Interpretive and Critical Phenomenological Crime Studies: A Model Design

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The critical and interpretive phenomenological approach is underutilized in the study of crime. This commentary describes this approach, guided by the question, "Why are interpretive phenomenological methods appropriate for qualitative research in criminology?" Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe a model of the interpretive phenomenological approach, illustrating its effectiveness in qualitative studies of criminology. The discussion illustrates the components of interpretive phenomenology approach and procedures of data analysis. These methods provide experiential data that highlight the effects of incarceration of juveniles as adults. Data can influence policymakers to reconsider criminal penalties for juveniles and toward enactment of more deterrent legislation. Keywords: criminogenic studies, interpretive phenomenological approach, juvenile waiver, deterrence, recidivism

Qualitative Research in Crime

Qualitative research methods are unique in their subjective accounts and rich detail that benefit both researchers and policymakers (Pogrebin, 2004a)**.** In criminology studies, these methods are particularly relevant for provision of meaningful information beyond aggregate crime data and the outcomes of crime control. Moreover, this type of inquiry takes into account the complex and multivariate nature of individuals and social influences (Creswell, 2008; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Pogrebin (2004b) argues that offenders' explanations must be included before the situational dynamics of offending can be fully understood.

The majority of crime-related research studies are quantitative (Miller, 2008; Sherman & Strange, 2004; Taylor, 2007). Nevertheless, qualitative studies have increased as researchers recognize the need to supplement statistical models and conclusions with experiential data in studying the real world of offenders and crime (Pogrebin, 2004a). Particularly useful to crime studies is critical and interpretive phenomenology. In this approach, researchers seek to understand how and when individuals experience alterations or changes in outlooks and worldviews based on the incorporation of information and experiences in the "fluid and dynamic process of decision-making and change" (Conroy, 2003, p. 31).

Smith et al. (2009) provide a comprehensive definition of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA):

> IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms. The philosopher Edmund Husserl famously urges

phenomenologists to go "back to the things themselves," [sic] and IPA research follows his lead in this regard rather than attempting to fix experience in predefined or overly abstract categories. (p. 1)

However, the critical and interpretive phenomenological approach is highly underutilized in the study of crime. This mode not only uncovers criminal participants' decisions and motivations for offending, but also allows researchers to include and reflect on their own experiences in ways that elicit deeper and more profound participant responses. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe a model of the interpretive phenomenological approach, illustrating its effectiveness in qualitative studies of criminology. The research question, then, is: why are interpretive phenomenological methods most appropriate for qualitative research in criminology? Such a model design could be used by both novice and experienced researchers and could provide a much-needed guide for approaches to gain better understanding of and elicit richer material from participants about their offending decisions. The significance of such a model can lead to more effective crime control strategies, shed needed light on offenders' mental processes, and encourage more effective legislation toward prevention and lower recidivism.

Qualitative phenomenological data analysis is a complex and unique method of inquiry. It involves "cyclical" analysis, in which, through repetition and recurring analysis, the researcher inquires, listens, searches, compares, verifies, composites, confirms, and evaluates "in endless cycles to ensure fundamentals of knowledge" (Shin, Kim, & Chung, 2009, p. 856). The process yields an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences in many social, cultural, emotional, and psychological aspects. The interpretive approach thus includes the impacts and importance to participants of cultural, social, and political environments (Conroy, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). This approach includes critical hermeneutics as a specialized approach to interpretive phenomenology (Thompson, 1981).

With regard to the study of crime, interpretive phenomenological approaches appear to have been neglected. For example, Smith et al. (2009) point out that no single design can be applied without sensitivity to the particular sociocultural milieu studied, literature on the topic, and the specific participants. However, Smith et al. discuss studies and applications only to issues of health, sex, psychological distress, and life transitions. Their studies do not suggest applicability to criminogenic studies.

This paper and the recommendations for conducting interpretive phenomenological research stem from my study of incarcerated adults serving sentences imposed in adult court for crimes committed as juveniles (Miner-Romanoff, 2010). I developed this study after much experience as a practicing attorney in public and private venues. A former clerk in the U.S. District Court and U.S. Court of Appeals and assistant to chief of staff and chief counsel for the Ohio Attorney General, I have long been interested in juvenile justice and the effects on juveniles as they reach adulthood. As a professor of juvenile delinquency and the law, I have conducted research in pivotal issues in delinquency, including legislative changes and sentencing trends. I have worked with local juvenile facilities to develop reciprocal relationships with institutional and judicial leadership to expose my students to actual facilities and the realities of court procedures.

In addition, I was principal investigator for a research study funded by a grant

from the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services involving juveniles bound over to the adult court and worked with a leading scholar, C. Ron Huff, Ph.D., currently Dean of the School of Social Ecology and Professor of Sociology and Criminology, University of California, Irvine. For this research, I conducted 35 in-depth interviews with incarcerated adults who had been sentenced as juveniles and incarcerated in adult institutions. The more I learned, the more I became aware of the wide gap between public policy adopted to deter crime and actual crime rates. Consequently, I developed great interest in the development of severe sanctions for juveniles.

My study purpose was to explore the incarcerated participants' perceptions, understandings, and knowledge of their assignment to adult court; severity of punishment in their sentences; how these contributed to their decisions as juveniles to commit crimes; and possible deterrent influences of their understandings and knowledge.

I conducted in-depth interviews in four of the 12 Ohio prisons with 12 male and female adult inmates (age range 19-30, age range at incarceration 14-17, all currently serving sentences from 2 to 45 years). Data analysis revealed that none (0%) of the participants understood their assignment as juveniles to adult court for sentencing, and over four-fifths had no knowledge of this law. The majority also claimed they may not have committed their crimes if they had understood they could be tried and sentenced as adults (Miner-Romanoff, 2010).

My findings elucidate the offenders' decision-making capacities in ways that could lead to alternative methods of crime control and preventative educational strategies. The participants were *waived* to adult court. Juvenile waiver refers to laws that allow or mandate judges to transfer youth who would normally be classified as juveniles to the adult criminal court based on the seriousness of the crimes (Rosch, 2007). By law, they are *bound over,* that is, assigned for sentencing, to adult court (Peterson-Badali, Ruck, & Koegl, 2001). These laws were developed to increase public safety and were based on the theory of deterrence, in which the severity of a criminal sentence is perceived as a risk in the decision to commit a crime. If the risk outweighs the benefit of the criminal behavior and the sentence is perceived as aversive enough, the likelihood of criminal offending will be decreased (Peterson-Badali et al., 2001; Redding, 2003).

In this commentary and explanation of the model design I used in my study, I will include examples from the study findings. To place this design in its proper context, I will first briefly review the historical use and importance of qualitative research in crime. Next, I will provide a rationale for qualitative designs in criminogenic studies toward influencing social change and then critically review the few qualitative collections and individual studies. Then, I will substantiate the need for interpretive rather than descriptive phenomenological designs in crime research and discuss the basic components of interpretive phenomenology, including consideration of social contexts, interviewing skills, and researcher bias and stance. Finally, I discuss the stages and methods of data analysis designed to elicit the richest meanings from the data collected, with appropriate illustrations, including authentication procedures.

This discussion is intended to encourage the greater use and appropriateness of interpretive phenomenological designs in qualitative studies, especially of criminal behavior. Such methods provide rich experiential data from participants that highlight the adverse effects of incarceration of juveniles as adults. Such data can be used to influence

policymakers in reconsideration of current harsh criminal penalties for juveniles and toward enactment of more effective legislation.

The Importance of Qualitative Research in Crime Studies

Qualitative studies were traditionally utilized to study crime from approximately 1920 to 1940. However, the qualitative approach fell out of favor in the last several decades (Miller, 2008; Taylor, 2007). Over 10 years ago, Von Hirsch, Bottoms, Burney, and Wikstrom (1999) urged the use of qualitative studies to examine offending processes, pointing out that studies of deterrence and its relation to sentence severity must be more than statistical and outcome-based. Von Hirsch et al. point out the very limited qualitative research conducted up to that time on the subjective nature of deterrence and decision making.

Von Hirsch et al. (1999) also observe that two crucial issues need in-depth study, and to date both have been largely ignored. The first crucial issue is to what extent are potential offenders aware of the severity of punishment? This question cannot be posed to individuals who have not actually contemplated or committed crimes, as is often the case with deterrence research (Piquero, Gomez-Smith, & Langton, 2004). Rather, Von Hirsch et al. note that the answers must be sought from those who are at risk of offending or who have actually offended. After a decade-long hiatus, the issue was only recently addressed again by Jacobs (2010), who discusses risk sensitivity and deterrability with the purpose of drawing attention to an area of inquiry in criminology that has been generally neglected.

The second crucial issue is to what extent are participants' subjective perceptions likely to affect their behavioral outcomes? This question refers to the variability of offenders' deterrence thresholds, that is, the level of risk they can tolerate, and requires in-depth inquiry of offenders' perceptions of sanctions and risk aversion (Von Hirsch et al., 1999). Without such particularized research with those who have offended, deterrence studies may remain deficient (Peterson-Badali et al., 2001; Redding, 2008).

