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Systematic Pragmatic Phenomenological Analysis: Step-wise guidance for mixed methods research

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Abstract

Background: Structural Pragmatic Phenomenological Analysis (SPPA) is a pragmatic-phenomenological methodology integrating qualitative and quantitative research, offering a systematic, sensitive and specific guidance to developing a reflexive understanding of individual experiences and meanings. Applications of SPPA have previously been published, but no systematic overview and guidance.

Aim and method: This article offers an overview and a step-by-step guidance of SPPA.

Result: SPPA is based on pragmatic-ontology and critical-realist epistemology. The overall aim of an SPPA study is to systematically examine the lived experience and meaning of a phenomenon for one or more individuals. This overall aim could be specified in specific research objectives (e.g., ontological status of the phenomenon, type of meaning, approach to meaning, relationship to individual/society, development over time, individual history, sense of freedom, existential and daily life experience). The first part of interview schedules consists of: mindfulness exercises, open introductory questions, questions about time and space, influence of the participant and the context on the experience and meaning. The second part includes specific questions about each research objective, broadening of the perspective, exploring paradoxes and inconsistencies, narrowing the perspective, interpretations, participant decisions and conclusions, and systematic reflexivity. Questionnaires help in understanding individual differences, representativity, reflexivity and hypothesis creation. Analytic steps include macro-level and micro-level phenomenological analysis, systematic analysis of research objectives, questionnaire analysis, systematic reflexivity, synthesis per participant, synthesis for all participants and reflection on trustworthiness.

Discussion: SPPA offers step-wise guidance, which can be helpful for trainees and beginning researchers. More applications and research into the experiences of SPPA are needed.

KEYWORDS

existentialism, interviews, methodology development, mixed methods, phenomenology

1 | INTRODUCTION

From the moment that we are born, we seem to be in a flow of experiencing the world in which we live. For a newborn, the world may be an overwhelming flow of stimuli without clearly distinguished meanings. However, over the years, we may learn to differentiate meanings in our lifeworld. That is, we learn to name, categorise and compare different facets of our experiences. We often create these meanings under the influence from the people who raise us, peers and educators, but also from our unique life experiences and idiosyncrasies (Vos, 2019).

Psychological and social-scientific research projects usually examine the experiences and meanings that a specific phenomenon has for research participants. Qualitative and quantitative researchers differ in what facets of the experiences and meanings they focus on, and in how they collect and analyse these experiences and meanings. As fallible human beings without omnipotence, we may be unable to conclusively answer what the participant's experiences and meanings precisely are and how we could approach these experiences and meanings the best. We may never be able to grasp the complex and dynamic totality of a phenomenon—like we can never see all facets of a diamond at the same time. However, by looking at the phenomenon from as many angles as possible, we may develop a relatively completer and more meaningful picture than we had before, although we may not reach an end point of knowing the Ultimate Truth about the phenomenon (Vos, 2013, 2020c). Quantitative and qualitative research could offer additional perspectives to each other; whereas questionnaires with pre-defined categories could, for example, test hypotheses, open interview questions may help us understand the subjective flow of experiencing (Willig & Rogers, 2017). In this article, we will develop a phenomenological method, which uses both qualitative and quantitative research to understand the experiences and meanings of phenomena for research participants, called Systematic Pragmatic Phenomenological Analysis (SPPA).

Phenomenology has often been described as "the study that systematically describes how phenomena appear to our consciousness in the reality of our lived experiences". The word "logos" means meaning, understanding or study. "Systematically" means that a method is used that is analytical, deliberated and step-wise. Phenomenology describes why I experience something as meaningful from my perspective of my individual lived experience, instead of explaining this (that is, factually knowing the object and its objective causality). This implies focusing on lived experiences in the here-and-now, describing what is given to us in our immediate experiences without being obstructed by preconceptions and theoretical notions; understanding the structure of experience through a new perspective ("new eyes"). Phenomenology focuses on the "how" and not on the "what" of meanings. That is, it focuses on the consciousness process (construction), not the end state (constructed) (Merleau-Ponty, 1982). This implies that phenomenology focuses on the appearance process—how things appear in the relationship between me and a phenomenon. Phainómenon means "that which shows itself" in our experience. Initially, we were not aware of a meaning, but now we are: how did this process of appearance develop? Phenomenology focuses on the fundamental structure of any given experience, and this structure is "absolute", "given" and "real". (...)The "lived experience" refers to the totality of our senses, all relationships to the world and ourselves, including past, present and future potential" (Vos, 2018, glossary, slightly adjusted textual format).

Phenomenology emerged as a philosophical methodology in the 19th century (Moran, 2002). Since phenomenology emerged as a philosophical method, a variety of psychological methods have been developed to examine interviews (see overview in Langdridge, 2007). The fundamental differences between the most frequently used phenomenological research methods and the unique approach of SPPA will now be characterised on seven dimensions.

1.1 | Qualitative versus quantitative analysis

Phenomenological analysis is usually only applied to interviews, although some researchers have suggested to use phenomenological-hermeneutic interpretations in quantitative research (Fisher & Stenner, 2011). Whereas previous phenomenological research methodologies seem to have exclusively focused on qualitative research, SPPA aims to offer a phenomenological framework, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods.

1.2 | Parallel versus integrative methods

There are many ways to mix methods (Clark & Ivankova, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). However, many researchers seem to use two independent methods parallel to each other, and later combine the findings of both, and thus, they do not seem to have an elaborate mixing process and synergetic dialogue between methods. In contrast, SPPA aims to follow an integrative mixing process and synergetic dialogue.

1.3 | Essentialism versus constructivism

Phenomenologists seem to differ in the extent to which they believe that it is possible to identify an essence or core of a phenomenon. On the one end, phenomenologists such as Husserl (1999) believed that it is possible to identify universal essences underlying our experiences ("eidetic reduction"). Similarly, Giorgi (1992, p. 123) argued that "unified meaning can be teased out and described precisely". On the other end, hermeneutic phenomenologists such as Gadamer (2004) and Ricoeur (1981) believed that the identification of a universal essence is impossible as all phenomena are filtered through the subjective interpretation of the researcher and the researcher/participant relationship. This is further complicated by a double hermeneutic: the researcher makes sense of the participant's attempts to make sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2008). These two

positions may be metaphorically compared with unpeeling a piece of fruit or vegetable. Whereas essentialists seem to assume that unpeeling may lead to a core—like a mango, constructivists seem to assume that after unpeeling there may be no core left—like an onion (Vos, 2018).

Pragmatic phenomenology takes a position beyond the essentialism/constructivism opposition and focuses on the phenomenological process and not merely on the end result of a core (Vos, 2018, 2020c). "Pragmatic" means that the focus mainly lies on the practical dimension and applications in the everyday lifeworld, and not on theoretical or metaphysical discussions (James, 1975; Peirce, 1986). "Pragmatic phenomenology starts with the idea that for ordinary individuals, metaphysical questions may not be relevant in daily life. Nobody starts by questioning how they are being manipulated and debating what truth is before they go grocery shopping. From the psychological perspective of daily life, these fundamental questions are irrelevant" (Vos, 2020c, p. 56). However, in everyday life individuals often seem to have an implicit understanding of what is more-meaningful and what is less-meaningful. For example, individuals spend more time on certain relationships and activities than on others, without needing explicit reflection and deliberation. Their actions and experiences already reflect an underlying intuitive hierarchy of meanings, where certain experiences/people/activities are valued more than others. Pragmatic phenomenology focuses on the exploration of these temporary meaning hierarchies in lived everyday experiences, and not on the identification of absolute essences, in line with Sartre's adage (2001): "existence precedes essence".

1.4 | Researcher-oriented versus participant-oriented

In the practical application of phenomenological methods, researchers often seem to have a large contribution in the interpretation process. For example, in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2006) the researcher usually identifies themes after the interview and not during the interview. Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology (Manen, 2016) also allocates an important role for the researcher, who needs to maintain a strong pedagogical or psychological relationship with the topic and who needs to start with a wholistic reading and identification of an overall meaning in the interview. In these phenomenological methods, the researcher may use reflexivity and check the findings with participants ("member-checking"), but this is a post hoc validation of themes instead of an interactive process between researcher and participant during the interview.

In contrast, SPPA researchers aim to guide participants during the interview to identify and name the themes themselves, which researchers later validate with further systematic analysis. This is a significant difference, as no longer do merely researchers make the conclusions, but the conclusions are primarily made by the participants followed by further analysis by the researcher; SPPA tries to give the most important voice in the research project to the participants. Via the use of the systematic research process, the researchers aim to prevent imposing a content or a perspective onto the participants.

1.5 | Non-systematic versus systematic

The first phenomenological philosophers, such as Husserl and Heidegger, were very systematic in their analytical method with clear procedural steps. In contrast, most phenomenological methods for analysing interviews seem to be relatively less systematic, ranging from Giorgi's general explanation of descriptive phenomenology to the general steps of IPA. Most phenomenological methods in psychology do not seem to offer the detailed structure of the early phenomenological philosophers.

This lack of system may be due to a form/content logical fallacy; that is, individuals may conflate the form of the system with imposing the content within the system (Vos, 2013). That is, whereas imposing content onto an individual may not be regarded phenomenological, using a systematic process to do justice to the individual's lived experiences of a content may be regarded as such. Pragmatic phenomenology aims to offer a dynamic process that opens up and helps to understand, and that does not necessarily lead to fixed end states, essence or explanations. Thus, SPPA is systematic in the process, not in the content. In contrast to the relatively non-systematic approaches in modern phenomenological psychological research, SPPA uses a systematic approach in the tradition of philologists like Nietzsche and Heidegger, as exemplified in the step-by-step procedures in the tables in this article.

