed that “I was taking the test and someone in another part of the room was telling someone else an answer. I heard it and just couldn’t not (sic) write it down” (LaBeff et al., 1990, p. 194). In a similar fashion, other students reported accidentally viewing other students’ tests and were unable to resist the temptation to cheat. The second most common neutralization technique utilized by respondents was condemnation of condemners. One student believed that “the teachers here are boring and I dislike this school. The majority of teachers here don’t care about the students and are rude when you ask them to help” (LaBeff et al., 1990, p. 195). Students criticized some instructors for using trickery on tests. Another student felt instructors attempt to fail students by assigning too much work. And yet another respondent blamed America and its unethical means for his or her cheating.

Lastly, appeal to higher loyalties was another technique of neutralization that was common among respondents. In an attempt to help a fellow student, a student
rationalized his or her academically dishonesty by asserting “I only cheated because my friend had been sick and she needed help…. it (cheating) wouldn’t have happened any other time (LaBeff, et al., 1990, p. 273). Still, another respondent claimed that he or she have never cheated. However, the respondent’s friends needed help so the respondent allowed the friends to cheat off the test. LaBeff’s research team claims that they did not recognize the denial of injury or the denial of the victim technique in the responses. Despite this, they might have overlooked or misinterpreted one respondent’s statement. One student’s response suggested that majority of instructors were deliberately attempting to fail the students by making difficult exams. Perhaps the student would claim that the act of cheating “is not really an injury: rather it is a form of rightful retaliation or punishment” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668) for unfair assessments given by instructors. This could support the fact that this student used the denial of the victim technique. Regardless, the authors concluded that undergraduate students accept that cheating is unethical, yet they use these techniques in certain circumstances known as situational ethics.

Furthering investigations into neutralization techniques and academic dishonesty, McCabe (1992) responded to LaBeff, et al. (1990)’s scholarship by conducting a study in a more diverse university and to challenge the dismissal of denial of victim and denial of injury techniques to justify cheating behavior. Analyzing 6,096 student questionnaire responses from highly selective colleges, the author asserts that the “data established the importance of denial of responsibility and condemnation of condemners as neutralization techniques” (McCabe, 1992, p. 367). For example, over half of the
respondents listed parental and admission pressures for good grades as a common rationalization.

Addressing the denial of responsibility technique, the author presents a student response by offering “here at….you must cheat to stay alive. There’s so much work and the quality of materials from which to learn, books, and professors, is so bad that there’s no other choice” (McCabe, 1992, p. 369). Another student using the denial of responsibility technique claimed that students are influenced to cheat in order to account for the grading curve that is a result of other student’s cheating. Using the denial of injury technique, one student responded by saying “these grades aren’t worth much therefore my copying doesn’t mean very much. I am ashamed, but I’d probably do it the same way again” (McCabe, 1992, p. 370). In essence, the student is claiming that no one gets hurt as a result of cheating.

Using the denial of victim technique, one respondent, using a “rightful retaliation” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668) tone, stated that “this school is a manifestation of bureaucratic capitalist system that systematically keeps the lower classes down, and that adhering to their rules was simply perpetuating the institution” (McCabe, 1992, p. 370). The author was sure to point out that about four students had a similar response. Using the condemnation of the condemner technique, another student attempted to shift the attention away from cheating by stating that “if our leaders can commit heinous acts and then lie before Senate committees about their total ignorance and innocence, then why can’t I cheat a little?” (McCabe, 1992, p. 371).
Lastly, using the appeal to higher loyalties technique, one student responded with “there’s a lot of cheating within the Greek system. Of all the cheating I’ve seen, it’s often been men and women in fraternities & sororities who exchange information or cheat” (McCabe, 1992, p. 372). The author concludes that neutralization techniques are prominent among today’s college students.

Diekhoff et al. (1996) surveyed 474 university students in a 10 year study comparing the extent of cheating, attitudes toward cheating, what distinguishes noncheaters from cheaters, effectiveness of cheating deterrents, and changes in cheating behaviors and attitudes. The results reveal “that both cheaters and noncheaters showed such as strong decrease in neutralization…from 1984 to 1994 that 1994’s cheaters actually engaged in significantly less neutralization…than 1984s noncheaters” (Diekhoff et al., 1996, p. 491). These findings support the notion that there is less neutralization among cheaters. However, there are few if any other follow up studies on cheaters and neutralization for comparison.

Taylor et al. (2002) conducted in-depth interviews with 32 high school students enrolled in international baccalaureate and advanced placement programs. The interviews centered on academic dishonesty and school pressures from parents, teachers, peers, and the individual student. The pressures to succeed given by the students were competitive pressures, parental pressures, peer and teacher pressures, schoolwork pressures, and pressure for acceptance to prestigious colleges. The authors discuss a student subculture in which students justify their cheating. Briefly mentioning Sykes’s and Matza’s (1957) work, the authors claims that “we observed a definitive process in
which students who admitted to cheating rationalized their behavior” (Taylor et al., 2002, p. 413). Despite this comment, limited evidence was given to support the individual techniques of neutralization for cheating used by these high-achieving students.

Granitz and Loewy (2007) try to determine which theory of ethical reasoning students call upon when justifying their plagiarism via the Internet. These theories of ethical reasoning include utilitarianism, rational self-interest, deontology, Machiavellianism, cultural relativism, and situational ethics. The authors acknowledged that many of these theories of ethical reasoning have equivalent techniques to Sykes’s and Matza’s (1957) techniques of neutralization. The findings suggested that students employed all six theories of ethical reasoning to rationalize their plagiarism. Granitz and Loewy (2007) claim that “the second most frequently invoked theory of ethical reasoning was situational ethics (19.9%)” (p. 299). Despite not being discussed specifically, situational ethics is quite similar to the denial of responsibility techniques. These findings provide some support that techniques of neutralization are used by university students to justify plagiarism.

Investigating personal and situational causes of undergraduate student cheating, Rettinger and Kramer (2009) analyzed questionnaires to investigate the students’ neutralizing attitudes, cheating behavior, perceptions of peer attitudes and behaviors, and performance/mastery orientation. Addressing Sykes’s and Matza’s (1957) techniques of neutralization, the results suggest that “witnessing dishonest behavior will cause dishonesty without necessarily engendering explicit neutralizing attitudes” (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009, p. 310). The authors assert that the more a person witnesses a behavior as
being common to the culture, one will have less guilt for performing that same behavior because he or she believes that no unethical behavior was performed.

With a focus on middle school students and cheating, Zito and McQuillan (2011) interviewed eight students and eight of their teachers at a private middle school. These interviews addressed reasoning given for cheating among 8th grade students. The findings suggest that middle school students use the denial of responsibility technique, appeal to higher loyalties technique, and the condemning the condemnner technique. The authors claim that “students often viewed decisions to cheat as a reflection of factors beyond their control” (Zito & McQuillian, 2011, p. 16). In this study, the denial of responsibility technique appears to be the most frequently used technique offered by Sykes and Matza (1957).

Curasi (2013) investigated the influence of techniques of neutralization and subcultural values on cheating. Surveying undergraduate business majors, the findings supported the hypothesis that “academic dishonesty was strongly associated with neutralization techniques among college of business undergraduate students” (Curasi, 2013, p. 171). Academic dishonesty was significantly correlated with four neutralization techniques: denial of injury, denial of responsibility, denial of the victim and condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. It is interesting how the researcher grouped the denial of the victim technique with the condemnation of the condemners technique. Nevertheless, condemning the condemners appears to be most strongly correlated with cheating among business undergraduates.
In a more recent study of undergraduates and neutralization techniques related to academic dishonesty, Meng et al. (2014) claim “that neutralization techniques were significantly and positively related to academic dishonesty. Students in this study used neutralizations to justify or rationalize their cheating” (p. 70). It is clear based on these investigations that the application of the neutralization theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) is a suitable theoretical lens in educational research, especially in the study of academic dishonesty.

The defense mechanisms of denial and rationalization, within the psychodynamic theory, can allow for self-deception and distortion of reality when gifted high school students explain irrational behavior. Benson’s (1985) article, Denying the Guilty Mind: Accounting for Involvement in a White-collar Crime, offers that individuals convicted of white-collar crime can simply deny that a crime was committed. These individuals “were nearly unanimous in denying basic criminality” (Benson, 1985, p. 296). The neutralization theory’s (Sykes & Matza, 1957) techniques of neutralization, or statements that can be self-deceptive and could distort reality, are also very applicable when analyzing gifted students’ explanations for cheating in high school. One could argue that the defense mechanisms of denial and rationalization could allow or provide a foundation for such techniques of neutralization offered within the neutralization theory. When analyzing the gifted students’ responses explaining or justifying academically dishonest behaviors, the theory of neutralization will be theoretical lens. The investigation also intended to not only identify any of the five neutralization techniques and the extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003;
Klockars, 1974; Minors, 1981; Sykes & Matza, 1957) employed by these individuals, but the investigation seeks to discover any other techniques of neutralization that are beckoned when explaining and justifying academic dishonesty.

This theory of neutralization (Sykes & Matza, 1957), and its extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003, Klockars, 1974; Minors, 1981), is a superb choice for alignment with the constructivist paradigmatic worldview and the research purpose. For example, in Scott and Lyman’s (1968) discussion of accounts offers that an account is using a linguistic device when a behavior is being judged. Considering the techniques of neutralization, the authors assert that denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to loyalties are relevant examples of justification. Similarly, can gifted high school students convince their classmates and themselves that their cheating behaviors are acceptable, but not convince teachers and administrators? As it relates to the research purpose, how can gifted high school students summon these neutralization techniques as professed by (Taylor et al., 2002) when explaining their cheating behavior? Can these justifications be accepted by gifted high school students, or high schools students in general, but not by society? It is evident that individuals use these linguistic devices, like a justification, to construct a reality and members of society judges whether it is accepted or rejected. Furthermore, Sykes and Matza (1957) claims that delinquent behavior is learned through social interaction. This social interaction is a major aspect within the constructivist paradigmatic view. Lastly, Hazani (1991) offers that this theory has “universal
applicability” (p. 135) which allows for the investigation of the various neutralization
techniques offered by gifted high school students.

The researcher’s positionality as a constructivist influences the choices within this
investigation. According to Creswell (2014), constructivists believe “that individuals
develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (p. 8). Due to this perspective, there
are multiple meanings. Researchers under the constructivist paradigm may investigate
the various views rather than only recognizing a few narrow categories. Looking at the
research questions, the study is investigating rationalization techniques used by gifted
high school students for cheating. To this point, investigations using a constructivist
approach tend to “understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and
knowledge” (Mertens, 2015, p. 18). This notion aligns with the neutralization theory.
Within this theory, Sykes and Matza (1957) claim that delinquent behavior is learned
through social interaction. In other words, meanings of behavior are socially constructed.
The researcher’s positionality as a constructivist aligns well with the notions within the
psychodynamic theory as well as the neutralization theory.

The Gifted Student and Academic Dishonesty

Geddes’ (2011) research investigated the prevalence and motivations for
academic dishonesty among gifted and high-achieving high school students. The study
addressed 13 academically dishonest behaviors. Of the identified cheating behaviors, it
was revealed that eight of the behaviors were performed or witnessed by 60% or more of
the respondents. These high percentage behaviors include unauthorized notes on an
exam, copying answers on an exam, allowing someone to copy answers on an exam,
copying homework, allowing someone to copy homework, restricted collaboration on an assignment, giving information to another section, and receiving information from another section.

Further, Geddes (2011) identified three categories of motivations for cheating. These categories include academic reasons, nonacademic reasons, and neutralizing attitudes. The findings reveal four possible motivations for cheating that were recognized by over 60% or more of the respondents. These motivations include too many tests on a single day, too heavy of a school workload, inadequate instruction by the teacher, and helping a friend. Although the techniques of neutralization presented by Sykes and Matza (1957) were not explicitly identified, when examining these possible motivations the techniques of condemnation of the condemners, appeal to higher loyalties, and denial of responsibility are arguably evident. Likewise, Evans and Craig (1990) discovered that high achieving students are likely to identify teacher behavior as a causal factor in cheating. This provides further support that gifted high school students could use the neutralization technique of condemnation of the condemners. This current study intends to further this research by investigating how former gifted high school students can call upon the original five techniques of neutralization (Sykes and Matza, 1957) and the extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981) when justifying academically dishonest behavior in the high school setting.

When discussing Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralization theory, Cromwell and Thurman (2003) offer that by using various neutralization techniques “the individual may
remain committed to the value system of the dominant culture while committing criminal acts without experiencing the cognitive dissonance that might be otherwise expected” (p. 536). The researcher of the current investigation argues that the gifted high school students could utilize these techniques to remain committed to the expectations of academic integrity often expected by teachers, administrators, parents, and much of society. Yet, these students may drift (Matza, 1964) into academic dishonesty and avoid guilt and self-blame for unconventional behavior. It can be suggested that, like juvenile delinquents, the gifted student does not commit to the counter culture of cheating. Many of these individuals arguably do not want to be labeled as a cheater. Similar to the juvenile delinquent, these students can deny guilt and reality by offering techniques of neutralization to rationalize academic dishonesty.

Taylor et al. (2002), in their article on elite high school students, “observed a definitive process in which students who admitted to cheating rationalized their behavior (Sykes and Matza 1957)” (p. 413). This sample of juniors and seniors enrolled in advanced placement and international baccalaureate classes justified their academic dishonesty in various ways. Yet, Taylor et al. (2002) employed a grounded theory approach which allowed them to develop a theory that addresses the numerous pressures placed on the high-achieving student to succeed. Further, this study did not specifically identify any of the neutralization techniques within the neutralization theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) or its extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minors, 1981) due to the research focus of pressures and academic dishonesty. Using the neutralization theory and the extensions as my theoretical lens for
analysis, the investigation intends to explicitly examine the justifications for academically dishonest behaviors suggested by gifted high school students. This investigation will assist the researcher in determining if gifted high school students use such neutralization techniques when encountering academic dishonesty.

Polding’s Questionnaire

Brian Polding’s (1995) work has influenced the quantitative aspect of this investigation. His dissertation included a questionnaire that applied the neutralization theory to academic dishonesty among college students. A section of this lengthy questionnaire addresses Sykes and Matza’s (1957) original neutralization techniques and two later neutralization techniques (Klocker, 1974; Minors, 1981). This questionnaire will be referred to as Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire. This section of the questionnaire presented 19 neutralization statements. These neutralization statements consisted of four denial of responsibility statements, one denial of injury statement, two denial of victim statements, three condemnation of the condemner statements, four appeal to higher loyalties statements, four defense of necessity statements, and one metaphor of the ledger statement.

Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire was assessed for validity and reliability in the original publication. Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure the reliability of the assignments of the neutralization statements with the neutralization techniques. Due to the fact that two neutralization techniques had only one statement each and reliability could not be determined, only five composites of the seven neutralization techniques were produced. Regardless, Table 4.4 within Polding’s (1995)
dissertation shows the evidence for reliability of this instrument. In the dissertation the 19 neutralization statements were assigned to one of five neutralization types or composite groups. According to the developer, three of the composites were satisfactory. The coefficients for defense of necessity is 0.844, for appeal to higher loyalties is 0.753, and for denial of responsibility is 0.841. The coefficient for denial of victim, 0.263, is significantly low. Yet, the developer claims that this can be linked to the fact that this composite consisted of only two items. Lastly, the coefficient for condemnation of the condemners, 0.536, is moderate. The developer claims that this is reasonable. This lower coefficient has been linked to a neutralization statement within the composite that addresses cheating by athletes versus non-athletes. At the time of the study the university’s football and basketball teams were under investigation by the National Collegiate Athletic Association for possible regulation infraction. This circumstance may explain the lower coefficient.

Likewise, parameter estimates of factor loadings from confirmatory factor analysis was performed to assess this instrument’s validity. Polding (1995) asserts that “a negative estimate would mean that one of the composite indicators was operating in a direction opposite of the others, questioning the validity of the assignments analyzed” (p. 129). However, Table 4.5 within Polding’s (1995) dissertation reveals the parameters are positive and show evidence of validity. For example, the denial of responsibility composite has parameter estimates ranging from 0.646 to 1.421. The denial of victim composite has parameter estimates ranging from 0.097 to 1.000. The condemnation of
the condemners composite has parameter estimates ranging from 0.650 to 1.000. The appeals to higher loyalties composite has parameter estimates ranging from 1.000 to 2.054. Finally, the defense of necessity composite has parameter estimates ranging from 0.849 to 1.620.

Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire has also influenced other publications. For instance, this work influenced rationalization questions developed for a dissertation by Faulkner (2012) to examine the roles that rationalization and narcissism have on academic dishonesty. This study found both survey respondents and interviewees had a strong tendency toward motivated reasoning. Specifically, there is a significant link between propensity to rationalize and the level of cheating. According to the researcher, this finding aligns with the research literature.

Similarly, this questionnaire influenced multiple statements developed for Gonzalez’s (2011) dissertation to measure the ethical behavior of student pilots in higher education institutes and their ability to follow Federal Aviation Regulations. Polding’s (1995) neutralization statements were used, along with other publications, to create a subscale on neutralization behavior for this study. It was discovered that a significantly positive difference occurred in student pilots’ ethical beliefs after an ethics course. This supports the belief that ethical courses can assist students with conceptualizing ethical beliefs.

Furthermore, items on a survey instrument developed for McCrink’s (2008) dissertation on nursing student attitudes toward academic misconduct used a modified form of Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire. The findings suggest that nursing
students holistically frown upon neutralization behaviors. However, a small number of nursing students had favorable attitudes towards neutralization behavior.

Finally, Storch, Storch, and Clark (2002) used Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire in their study to address differences in neutralization tendencies between intercollegiate athletes and nonathletes. The findings show that athletes reported using the technique of denial of responsibility, denial of injury, and appeal to higher loyalties more than nonathletes. Further, athletes reported using the technique of condemnation of the condemners less than nonathletes.

This chapter discussed the psychodynamic theory and the concept of defense mechanisms. The neutralization theory and the various neutralization techniques were also identified and discussed. Likewise, the well-established literature that connects the neutralization theory to academic dishonesty was presented and discussed. Despite the criticism of the neutralization theory, there is substantial literature that supports the use of this theory. Regardless, the literature reveals there are no investigations that directly focuses on the neutralization techniques among gifted high school students. This current study intends to expose any neutralizing tendencies for academic dishonesty among former gifted high school students in a high school setting. Chapter Three presents the methodology employed in this investigation.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Developing a methodological framework for one’s research is crucial. Equally important is providing rationale for the chosen methodology. The following discussion centers on the methodological framework that will guide the investigation concerning academic dishonesty and gifted high school students. This discussion will cover several methodology elements along with rationale for these chosen elements.

Research Questions

This study is intended to investigate a link between neutralization techniques (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981; Sykes & Matza, 1957) and academic dishonesty among former gifted high school students. The literature in this area reveals that a vast majority of gifted and high achieving students self-reported that they have cheated in some form within the last year (Geddes, 2011; Taylor, et al., 2002). In recent years, “educators of these students are witnessing a rise in academic dishonesty among the gifted community” (Geddes, 2011, p. 52). Furthermore, it appears that gifted high school students summon neutralization techniques to justify academic dishonesty (Geddes, 2011; Taylor, et al., 2002). Yet, the research on neutralization techniques used by gifted high school students has not been explicitly investigated. As a result, this study intends to investigate to how former gifted high school students, in a high school setting, can use neutralization techniques when
justifying their and other students’ cheating. The following research questions have guided this investigation. Primary question: How can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? Secondary questions: 1. What previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? 2. If there are any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used by undergraduates to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior as gifted high school students, what are these techniques? 3. What aspects of school or classroom culture do former gifted high school students say contribute to academic dishonesty? 4. How do former gifted high school students say teachers and schools can encourage academic integrity?

Rationale for Mixed Method Research

This study employed a mixed methods design. Due to the novelty of mixed methods in the social or human sciences, it is beneficial to define and describe this research approach. Creswell (2014) offers that this method “involves the collection of both qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (closed-ended) data in response to research questions or hypotheses” (p. 217). In this investigation the quantitative results were collected to answer the primary research questions and the first secondary question. Also, the quantitative results were used to determine which online survey respondents would be chosen to participant in a qualitative interview. These qualitative interviews were analyzed to explain how former gifted high school students could further neutralize or rationalized academic dishonesty beyond the seven neutralization techniques offered
within the online survey. Moreover, these qualitative interviews were analyzed to address all research questions.

Ultimately, the participants’ responses to the online survey was a major factor in determining which participants would be chosen to be interviewed. The interviewees were chosen from the pool of respondents that offered to participate in an interview and provided a phone number. Furthermore, mixed methods research also aligns with the paradigmatic view of constructivism. As mentioned before, qualitative methods such as interviews are commonly used with a constructivist worldview. Moreover, the survey, or quantitative measure can be used to reveal each individual’s perspective on academic dishonesty.

Rationale for Quantitative Methodology

The discussion will first center on the quantitative element in this investigation. The survey design, or a design that can offer “a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2014, p. 155) was used in this investigation. As a result, the investigator can generalize the findings to a population. Moreover, this survey design allows the investigator to discover the respondents’ attitudes and opinions that align with the constructivist view, a worldview that guides this investigation. An online survey of neutralization statements was first administered in this study. The survey method was chosen due to the convenience of the relatively quick data collection in combination with a preexisting, valid, and reliable survey instrument on neutralization techniques within academics. The survey is considered cross-sectional, or “the data is collected at one point
in time” (Creswell, 2014, p. 157). The purpose of the survey is to identify the neutralization tendencies of former gifted high school students in a high school setting. The participants responded either strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree to the various neutralization statements for academic dishonesty identified and developed by Polding (1995). The survey was found to be valid and reliable in the original study. As mentioned before, Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire was assessed for validity and reliability in the publication. Table 4.4 within Polding’s (1995) dissertation shows the evidence for reliability of this instrument. Table 4.5 within Polding’s (1995) dissertation reveals the parameters are positive and show evidence of validity.

These neutralization statements correspond with the neutralization techniques by Sykes and Matza (1957) and later extensions (Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981). Similar to other publications using Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire, there were several changes made to this questionnaire in order to be appropriate for this present investigation centered on academic dishonesty in high school. First, “in high school” was added at the beginning of each statement to address the retrospective nature of this investigation. Second, “professor” and “instructor” was changed to “teacher” to accommodate the common terminology used at the high school level. Next, “cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college” was present but “graduate program or professional school” was omitted for simplicity. Finally, “fraternity brother or sorority sister” was replaced with “friend, classmate, teammate,
etc.” in order to address the high school experience. The neutralization statements within the questionnaire address the primary research question and the first secondary question.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Next, a qualitative element was employed in this investigation. This qualitative element was performed to address the previously identified neutralization techniques that were not addressed in Polding’s (1995) neutralization questionnaire. Likewise, the qualitative interviews were performed to understand denial and self-deception of academic dishonesty. Further, the qualitative interviews were employed to discover any previously unidentified neutralization techniques. Qualitative research is used to study meaning, context, and processes that characterize behavior (Jamison, 2010). This research requires an interpretive approach that addresses the research problem by investigating how individuals and groups ascribe meaning to events (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative research is characterized by collecting data in natural settings associated with the people being studied (Creswell, 2013). The final report in qualitative research will involve participant voices, research reflexivity, an intricate account and interpretation of the problem or event, the work’s contributions or a request for change (Creswell, 2013). Geertz (1973), borrowing from Gilbert Ryle, claims that qualitative research should document the people’s experiences in great detail, or “thick description” (p. 6). By way of documenting detailed descriptions and further analysis, the study strives to show credibility and generalizability (Jamison, 2010), or transferability (Creswell, 2013).

During this qualitative investigation of neutralizing tendencies of former gifted high school students for cheating in high school, there was a focus on the credibility of
the findings. Jamison (2010) asserts that credibility is the method of establishing trustworthiness of the results of a study. Credibility can be increased by using reflexivity, performing triangulation, checking interpretations against other interpretations, and investigating the transferability of the results (Jamison, 2010). Credibility can be obtained in this study by using triangulation and member checking. Triangulation requires the researcher to employ multiple and unique methods, sources, researchers, and theories to offer convincing evidence (Creswell, 2013). There are several types of triangulation. Two types of triangulation include method triangulation and observer, or investigator, triangulation (Jamison, 2010). The first example requires the researcher to employ a wide variety of experimental and nonexperimental methods. The latter type requires the research to be performed by multiple researchers. In this study using method triangulation, the researcher collected, analyzed, and triangulated two types of data related to neutralization techniques used by former gifted high school students when explaining cheating behaviors in a high school setting. The discussion of the methods of triangulation will follow.

Similarly, during the qualitative investigation there was a focus on transferability of the findings. Like credibility, transferability is another crucial element of qualitative research. Transferability can be defined as the extent to which a study’s findings may be true for other people in other environments (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, Shenton (2004) adds that by the researcher providing thick description of the study under investigation, it can enable the reader to decide to what extent these findings can be transferred to other people at other times and in other places. The intent of this investigation was to have the
participants’ voices presented verbatim in order to have thick description, use triangulation in the form of two methods of data collection, and conduct member checking to support trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability of the findings.