Rationale for Qualitative Designs in Studies of Crime Toward Social Change

A long-term goal of many crime studies is positive social change in policy development and implementation, and thus qualitative designs are additionally justified. Mears (2007) argues that social science research must include rich and personal accounts that are informed, systemic, and fluid to draw in stakeholders. If researchers are open to multiple research methods and accept collaboration, the general community will be more likely to accept scientific findings and engage in meaningful policy dialogue as issues are reframed and clarified (Silverman, 2004). Hence, it is often the in-depth and well-researched accounts that compel decision makers to question and change policy for the better rather than impersonal statistics of quantitative studies (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). Thus, in criminogenic studies, when qualitative findings are used for policy formation, the reflections and decision-making processes of offenders will more likely be understood and taken into account in evidence-based policy, rather than reliance on rigid theories and positions (Sullivan, 2007).

With qualitative methods, the participant's individual consciousness provides the vehicle for the understanding of a research issue (Groenewald, 2004). Responsible qualitative methods are designed to produce findings that reveal individuals' experiences and genuine thoughts and reflections (Creswell, 2008). Too often researchers use interview data without effectively describing the philosophical underpinnings and corresponding methodology of the research. In a recent study of qualitative research, Shin, Kim, and Chung (2009) found that of the 135 studies reviewed, 95, or 70%, did not credit any methodologist for any particular philosophical basis or specified methods utilized. Although the authors of those studies could have utilized specified methods, the reader cannot frame or assess the studies without knowledge of the particularized philosophies or designs used. Such omissions may render findings less than reliable or even applicable to the research problems.

With regard to studies of juvenile offenders and their knowledge of the possibility of their sentencing as adults, Peterson-Badali et al. (2001) argue that quantitative variables to measure offending cannot explain how juveniles process and perceive sanctions. Nor will offender variables reveal how sanction knowledge is obtained or what it means to offenders. Juveniles' understandings are subjective in a complex and inconsistent manner that calls for in-depth explorations of their perceptions. Similarly, surveys cannot provide the multifaceted and personal data needed to understand complex phenomena recounted by participants in terms of their motivation, step-by-step accounts, and contexts of decision-making (Taylor, 2007).

With regard to previous studies in crime, Von Hirsch et al. (1999) call for the use of phenomenological traditions to explore the extent and meaning of juveniles' sanction knowledge as it relates to deterrence. More recently, scholars have pointed out the need for interview-based research that specifically explores subjective offender accounts and perceived meanings by criminology experts (Mears, 2007; Miller, 2008; Miller & Glassner, 2004; Pogrebin, 2004a). Redding (2008) also recommends that such studies be conducted with youth bound over to adult court.

Qualitative Studies in Crime: A Brief Critical Review

Similar to the surprising findings of the Shin et al. (2009) study, criminologic qualitative studies show similar deficiencies, even among champions of qualitative research. This lack is evident in recent discussions and collections (reviewed next). An inaugural volume of qualitative studies, edited by Taylor (2007), indicates a renewed interest in qualitative studies in crime. Sullivan's (2007) foreword justified the need for research that focuses on offenders' accounts and perspectives. In a brief history of crime studies, Sullivan points out the dominance of quantitative studies, even though as early as 1937, there has been a longstanding tradition of using offenders' accounts to further an understanding of crime. Sullivan (2007) notes qualitative studies have gained new prominence and observes they have inappropriately remained underutilized for studies of crime and justice. "Even as new enthusiasm for qualitative studies . . . has spread through other parts of the social sciences, qualitative studies have tended to remain marginalized in criminology and criminal justice" (p. xiv).

Moreover, in his introductory chapter, Taylor (2007) points out the inadequacies of surveys to provide the complex and personal data needed for an adequate

understanding of offenders and their choices for use in policy evaluations and prevention efforts. Data that are not in-depth become "opaque" (p. 24), failing to include the step-by-step accounts, relationships, contexts, feelings, and motives of offenders. Thus, although the volume edited by Taylor (2007) focuses on drug-related crimes, it collected studies that have used qualitative methods, specifically offender accounts, to inform and understand theories of crime and offender decision-making. Special emphasis was given to offenders' knowledge of risk/benefit relationships embedded in deterrence and rational choice theories of crime and crime control. However, although the volume provides particularized and transparent data analysis methods, it fails to identify interviewing techniques used and perspectives of philosophical approaches. Clarity is lacking regarding researchers' specific roles, goals, or techniques as a frame of reference for greater understanding of the data (Creswell, 2008; Maxwell, 2005).

Similar to Sullivan (2007) and Taylor (2007), Miller (2008) discusses the importance of returning to qualitative research in criminology to understand the vast amount of variation in and importance of context and situational aspects of offending. Miller argues for the inclusion of more qualitative studies to further understanding of crime and offenders. In contrast to quantitative findings, qualitative studies, Miller (2008) maintains, carried out within carefully framed designs and analytical vigor will advance research goals and societal understanding.

Further, Miller (2008) explicates the damaging effects of judging qualitative studies by the same standards as quantitative studies. He points out that researchers and policymakers must appreciate the unique goals and methodological designs of qualitative studies as distinct from, yet complementary to, those of quantitative studies. Consequently, sampling, for example, is generally purposeful in qualitative studies and not random, as in quantitative studies. Miller (2008) also emphasizes the necessity of rigorous, strategic, and carefully designed and executed qualitative studies and called for clear delineation of the methodological philosophies that inform and guide researchers' roles and techniques.

However, like many qualitative criminologists, Miller (2008) fails to specify different methods of qualitative studies and their corresponding philosophies. Nevertheless, he suggests several areas that would benefit greatly from qualitative research. These include situational studies of crime and the social processes that shape offenders' decisions, as well as pathways to offending and desistance.

In another effort to further the value of qualitative studies in crime, Pogrebin (2004a) edited a collection of qualitative studies utilizing different crime typologies, such as property crimes, violent crimes, and sex crimes. All the studies include offenders' personal accounts, explanations, and meanings associated with the criminal activities and lifestyles. The studies were collected to provide a better understanding of offenders' personal descriptions of their motivations and operations, in what Pogrebin (2004b) terms "naturalistic" (p. 2) methods. Several studies reproduced in Pogrebin's (2004a) book (e.g., Sommers, Baskin, & Fagan, 1994; Waldorf & Murphy, 1995) analyze data collected for significant meanings comparable to phenomenological studies.

However, in Pogrebin's (2004a) volume, the majority of the studies fail to describe the design specificity, researchers' roles, viewpoints, or techniques. Most studies do not include transparent trustworthiness methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Instead, the authors reproduce participants' narratives verbatim in an effort to organize important findings, but do not account for any type of researcher bracketing (Creswell, 2008), data coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994), thematic patterns (Seidman, 2006), or other complex, yet crucial, qualitative analytical features recommended by qualitative experts (Conroy, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). Although the studies in Pogrebin (2004a) illustrate the necessity of interview methods to gain insight into offenders' understandings, meanings, and criminal decision making processes, most of the studies fail to provide examples of well-conducted, authentic, and reliable qualitative research.

In contrast, in a careful and important study of female gang rituals, Miller and Glassner (2004) argue for the permanent inclusion of nonpositivistic approaches. Miller and Glassner recognize that qualitative approaches can fill many gaps and contribute to understanding of the social world as a basis for fostering social change. They further endorse the interactionist tradition of interviewing, which emphasizes intersubjectivity between researcher and participant. Intersubjectivity describes the dual and concurrent relationship with oneself and others (Smith et al., 2009). With this type of interview technique, similar to interpretive phenomenological methods, researchers gain knowledge of a phenomenon that is meaningful beyond the immediate interview context (Conroy, 2003; Groenewald, 2004).

Miller and Glassner (2004) provide clear and specific philosophical frames of reference necessary for a well-designed qualitative study. They explain their perspectives and research roles for the study of female gang rituals and discuss the interview techniques used that increase the depth and authenticity of participants' responses. Miller and Glassner also point out how they concurrently drew on their own expertise to frame the issues and search for relevant structures, contexts, and meanings. Moreover, the authors emphasize the need to accept participants' responses as relevant and realistic, despite possible or apparent inconsistencies with cultural norms or stereotypes, such as the stereotype of female gang members as not intelligent. As one of the participants in my study observed, "Your wrong may be my right."

The Miller and Glassner (2004) study provides scholarly and significant qualitative research in crime that not only contributes to the understanding of gang phenomena, but also can serve as a model for rigorous and excellent qualitative research and interviewing techniques, such as interpretive phenomenology. As these authors show, it is important for interview techniques, mechanisms, and strategies to be specified and implemented, and rigorous and in-depth analyses to go beyond description to interpretation based on empirical data. These standards are necessary especially for phenomenological designs to be perceived as methodologically viable and viewed as credible as quantitative methods (Miller, 2008).

Why Phenomenological Designs?

Although many qualitative research methods provide rich and detailed personal accounts of particular problems and societal issues, phenomenological studies are particularly appropriate for addressing specific knowledge and participants' detailed subjective experiences. In-depth and semistructured interviews encourage participants to reflect on the meanings of their experiences in ways beyond initial, possibly facile, responses to consideration of intricate relationships of factors and contexts related to their

present situations (Seidman, 2006). Moustakas (1994) suggests that the primary purpose of phenomenological research is

> to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words the essences of structures of the experience. (p. 13)

Moreover, phenomenological research is often informed by recognized theories that can guide interview questions and orient research designs (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The phenomenological tradition has been recommended by prominent criminologists to provide the means to encourage offenders to explain the process that led to their offending (Seidman, 2006; Taylor, 2007).