1.6 | Critical realism

It seems that the application of phenomenology as a method in psychology is strongly influenced by the hermeneutic tradition, linguistics, constructivism and post-structuralism. Phenomenology often seems to be applied on the foundations of a relativist ontology and a constructivist epistemology. In contrast, SPPA stands in the tradition of critical realism, which has its roots in the later works of Heidegger (Vos, 2015, 2017, 2020c).

Critical realism posits the idea that although knowledge about absolute truths may not be attainable, individuals may intuitively experience differences between what is more-meaningful and what is less-meaningful (Archer et al., 2013; Dreyfus & Taylor, 2015; Vos, 2015). This differentiation does not necessarily lead to the identification of positivist truth, as individuals could make these differentiations by listening to their phenomenological intuition, while engaging in critical reflexivity regarding their own role, position and contextual embedding (Vos, 2018). This avoids the complete relativist stance that it is impossible to say anything meaningful, as well as the essentialist stance that we can identify absolute essences or even The Meaning Of Life—in capital letters.

For example, Heidegger explained this in his later work with the metaphor of a house: the wide and timeless surroundings of Being may need a "house" (Vos, 2015). That is, human beings may only understand Being from the houses in which they live at a specific location at a specific time, such as the house of their subjective perceptions, assumptions, language, and other systems and structures. We may not be able to avoid living in subjective houses, as all human beings seem to live with systems and structures. The key question is not how to avoid any systems/structures—as this may be impossible—but how to approach these systems/structures, for example by explicating this system/structure and its potential influence on our experiences and interpretations of the phenomena around us. We do not need to be stuck inside our house with mere constructivist self-analysis; we may explore where we could build our houses in the surroundings and how we live in our house, we may open our windows and doors, and explore opportunities in our surroundings, as long as we remain critically aware of the limitations of our house (Vos, 2015). Thus, we may not be able to prevent being in the hermeneutic circle, but the question is *how* we are in the circle: do we obscure the phenomenological process by either pretending that there is no interpreter-me at all (naïve realism), or that there is only the interpreter-me and no reality with real people and real objects (extreme relativism); or do we recognise the circle and analyse this to try to understand it? To prevent the circle becoming a negative spiral of either naïve realism or solipsistic subjectivism, researchers may want to use a systematic process of critical analysis, self-reflection and reflexivity (Vos, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020c). Thus, in line with the later work of Heidegger, SPPA does neither apply a rigid constructivist version of phenomenology nor does it follow naïve realism; from a pragmatic-phenomenological perspective, it may even be seen as irrelevant to ask whether there is a reality beyond our experiences, as well as it may be irrelevant to rigidly assume that there is nothing more than experiences.

1.7 | Sensitive versus specific

Research interview schedules seem to differ in the extent to which they are sensitive and specific. Often, interview schedules are either sensitive/non-specific or non-sensitive/specific. A sensitive interview schedule includes the most open and broad questions, so that all relevant topics can be mentioned by the participant; this could include unstructured interview schedules, where the only input from the researcher is describing the topic of the research and asking the participant to describe their general experience of this topic (e.g., "Could you describe your experience of [phenomenon]?"). The danger of such broad questions is that participants may only report generic or superficial experiences without going in-depth. Individuals may be less likely to report experiences associated with complex emotions, or they may mainly present socially desirable answers, where blind spots and defence mechanisms may remain invisible (Vos, 2011).

A specific interview schedule explores experiences in-depth, for example with a pre-determined "template" or "hermeneutic aid" in the interview schedule or analysis. For example, the Sheffield School (Ashworth, 2003) identifies seven fractions of the lifeworld: selfhood, sociality, embodiment, temporality, spaciality, project and discourse. Van Deurzen (2014) identifies four worlds in Structural Existential Analysis: physical, personal, social, and spiritual worlds; subsequently, within each dimension, she identifies paradoxes and emotions, which may tell how the participant relates to each of these worlds. The danger of using pre-structured interview schedules or analytic categories is this may bias the researcher or participants, for example by directing the participant to focus on these pre-determined categories. SPPA offers a sensitive as well as a specific methodology by starting with relatively open interview questions, followed by more specific questions and questionnaires. The Sheffield School and Structural Existential Analysis have mainly based their pre-determined categories on philosophical analysis.

In contrast, SPPA is based on systematic reviews and meta-analyses of empirical studies (Vos, 2020a). Furthermore, both the Sheffield School and Structural Existential Analysis seem to limit their focus on the question of "what" content or meanings participants experience (Vos, 2020c). However, Heidegger (1921/1995) has suggested that in modern times—and particularly in psychology—scientists seem to be asking "what" content is experienced by "whom", whereas for Ancient philosophers more questions were involved. Aristotle wrote that the experiences and meanings of phenomena include four sub-questions, which provide four causal explanations (*aitia*, traditionally translated as "causes", but more neutrally translated as "questions"; Hankinson, 1998): "what" is about the matter or material of something (*hyle*); "how" is about form, shape, or appearance (*eidos*); "who" is about the agent that created the phenomenon (*kinoun*); and "for what" is the sake for which something is what it is (*telos*). However, as we will see later, in total 10 research questions or objectives may be identified (Vos, 2020c). Thus, by focusing on developing a comprehensive interview schedule, SPPA aims to be more inclusive and comprehensive than other phenomenological methods, particularly as many methods seem to mainly focus on the stage of analysis and not on the interview stage (e.g., Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis does not provide a detailed guidance to how to develop an interview schedule). By systematically exploring multiple questions, researchers may prevent imposing the limitations of asking only one question to the participant. Therefore, it seems crucial to develop a systematic comprehensive interview schedule.

1.8 | Non-systematic self-reflection versus systematic reflexivity

Since the hermeneutic turn in phenomenology, reflexivity fulfils an important role in phenomenological analysis. Etymologically speaking, reflexivity means bending back upon oneself; in research terms this could be translated as critical self-reflection regarding the intersubjective dynamics between the researcher and the participant.

Reflexivity recognises the roles and positions of the researcher and the participant in the research process and in the broader context in which the research is embedded (Finlay & Gough, 2008). Although many phenomenologists recommend reflexivity, few seem to elaborate how to engage in *systematic* reflexivity, for example via systematic steps. Without a systematic approach, there is the danger that reflexivity becomes mere self-reflection—that is, reflecting on one's own experiences as researcher but not on the dynamic interaction with the participant and context. In contrast, SPPA offers a step-by-step guidance for systematic reflexivity.

1.9 | No-guidance versus guidance

Phenomenological methods differ in the extent to which they offer detailed guidance and recommend procedural steps for researchers. Some authors seem to offer little guidance, such as Van Deurzen and Giorgi. This lack of operationalisation of steps and procedures may lead to a lack of transparency and replicability of the research process. Furthermore, whereas experienced researchers may need little guidance, beginning researchers may need more. SPPA offers detailed guidance.

2 | AIMS & METHODOLOGY

In sum, Structural Pragmatic Phenomenological Analysis (SPPA) is a pragmatic phenomenological methodology which aims to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods, and offer a systematic, sensitive and specific guidance to developing a shared reflexive understanding of individual experiences and meanings regarding a research topic. SPPA has been applied in several publications and in several currently ongoing doctorate research projects (Vos, 2004, 2005, 2011, 2018, 2020b). The aim of this article is to give an overview and a practical guide of SPPA. This will be done by systematically describing the steps in the SPPA methodology, as applied in the published studies. The theoretical foundations and reflexivity regarding the development of SPPA can be found in other texts (ibidem).

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | STEP 1. Introduction

It is common practice that qualitative researchers start with explicating their fundamental position towards reality (ontology) and knowledge acquisition (epistemology; Pernecky, 2016). SPPA is based on a pragmatic-phenomenological ontology and a critical-realist epistemology (as described in Vos, 2018, 2020c).

Pragmatic phenomenology focuses on the critical-realist process of distinguishing more-meaningful experiences from less-meaningful experiences. This leads to a description of the phenomenological process, how research participants have developed a sense of the phenomenon. This is like unpeeling a piece of fruit, where you get rid of the outer layers (i.e., less-meaningful) to reveal inner—previously concealed—layers (i.e., more-meaningful), but without knowing whether there is a core (like a mango) or not (like an onion; Vos, 2017). Some participants may feel that there is a core in their experiences (like a mango), whereas others may not reach such a conclusion (like an onion). The researcher does not have a predetermined assumption about whether the participant may experience an essence or not, and will not impose any expectations; instead, the researcher will facilitate the participant in the phenomenological process of unpeeling layers in their experiences. Thus, SPPA seems more process-oriented than content-oriented, in line with existential-phenomenological philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty (1982) and Sartre (2001).

An SPPA project may formulate an overall aim as follows: "The overall aim of this study is to systematically examine the lived experience and meaning of [participant/sample] about [phenomenon/topic]". The word "systematic" means that specific steps and procedures are followed. "Lived experience" means that this is not merely about psychological experiences such as changeable or manipulatable emotional states, but it explores an individual's fundamental experiences of life in its totality (Heidegger, 1927). For example, when we only search for psychological categories, for example with the help of diagnostic manuals such as the DSM or ICD, we do not seem to do justice to the complex and dynamic totality of the lived experiences of the individual (Vos et al., 2019). Lived experiences also do not seem to be about theoretical reflections or explanations of daily life that individuals may have, but it describes how they actually live their daily life. That is: in everyday daily life, we seem to reflect rarely on ourselves and on our ways-of-living; we simply follow our habits (Bourdieu, 1984) and are submerged in the flow of our subjectively lived experiences of everyday life (Vos, 2015, 2016, Vos, 2020c). Only when our body or mind stops working, or if we see an immediate danger to our being, we may stop our habits and start reflecting or acting. In that situation, our relationship with ourselves may change: the habitual non-reflected flow of experiencing daily life may get replaced by theoretical reflection, and we may use theoretical categories.