Additionally, Taylor et al. (2002) asserts that “the existing literature, however, lacks in-depth, qualitative studies on academic dishonesty” (p. 403). Much of the research into academic dishonesty and neutralization techniques is quantitative. Although this study is mixed-methods in design, developing a qualitative investigation into academic dishonesty can provide a more genuine description of former gifted high school students’ attitudes and perceptions of academic dishonesty. Also, Taylor et al. (2002) assert that “we observed a definitive process in which students who admitted to cheating rationalized their behavior” (p. 413). The authors even have an in-text citation for Sykes and Matza (1957). Regardless, the ethnographic investigation by Taylor et al. (2002) did not explicitly identify the five original neutralization techniques, nor did it address the extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981) of the neutralization theory. By analyzing the retrospective responses of undergraduates, this study intends to investigate the various neutralization techniques that can be used by gifted high school students for academic dishonesty.

Furthermore, the methodological framework of this investigation is well aligned with the constructivist paradigmatic view that the researcher holds. When addressing the constructivist paradigmatic view, Guba (1990) claims that ‘reality’ exists only in the
context of a mental framework (construct) for thinking about it” (p. 25). The neutralization theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) is such a theory to view reality.

To support the constructivist view this investigation employed a theory to analyze the responses of the participants. Specifically, the neutralization theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) was used to analyze the gifted students’ responses related to academic dishonesty. Likewise, this approach aligns with the notion that knowledge is the result of interactions between the inquirer and the inquired. The purpose of this research is not to find a universal theme. Yet, this investigation is seeking to uncover a set of gifted students’ rationalizations or justifications for academic dishonesty. These rationalizations or justifications may not be true for all gifted high school students, but this investigation will assist in determining how gifted high school students can neutralize academic dishonesty.

As mentioned earlier, this study employed retrospective reporting elements. For example, the undergraduates in this study were asked to respond in a retrospective manner to the online survey and the qualitative interviews. One of major concerns with retrospective investigation is faulty memory on part of the participants. Despite this concern, recent retrospective studies with undergraduates and young adults have employed this data collection method. These topics include the retrospective experiences of problem solving in engineering (McNiel et al., 2016), coping with parental divorce (Du Plooy & Rensburg, 2015), intimate partner violence (Katz & Rich, 2015), and sexting in high school (Strassburg, Rullo, & Mackaronis, 2014). How can a researcher support the trustworthiness of the findings using retrospective methodology?
Retrospective investigations often center on recent experiences in an attempt to support trustworthiness of the findings. Du Plooy and Rensburg (2015) offers that their participant’s experience, within the context of parental divorce, is “a relatively recent experience and therefore not influenced by faulty memory” (p. 509). Likewise, this current investigation’s participants are traditional undergraduate students that are not far removed from high school. These relatively recent experiences and perceptions associated with high school should not be influenced by faulty memories.

Participants and Sampling Techniques for Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology

The following will address the study participants and sampling techniques that were used in this investigation. The original intent of this study was to recruit current gifted/talented/exceptional students as participants. When attempting to recruit participants from the target population within a single high school, only one individual returned the required assent forms and parental consent forms within the period of a month and a half. Likewise, face-to-face recruitment without parental consent was not permitted within this school system. As a result, the principal researcher and the then committee chair decided that the participants would be recruited from undergraduate population due to concerns of sample size and time. The university was chosen because this institution was willing to allow this investigation to take place. Equally, this university was likely to have a reasonable number of former gifted/talented/exceptional high school students enrolled at the time of this investigation. Participants in this investigation were university undergraduates who self-identified as gifted/talented/exceptional by their previous high school. Participant names were not
used for confidentiality (Jamison, 2010). Due to the selected university being in Georgia, a model school district in Georgia that has a gifted/talented/exceptional program will be offered for comprehension. A school district may provide a definition of gifted student like the following. The definition may state:

In Georgia, a gifted education student is defined as one who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her ability(ies).

(Houston County Board of Education, n.d., para. 1)

To qualify for the gifted/talented/exceptional program in this district, students must complete a three step process (Houston County Board of Education, n.d.). The first step is the referral process. The referral process has the student being considered for testing. Students can be referred by teachers, administrators, parents or guardians, peers, or self. Students that score at a certain level on a norm-referenced test will be referred automatically. The second step in the process is testing. Following the state guidelines to place students, to be eligible for gifted education, students must earn a qualifying score in three of four areas. These areas include mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation.

Similar to gifted students, teachers of the gifted must meet certain requirements (Houston County Board of Education, n.d.). For example, teachers of the gifted must be highly qualified, earn an endorsement by completing 170 classroom hours of teaching the
gifted and talented student, enjoy a variety of cultural and intellectual interests, hold broad general knowledge, appreciate the gifted learner, the high-achiever, and creative thinker, and strive for high achievement.

Creswell (2013) offers that there are three considerations when using a purposeful sampling strategy. These three considerations include the selection of participants, the type of sampling strategy, and sample size. For the quantitative element, this study employed a single-stage sampling procedure, or “the researcher has access to names in the population and can sample the people (or other elements) directly” (Creswell, 2014, p. 158). For the quantitative portion of the study, an email was sent to all available undergraduate university email addresses obtained through the registrar’s office. Gifted and non-gifted individuals were allowed to respond to this survey. Regardless, respondents were asked if they were identified as gifted/talented/exceptional in their former high school. As a result, quantitative findings strictly focus on the responses by respondents that claimed to be identified as a former gifted high school student.

Purposive sampling (Jamison, 2010) or purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) was employed. Jamison (2010) asserts that purposive sampling is rigorous and is used frequently. In purposive sampling the researcher selects participants for a specific purpose. These participants have a specific characteristic that is the focus of the study. Ethnographers tend to rely on their own judgment when selecting members of the subculture according to their research questions. Further, ethnographers can establish criteria for selecting participants. This type of sampling is referred to as criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013). Using criterion sampling, all participants have to meet the
following requirements. The study participants must have been enrolled as an undergraduate in the selected university and must have been identified as gifted/talented/exceptional by their former high school.

The quantitative element of this study included 127 undergraduate students from a single private university in Georgia. The sample size appears to be appropriate considering the university provided 4,349 undergraduate email addresses. With a sample size of 127 and a population of 4,349, there is a margin of error of 8.57 according the Margin of Error Calculator (2017) provided online by the American Research Group, Inc. With the confidence level set at 95%, there is a 5% chance that the quantitative data results may vary ± 8.57% from the true population. Furthermore, one can conclude that not all of these undergraduates were identified as gifted/talented/exceptional by their former high school based on the 116 respondents that were self-identified as non-gifted high school students according to the online survey. The knowledge that not all of the 4,349 undergraduates were identified by their former high schools as gifted/talented/exceptional further supports the sample size. Moreover, respondents were both male and female, racially diverse, and from all four classes at this university.

Using the results from the quantitative data, four participants were chosen for the semi-structured interviews. Like the quantitative element of this study, criterion sampling was employed. Ethnographers tend to rely on their own judgment when selecting members of the subculture according to their research questions. Further, ethnographers can establish criteria for selecting participants. Using criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013), the participants to be interviewed must have been enrolled as an
undergraduate in the selected university, must have been identified as gifted/talented/exceptional by their former high school, and must have completed the online survey. Additionally, these interviewees had to have responses to the online survey that were overwhelmingly “strongly disagree/disagree” or “strongly agree/agree”. Moreover, the interviewees had to have representation from both sexes. Like the quantitative questionnaire, both sexes were interviewed to present the voices of both genders as they discuss their perceptions of academic dishonesty.

Lastly, sample size is important to the sampling process. Four individuals who responded to the online survey were chosen to be interviewed. Yet, these individuals were chosen because they provided responses that were either significantly agree/strongly agree, an agree interviewee, or significantly disagree/strongly disagree, a disagree interviewee. Several questionnaire respondents may have met this criteria. Roughly 12 respondents fell into this category. However, not all agree or disagree respondents were willing to participate in an interview according to the online survey. After identifying and attempting to contact these agree or disagree respondents, three females and one male were willing to meet for an interview. Furthermore, this sample is adequate because it has representatives from both response extremes while accounting for both genders and two races. Having members of both sexes interviewed allows the researcher to account for any gender differences if any exist. Due to the quantitative survey that addresses Sykes and Matza (1957), Klockars (1974), and Minor (1981), four individuals were chosen to address all identified neutralization techniques especially the techniques offered by Benson (1985), Coleman (2006), and Cromwell and Thurman (2003). This
current investigation employed multiple strategies such as a quantitative survey, semi-structured interviews, and a member-checking session to offer triangulation and thick description of the data. One of the agree interviewees, a respondent who provided a significant number of agree/strongly agree responses, was a white female in her freshman year. Her cheating profile was obtained from the online survey (see Table 1). This undergraduate went to high school in central Georgia. When describing her high school’s gifted courses/program she claims, “my high school gifted course just seemed like regular classes but had gifted students in it”. This undergraduate is a biomedical engineering major with a chemistry minor. She has a 3.529 GPA in college. This undergraduate is not in an honors program at her university.

The other agree interviewee was a black male in his sophomore year. His cheating profile was obtained from the online survey (see Table 2). This undergraduate went to high school in central Georgia. When describing his high school’s gifted courses/program he offered, “the gifted programs were challenging enough to prepare me for college”. This undergraduate is a computer engineering major. He has a 2.72 GPA in college. This undergraduate is not in an honors program at his university.

One of the disagree interviewees, a respondent with a significant number of disagree/strongly disagree responses, was a black female in her freshman year. Her cheating profile was obtained from the online survey (see Table 3). This undergraduate went to two high schools in north central Georgia. When describing her high schools’ gifted courses/programs, she asserted,
both schools had typical gifted programs. Gifted students were placed in
honors core classes. Other classes like electives were not separated by
academic level. Also, anyone in the school could take AP classes, but
gifted students were more capable of succeeding in them. In my opinion,
the honors and AP classes were not more rigorous than regular classes.
The work load was the same or in some cases less than the amount of
work non-gifted students had.

This undergraduate is a neuroscience major with a minor in Spanish. She has a 3.56 GPA
in college. This undergraduate is in an honors program at her university.

The other disagree interviewee was a white female in her junior year. Her
cheating profile was obtained from the online survey (see Table 4). This undergraduate
grew up in northwest Georgia. When describing her high school’s gifted
courses/program she suggested that, “my high school gifted program was adequate but
not extensive”. She is a biomedical engineering major with a minor in math, chemistry,
and biology. She has a 3.7 GPA. This undergraduate is in an honors program at her
university.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cheating Profile for Agree Student A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutralization Statements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. In high school, helping someone to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheat on exams and assignments is OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because students should stick together and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. In high school, cheating is OK if others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the class are doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralization Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. In high school, a “double standard” exists; cheating by athletes is tolerated, but for other students it is not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the wrong assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. In high school, cheating is better than failing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 – continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q. In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate, teammate, etc.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

_Cheating Profile for Agree Student B_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. In high school, helping someone to cheat on exams and assignments is OK because students should stick together and help one another.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. In high school, cheating is OK if others in the class are doing it.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. In high school, a “double standard” exists; cheating by athletes is tolerated, but for other students it is not.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 – continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K. In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure on them to get good grades.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrong assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>into a college.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. In high school, cheating is better than failing.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate,</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teammate, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

*Cheating Profile for Disagree Student A*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. In high school, helping someone to cheat on exams and assignments is OK because students should stick together and help one another.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. In high school, cheating is OK if others in the class are doing it.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.</td>
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<td>H. In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>J. In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>K. In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.</td>
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<td>L. In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.</td>
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<td>M. In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the wrong assignment.</td>
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<td>N. In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.</td>
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<tr>
<td>O. In high school, cheating is better than failing.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate, teammate, etc.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralization Statements</td>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. In high school, helping someone to cheat on exams and assignments is OK because students should stick together and help one another.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. In high school, cheating is OK if others in the class are doing it.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. In high school, a “double standard” exists; cheating by athletes is tolerated, but for other students it is not.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the wrong assignment.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 – continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O. In high school, cheating is better than failing.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate, teammate, etc.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Data Collection

For the quantitative element in this mixed-methods study a survey design was employed. According to Creswell (2014), this study design “provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (p. 155). As a result, the investigator can make inferences or generalizations. The survey instrument and its use will be discussed next.

Administration of the Survey Instrument

The instrument used in the quantitative phase was a modification of Polding’s (1995) neutralization statements used in a larger questionnaire on neutralization theory and academic dishonesty among undergraduates. The permission to use the survey can be viewed (see Appendix F). The accuracy of the self-report can be furthered by the anonymity of the respondents (Polding, 1995). Likewise, the accuracy of the self-report can be furthered by the fact that these participants no longer attend their high school. In turn, their opinions on academic dishonesty will not jeopardize their status at those
schools. Further, Thornberry and Krohn (2000) suggest that “the self-report methodology has become much more sophisticated in design, making it more reliable and valid and extending its applicability to a myriad of issues” (p. 35). Polding (1995) provides evidence of validity and reliability of the neutralization statements. For instance, the 19 neutralization statements were developed by an expert panel on staff at the University of Florida. To address the retrospective nature of my survey, the phrase “in high school” was placed in front of each neutralization statement to realign the respondents’ attention to that time in their life. The online survey can be viewed (see Appendix D).

The survey invitations were sent to 4,349 undergraduate email addresses provided by the university during the spring semester of 2017. The description of the study and the informed consent were presented within the survey using SurveyMonkey. The survey closed after a month. The survey included questions about the respondent’s sex, being identified as gifted/talented/exceptional in high school, undergraduate class, and neutralization statements related to academic dishonesty. Respondents were to address these neutralization statements using a continuous scale (Creswell, 2014) from strongly disagree to strongly agree. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview about their perceptions of academic dishonesty in high school. If so, the respondents could provide their name, email address, and phone number. It was from these willing respondents that the four interview participants were chosen.
Creswell (2014) suggests that the investigator should “relate the variables, the research questions or hypotheses, and sample items on the survey instrument” (p. 161). Consequently, the reader can realize how the data collection process fits with the research questions. The instrument addresses the primary research question and the first secondary research question. Each neutralization statement’s correlation to a neutralization technique is provided (see Table 5). In this table each neutralization technique is presented along the corresponding neutralization statements presented in the online questionnaire.

Table 5
*Correlation of Neutralization Techniques and Neutralization Statements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Technique</th>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Responsibility</td>
<td>D, G, O, R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Injury</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Victim</td>
<td>J, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemnation of the Condemner</td>
<td>F, H, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to Higher Loyalties</td>
<td>A, K, L, Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense of Necessity</td>
<td>B, C, M, N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor of the Ledger</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative research relies on a range of methods for collecting data (Glesne, 2011). Through the analysis of this data the research can aspire to understand the people or phenomena that are being investigated. Qualitative research is conducted to explore an issue, to develop a detailed understanding of an issue, to empower individuals, and to develop theories among other things (Creswell, 2013). In this investigation of
neutralizing tendencies of former gifted high school students for cheating, semi-structured interviews, and member checking will be the qualitative methods of data collection. In efforts to use triangulation, interviews were performed in this investigation. Interviews can range from being structured and unchanging to unstructured and conversational (Glesne, 2011). The goal of an interview is to present questions to obtain a person’s perspective or point of view (Jamison, 2010). The structured interview has questions, often developed by the researcher, that are pre-established before the interview. These questions stay unchanged during the interview (Glesne, 2011). Structured interviews have their advantages. The researcher, or interviewer, requires limited training to perform them. Moreover, structured interviews tend to be “more objectively verifiable” (Jamison, 2010). One disadvantage of structured interviews is this format lacks the detail and complexity of less formal interview formats (Jamison, 2010). Structured interviews can be designed to collect data on a predetermined scale. For example, a Likert Scale may be used in this interview format. However, structured interviews can be open-ended. For instance, interviewers will ask predetermined questions, but these questions allow the interviewee to respond in any way they choose (Jamison, 2010).

Similar to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews use pre-established questions, but questions may emerge during the interview that can be asked (Glesne, 2011). Jamison (2010) claims that this interview format allows the interviewer the ability to carry on a conversation in which the interviewee might cover the topic of investigation. Nevertheless, the interviewer may choose to ask any further questions that
the interviewee did not answer spontaneously (Jamison, 2010). On the contrary, the unstructured interview, or conversational interview, has the interviewer developing questions on the spot through interactions and dialogue with the focus of the research leading the way (Glesne, 2011). In this informal format, the researcher has no set questions or scales, but the researcher has a general topic to pursue.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this investigation. The semi-structured interview was chose because if the interviewees’ dialogue gets off track the interviewer can use prompts to steer the conversation back on to the research topic (Jamison, 2010). To guide the semi-structured interviews, the general topics were denial and rationalizations for academic dishonesty among gifted high school students. Likewise, the semi-structured interview was used in this study due to its connection with participant/researcher power relationships. The interview questions based in the interview protocol inspired by Creswell (2014) are provided (see Appendix C). A paper copy of neutralization statements A through S were presented to the interviewees during the interviews. These interview questions centered on the research questions. Glesne (2011) offers that researchers need to be aware of power and hierarchy when conducting interviews. For example, when conducting interviews with undergraduates about cheating in high school, the interviewer needs to be aware that these students may feel uncomfortable and less likely to divulge certain information. The semi-structured interview should assist the interviewee in feeling comfortable due to the format being more conversational and less test-like. In essence, the interviewee is more equal to the interviewer. For instance, the conversation could cover broad topics such as the
individual’s perceptions of “cheating” or “reasons for cheating” and have a number of
preset questions.

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted. As stated before, the
participants were chosen because the majority of their responses to the neutralization
statements were overwhelmingly disagree/strongly disagree or agree/strongly agree.
More specifically, two of the participants were chosen because their responses were
overwhelmingly disagreeing/strongly disagreeing with the neutralization statements
while the other two participants were chosen because their responses were
overwhelmingly agreeing/strongly disagreeing with the neutralization statements. Also,
having a representative of both males and females was crucial. As a result, three females
and one male were chosen from the survey respondents that were willing to participate in
an interview. Also, the interview participants were racially diverse.

The interviews lasted roughly 30 minutes, occurred in a private office within the
university library, and were audio taped. The interviews were recorded using Audacity
software on the researcher’s laptop computer. Audacity is a free downloadable audio
recorder and editor. The audio files were transcribed by Shelia McPhilamay at A
Transcription Company. More information about this company can be found at
http://www.atranscriptioncompany.com/index.html. The interview recordings were
transcribed without “ums”, stutters, etc. The interview transcripts are provided (see
Appendix E).

As mentioned earlier, semi-structured interviews have the researcher developing
questions during the course of the conversations and interactions along with the preset
questions. However, Glesne (2011) offers that qualitative researchers tend to start the conversations or semi-structured interviews with some interview questions and continue to be open to reforming these questions during the research process.

When setting up interviews there were several considerations. Glesne (2011) suggested that researchers need to find “convenient, available, and appropriate locations” (p. 113) for which to conduct interviews. Convenient locations refer to the researcher being considerate of the interviewees’ needs when determining the location. Available locations refer to using locations and facilities that promote sound interview environments. Appropriate locations refer to environments that are comfortable, private, and quiet. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private and vacant office at the university’s library. These interviews were conducted a few days after the online survey was closed.

Member checking (Creswell, 2013), or member validation (Jamison, 2010) was employed to increase validity of the findings in this study. This process requires that participants approve or disprove of the researcher’s interpretations (Jamison, 2010). Member checking in this study will be discussed further in the qualitative analysis section. The member checking process occurred after the data analysis process. This qualitative data analysis was performed to answer all research questions.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Of the 4,349 email invitations that were sent out to undergraduates, 285 undergraduates responded. Of those respondents, 161 identified as gifted/talented/exceptional in their former high school. However, only 127
gifted/talented/exceptional respondents answered the survey completely. Creswell (2014) recommends that the investigator should mention the process used to check for response bias. One method to check for response bias is wave analysis. According to the “assumption that those who return surveys in the final weeks of the response period are nearly all nonrespondents, if the responses begin to change, a potential exists for response bias” (Creswell, 2014, p. 162). When comparing the first 10 responses to the last 10 responses, it appears that the first and last waves do not vary significantly. The descriptive analysis techniques suggested by Creswell (2014), such as frequency and percentage, will be provided for each neutralization statement. Similarly, frequencies and percentages of agree/strongly agree, neutral, and disagree/strongly disagree categories will be presented. Equally, percentages of agree/strongly agree responses to the neutralization statements will be clustered under the neutralization techniques. These frequencies and percentages will be used to answer the primary question and the first secondary research question.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In this qualitative investigation, the focus of the study is the participants’ responses in the semi-structured interviews. The research questions in this study aspire to understand the gifted students’ perceptions of academic dishonesty at the high school level. The participants’ responses were analyzed to address the research questions. The perspectives on academic dishonesty among former gifted high school students is the shared patterns in this study. It is during these interactions that the researcher is looking for patterns or themes. The neutralization theory proposed by Sykes and Matza (1957)
is the theory that is directing the focus and analysis of this study. Quotes about academic dishonesty by the participants will be presented from the semi-structured interviews. These quotes were categorized and labeled according to their connection to the neutralization techniques and other elements that are of interest in this investigation.

Moreover, Neuman (as cited in Jamison, 2010, p. 43) states there is no single or standardized method to analyze data in qualitative studies; however guidelines have developed over the years. For example, analysis is more inductive and less standardized, researchers seek emerging patterns during interviews and after, and analysis should create good generalization or transferability. Further, Neuman (as cited in Jamison, 2010, p. 43) claims that during qualitative data analysis researchers should organize data into categories according to themes and coding, or organizing data into precise categories based on important themes that emerge. Likewise, Jamison (2010) asserts that inductive content analysis is an approach used to analyze interview transcripts. This format of analysis is a bottom-up approach from which themes emerge from the interview transcripts.

Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed for data analysis. Jamison (2010) claims there are four stages to how a researcher identifies and develops categories from the themes that surface from the interview transcripts. During note taking is to develop first impressions. For this investigation, the researcher read over the transcripts while making limited notes.

Next, during the second stage, the researcher begins to identify and label specific themes that surface from the interview transcripts (Jamison, 2010). Such themes related
to reasons for or perspectives of academic dishonesty could possibly include “no big deal”, “parent pressures”, “no time”, “teachers”, “friends”, or “no one was hurt”. For this investigation, the researcher began recognizing and highlighting quotes that could correspond to such neutralization techniques.

Further, during the third stage, the researcher places structure on the overarching themes that were developed from stage two (Jamison, 2010). Often, multiple overarching themes merge together into clusters of themes, or categories. When categories develop, the researcher creates a title for that category. Such category titles associated with reason for academic dishonesty could include “outside pressures”, “little or no control”, “classmates”, “harmless”, “adults”, or “teacher deserves it”. It is possible that a few of these categories can be grouped together. For example, the categories “outside pressures” and “little or no control” might be grouped as a single category. The various neutralization techniques offered by Benson (1985), Coleman (2006), Cromwell & Thurman (2003), Klockars (1974), Minor (1981), and Sykes and Matza (1957) guided these overarching themes. Equally, denial, self-deception, and novel neutralization techniques also guided these overarching themes. For this investigation, the researcher began copying and pasting the identified quotes under headings labeled as denial of responsibility, postponement, claim of entitlement, and so on.

Last, during the fourth stage, Jamison (2010) claims that the researcher will develop a summary table. This summary table will include the theme categories. These theme categories will provide supporting quotations. A notation on which participant gave the original response will accompany the supporting quotations in the summary.
A model for rationalization categories for academic dishonesty among gifted high school students is provided (see Table 6).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1: Denial of Responsibility</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I think overall that’s an issue with the public education system putting too much pressure on students to make good grades. It’s kind of a market on AP students also with the AP testing and the prep testing and getting prepared for college. So, I think that just puts a lot of pressure on students who want to succeed”</td>
<td>1st Agree Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“So during while I’m watching the boys’ game I would have someone and I would text them like hey, can you send me a picture of the homework? I won’t have time to do it tonight and I’ve had people ask me to do that before too. So it is definitely a way that students cheat”</td>
<td>2nd Agree Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You’ve run out of time. Everyone always runs out of time or your printer is broken just this one time. So, you’re just going to have your friend print their own twice”</td>
<td>2nd Disagree Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Creswell (2014), constructivists believe “that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (p. 8). As a result, there are multiple meanings. Researchers under the constructivist paradigm may investigate the various views rather than only recognizing a few narrow categories. Looking at the research questions, the study is investigating the rationalization techniques used by gifted high school students to neutralize cheating. The researcher will be able to investigate the multiple truths and multiple realities about academic dishonesty held by former gifted high school students as individuals. Likewise, investigations using a constructivist approach tend to “understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge” (Mertens, 2015, p. 18). This notion aligns well with the neutralization theory. Within this theory, Sykes and Matza (1957) claim that delinquent behavior is
When coding the data several codes emerged. These categories included the identified neutralization techniques such as entitlement (Coleman, 2006), denial of responsibility (Sykes & Matza, 1957), necessity (Benson, 1985; Minor, 1981), and everybody cheats (Benson, 1985).