In similar terms, Groenwald (2004) explains that phenomenology should be utilized when the research calls for "the internal experience of being conscious of something" (p. 4) or the actual lived experiences of those involved with the issue investigated. Groenewald's work is less detailed than other phenomenological researchers, such as Lopez and Willis (2004) or Conroy (2003). However, in his informative work on phenomenological research design, Groenewald, like Conroy (2003) and Miller (2008), urges authors to choose their methods carefully, render those methods and techniques transparent to the reader, and substantiate their use.

Why Interpretive Rather Than Descriptive Phenomenology?

As overall research goals are expected to drive research methods, these same goals should drive the particularized tradition or paradigm best suited to the research questions within the broader method (Groenewald, 2004). The descriptive and interpretive modes offer two distinct, yet related approaches to phenomenology. Both are based on in-depth interviews that deal with participants' knowledge and subjective experiences on the topic of study. However, the modes differ considerably in their frames of references regarding how the interview questions are developed, how the interview is conducted, the role of the researcher, and the analytical paradigms that follow (Creswell, 2008).

Descriptive Phenomenology

Descriptive phenomenology is sometimes referred to as Husserlian, a philosophy holds that all experiences share one universal commonality or "correct interpretation" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). As a result, the analysis becomes a search for a universal meaning. Descriptive phenomenology is thus based upon the researcher's ability to achieve "transcendental subjectivity" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 727). The word *transcendental* refers to the researcher's continuous efforts to neutralize personal knowledge, preconceptions, and biases; transcending them so that they do not impact or obscure faithful or accurate recordings of participants' responses or the analysis of the data.

In this mode, knowledge of prior theory and even literature reviews may be contraindicated to prevent researchers from forming preconceived impressions regarding the phenomenon of study and possible conclusions. Participants' narratives are considered separate from their contexts. Further, descriptive phenomenology focuses on the participants' accounts of "what actually happened in terms of observable . . . behavior or events" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 59).

Interpretive Phenomenology

In contrast, the interpretive tradition of phenomenology emphasizes different paradigms that embrace and encourage researchers' prior knowledge and expertise. This tradition simultaneously provides methods and techniques that limit researcher bias (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Interpretive phenomenology focuses not only on behavior and events, but on their meanings "including cognition, affect, intentions" for the people involved (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22).

Thus, interpretive or critical hermeneutical phenomenology, based on the tenets of the philosopher Heidegger, uses interview techniques that elicit deep and profound responses based on the phenomenon of study within the participants' social contexts (Maxwell, 2005). Prior theory is not eschewed as limiting by the researcher, but rather is thoughtfully utilized in a cyclical approach, with theory informing research questions and findings informing theory development (Shin et al., 2009). Likewise, literature reviews are used to focus the study where most needed, most functional and also to make design decisions regarding sampling, validity, authenticity, analysis, and usefulness of findings (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

However, Maxwell (2005) cautions that theory should not dominate or constrict phenomenological designs. Instead, researchers should continually test theories as they search out a variety of ways to analyze and interpret the data gathered. Maxwell's balanced approach is the one reflected in the design suggested in this paper. Although existing theory informs and focuses interpretive phenomenological research, theory should not act as a limiting agent to new ideas and clusters of meanings that may be discovered during data analysis (Maxwell, 2005).

In addition, in interpretive phenomenology, the researcher's expertise is cautiously utilized. Although the participants' meanings are focused on and the most relevant, researchers' experiences, training, and expertise can encourage and enhance expression of participants' meanings (Maxwell, 2005). Researchers can then perceive themselves as instruments of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Groenewald (2004) points out that researchers can never fully detach themselves from their research and, instead of pretending to do so, may recognize their experiences as valuable grounding information as they maintain openness to new ideas and constructions. Thus, design, implementation, and interpretation are grounded in and shaped by the researcher's experiences, knowledge, skills, and purposes. Interpretation is not mechanical, but based on insights and perspectives beyond simple or literal description that allow and encourage the researcher to simultaneously hold personal descriptions in check and utilizing accumulated acumen to guide the research and analytical processes (Smith et al., 2009).

Conroy (2003) maintains that interpretive or hermeneutical phenomenological techniques are superior to those of descriptive or transcendental phenomenology. Conroy

suggests that researchers use interpretive phenomenology with meticulously designed, implemented, and analyzed interviews. Moreover, he recommends a cyclical spiraling approach in interviews. This approach involves researchers recognizing established theories and governing paradigms and utilizing them for direction and interpretation while simultaneously acknowledging participants' understandings and internal logic as significant and primary. Thus, Conroy (2003) urges researchers to search for shared interpretation in nonlinear pathways to arrive at shared meanings and discover new connotations.

The Components of Interpretive Phenomenology

In this section, I discuss basic components of interpretive phenomenological research (with substantiation from experts in the field), and I advocate scholars' serious consideration of phenomenological methods. There are seven basic components of interpretive phenomenological research: interviewing methods, researchers' prior experiences, sensitivity to participants' values and norms, researcher bias, researcher bracketing, researcher fluidity, and building trust with marginalized participants. These elements are present in other types of responsible qualitative research; however, they are discussed to orient the reader to the distinctive emphases and techniques of the interpretive method and to illustrate their use with participants who are criminals or incarcerated.

Interviewing Methods

A major precept in interpretive phenomenological interviewing is "intersubjectivity" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). This concept refers to the study's explicit frames of references and minimization of researcher bias during the interviews (Conroy, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Intersubjectivity in phenomenology "presupposes that our . . . knowledge of ourselves is directly linked to our knowledge of others" (Kaylo, 2006, p. 7). Intersubjectivity thus integrates the interviewer's knowledge and experience that, in turn, produce participants' most relevant and important meanings and impressions within their social and cultural contexts (Burke, 2005). In turn, the researcher relates from personal experiences to the participants' experiences and strives to listen empathically and interpret accurately. With this overarching principle in mind, it is important for phenomenological researchers to recognize specific interview techniques for comprehensive data collection.

Interviewing in criminogenic research requires planning and arrangements beyond those with participants in other physical locations. If participants are interviewed in a prison setting in which they are incarcerated, a location needs to be arranged that is both private for them and safe for the interviewer. For example, during my research, an institution guard accompanied me to a private room from which the guard could see me at all times. The participant was escorted to the room and the door was closed. At my request, I faced the window so that the participant would not be distracted or intimated by the guard.

As in any research, participant protections need to be explained and an informed consent signed. If the interview is to be audiotaped, participants should be informed and

their permission voluntarily given. However, special circumstances may prevail. In my research with incarcerated individuals, I explained that three exceptions to the confidentiality agreement existed. First, I noted that a court of law could execute a legal subpoena for my research data (Palys & Lowman, 2002). Second, based on ethical duties, I would have to notify a prison official if the participant threatened to harm a particular person or himself or herself (Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Code of Ethics, 2000). Last, I noted that the Department of Corrections had a right to examine all materials that were carried out of the institution, if they so desired.

For maximum trust-building, it is wise for researchers to memorize the primary interview questions, so that eye contact may be maintained throughout the sessions (Creswell, 2007). Eye contact will convey researchers' genuine interest and undivided attention (Creswell, 2007). Researchers may find helpful a notebook containing the typed interview protocol with ample room for making notes and observations of participants' responses in tone and gestures. These field notes are taken so the nonverbal aspects of the responses may be captured (Perakyla, 2004). In addition, on these sheets, researchers may record their own responses and bracket them for later reflection (Moustakas, 1994). These reflections are best documented immediately after the interviews; however, recording of notations and impressions as soon as possible should still result in more enhanced interpretation of interview data (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005).

Questions may be used judicially in the interviews. If a response is less than clear, researchers may ask follow-up or clarifying questions without making the question leading (Seidman, 2006; Taylor, 2007). To further ascertain consistency, researchers may ask repeated question sequences (Miller, 2008). Spiraling techniques (Conroy, 2003) allow researchers to build upon their own and participants' understandings in an open-loop manner, with one question building upon another as the dialogue progresses. This technique does not mean that the interviewer and interviewee become "we," as defined by Seidman (2006, p. 96). Seidman warns researchers to maintain a somewhat detached sense of an "I-Thou" (Buber, as cited in Seidman, p. 95) relationship, while also establishing the type of intersubjectivity called for by Conroy (2003).

In my research with incarcerated adults who were sentenced as adults while juveniles, one of my primary research questions was the extent to which the participants knew, understood, and perceived juvenile bindover to adult court for sentencing as it impacted their strategies of general deterrence; that is, their risk assessment relating to offending decisions. I began with the general question: "As a juvenile offender, what was your understanding regarding possible adult criminal sentences?" Participants' responses were generally short and pointed: "None." "I didn't know nothing about it."

To access deeper or unconscious understandings, which I suspected lay beneath their terseness; I asked a repeated sequence of questions intermittently to determine whether they had any subjective understanding or perceptions of juvenile bindover. However, consistent with the concept of intersubjectivity and qualitative research, the questions were based upon and respected their prior responses. As a result, I asked both open- and closed-ended questions. For example, "What did your friends say about it?" "What about those in the justice system, what did they say about it?" If participants had imprisoned family members that they had previously mentioned, I asked too whether those family members had ever discussed juvenile transfer to adult courts for sentencing.