Therefore, researchers may want to avoid psychologisation in research projects, if they aim to understand the subjectively lived everyday experiences of individuals (Heidegger, 1914). In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger uses the term "modes-of-being" (*Seinsweisen*) to distinguish a psychological approach, which imposes our theories and categories on our experiences, from a phenomenological approach in which life reveals itself via our flow of experiencing. This stands in line with Life Philosophers who want to do justice to Life as it reveals itself, such as Schopenhauer, Dilthey, and Nietzsche.

The word "meaning" suggests that we aim to understand not only one specific aspect or the theory of an individual's experience, but the *meaning* of its totality to the individual. Wilhelm Dilthey (1897) speaks of the "totality of experiences" which includes an individual life's history in space, and Heidegger (1927) speaks of "the Meaning

of Being" (*Sinn des Seins*) and of events (*Geschehen*) happening in the totality of the time-play-space (*Zeitspielraum*). Thus, the term "meaning" is used as a meta-term here; furthermore, meaning is not "made", as meaning is always experienced but not always "made" by an individual (Vos, 2018, 2020c; Table 1).

A research project has usually one overall aim. Subsequently, this umbrella aim is often split into multiple objectives, formulated in specific, operationalised terms. Instead of objectives, a researcher may formulate research questions (i.e., objectives formulated as a question). Based on systematic research, 10 possible objectives have been identified in previous empirical and philosophical research (Vos, 2020c; Table 1). This table shows the unique contribution of SPPA, as this method includes 10 possible objectives, whereas other methodologies seem to have mainly focused one analysing one objective in-depth while ignoring other objectives. Table 2 provides an overview. A researcher may not need to examine all 10 objectives and may tailor these objectives to their specific research interest.

3.2 | STEP 2. Sample

SPPA could be used to describe the experience and meaning of a phenomenon to one individual ($N = 1$/case study). This individual could be a unique individual with a unique life experience, such as having a rare disease, or having a unique role or position in society. An SPPA study could also include multiple individuals, to develop a broader perspective on a phenomenon. This could be compared with the metaphor of casting lights from different angles on a multi-faceted diamond; one individual may only see one of few facets of the diamond, whereas more individuals may see more facets as they look from different angles at the diamond (Vos, 2013, 2020c).

This does not necessarily imply that SPPA leads to a comprehensive positivist sum of the characteristics of the phenomenon or the identification of an essence. This merely means that SPPA tries to do justice to multiple meaningful perspectives from meaningful stakeholders, which may reveal more facets of the

TABLE 1 Ten research questions and objectives with overall descriptions and examples (Vos, 2020c)

Simplified question	Full question	Formal name	Examples
Status?	What is the overall ontological status of the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] for the participant?	Ontological status	Reality Symbol Imagination
What?	What different types of meaning does the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] have for the participant?	Type of meaning	Materialistic Hedonistic Self-oriented Social Larger Existential–philosophical
How?	What approach does the participant have towards the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon]?	Approach to meaning	Traditional Functionalistic Critical–intuitive (also called phenomenological)
Where?	How are the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] embedded in the social context of the participant?	Relationship between individual and society	Social determinism Social-individual interactionism Individual determinism
When?	How do the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] change over time for the participant?	Development over time	Historiography Historiology
Who?	How do the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] fit in the life story of the participant?	Emergence of individual meaning (individual history)	Psychology Pedagogy Anthropology
Whose?	How much freedom does the participant experience regarding the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon]?	Sense of freedom	Symbolic versus realised freedom Negative versus positive freedom Individual versus structural freedom
Why?	What is the existential experience of the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] for the participant?	Existential well-being	Existential questions and concerns Realistic sense of freedom and limitations
Which?	How does the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] impact the daily life of the participant?	Impact on daily life	Many mental health problems, low quality of life, and low life satisfaction Few mental health problems, large quality of life, and large life satisfaction

Note: Examples are not absolute universal categories, but should be regarded as heuristic aids; which may be relevant for many individuals.

[a]Called "themes" by Heidegger (1927) and "worlds" by Binswanger, Spinelli and Van Deurzen.

[b]Called modes-of-being by Heidegger (1927). See explanation: Vos (2020c).

TABLE 2 Example questions regarding position in time and space, and influence of the context

Section	Example questions
3.5.2. Position in time and space	"Have your experiences of [phenomenon] changed over time? If so, how does this change look like?" (Alternative formulation: When did your experience start, how did it develop over time, and how did it end?/Could you describe your experience as a story, with a beginning, middle and end?"); "Are your experiences of [phenomenon] different in different contexts/situations/locations/places/regions? If so, how does this look like?"; "Have your interpretations of [phenomenon] changed over time? If so, how does this change look like?" (Alternative formulation: How did you interpret this [phenomenon] at the start, how did it develop over time, and how do you interpret this now?"); "Are your interpretations of [phenomenon] different in different [contexts/locations/places/regions]? If so, how does this look like?"
3.5.3. Influence of the participant	"How do you usually cope with [phenomenon] in your life? What is the impact of your coping-style on your experience of the [phenomenon]? Have you changed your coping-style, and if so: how has this changed your experience of [the phenomenon]?"; "How would you describe yourself in general: for example, what type of person are you, how do you look at the world, and how do you usually deal with challenges in life? To which extent do you think that your general sense of self may have influenced your experience or interpretations of this [phenomenon]? Would you have interpreted [the phenomenon] differently in other times in your life; if so, what is the difference, and what do you think has created this difference?"; "How would you describe your general values, meanings or purpose in life in general? For example, what do you find important: material wealth and success, enjoying nice experiences, your self, social life and helping others, larger purposes in life, ethics, authenticity or religion? To which extent do you think that these general values, meanings or purposes may have influenced your feelings, thoughts or behaviour about this [phenomenon]?"
3.5.4. Influence of the context	"Could you describe whether and if so how this [phenomenon] feels in your daily life? Does this feeling of the [phenomenon] in your daily life differ from how you are now speaking about this [phenomenon]; if so: how? What is the difference between these situations?" "In which situations are you the most aware of [phenomenon] in your life? In which situations are you the least aware? What is the difference between these situations?" "In which situations does [the phenomenon] feel the most intense in your life, as if you are in the middle of the experience? In which situations does the [phenomenon] feel the least intense, as if you are outside of the [phenomenon]? What is the difference between these situations?" "How would you describe your life situation in general? For example, how you live, your type of job, social life, your position in your community and in the wider society, your culture, etc. To which extent do you think that your general life situation may have influenced your experience or interpretations of this [phenomenon]?" "What impact does this [phenomenon] have on other people (around you), the wider world or history in general? Do you think that the impact of [this phenomenon] on other people may have changed how you experience or interpret [this phenomenon]?" "Have you shared your experiences of [phenomenon] with others? What did you tell them? How did they respond, and how did you react to these responses? Have you changed the story about [phenomenon] that you have told to different people?" "How would other people close to you, such as your family friends or colleagues possibly interpret this [phenomenon], even if they have never explicitly said anything about this? How important is their opinion for you? Have you changed your interpretation due to what they may expect from you?"

phenomenon than when the phenomenon is only examined from one perspective. This may be labelled as a pluralistic epistemology, or as critical realism (Vos, 2015, 2017). By systematically analysing a phenomenon from different perspectives, we may understand relatively more meaningful aspects of it, although we may never reach an absolute end point like the identification of an absolutely true essence like in Husserlian eidetic reduction (ibidem). We may not know whether there is an absolute reality of a phenomenon outside of human experience, and seen from a pragmatic perspective, the question of whether there is an absolute reality outside humans may be irrelevant. What does seem relevant is that we may be able to distinguish the more-meaningful from the less-meaningful facets in the perspectives of relatively meaningful stakeholders.

The first sub-step in defining the sample is identifying all groups of stakeholders whose perspectives may be relevant for understanding the phenomenon (e.g., imagine at least 10 different groups of possible stakeholders with as specific sociodemographic characteristics as possible; Heidegger, 1914, calls this step "reduction", as will be explained below). The second sub-step is describing the potential relevance and the unique perspective of each group regarding the phenomenon ("step of destruction"). This description will most likely be a combination of the researcher's phenomenological intuitions and previous research. For example, to examine the phenomenon of being-an-immigrant, immigrants who have migrated mainly for economic reasons may have a different experience than refugees, and their perspectives may differ for different countries of origin and for different arrival countries (Vos, 2004, 2005). The different groups will be compared for their potential to describe the phenomenon of study. For example, if refugees would be included in the sample, their perception of immigration may be mixed with their perception of political oppression, and consequently, due to this mixing, the phenomenon of being-an-immigrant itself may not become totally clear in this study. Furthermore, the researcher needs to describe

the likelihood of recruiting enough participants from each possible group of stakeholders. The third sub-step should logically follow from the descriptive analysis in the previous step. The researcher needs to define the sample and justify this definition ("step of construction"). The ideal number of participants may be decided on the basis of the saturation of their answers, like is sometimes done in Grounded Theory; that is, new participants are invited and interviewed when the last participant revealed significantly more new facets; no new participants need to be invited and interviewed when adding new participants will not significantly reveal more facets of the phenomenon (metaphorically said, looking from slightly different angles at the phenomenon does not reveal meaningful new facets of the phenomenon). In practice, there is often a convenience sample, as the number of participants depends on the feasibility of recruitment and time available for the researcher. Many qualitative studies seem to include five to 10 participants with relatively homogeneous characteristics, but this number seems to be more determined by scientific paradigmatic habits than by fundamental research considerations. If quantitative tests are conducted in the study, such as calculating means or comparing participants, a priori statistical power calculations should determine the sample size.