To further validate the findings in this study, member validation (Jamison, 2010) or member checking (Creswell, 2013) was utilized. Jamison (2010) states that this process has the researcher, after data collection and analysis, asking study participants to read over the researcher’s interpretations. If the study participants believe that the interpretation represents their experiences, then validity is strengthened. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that member checking is “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). When the analysis of the interviews is completed, a draft of the researcher’s interpretations about the participants’ thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions of academic dishonesty among gifted students was presented via email to the four interviewees for review and approval. These participants analyzed the interpretations for accuracy. Member checking by the participants will be further addressed in the following section.

Member Checking

Member checking involved the participants in the qualitative data analysis process. Creswell (2014) argues that “the informant will serve as a check throughout the analysis process…regarding my interpretations of the informant’s reality and meanings will ensure the truth value of the data” (p. 210). In this investigation, the analysis and interpretations of the interview transcripts were sent via email to all four interviewees.
All four interviewees responded with comments. These responses were supportive of the findings and interpretations. For instance, an interviewee claimed, “I believe all of this is reasonable. Didn’t realize I said “like” so much”. Equally, the second interviewee asserted, “the analysis definitely seems reasonable to me”. Also, the third interviewee affirmed, “the analysis was reasonable”. Last, the fourth interviewee suggested that “this analysis is reasonable”. Overall, the member checking responses from the interviewees support the qualitative findings.

Summary

The mixed method design was essential in this investigation. As discussed before, quantitative methods were performed to address a set of neutralization techniques. Addressing these neutralization techniques in a quantitative manner allowed for the selection of participants for the qualitative element of this study. The quantitative survey instrument in this investigation only addresses the neutralization techniques offered by Klockar, (1974), Minor (1981), and Sykes and Matza (1957). The survey instrument does not address the later neutralization techniques offered by Benson (1985), Coleman (2006), Cromwell & Thurman (2003). As a result, the qualitative interviews allowed for the investigation to address the later neutralization techniques. Furthermore, the quantitative nature of the survey instrument only allows for close-ended responses. However, the qualitative nature of the semi-structured interview allows for open-ended responses. It is these open-ended responses that allow this investigation to not only address the more recently acknowledged neutralization techniques, but to also discover any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used to justify academic dishonesty.
Moreover, the qualitative interviews allow this investigation to discover any issues that may lead to cheating and how schools can promote academic integrity. Ultimately, this allows for the qualitative findings to expand upon the quantitative findings.

In conclusion, the methodology employed in this investigation of neutralizing tendencies of former gifted high school students is well justified and supported by the literature. The intent of this mixed-methods investigation is to identify any neutralization techniques used by former gifted high school students when justifying academic dishonesty in a high school setting. Focusing on triangulation, the methods of data collection consisted of an online survey and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics. The qualitative data analysis consisted of multiple stages. Member checking was employed to support credibility of this investigation.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the denying and neutralizing tendencies of academic dishonesty among gifted high school students. The following research questions have guided this investigation. Primary question: How can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? Secondary questions: 1. What previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? 2. If there are any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used by undergraduates to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior as gifted high school students, what are these techniques? 3. What aspects of school or classroom culture do former gifted high school students say contribute to academic dishonesty? 4. How do former gifted high school students say teachers and schools can encourage academic integrity?

The quantitative findings were analyzed to address primary research question and the first secondary research question. The primary research question asks, how can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? The first secondary research question asks, what previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students?
Analysis of the Quantitative Data

The following section will analyze the quantitative data taken from the online survey. Overall, the analysis will focus mainly on the frequencies and percentages of the responses to the neutralization techniques. Frequencies of responses for each neutralization statement were produced and analyzed. Also, frequencies for agree/strongly agree, disagree/strongly disagree, and neutral responses were produced and analyzed. Percentages of responses for each response were produced and analyzed. Likewise, percentages for each neutralization statement were produced and analyzed.

The frequencies and percentages of all responses for each neutralization statement is provided (see Appendix A). The frequencies and percentages for agree/strongly agree, disagree/strongly disagree, and neutral responses for each response is provided (see Appendix B).

It is important to discuss how each response to the neutralization statement is interpreted in this study. The responses agree and strongly agree reveals a moderate to strong tendency to use or accept the statement as justification for cheating. The responses disagree and strongly disagree reveals a moderate to strong tendency to not use or accept the statement as justification for cheating. The response of neutral shows that the respondent does not agree or disagree with the statement as justification for cheating.

The percentage of respondents that agree/strongly agree, disagree/strongly disagree, or are neutral will be addressed with the statement. These percentages of responses to statements A to S are provided (see Appendix B). The following section will provide the notable findings from the quantitative data.
Looking at the results in Appendix A, several neutralization statements received zero strongly agree responses from the respondents. This includes statements A, B, D, E, G, and L. This may reveal that none of the respondents have a strong tendency to use or accept these statements as justification for cheating. Turning to the results in Appendix B, 80% or more of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with several neutralization statements. These statements include A, B, D, and H. This may reveal that these respondents are less likely to use or accept these statements as justification for cheating.

On the other hand, 42% or more respondents agreed/strongly agreed with several neutralization statements. These statements include I, K, O, and S. This may reveal that the respondents have the strongest tendencies to use or accept these statements as justification for cheating. Furthermore, statement F received the highest percentage of neutral responses. This may reveal that situational ethics (LaBeff et al., 1990; McCabe, 1992) may come into play with this statement.

Lastly, statement O received the most divided responses. Roughly 42% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement while roughly 42% of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement. This reveals that close to half of the respondents have the tendency to use or accept this statement as justification for cheating. That is, almost half of the respondents agree that cheating is better than failing in high school. However, this reveals that close to half of the respondents do not have the tendency to use or accept this statement as justification for cheating.

The following section will discuss the data in order to address the primary research question and the first secondary question. The primary research question
inquires, how can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student?

The results reveal that neutralization tendencies among these respondents exist for each neutralization statement. For example, four students or 3.14% agree/strongly agree with neutralization statement D and as many as 68 students or 53.54% agree/strongly agree with neutralization statement S. Nevertheless, a few of the respondents agree/strongly agree with each neutralization statement. It appears that former gifted high school students can use a wide range of neutralization techniques when justifying or rationalizing academic dishonesty in high school. Overall, the quantitative findings reveal that former gifted high school students can use all seven of the neutralization techniques (Sykes & Matza; 1957; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981) addressed in the online survey. These findings align with similar discoveries related to gifted high school students (Taylor et al., 2002; Geddes, 2011). The percentages of respondents that agree or strongly agree with the neutralization statements are provided (see Table 7).

Table 7

Percentages of Respondents that Agree/Strongly Agree with Neutralization Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. In high school, helping someone to cheat on exams and assignments is OK because students should stick together and help one another.</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. In high school, cheating is OK if others in the class are doing it.</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 – continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.</td>
<td>23.62</td>
<td>9.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.</td>
<td>17.32</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. In high school, a “double standard” exists; cheating by athletes is tolerated, but for other students it is not.</td>
<td>29.92</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.</td>
<td>36.22</td>
<td>12.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.</td>
<td>17.32</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the wrong assignment.</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.</td>
<td>20.47</td>
<td>7.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. In high school, cheating is better than failing.</td>
<td>29.13</td>
<td>12.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.</td>
<td>14.96</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate, teammate, etc.</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 – continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutralization Statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.</td>
<td>33.85</td>
<td>19.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The online questionnaire was designed to address some of the research questions. The first secondary question asks, what previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? The findings reveal that some respondents agree with virtually all neutralization techniques offered by Klockar (1974), Minor (1981), and Sykes and Matza (1957). For instance, as little as 3.14% of respondents agree with statement D, a denial of responsibility statement. Likewise, as many as 53.96% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statement S, a denial of victim statement. For appeal to higher loyalty statements, 7.14% to 49.20% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statements K, Q, A, and L (see Figure 1). Again, neutralization technique with the corresponding research questions and neutralization statements presented in online survey or questionnaire are presented (see Table 1). This reveals that these respondents can justify cheating if it helps or is approved by a person close to that individual. For defense of necessity statements, 6.35% to 27.78% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statements B, C, N, and M, (see Figure 2). This shows that these respondents can justify cheating if cheating is deemed crucial to the individual. For denial of responsibility statements, 3.17% to 42.06% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statements D, G, R, and O (see Figure 3). This reveals that these individuals can justify cheating by claiming that they had little to no control of the situation. For condemnation of the condemner
statements, 3.96% to 47.61% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statements F, H, and I (see Figure 4). This shows that these respondents can justify cheating by suggesting that the condemner is guilty in other ways. For denial of victim statements, 16.13% to 53.96% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statements J and S (see Figure 5). This shows that these individuals can claim that no one is truly hurt by their actions. For the denial of injury statement, 5.55% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statement E (see Figure 6). This reveals that these respondents can claim that no one is injured or harmed by their actions. Lastly, for the metaphor of the ledger statement, 16.66% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statement P (see Figure 7). This shows that these respondents can claim that they could cheat because of the many acceptable behaviors that they have performed in the past.

Figure 1
Agree/Strongly Agree Responses to Statement K, Q, A, and L
Figure 2
Agree/Strongly Agree Responses to Statement B, C, N, and M

Figure 3
Agree/Strongly Agree Responses to Statement D, G, R, and O
Figure 4
Agree/Strongly Agree Responses to Statement F, H, and I

Figure 5
Agree/Strongly Agree Responses to Statement J and S
Figure 6
Agree/Strongly Agree Responses to Statement E

Figure 7
Agree/Strongly Agree Responses to Statement P
The quantitative findings reveal that the gifted high school student has the potential to employ all the neutralization techniques offered by Klockar (1974), Minor (1981), and Sykes and Matza (1957). Yet, several other discoveries should be addressed. It was discovered that no respondent strongly agreed with statements A, B, D, E, G, and L. This suggests that gifted high school students are not be overly committed to justifying their cheating by using the techniques of appeal to a higher loyalty, defense of necessity, denial of responsibility, denial of injury, and denial of responsibility. Likewise, the survey discovered that 80% or more respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with statements A, B, D, and H. This suggests that gifted high school students are less likely to use the techniques of appeal to higher loyalty, defense of necessity, denial of responsibility, and condemnation of the condemner to justify their academic dishonesty.

Despite the overwhelming number of respondents that disagreed/strongly disagreed with some neutralization statements, several neutralization statements received a generous number of agreed/strongly agreed responses. For example, 42% or more respondents agreed/strongly agreed with statements I, K, O, and S. As a result, it appears that gifted high school students are more likely to employ the techniques of condemnation of the condemner, appeal to higher loyalty, denial of responsibility, and denial of victim.

One can quickly notice discrepancy between these conclusions. For instance, the techniques of appeal to a higher loyalty, condemnation of the condemner, and denial of responsibility is more likely to be used by gifted high school students in one situation but
less likely in another situation. It appears that these inconsistencies may be due to the individual neutralization statements. Focusing first on the appeal to a higher loyalty statements, statement A addresses a loyalty to classmates while statement K addresses a loyalty to parents. Ultimately, this suggests that gifted high school students are more likely to use the appeal to higher loyalty technique when parents are involved. On the other hand, gifted high school students are less likely to use the appeal to high loyalty technique when classmates are involved.

Similarly, the condemnation of the condemner statements of H and I show inconsistency. The findings offer that gifted high school students are less likely to use the condemnation of the condemner technique when the teacher’s grading policies are concerned. Yet, the responses suggest that gifted high school students are more likely to use the condemnation of the condemner technique when cheating by certain groups is tolerated.

Likewise, the responses to the denial of responsibility statements of D and O are contradictory. The responses reveal that gifted high school students are less likely to use the denial of responsibility technique when the teacher is involved. However, these individuals are more likely to use this technique when failing a course is the concern.

Overall, the findings suggest that gifted high school students can potentially employ all of the neutralization techniques offered by Klockar (1974), Minor (1981), and Sykes and Matza (1957). However, the percentage differences between responses for the same neutralization techniques suggest that certain factors that these individuals will encounter may ultimately determine if these neutralization techniques will be summoned.
Analysis of Qualitative Data

The purpose of this study was to investigate the denying and neutralizing tendencies of academic dishonesty in high school among former gifted high school students. The qualitative findings were analyzed to address all research questions. When discussing the organization of the text, Glesne (2011) asserts that “probably the most frequently used technique is organization by themes or topics” (p. 229). The majority of the themes or topics were aligned to answer the research questions. The primary research question asks, how can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? Secondary research question one asks, what previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? Secondary research question two asks, if there are any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used by undergraduates to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior as gifted high school students, what are these techniques? Secondary research question three asks, what aspects of school or classroom culture do former gifted high school students say contribute to academic dishonesty? Secondary research question four inquires, how do former gifted high school students say teachers and schools can encourage academic integrity?

Qualitative Themes

The themes that developed from these semi-structured interviews center on answering the research questions. As a result, the themes focused on denial, self-deception, the original neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957), the
extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981), and novel neutralization techniques.

Theme One: Denial

Theme one presents findings that illustrate public denial of academic dishonesty. Denial, in this case, refers to the individual’s ability to publicly claim that he or she did not perform a behavior when in fact he or she did perform the behavior in question. In reference to this study, the individual publicly denies cheating to avoid punishment when in fact he or she did cheat. The interview transcripts reveal conflicting stances on denial of academic dishonesty among former gifted high school students. In response to the question if gifted high school students cheat, one interviewee offered that “it depends on how I was confronted. If I was confronted more aggressively, like serious threats like you're going to fail this class, I'd probably try to deny it”. That same interviewee added that “cheating definitely happens and people don’t like to say yeah, they cheated on that one. So it’s [denial] definitely as common as cheating is”. This interviewee claims that denial of cheating is as common as cheating among this subpopulation.

Likewise, in response to if students could knowingly deny that they were cheating when in fact they were, another interviewee offered, “yes, it’s [denial] very likely”. Moreover, this same interviewee stated, “by definition, yes, I participated in cheating but if someone were to ask me if I had cheated I would honestly say no because it would be – my cheating would be just the fact being it wasn’t that serious as a topic or it was something that was easy enough to do”. Ultimately, many of the interviewees believe that denial is common among this subpopulation of students.
However, another interviewee stated that “usually, when I’ve seen gifted students if they're caught cheating, they admit to it and take the consequences”. Similarly, that same interviewee presented, “yeah, they wouldn’t give an excuse for why they were cheating”. These statements reveal that denial of academic dishonesty is not only possible, but is potentially commonplace among gifted high school students. The interview transcripts reveal four statements that support this claim. Yet, one interviewee claims that the gifted high school student usually confesses to cheating if he or she is confronted with the accusation. These conflicting notions suggest that denial may not be universal among this population. Nevertheless, these candid statements support the use of denial by gifted high school students when encountering academic dishonesty.

Theme Two: Self-Deception

Theme two discusses the findings considered to be self-deception of academic dishonesty. Self-deception, in this case, refers to the individual’s ability to self-deceive. This is when the individual experiences self-deception to avoid guilt or blame for a thought or behavior. Ultimately, the individual truly believes that his or her behaviors are acceptable and guilt free. In this case, the individual believes that his or her behaviors are not forms of academic dishonesty. The interview transcripts reveal that former gifted high school students could use self-deception of academic dishonesty in a high school setting. One interviewee professed,

yeah, because until now until I thought about sharing the homework being cheating, I totally didn’t even think of it as cheating at all. Like, I don't
know. It’s like I almost felt like it was group work or something, but now that I think about it, it is cheating.

This same interviewee asserted “it doesn’t bother me because I’m not doing it. I’m not the one that’s actually cheating, even though me helping someone else is cheating. It doesn’t really feel like cheating in the moment. It just feels like you're helping someone out”. In response to the question related to if there are any other neutralization techniques, another interviewee proclaimed, “I guess it’d be something you'd tell yourself more than you'd share”. In other words, these individuals were convincing themselves that cheating did not occur.

Similarly, another interviewee proclaimed, “I don’t think anyone assumes that they’re doing something wrong. So, they try to rationalize what they do… some people might not even view it as cheating because they’ve rationalized it so much”. Like denial, these statements provided by the interviewees indicate that self-deception is present among this student population.

Theme Three: The Original Neutralization Techniques

Theme three centers on the original neutralization techniques identified by Sykes and Matza (1957). The interview transcripts reveal that former gifted high school students have summoned or could summon all five original neutralization techniques. These original techniques include denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. Looking at the denial of responsibility technique, the responses by three interviewees support the use of this technique by gifted high school students. The denial of responsibility technique
asserts that forces beyond the individual’s control has caused the deviant acts. The individual feels “helplessly propelled into new situations” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 667). As a result, the individual learns to believe that he or she is being acted upon by outside forces and this allows him to deviate from the societal norms. One interviewee suggested that

I think overall that’s an issue with the public education system putting too much pressure on students to make good grades. It’s kind of a market on AP students also with the AP testing and the prep testing and getting prepared for college. So, I think that just puts a lot of pressure on students who want to succeed.

Further, that same interviewee said, “just that it’s – as long as the pressure is going to be there, people are going to feel compelled to cheat. But then again, there are also people who they feel more pressure than others so they might always be cheaters”. Another interviewee stated,

so during while I’m watching the boys’ game I would have someone and I would text them like hey, can you send me a picture of the homework? I won’t have time to do it tonight and I’ve had people ask me to do that before too.

Still, another interviewee offered, “you've run out of time. Everyone always runs out of time or your printer is broken just this one time. So, you're just going to have your friend print their own twice”.

For the technique of denial of injury, two responses from the same interviewee supported the use of this technique by gifted high school students. The denial of injury technique posits that the individual can judge behavior based on whether anyone was hurt or injured. The individual could neutralize his or her actions by believing that “injury is not wrong in light of the circumstances” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). It is believed that only one interviewee addressed this technique by saying “I guess trying to rationalize it as it’s just something I do just to get into college. It’s not going to affect me in the long-term”. Moreover, that interviewee later stated, “I do think it’s still a big deal because you’re not learning, but it can be rationalized away as being victimless or by saying I’m the only victim”.

The interview transcripts also reveal the possible use of denial of victim technique by gifted high school students. For the denial of victim technique, the individual may claim that the injury is not truly an injury. He or she may even claim that the injury was justified as a form of appropriate punishment or retaliation. When discussing an unfair history teacher, an interviewee provided,

so some grades were definitely not fair to the students and I remember seeing students having stuff on the ground and stuff like that when they thought the teacher wasn’t looking and if he would walk by, they would just use their foot to move it out of the way like under the desk when we would like take a test or a quiz or something like that.

For the technique of condemnation of the condemner, two responses from different interviewees support the use of this technique by gifted high school students. The
individual “shifts the focus of attention from his own deviant acts to the motives and behaviors of those who disapprove of his violations” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668).

When discussing when students get caught cheating and are surprised that their behavior is considered cheating, an interviewee proclaimed, “so it affects them way more than they are able to see and in high school you throw all of the blame on the teacher”. Similarly, another interviewee suggested,

I do remember now that I was in a history class I think when I was in tenth grade and the teacher we had was new to our school and he was really, really hard…it was just a sign and a grade and he wouldn’t read it and it was based on kind of who he liked. So some grades were definitely not fair to the students and I remember seeing students having stuff on the ground and stuff like that when they though the teacher wasn’t looking and if he would walk by, they would just use their foot to move it out of the way like under the desk when we would like take a test or a quiz or something like that.

For the appeal to higher loyalties technique, three interviewees provided responses that support the use of this technique by gifted high school students. This technique suggests that deviant behavior could “be neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of the smaller social groups to which the delinquent belongs such as sibling pair, the gang, or the friendship clique” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 669). An interviewee said,
well yeah, he was my friend and I didn’t want him to fail the assignment
and he was looking for some type of inspiration on the assignment, he
didn’t grasp the concept too well. So, I gave him [friend] the paper to
allow him to get that thought process going and she [teacher] read both of
them in front of the class and they were word for word.

Still, another interviewee presented, “I can remember this one distinct time. I was in a
science class at my high school and we were taking a test and one of the students next to
me had asked me for an answer and I told them”. When talking about a sibling, that same
interviewee said,

I think with the pressure my parents on her, like it says in here. With the
pressure my parents put on her and with all of that on top of her that she
feels like she doesn’t know the material. So she needs to cheat so that she
can make the grades that my parents want her to make even though she
doesn’t really care about school.

Likewise, this interviewee suggested, “like a lot of students they really stick together”.

Moreover, this interviewee put forward,

the one where it talks about cheating to help a friend, classmate, or a
teammate definitely that. That’s how I justified what I did. It was to help
another, but I really like K [okay], when it talks about in high school,
students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure
on them to get good grades. I see that a lot. I really do. I see it so much.
Still, another interviewee provided, “I feel like between friends. So if you knew the student and you knew that you guys had a decent relationship, I feel like those students were more comfortable to cheat off of each other”.

Theme Four: The Later Neutralization Techniques

Theme four discusses the neutralizations techniques identified by later scholars (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981). The interview transcripts reveal that these former gifted high school students have summoned or could use all but one of these extensions in a high school setting. These later neutralization techniques include denial of criminal intent, defense of necessity/competition, justification by comparison, denial of crime, everybody does it/diffusion of guilt (Benson, 1985), denial of the justice or necessity of the law, claim of entitlement (Coleman, 2006), justification by comparison, postponement (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003), the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974), and the defense of necessity (Minor, 1981).

For the defense of necessity/competition (Benson, 1985; Minor, 1981) technique, the interview transcripts reveal that gifted high school students can use this technique. When using this technique an offender can deliberately break the rules, even if he is likely to get caught, to prevent others from getting ahead or winning. The analogy of fouling a player in basketball to prevent the player from making the shot is offered to illustrate this competition element (Benson, 1985). Furthermore, Minor (1981) suggests “if any act is perceived as necessary, then one need not feel guilty about its commission, even if it is considered morally wrong in the abstract” (p. 298). All four interviewees had
a statement related to the defense of necessity/completion technique. When identifying reasons for cheating, the first interviewee offered this statement in regards to college, then there is the long run with colleges and things like that. So, you just feel – it’s a pressure that kind of hits you presently and also in the future with something that’s a bad grade here in one instance can make you doubt yourself in the future, so it’s constant pressure…to get the good grade by any means necessary. The more badly you need it the more you’re able to justify it”.

When discussing cheating among other gifted high school students, the another interviewee provided information about copying outlines, “they had to write out that chapter outline I think every week and so I can see why she would justify doing something like that because I had heard that the class was a lot of work”. Further, the same interviewee stated,

in my senior year of high school, some students would cheat because they needed to be able to pass so that they could graduate. I guess that’s more of an end-all be-all. So they got to a point where they had to have these credits to graduate and so they were cheating to be able to pass the class. That was why that one student would sit closer to me and look on my paper so that they would pass that class and they could graduate.

When discussing what leads students to cheat, the third interviewee suggested, gifted students it’s always about grades and high school period is always about having to get into college. It’s like from freshman year on, it’s
always about college. You have to have good grades, standardized testing. Even in elementary school testing is really important. So for gifted students they always want to be at the top of the class. I know from my school, at least the first school I went to, rankings was really important, who was first, who was second, comparing. The group of gifted students they would kind of stick together and they would always compare their ranks because it’s a lot of competition in wanting to kind of do better than their friends and be the one on top. So usually, that’s why they cheat. I don't believe it’s they didn’t study or they had something else to do. That’s usually not the problem. It’s just they don’t think they're going to do well. So they feel like cheating is the only way to get them that good grade.

This interviewee also emphasized that sometimes cheating is necessary to get the GPA that you need. That’s one, but I don't know. It’s just from what I remember it was always who was number one, who was number two, and the ranking and waiting to get their report card so they can see where they were ranked. It’s such a big deal for gifted students.

The last interviewee provided that maybe I’ve seen some about like cheating to stay on a sports team. He was failing Spanish. He was the quarterback. Also he was gifted in middle school. I think he was still in the gifted program in high school, but took
less, few honors program classes and he decided to make a cheat sheet, just like good old fashioned cheating.

For the justification by comparison (Benson, 1985; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003) technique, responses from three interviewees support the use of this technique by gifted high school students. By highlighting more serious offenses, the offender attempts to make his or her own questionable behavior appear less severe in comparison. One interviewee asserted,

by definition, yes, I participated in cheating but if someone were to ask me if I had cheated I would honestly say no because it would be – my cheating would be just the fact being it wasn’t that serious as a topic or it was something that was easy enough to do, it was just stuff that I was behind on.

This same interviewee offered, “but I think there are different levels of justifying it when it comes to homework, quizzes or exams, like take home assignments, things like that. Some people might not even view it as cheating because they’ve rationalized it so much”. Alike, another interviewee suggested,

well, I feel like every student knows that if they get help on a test, that it’s cheating. I feel like sometimes homework can get lost in that little cloud because you're not at school. You're at home and you don’t think about stuff like that when you're at home.