In this repeated question sequence, the possibility became greater for me to access the range of participants' lived experiences in relation to the research purpose. My encouragement of their deeper exploration of their understanding led to more meaningful data. Further, this iterative method also helped to increase validity and authentication of the data. This type of interview technique, known as "reflexivity" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108), can enhance validity by increasing participants' comfort and openness and providing ongoing clarification. For example, for participants who indicated familial criminality, I asked repeated questions regarding the influence of those members prior to offending and hypothetically upon release. I returned to the topic at different times to explore this important issue so participants could consider and reconsider it from several viewpoints.

Other interview techniques can enhance participants' comfort and openness and provide ongoing clarification. Researchers are well advised to practice reflexivity during the interview process. This is a process in which researchers are continuously aware of participants' response threads and encourage them to return to previously expressed replies to "draw out what is hidden" (Conroy, 2003, p. 21). In this mode, researchers redirect participants' words to prompt them to enlarge on their responses and clarify them (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). Moreover, as Morse et al. (2002) explain, a threat to validity can exist if the researcher is unable to respond during all stages of the research process. Such reflexivity or responsiveness encourages participants' greater depth and concurrently encourages the researcher to probe for new insights and be grounded in but not bounded by prior theoretical development.

I often utilized this interview technique in my research with incarcerated individuals through a simple reflective comment based upon participants' previous replies. For example, when one participant exclaimed that he did not think about punishment at all before he committed his crime, I immediately asked, "You didn't think of juvenile consequences at all?" In response, he began to explain his perceptions regarding juvenile punishment and that prior juvenile sanctions had not rehabilitated him. "I didn't care really. . . . I was still young when I got out. Juvenile detention centers is like daycare compared to here."

I next reiterated his statement by way of a question: "So, you do not believe that juvenile sanctions were a deterrent for you?" In response, he further explained why and how he had committed crimes as a youth. He began to discuss his rational choices with profound insight. His mother was addicted to drugs, his aunt had just died, and he had a handicapped brother. He believed that they all needed the help he could provide with money, and this need outweighed the risk of punishment: "I thought about it. . . . I felt as though what I was doing, it was worth it." As we discussed his current sentence, I kept returning to these responses to uncover both consistencies and inconsistencies and to uncover the multifaceted aspects of his lived experiences connected to offending, punishment, and deterrence.

If a participant has been narrating expansively and is clearly rambling, researchers may provide a "navigational nudge" (Seidman, 2006, p. 70) in the appropriate direction to return to the interview question at hand. However, in addition to questions and to elicit more complex data, researchers can encourage with verbal signals, such as assents at various points, empathic murmurs, and gentle laughter. Nonverbal clues, such as body language or tone, also encourage the data flow and promote an open, positive

understanding. Such clues include leaning forward, open arms, uncrossed legs, understanding nods, and steady eye contact, all of which demonstrate sincere interest in participants' reflections and revelations (Conroy, 2003). In contrast, researchers are wise to refrain from certain verbal and nonverbal clues that may inhibit participants' fullest disclosure. Verbal clues include responses that indicate judgment, disapproval, shock, or dismay; nonverbal clues include frowning, negative head nodding, appearing surprised, or failing to maintain eye contact. In my research, I affirmed participants' contributions by nodding and maintaining serious and thoughtful facial expressions, so as not to disturb the flow of their stories. When appropriate, simply nodding or telling participants that I recognized and somewhat understood their expressions reiterated my sincerity and encouraged their greater openness. As one inmate explained his mother's drug use and the crimes he committed to support her habit, he became emotional and began to cry. I told him I was sorry and paused to give him the opportunity to reflect and collect himself. My empathic response also served to reassure his continued participation in a safe and respectful environment.

In combination with such interview techniques, others enhance data collection in interpretive phenomenology. Seidman (2006) recommends especially active listening, following up, and exploration. In these techniques, interviewers talk less and listen more, with the goal of drawing out participants to speak at greater length, toward collection of more profound and data-rich responses (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). Researchers intercede only to follow up or explore a particular aspect. For example, in my research, one participant described himself as "hardheaded" in relation to his lack of risk assessment. When I asked him what "hardheaded" meant to him, he replied, "I didn't care; that's how it was. I didn't care attitude; I still get like that sometimes."

Researchers' Prior Experiences

In addition to these specific interviewing techniques, interpretive phenomenological methods allow mutual exploration that utilizes researchers to reflect on their prior expertise and experiences as they search for meanings within the interviewees' responses (Groenewald, 2004). Conroy (2003) explicitly calls for researchers' simultaneous openness to participants' interpretations, while concurrently utilizing their own prior experience and expertise as guides to relevant questions and analyses, to "draw out what is hidden within the narrative accounts and interpret them based on background understandings of the participants . . . and the researcher" (p. 11). Gadamer (as cited in Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) elucidates,

> [T]his kind of sensitivity involves neither neutrality with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meaning. (p. 26)

The researcher's knowledge provides a vital compass to and through the research (Groenewald, 2004; Lopez & Willis, 2004). The researcher's expertise also informs other

significant elements of the research design, such as sampling and research questions. With regard to my study of incarcerated individuals' knowledge and understanding of punishment with regard to their experiences of juvenile waiver, my considerable experience and knowledge in this area helped identify the gaps in issues and prior research. Further, my previous exposure to similar populations provided the background for my creation of the most pertinent interview questions. Thus, interpretive phenomenology presupposes that researchers' expert knowledge is invaluable in guiding interview questions, probing for participants' deeper meanings, and rendering the inquiry more meaningful (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Sensitivity to Participants' Values and Norms

Sensitivity to participants' values and norms as valid is an important aspect of interpretive phenomenological research. With sensitivity, researchers avoid biasing data collection and analysis with mainstream cultural norms that they or others may hold. In crime research on gangs, for example, a commonly-held cultural norm is that gang members do not fare well in school (Miller & Glassner, 2004). Such a stereotype may affect researchers' interpretations of individual inmates' insights and experiences. In the Miller and Glassner study, one young interviewee explains,

> Some people stereotype, they just . . . stereotype gang members to be hardcore and always be shootin' at somebody . . . . I know a few gang-bangers who go to school, get straight A's. . . . (p. 133)

As this quotation shows, participants themselves may be aware of such stereotypes and offer contradictory evidence.

Similarly, in my research with adults serving sentences for crimes committed while juveniles, one participant explained that she was a good student and in the band prior to her conviction for murder. As I immersed myself in her narrative, I was aware of the possibility of bias with regard to stereotyping juvenile murderers and the danger therefore that I could discount what she said about her academic abilities. Another participant profoundly explained that in "some things, man, your wrong might be my right." His words exemplified the necessity for researchers to understand participants' experiences without prior preconceived notions and definitions reflecting mainstream views that could interfere with perception of participants' experiences.

Researcher Bias

As in any mode of qualitative research, in interpretive phenomenology, researchers' biases require awareness and notation. Researcher bias can be minimized by several means. A comprehensive method suggested by Brunelle, Brochu, and Cousineau (2000) in their study of drug-consuming juvenile delinquents focuses on extracting the participants' "subjective logic" (p. 836) in a manner that was both informed and deeply reflective. In this technique, researchers allow the free flow of participants' revelations and insights through open-ended questions combined with "relaunchings" (Brunelle et al., 2000, p. 840) or paraphrasing of questions that both maintain concentration on the

research purposes and provide participants with a safe and respected platform for profound and insightful exploration. Brunelle et al. affirm their participants' ideas and revelations rather than searching for affirmation of their own personal ideas and interpretations.

Several methods may be suggested in interpretive phenomenological analysis to minimize researcher bias. Undeniably these methods may have commonalities with other types of qualitative research designs. However, because of the depth and breadth of data collected (ideally), these approaches are highly important in criminogenic interpretive phenomenology.

First, it is suggested that researchers maintain "a high degree of consciousness" (Apori-Nkansah, 2008, p. 113) about possible bias. It is wise to give priority to the participant's reflections rather than the researcher's preconceptions (Smith et al., 2009). In this regard, throughout the interviews and analysis, researchers may record through *epoché* or bracketing (further discussed below) possible preconceived judgments, such as those suggested above in recognition of participants' values and norms. Such notation can facilitate analysis in reflecting participants'' meanings and increase the validity and reliability of study findings (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1990).

With populations such as criminals, researcher biases might include a conclusion that participants desire to justify themselves or emphasize having been treated unfairly by the justice system. A researcher might collect and analyze data with the prejudgment that participants desire to express their outrage that the system failed them. For example, juvenile offenders, many of whom have committed drug and property crimes, might feel that the juvenile justice system treated them with an inflexible and punitive "get-tough" (Peterson-Badali et al., 2001, p. 593) approach to juvenile crime that gave them no opportunities for treatment or rehabilitation. On the other hand, a researcher's positive bias may assume that participants are honest, relate the circumstances of their offenses with sincerity, and express a fervent desire to learn from their experiences. With young offenders, a researcher may empathize with offenders' justification of their actions and further justify their actions for them with the premise that, because of their age, they were incapable of rational decision making at the time of their offenses.