Whatever number of participants is included, the researcher needs to describe the level of saturation achieved in the interviews, as this describes how different the angle is from which the phenomenon is examined and how many new facets of the phenomenon are revealed. For example, how many new topics were added by each consecutive participant; how many new points were added to the overall conclusions and implications of the study by the last interviewed participant? For example, the first participant will contribute the most - as this is the first participant in the study and thus everything that this participant tells is new (e.g., 50%), the second adds less (20%), the third even less (10%), etc. The last interviewed participant should almost not add any new points to the overall conclusions and implications of the study. If all participants have added a relatively similar number of points (e.g., 20%, 20%, 20% by each of three participants in a study), this means that there is no saturation of the data. In general, the more homogeneous a sample is, the quicker will saturation be achieved; the required homogeneity of the invited participants needs to be logically derived from the overall study aim, and the researcher needs to justify the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the sample. When saturation for one specific group of stakeholders is reached, implying that unique facets of the phenomenon have become more visible from their perspective, the researcher may consider examining the phenomenon for another specific group of stakeholders to examine other possible facets, until this reaches saturation, etc.

3.3 | STEP 3. Interview

3.3.1 | Philosophy of interview schedule

The first part of the interview may consist of broad, open questions to capture the experiences and meanings of the phenomenon in the own words, categories and ordering of the participant. This can be followed by the second part with more specific questions, which may stimulate the participant to systematically explore aspects of the phenomenon that may be less conscious or suppressed. The generic interview schedule in this article is developed in line with the three main phenomenological steps identified by Heidegger (1914, 1927; Vos, 2005, 2015).

The first step is reduction, which means that the researcher returns their focus of attention to what matters (the term "reduction" is etymologically derived from "reducere" which means bringing back or looking into the right direction). This means that the focus is returned, for example, from psychologisation and theories to the subjectively lived experiences of individuals; that is, from a cold outside perspective in a laboratory setting to the inside hot flow of lived experiences in daily life (Vos, 2018). The philosopher Husserl (1999) wrote that we should bracket our assumptions, and the psychiatrist Frankl (1975) wrote that we should "de-reflect". This also implies that we should not diagnose or blame individuals but see individuals as part of their social and historical–political–economic context (Vos et al., 2019). We can return to this primary flow of experiencing by using our phenomenological intuition (Vos, 2015, 2018, 2019). Phenomenological intuition is "the individual's embodied, full-sensory receptivity towards their true self and an unconscious understanding of what is meaningful and valuable, and what is not. Metaphorically, this is like the compass that directs individuals in the mountains of their lives" (Vos, 2018, glossary). This is the hermeneutic circle: an individual may already intuit their research topic before they start the research, although they will need to be critical and reflexive in differentiating this intuition from subjective opinion (Vos, 2015).

The second step is destruction, which means that the researcher destructs less-helpful, less-meaningful or less-authentic attitudes and approaches, and instead focuses on what is the most meaningful (Vos, 2015). This was earlier described as "unpeeling": getting rid of the outer superficial layers and going deeper to the more meaningful layers of our flow of experiencing. Heidegger (1914, 1927) applies a systematic approach to destruction. For example, when he discussed the being of a hammer, he analysed whether a theoretical explanation ("Vorhanden") does full justice to a hammer, which it does not, as a hammer is about its use: hammering ("Zuhanden"). Subsequently, Heidegger asks about the being of human beings: neither theoretical explanations nor use-value do justice to our subjectively lived experiences. Thus, Heidegger seems to go around the phenomenon - like walking around a diamond, to analyse different facets, until he develops an intuitive understanding of what is more-meaningful and what is less-meaningful. For example, over 107 research studies of over 45,000 participants worldwide have identified that individuals may experience six types of meaning (Vos, 2016, 2018, 2020c): materialistic, hedonistic, self-oriented, social, larger and existential-philosophical; a researcher may analyse a phenomenon from the perspective of each of these six types of meaning: which types of meaning are more-meaningful and which are less-meaningful for the participant? Other philosophers, such as

Derrida (1991), have elaborated how we could conduct the deconstruction process. Derrida criticises the idea that our deconstruction goes into the direction of a pre-determined Platonic essence or core; instead, deconstruction focuses on the analyses of appearances and subtle differences in everyday experiences and language. From a pragmatic phenomenological perspective, we may not always have a specific direction—like moving towards a goal—in our destruction process; the only thing we may know is intuitively distinguishing what is more-meaningful from what is less-meaningful (and even these distinctions may not always be clear).

The third step is construction, although this is usually not a conscious step, as the phenomenon will reveal itself (Heidegger, 1914, 1927; Vos, 2015). After reduction and destruction, we may intuit what are the relatively most meaningful facets of the phenomenon. To identify this intuition, the researcher could ask the participant—after a systematic process of destruction—to describe their intuitions and overall conclusions. Similarly, the researcher may critically listen to their own intuitions. This step implies a fragile balance between intuition and reflexivity: the researcher and participant give words to their intuition, but while doing this, they may want to continue doing justice to the previous destruction process and, for example, not fall back into psychological theories that may not do total justice to the subjectively lived experiences (Vos, 2015). Nietzsche describes this stage as walking on a tight-rope (Vos et al., 2015); systematic reflexivity may be crucial to prevent the walker falling off the tight-rope.

3.3.2 | Prompts/follow-up questions

An SPPA interview may consist of semi-standardised questions, which may need to be adjusted to the specific research project, the specific participant and the specific moment in the interview, for example to reflect what the participant has said earlier. It is recommended that any prompts or follow-up questions are non-directive and focus on: clarification, explanation, exemplification (asking examples), observation (explicating non-verbal behaviour), empathic validation (validating the participant's experiences via empathic responses, e.g., humming, nodding, paraphrasing), and crystallisation (summarising what the participant has said, to check whether the researcher has accurately understood the participant). Seen from an ethical perspective, the relationship should be empathic and supportive, and ethical guidelines should always be prioritised over rigidly following the interview schedule.

3.3.3 | Researcher self-development

Before the first formal interview, the researcher may want to engage in systematic self-reflection and self-development to become aware of possible biases. This may include a self-interview and self-administering of the same questionnaires as the research participants: a senior researcher or personal therapist could conduct this interview. The researcher could use this to develop a better understanding of possible biases and to facilitate reflexivity.

3.3.4 | Mindfulness exercises

A theoretical, cognitive approach may hinder a researcher to develop a phenomenological understanding of the subjectively lived experiences of the participant. Therefore, it may be recommended that the researcher frequently engages in mindfulness/meditation exercises to learn how to bring their focus of attention to the present instead of to their theories or expectations. Before the start of the interview, the interviewer could do a mindfulness/meditation exercise, and the interview may start with a similar exercise to help the participant focus on their phenomenological flow of experiencing in the here-and-now. The researcher can justify this exercise by explaining that people often talk in theoretical ways about their experiences, but for this research we are also interested in less-theoretical and more-experiential, embodied descriptions of the experience, and therefore a mindfulness/meditation exercise may help. However, such exercises should never be enforced, and exercises could involve self-compassion. Examples of a pragmatic-phenomenological approach to mindfulness have been described in detail by Vos (2018).

3.3.5 | Generic questions

Introductory questions

The interview could start with open, non-directive questions, such as: "Could you describe the situation?"/"What are the facts?"/"What do you remember about what factually happened?" The researcher may ask these questions, while the client has their eyes closed at the end of the mindfulness/meditation exercise. To facilitate the memory-retrieval process, the researcher could ask the participant to remember a specific situation and could ask them to explore each of the senses: where are you, what do you see, what do you feel, what do you hear, what do you smell? (Vos, 2018).

Research indicates that participants give different answers when they are asked to recall the situation, describe their feelings, their thoughts or their subjective interpretations (Vos, 2011). Therefore, it is recommended that interviewers ask all following questions: "What is your general experience of the phenomenon?"; "How does this feel?"; "Regardless of how this feels, what are your thoughts?"; "Regardless of your thoughts or feelings, how do you interpret this?" The researcher could note any differences in answers, and make hypotheses about possible causes for these differences, such as the participant initially wanting to please the researcher or give a socially desirable answer.

Position in time and space

The philosophers Heidegger (1927) and Gadamer (2004) have argued that each experience needs to be interpreted from their unique position in time and space ("hermeneutic analysis"). Our experiences

change over time and in different situations. Therefore, the researcher may ask questions about the position of the phenomenon in time and space (see examples in Table 2).

Influence of the participant on the experience and interpretation

Each individual seems to have a unique relationship to themselves, and this relationship may change over time and may be different in different locations. Individuals often seem to have a generic understanding of themselves and of how their sense of self influences their experiences of the phenomenon under study. Naturally, this is their own reconstruction of themselves and their relationship to themselves, but it may help to ask individuals to investigate this (Table 2). Some questions may require significant self-insight and may need much time; to limit the time, researchers may ask the participant to focus on the most important (e.g., three) aspects.

Influence of the context on the experience and interpretation

As described before, individuals could approach their experiences in different ways (which Heidegger calls "modes-of-Being"), for example from a cold outside perspective to an inside hot flow of lived experiencing of daily life (Vos, 2018). See Table 2 for possible questions to identify their approach to the phenomenon.

3.3.6 | Questions about specific perspectives

The researcher could ask specific questions for each of the research objectives. These questions could help the participant to reflect systematically on each objective. Without a systematic method to examine each research objective, participants may not reveal certain objectives, for example due to blind spots or defence mechanisms (Table 3; Vos, 2019).

3.3.7 | Exploring multiple facets

As described before, in the destruction process, Heidegger (1914) systematically analysed a phenomenon from different angles. Similarly, researchers may want to invite the participant to explore different facets or associations to the phenomenon, broadening their experience, and systematically analysing each of these facets: Which facets are more-meaningful and which are less-meaningful? See Table 4 for examples of questions.