When conversing about using various definitions to rationalize cheating, another interviewee provided, “oh, definitely. Cheating on smaller assignments, Googling the
answers to homework that you still turn in, but it’s not cheating because it’s not really a test”.

For the denial of crime (Benson, 1985) technique, responses by three interviewees support the use of this technique by gifted high school students. Obviously, in this case, academic dishonesty is not considered a crime, but is considered an offense or wrongdoing. With this technique, individuals are denying the fact that this behavior is indeed an offense in their opinion. To show this, an interviewee stated, “I don’t think anyone assumes that they’re doing something wrong. So, they try to rationalize what they do…some people might not even view it as cheating because they’ve rationalized it so much”. Likewise, another interviewee presented,

people will, say one person does the homework and then, someone will send them a text or something like that or see them in person and is like hey, can I borrow your homework so they can copy it. I have done that and I forgot about that probably because a lot of the times I don’t even think of it as cheating when it actually is because I’m not doing my own work.

Additionally, this interviewee said,

yeah, because until now until I thought about sharing the homework being cheating, I totally didn’t even think of it as cheating at all. Like, I don't know. It’s like I almost felt like it was group work or something, but now that I think about it, it is cheating. It’s different if you're, like I’ve come into now, it’s different when you're stuck on a problem, like if it’s a math
problem or something. You're like hey, I can’t figure this out. You text one of your friends, hey, can you send me a picture of this homework problem that you did so you can try to figure it out because I’m a commuter and I can’t be here all the time to actually meet up with someone to have them help me.

Like previous responses, another interviewee stated, “if it was more of a you're better than this and I know you cheated then I would just own up to it or try to rationalize it away. Like, it’s not cheating”. Moreover, this interviewee provided, “yeah, and even if you stop cheating, but you still hold this belief that well, this really isn’t cheating, the justification and like rationalization of that behavior is still there”.

For the everybody does it/diffusion of guilt (Benson, 1985) technique, one response by an interviewee suggests the use of this technique. Individuals using this technique can believe that their offensive behaviors are widespread which allows these offenders to diffuse the guilt of committing these offenses to others. This is to suggest that these offenders are “no more guilty than most people” (Benson, 1985, p. 594). For instance, this interviewee offered,

so one thing that I don’t see on here is everyone cheated so I thought it was okay or everybody else was doing it, so I did it too because usually gifted students stick together. Usually, they have the same classes. They're usually separated from the rest of the students. So they kind of stick together. So if they all decide to do it, then the student can say well, everybody else did it. So why not, I decided to do it too.
For the denial of criminal intent (Benson, 1985) technique, like the everybody does it/diffusion of guilt technique, one response by an interviewee supports the use of this technique by gifted high school students. By using this technique, individuals can recognize that their behavior may be considered an offense, but they commonly “denied that their actions were motivated by a guilty mind (Benson, 1985, p. 589). For instance, the interviewee suggested, “for all students this is a good list, but if a gifted student did cheat it would be one of these or the not knowing that it was cheating, so a really big one”. In this case, the list refers to the neutralization statements offered in the online survey. A paper copy was presented to the interviewees during the interview.

For the denial of the justice or necessity of the law (Coleman, 2006) technique, one response by an interviewee suggests the use of this technique by gifted high school students. The individual using this technique claims there is no need for a rule or law related to a behavior. When discussing any new ways to justify academic dishonesty, this interviewee stated, “so if I choose to, then why should anyone care”? It appears that this interviewee claims that if he or she performs an academically dishonest behavior it should not be an issue or concern. Hence, there should not be rules or punishments connected to academic dishonesty. Ultimately, this individual does not recognize the necessity of rules that govern academic dishonesty.

Focusing on Coleman’s (2006) claim of entitlement technique, one interviewee provided several responses that support the use of this technique by gifted high school students. The offender justifies his or her offensive behavior by believing that he or she is entitled to, or deserve, these benefits within this label. When addressing if justifying
academic dishonesty is common among gifted high school students, an interviewee proclaimed,

I do think it’s common because sometimes, especially in my high school, the gifted students, I don’t want to sound mean, but sometimes it just felt like we were so much more like that prepared for stuff and I guess it’s from being considered gifted or I’m not really sure. At least that’s how I felt because it comes easier to me to be able to like read something and retain it or understand a math concept, that I can help someone who has a harder time understanding a concept.

Equally, this interviewee offered,

I feel like a lot of gifted students have that like superiority complex. I had it to some degree. But I know a lot of other gifted students took initiative because of that to help other people because they did almost feel like they were better than those people. So they wanted to help them.

In response to if this entitlement concept is found in both gifted and non-gifted students, this interviewee provided,

I think it’s exclusive to gifted, probably not wholly exclusive, but since I’ve been gifted since second grade, I have actually been told before second grade, but second grade was just when I got in gifted, that I’ve always been special. That’s I’ve always been, oh, she’s so smart, she’s so this and so that, that I’ve always kind of been in condition to have that entitled feeling when it came to school.
Lastly, this interviewee asserted,

I think a lot of why gifted high school students cheat or help others cheat is because a lot of the times they're told that they're special and that they're good at things and that this and that. So either they want to help other people or sometimes they fall away from that standard and they're trying to keep that standard. And so to do that, they have to cheat to make up for that specialness that they might not have anymore because they’ve just gotten older and things just don’t come as naturally to them anymore as they did like when they were younger.

It appears that these responses reveal the gifted high school student’s abilities, status, or title allows them to help others cheat. It is as if one’s giftedness entitles the individual to not only perform well on assignments or assessments by cheating or not, but it also allows the individual to assist others in cheating.

Along with the justification by comparison, Cromwell and Thurman (2003) identified postponement as another technique of neutralization. This technique is used when the individual “suppresses his or her guilt feeling- momentarily putting them out of mind to be dealt with at a later time” (p. 546). By not attending to the fact that an offense was committed, the individual does not have to deal with the guilt that may accompany the thought of having performed an unconventional behavior. One interviewee gave a response that supports the use of this technique by gifted high school students. In reaction to seeing other gifted high school students cheating, that interviewee presented, “I don't know. I just kind of ignore it”.
It appears the only extension of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) original neutralization techniques that were not evident from the interview transcripts is the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974) technique. However, this is not to say that gifted high school students do not use this neutralization technique from time to time. The quantitative data revealed that this subpopulation may use this neutralization technique.

Theme Five: Previously Unidentified Neutralization Techniques

Theme five showcases the previously unidentified neutralization techniques that could be used by former gifted high school students to justify academic dishonesty in a high school setting. These novel neutralization techniques include the they were, not me defense, convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense, and bending the definition. The interview transcripts show that former gifted high school students can summon what can be labeled the they were, not me defense. This technique differs from the denial of crime (Benson, 1985) technique because the person neutralizing the behavior, academic dishonesty in this case, acknowledges that it is academically dishonest or wrong but points the finger at another individual as being the cheater or wrongdoer. The denial of crime technique suggest that the behavior in question is not an offense regardless of who performs the behavior. On the contrary, the they were, not me defense has the neutralizing person removing themselves, if only briefly, from the questionable behavior. However, this technique maybe limited to such behaviors as an individual allowing another to copy or view information when completing such assignments as quizzes or tests, homework, papers, or projects. In this way, the individual is merely an accessory in the legal sense and believes he or she is not guilty of any wrongdoing.
Several responses from two interviewees appear to support the *they were, not me* defense technique. In response to helping others cheat by allowing them to copy or view information, an interviewee provided,

It doesn’t bother me because I’m not doing it. I’m not the one that’s actually cheating, even though me helping someone else is cheating. It doesn’t really feel like cheating in the moment. It just feels like you're helping someone out.

The same interviewee also asserted, “I wouldn’t define it as cheating for me, but I am helping the cheating”. Similarly, this interviewee acknowledged, “I don’t normally cheat. Normally, it’s me, I guess that is cheating if I give answers to other students, but normally, I wouldn’t help myself try to do something”. Additionally, another interviewee affirmed,

I personally have been cheated on. I didn’t know what the student was going to do with my work. I was just like, yes you can use it as a guideline and it ended up being word for word and I took a hit on that in terms of grades.

So it seems that this technique can be used to remove oneself from academic dishonest behavior by believing that he or she is not directly benefiting, but another person is the true beneficiary. As a result, this person that summons this technique does not believe he or she was cheating when helping another.

The interview transcripts exposes a second unidentified neutralization technique that could be used by gifted high school students to justify academic dishonesty. Two
responses from an interviewee could be labeled the *convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense*. With this neutralization technique, the individual comes across an opportunity that might be too difficult to turn down. This opportunity can be related to copying or using an older sibling or classmate’s work or seeing a classmate’s answers on an assessment. This neutralizing individual may actually seek this preexisting academic work or the individual may find himself in a situation where this preexisting academic work falls in his lap so to speak. Due to this preexisting academic work, the individual may neutralize the guilt by believing that he or she should not have to do the work if another’s work is conveniently available. Moreover, because of the convenience of another’s work, the individual may use the saying “don’t reinvent the wheel” as a way to neutralize his or her academically dishonest behavior. To display this neutralization technique, an interviewee alleged, “but some who you had used their older siblings’ work from previous classes to get some better grades in their classes”. Further, the interviewee offered, “using older siblings’ work is common, but I don't know what that rationalization is”. Lastly, this interviewee thought, “I guess using their older siblings’ work saying someone else has put in the work. So why not use it”? So it appears that gifted high school students can call upon this neutralization technique alongside other techniques such as appeal to higher loyalties by using a sibling’s or a classmate’s work. Also, the convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense can be used in conjunction with the defense of necessity due to the need for better grades. Perhaps, this neutralization technique could also be coupled with the denial of responsibility because the individual is pressed for time to complete the assignment in question.
To finish the newly identified neutralization techniques, the interview transcripts exposed a possible extension of the denial of crime (Benson, 1985) technique. If not, it may be a standalone neutralization technique. Two statements by an interviewee can be labeled bending the definition technique. When using this neutralization technique, the individual alters the definition of academic dishonesty to suite his or her current needs and situation. This technique can be paralleled to bending the rules in a game in order to benefit the individual or team. In response to if the interviewee could identify any other ways a gifted high school student could justify or rationalize academic dishonesty, one interviewee asserted, “using the definition of cheating and kind of bending it to define what cheating is”. The interviewee was asked if this is a technique that the gifted students uses, the interviewee claimed, “I’ve used and I’ve seen used”. Despite having observed and actually used this technique, the interviewee asserts,

like, you can’t just bend the definition or you shouldn’t be able to just bend it and change it and having an agreed upon standard instead of allowing teachers to bend it, which kind of shows the students that it’s pliable.

Unlike the denial of crime technique, it seems as though the behavior can be academically dishonest in one context or situation, yet in another that behavior is not considered cheating.

Theme Six: Issues Leading to Academic Dishonesty

Several other themes emerged to answer secondary research question three. Theme six spotlights the issues that could lead to cheating among gifted high school
students. These issues which include the different definitions of academic dishonesty, the
inappropriate or ineffective responses to academic dishonesty, and the lack of
confidence/preparedness. The wide variety of definitions of what is academically
dishonesty can be a concern. This issue of individuals having different definitions for
academic dishonesty may be directly linked to bending the definition technique. For
example, an interviewee brought forth one statements that may lead to cheating among
this subpopulation. This individual stated, “yes, and I guess it depends on how you
define cheating. It depends on the type and I guess some would define cheating a little
differently than others”.

Another issue that may lead to cheating is the belief that students, teachers, or
administrators alike do not respond to academic dishonesty in an appropriate or effective
manner. Two interviewees addressed their concern with a laissez-faire approach to
academic dishonesty in their high schools. While discussing the use of an older siblings’
work, one interviewee suggested “I think a teacher might have made a joke or lightly
questioned [the student]. They were never really sent for disciplinary action. I think
cheating isn’t taken as seriously by high school students as it should be”. Likewise, this
interviewee added, “yes, and even in high school, if you do cheat you might get a slap on
the wrist, a couple of days of in-school suspension depending on how much you cheated
on, I guess”. It seems as though this interviewee has become desensitized to not only to
academic dishonesty, but also to the disciplinary actions that come as a result of being
caught cheating. When being suspected of cheating during a test, another interviewee
commented,
I guess they saw me move or something and they didn’t accuse me of cheating, but they joked about it and I did almost confess, but I just kept it to myself and none of the other students in the classroom said anything about it either even though they had heard me speak to the other student.

It is clear from these statements that the response from a teacher or administrator can influence how a student responds to accusations of cheating. These professionals should not give the impression that academic dishonesty will be laughed away or go unquestioned. As a result, teachers and administrators should always respond to possible cheating in a manner that holds students accountable for their behaviors.

The interview transcripts reveal a final issue that could contribute to academic dishonesty. Two interviewees provided statements that show that students can experience a lack of confidence/preparedness in the high school setting. In this situation, the individual’s confidence level related to an academic assignment or assessment is subpar. These individuals may feel as if their academic efforts will be fruitless. This lack of confidence can be caused by a number of reasons that can range from not understanding the content being assessed to not believing the individual can complete an assignment correctly. This experience could be specifically tied to the high-achieving and/or gifted student. For example, this subpopulation may have a standard that they or others have established for themselves. Regardless, an interviewee suggests that students that do not feel confident or prepared may consider cheating. As a result, if these individuals believe that they are not confident in their efforts or not prepared, they may
resort to academically dishonest behavior. To highlight this experience, one interviewee acknowledged,

I think it’s about students just being more confident in what they know and being able to take their knowledge and put it on a test with whatever questions they're asked. What’s helped me is a teacher has gone over okay, there’s going to be this type of question on the test and this type of question on the test. I know that’s kind of going through the test, but it’s not giving the student exactly what is on the test. So I know it makes me a lot more confident when I come in to the test and I think confidence is key when students are thinking about cheating or not. If there’s any type of anxiety or un-sureness in themselves when they're going in and taking a test, that they're more likely to cheat.

Also, another interviewee stated, “for any student, not feeling like you're prepared enough or you're going to do well on a test is some of the main reasons for cheating”. So according to this interviewee, having a lack of confidence/preparedness is a common experience that may lead to academically dishonest behaviors among gifted high school students.

Theme Seven: Classroom Procedures and Instructions to Encourage Academic Integrity

Theme seven emerged to answer secondary research question four. This theme highlights the classroom procedures and instructions that could encourage academic integrity among gifted high school students. It appears that designated group work and
in-class assignments could limit cheating by this subpopulation. For instance, one interviewee claimed at her high school,

  gifted students didn’t cheat as much. Like when it was just a class with like AP or something like that, there was no need because mostly stuff was group work. So I don’t remember any incidents of cheating. We had a lot of projects or in class assignments. We would usually sit in groups. So you could work with your group on your assignments. The only thing that we couldn’t do together was tests and homework and quizzes.

Beyond procedures, instruction that clarifies the expectation for the assignment could encourage academic integrity among gifted high school students. To illustrate this, the same interviewee offers,

  in high school if no one has told you that what you are doing is cheating, it’s okay and I feel like this can be justified, especially by gifted students. Because if you're not taught that it’s cheating, then you think it’s okay to do that and I see that in college too.

  These statements suggest that this subpopulation of student can believe that they are similar to elementary and middle school students when it comes to accountability. Students at the lower grade levels may not be held truly accountable for their academically dishonest behaviors compared to high school students. Yet, at the high school level, students are often expected to know what is considered cheating. However, as the interviewee states, clarification of what is academically dishonest is essential for
student accountability. This interviewee goes on to suggest more reasons why clarity of expectations is important. This student offers,

but if a teacher doesn’t say that you can’t work together, then students will take that as well, we can work. We can look at each other’s answers because sometimes a teacher assumes that the students know that they don’t want them working together, but sometimes it’s not clear

When discussing clear instructions by the teacher, the interviewee provides,

I feel like that’s always best because I guess you can assume well, if the teacher didn’t say anything, let’s work together, but I feel like a teacher should just say that, just what they want and be clear about that.

In response to how to deter cheating among gifted high school students, another interviewee professed,

I don't know that it’s even necessarily a harsher punishment. I think something more about like this is cheating and reinforcing [academic integrity]. Like, you can’t just bend the definition or you shouldn’t be able to just bend it and change it and having an agreed upon standard instead of allowing teachers to bend it, which kind of shows the students that it’s pliable.

The candid statements offered by the interviewees indicate that denial, self-deception, and neutralization of academic dishonesty is prevalent among gifted high school students. Furthermore, the interview transcripts revealed three novel neutralization techniques that can be used by these students. The transcripts also offer
issues that could lead to cheating and instructions and procedures that could encourage academic integrity among this subpopulation of students.

The qualitative interviews were designed to address all research questions. The primary research question asks, how can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? These interviews reveal that gifted high school students have the ability to publicly deny that they were cheating. Further, one interviewee claimed that public denial of cheating is common among this subpopulation. The transcripts also reveal that gifted high school students may experience self-deception of cheating to avoid guilt.

Secondary question one asks, what previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? Ultimately, gifted high school students can justify or rationalize academic dishonesty using all five neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957) according to the interview transcripts. Too, this subpopulation can justify or rationalize academic dishonesty using all previously identified extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Minor, 1981) of the neutralization theory except for the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974) according to the qualitative data.

Secondary question two asks, if there are any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used by undergraduates to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior as gifted high school students, what are these techniques? The interviews reveal that gifted high school students can use three previously unidentified neutralization techniques to rationalize or justify academic dishonesty. These novel
neutralization techniques include the *they were, not me defense*, the convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense, and the bending the definition technique.

Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The quantitative data analysis reveals that former gifted high school students can call upon any of the neutralization techniques identified by Sykes and Matza (1957), Klockars, (1974), and Minor (1981) in a high school setting. Virtually all neutralization statements received an agree response from the participants. These findings assist in answering the primary research question and secondary question one. Apparently, gifted high school students can employ a wide range of neutralization techniques to rationalize or justify their or another student’s academically dishonest behavior. Furthermore, the quantitative findings help to answer secondary question one by realizing that virtually all neutralization techniques suggested by Sykes and Matza (1957), Klockars (1974), and Minor (1981) or Cromwell & Thurman (2003) can be summoned by members of this subpopulation.

Moreover, the five neutralization statements with the highest percentage of agree/strongly agree responses were statement F with 33.33%, statement O with 42.06%, statement I with 47.62%, statement K with 49.21%, and statement S with 53.97%. These statements correspond to the neutralization techniques of condemnation of the condemning, denial of responsibility, appeal to higher loyalties, and denial of victim respectfully. The five neutralization statements with the lowest percentage of agree/strongly agree responses were statement D with 3.17%, statement H with 3.97%, statement E with 5.56%, statement B with 6.35%, and statement R with 9.52%. These statements correspond to the neutralization techniques of denial of responsibility,
condemnation of the condemner, denial of injury, defense of necessity, and denial of responsibility respectfully.

As mentioned prior, there are discrepancies between the quantitative findings. Due to the wide range of responses, the findings suggest that gifted high school students are more likely to use the appeal to higher loyalty technique when parents are involved and less likely to use this technique when classmates are involved. Similarly, findings suggest that gifted high school students are less likely to use the condemnation of the condemner technique when the teacher’s grading policies are concerned and more likely to use this technique when cheating by certain groups is tolerated. Likewise, the responses suggest that gifted high school students are less likely to use the denial of responsibility technique when the teacher is involved and more likely to use this technique when failing a course is a concern. Despite these discrepancies, the findings suggest that gifted high school students can potentially employ all of the neutralization techniques offered by Klockar (1974), Minor (1981), and Sykes and Matza (1957).

The qualitative findings have offered much in the way of addressing neutralization tendencies by former gifted high school students when encountering academic dishonesty in a high school setting. To address the primary research question, the interview transcripts support the notion that gifted high school students can not only deny that they or another student was cheating, but it seems that gifted high school can even fall victim to self-deception when encountering academic dishonesty.

Like the quantitative data, the qualitative findings answer secondary research question one by revealing that former gifted high school students can call upon most of
the established neutralization techniques. Furthermore, the interview transcripts supported most of the later neutralization techniques (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981). Despite this, the qualitative data did not show support for the gifted high school student’s use of the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974) technique when encountering academic dishonesty. Regardless, this is not to say that this neutralization technique is foreign to this subpopulation. The quantitative data revealed that some respondents agreed with the corresponding statement for the metaphor of the ledger.

To address secondary research question two, the qualitative findings support the employment of up to three more neutralization techniques when justifying academic dishonesty. These novel techniques include the *they were, not me defense*, the convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense, and the bending the definition technique.

Themes emerged to address secondary questions three and four. The first of these themes focuses on issues that could lead to academic dishonesty among gifted high school students. These issues include the variations of the cheating definitions, the inappropriate or ineffective manners that students, teachers, and administrators respond to academic dishonesty, and experiencing a lack of confidence/preparedness. The second theme identifies possible classroom procedures and instructions that could encourage academic integrity among this subpopulation. The procedures that could encourage academic integrity include assigning designated group work and having in-class assignments. The instructions that could foster academic integrity include clarifying the expectations related to assignments and assessments.
Conclusions of Findings

As discussed earlier, this investigation employed a mixed methods design. When using this research design, Creswell (2014) asserts, an “interpretation follows the form of first reporting the quantitative, first-phase results and then the qualitative, second phase results…then employs a third form of interpretation: how the qualitative findings help to explain the quantitative results” (p. 225). As a result, it is important to summarize and provide an interpretation of the quantitative findings. At least one respondent agreed with each neutralization statement. As a result, it appears that undergraduates, former gifted high school students, can summon all of these neutralization techniques in a high school setting. This discovery supports research conducted by Taylor et al. (2002) and Geddes (2011). Yet, no respondent strongly agrees with statements A, B, and D. These statements correlate to the neutralization techniques of appeal to higher loyalties, defense of necessity, and denial of responsibility. This may reveal that gifted high school students may be less likely to use some neutralization techniques. To further support this notion, almost 90% of respondents disagree/strongly disagreed with statement D using the denial of responsibility technique.

It also seems that a fair number of respondents were neutral when responding to some neutralization statements. For instance, at least 7% of respondents were neutral when responding to each statement. Furthermore, almost 21% of respondents were neutral when responding to statement F using the condemnation of the condemner technique. To this, one may conclude that situational ethics (Granitz & Loewy, 2007) may come in to play when deciding to cheat in an academic setting. For example, a
gifted high school student that is originally neutral could agree or disagree with a neutralization statement if the teacher was seen as unfair or providing poor instruction.

Yet, it appears that gifted high school students may be more likely to summon some neutralization techniques over others. For example, around 50% of respondents agree/strongly agree with statements I, K, and S. These statement correlate with the neutralization techniques of condemnation of the condemner, appeal to higher loyalties, and denial of victim. Moreover, over 20% of respondents agree/strongly agree with a total of six neutralization statements. Again, this supports the notion that gifted high school students may use some neutralization techniques over others.

Continuing with a mixed methods design, it is crucial to summarize and provide an interpretation for the qualitative findings. The interviews reveal that the former gifted high school student can publicly deny that he or she was cheating to avoid punishment. For example, in response to the question if a former gifted high school students would deny cheating in high school, one interviewee offered that “it depends on how I was confronted. If I was confronted more aggressively, like serious threats like you're going to fail this class, I’d probably try to deny it”. Likewise, gifted high school students can experience self-deception when cheating. For instance, an interviewee asserted “it doesn’t bother me because I’m not doing it. I’m not the one that’s actually cheating, even though me helping someone else is cheating. It doesn’t really feel like cheating in the moment. It just feels like you're helping someone out”. These findings support the notion of denial offered by Jones (1908) and Anna Freud (1966/1992). It appears that
these former gifted high school students have the ability to self-deceive in order to rationalize academic dishonesty in a high school setting.

The interview transcripts also reveal that gifted high school students could summon all five of the original neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957). This finding is interesting on several levels. First, these neutralization techniques were offered for criminal behavior performed by juveniles, yet it seems that these techniques apply to academic dishonesty as well (Curasi, 2013; Diekhoff et al., 1996; Granitz & Loewy, 2007; Haines et al., 1986; LaBeff et al., 1990; McCabe, 1992; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009; Taylor et al., 2002; Zito & McQuillian, 2011). Second, the fact that these neutralization techniques were first presented some 60 years ago is surprising. These neutralization techniques have stood the test of time and much research.

The qualitative findings also reveal that gifted high school students could use all of the later neutralization techniques except the metaphor of the ledger. These later neutralization techniques include denial of criminal intent, defense of necessity/competition, justification by comparison, denial of crime, everybody does it/diffusion of guilt (Benson, 1985), denial of the justice or necessity of the law, claim of entitlement (Coleman, 2006), justification by comparison, postponement (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003), and the defense of necessity (Minor, 1981). The quantitative findings reveal that this subpopulation could use the metaphor of the ledger technique. However, the qualitative findings in this study do not support the use of this technique. Regardless,
the gifted high school student has many other neutralization techniques to use according to the findings.