Second, researcher bias can be further made conscious, as noted above, by researchers' recording of private notes during data collection for later reflection in analysis as part of the interpretive tradition (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Although researchers may record views relating to their own prior knowledge and experiences, they may find it especially helpful also to record thoughts and comments that reflect participants' realities exclusively. Conroy (2003) refers to this awareness as a "double internal tap" (p. 21). It requires researchers to absorb what has been said and to separate their own interpretations and conclusions from those of participants.

Third, triangulation of the data is conducted with comparison of interview data collected from other sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In criminology research, triangulation can compare the interview material primarily with official public records. These include adult court transcripts, prison intake records, parole proceedings, and other accounts of participants' criminal court and sentencing history. Generally, private records, such as personal diaries, notebooks, computers, and educational records are not made available, especially for juvenile offenders.

Fourth, member checking may be employed at a mutually convenient time after all data are collected and transcribed. In this process, participants are given the opportunity, if they wish, to review their transcripts and offer suggestions for greater clarity and fit with their lived experiences (Maxwell, 2005). With criminal offenders, procedures for member checking may include the researcher presenting participants with a preliminary thematic analysis of the data for their review and response.

I created such a summary to enable participants to grasp and understand the findings more easily. In so doing, I was able to revisit all salient issues with the participants, which facilitated the purposes of solidifying my respect for their experiences, respecting the story in transcribing their lived experiences, and assuring that their responses were comprehensive. Moreover, since interpretive methods encourage use of researchers' knowledge and experience, member checks are especially important to assure that researcher bias does not interfere with the findings.

In the prison setting, member checking can be carried out in one of two ways. Researchers can return to the institution to meet with participants in a safe and confidential environment, such as a private room overseen by prison security officials. If a private meeting is not feasible, inmate mail can be utilized for participants' review and written feedback regarding the accuracy of the research interpretations.

Researcher Bracketing

Researchers' recognition of their biases and use of their subjectivity in interpretive phenomenology do not negate the necessity for the practice of bracketing, or *epoché* (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90). In bracketing, researchers do not ignore their own preconceptions or claim them as autonomous; that is, independent of the participants' perceptions, or without influence. Rather, researchers "bracket" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 35) them, making special note of their existence (Moustakas, 1994). By this means, researchers identify prejudgments and establish a more consciously open attitude (Creswell, 2008).

Researchers' thinking and approaches are influenced by their history, values, desires, and interests (Miller & Glassner, 2004). Thus, following from the above discussion on researchers' use of their own experiences and sensitivity to their particular participants, simple acceptance of frameworks or previous experiences with similar populations may not be acceptable. Rather, researchers should "access and make explicit participant understandings through their own modes of existence, mode of engagement while being sensitive to their own modes of existence and of engagement and 'foregrounding'" (Conroy, 2003, p. 11). As Peshkin (1991) strongly recommends, the researcher needs to keep "the lines of subjectivity" (p. 293) open.

Acknowledgment through bracketing of researchers' own thoughts and impressions is an integral aspect of the interpretive phenomenological method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Through this approach, researchers consciously recognize their own relevant values and norms to prohibit their intrusion into the recording, analytical, and interpretive processes of participants' responses and meanings. Thus, through acknowledgment, "the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of the [phenomenon]. And this usefully illustrates the dual role of the researcher as both like and unlike the participant" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 35).

However, bracketing need not be employed to the exclusion of researchers' expertise. Rather, bracketed material can illuminate interpretation, although with emphasis on participants' experiences and expressions about them (Conroy, 2003). Groenewald (2004) recommends acknowledgment of prior expertise and background and simultaneously limited preconceptions, so researchers maintain a flowing dialogue with participants and remain open to new ideas. Both Conroy (2003) and Groenewald (2004) assert that researchers can never fully detach themselves from their research. Instead of pretending to do so, their acknowledgment of their experiences enables use of them in the service of the fullest interpretation, while maintaining openness to new ideas and constructions. Critical hermeneutics encourages researchers to be aware of and bracket their definitions of societal norms to allow participants in subcultures, who have had limited or unfair hearings, the fullest possible opportunities for expression (Miller & Glassner, 2004). Phenomenological research with marginalized populations, such as that in my study, will be further discussed below.

Researcher Fluidity

Interpretive phenomenology also emphasizes the fluidity of researchers in questioning and interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). This characteristic is comprised of many aspects. Skillful questioning elicits movement between participants' past and present, indicating possible paradigm shifts and highlighting thematic patterns and fluctuations. Utilization of visual, verbal, and nonverbal active listening skills can help researchers identify and work within participants' moods as trust is developed (Conroy, 2003).

In interpretive phenomenology, participants' lived experiences are drawn out, clarified, and mutually interpreted by researcher and participant. Participants' verbalized experiences move beyond their consciousness. A well-trained and fluid researcher, therefore, practices "concurrent interpretation" (Conroy, 2003, p. 729) that emphasizes meanings within social contexts, just as an interpretive approach takes into account the impacts and importance of cultural, social, and political environments. Drawing a contrast between interpretive and descriptive phenomenology, Conroy (2003) notes that in interpretive phenomenology researchers recognize the "non-static" (Conroy, p. 3) nature of interpretations and definitions in ways that encourage "reinterpretation" (Conroy, p. 3) based upon reciprocal interactions with others. Rather than searching for "numerical universality" (Conroy, p. 5), researchers search for shared interpretation in a nonlinear pathway. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) summarize, researchers can then become "marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument[s] who can respond to situations with skill, tact, and understanding" (p. 107).

Building Trust With Marginalized Participants

Researchers' responses through all the methods discussed here build trust with marginalized populations. Critical hermeneutics recognizes that societal definitions and norms are generated by privileged classes (Thompson, 1981), and thus marginalized populations are rarely heard. Interpretations, therefore, irregularly incorporate the actual definitions or experiences of the underprivileged (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In critical

hermeneutics, the researcher becomes aware of these perspectives and interprets participants' responses through participants' own lenses for reporting and interpretation that fit with participants' lived experiences (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Marginalized participants, such as delinquent populations and criminal offenders serving sentences, often feel misunderstood, unheard, and not cared about (Huff & Romanoff, 1999). Because such perceptions may color their responses with phenomenological researchers, at worst resulting in monosyllabic or superficial answers, researchers are advised to communicate assurances of interest and fair hearing. In addition to ethical considerations and assurances of privacy, researchers' placing participants at ease and building trust before and during interviews are crucial means for development of meaningful dialogue (Miller & Glassner, 2004).

Having identified their own experiences and biases, skilled interviewers are careful to maintain an open and nonjudgmental manner throughout interviews. Good listening skills are needed for the majority of the interview, with empathic responses and body language. Researchers may also find that use of the attendant probing and spiraling questioning techniques elicits greater participant expression and researcher understanding (Conroy, 2003; Miller & Glassner, 2004).

Building trust. In interpretive phenomenological research, for researchers to establish an atmosphere of comfort and trust is paramount for participants' fullest disclosure of their experiences (Conroy, 2003). To create this atmosphere, researchers may briefly explain the study and indicate relevant background in a manner intended not to intimidate participants. Researchers may also share their genuine interest in the subject and in learning about participants' thoughts and experiences. In this regard, researchers may inform participants of the importance of their ideas and meanings, not only to the particular study, but also to the larger societal contexts (Moustakas, 1990; Smith et al., 2009).

In my research, I explained to each participant my intense and long-time interest in juvenile waiver to adult court. I assured them that their understanding of sentencing possibilities and how it may have impacted their offending decisions was of great significance to me. I also described my relevant background and said that I recognized their expertise in the subject matter I would ask them about.

With establishment of a trusting relationship, participants will be more likely to "talk-back" (Blumer, 1969, as cited in Miller & Glassner, 2004, p. 134). Talking back refers to a participant's abilities to correct misnomers or point out irrelevant topics introduced by the researcher. Researchers are wise to welcome such contributions because they indicate a sense of equality and trust that provides the greatest opportunities for participants' full disclosures and meaningful dialogue (Blumer, 1969).

For example, during one of my interviews, a participant commented that an interview question on future offending was very difficult to comprehend. "Could you imagine getting locked up in 2006, 2007, and they tell you, you can't go home until 2016? Man, that just seems unreal." This response indicated the participant's comfort with the researcher; in this talking back, the participant appeared honest and forthcoming and fully disclosed the personal meaning elicited by the question. As a result, the talking back resulted in a richer and more meaningful response.

Social distance. To further increase trust and minimize social distances, real or perceived, researchers may encourage participants to recognize themselves as experts on the topic of inquiry. Researchers can point out that the participants themselves provide the greatest insight and understanding for the phenomenon being explored (Seidman, 2006). They are, after all, the ones who have experienced the phenomenon, unlike other individuals. These include those typically in higher positions in the generally accepted social and educational hierarchy. In the case of my participants, such individuals placed participants in their present circumstances.

Social distance can be further diminished by researchers' consciously minimizing status and class. Such measures can minimize participants' perceptions of researchers through a hierarchical lens (Seidman, 2006). This lens could include participants' assumptions that because of divergent backgrounds, as with my participants, researchers have a privileged status and cannot understand the participants' viewpoints or choices.