3.3.8 | Paradoxes and inconsistencies

Individuals may deny paradoxes, inconsistencies and uncertainties in their experiences (Vos, 2015, 2018, 2020b). Individuals could, for example, have a narrow focus on a phenomenon, by only approaching it from the perspective of what they can/cannot do, must/must-not do, or want/want-not do - instead of having a broad focus on the totality of their experiences (Vos, 2018). Therefore, asking questions like those in Table 4 about this could be helpful.

3.3.9 | Let the phenomenon reveal itself

Heidegger describes how after reduction and destruction, participants and researchers could let the phenomenon reveal itself: "let-it-be" (Vos, 2015, 2018, 2020c). This means that participants and researchers listen to their intuition, for example via questions in Table 4.

3.3.10 | Interpretation

Common practice in qualitative research is that the researcher stops the interview after asking these questions. However, from a Heideggerian-constructive perspective the interview may continue with possibly its most important stage. The researcher asks the participant to summarise the main points—or essence—of the interview, with questions such as: "Now that we have looked at this phenomenon from different angles, could you briefly summarise your experiences of the phenomenon and what it means to you? What overall name would you give these experiences and meanings?"

The researcher may summarise the interview, for example regarding each of the research objectives. For example, if a research objective regards the participant's experience of the type of meaning: "your experiences seem to mainly focus on materialistic and hedonistic types of meaning, and less on social or larger types of meaning". The researcher uses formulations that the participant may understand, and uses formulations of the participant, where possible. The researcher checks this interpretation with the participant and is careful not to impose their ideas, and to be open for corrections. "I feel that your experience of this phenomenon might be described as follows: [….]. How do you feel about this summary? Is there anything that I have misunderstood? Is there anything that you would like to change or add?" By checking their interpretations immediately in conversation with the participant, the researcher may increase the trustworthiness of their conclusions. This seems to be a large difference with the role of interviews in other phenomenological–psychological methods, where the focus seems to lie on the researcher making conclusions on their own after the interview.

3.3.11 | Participant's decision

In contrast with the relatively passive interview schedules in other research methods, Heidegger (1927) writes that individuals can make fundamental decisions in each situation, for example to be authentic or not to be authentic. Therefore, it may be helpful to ask: "Do you think that it is possible to experience or interpret this phenomenon in a different way? For example, do other people experience or interpret this differently? How would an alternative look

TABLE 3 Questions about specific perspectives

Research question	Interview question
What is the overall ontological status of the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] for the participant?[a]	How true do you feel that this [phenomenon] is? To which extent do you think that your experience or interpretation of [this phenomenon] is real, and to which extent do you think that this is your imagination? To which extent do you think that your experience and interpretation of this [phenomenon] is the same as other people; what is the difference, and why do you think these differences occur? To which extent do you think that it is possible to completely know the truth and reality of this [phenomenon]? Have you ever dreamt about the [phenomenon]; what did your dream tell; how is that different from how you would describe the [phenomenon] when you are awake? Imagine that the [phenomenon] would not be real (I am not saying that it is not real, I am just asking you to imagine this!), what could this experience of this [phenomenon] stand for, or what would it be a symbol for? For example, a yellow letter "M" stands for McDonalds, and McDonalds could in general symbolise our modern fast food culture If you would make a symbol, picture or icon of this phenomenon, what would this be?
What different types of meaning does the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] have for the participant?	MATERIALISTIC: What practical, material or physical meanings does [the phenomenon] have for you, if any? Examples of practical, material or physical meanings are material conditions (finances, housing, possessions, daily life activities, physical survival), success in your career, studies or social status, or health (e.g., health, healthy lifestyle, sports). HEDONISTIC: What experiential meanings does [the phenomenon] have for you, if any? Examples of experiences are hedonism, fun, leisure and joyful activities, enjoying beauty (music, art, eating, drinking, etc.), sex, nature and animals, peak experiences, and not experiencing pain or suffering. SELF-ORIENTED: What self-oriented meanings does [the phenomenon] have for you, if any? Examples of your self are the person you are, how you see yourself (self-image, self-insight, self-acceptance, self-worth, self-esteem), being autonomous (self-reliance), creatively expressing yourself, engaging in self-care, coping flexibly with difficult life situations (resilience, flexibility, perseverance, effective coping, optimism and hope), having self-control and being able to effectively set, plan and achieve goals in life (planning, organising, discipline, evaluating and adjusting daily life activities or goals). SOCIAL: What social meaning does [the phenomenon] have for you, if any? Examples of social meanings are feeling socially connected (being social, being with friends, family, intimate relationships/partner), belonging to a specific community (family, community, history and society), following social expectations (doing what is socially expected, following social virtues, conformism, tradition), helping others (altruism), giving birth and looking after children and young people. LARGER: What larger or spiritual meanings does [the phenomenon] have for you, if any? Examples of larger meanings are specific purposes in life (higher goals, purposes, aims or dreams in life), being authentic, personal growth (self-development, self-transcendence, self-realisation, fulfilling one's potential, authenticity, wisdom), justice & ethics (following ethical standards, being treated in a just way, contributing to a just world), spirituality and religion (beliefs, worship and religious practices, insight in cosmic meaning, spiritual union, peace harmony and balance, Platonic Idea or Highest Good), and seeing your place in the history of the world and universe (temporality, sense of coherence, future-oriented, reflection on the past, legacy, after-life, position in life-span, little time or resources left) EXISTENTIAL-PHILOSOPHICAL: What existential or philosophical meanings does [the phenomenon] have for you, if any? Existential of philosophical meanings are about more abstract ways about thinking about life, such as feeling alive and zest for life (being-born, feeling-alive, being-until-death), being aware of your fundamental uniqueness (the unique individuality of one's own experiences, own life, own world and own self), feeling fundamentally connected with the world and others (Being-in-the-world, being-in-context, being-in-relationships), feeling fundamentally free (freedom of decision, freedom to decide one's attitude towards a limitation situation in life, the possibility to leave a legacy), being grateful to life as a gift (experiencing the mere fact of being-born as a gift or miracle that one did not ask for but that one regards as highly precious and special, and to which one responds with gratitude) and feeling fundamentally responsible for your own life (individual responsibility for oneself to live a meaningful life according to one's highest values)
What approach does the participant have towards the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon]?	In general, people seem to approach experiences such as this [phenomenon] in three different ways. I will now ask questions about each possible approach Traditional-following approach: This means that you interpret this [phenomenon] mainly like other people do, how you have been told to interpret this, or how the experts and big books have explained this. To which extent do you use this approach? Could you give some examples? Controlling approach: This means that you do not automatically follow others, and you try to explain and control this [phenomenon] yourself. However, there may not be one perfect way of explaining or controlling this [phenomenon], and you may decide to simply go with the flow, as long as you can explain and control the [phenomenon] to some extent. To which extent do you use this approach? Could you give some examples? Critical-open approach: This means that you use your intuition (or: gut feeling) to understand what this [phenomenon] means, while you are also critical about what your intuition tells and are aware of your own limitations. You try to keep an open mind regarding this [phenomenon], use self-insight, creativity, and are critical of the expectations and manipulations by other people. To which extent do you use this approach? Could you give some examples?

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Research question	Interview question
How are the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] embedded in the social context of the participant?	To which extent is your experience of [this phenomenon] influenced by other people? If so, how, and could you give some examples? To which extent do feel that this influence by others is unavoidable and unchangeable? To which extent have you created your experience of [this phenomenon] yourself? If so, how, and could you give some examples? To which extent do feel that the creation by yourself is unavoidable and unchangeable? To which extent is your interpretation of [this phenomenon] influenced by other people? If so, how, and could you give some examples? To which extent do feel that this influence by others is unavoidable and unchangeable? To which extent have you created your interpretation of [this phenomenon] yourself? If so, how, and could you give some examples? To which extent do feel that the creation by yourself is unavoidable and unchangeable?
How do the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] change over time for the participant?	"Have your experiences of [phenomenon] changed over time? If so, how does this change look like?" (Alternative formulation: When did your experience start, how did it develop over time, and how did it end?/ Could you describe your experience as a story, with a beginning, middle and end?") "Are your experiences of [phenomenon] different in different [contexts/situations/locations/places/regions]? If so, how does this look like?" "Have your interpretations of [phenomenon] changed over time? If so, how does this change look like?" (Alternative formulation: How did you interpret this [phenomenon] at the start, how did it develop over time, and how do you interpret this now?") "Are your interpretations of [phenomenon] different in different [contexts/locations/places/regions]? If so, how does this look like?"
How do the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] fit in the life story of the participant?	"To which extent does your experience of [phenomenon] feel as a break in your life, as if you have a clear distinct life before and a life after this experience? Or did the experience of the [phenomenon] develop more gradually or did you become more gradually aware of this?" "How would you describe your life before, your life during and your life after the experience of the [phenomenon] or when you became aware of this? How do these different periods differ from each other?" "When do you think that your experience or awareness of the [phenomenon] started? Was there something unique about the situation when this started; for example, were there specific causes, triggers or challenges in your life when this started? How do you experience and interpret these causes, triggers or challenges now?" "Have you had any other experiences with phenomena like this [phenomenon]? How do you feel about these other phenomena? How do you interpret these phenomena? How have these previous experiences influenced how you experience and interpret the current [phenomenon], if there is any influence? Are there any other life experiences which may have influenced how you experience or interpret this [phenomenon] now?"
How much freedom does the participant experience regarding the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon]?	To which extent are you free to change the experience of [the phenomenon], if at all? To which extent are you responsible for the experience of [the phenomenon], if at all? To which extent does the experience of [the phenomenon] limit your freedom of decision in life? To which extent does the experience of [the phenomenon] enlarge your freedom of decision in life? To which extent are you free to change the interpretation of [the phenomenon], if at all? To which extent are you responsible for the interpretation of [the phenomenon], if at all? To which extent does the interpretation of [the phenomenon] limit your freedom of decision in life? To which extent does the interpretation of [the phenomenon] enlarge your freedom of decision in life?
What is the existential experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] for the participant?	"Have you learned any lessons about life from this [phenomenon], and if so: what are these life lessons? If you were to find a general lesson or rule for life in general in your experience of this [phenomenon], how would this look like?"
How does the experience and meaning of [the phenomenon] impact the daily life of the participant?	"Could you describe the impact of [the phenomenon] on your daily life?"