Furthermore, the interview transcripts offer three previously unidentified neutralization techniques that could be summoned by gifted high school students. These neutralization techniques include the *they were, not me defense*, convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense, and bending the definition. In addition to the 13 established neutralization techniques, not counting the absent technique of the metaphor of the ledger, gifted high school students have three other avenues that allow them to rationalize or justify academic dishonesty. This begs the question, how many other neutralization techniques that have or could be used by this subpopulation are still undiscovered in the literature?

The interview transcripts also provide that alternate definitions and inappropriate responses for academic dishonesty can lead to cheating among gifted high school students. One interviewee claims that “yes, and I guess it depends on how you define cheating. It depends on the type and I guess some would define cheating a little differently than others”. So, it appears that the gifted high school student can potentially cheat because of his or her own definitions of academic dishonesty. Further, how teachers and administrators respond to academic dishonesty can influence the prevalence of cheating. While discussing the use of an older siblings’ work, one interviewee suggested “I think a teacher might have made a joke or lightly questioned. They were never really sent for disciplinary action. I think cheating isn’t taken as seriously by high
school students as it should be”. The laissez-faire approach as revealed earlier may encourage this subpopulation to cheat.

Lastly, the qualitative findings offer procedures and instruction that could deter academic dishonesty and promote academic integrity. One interviewee suggested that group work and in-class assignments could deter some forms of academic dishonesty. Another interviewee offered that clarifying expectations and instructions related to assignments and assessments could also limit academic dishonesty.

A third and final interpretation is necessary within this mixed methods study. In this case, the qualitative results expands upon the quantitative results. The quantitative results indicated that gifted high school students could use the all of the original neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957) and two extensions offered by Klockars (1974) and Minor (1981). However, the qualitative investigation revealed that gifted high school students could use more than seven neutralization techniques offered in the quantitative instrument, the online survey. This knowledge that gifted high school students could potentially use 19 neutralization techniques to rationalize cheating would have never been revealed with the quantitative instrument alone. With that being said, the qualitative interviews expanded upon the quantitative results by revealing that gifted high school students could use a dozen more neutralization technique to justify cheating. The qualitative results also include three novel neutralization techniques that have not been discussed in the literature. Despite the limited number of neutralization techniques identified within the online survey, the quantitative results reveal that gifted high school students can potentially summon the metaphor of the ledger technique to
rationalize academic dishonesty. The qualitative interviews did not reveal this possibility. As it appears, the quantitative results and the qualitative results complemented one another to uncover a wide range of neutralization techniques that might be used by the gifted high school student when encountering academic dishonesty. The following chapter will further discuss the implications of the findings, the connection to curriculum and instruction, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following research questions have guided this investigation. Primary question: How can an undergraduate student justify or rationalize his or her or another student’s academically dishonest behavior as a gifted high school student? Secondary questions: 1. What previously identified neutralization techniques do undergraduate students say they used or observed in relation to cheating among gifted high school students? 2. If there are any previously unidentified neutralization techniques used by undergraduates to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior as gifted high school students, what are these techniques? 3. What aspects of school or classroom culture do former gifted high school students say contribute to academic dishonesty? 4. How do former gifted high school students say teachers and schools can encourage academic integrity?

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

This mixed-methods study was performed to understand the use of denial and neutralization techniques by former gifted high school students to rationalize or justify academic dishonesty. To answer the primary research question, the qualitative findings reveal that gifted high school students can deny that they were cheating to avoid a punishment related to their academically dishonest behavior. It gives the impression that denial is employed to ultimately avoid a punishment.
However, do these individuals use denial of academic dishonesty to also avoid public guilt? Likewise, according to the qualitative data, gifted high school students can also experience self-deception related to academic dishonesty. These individuals can experience self-deception when helping another cheat. Yet just a few years later, these individuals can acknowledge that their behaviors were academically dishonest. It is crucial to note that these individuals openly acknowledge that their behaviors were cheating in retrospect, but not during the actual behavior. It also appears that this self-deception can be accompanied by other neutralization techniques such as appeal to high loyalties.

To answer secondary research question one, the qualitative and quantitative findings show that former gifted high school students have neutralizing tendencies and can summon all of the neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957). This is unique for several reasons. These neutralization techniques were developed over half a century ago within the context of criminal justice and juvenile delinquency. Regardless, these neutralization techniques have transcended time and context. The neutralization theory has stood the test of time and is transferable to academic dishonesty. Furthermore, it is interesting how gifted high school students are potentially more likely to summon a neutralization technique in one situation, yet they are less likely to summon the same neutralization technique in a similar situation. Although, it appears that gifted high school students may gravitate towards some neutralization technique over others, it is astonishing how this subpopulation could turn to these techniques in order to accept academically dishonest behavior.
Looking further at secondary research question one, the quantitative and qualitative findings support the claim that gifted high school students can use most, if not all, of the neutralization techniques offered by Benson (1985), Coleman (2006), Cromwell & Thurman (2003), and Minor (1981) to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior. The only neutralization technique that was not addressed by the interviewees was the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974). This is not to say that this subpopulation will not or does not summon this neutralization technique when rationalizing or justifying academic dishonesty. On the contrary, the quantitative data revealed the potential use of the metaphor of the ledger. The discovery of the gifted high school student’s ability to use a wide range of neutralization techniques for academic dishonesty should alarm educators, administrators, parents, higher education, and other stakeholders.

Focusing on secondary research question two, the qualitative data revealed that gifted high schools students could summon three previously unidentified neutralization techniques when accepting academic dishonesty. Again, these novel neutralization techniques include the they were, not me defense, convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense, and bending the definition. For the they were, not me defense, these individuals can claim they were an innocent bystander when the alleged academic dishonesty occurred. However, the other persons in question are actually cheating. This could be paralleled to the getaway driver claiming that he or she was not involved in the bank robbery. Equally, the driver would believe he or she only drove the true criminals to and
from the bank. The individual believes that he or she was just assisting the actual cheater and is ultimately not cheating.

Further, the convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense can be summoned when the individual comes across preexisting information or material. This individual may or may not have sought out this information. Regardless, the individual reduces the guilt of cheating by claiming that the information or material is conveniently available and/or he or she should not exert more effort to produce similar information or material. This convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense can occur when individuals copy homework, essays, projects, answers on a quiz or test, or any other material and claiming it as their own. Plagiarism appears to be a common result of this neutralization technique.

Finally, bending the definition occurs when the individual adjusts the definition of cheating to allow the individual an advantage and to feel as though he or she did no wrong. As mentioned in chapter four, this technique is similar to how competitors can bend the rules in a game to benefit themselves. However, in this case, the individual redefines his or her definition of cheating to allow a guilt-free mind when performing the academically dishonest behavior.

To address secondary question three, there are issues that could contribute to a culture of academic dishonesty. The first issue dealt with the different definitions of cheating. The wide variety of definitions offered by a teacher, student, administrator, and even a parent could lead to great confusion when deciding what truly constitutes academic dishonesty. This uncertainty can seem to only foster a culture of cheating due
to these individuals claiming they were not cheating based on another definition.

Another issue that could contribute to a culture of academic dishonesty is how students, teachers, or administrators do not respond to academic dishonesty in an appropriate or effective manner. According to the interview transcripts, both students and school staff appear to be lackadaisical in their responses to academic dishonesty. From reading the commentary, some students appear to be desensitized when performing or watching academically dishonest behavior. Alike, the interviewees claim that teachers and administrators do not always respond to cheating in the most effective manner.

A final issue that could contribute to a culture of cheating is experiencing a lack of confidence/preparedness. A lack of confidence/preparedness could be experienced when an individual goes into an assignment or assessment with limited to no confidence due to his or her perceived level of preparedness or ability. This may have a connection to a fixed mind-set versus or growth mind-set of the individual (Dweck, 2012). When discussing if there were any new reasons that this subpopulation would justify cheating, the researcher asked, “so as the confidence level goes down going into some assignment or assessment, the possibility of cheating can go up”? One interviewee agreed, “oh, yes, yes”. So, it seems that an inverse relationship can exist between the level of confidence and/or preparedness and likelihood of academic dishonesty. As a result, the gifted high school student may be prone to academic dishonesty if he or she has an inadequate level of confidence and/or preparedness.

On the contrary, to address secondary question four, there are classroom procedures and instructions that could encourage academic integrity among gifted high
school students. The interviewees suggest that group work, in-class assignments, and clarifying instructions can help eliminate the occurrence of academic dishonesty. Collaboration during group work could eliminate the many forms of cheating, but not all forms. Likewise, sufficient time for in-class assignments could prevent issues of not having enough time at home due to other obligations. Further, clarifying instructions for assignments or assessments could also realign the student’s mind in an attempt to promote academic integrity.

In conclusion, the following is a comprehensive list of the findings. 1. The qualitative findings reveal that gifted high school students can deny that they were cheating to avoid a punishment or sanction related to their academically dishonest behavior. 2. The qualitative findings reveal that gifted high school students can experience self-deception related to academic dishonesty. 3. The qualitative and quantitative findings show that gifted high school students have neutralizing tendencies and can summon all of the neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957). 4. The quantitative and qualitative findings support the claim that gifted high school students can utilize most, if not all, of the neutralization techniques offered by Benson (1985), Coleman (2006), Cromwell & Thurman (2003), (Klockar, 1974, and Minor (1981) to rationalize their academically dishonest behavior. 5. The qualitative data revealed that gifted high schools students could summon three previously unidentified neutralization techniques when encountering academic dishonesty. These novel neutralization techniques include the *they were, not me defense*, convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel defense, and bending the definition. 6. The qualitative data revealed
that there could be issues that could contribute to a culture of academic dishonesty. These issues include the use of different definitions, the inappropriate responses by students, teachers, and administrators, and experiencing a lack of confidence/preparedness in the school setting. 7. The qualitative findings suggests that there are classroom procedures and instructions that could encourage academic integrity among gifted high school students. These classroom procedures and instructions include group work, in-class assignments, and clarifying instructions.

This investigation stands out for several reasons. These findings further support the notion that gifted or advanced high school students can rationalize or neutralize their academically dishonest behavior (Geddes, 2011; Taylor et al., 2002). Also, these findings support the notion that gifted or advanced high school students use neutralization techniques identified by Sykes and Matza (1957) (Taylor et al., 2002). Yet, this appears to be the first investigation to explicitly reveal that gifted high students can use neutralization techniques identified by Benson (1985), Coleman (2006), Cromwell & Thurman (2003), Klockar, (1974); and Minor (1981). Further, this investigation is the first investigation to discover novel neutralization techniques for academic dishonesty from the perspective of former gifted high school students. The research findings suggest that the gifted high school student can use up to 19 known neutralization techniques to rationalize or neutralize academic dishonesty. Equally, this investigation appears to be the first investigation to discover that gifted high school students have the ability to publicly deny their academically dishonest behaviors. The qualitative findings also show
that the gifted high school student can experience self-deception when performing academically dishonest behavior.

The 19 known neutralization techniques were clustered together based on overarching themes of neutralization. These clusters include denial, focusing on others, self-serving, and good person neutralizations. The neutralization clusters along with neutralization techniques, sample neutralization statements, and percentages and frequencies of responses are provided (see Table 8). A graphic of the neutral clusters and the corresponding neutralization techniques is provided (see Figure 8). This graphic showcases that gifted high school students have the ability to use all of these neutralization technique when encountering cheating. Furthermore, this graphic highlights the various number of neutralization techniques that correspond to the four neutralization clusters. As the graphic reveals, the gifted high school student has more avenues to use a form of denial when he or she neutralizes cheating. There are eight forms of denial that could be summoned by these individuals.
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<td>Denial</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>“If I was confronted more aggressively, like serious threats like you're going to fail this class, I'd probably try to deny it”.</td>
<td>Four Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Deception</td>
<td>“Until now until I thought about sharing the homework being cheating, I totally didn’t even think of it as cheating at all… but now that I think about it, it is cheating.”</td>
<td>Four Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of Responsibility</td>
<td>In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.</td>
<td>3.17% to 42.06% Four Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of Victim</td>
<td>In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.</td>
<td>16.13% to 53.96% One Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of Injury</td>
<td>In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.</td>
<td>5.55% Two Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of Crime</td>
<td>“I don’t think anyone assumes that they’re doing something wrong. So, they try to rationalize what they do… some people might not even view it as cheating because they’ve rationalized it so much”.</td>
<td>Five Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of Criminal Intent</td>
<td>“But if a gifted student did cheat it would be one of these or the not knowing that it was cheating”.</td>
<td>Two Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>Neutralization Techniques</td>
<td>Sample Neutralization Statements</td>
<td>Frequencies or Percentages of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of the</td>
<td>“So if I choose to [cheat], then why should anyone care”?</td>
<td>One Statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on Others</td>
<td>Denial of the Justice or Necessity of the Law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to Higher Loyalty</td>
<td>In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.</td>
<td>7.14% to 49.20% Five statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemnation of the Condemner</td>
<td>In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.</td>
<td>3.96% to 47.61% Two Statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody Does It/Diffusion of Guilt</td>
<td>“So one thing that I don’t see on here is everyone cheated so I thought it was okay or everybody else was doing it”.</td>
<td>One Statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They Were, Not Me Defense</td>
<td>“It doesn’t bother me because I’m not doing it. I’m not the one that’s actually cheating, even though me helping someone else is cheating”.</td>
<td>Four Statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor of the Ledger</td>
<td>In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim of Entitlement</td>
<td>“I think a lot of why gifted high school students cheat or help others cheat is because a lot of the times they're told that they're special”.</td>
<td>Four Statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification by Comparison</td>
<td>“Oh, definitely. Cheating on smaller assignments, Googling the answers to homework that you still turn in, but it’s not cheating because it’s not really a test”.</td>
<td>Four Statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>Neutralization Techniques</td>
<td>Sample Neutralization Statements</td>
<td>Frequencies or Percentages of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Serving</td>
<td>Postponement</td>
<td>When observing academic dishonesty: “I don't know. I just kind of ignore it”.</td>
<td>One Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Convenience/Don’t Reinvent the Wheel Defense</td>
<td>“I guess using their older siblings’ work saying someone else has put in the work. So why not use it”?</td>
<td>Four Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bending the Definition</td>
<td>“Using the definition of cheating and kind of bending it to define what cheating is….I’ve used and I’ve seen used”</td>
<td>Three Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defense of Necessity/Competition</td>
<td>In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.</td>
<td>6.35% to 27.78% Six Statements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These neutralizations include denial, self-deception, denial of responsibility, denial of victim, denial of injury, denial of crime, denial of criminal intent, and denial of justice/necessity of the law. These neutralization techniques of denial allow the individual to deny or refuse to accept an aspect of reality. This denial could be both public and private. Regardless, the individual denies some aspect of reality when encountering cheating. As a result, the individual is believed to reduce guilt or anxiety involved in cheating.

Following the denial cluster, the focusing on others and the self-serving cluster have the second most neutralization techniques. Each of these clusters contains four neutralization techniques. The focusing on others cluster consists of appeal to higher loyalty, condemnation of the condemner, everybody does it/diffusion of guilt, and *they were, not me* defense. These neutralizations allow the individual to shift the focus onto another person to attempt to reduce the guilt connected with cheating.

Next, the self-serving cluster consists of defense of necessity/competition, postponement, convenience/don’t reinvent the wheel, and bending the definition. These neutralizations allow the individual to perceive one’s behavior or cognition as advantageous. These beneficial thought patterns provide an avenue for the individual to reduce or eliminate guilt connected with cheating. The individual may come to believe that the benefit of performing the behavior or having the thought pattern outweighs the guilt or anxiety connected to cheating.

Lastly, the good person cluster has three neutralization techniques. These neutralizations include metaphor of the ledger, justification by comparison, and claim of
entitlement. These techniques allow the individual to focus on the notion that he or she retains his or her good character despite having performed an academically dishonest behavior. In turn, the guilt or shame connected with cheating is reduced due to the preservation of the individual’s positive self-image.
Figure 8
Image of Neutralization Clusters for Gifted High School Students
In summary, there are 19 neutralization techniques that can be used by the gifted high school student. Equally, these techniques can be grouped into four clusters that include denial, focusing on others, self-serving, and good person.

Although the quantitative and qualitative elements of this investigation revealed that respondents show more agreement with some neutralization techniques, it appears that the gifted high school student has more choices within the denial cluster. In fact, these individuals have twice as many options compared to any other cluster. Furthermore, the quantitative findings reveal that a denial neutralization received the highest percentages of agree/strongly agree responses. Yet, the other clusters consist of a total of 11 other neutralization techniques from which the individual can choose. Likewise, almost half of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed with two neutralization statements that are found in the focus on others cluster. With this knowledge, it is difficult to conclude which cluster the gifted individual will most likely turn to when attempting to neutralize academic dishonesty. Regardless, these individuals have a wide range of neutralization techniques from which to choose.

The ability of gifted high school students to summon so many neutralization techniques to avoid the guilt of cheating is troubling. To add to this disturbing notion, for these gifted individuals “earning the top score on every test is routine, as is acing papers written a fraction of the time that classmates spent on theirs. After a while, a student’s identity can become intertwined with being the standout” (Flick, 2012, para. 4). However, it seems that if something questions an individual’s gifted or standout status he or she may turn to cheating to overcome this perceived deficit. In doing so, these
students may call upon neutralization techniques, deny their cheating, or experience self-deception in order to get those top scores that they are expecting.

However, these findings do not conclude that all gifted high school students cheat regardless of having neutralization tendencies. When recruiting participants via an email invitation, one respondent replied with, “no I do not wish to participate, nor do I appreciate being accused of cheating”. Believing that this undergraduate self-identifies as a former gifted/talented/exceptional high school student as his response indicates, several questions will come to mind. Could this undergraduate be an honest student who never knowingly cheated while in high school? Or could this undergraduate be experiencing denial and/or self-deception when claiming that he did not cheat? This study allows stakeholders to understand that some gifted high school students can utilize neutralization techniques or experience denial or self-denial. However, other gifted high school students may not have these tendencies when encountering academic dishonesty. Regardless, the findings do reveal that gifted high school students can have neutralization tendencies and may experience denial and self-deception when encountering academic dishonesty.

Why do gifted individuals have a tendency to neutralize their academic dishonesty? The answer can center on the gifted nature of the individual and the culture of the gifted. As discussed before, these gifted individuals are often seen as not needing to cheat because of the myth that only low-performing individuals cheat (Challenge Success, 2012). Despite this myth, investigations, including this present study, have revealed that gifted and high-achieving high school students can quite easily neutralize
their academically dishonest behavior (Geddes, 2011; Taylor et al., 2001). These individuals are seen “as capable, motivated learners who think independently and have little reason to plagiarize” (Abilock, 2009, p. 12-13). Nevertheless, these investigations are calling their integrity into question. As a result, neutralizing their cheating behavior to maintain their perceived giftedness may be a common occurrence.

Equally, scholarship has shown that there is a wide-range of gifted individuals. For example, Betts and Neihart (1988) offers that there are as many as six profiles for the gifted individual. One of those profiles is labeled the “The Successful”. The authors argue that as much as 90% of identified gifted individuals fall into this category. This type of gifted individual tends to learn well and perform well on achievement tests. Despite this, these individuals “often become bored with school and learn to use the system in order to get by with as little effort as possible” (Betts & Neihart, 1988, p. 2). Perhaps this is another one of the factors leading to neutralizing tendencies among gifted high school students. The perceived boredom and lack of motivation may lead this type of gifted individual to rationalize cheating. Cheating and neutralizing their cheating is an obvious method for intellectually gifted students to work the system to their advantage. These individuals may simply “go through the motions of schooling” (Betts & Neihart, 1988, p. 2) with no regard to integrity.

Furthermore, Abilock (2009) discusses a cheating culture that is prevalent among gifted students. This cheating culture among the gifted has led to a distorted sense of purpose in an academic setting. In this culture, “success trumps methods, some students come to believe that the odds are in their favor and that getting caught is only a
momentary downside” (Abilock, 2009, p. 13). Similar to nursing programs, “dishonest actions have almost become the norm, rather than the exception, as they represent the necessary price to pay for survival in a high stakes environment” (DiBartolo & Walsh, 2010, p. 543). This gifted cheating culture helps to explain the gifted high school student’s tendencies to use any or all of the discussed neutralization techniques when encountering cheating.

Beyond the gifted individual and the shared culture, other constant pressures may also promote cheating and neutralization among this population. These pressures can include a quest for perfectionism (Neumeister, Williams, & Cross, 2007), GPA concerns, competition for college admissions, too many tests in a day, a heavy workload (Geddes, 2010), parental pressures, and peer and teacher pressures (Taylor et al., 2001). With all of these factors bombarding gifted high school students, it is no wonder that these students can have neutralizing tendencies for academic dishonesty.

This situation is unfortunate. The gifted individual has much to offer society in the way of intellect and creativity. However, these individuals often find themselves in situations where cheating and neutralizing is common, easy, and seen as necessary. As a result, gifted students may not learn essential skills and reach their full potential when cheating is employed. Moreover, this lack of integrity may follow them into other aspects of their life. This lack of ethical concern could spill over into their professions, finances, and interpersonal relationships. In other words, neutralization of unethical behaviors may not be limited to the high school classroom.
These highly intellectual and creative individuals often have the abilities to perform well or even excel in the classroom. Despite these abilities, these students are often pulled in different directions. For example, many of these students are taking six or seven rigorous and time-consuming courses. In fact, a fair number are taking college-level courses while attending the traditional high school. Couple these factors with the individual’s active participation in sports, clubs, or other organization on a weekly basis and this results in a full schedule for the gifted high school student.

Due to these concerns, the education system and society should reconsider how the gifted student should be educated. Considering the often busy schedule of this subpopulation, these students should be provided with support to avoid falling into the cheating and neutralizing culture that appears to be well established (Abilock, 2009: Geddes, 2011; Taylor, et al., 2002). Along with time management support, these students should be aware of the numerous neutralization techniques that could cloud their judgement and the cheating behaviors that can follow. Ultimately, the education system should attempt to counteract neutralization tendencies and academic dishonesty among this population. An obvious avenue to achieve this goal is to tailor curriculum and instruction to promote integrity in academia and beyond.

Connection to Curriculum and Instruction

The revealed experience of denial and self-deception of academic dishonesty and the other neutralization techniques allows the gifted high school students to cheat with little to no guilt. Due to this alarming notion, action should be taken to deter cheating in the way of curriculum and instruction. Ultimately, curriculum and instruction should be
shaped to promote a culture of academic integrity among these students. The following will discuss curriculum and instruction that could foster academic integrity among gifted and non-gifted high school students.

Curriculum and Instruction for Academic Integrity in High School

The following section provides efforts to promote academic integrity in high school through instructional and curricular efforts. First, Wangaard and Stephens (2011) discuss the various challenges that a high school faces when addressing and promoting academic integrity. Within their discussion, the authors highlight their three year study on academic integrity and motivation. This study reveals that 95% of high school students reported that they performed academic cheating at least once within the last academic year. To make matters worse, 57% of these same high school students agreed that cheating is morally wrong. These findings support the concept that many students acknowledge that cheating is wrong, but still cheat from time to time. Further, this may explain why gifted high school students may choose to publicly and/or privately deny that they were cheating as this current study has revealed.

Likewise, 44% of high school students claimed to observe cheating on exams every week and 82% claimed to observe cheating on homework every week. Yet, only 12% of these high school students claimed to observe their classmate being caught cheating during any week. The authors suggest that the failure to enforce academic integrity within the school may be a “reason why only 11% of students in our study expressed support for their schools’ academic integrity policies” (Wangaard & Stephens, 2011, p. 1). The qualitative findings in the present study support this notion of a half-
hearted effort to respond appropriately to cheating. Despite the lack of support for their schools’ academic integrity policies, the most common theme suggested by students was a desire for adults to take more meaningful steps to reduce cheating. Numerous students argued that schools should “do more to create a culture of academic integrity” (Wangaard & Stephens, 2011, p. 1) whether by providing more effective instruction or by stricter enforcement of their schools’ academic integrity policies. Again, the qualitative findings in theme seven of the present study supports this notion of a half-hearted effort by teachers and administrators to respond appropriately to cheating. As a result, teachers and administrators should adhere to strict enforcement of their schools’ academic integrity policies.

Supported by research, Wangaard and Stephens (2011) assert that academic dishonesty can be significantly reduced in high schools that have nurtured a culture of academic integrity. The authors suggest that this culture of academic integrity can be promoted by honor codes, integrity committees, focusing on values of trust, responsibility, and fairness. Equally, academic dishonesty can be reduced through instruction, curriculum, and assessments that emphasize mastery.

Furthermore, but perhaps most connected with curriculum and instruction, teachers can foster academic integrity by making appropriate “pedagogical and curricular connections” (Wangaard & Stephens, 2011, p. 2). These teachers can promote academic integrity by including aspects of integrity in moral discussions, course syllabi, classroom expectations, and classroom procedures. It is argued that developing a schoolwide focus on academic integrity is important. Yet, it is essential for the teacher in the classroom to
promote integrity among his or her students in a variety of ways. The present study reveals that gifted high school students can experience denial, self-deception, and a variety of other neutralization techniques when encountering academic dishonesty. As a result, finding resources on academic integrity at the high school level would be beneficial in order to prevent academic dishonesty and promote academic integrity.