In addition, because of potential gender and ethnic differences, researchers are advised to be aware of problematic interview behaviors, such as "flattery or statements indicative of social desirability response bias" (Collins, Shattell, & Thomas, 2005, p. 188). To minimize both social differences and problematic participant behavior, researchers may emphasize respect and importance of participants' contributions as well as "valuing the words of the participant" (Seidman, 2006, p. 110).

As an educated and professional Caucasian woman, I entered primarily African American male-occupied prison settings. I consciously minimized social distance by dressing conservatively, using simple and easily understood language, and speaking sincerely about my interest in participants' views and feelings. I also acted professionally, setting up audiotape equipment and arranging my interview protocol and notebook on the table in the interview room.

I was careful to communicate nonjudgmental responses or attitudes by not expressing shock or dismay at participants' responses or often coarse language. Researchers may need to rehearse neutral or measured responses such as these, as well as facial expressions that do not transmit judgment, disapproval, or alarm. My care illustrated that I was not there to judge, but to listen and interpret their responses in light of my research goals and purposes. However, I understood that social distance could present a wide gap, and so I was patient, beginning the interviews slowly. Early too, I explained, and often reiterated, that the participants themselves were the experts, and I sought their ideas, reflections, feelings, and narratives. My intention to maintain a professional, yet caring, attitude and bearing through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors helped minimize social distance, relax the participants, and draw out their most forthright responses.

Methods of Data Analysis

On completion of all interviews, data analysis commences. Phenomenological methods of data analysis, because they generate massive data, are complex and require close attention with researchers using both cognitive and intuitive skills (Moustakas, 1990). Researchers have the options of manual or computer software in qualitative analysis. Computer software, which has become increasingly sophisticated, can aid in

initial organizing and identification of themes. However, if used exclusively, the software is often impractical and ineffective in identification of shared and subjective meanings.

For qualitative analysis, critics have pointed to software emphasis on the algorithmic process, with little room for intuitive judgments or additions (Groenewald, 2004). With computer analysis, researchers' reflections, intuitions, and experiences can be marginalized, because digital logic cannot capture human complexity. Mechanistic data analysis may not fully take into account the contextual human relationships, social behaviors, and lived experiences that can be captured by a researcher fully immersed in the data (Roberts & Wilson, 2002).

Thus, although software programs can assist, to some degree, with coding, I believe that data collected can be more effectively analyzed manually with several accepted techniques that provide systemic processes. These engage the researcher's mental, emotional, and intuitive responses (Groenewald, 2004). Several manual processes are unique to interpretive phenomenology. The frames of reference are often based on particular theories that provide an overall guide to the interviews and focus the research purposes. Moreover, researchers' expertise is a constant guide. Other qualitative methods, such as grounded theory and case study, may not require the intense analytical reduction necessary in interpretive phenomenology. The coding processes, reduction worksheets, and analyses for thematic searches are all unique to interpretive phenomenology, as the following discussion illustrates, and do not generally apply to other qualitative methods as specifically. To facilitate this discussion, a flow chart that illustrates the many steps and interrelationships in both methods and analysis appears as Figure 1.

Figure 1. Stages of Interpretive Phenomenological Data Analysis
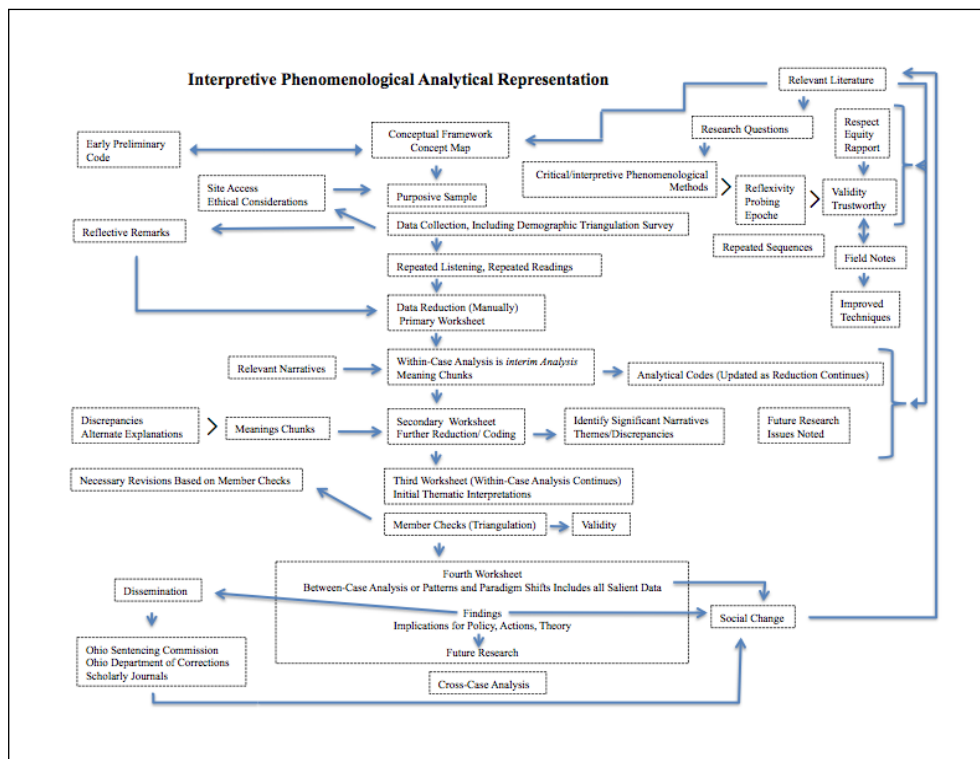
Figure 1 illustrates the many steps and interrelationships in the data analysis process. Although no single illustration can fully convey the intricate and multifaceted analytical progression engaged in and important to interpretive phenomenological research, this visual aid provides an additional graphic explanation. Discussion follows of the stages and steps in greater detail below.

Early Analysis

As with all qualitative research, the first impressions of participants in the interview process can quickly be forgotten or clouded, despite researchers' extensive notetaking (Groenewald, 2004). Miles and Huberman (1994) strongly encourage early analysis to maintain clarity, identify initial impressions, and energize the analytical process. Thus, immediately after each interview, it is suggested that researchers review field notes and make additions or changes that could not be made during the interview. These notes would also include preliminary theoretical observations, referring to the researchers' reflections and derived meanings as informed by prior theory (Maxwell, 2005). Methodological observations referring to the interview methods may also be made at this time, so that techniques may be progressively improved throughout the interviews (Maxwell, 2005).

In addition, initial data analysis might include researchers' marginal and reflective remarks. These remarks may be maintained in a research journal or subsequently added to the interview transcripts so that researchers' nonverbal impressions and field notes can be documented within the context of the transcripts. The notes may then be summarized and included in the coding process as part of the primary analysis and for further coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Phenomenological Reduction and Coding

In a modification of Moustakas' (1994) analytical approach to data analysis for phenomenological research, in which he referred to heuristic analysis, Creswell (2007) notes that phenomenological data analysis is unique to each study and should be customized. Moustakas refers to "epoché" (p. 22) as an early and important step in data analysis that calls for researchers' identification and temporary suspension of their personal experiences (expertise) and biases that may be evoked regarding the phenomenon and bracketing of them so they do not contaminate the analysis, that is, interfere with analysis of participants' viewpoints and meanings (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

Next, the data are reduced or "horizontalized" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 16). Miles and Huberman (1994) define data reduction as the selection or focus of data that appear in the field notes and transcripts based on the study objectives and fields of inquiry. Information reduction takes place throughout data analysis as researchers identify themes and explain shared understandings. Further, inductive data reduction requires researchers to maintain an open attitude to assure that the study adheres to its theory- and research-informed frames of reference, with researchers' prior conceptions that might impact participant's contributions noted and minimized.

Data reduction in interpretive phenomenology involves several steps recommended by scholars (Conroy, 2003; Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004; Seidman, 2006). First, the transcripts should be read and be relevant, and provocative passages marked during repeated readings (Seidman, 2006). Audio recordings (if made) should be repeatedly listened to, so that researchers may "re-immerse" (Conroy, 2003, p. 27) in the participants' subjective worlds and identify additional passages of interest. Thereafter, nonrepetitive passages should be listed and grouped together in "meaning units" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159) that identify meaningful topics and themes based on the research purpose and questions (Groenewald, 2004). These initial meaning units should be identified and interpreted within the hermeneutical tradition (Conroy, 2003).

The hermeneutic tradition calls for a circular approach, in which the researcher moves between the larger research purposes, theoretical frames of references, and expertise and personal experience, and the smaller subjective cultural, social, and contextual responses of the participants. For example, during my research of incarcerated adults, I grouped initial meaning units that revealed participants' criminal intentions upon release and the institutional, social, contextual, and individual factors that they discussed in relation to their intentions and hopes upon release. Although I searched for deep meanings regarding these influences and let my expertise and theoretical frames of reference guide my questioning, I also respected and sought participants' observations and understandings as independent of and sometimes contrary to those frames of references.

Researchers become alert to "chunks of meanings" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56) and code them based on the research paradigms and preliminary statements to further organize and condense the data. Groenewald (2004) refers to the process of clustering meaning units within the participants' holistic context as eliciting the meaning of verbal units. Both Groenewald (2004) and Conroy (2003) point out the necessity for researchers to consciously preserve participants' viewpoints while making subjective judgments about the importance of the data within the research frames of reference and interview contexts. Admittedly, this is a delicate balance.