[a]This perspective may be difficult to ask directly as this requires good self-insight; the researcher may consider skipping explicitly asking about this, and only use this as part of the analysis. A researcher interested in this may want to formulate questions based on the works of Jacques Lacan.

like?" The researcher may share some hypothetical alternative experiences or interpretations in line with the research objectives; for example, the researcher may explain there are not only materialistic types of meaning like the participant has described, but also hedonistic, self-oriented, social or larger types-of-meaning. The researcher needs to formulate these alternatives as *hypothetical*, and not be directive, normative or dismissive of the participant's experiences. Subsequently, the researcher asks: "If you would be able to choose any of these experiences and interpretations, albeit your current ones or an alternative, which would you choose?"

TABLE 4 Example questions to explore multiple facets, paradoxes and inconsistencies, and to let the phenomenon reveal itself

Topic	Examples
3.7. Exploring other approaches	"Are there any other relevant aspects to this [phenomenon] that you want to mention?" "Have you had similar experiences in your life before? Could you describe these experiences? What do these experiences have in common?" "Have you had similar thoughts in your life before? Could you describe these? What do these have in common? What could be a name for this general theme or trend in your life?" "What associations do you have/ have you had during our interview when you were describing [phenomenon]. These associations could be images, intuitions, memories, thoughts, feelings, etc." When describing these associations, ask: "do you have any new associations, or associations with these associations?" (alternative: do a free association exercise, or a thinking aloud exercise) "What metaphor, symbol, fictional person, film, book or poem could represent your experience?" (Alternative: could you make a poem or movie script of this experience?)
3.8. Paradoxes and inconsistencies	Are there any parts of your experience of [phenomenon] that do not add up, that are paradoxical or inconsistent, or that you do not understand or that you find difficult to experience; if so, could you describe these? How does this paradox/ inconsistency feel? How do you think that you cope with this paradox/inconsistency at this moment, here during this interview? How do you think that you usually cope with this paradox/inconsistency in your life? How would you ideally like to cope with this paradox/inconsistency?
3.9. Let the phenomenon reveal itself	"Now that we are coming at the end of the interview: what is the most meaningful aspect of [phenomenon]?" (alternative: most important, valuable or significant aspect) (the researcher could compare this question and the next question with unpeeling a piece of fruit, such as getting rid of the outer layers of a mango and trying to go to the core of the mango, while you try to get rid of the outer flesh of the fruit) "What is the least meaningful aspect of [phenomenon]?" (alternative: least important, valuable or significant aspect) "If you were to make a ladder of this experience, with the least meaningful aspects of the experience on the lowest rods, and the most meaningful aspects on the highest rods, how would this look like?" (the researcher may stimulate participants to do this intuitively and not to think too long about this; you could ask them to write one aspect of the phenomenon on one post-it and ask them to rank this) "Do you feel that there is a core or essence to this experience [of this phenomenon] or do you feel that this experience is more like a combination of unrelated experiences without one shared core essence?" (the researcher may want to use the comparison of a mango which has a hard core, and an onion which does not have a core at all)

3.3.12 | Participant's conclusions

In contrast with most qualitative studies, the focus of SPPA does not lie on the researcher making conclusions when reflecting after the interview, but on facilitating the participant to give their own conclusions in the heat-of-the-interview. These conclusions may be subsequently analysed and validated after the interview by the researcher. Therefore, the last interview question could be: "What do you feel are the main conclusions from this interview?"; "Is there anything you would like to add?"; "How was your experience of this interview?"

3.3.13 | Researcher's reflections

Immediately after the interview, the researcher may want to reflect on the interview, for example by writing several points in a research diary (Table 5).

3.4 | STEP 4. Questionnaires

Adding questionnaires to the interviews may be compared with looking from different angles at the multiple facets of a diamond (Vos, 2013). The aims of adding questionnaires is to examine individual differences, representativity of the participant, and creation of hypotheses. Questionnaires could, for example, help with hermeneutic and reflexive analysis by testing hypotheses regarding the phenomenon, participant or context (Table 6). Furthermore, questionnaires could help to understand the general important meanings in the life of the participant; research suggests that an individual's existential position may determine their perception of phenomena (Vos, 2011, 2020c). The selected questionnaires should have norm groups to compare the participant's scores with. When the sample size allows for sufficient statistical power, statistical comparisons between participants within this study may be conducted. The questionnaires may be scored and interpreted after the interview and before the interview analysis, so that findings may not bias the researcher during the interview.

3.5 | STEP 5. Analytical phases

3.5.1 | Phase 1: Macro-level phenomenological analysis

The starting point of the analysis are the participant's conclusions at the end of the interview. The next analytical steps may help to validate and elaborate these conclusions, which could particularly be

helpful when participants have relatively limited self-insight or if the interview shows paradoxes or inconsistencies.

3.5.2 | Phase 2: Micro-level phenomenological analysis

Step 1. Transcribe the interview, including non-verbal and physical communication such as pauses, hums, laughing, and swallowing. It is recommended to video-record the participant and to add any significant non-verbal behaviour between brackets in the interview transcription: [swallowing]. This could also include speaking style, such as [passionate], or [disconnected]. Non-verbal communication and speaking style may suggest the participant's approach to the phenomenon: for example, does the participant have a functionalistic approach (e.g., theoretical, cold, distant) or is the participant in the flow of experiencing the phenomenon?

Step 2. Break the interview down into smaller components on the basis of content, as in line with thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2006). Usually, this will be between 1 and 10 sentences. One component describes one theme.

Step 3. Put the components in a column in a table. Add the columns "component theme", "reflexivity", "relationship with conclusions", "subtheme", "overarching theme" and "researcher comments".

TABLE 5 Possible reflexive post-interview questions

- General experience of the interview and the role of this experience regarding the actual conductance and perception of the interview (e.g., to which extent have the researcher's subjective experiences shaped the actual conductance and perception of the interview);
- Thoughts during and after the interview & the role of this regarding the actual conductance and perception of the interview (e.g., to which extent have these shaped the actual conductance and perception of the interview);
- Feelings during and after the interview & the role of this regarding the actual conductance and perception of the interview (e.g., to which extent have these shaped the actual conductance and perception of the interview);
- Free associations during and after the interview, including images etc. that came up & the role of this regarding the actual conductance and perception of the interview (e.g., to which extent have these shaped the actual conductance and perception of the interview);
- Paradoxes and inconsistencies in the participant's story (e.g., non-verbal versus verbal messages) & the role of this regarding the actual conductance and perception of the interview (e.g., to which extent have these shaped the actual conductance and perception of the interview);
- Thoughts about one's own functioning during this interviewer (self-evaluation) & the role of this regarding the actual conductance and perception of the interview (e.g., to which extent have these shaped the actual conductance and perception of the interview);
- Any possible biases (e.g., based on prior self-analysis);
- Conclusions

Step 4. Fill in the "component theme" for each component which is the general theme that the participant is expressing in this component.

Step 5. Fill in reflexivity for each component. Reflexivity includes any hypothesis in key words and short sentences regarding the role of the researcher in the interview and analysis, such as "possible influence of my positive bias?", "this triggers a sadness in me; does this sadness come from me or from the participant?" On the basis of this reflexivity, the researcher may add an "updated theme". The researcher could use reflexivity questions from the next section. Where possible, use the participant's words to name the themes.

Step 6. Fill in the column "relationship with conclusions". This is a description of hypotheses in key words or sentences of the relationship between this component and the overall conclusion that the participant made in the interview. For example: "inconsistency?", "example?" Try to understand what factors may have caused any differences, such as the participant not wanting to experience or share specific experiences or interpretations, avoidance or denial. The researcher may update the themes.

Step 7. The researcher categorises all component themes in approximately 10–25 subthemes. Try to use the participant's words for the name of the theme.

Step 8. The researcher categorises the 10–25 subthemes into five overarching themes. Try to use the participant's words for the name of the theme.

Step 9. The researcher may add any comments if needed, such as any doubts about the title, etc. (Table 7).

3.5.3 | Phase 3: Systematic analysis of the objectives

Step 1. A similar table with the interview components can be made, but with one column for each of the objectives, one column for "reflexivity" and one for "researcher comments" (Table 8).

Step 2. The researcher fills in each column for each interview component. The researcher may use pre-determined categories (e.g., Table 1) but the researcher could also use new names (preferably using words of the participant). The researcher identifies how strong the evidence for this is, ranging from 1, not strong, to 7, very strong. For example, a citation could be scored as follows: "type of meaning: materialistic 3, hedonistic 1, self-oriented 5, social 1, larger 1, existential-philosophical 1, other 1".

Step 3. After having filled in all columns for an interview component, the researcher engages in reflexivity, as described in the previous section.

Step 4. The researcher adds any comments if needed.