As theme six of this present study reveals that teachers and/or administrators may not response correctly or accordingly when a student is discovered cheating. With that theme in mind, Cizek (2003) provides another useful instructional resource to address academic dishonesty for educators, principals, and others in the K-12 setting. Perhaps most connected with theme six, the text discusses such topics as problems related to ignoring cheating, the difficulties of responding to cheating, and strategies for responding to cheating.

Instruction for Academic Integrity in High School for the Gifted

There appears to be limited resources on educating the gifted about academic dishonesty. This is unfortunate considering the present study’s findings concludes that gifted high school students can experience various rationalization techniques when encountering academic dishonesty. Regardless, two resources within the literature were found to address this concern. Although not explicitly focusing on the high school level, Abilock (2009) offers one of the few resources that explicitly provides strategies to foster academic integrity in order to avoid plagiarism among gifted students. One way to combat cheating among gifted students “is to avoid assignments that lack critical thinking and inquiry learning” (Abilock, 2009, p. 13). Gifted students may respond with little
effort, limited thinking, and plagiarism if the task is superficial. Another approach teachers of the gifted can use to limit cheating is by providing explicit instruction and multiple experiences that allow the student to address notions of paraphrasing and attribution. Providing instruction and “scaffolded practice with frequent feedback” (Abilock, 2009, p. 13) when completing a research paper can also deter plagiarism among this subpopulation. Further, teachers of the gifted should educate the students on correct citations to avoid pitfalls when citing one’s sources. This type of instruction could help to clarify the expectation which was a topic within theme six.

Other strategies to encourage academic integrity include developing conversations with students about creating a school honor code, openly discuss academic challenges, provide choice within assignments, and focus on mastery goals (Abilock, 2009). Likewise, teachers can model academic integrity by citing the educator if a teacher adapts a handout. When a parent assists a student with an assignment, that parent or student is advised to recognize this fact in a written statement. This modeling of academic honesty can encourage the students to follow suit. Regrettably, this resource does not address strategies or instructions that explicitly address the various neutralization techniques. The present study’s findings support the need to include instruction on the numerous neutralization techniques that could be used by gifted high school students.

Geddes (2011), offering another resource that directly addresses cheating among gifted students, provides a study on the frequency and motivations for academic dishonesty among this population. The author asserts that
research on the prevalence and causes of cheating among gifted and high-achieving learners is very limited, but the existing literature suggest that educators of these students are witnessing a rise in academic dishonesty among the gifted community, necessitating a discourse concerning guiding the gifted to do honest work (Geddes, 2011, p. 52).

Despite the limited research, this study revealed that academic dishonesty among gifted students was predominant. Furthermore, frequent motivations for cheating include peer pressure, GPA pressure, and dealing with a heavy workload. Not surprisingly, these motivations align with the neutralization techniques offered by Sykes and Matza (1957) and the extensions (Benson, 1985; Coleman, 2006; Cromwell & Thurman, 2003; Klockars, 1974; Minor, 1981).

Geddes (2011) suggests several strategies to deter cheating among this student population. To limit the cheating related to homework, teachers could use web-based services that assign unique assignments to students. In order to handle the pressure of peer influence on cheating on exams, it is recommended that teachers have multiple versions of an exam and be attentive during these assessments. Considering the present study, this strategy could help to limit the use of the appeal to higher loyalties and the *they were, not me* defense among this subpopulation. To further deter cheating on assessments, Geddes (2011) suggested that teacher should use portfolio or performance assessments when appropriate. In order to address the overwhelming GPA pressure and workload, the author offers that counseling should be provided for these students and their parents to develop a balanced academic schedule to help avoid situations that could
lead to academic dishonesty. This strategy could assist in curbing the use of the defense of necessity associated with workload and GPA pressures that are often experienced by gifted high school students. The current study’s findings can clearly support the need to educate the gifted community on the various neutralization techniques that are potentially used when justifying academic dishonesty. Further, curricular and instructional resources must be created to complement the limited resources that address the current study’s findings.

Unfortunately, when surveying the instructional and curricular resources for teaching the gifted/talented/exceptional individual, little to no discussion on academic integrity is offered among the literature. When surveying the chapter titles in a number of texts on educating the gifted and talented that covered a wide range of years (Barbe, 1965; Barbe & Renzulli, 1975; Borland, 2003; Burt, 1974; Clark, 1988; Colangelo & Davis, 2003; Dai, 2010; Davis & Rimm, 1985; Eby & Smutny, 1990; Fliegler, 1961 Gallagher, 1964; Gilman, 2008; Gowan, Demos, & Kokaska, 1972; Hildreth, Brumbaugh, & Wilson, 1952; Howley, Howley, & Pendarvis, 1995; Lindsey, 1980; Maker, 1982; Osburn & Rohan, 1931; Perrone & Male, 1981; Pringle, 1970; Rogers, 2002; Ruf, 2005; Torrance & Sisk, 1997; VanTassel-Baska, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, Cross, Olenchak, 2009), there are no chapter titles that explicitly address academic dishonesty or academic integrity by way of instruction nor curriculum. However, two of these resources suggest a curriculum for gifted and talented that only addresses social and emotional development, but not moral development (VanTassel-Baska, 2004; VanTassel-Baska, Cross, & Olenchak, 2009). Nevertheless, only two books contain a
chapter addressing anything related to academic integrity of the gifted and talented individual (Clark, 1988; Maker, 1982). For instance, Maker’s (1982) text offers a curriculum for the gifted centered on discussion of moral dilemmas based on research by Lawrence Kohlberg. Clark (1988) offered a similar approach with suggesting that teachers and parents should provide a moral environment focused on having the gifted child progress towards the highest level of moral development according to Kohlberg. Regardless, neither of these resources (Clark, 1988; Maker, 1982) explicitly addresses academic integrity or academic dishonesty among gifted and talented students. Furthermore, no text on curriculum and instruction for gifted/talented/exceptional individuals was found that discussed the neutralizing techniques that could promote academic dishonesty among this subpopulation. This lack of instructional and curricular resources for educating the gifted student on academic integrity and academic dishonesty may be due to fact that several of these books were published well before the introduction of high-stakes tests that have saturated today’s schools (Lang, 2013). Yet, it is surprising that when surveying the post No Child Left Behind books focusing on educating the gifted, talented, or exceptional individual, there was not a single chapter explicitly addressing academic integrity, academic dishonesty, or moral development.

Considering the previous discussion of moral development among gifted students, at which level would the gifted high school student be if he or she uses any or all of the identified neutralization techniques when encountering academic dishonesty? Focusing on Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development, where is the neutralizing gifted student? Looking briefly at the stages, Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) assert there are three
levels of moral development. Level one, or the preconventional level, consists of right and wrong being determined by reward and punishment and/or what satisfies one’s or other needs. Considering the identified neutralization techniques, all the technique within the denial cluster, appeal to higher loyalty, *they were, not me defense*, and all of the self-serving techniques could support the claim that these individuals are only in the first level of moral development.

Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) offer that level two, or the conventional level, consists of a good citizen orientation focusing on pleasing others, conformity, and/or law and order. When considering the conformity orientation within this level, all of the 19 neutralization techniques could be summoned if the individual observes cheating and the accompanying neutralization techniques among his or her classmates. Also, the individual within this level may use appeal to higher loyalty, *they were, not me defense* if her or she has the good citizen orientation. Yet, the individual may abstain from cheating and any form of neutralization if he or she truly adheres to the law and order orientation that promotes respect of “fixed rules” (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 55).

Finally, level two, or the postconventional level, proposes that individuals at this level determine right from wrong based on personal value or opinion and/or a set of universal ethics or principles such as equality (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). With the personal value or opinion orientation, an individual may refrain from cheating and any form of neutralization if he or she personally believes cheating is wrong. Similarly, with the universal ethics or principles orientation, the individual may not cheat and neutralize if he or she believes no one else is cheating. However, the individual with the same
orientation may choose to cheat and neutralize if he or she believes others are cheating. For example, individuals may use the everybody does it/diffusion of guilt or defense of necessity/competition techniques to address their notion of equality. Despite these speculations on neutralization techniques and levels moral development, the promotion of moral development should be paramount within the curriculum and instruction of all students. Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) suggest that moral education should foster moral development that leads the individual “toward an increased sense of moral autonomy and a more adequate conception of justice” (p. 54). In doing so, the gifted student can potentially avoid cheating and neutralizing.

Conclusion

The previous discussion of the literature focusing on instruction and curriculum related to academic integrity and academic dishonesty indicates that there is a deficit in curriculum and instruction that promotes academic integrity among students. Equally, as the literature suggests, there is limited instructional and curricular resources for educating the gifted high school students, their teachers, their parents, school administration, counselors, and other stakeholders about academic integrity and academic dishonesty. This is quite problematic based on the findings within the current study. According to the research on grade levels and academic dishonesty, Cizek (2003) affirms that “cheating is comparatively scarcer in the early elementary grades, it reaches a peak in the late high school years, then it tapers off somewhat in college” (p. 13). Likewise, McCabe, Butterfield, and Trevino (2012) claim that “cheating habits develop long before college” (p. 33). Yet, much of the research and instructional and curricular resources on academic
dishonesty focuses largely on higher education (Lang, 2013; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012). There are probably several significant explanations for this trend. Regardless, as the research shows, educators should have curriculum and instructional resources available to them at the primary and secondary levels in order to promote academic integrity and to prevent or deter academic dishonesty at any educational level.

This current study supports the need to include instruction and curriculum that address the neutralization techniques that appear to be rather common among gifted high schools students. As mentioned earlier, there is a commonly held myth that “only kids who struggle in school cheat” (Challenge Success, 2012, p. 3). The literature shows support for this notion. According to a survey on high school students, “when asked which achievement groups were thought to cheat more, poorer achievers were first” (Schab, 1991, p. 840) according to high school students over several decades. However, it is evident in the research that many gifted or advanced high students are academically dishonest at times and it appears that they may use these neutralization techniques (Geddes, 2011; Taylor et al., 2002). The findings in this present study further supports the claim that gifted high school students can use neutralization techniques when cheating. These findings only further complement research linking academic dishonesty and neutralization techniques (Arvidson, 2004; LaBeff et al., 1990; McCabe, 1992; Meng, Othman, D'Silva, & Omar, 2014; O’Rourke et al., 2010; Polding, 1995; Pulver & Diekhoff, 1999; Storch et al., 2002; Taylor et al., 2002; Zito & McQuillan, 2011) which should influence development of curricular and instructional resources promoting academic integrity.
This present study highlights the desperate need for curriculum and instruction for this gifted population that addresses the various neutralization techniques and academic dishonesty that these individuals may encounter. Likewise, these findings showcase the gifted high school culture that appears to be plagued with neutralization tendencies and academic dishonesty. This information will allow teachers, administrators, parents, counselors and perhaps more importantly, students to recognize that individuals can use neutralization techniques to reduce the guilt. In essence, this knowledge can allow the gifted student to avoid these rationalization or neutralizations that can potentially foster more academically dishonest behavior. Hopefully, these discoveries from this investigation on former gifted high school students and academic dishonesty could possibly shape curriculum and instruction in order to promote academic integrity in schools. Having the knowledge of such neutralizations may allow the student to avoid the pitfalls of using these techniques. As a result, the student may feel more guilt and shame associated with academic dishonesty. By not using these neutralization techniques, students may experience the guilt and shame which may further deter academic dishonesty.

Researcher’s Reflection and Need for Action

In a world where video game cheat codes are common, collaboration at the profession level is often expected, and high-stakes grades and tests are present, how is academic integrity best promoted? That is the glaring question. As a teacher of the gifted, am I attempting to do my part to promote integrity among my students? Over the past few years I have presented a description of academic dishonesty to my students on
the first day of the new school year. I allow them several minutes to review what constitutes the various forms of academic dishonesty. After this, I highlight some of the definitions. Finally, I ask if any form of academic dishonesty offered in this lengthy description is surprising or questionable. Invariably, no student openly acknowledges that he or she was surprised or questioned any definition. Due to this yearly routine, a student rarely ever question if his or her behavior is academically dishonest when I discover that the individual was cheating. Perhaps by defining what constitutes academic dishonesty I am helping to prevent the bending the definition technique or the denial of crime technique (Benson, 1985). Regardless, what am I doing to prevent the use of the other neutralization techniques?

Surely I, and other educators, can do more to promote a culture of academic integrity. Educators, through instruction, should explicitly identify for the student the various forms of academic dishonesty and the various neutralization techniques. Also, instruction can be shaped to clarify expectations related to academic work. In this way, students can be aware of the pitfalls that some students experience. Likewise, curriculum, whether hidden (Power & Kohlberg, 1987) or explicit (McCabe, 2005), should be focused on promoting academic integrity and moral education among all students not just the gifted/talented/exceptional.

Disseminating Findings

How can or will these findings be disseminated to the various stakeholders? Beyond the obvious publication of this information in this dissertation, there are several avenues to pass this information onward. One format to disseminate these findings is to
publish an article in a scholarly publication. This avenue may allow this information to reach the largest audience. Another format to broadcast these findings could be found in a paper and/or presentation at a national or international conference. This route may also reach a significant audience. At the very least, I plan to inform my school administration and my fellow teachers of the gifted within my school system. Perhaps most importantly, I will inform my future students about the neutralizing tendencies that gifted high school students can have when encountering academic dishonesty.

Recommendations for Further Research

As this study answers the established research questions, more questions develop. Due to these new questions, this section will offer recommendations for further research. For instance, the experience of drift (Matza, 1964) by the gifted high school student was not explicitly investigated. Drift occurs when an individual moves away from conventional behaviors to more deviant behaviors. Yet, this individual can live in both the conventional and deviant worlds. However, it is not clear that the gifted high school student adheres to the conventional restrictions on academic dishonesty. Only then does the individual drift into unconventional behaviors such as cheating. Equally, to what extent do individuals experience guilt when cheating? As discussed before, a study by Wangaard and Stephens (2011) revealed that 95% of high school students reported that they performed academic cheating at least once within the last academic year. To make matters worse, 57% of these same high school students agreed that cheating is morally wrong. This begs the question, to what extent do gifted high school students experience drift when encountering cheating. Are these individuals living in both worlds of
academic integrity and academic dishonesty? As the literature suggest, is there a subculture of cheating among the gifted? Equally, to what extent do individuals experience guilt and/or shame when cheating? A qualitative study on drift among this subpopulation is highly recommended.

Another recommendation for further research centers on which neutralization techniques, both established and newly identified, are common among non-gifted high school students? It is difficult to believe that these neutralization techniques are limited to the gifted/talented/exceptional population. Equally, McCabe, Butterfield, and Trevino (2012) claim that “cheating habits develop long before college” (p. 33). Due to this finding, another recommendation for further research should address when do students, gifted or non-gifted develop these neutralization techniques?

Another area of concern is the possible desensitization that students are experiencing when encountering academic dishonesty. Are students becoming desensitized to cheating due to the overwhelming presence of academic dishonesty in high school (Geddes, 2011; Wangaard & Stephens, 2011)? Just as an individual can become desensitized to violence through exposure, can high school students become less concerned or indifferent when exposed to cheating? Thus, a recommendation for further research would be to investigate the desensitization to cheating that could be experienced by students.

Likewise, Taylor et al. (2002) offers there is limited qualitative research centered on academic dishonesty. This present study used a qualitative element within a mixed-methods design. The qualitative interviews generated a considerable amount of
information on the gifted high school student’s neutralization tendencies despite conducting only four interviews. With this knowledge, an additional recommendation for further research should involve a strictly qualitative approach to hear more of the gifted and non-gifted high school student’s true voice as it relates to the many aspects of academic dishonesty.

As discussed previously, Kohlberg’s stages of moral development is a crucial topic connected with academic dishonesty and neutralization among gifted students and all students. It appears that the individual that cheats and neutralizes his or her cheating is arguably in the first two levels of moral development. However, this notion is far from being well defined from the brief discussion. Nevertheless, further research should investigate if cheating and neutralizing individuals are found to be in the lower two levels of moral development.

Finally, what other factors influence an individual to neutralize academically dishonest behavior? There has been scholarship to support that individuals can adopt one of two mindsets, fixed- and growth-mindset. The individual that adopts a fixed-mindset believes “that your qualities are carved in stone” (Dweck, 2012, p. 14) or unchanging. Conversely, the individual that adopts a growth-mindset believes “that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts” (Dweck, 2012, p. 16). A recommendation for further research should investigate the relationship of one’s mindset and his or her tendencies to neutralize and/or performance academically dishonest behavior.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF NEUTRALIZATION STATEMENTS
APPENDIX A

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF NEUTRALIZATION STATEMENTS

A. In high school, helping someone to cheat on exams and assignments is OK because students should stick together and help one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. In high school, cheating is OK if others in the class are doing it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>50.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>16.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>46.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F. In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>20.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.89</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

G. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.

<table>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H. In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. In high school, a “double standard” exists; cheating by athletes is tolerated, but for other students it is not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J. In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Agree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

K. In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>12.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
L. In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M. In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the wrong assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
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<td>Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>11.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N. In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>20.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
O. In high school, cheating is better than failing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>12.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P. In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate, teammate, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>17.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
R. In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>46.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S. In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>19.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>33.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>17.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>22.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE,
DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE, AND NEUTRAL
APPENDIX B

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE, DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE, AND NEUTRAL

A. In high school, helping someone to cheat on exams and assignments is OK because students should stick together and help one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>82.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. In high school, cheating is OK if others in the class are doing it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>86.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>72.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>88.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>78.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>46.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.63%</td>
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G. In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.

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<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.08%</td>
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H. In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.

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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>16</td>
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I. In high school, a “double standard” exists; cheating by athletes is tolerated, but for other students it is not.

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J. In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.

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<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.90%</td>
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K. In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.

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L. In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.

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<td>Neutral</td>
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M. In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the wrong assignment.

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N. In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.

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O. In high school, cheating is better than failing.

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<td>15.08%</td>
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P. In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.

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<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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Q. In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate, teammate, etc.

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<td>Neutral</td>
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</table>

R. In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.

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<thead>
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<th>Range of Agreement</th>
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<td>11.90%</td>
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S. In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.

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<tr>
<th>Range of Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.46%</td>
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APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date:
Place:
Interviewee:

Interview Protocol

**Explain the purpose of the interview:** This interview is designed to investigate gifted high school students’ perceptions of cheating. Feel free to offer any information related to this topic as we go through the interview.

**Ice Breaker:** Why did you decide to participate in this study/complete the online survey/agree to a face-to-face interview about cheating in high school?

**Question 1:** Where did you go to high school? City? State? Geographic location?

**Question 2:** Were you identified as gifted/talented/exceptional by your high school?

**Question 3 (RQ1):** While in high school, have you known other gifted students that denied that they were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when in fact they had cheated? If so, please explain the situation(s).

**Please Elaborate:**
**Question 4 (RQ1):** While in high school, have you denied that you were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when in fact you had cheated? If so, please explain the situation(s).

**Please Elaborate:**

**Question 5 (RQ3):** While in high school, have other gifted students justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? *(have these statements for the interviewee)* If so, please provide those statements or techniques.

**Please Elaborate:**

**Possible Neutralization Techniques:**

Do not mention these techniques; just circle possible techniques and/or jot down statements

Denial of intent:

Justification by comparison:

Denial of crime/offense:

Everybody does it/diffusion of guilt:
Claim of entitlement:

Denial of necessity of the law/rule:

Postponement:

New technique:

**Say this before going on to the next questions:** If you think of another neutralization technique later in the interview, feel free to say it.

**Question 6 (RQ4):** While in high school, have you justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? *(have these statements for the interviewee)* If so, please provide those statements or techniques.

**Please Elaborate:**

**Possible Neutralization Techniques:**

Do not mention these techniques; just circle possible techniques and/or jot down statements

Denial of intent:

Justification by comparison:

Denial of crime/offense:

Everybody does it/diffusion of guilt:

Claim of entitlement:
Denial of necessity of the law/rule:

Postponement:

New technique:

**Say this before going on to the next questions:** If you think of another neutralization technique later in the interview, feel free to say it.

**Question 7 (RQ2, RQ3, RQ4):** Can you provide me any other way a gifted high school student could justify, rationalize, or neutralize cheating behavior? If so, please provide these techniques.

**Question 8 (RQ2, RQ3):** Do you believe that justifying, rationalizing, or neutralizing of cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? Please explain.

**Please Elaborate:**

Do you have any final comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students?

**Final Thank You**
APPENDIX D

ONLINE SURVEY

Please choose one.
_____ Male  _____ Female

Please choose one.
_____ Freshman  _____ Sophomore  _____ Junior  _____ Senior

Please choose one.
_____ Identified as gifted/talented/exceptional (GTE) by former high school.
_____ Not identified as gifted/talented/exceptional (GTE) by former high school.

Many factors or justifications may influence the gifted student’s decision about whether or not to do honest academic work in a particular situation. For each of the following items, please indicate its importance to you in making such decisions by putting the appropriate abbreviation in the item blank.

Multiple Choice Options for each question:
SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neutral D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

A. _____ In high school, helping someone to cheat on exams and assignments is OK because students should stick together and help one another.

B. _____ In high school, cheating is OK if others in the class are doing it.

C. _____ In high school, cheating is OK if you are not given reasonable time to prepare.

D. _____ In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher speaks English poorly.

E. _____ In high school, if the curve goes up because a number of students have cheated, cheating really doesn’t give you an unfair advantage.

F. _____ In high school, there would be less cheating if the teaching were better.

G. _____ In high school, cheating is OK if the teacher gives unreasonably difficult assignments or tests.
H. _____ In high school, teachers shouldn’t complain about cheating because they don’t assign grades fairly anyway.

I. _____ In high school, a “double standard” exists; cheating by athletes is tolerated, but for other students it is not.

J. _____ In high school, cheating must not be too wrong or teachers would try harder to catch cheaters.

K. _____ In high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades.

L. _____ In high school, cheating isn’t so bad if you are helping a friend.

M. _____ In high school, cheating is OK if you studied the wrong materials or did the wrong assignment.

N. _____ In high school, cheating is sometimes necessary to get the GPA you need to get into a college.

O. _____ In high school, cheating is better than failing.

P. _____ In high school, it’s not too bad to cheat if you have studied hard and attended class.

Q. _____ In high school, sometimes you have to cheat to help a friend, classmate, teammate, etc.

R. _____ In high school, cheating is OK if you can’t study because of other commitments.

S. _____ In high school, grades really don’t reflect what you know about a subject.

T. _____ In high school, cheating is OK because no one ever gets caught.

U. _____ In high school, cheating is OK because nobody gets hurt.

V. _____ In high school, if no one has told you that what you are doing is cheating, it’s OK to do it.

W. _____ In high school, I am confident that my education will prepare me for the job or career that I want.

If you are willing to participate in an interview to share more about your perceptions of academic dishonesty, please provide your contact information below. If you provide your contact information, you may be chosen to participate in such an interview.

Name:

E-mail:
Phone:

If you are not willing to participate in an interview to share more about your perceptions of academic dishonesty, please submit your responses.

Thank you.
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW 1 225 AGREE

INTERVIEWER: Thanks for joining me. I wanted to start with an ice breaker first. You can follow. The questions I might be writing over here shouldn’t be too distracting and I’m always listening okay. But feel free to share all that you want to. Why did you decide to participate in this study or to complete the online survey or agree to the face to face interview?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I saw your name and I was like, I mean I might as well you know.

INTERVIEWER: Any other reasons besides my name?

INTERVIEWEE: I think it would be helpful to have data on this.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I’m just really like pro-science so -- anything that can help, I was an AP student, so giving my opinion, if I can give back.

INTERVIEWER: Question number 1, where did you go to high school, city and state or you could just give me a geographic location, your choice.

INTERVIEWEE: I went to Houston County High School, Warner Robins.

INTERVIEWER: And that’s in Georgia, correct?

INTERVIEWEE: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Perfect. Were you identified as gifted, talented or exceptional at your high school?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes yes. I graduated with AP credits. Although you were my first class so, I was kind of late.

INTERVIEWER: Question number 3, while in high school have you ever known other gifted students that denied that they were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator or parent when in fact they had cheated? If so, please explain the situation to the best of your ability.

INTERVIEWEE: I do not recall anyone explicitly cheating. I mean I’m sure it happened but I can only assume that. And then I think the most cheating involved at the AP level would be homework not so much the tests.
INTERVIEWER: So, you don’t know of an actual time where they’ve actually cheated but you can assume that they would cheat and you’re saying that’s most likely for homework. You think they would deny this or your think they would be open to disclose this information?

INTERVIEWEE: I think it would depend on who you ask. I think if peers you would be more likely to say yeah, I have the homework, I got it from so and so.

INTERVIEWER: What about teachers and administrators? Do you know students that could knowingly deny that they cheated when in fact they cheated? You don’t necessarily need to give me a situation but do you think that’s very likely?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it’s very likely.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else on that question that you would like to add?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I wish I had a situation but I don’t.