The next step is the assignment of codes to segments of the interviews. Codes are ""words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56) and are based on meanings the researcher identifies as significant from participants' interviews and within the research paradigms and context. Researchers' personal expertise and experience are also used in the assigning of codes (Taylor, 2007).

Toward more accurate coding, a concept map could be created that provides further guidance and organization (Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Troachim & Donnelly, 2007). I found such a map extremely useful in my study of juveniles sentenced as adults. My concept map included policy goals, theoretical frames of references, and relevant research that served as guides to the study purposes and questions, as illustrated in Figure 2. Since a legislative goal of waiver to adult court is based upon the deterrence concept of crime control, I included that theoretical concept (top third of map). Narrowing the model to focus on the rational choice component (half way down) based upon understanding and knowledge allowed me to further define my research purposes and interview protocol. Relating each research component (bottom third) helped maintain my focus throughout the research process.

Figure 2. Concept Map
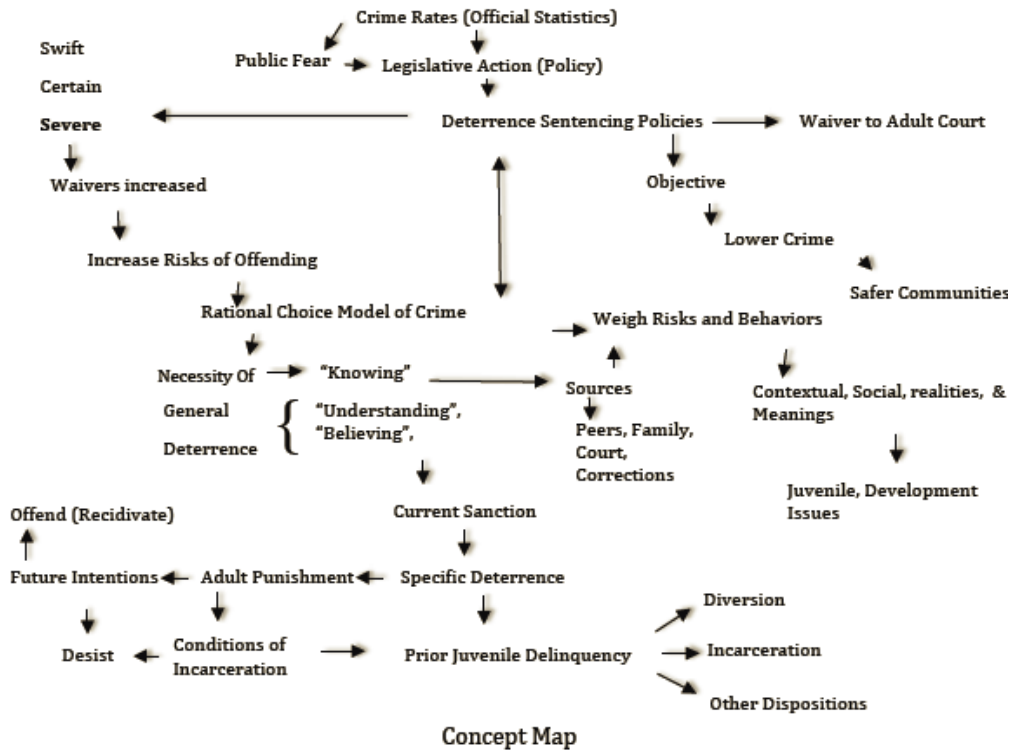
Concept Map

Note: Concept map for qualitative study of incarcerated adults sentenced as adults for crimes committed while juveniles.

With such a map as a guide, researchers can complete worksheets that identify the meaning units, codes, and initial themes for each interview. On these worksheets, the actual transcript narratives can appear on one side and the meaning units, codes, and themes on the other (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A sample worksheet from one of my participants follows:

Figure 3. Participant 4: Meaning Units with Corresponding Codes and Themes (partial).

Adult Sanction Knowledge, Understandings and Perceptions and General Deterrence Meaning Units	Codes	Themes/Notes (In Italics)
Knowledge/Understanding of Adult Sentences K: So you had never understood that you could be taken into adult court for adult sentences. P4: No, I didn't.	GD-AS/N	*He had no knowledge or understanding of juvenile bindover or adult sanctions.*

I didn't think about it.	GD-AS/N	
K: So you had never understood that you could be taken into adult court for adult sentences.		
P4: No, I didn't.	GD/AS/DU	
Hypothetical Knowledge and Possible Consequences		
P4: I would have thought about it a little bit better, before I would have did it. I would have got a better understanding about it before I would have did my crime.	GD-AS/HC	
K: Do you think perhaps you wouldn't have committed your crime?		*If he had known, he would have engaged in weighing of consequences but still may have committed his crime.*
P4: Well I wouldn't necessary say that (appears pensive, thoughtful).		
Juvenile Sanctions and the role they may have played in offending decisions and deterrence and corresponding perceptions/subjective logic.		
K: Did you ever think about punishment and the possibility of a sentence . . .	GD-JS/NRC	
P4: No.	GD-JS/NRC	*No rational choice decision making or consideration of juvenile sanctions possibly due to his young age*

Identification of Thematic Patterns and Paradigm Shifts

When all interviews have been coded and meanings have been preliminarily delineated, researchers take several additional steps. First, the units of meanings, or "thematic patterns" (Groenwald, 2004, p. 21) are further clustered more precisely by codes as shared or consistent themes, ideas, or concepts are discovered (Conroy, 2003). In this process, though, researchers need to be mindful not to cluster themes that may show obvious or significant differences, since divergent cases are also important to the research findings and possible future research (Maxwell, 2005).

It must be noted as well that divergences may be based on distortions or misunderstandings introduced by either researchers or participants (Creswell, 2007). For example, in my research, a participant who was describing his future responded that he had obtained his GED while incarcerated. He was one of the few who spoke of what appeared to be a positive experience—obtaining the GED—that could lead to future desistance of crime. However, upon further clarification, he said that did not believe his

GED would matter because of his felony record. That is, in his view, no amount of education could eradicate the biases of future employers in refusing him work because of his criminal history.

Another critical analytical tool is identification of paradigm shifts that pinpoint changes in participants' behavior or thinking (Conroy, 2003). In crime research, when criminogenic behaviors are studied in relation to policy changes, these shifts are especially important (Taylor, 2007; Von Hirsch et al., 1999). The shifts can be recognized as possible catalysts to changed behavior and can be highly relevant to public policy.

In my research, a participant's paradigm shift was uncovered in his admitting that prior knowledge of adult sentencing would have influenced his initial decision to offend. He might have decided to desist: "I wouldn't have committed the crime. It would have helped me out in the long run, through my life; that way I would at least know what I was getting into." His response indicated that if he had understood juvenile transfer, he may not have committed his crime, and therefore his entire life might have been much different, and presumably less crime-related.

Figure 4. Thematic Graphic Representation
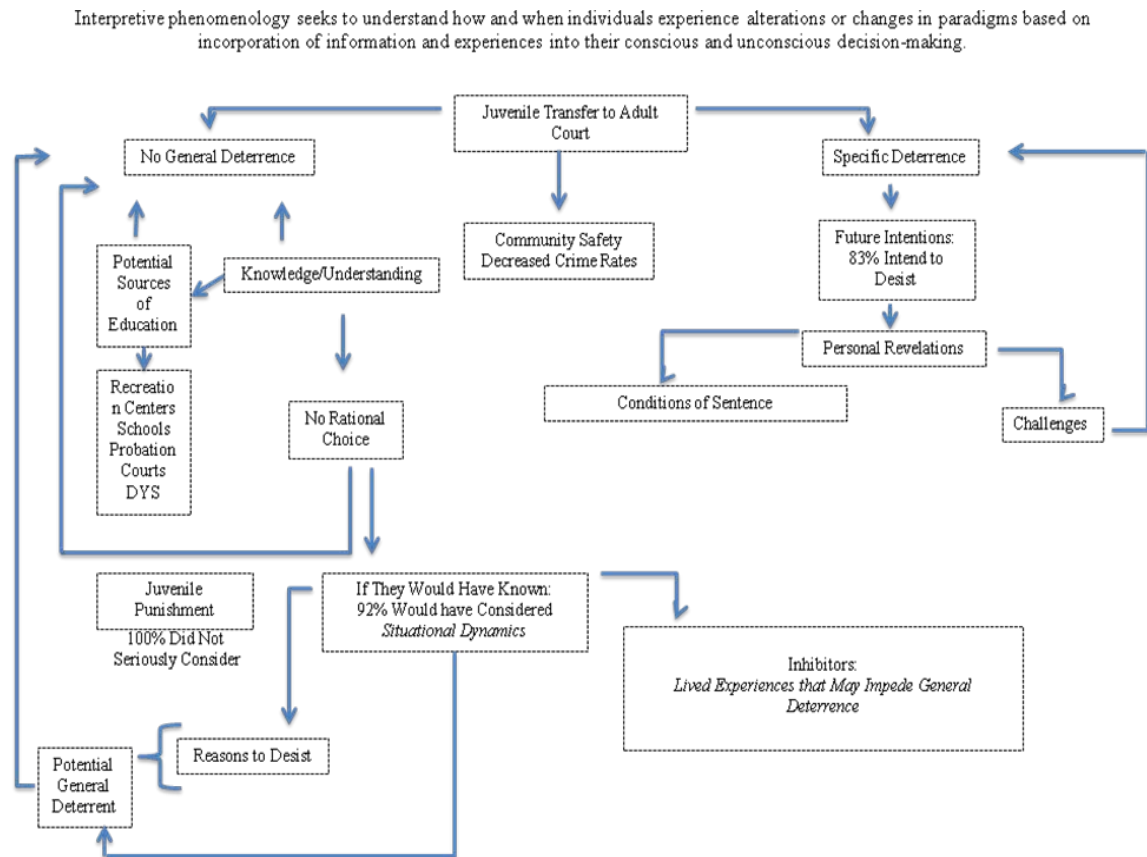
With completion of these steps in data analysis, researchers are ready to compile a composite summary of the themes and patterns revealed by the analysis. The summary