Step 5. The researcher summarises how often objectives had strong evidence (scores of 5–7) for their presence in the interview components. For example, during the full interview, the participant showed materialistic types of meaning in 30 interview components, and hedonistic types of meaning in three interview components. On the basis of the overall sum scores, the researcher concludes the dominant perspective of the participant regarding this phenomenon,

TABLE 6 Examples of questionnaires

Domain	Questionnaire examples
Phenomenon	Specific questionnaires about the phenomenon
Participant's personality	Personality: NEO-FFI Coping Style: COPE Ego states: Young Schema Mode Questionnaire Mood & psychopathology: Positive Affect/Negative Affect Scale (PANAS); CORE-10; Symptom Checklist (SCL-90); Impact of Events Scale (IES)
Context	Sociodemographic variables: Vos Socio Demographic Scale Life events: Life Events Scale Social context: Social Relationships Scale, Young Parenting Scale
General meaning scales	Reality, symbol, imagination: Dissociation Scale (in the MMPI) Types of meaning: Meaning Sextet Questionnaire-wish/realisation[a] Approach to meaning: Meaning Approach Scale[a]; Flow Questionnaire; Flexibility Scale (AAQ-II) Social context: Hofstede Cultural Values Scale Time, life story: Developmental Stages Scale; Individuation-Separation Scale; Inventory of Personality Organisation (IPO) Freedom: Freedom Scale Existential: Ryff's Conceptual Well-Being Scale; Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ); Life Position Scale Daily life: Life Satisfaction Scale; Quality of Life Scales such as SF-6D, EQ-5, or WHO-QoL

[a]See Vos (2018, 2020c).

such as: "the participant seemed to focus dominantly on materialistic meanings regarding the phenomenon".

3.5.4 | Phase 4: Analysis of questionnaires

In line with the pragmatic-phenomenological and critical-realist position, questionnaire scores may not be regarded as directly giving absolute truths; they may need to be interpreted and integrated in the broader context of the research. For example, questionnaires may be limited due to their relatively functionalistic approach to participants and their experiences; as such they may mainly reveal aspects of the participant's experiences and meanings within this functionalistic approach. However, questionnaires could, for example, be used for reflexivity and formulation of hypotheses.

Step 1. Calculate sum scores for overall scales or sub-scales within each questionnaire.

Step 2. Compare the scores with norm group.

Step 3. Focus on the highest and lowest scores in the questionnaires and identify how scores may relate to each other. For example, are there any inconsistencies, or can scores on different scales compensate for each other, such as self-discipline helping to cope with a large energy-drive (Eurelings-Bontekoe & Snellen, 2017).

Step 4. Create hypotheses around how questionnaire scores could relate to the experiences and meanings of the phenomenon for this participant. Focus on scores which are confirmed by other findings in the interview. If there are inconsistencies between interview and questionnaire, try to hypothesise why this happened (e.g., the questionnaire has a functionalistic approach or only examines general experiences and not the everyday experiences and meanings of this specific phenomenon). If needed, update the tables.

Step 5. Use the questionnaire scores and hypotheses in the next analytical phase of reflexivity.

3.5.5 | Phase 5: Systematic phenomenological reflexivity for each participant

Our experiences and interpretations always seem to be embedded in a broader context: being is Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1927). We experience phenomena from our unique positions and roles in this world, and as researchers we face a double hermeneutic as we try to make sense of how the participant makes sense of the phenomenon. Therefore, understanding phenomena requires hermeneutic analysis and reflexivity (Gadamer, 2004; Ricoeur, 1981). In contrast with other methods, SPPA has a systematic

TABLE 7 Example of table for micro-level phenomenological analysis

Starting time on recording	Interview component	Component theme	Reflexivity	Relationship to conclusions	Subtheme	Overarching theme	Researcher comments
00:00	…	Initial theme: … Updated theme: …					
00:07							

TABLE 8 Example table for systematic analysis of research objectives

Start time on recording	Interview component	Ontological status	Type of meaning	Approach to meaning	Individual society	Time	Life story	Freedom	Existential	Daily life	Reflexivity	Researcher comments
00:00	…	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example: Evidence: Updated	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example: Evidence: Updated:	Example Evidence: Updated	Example: Updated:
00:07												

Note: Evidence may be scored on a scale from 1, very weak evidence, to 7, very strong evidence.

TABLE 9 Examples of reflexive questions (numbers refer to Figures 1 and 2)

A. How does the participant relate to the phenomenon, according to what the participant has explicitly said about this in the unfocused first part of the interview and what the questionnaires show (NB: try to stay with what the participant explicitly said or what the questionnaires score are, with as little interpretation as possible)? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (L)?
B. How does the subjectivity of the participant (e.g., personality, self, life experience, general meaning in life) influence how they relate to the phenomenon? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? (e.g., an individual who is generally optimistic will have a more optimistic perspective on the phenomenon) How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (K)?
C. How does the phenomenon influence how the participant relates to the phenomenon? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? (e.g., the phenomenon of depression makes participants reflect in a more negative and generalising way about the phenomenon) How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (M)?
D. How does the participant relate to the wider context, according to what the participant has explicitly said about this in the interview and what the questionnaires show (NB: try to stay with what the participant explicitly said or what the questionnaires score are, with as little interpretation as possible)? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? (these are the general conclusions from the interview and/or from the previous analysis phase) How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (T)?
E. How does the wider context relate to the phenomenon, according to research or clinical experience (NB: try to stay with what is explicitly written about this in research, reports or books by reliable authors in the field, or strong personal clinical experience?) How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (P)?
F. How does the subjectivity of the participant (e.g., personality, self, life experience, general meaning in life) influence how they relate to their wider context? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? (e.g., an optimistic individual may have positive views of society) How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (U)?
G. How does the wider context influence how the participant relates to the wider context? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? (The researcher may use what is explicitly written about this in research, reports or books by reliable authors in the field, or strong personal clinical experience) (e.g., the socio-economic place where a person is born may determine their perspective on society). How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (S)?
H. How does the phenomenon influence the relationship between the phenomenon and the wider context? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? (e.g., symptoms of depression may lead to social introversion) How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (O)?

(Continues)

TABLE 9 (Continued)

I. How does the context influence the relationship between the phenomenon and the wider context? How strong is the evidence for this (rate 1, weak–7, strong)? (e.g., society may have stigmas about depression) How does the researcher relate to the answers to these questions (Q)?
J. How does the researcher relate to the participant (J)?
N. How does the researcher relate to the phenomenon (*N*)?
R. How does the researcher relate to the context (R)?
Implications and summary of reflexivity
V. Summarise how the participant relates to the [phenomenon] in its context (a-i). Focus on the reflexive hypotheses based on the strongest evidence. Max. 10 sentences
W. Summarise how the researcher relates to the [phenomenon] in its context as described by the participant (j-u). Focus on the reflexive hypotheses based on the strongest evidence. Max. 10 sentences
X. How has the unique specific relationship of this researcher (mentioned in W) possibly influenced the way the researcher has described the participant's relationship to the [phenomenon] (mentioned in V)?
Y. Looking at all the research findings, what are the most unexpected, meaningful and significant findings? What makes these findings feel unexpected, meaningful and significant to the researcher?
Z. How coherent are the findings? To which extent does any incoherence reflect the participant's experiences and interpretations of the [phenomenon], does this reflect the [phenomenon], or does this reflect the unique context and role of the researcher?

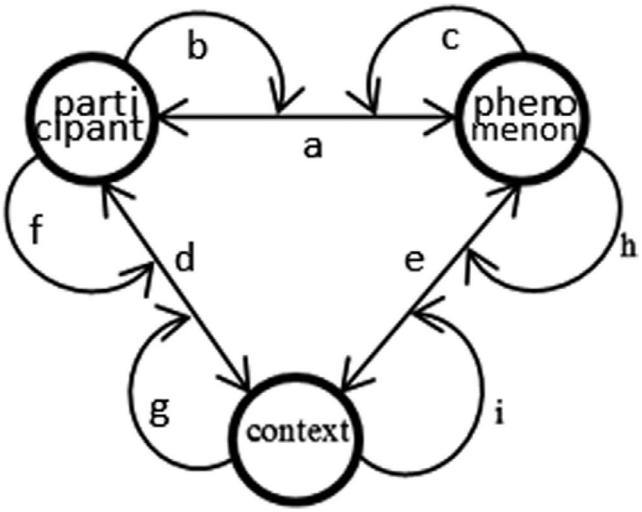

FIGURE 1 Phenomenological relationships between participant, phenomenon and context

phenomenological approach to hermeneutic analysis and reflexivity. This systematic method may help to explore phenomenological relationships which researchers may overlook without a systematic method; this system could help researchers to become aware of biases such as mood-congruent memory-retrieval, self-serving

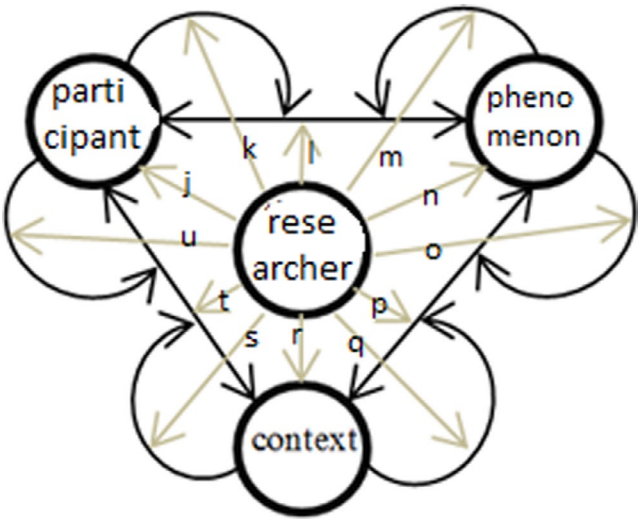

FIGURE 2 Phenomenological relationships between researcher and participant, phenomenon and context

TABLE 10 Analytical steps for synthesis per participant

Step 1. What were the main conclusions according to the participant (analysis phase 1)?
Step 2. What themes arose from the micro-level interview analysis (analysis phase 2)?
Step 3. What were the dominant perspectives of the participant (analysis phase 3)?
Step 4. What did the questionnaires suggest about the lived experiences and meanings of the participant regarding this [phenomenon], if anything (analysis phase 4)?
Step 5. How were the lived experiences and meanings constructed in the interaction between participant, phenomenon, context, and researcher (analysis phase 5)?
Step 6. Are there any differences between the findings of the different analysis phases; if so, describe the main differences and the hypothetical explanations for these differences with the strongest evidence?
Step 7. Summarise the key findings for this participant (keep this short, e.g., maximum 3 sentences)
Step 8. The researcher may consider adding a metaphor, symbol, fictional person, book, film, poem or another creative expression to summarise the key findings (see lecture of Heidegger on art and on poetry; see also the work of Bachelard).

and confirmation biases. The researcher could ask themselves hermeneutic and reflexive questions (Table 9) about the relationships of the participant with the phenomenon and their context (A-I in Figure 1), and about the relationships of the researcher (J-U in Figure 2). This could include information from the interviews and questionnaires, and any preliminary understanding of the research objectives. It is recommended that researchers use these reflexive questions before analysing an interview, and as part of the synthesising process for each participant and across all participants (see next analytical phases).