INTERVIEWER: Question number 4, while in high school have you denied that you were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator or parent when in fact you had cheated? If so, please explain the situation.

INTERVIEWEE: Let’s see. I mean I guess I have participated in cheating by maybe writing down some homework. Because I remember you would give us our words at the beginning of the chapter and those were definitions from the back of the book. So, you know you copy then down from the back of the book, so if I were behind on some of my words, I would take a classmate’s paper and write down my definitions. But when it came to like tests and assignments I feel very uncomfortable cheating so it’s not something that I’ve done. By definition, yes, I participated in cheating but if someone were to ask me if I had cheated I would honestly say no because it would be – my cheating would be just the fact being it wasn’t that serious as a topic or it was something that was easy enough to do, it was just stuff that I was behind on.

INTERVIEWER: So, if you were asked if you had cheated you would be – you would deny it was cheating because your rationalization, your justification would be its insignificant assignment because you’re referring to homework.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So again, I’ll just reread the question you can add anything else, if not we can go to the next one. While in high school you deny that you weren’t cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator or parent when in fact you had cheated, if so please explain the situations. Anything else you want to add to that one?

INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: Question number 5, while in high school have other gifted students justified rationalized or neutralized cheating behavior beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? Here is the online survey. If so, please provide those statements…. okay do you know of any other rationalization techniques that gifted students have used for cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I feel like the survey covers the majority of the reasons. I don’t have any that I can contribute to that.

INTERVIEWER: If you think of another rationalization technique later in this interview, please feel free to bring that up. Question number 6, while in high school have you justified, rationalized or neutralized cheating beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? If so, please provide those statements or techniques. Do you have any techniques?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I do not.

INTERVIEWER: Again, if you think of any other neutralization techniques later in this interview feel free to say them. Question number 7, can you provide me any other way a gifted high school student could justify, rationalize or neutralize cheating behavior? If so, provide those techniques. So, this is the time for you to think what are some other ways that maybe you have not heard of but can allow you to say cheating is justifiable. Do you have any possible ways a gifted high school student could justify, rationalize or neutralize cheating behavior?

INTERVIEWEE: No I do not. The survey covered a lot of the bases. There is always that fear of failing the class or not doing so well in the class. I think overall that’s an issue with the public education system putting too much pressure on students to make good grades. It’s kind of a market on AP students also with the AP testing and the prep testing and getting prepared for college. So, I think that just puts a lot of pressure on students who want to succeed.

INTERVIEWER: So, you feel the fear of failure could lead to justifying perhaps cheating because you believe it’s a fault on the system of education whether it be pressure associated with the education system on getting good grades or the marketing associated with AP testing. Anything else that could possibly be a justification for cheating that you can think of?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Question number 8, do you believe that justifying, rationalizing or neutralizing of cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? Please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: Definitely. I don’t think anyone assumes that they’re doing something wrong. So, they try to rationalize what they do. I find it difficult to rationalize
the cheating on an exam because that’s the definition of cheating, that’s what most people think of when you say cheating. But there are still people who justify that. But I think there are different levels of justifying it when it comes to homework, quizzes or exams, like take home assignments, things like that. Some people might not even view it as cheating because they’ve rationalized it so much.

INTERVIEWER: So, if I understand it correctly you’re saying that because of certain behavior can be seen in a lesser light as cheating so that could be a justification for the cheating because in comparison with other academic behavior it’s not seen as so malicious or problematic, would you agree on that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I always found it difficult to even try to cheat on an exam because I know just growing up I’ve heard stories of entire tests being thrown out or just receiving bad grades in the class overall just from one assignment. I personally have been cheated on. I didn’t know what the student was going to do with my work. I was just like, yes you can use it as a guideline and it ended up being word for word and I took a hit on that in terms of grades. So that was in middle school. So, I’ve already been negatively affected by it, someone else cheating. So, it was really hard for me to do that in high school.

INTERVIEWER: So, do you believe allowing someone else to copy off of your paper is cheating on your part or do you believe it is not cheating on your part?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it’s cheating on my part. For that assignment, I was really saying hey, use this as inspiration just like I would on the internet. I would try to find ideas to help me get started.

INTERVIEWER: What is your rationalization for allowing that person? At the time did you look at that person borrowing that information, that was looking on your homework or looking on whatever, did you see that as cheating at the time? If so, could you justify it at the time?

INTERVIEWEE: I did not see it as cheating at the time.

INTERVIEWER: So, you did not see it as cheating at that time, okay. Now that you have confirmed it is cheating can you justify it now?

INTERVIEWEE: Well yeah, he was my friend and I didn’t want him to fail the assignment and he was looking for some type of inspiration on the assignment, he didn’t grasp the concept too well. So, I gave him the paper to allow him to get that thought process going and she read both of them in front of the class and they were word for word. And in my perspective, I’m like wow, you cheated off of me but in other people’s perspective it was like, wow these people are kind of dumb to do this.

INTERVIEWER: I can see both sides of the fence on that one. Interesting. Thank you for sharing that. Just to wrap up that question I’m going to read it again and if you
want to add any more you can feel free. Do you believe that justifying, rationalizing or neutralizing cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? You said definitely. Would you like to add any more to that?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think of any other possible rationalization techniques that you or other gifted individuals in high school could use to justify that have not already been previously discussed?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Final question, do you have any final comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: Just that it’s – as long as the pressure is going to be there, people are going to feel compelled to cheat. But then again there are also people who they feel more pressure than others so they might always be cheaters. I don’t know what the psychology of it is. If it’s a situational thing or external, internal attributions, so…

INTERVIEWER: When you say pressure, where does that pressure come from? Is it multiple areas or if it’s one area, either way, please describe the pressures.

INTERVIEWEE: Well you have the social pressure of failing the class and those are your peers, you are supposed to progress with them so failing your class or not doing so well in the class can negatively impact you socially and then you go home and it’s a parental thing. So not getting a good grade could affect you at home also. And then there is the long run with colleges and things like that. So, you just feel – it’s a pressure that kind of hits you presently and also in the future with something that’s a bad grade here in one instance can make you doubt yourself in the future, so it’s constant pressure.

INTERVIEWER: So, what would you say would be the most likely rationalization for cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: To get the good grade by any means necessary. The more badly you need it the more you’re able to justify it.

INTERVIEWER: Again, do you have any final comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

END TRANSCRIPTION
INTERVIEWER: Thank you for joining me. Let’s go over the icebreaker. Why did you decide to participate in this study, complete the online survey, and agree to the face-to-face interview about cheating in high school?

INTERVIEWEE: I just saw it in my mail and so I was like all right, so I don't have anything to do. I’ll take this survey. So I finished it and I was going to click just to skip and to not do the face-to-face, but I was like they probably don’t have a ton of people coming in to do the face-to-face because I know a lot of people don’t want to put the extra time in there. So I was like if they need me, I’ll put my contact information.

INTERVIEWER: Any other reason why an individual would not want to do a face-to-face interview on this topic?

INTERVIEWEE: Probably because they might want to talk about having cheated or having see other people cheating. So thinking back on it, it’s kind of like a guilty thing.

INTERVIEWER: I’m always listening, just to point that out. I’m just taking down notes.

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yeah, that’s fine.

INTERVIEWER: Do you want to offer any more about that first question, why you wanted to participate?

INTERVIEWEE: I can’t think of anything more.

INTERVIEWER: Question number one, where did you go to school, city, state? Why don’t you just give me the geographic location?

INTERVIEWEE: I went to Peach County High School. I forgot I was even wearing this shirt today.

INTERVIEWER: Kind of give it away?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That’s all right.

INTERVIEWEE: But it’s in Fort Valley, Georgia.

INTERVIEWER: I think you're done answering that one. Question number two, were you identified as gifted, talented, exceptional by your high school?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I think I was considered gifted in second grade. I believe it was the second half of second grade.
INTERVIEWER: Question number three, while in high school have you known other gifted students that denied that they were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when, in fact, they had cheated? If so, please explain the situations. Please take your time.

INTERVIEWEE: I think I remember this one time, but they didn’t even deny it, but it wasn’t to a teacher. I was told about it. In this AP class, one of the girls I knew in there, they had to turn in outlines for each chapter that they did and I just went in the classroom because I had a free period that I didn’t have a college class in. So I went in there for lunch and she told me that she kept turning in the same paper, the same outline, and just changing the chapter name at the top without actually having done the work and the teacher gave her credit because they just looked at the chapter name and didn’t look at the rest of it. Honestly, that’s the only time I can remember.

INTERVIEWER: Going back to that, was that student ever confronted by the teacher or fellow classmates about that?

INTERVIEWEE: Not that I know of, no, and I didn’t say anything either.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think this happens often this type of cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: Honestly, I don’t know. When she told me about it, I was like wow. I never thought of that before, wasn’t going to do it because I wouldn’t want to risk something like that, but I thought it was a little bit ingenious.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think or did she ever tell you how she could justify?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I do know that AP class, that one in particular, I had heard a lot about it being a lot of work, that they had to do a lot of projects that were very in depth. They had to write out that chapter outline I think every week and so I can see why she would justify doing something like that because I had heard that the class was a lot of work.

INTERVIEWER: So justification because the course load is so dramatic along with other things that they deal with?

INTERVIEWEE: Uh-huh, because I do know she was a student athlete as well.

INTERVIEWER: Would you like to add anything related to that question?

INTERVIEWEE: I couldn’t think of anything else. It stood out to me because I thought it was just so, I was like wow. I’d never heard of anything like that.

INTERVIEWER: Question number four, while in high school, have you denied that you were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when, in fact, you had cheated? If so, please explain the situation.
INTERVIEWEE: I can remember this one distinct time. I was in a science class at my high school and we were taking a test and one of the students next to me had asked me for an answer and I told them. The teacher had walked out of the room and right as I told them, like right after, the teacher come in with another teacher. I guess they saw me move or something and they didn’t accuse me of cheating, but they joked about it and I did almost confess, but I just kept it to myself and none of the other students in the classroom said anything about it either even though they had heard me speak to the other student. It’s more so I’ve never been caught cheating. I don’t normally cheat. Normally, it’s me, I guess that is cheating if I give answers to other students, but normally, I wouldn’t help myself try to do something. My senior year in my economics class, students would sit closer to me and I wouldn’t go out of my way to hide my paper, but I wouldn’t show them my paper, but the teacher eventually caught on. I guess she noticed that I didn’t want to say anything and she made the students move.

INTERVIEWER: So you allowing other students to look on your test you would define that as cheating or not?

INTERVIEWEE: I would define it as cheating.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: I wouldn’t define it as cheating for me, but I am helping the cheating.

INTERVIEWER: So they’re cheating. You’re helping the cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Any other comments or topics related to you denying cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: I can’t think of any more.

INTERVIEWER: All right, number five. While in high school have other gifted students justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating behavior beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? If so, please provide these statements or techniques.

INTERVIEWEE: I had spoke about the survey to my sister and she told me about one time that she had cheated on one of her tests. She had written on an index card some of the answers and I think that sometimes when students struggle with stress or their mental health, they would allow themselves to cheat because I know my sister has struggled and she’s still struggling with her mental health. And I think with the pressure my parents on her, like it says in here. With the pressure my parents put on her and with all of that on top of her that she feels like she doesn’t know the material. So she needs to cheat so that she can make the grades that my parents want her to make even though she doesn’t really care about school.
INTERVIEWER: I appreciate you sharing that. Are there any other possible ways that you heard other gifted students justifying or rationalizing cheating beyond the ones we have listed here? There is a backside. There’s two more on the backside. That’s all.

INTERVIEWEE: In my senior year of high school, some students would cheat because they needed to be able to pass so that they could graduate. I guess that’s more of an end-all be-all. So they got to a point where they had to have these credits to graduate and so they were cheating to be able to pass the class. That was why that one student would sit closer to me and look on my paper so that they would pass that class and they could graduate.

INTERVIEWER: That’s good. They needed to pass. So it’s a necessity is what would you say?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, for them, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Any other possible justifications?

INTERVIEWEE: Not that I can think of.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Before we move on to the next question, I’ll just state this. If you think of any other techniques or reasons later in the interview, please share them.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Just interrupt and we can go with that.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So question number six, very, very close related. While in high school have you justified or rationalized or neutralized cheating beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? Have you?

INTERVIEWEE: The one where it talks about cheat to help a friend, classmate, or a teammate definitely that. That’s how I justified what I did. It was to help another, but I really like K, when it talks about in high school, students wouldn’t cheat so much if parents wouldn’t put so much pressure on them to get good grades. I see that a lot. I really do. I see it so much.

INTERVIEWER: Would you assume that’s the most likely rationalization by gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Anything close to that?

INTERVIEWEE: Not that I can think of.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Good.
INTERVIEWEE: I do remember now that I was in a history class I think when I was in tenth grade and the teacher we had was new to our school and he was really, really hard. He would just kind of look at a paper and he [indiscernible]. It was just a sign and a grade and he wouldn’t read it and it was based on kind of who he liked. So some grades were definitely not fair to the students and I remember seeing students having stuff on the ground and stuff like that when they though the teacher wasn’t looking and if he would walk by, they would just use their foot to move it out of the way like under the desk when we would like take a test or a quiz or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: So you would say because of the unfairness associated with the teacher?

INTERVIEWEE: Uh-huh, because which I did like his class, but his tests were very difficult and that wasn’t even a class that was considered a gifted class. It was just a regular history class and it was very difficult.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, yeah, anything else you would like to add to question number six?

INTERVIEWEE: Not that I can think of.

INTERVIEWER: Feel free to add these or say it if you come up with some.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Question number seven, can you provide me any other way a gifted high school student could justify, rationalize, or neutralize cheating behavior? If so, please provide those techniques. This is a time where you can just hypothesize and kind of throw out possible reasons to justify that you may have never heard of, but you believe could be possible.

INTERVIEWEE: I think it’s about students just being more confident in what they know and being able to take their knowledge and put it on a test with whatever questions they're asked. What’s helped me is a teacher has gone over okay, there’s going to be this type of question on the test and this type of question on the test. I know that’s kind of going through the test, but it’s not giving the student exactly what is on the test. So I know it makes me a lot more confident when I come in to the test and I think confidence is key when students are thinking about cheating or not. If there’s any type of anxiety or un-sureness in themselves when they're going in and taking a test, that they're more likely to cheat. So I feel like if the teacher would try to help better prepare the students like giving them a study guide and then, some of the questions from the study guide are actually on the test. I know that’s happened before to me and I thought that was awesome, but I can’t really think of any other way that they could change that.

INTERVIEWER: So you think the confidence level. So as the confidence level goes down going into some assignment or assessment, the possibility of cheating can go up?
INTERVIEWEE: Oh, yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: So that inverse relationship. Okay, anything else you can think of related to a possibility that you may have never heard of?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I can’t think of another way. It’s just I know some schoolwork is hard. So that’s another thing, homework. People will, say one person does the homework and then, someone will send them a text or something like that or see them in person and is like hey, can I borrow your homework so they can copy it. I have done that and I forgot about that probably because a lot of the times I don’t even think of it as cheating when it actually is because I’m not doing my own work. Just like, didn’t have time to finish it, like when I was playing sports. I would get home really late some nights from games. I was playing basketball and we would go off a couple of hours away from where I lived. So when we would get home because you had to wait until after the boys’ game, which always ran late. It would be very late at night and so a lot of the times I wouldn’t have time to finish homework. So during while I’m watching the boys’ game I would have someone and I would text them like hey, can you send me a picture of the homework? I won’t have time to do it tonight and I’ve had people ask me to do that before too. So it is definitely a way that students cheat.

INTERVIEWER: So time restraints and other commitments associated can lead to that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So the more involved one can be maybe they're a little more likely to cheat?

INTERVIEWEE: More likely to cheat, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, the ability to justify that. Okay. You've mentioned not seeing certain behavior as cheating. Do you think that could be something that students hold onto to justify a lot of cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, because until now until I thought about sharing the homework being cheating, I totally didn’t even think of it as cheating at all. Like, I don't know. It’s like I almost felt like it was group work or something, but now that I think about it, it is cheating. It’s different if you're, like I’ve come into now, it’s different when you're stuck on a problem, like if it’s a math problem or something. You're like hey, I can’t figure this out. You text one of your friends, hey, can you send me a picture of this homework problem that you did so you can try to figure it out because I’m a commuter and I can’t be here all the time to actually meet up with someone to have them help me. It’s just easier for me to be like hey, can you send me a picture and then I figure it out by looking through their work, but in high school definitely people don’t do that. They're just like can you send me a picture of the homework because it’s something that I have to turn in for a grade.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. So anything that extends beyond homework, the fact that they can say I didn’t know it was cheating.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah. Well, I feel like every student knows that if they get help on a test, that it’s cheating. I feel like sometimes homework can get lost in that little cloud because you're not at school. You're at home and you don’t think about stuff like that when you're at home.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any other type of assignment or even assessment that could fall under the realm of this is not cheating if someone could assist them?

INTERVIEWEE: I can’t think of any.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, awesome. Any final comments on question number seven, can you provide me with any other way a gifted high school student could justify, rationalize, or neutralize cheating behavior?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Question number eight, do you believe that justifying, rationalizing, or neutralizing of cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? Please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: I do. I do think it’s common because sometimes, especially in my high school, the gifted students, I don't want to sound mean, but sometimes it just felt like we were so much more like that prepared for stuff and I guess it’s from being considered gifted or I’m not really sure. I know some students had to work really hard for being that prepared and so sometimes being like that prepared you feel okay to help other students who aren’t as prepared because you feel like because it’s easier for you and it’s harder for them, you can help them out. At least that’s how I felt because it comes easier to me to be able to like read something and retain it or understand a math concept, that I can help someone who has a harder time understanding a concept.

INTERVIEWER: So you feel because of you said gifted as in the title, with the label-

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Does that give you some type of I guess, I hate to say it, entitlement?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, a little bit. I feel like a lot of gifted students have that like superiority complex. I had it to some degree. I didn’t necessarily say it to anyone and I could actually see it in other people. I really tried to keep myself levelheaded and really didn’t want to fall into that superiority complex because I did see it in other gifted students. But I know a lot of other gifted students took initiative because of that to help other people because they did almost feel like they were better than those people. So they wanted to help them.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you see it more as like helping. So could they use the entitlement idea to justify them helping others or could they, I guess, justify their own cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, definitely.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know of a situation that could fall in that category related to, I guess, their label of being gifted?

INTERVIEWEE: When I wouldn’t say anything to the student to move or to not look on my paper in that economics class that I talked about before, that’s definitely something that because I understood and I had that like entitlement like oh, yeah. I’m going to get this test easy. I’m not going to say anything about this student looking on my paper even though I know he’s doing it because I want to help him because I know that he needs to graduate.

INTERVIEWER: And do you think the entitlement concept would apply to non-gifted individuals or is it exclusive to gifted?

INTERVIEWEE: I think it’s exclusive to gifted, probably not wholly exclusive, but since I’ve been gifted since second grade, I have actually been told before second grade, but second grade was just when I got in gifted, that I’ve always been special. That’s I’ve always been, oh, she’s so smart, she’s so this and so that, that I’ve always kind of been in condition to have that entitled feeling when it came to school.

INTERVIEWER: All right. I’m going to read the question again and if we're done with that question, we can move on. Do you believe that justifying, rationalizing, or neutralizing of cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? Please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: I don’t think they neutralize it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. They don’t neutralize it?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What do you mean by that?

INTERVIEWEE: Like a lot of students they really stick together. When they see it, they don’t say anything like how I would see it and I didn’t say anything, how no one said anything when the teacher joked about me. They were joking about having caught me cheating, but they were just joking. They weren’t being serious because they didn’t know I actually had. Anyone in that class could have spoken up and been like well, actually they were, but no one did and I have never turned a student in for cheating ever, even though I’ve seen it many times.
INTERVIEWER: So as a gifted student seeing these individuals cheating, how do you handle this, I guess, being mute about it? What’s your justification for not saying anything even though obviously, and correct me if I’m wrong, it weighs on your mind?

INTERVIEWEE: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: I don’t know. I just kind of ignore it. It’s just thinking they don’t understand it like I do. So they need like help with taking a test or quiz or finishing an assignment. I guess you can put it as because I think I’m better. It doesn’t bother me because I’m not doing it. I’m not the one that’s actually cheating, even though me helping someone else is cheating. It doesn’t really feel like cheating in the moment. It just feels like you’re helping someone out.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, any other follow-up comments on that question number eight?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: All right, good. Do you have any final comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students? So this could be any statements or belief or concern or issue that you feel is important and I’ll pause there.

INTERVIEWEE: I think a lot of why gifted high school students cheat or help others cheat is because a lot of the times they’re told that they’re special and that they’re good at things and that this and that. So either they want to help other people or sometimes they fall away from that standard and they’re trying to keep that standard. And so to do that, they have to cheat to make up for that specialness that they might not have anymore because they’ve just gotten older and things just don’t come as naturally to them anymore as they did like when they were younger. I feel like students are so conditioned, that it just-

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so conditioned, all right. So you say they’re not meeting a standard. They’re not meeting the, I guess, label that you would say of gifted and that will help them justify the cheating.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: I think a lot of the times they keep trying to meet that standard even though they might not quite be there anymore. It doesn’t mean that they're not still a good student. They just might not meet the standard that’s been set for them as because of their parents. So they keep trying to want to meet that standard because their parents have been so used to that, they don’t want to change it.

INTERVIEWER: So you would say parent pressure?
INTERVIEWEE: Uh-huh, because I have set a standard for my sister and even though she is a very, very smart student, she doesn’t have the same kind of work ethic as I did when I was in high school. She doesn’t care as much. So my parents really weigh down heavy on her because she doesn’t make the kind of grades that I did.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So meeting this standard or label as well as parent pressure, so you think those are the top reasons for gifted high school students cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. any other top reasons for justifying or rationalizing cheating by gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: Only than to help others, that’s really all I can think of is to meet a student because of parent pressure or just to help others.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Do you have any comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: I guess we will stop.

END TRANSCRIPTION

INTERVIEW 3 273 DISAGREE

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you, for joining me for this interview. We’ll start with the icebreaker. Why did you decide to participate in this study, complete the online survey, and agree to a face-to-face interview about cheating in high school?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, as a student we get emails all the time about surveys and different requests and stuff like that. So I thought why not. I fill out as many of them as possible and this one was just another one where I would like to give my input on it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, all right, good. Any other reason?

INTERVIEWEE: No. It came in the email and I submitted my response.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Good, good, all right. Where did you go to high school? You don't have to give me the city or state, but please give me a geographic location or you can give me the city and state and the actual high school.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay. I went to two high schools. I went to Berkmar High School, which is Lilburn, Georgia and then, my senior year I went to Discovery High School, which is in Lawrenceville, Georgia.
**INTERVIEWER**: I saw that 706 is your area code?

**INTERVIEWEE**: 678, 770, or 404.

**INTERVIEWER**: Okay. Gotcha, all right. Were you identified as gifted, talented, or exceptional by your high school?

**INTERVIEWEE**: Yes.

**INTERVIEWER**: Question number three, I’ll read it. Take your time to read it again and we’ll go from there. While in high school have you known other gifted students that denied that they were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when, in fact, they had cheated? If so, please explain the situations.

**INTERVIEWEE**: I don’t know if they were gifted students because I was in a class with mixed students. So we had both gifted and just regular students and when there was a situation of cheating which was clear and evident, they would lie a lot of times. Gifted students didn’t cheat as much. Like when it was just a class with like AP or something like that, there was no need because mostly stuff was group work. So I don’t remember any incidents of cheating, but usually it was the regular students who would like and say they didn’t.

**INTERVIEWER**: So group work and that was very common in most of your classes that you focused on and it was pretty clear from the teacher’s point of view that group work was okay?

**INTERVIEWEE**: We had a lot of projects or in class assignments. We would usually sit in groups. So you could work with your group on your assignments. The only thing that we couldn’t do together was tests and homework and quizzes.

**INTERVIEWER**: So you think that helped with preventing cheating in the concept of say other assignments that were not quizzes or tests? When it comes to like say homework, when homework was assigned would that be considered group work or would that be independent or would vary from class to class, teacher to teacher?

**INTERVIEWEE**: I think it varied teacher to teacher. Usually, homework you take it home and it’s due the next day. So I mean it’s rare that you go home and you have friends next door that you can study with. So it’s usually independent, but I don’t think they would mind if you worked together as long as you weren’t like coming in the next day and saying, what’s your answers and like, writing it down. You asked another question that I wanted to answer. I felt like having group work in the classroom prevented the need to cheat because I feel like cheating is when you don’t understand something. So you feel like well, I don't know, but I have to get this grade. So I still need to find some way to get the answer. Where if you work in a group that eliminates you feeling the need to just copy because you're working with other students and together you guys can figure out the problem.
INTERVIEWER: So your confidence on the material helps to dictate if one cheats or not. Is that what you're telling me or because you said they were more likely to cheat if they didn't know the material? Is that what you're telling me?