includes participants' descriptive experiences (the structural findings) and how those experiences took place within their social, cultural, and logistical context (the contextual findings). These structural and contextual findings provide the "'essence' of the participants' shared experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). With these distinctions in mind, I developed the graphic representation of themes and patterns, as shown in Figure 4, and found it most helpful in analyzing the data. With data analysis, several procedures are also used to increase validity, reliability, and authentication. These are discussed next, with special application to interpretive phenomenology.

Validity, Reliability, and Authentication Procedures

Qualitative research in crime and public policy has gained recognition as increasingly valuable. With this recognition, scholars have pointed out the importance of rigorous, reliable, and valid methods to safeguard academic standards and increase utility of the studies (Miller, 2008; Miller & Glassner, 2004; Pogrebin, 2004a; Taylor, 2007). For these reasons, methods for ascertaining validity and reliability of qualitative studies are important. Troachim and Donnelly (2007) define validity as the "best approximation of the truth" (p. 56). The term is also defined as "correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation or other sort of account" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 106). Important throughout the process, the researcher can implement procedures as responsive or "constructive" (Morse et al., 2002, p. 15) mechanisms to increase the quality of the findings as the research evolves (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008).

Consistent with other forms of qualitative research, phenomenological reliability does not refer to a precise measurement. Rather, as Seamon (2002) explains, "reliability can only be had through what can be called *intersubjective corroboration*—in other words, can other interested parties find in their own life and experience, either directly or vicariously, what the phenomenologist has found in her own work?" (p. 171). Although trustworthiness is often substituted for validity and reliability as quality benchmarks, Morse et al. (2002) argue that while trustworthiness and its four criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) are important evaluative tools, they are limited to assessing the utility of completed research. Validity and reliability mechanisms, such as repeated question sequences and intersubjectivity, also allow the researcher to incorporate procedures during the research to "ensure the quality" of the research (p. 14). Nonetheless, trustworthiness is the more standard means of establishing research quality (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Thus, interpretive phenomenological researchers in crime may utilize several means to verify the authenticity of the data and validate the credibility of the findings to produce rich and meaningful accounts that include robust means of "evidentiary" (Morse et al., 2002, p. 334) support for the complex conclusions reached. Some of these techniques have been discussed above in other sections; the methods enumerated here nevertheless serve also to enhance validity and reliability. Most of these methods are similar to those used in other forms of qualitative research; the differences may lie in special attention to interview techniques, participants' worldviews, and researchers' expertise.

Four major methods are used for establishing trustworthiness. First, participants may be selected through purposeful sampling methods from a variety of prisons or other

institutions of incarceration, such as residential facilities or juvenile detention centers. This range helps decrease possible systemic bias possible with participants from a single institution (Seidman, 2006). Maximum variation of participant characteristics in terms of gender, race, offense, sentence, and time served also helps achieve the greatest diversity of comparisons for further insight into the phenomenon (Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008). Second, the phenomenological data obtained may be triangulated with participants' official records, which could include demographic information, descriptions of crimes committed, and length of sentences. This type of "corroborating evidence" (Creswell, 2008, p. 208) can increase the validity of responses for greater consistency with the interview data. My study included a brief (12-item) demographic questionnaire requesting participants' current age, gender, ethnicity, city, crime for which they were bound over and convicted, original sentence, and remaining sentence.

Third, to further ensure validity of responses, Troachim and Donnelly's (2007) "best approximation of the truth" (p. 56) or Taylor's (2007) "accuracy" (p. 36), participants may be questioned carefully with repeated sequences and interviewing techniques, as described above, to better ensure internal consistency of the narrative accounts (Taylor, 2007). A criminal population's veracity for truth has been questioned with regard to self-reports (Rouse, Kozel, & Richards, 1985) and may pose an additional challenge. To counteract such tendencies, carefully implemented questioning techniques that identify inconsistencies, such as the spiraling and iterative methods described earlier, may increase identification of participants' mistruths or mischaracterizations and the likelihood of truthful responses. In prior research with similar populations, I observed that incarcerated offenders are often eager to be heard and find it important that their accounts are believed (Huff & Romanoff, 1999). Further, techniques for promoting trust and confidence during the interview process, as described above, should help increase the probability that participants will see the benefits of truthful responses to themselves and others in related populations.

Fourth, the interview protocol can be designed to increase verisimilitude. With participants given repeated opportunities to clarify and expand through questioning sequences and probes, their responses may more likely be trustworthy and valid. Spiraling techniques, such as those described above that prompt for iterative interpretations that build upon one another, also are advised so researchers can compare previous and current responses (Conroy, 2003).

As has been well-documented, researcher bias poses a threat to validity (Conroy, 2003; Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). In interpretive phenomenological qualitative research, the researcher should identify potential threats while emphasizing the positive aspects of the researcher's role (Maxwell, 2005). Thus, fifth, validity is increased by identification and recognition of researchers' frames of reference, background, and expertise, so that bias may be limited (Creswell, 2007).

Further, although researchers are presumably familiar with the literature, they are advised to remain open to participants' meanings and understanding of the phenomenon explored, whether or not their responses concur with the literature. This discrepancy was illustrated during one of my interviews in which the participant explained that she felt fortunate to be incarcerated so she could learn a skill she might otherwise not have learned. Her statement contradicted the "punishment-as-deterrence doctrine" (Wright, Caspi, Moffit, & Paternoster, 2004, p. 180), as well as offender accounts of the negative

experiences of incarceration (Ashkar & Kenny, 2008; Peterson-Badali et al., 2001; Redding, 2008).

Sixth, reliability of data collection is enhanced by researchers' careful attention to the recording and transcribing processes. In addition, thoroughly constructed field notes should be kept. These should record nonverbal nuances that may not be fully identified on recordings are important to validity (Creswell, 2007). Seventh, reliability can be further enhanced by use of the worksheets described earlier. Researchers may find it helpful to place the verbatim transcripts and researchers' comments and observations side by side for ease of comparison, as illustrated in Figure 2. Authentication can then take place with researchers' rigorous reviews and refinements of the worksheets to validate their interpretations and conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Finally, the interview transcripts can be further validated and authenticated by participant "member checks" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111) to preclude erroneous data This technique also serves to limit researcher bias and assure that the participants' viewpoints and understandings are accurately recorded. All participants should be given the opportunity to review their transcripts and suggest adjustments on the accuracy of their interviews and interpretations consistent with their reflections (Creswell, 2007). These techniques may help researchers enhance the validity and reliability of their data collection and analysis and increase acceptance of qualitative findings.

Conclusion

My premise in this paper is that the critical and interpretive phenomenological approach is highly underutilized in the study of crime. My purpose here was to present a model design for use by both novice and experienced researchers that can provide a much-needed and to date lacking guide for approaches by which to gain better understanding of and elicit richer material from participants about their offending decisions. The interpretive component allows researchers to include and reflect on their own experiences in ways that elicit deeper and more profound responses than would otherwise be possible regarding criminal participants' offending decisions and motivations. Analysis of such data can lead to more effective legislation toward prevention of further offenses and recidivism.

As the model offered in this paper illustrates, the interpretive phenomenological design has unique challenges, especially for criminogenic studies. Researchers may meet these challenges through meticulous preparation and implementation (Creswell, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). From the earliest conceptualizations through the final analysis and written interpretation of findings, systemic methods should be used based on recommended and acceptable techniques that further enhance the process (Creswell, 1998; Groenewald, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seidman, 2006).

The model presented in this paper demonstrates and illustrates that not only qualitative methods but also interpretive phenomenological approaches are especially appropriate for the study of crime. Interpretive phenomenology elicits participants' fullest experiences and perceived meanings and utilizes researchers' often extensive expertise in the field of inquiry. Rich data are thus produced in the personal and social contexts of the participants. I hope that the components discussed here will encourage more criminogenic scholars to utilize interpretive phenomenological designs to gain needed

insights into criminal participants' experiences, decisions, and motivations. Use of these designs and resultant findings can provide multifaceted heuristic and empirical experiential data. These can become persuasive and credible bases for policymakers to enact more effective legislation toward reduction of crime, decrease in recidivism, and rehabilitation of both juvenile and adult criminal offenders.

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