TABLE 11 Analytical steps for synthesis of all participants

Step 1. Put the key synthesis for each participant in a table, according to the analysis phase. Use key words only to make this fit the small cells
Step 2. Synthesis of themes and subthemes
2A. Combine all subthemes from all individual participants (e.g., in an excel spread, visual software, or on post-its)
2B. Group all subthemes from all participants, with a maximum of 25 groups of subthemes; you could name each theme according to the words of the participants or you may find a new name
2C. Group all subthemes into approximately 3 to 7 between-participant themes; you could name each theme according to the words of the participants or you may find a new name
2D. Create a table for all between-participant themes; these are the similarities between participants
2E. Create a summary of the most remarkable, significant or meaningful dissimilarities between participants where they differed from each other in the themes and subthemes. Start with a list of maximum 25 dissimilarities, and group these dissimilarities until 3 to 7 main dissimilarities are found
NB: Using post-it notes could help to identify similarities and dissimilarities: put each key word of one participant on one post-it, with a reference (e.g., conclusion 1-participant 1: "being in a dark place"). Combine similar post-its to identify any similarities
Step 3. For each analysis phase, identify key similarities between the participants
Step 4. For each analysis phase, identify the key dissimilarities between the participants. Limit the number of dissimilarities (3–7 for the themes)
Step 5. The last key similarities and key dissimilarities to identify are the similarities and dissimilarities between the summaries of different participants
Step 6. Identify one creatively expressed summary of the similarities between participants
Step 7. Identify one creatively expressed summary of the dissimilarities between participants (this could be related to step 5)

3.5.6 | Phase 6: Synthesis for one participant

Pragmatic-phenomenological synthesis does not necessarily mean identifying an essence or core to the experiences and meanings of the phenomenon for the participant (as we do not know whether the participant experiences a core). This means summarising the findings, and analysing which findings are more-meaningful and which are less-meaningful to the participant, for example via the steps in Table 10.

3.5.7 | Phase 7: Synthesis for all participants

Synthesis does not mean identifying an essence but describing the most important similarities and dissimilarities between the lived experiences and meanings of a phenomenon for different individuals. Table 11 suggests analytical steps, and Tables 12 and 13 give examples.

TABLE 14 Examples of trustworthiness

- *Credibility*: e.g., do the results appear truthful at face value; prolonged engagement, peer briefing, triangulation, member checks
- *Transferability*: e.g., providing thick description, purposive sampling
- *Dependability*: e.g., create an audit trail, triangulation, consistency of findings over time and in different contexts
- *Confirmability*: e.g., triangulation, quality of reflexivity, role
- *Authenticity*: e.g., are all realities represented
- *Generalisability*: e.g., level of saturation of data (see section on "sample"), how large are the differences between participants (both in general, e.g., sociodemographic characteristics - and regarding their lived experiences and meanings of the [phenomenon]), how representative is the sample of the full population, how representative is this topic for the general life experience of the participants, how unique are the findings for the specific sample in the specific context (see also dependability), how large is the interpretative gap when the findings get generalised to a broader sample?

TABLE 13 Example table visualising between-participant themes and subthemes

Between-participant theme	Between-participant subtheme
Theme 1 (*N* = …)	Subtheme 1 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 2 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 3 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 4 (*N* = …)
Theme 2 (*N* = …)	Subtheme 1 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 2 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 3 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 4 (*N* = …)
Theme 3 (*N* = …)	Subtheme 1 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 2 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 3 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 4 (*N* = …)
Theme 4 (*N* = …)	Subtheme 1 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 2 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 3 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 4 (*N* = …)
Theme 5 (*N* = …)	Subtheme 1 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 2 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 3 (*N* = …)
	Subtheme 4 (*N* = …)

Note: In total, 3–7 themes and within each theme max. 3–7 subthemes; *N* = number of participants who mentioned this subtheme.

3.5.8 | Reflection on trustworthiness

What has the researcher done to guarantee the trustworthiness of the study, and how strong is the trustworthiness? The

TABLE 12 Example of table of synthesis of seven participants

Analysis phase	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Key similarities	Key dissimilarities
Key sociodemographic characteristics	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points
1. Conclusion of participant	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points
2. Interview themes	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 key points	3–7 themes with each max. 3–7 subthemes	3–7 themes with each max. 3–7 subthemes
3. Dominant perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective	Max. 1 key point for each perspective
4. Questionnaires	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points
5. Construction in the interaction between participant, phenomenon, context, and researcher	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points
6. Explanations for differences	Max. 7 key points for differences within participants	Max. 7 key points for differences within participants	Max. 7 key points for differences within participants	Max. 7 key points for differences within participants	Max. 7 key points for differences within participants	Max. 7 key points for differences within participants	Max. 7 key points for differences within participants	Max. 7 key points for differences between participants	Max. 7 key points for differences between participants
7. Summary in key words	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points	Max. 7 key points
8. Creatively expressed summary	Max. one summary	Max. one summary	Max. one summary	Max. one summary	Max. one summary	Max. one summary	Max. one summary	Max. one summary for all participants	Max. one summary for all participants

researcher may want to critically reflect on these questions (Yardley, 2008; see Table 14). Appendix S1 suggests how to write an SPPA study.

4 | DISCUSSION

This article has shown that SPPA has many commonalities with other qualitative and some quantitative research methods. However, SPPA also has large differences, particularly due to its pragmatic critical-realistic foundations and its systematic approach. SPPA researchers intend to be more holistic than other phenomenological–psychological approaches, by systematically asking 10 questions instead of imposing the one—possibly biased—question that the researcher may have pre-selected. Furthermore, SPPA seems to differ from other phenomenological applications in psychology, as it is based on the systematic approach from early phenomenological philosophers and relatively less on the more constructivist traditions in phenomenological psychology.

SPPA has been successfully applied in multiple research projects and is used as methodology in several doctorate research projects at this time of writing (Vos, 2004, 2005, 2015, 2018, 2020c). This article offers the first guidance for conducting SPPA, with specific examples of questions and analytical steps. This guidance seems more detailed than in other methods and could therefore be particularly helpful for beginning researchers.

A limitation of this study is the relative lack of self-reflection and reflexivity by the author, which seems to be a contradiction with the SPPA methodology. For example, the author has been influenced by his training in the systematic phenomenology of early phenomenological philosophers, which may contrast the often more hermeneutic and less systematic applications of phenomenology in psychological research (Vos, 2015). The pragmatic meaning-oriented approach of SPPA may also be seen as part of the recent academic trend towards post-postmodernism and critical realism, or more generally towards a meaning-oriented society (Vos, 2020c). The sole reason for the relative lack of reflexivity is the lack of space; examples of reflexivity can be found elsewhere (e.g., Vos, 2017, 2020c).

The author has also developed the systematic approach of SPPA for pedagogical reasons, as he sees conducting phenomenological research as a craft. Like a mediaeval journeyman was expected to learn the craft from masters, students of phenomenological research may also need to learn phenomenological skills step-by-step (Vos, 2020c). Individuals may not be expected to know immediately without structured guidance how to conduct phenomenological research, like a journeyman may not know how to build a violin without the guidance of a master and the experience of several years of building violins step-by-step (Vos, 2020c). Without prior rigorous guidance and experience, beginning researchers may conduct uncritical and biased research, like a journeyman may be able to build a violin on their own, but it may not (yet) have the quality of a Stradivarius. However, some students seem to reject such a systematic approach, which they may justify with ideological arguments. For example, one student told the author that she "refuses to identify a clear aim and method in the research", because she wants "to remain open to the experiences of the client". However, after conversation, it appeared that this student—like several other doctorate students of the author—seemed to be hiding a lack of research skills behind her pseudo-ideological aversion against applying systems, combined with a rebellion against authorities (cf. Vos, 2013). Such academic and psychological reasons may lead to bias and a lack of research rigour. Systematically explicating the research processes—for example in the many tables in this article—may help beginning researchers to develop their phenomenological skills and to overcome some academic or psychological problems and logical fallacies. However, a potential danger in the application of SPPA is that the detailed structured approach may distract the researcher and participant from their intuition, and thus the research may not capture the subjectively lived experiences of the participant; therefore, it is recommended that the researcher practices with the interview schedule, and prioritises following the relationship and intuition over rigidly sticking to the structure. Furthermore, SPPA needs to be applied more often to further investigate its feasibility. More research is needed into the experiences of SPPA by interviewers and interviewees, and comparisons with other qualitative methods. In the meantime, researchers may use this guidance with sufficient reflexivity and critical intuition. Clinicians may also want to consider using SPPA in clinical assessments (see Appendix S2 and Vos, 2018).

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section.

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