INTERVIEWEE: Right. I do feel like you have to know the material in order to do well on a test and in high school it's test, test, test. So if you don't know, then taking a test is well, I don't know the answer. So I'm going to fail. So I feel like if they don't know it, then they feel more obligated to find the answer, which is sometimes cheating.

INTERVIEWER: Gotcha, gotcha, all right, good. Any other offerings for that question?

INTERVIEWEE: No. I don't have specific examples that I can remember.

INTERVIEWER: Question number four, while in high school, have you denied that you were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when, in fact, you had cheated? If so, please explain the situations.

INTERVIEWEE: I never cheated because I was always the student that knew everything. I don’t say that to sound a type of way, but I didn’t talk to a lot of people. I didn’t have friends and I hated group work. So the only time I worked together with somebody else is when I wanted to. So I was kind of that loner kid that just kept to themselves. So I didn’t cheat and I didn’t let anybody cheat off of me. So I don't have an example for that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you did not let others cheat off of you.

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Were there other students that would be more than happy to look on, whether it was homework or a quiz or a test? Would there be opportunities for that?

INTERVIEWEE: I feel like between friends. So if you knew the student and you knew that you guys had a decent relationship, I feel like those students were more comfortable to cheat off of each other.

INTERVIEWER: So is that one of the reasons why you said you were kind of the loner or is it just kind of a product of being you?

INTERVIEWEE: I'm not very sociable. I prefer to be by myself. So probably that’s the reason.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, good. Do you have any other offerings for that question?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I do not have any examples.
**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, good, good. Question number five, while in high school, have other gifted students justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? If so, please provide those statements.

**INTERVIEWEE:** When taking the survey, I remember letter E. I didn’t understand the curve part. What did you mean by-

**INTERVIEWER:** The curve?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** So that’s when if a student has a higher score that would also be bumped up. So to maintain, to help with that curve, some people will cheat to get an advantage.

**INTERVIEWEE:** To bump the whole class up?

**INTERVIEWER:** To bump the whole class up. Okay?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Okay. I’m ready.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. Go ahead.

**INTERVIEWEE:** So for gifted students specifically, there was one on here V. In high school if no one has told you that what you are doing is cheating, it’s okay and I feel like this can be justified, especially by gifted students. Because if you’re not taught that it’s cheating, then you think it’s okay to do that and I see that in college too. I’m on the honor council. So I see that some students don’t know. So if they don’t know, then they don’t think it’s cheating.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. It’s interesting I picked you being on the honor council.

**INTERVIEWEE:** And then, the rest of them, gifted students know cheating is cheating and even if they do it, they know that it’s wrong. So a lot of these, the majority of them, I don’t believe a gifted student, especially in high school, would justify this. I feel like cheating is better than failing if you don’t get caught. For letter O, that’s how I believe a statement would say that, but still they know cheating is wrong.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you know of any other techniques or rationalizations beyond these that could be used or have been used by others? Let’s go with have been used.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Okay. About group work or if a teacher doesn’t, I don’t know if it’s on here, but if a teacher doesn’t say that you can’t work together, then students will take that as well, we can work. We can look at each other’s answers because sometimes a teacher assumes that the students know that they don’t want them working together, but sometimes it’s not clear. And I’ve had that issue too where a teacher just gives us an assignment, but we don’t know if we can work on it or not and then another thing I just thought of. Substitute teachers, when you have a substitute teacher and the teacher is not
there, the teacher usually has the written instructions, but if the substitute isn’t really sure they’ll ask the students. Well, does your teacher normally let you guys work on this together and, of course, the students will say yes. So I just thought of that.

INTERVIEWER: All right. Okay. So group work, should teachers specify specifically what is and what isn’t appropriate when it comes to group work or any assignment or should there be a broad, I guess, statement associated with what is and what isn’t cheating associated with assignments. And what do you think works best?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, for exams and quizzes I don't believe that a teacher needs to say that you can’t work together. I mean that’s assumed unless it’s a group quiz. They do have those, but with assignments in high school, I feel as though teachers should say so because some assignments you have where the class works on it together with the teacher. Sometimes it’s just you work with your table partner and then, other times if the teacher just gives you a piece of paper and doesn’t say anything, you don’t know what to do.

INTERVIEWER: So is clarification important?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I feel like that’s always best because I guess you can assume well, if the teacher didn’t say anything, let’s work together, but I feel like a teacher should just say that, just what they want and be clear about that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Gotcha. Thank you. Anything else you'd like to add for this question?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. We're going to move on to the next one. If you think of any other rationalization techniques later in the interview, please feel free to bring those up.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Question number six, while in high school, have you justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? If so, please provide those statements or technique.

INTERVIEWEE: So we have the list. I can’t justify any of these as being okay for cheating. You can’t put a condition on cheating, but like I said before with V, if you're not told what you're doing is cheating, then that’s where I’m like oh, well. If you tell me, then I know, but if I don't know and I’m unsure and I do it, I didn’t meant to cheat because I didn’t know that it was cheating.

INTERVIEWER: All right. So there was no intent on it.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I don't have an example. Usually everything is pretty clear, but just with that one, I can just see different ways of how that can go wrong.
INTERVIEWER: Now, do you think some gifted high school students could use that often as in that’s their go-to? If they didn’t clarify it, that’s something that may be in the back of their mind? Not necessarily you personally, but-

INTERVIEWEE: I would say no because I would have never thought of this situation because to me this is a situation where cheating is questionable. I would never have thought of this before and I don’t think a high school student would think well, if I wasn’t explained or if this wasn’t defined as cheating, then I wouldn’t know. I would have never thought of that and I don’t think other high school students do because the other examples are more common, better than failing or if you don’t know a subject then it’s okay to cheat. That’s what you think of, but as a high school student I would have never thought about that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So again going back to the if you don’t feel confident, that may lead you to cheating.

INTERVIEWEE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: So you would understand that. I’m not saying you agree with it, but you could see other gifted students doing that.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: All right, good, good. Any other comments on that question?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Like before, if you think of any other neutralization techniques, feel free to say them before the end of the interview. Okay?

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Question number seven, can you provide me any other way a gifted high school student could justify, rationalize, neutralize cheating behavior? If so, please provide those techniques and again, this doesn’t have to be something that you’ve thought of or you’ve seen, but take a moment and think about what is possible.

INTERVIEWEE: So one thing that I don’t see on here is everyone cheated so I thought it was okay or everybody else was doing it, so I did it too because usually gifted students stick together. Usually, they have the same classes. They're usually separated from the rest of the students. So they kind of stick together. So if they all decide to do it, then the student can say well, everybody else did it. So why not, I decided to do it too.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So they're not alone, getting maybe the strength in numbers; is that what you're saying?

INTERVIEWEE: Right.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. Everyone cheats, gotcha. Any other possible ones that a gifted high school student could use that’s not listed?

INTERVIEWEE: Not that I can think of.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Of course, you can always offer some up before the interview is over. Question number eight, do you believe that justifying, rationalizing, or neutralizing of cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? Please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: So I don't believe that high school students try to justify. Usually, when I’ve seen gifted students if they're caught cheating, they admit to it and take the consequences. Usually, they forgive the students since they are high performers compared to the rest of their peers. They don’t get into as much trouble and students know that because their teachers are always complaining. At least from my experience, teachers complain well, my other class they did this and I’m so glad I have you guys sometimes because they're having AP that’s on a different level. So sometimes when they're caught, they just admit because they know that their punishment won’t be that harsh and like I said before, usually high school gifted students don’t have to cheat. They usually know, at least for me I knew the material. So I was pretty comfortable with it, but there’s always that one example of a student cheats for some reason.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Going back to your statement, you don’t believe they cheat or believe that they justify that they cheat. However, you said when they are caught, they usually admit it. So what do you think led them to cheat to begin with?

INTERVIEWEE: Grades. Gifted students it’s always about grades and high school period is always about having to get into college. It’s like from freshman year on, it’s always about college. You have to have good grades, standardized testing. Even in elementary school testing is really important. So for gifted students they always want to be at the top of the class. I know from my school, at least the first school I went to, rankings was really important, who was first, who was second, comparing. The group of gifted students they would kind of stick together and they would always compare their ranks because it’s a lot of competition in wanting to kind of do better than their friends and be the one on top. So usually, that’s why they cheat. I don't believe it’s they didn’t study or they had something else to do. That’s usually not the problem. It’s just they don’t think they're going to do well. So they feel like cheating is the only way to get them that good grade.

INTERVIEWER: So you mentioned for comparison. So that may be a leading factor for someone to cheat?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you see that on here anywhere or do you recall off the top of your head?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't remember seeing it on here.

INTERVIEWER: So you think comparison in the class rankings, in competition?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah. Sometimes cheating is necessary to get the GPA that you need. That’s one, but I don't know. It’s just from what I remember it was always who was number one, who was number two, and the ranking and waiting to get their report card so they can see where they were ranked. It’s such a big deal for gifted students. Regular students didn’t care.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, great, great. So competition, comparison, and you said grades, colleges. So there’s pressure associated with that, heavy pressure to get into certain colleges.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Would scholarships fall in that category as well, competition for that?

INTERVIEWEE: From where I’m from, a lot of the students get scholarships based on financial need. So that’s always-

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Gotcha, good, good. Any other comments on that question?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any final comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: I think the last question really summed it up where I don't believe gifted students cheat as much as students who aren’t gifted and like I said, it’s because they're gifted for a reason. They work hard to get where they're at. A lot of times gifted students, the information comes naturally for them and being around other gifted students encourages them to do better, but it’s always, like you said, pressure. And for any student, not feeling like you're prepared enough or you're going to do well on a test is some of the main reasons for cheating.

INTERVIEWER: So not prepared is a big factor for gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: But you're saying the majority of them will be working hard and will be studying, but yet that may be a factor in the situation of cheating.
INTERVIEWEE: Yeah. Sometimes no matter how hard you study or how much you do or how well you're doing in class, exams, and quizzes and stuff like that are always difficult for any student.

INTERVIEWER: Good, good, all right. Any other final comments about gifted high school students and they can be about anything as it relates to that area?

INTERVIEWEE: I feel like this list is a pretty good summary of reasons why students cheat. I couldn’t really think of too many more reasons why a student would cheat, but that’s pretty much it.

INTERVIEWER: So you would agree that gifted high school students would definitely use some of these?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Overall, I meant like non-gifted-

INTERVIEWER: Non-gifted, okay.

INTERVIEWEE: For all students this is a good list, but if a gifted student did cheat it would be one of these or the not knowing that it was cheating, so a really big one.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you're saying the non-gifted would be more likely to neutralize, rationalize, and use these techniques more so than the gifted?

INTERVIEWEE: For why they were cheating?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: I think I mean that this list overall for students, I guess any student, but more so non-gifted students would use these reasons for why they cheat, but for gifted students it’s more along the lines of they didn’t know it was cheating or it’s either that or they wouldn’t use an excuse. Like I said before, they would just admit that they were cheating.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So they are less likely to deny than-

INTERVIEWEE: Right. Yeah, they wouldn’t give an excuse for why they were cheating.

INTERVIEWER: All right. They would just take the whatever discipline or action from it and not try to justify it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Any other comments in general?

INTERVIEWEE: Not that I can think of.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. All right, good.
INTERVIEWER: Thank you for joining us. So, the icebreaker, why did you decide to participate in this study, complete the online survey, and agree to a face to face interview about cheating in high school?

INTERVIEWEE: It sounded like something kind of interesting and I’d actually be kind of interested in the results.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And I’ll be writing as we discuss. Please don’t think that it’s disrespectful. I’m always listening.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Specifically, what information would you be interested in? You mentioned being interested. What aspect specifically, do you know what would be interesting about the results?

INTERVIEWEE: I’d be interested in seeing like across different schools and comparing like not just my rural high school, but seeing how gifted students tend to rationalize cheating and tend to really look at it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, great.

INTERVIEWEE: Because I’m sure those attitudes actually do follow them through college.

INTERVIEWER: Any other reason why you did this study?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: All right, thank you. So question number one, where did you go to high school? You can mention the city, the state, or the geographic location or you can be as clear as you want.

INTERVIEWEE: I went to Ringgold High School and that’s in north Georgia; so, like just outside of Chattanooga.

INTERVIEWER: And you said it was rural?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Question number two, were you identified as gifted, talented, or exceptional by your high school?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I took a lot of honors, AP classes.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. Anything else for question number two?

INTERVIEWEE: What else would you want to know?

INTERVIEWER: Whatever you want to tell me. If you have nothing else, we can just move on to the next question.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And I’ll ask for that and don’t think I’m questioning you or judging you. I’ll just keep probing if you have more to offer. Okay, and that’s it and if you don’t, we simply move on.

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, I just didn’t know if there was some other piece you wanted.

INTERVIEWER: No. You’re fine, you’re fine. While in high school, have you known other gifted students that denied that they were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when, in fact, they had cheated?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and I guess it depends on how you define cheating, but some who you had used their older siblings’ work from previous classes to get some better grades in their classes.

INTERVIEWER: All right. Now, you said using your older siblings’ work. Were they ever questioned about this by any of these parties, classmate, teacher, administrator, in these situations?

INTERVIEWER: I think a teacher might have made a joke or lightly questioned. They were never really sent for disciplinary action.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now, would that be a common response from your experience when teachers would be dealing with cheating, jokingly?

INTERVIEWEE: It depends on the type and I guess some would define cheating a little differently than others. Some maybe not even include using disciplines or [indiscernible] cheating.

INTERVIEWER: So your definition, you’re saying the definition of cheating can vary from person to person and that could determine if cheating would occur?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So do you think gifted high school students have used that rationalization because their definition of cheating does not match that behavior?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, definitely. Cheating on smaller assignments, Googling the answers to homework that you still turn in, but it’s not cheating because it’s not really a test.
INTERVIEWER: So the definition would influence if one cheats, correct?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Any other information you'd like to share for that question?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: No problem. Question number four, while in high school, have you denied that you were cheating to a classmate, teacher, administrator, or parent when, in fact, you had cheated? If so, please explain the situation.

INTERVIEWEE: No, never cheated.

INTERVIEWER: May I ask why?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I’m the oldest of four. So there are no older siblings to copy and for the homework answers that I did Google, I was never really confronted. So I never denied it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now, if you were confronted, just hypothetically, do you think you would deny it?

INTERVIEWEE: It depends on how I was confronted. If I was confronted more aggressively, like serious threats like you're going to fail this claim, I’d probably try to deny it. If it was more of a you're better than this and I know you cheated then I would just own up to it or try to rationalize it away. Like, it’s not cheating.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Any other comments you want to share with that one?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Question number five, while in high school have other gifted students justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating behavior beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? If so, please provide those statements and techniques and so do you have any?

INTERVIEWEE: I haven’t seen any outside of this list.

INTERVIEWER: So would you believe that this is a good set of rationalization techniques that are common among gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: Definitely. There are some that I haven’t even seen, but would probably happened in, I guess, more diverse areas. Like English, speaking English poorly or curving. That wasn’t a thing in high school.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, any other comments on question number five?

INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: All right. Before I move on to the next question, if you think of another neutralization technique that is not on here later in the evening feel free to bring it up. Okay?

INTERVIEWEE: Sure.

INTERVIEWER: Question number six, while in high school, have you justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating beyond the techniques provided on the online survey? Again, I’m going to pause.

INTERVIEWEE: Using the definition of cheating and kind of bending it to define what cheating is.

INTERVIEWER: So that’s something that you have used when justifying or rationalizing cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: I’ve used and I’ve seen used.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So that would go back to number five. So you’ve seen others, so bending the definition. Do you have any other justification for cheating that you’ve used?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I’ve never really used any especially outside of the list.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Maybe I’ve seen some about like cheating to stay on a sports team.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now, was that you?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I didn’t play sports.

INTERVIEWER: So you’re saying that to stay on the sports team, you’ve heard of gifted high school students to stay on the team they would cheat?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, one in particular on a Spanish test.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me more about that?

INTERVIEWEE: He was failing Spanish. He was the quarterback. Also she was gifted in middle school. I think he was still in the gifted program in high school, but took less, few honors program classes and he decided to make a cheat sheet, just like good old fashioned cheating.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that’s common among gifted high school, this necessity?

INTERVIEWEE: No.
INTERVIEWER: All right. So you don’t think that’s common. Why do you think that?

INTERVIEWEE: At least for Spanish, definitely that failing, that was rather uncommon in and of itself at my high school and the class he was in, I was also in and we had a very lenient [indiscernible] type teacher.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, good. Do you have any other ways that you or another gifted high school student has justified or rationalized cheating beyond what we’ve discussed so far?

INTERVIEWEE: I can’t think of anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Of course like before, if you think of anything else please feel free to jump in and offer those. Question number six, while in high school, have you justified, excuse me, we’ve already asked that, justified, rationalized, or neutralized cheating behavior and you said you’re good now. Okay. Question number seven then, can you provide me with any other way a gifted high school student could justify, rationalize, or neutralize cheating behavior? If so, please provide those and I’ll give you a moment.

INTERVIEWEE: I guess trying to rationalize it as it’s just something I do just to get into college. It’s not going to affect me in the long-term.

INTERVIEWER: And do you think that this common among on gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: It may be. I guess it’d be something you’d tell yourself more than you’d share that [indiscernible].

INTERVIEWER: So it’s not going to affect you. Would you say that no one is hurt by it or what would you say? Is it a big deal or what would you say possibly?

INTERVIEWEE: I do think it’s still a big deal because you’re not learning, but it can be rationalized away as being victimless or by saying I’m the only victim. So if I choose to, then why should anyone care?

INTERVIEWER: Good. Can you think of any other possibilities or ways that gifted high school students could justify cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: I guess using their older siblings’ work saying someone else has put in the work. So why not use it?

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that that could be common, apparently from your experience?

INTERVIEWEE: Using older siblings’ work is common, but I don’t know that that rationalization is.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, good. You've heard the phrase don’t reinvent the wheel?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you think that falls in that category? It’s already been done, why do redo it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you don’t know how common this would be?

INTERVIEWEE: I don’t.

INTERVIEWER: What would be another reason to justify, besides not reinventing the wheel, why, I guess, using their older siblings’ or say another classmate’s work as their own? What would be another justification for that?

INTERVIEWEE: I guess all the usual ones. You've run out of time. Everyone always runs out of time or your printer is broken just this one time. So, you're just going to have your friend print their own twice.

INTERVIEWER: Good, good. Any other possible ways a gifted high school student can justify it that we have now discussed yet?

INTERVIEWEE: I can’t really think of anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, all right. If you do, please jump in at any time. Question eight, do you believe that justifying, rationalizing, or neutralizing of cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? Please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: Cheating definitely happens and people don’t like to say yeah, they cheated on that one. So it’s definitely as common as cheating is.

INTERVIEWER: So you think they go hand in hand as cheating and rationalizing?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Why do they go hand in hand? Is it because you mentioned that no one likes to be, I guess, wrong in their behaviors? Can you go a little further on that?

INTERVIEWEE: Maybe it’s a little bit of cognitive [indiscernible]. Like you know what you're doing is wrong, but you're also still going to be keep doing it. So, you're going to rationalize it and say oh, well, it’s not actually wrong or it’s okay because.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So the cognitive [indiscernible], so you have two conflicting cognitions. You tend to have two, maybe three results from that. Either you change one of the cognitions or you justify the two different cognitions. A possible third one is to convince others that it’s okay to have conflicting thoughts. Of those three possibilities, which of them is the most common when it comes cheating?
INTERVIEWEE: Justification and then followed by convincing others or telling others when you're caught it’s okay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you said justification first?

INTERVIEWEE: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: Then you said?

INTERVIEWEE: Trying to convince others.

INTERVIEWER: Convince others and then changing is the third one?

INTERVIEWEE: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: It’s interesting you put it that way. So they're more likely to justify way before they would actually change their cognitions of I know cheating is wrong. That would be the one cognition. However, I still cheat. Okay. Is that where you're going with that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, and even if you stop cheating, but you still hold this belief that well, this really isn’t cheating, the justification and like rationalization of that behavior is still there.

INTERVIEWER: So at one point it is cheating. The next point it is not. Okay, very good, very good. I’m going to ask the question again and then, we’ll go to the final one if you don’t have anything else to say. Do you believe that justifying, rationalizing, or neutralizing of cheating behavior is common among gifted high school students? Please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: It’s definitely common.

INTERVIEWER: Last thing, do you have any final comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students? This can be a broad statement. This could be on your soapbox, whatever you want.

INTERVIEWEE: I think cheating isn’t taken as seriously by high school students as it should be. As in they get to college and they try to copy, you know, [indiscernible] or some random yahoo answer that happened to answer their question [indiscernible] ago. And then, their professors see it and they notice. I know which yahoo answer that is because it’s got some unit flaw and then, they get caught and then they're surprised that it’s still cheating. So it affects them way more than they are able to see and in high school you throw all of the blame on the teacher. So you really should know I didn’t actually do this work. Therefore, it’s cheating.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, all right. So you believe that many undergraduates that were formal gifted high school students are ill prepared for the academic integrity that is expected in higher education?
INTERVIEWEE: Definitely. I was.

INTERVIEWER: So you were ill prepared yourself?

INTERVIEWEE: I was ill prepared in a lot of ways.

INTERVIEWER: Do you mind telling me some of those ways?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, study habits first of all. When you’re gifted, you don’t have to study in high school. You show up. You take a test. It’s like a minor inconvenience and then you get it back and it’s an A. Then you try to do that in college. The first semester, you can kind of coast and get like a 3.5sh, but then your second semester you’re in like the [Indiscernible] Chem. II, the intro to Physics I and you start having to actually learn and you don’t actually know how to learn anything on your own. Then, you don’t know who to ask for help or how to get help or where to start and then you’ve got a 33 on a test.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And because of that you think academic dishonesty could result from this because they’re looking back to their own high school experience and they see cheating as not a serious offense. If they were [indiscernible] and just the whole system of high school can be problematic when it comes to adapting well in college?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and even in high school, if you do cheat you might get a slap on the wrist, a couple of days of in-school suspension depending on how much you cheated on, I guess. Maybe you get a zero on the assignment or you lose a few days. Like, they make you redo it or something, but in college you could actually fail a class or if you cheat on something big enough [indiscernible]. People have returned papers. I don’t cheat. So I don’t, but if you cheated on that and you are in college, you have to understand plagiarism is. In high school, it’s like well, you technically put a website on there.

INTERVIEWER: So you would recommend harsher, I guess, punishments or sanctions in high school when it comes to violating honor codes or actually being found to be cheating?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know that it’s even necessarily a harsher punishment. I think something more about like this is cheating and reinforcing. Like, you can’t just bend the definition or you shouldn’t be able to just bend it and change it and having an agreed upon standard instead of allowing teachers to bend it, which kind of shows the students that it’s pliable.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay, so not so much on the disciplinary end, but you would recommend allowing say the administration and even teachers to define what is and what isn’t cheating to their best of their ability.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: And you think that would help the gifted high school students not only in high school, but also in college or higher ED and beyond that; would you agree?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, be playing it out. Like, very clearly spell out, no fancy legal language, this is cheating. Using a website to do your homework is also cheating. Even if the homework is a completion grade, it’s still cheating.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, good. I’ll read it again. You can offer up anything. You can ask for clarification, do any of that. Do you have any final comments on cheating as it relates to gifted high school students?

INTERVIEWEE: I think I’m good.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you want to go back to any other questions or do you think we're good?

INTERVIEWEE: I think we're good.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I’ll stop the recording.

END TRANSCRIPTION
APPENDIX F

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY
APPENDIX F

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY

RE: Dissertation Survey Permission

Don

I grant you permission to use the survey instrument from my dissertation in the way you have described below. Please let me know when it is finished - I would love to read it.

Brian E. Holting

Brian E. Holting, Ph.D.
Associate Faculty
University of Hawaii

Don:

I'm a doctoral student in the CBM program at Hawaii University. I am seeking your permission to use a portion of your survey instrument from your dissertation in my dissertation. I plan to include the neutralization statements and have undergraduates that were gifted high school students respond in a retrospective nature. My committee and I have realized that access to high school students is challenging so we are choosing to survey undergraduates. In my mixed methods study, your neutralization statements would address Styles and Napier's, Miron's, and Klocke's neutralization techniques used by gifted high school students. I will also utilize semi-structured interviews to address a handful of other established neutralization techniques. My dissertation could truly benefit from the use of your neutralization statements. If you have any further questions, please let me know. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Don Jenette
APPENDIX G

MERCER IRB APPROVAL
APPENDIX G

MERCER IRB APPROVAL

Thursday, March 23, 2017

Mr. Don Edwin Jennette
1501 Mercer University Drive
TIR College of Education
Macon, GA 31207

RE: Undergraduates’ Retrospective Perceptions of Academic Dishonesty as Gifted High School Students (H1703086)

Dear Mr. Jennette:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 13-Mar-2017 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.110(b) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(ies) 6, 7 per 63 FR 60384.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 22-Mar-2017. The protocol expires on 22-Mar-2018. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:
To investigate the gifted high school student’s ability to justify academic dishonesty

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and ALL accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ava Chambless-Richardson, Ph.D., CIF, CIM.
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
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