
LANEI RODEMEYER
Duquesne University
rodemeyer@duq.edu

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ESSENTIAL STRUCTURES OF GENDER—WITHOUT GENDER ESSENTIALISM

abstract

There are many ways to describe gender, making this notion both productive and challenging for phenomenological analysis. This paper will begin with an eidetic/static analysis in order to determine the multiple aspects of gender—from individual experience to intersubjective concept. We will then shift to a genetic analysis, looking also to how gender appears at distinct phenomenological levels of experience. In doing so, we hope to gain not only a better understanding of gender through a phenomenological lens, but also new insights into phenomenology itself.

keywords

phenomenology, gender, Husserl, levels

Introduction While a description of gender may seem simple at first glance—perhaps a quick reference to a biological description would suffice—it does not take much reflection to realize that gender is recognized and experienced on a multitude of registers. Since phenomenology is a method that begins with description in order to identify the essential and meaningful structures that allow experiences to appear in the way that they do, a phenomenological description of gender would be productive for an understanding of it. In this article, then, I propose to carry out a phenomenological description and analysis of our experience of gender.¹

I will begin with an eidetic and static phenomenological analysis, working to identify some essential structures. The second part of my paper will turn to “genetic” analyses, which take up the development and buildup of similar experiences, habits, and associations. Along the way, we will see that gender is experienced through multiple levels of constitution. I will conclude, then, by reviewing these levels, and demonstrating how they enable us to recognize the multiple dimensions through which we experience gender.

I.a Eidetic and Static Analysis: Preliminary Definitions and Reflection I would like to begin with a certain kind of phenomenological analysis, which looks at what makes a specific type of experience possible at all. Before we begin, though, I will lay out how I understand certain terms. *Eidetic or static analysis*² is a phenomenological approach that takes one sample object from a specific “region of being”,³ varies it as much as is necessary (even “infinitely”) in my mind or imagination, and then discovers the essential structures

1 This paper was originally a Presentation at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für phänomenologische Forschung (DGpF) conference, “Zurück zu den Sachen selbst. Die Praxis der Phänomenologie.” (Jena, Germany, September 27-29, 2022) The focus of the conference was to provide phenomenological description of “the things themselves,” with minimal textual references or analyses. For this reason, this article will contain few references, and it will focus on the phenomenological process and its results. Many thanks to the organizers for inviting me to present on this topic, and especially for pushing me beyond my comfort zone! Many thanks also to the participants for their feedback and support of the project.

2 I will not be working with a strict distinction between static and eidetic phenomenology, since they often overlap with one another, and since my concern here is with applying the method rather than identifying distinctions within the method.

3 I take the term “region of being” from Husserl’s early work, where he understands different types of objects to be divided according to their exclusively different rules of existence. The region of being of numbers, for example, functions according to very different rules compared to the region of being of material objects. See Husserl’s *Ideas I*, §28 (1983), where he describes different standpoints as related to different regions of being.

that underlie not only that object, but all objects belonging to that region.⁴ In Husserl's *Ideas I*, static/eidetic analysis is directed at the essential structures of consciousness that make possible *all* conscious experiences.⁵ By *essential structure* I mean the following: those structures within consciousness or within meaning that underlie an experience, without which that experience would be impossible. So, we can look for essential structures within specific regions of being, and especially within consciousness (which we find quite a bit in early phenomenology and especially Husserl), but we can also seek essential structures within intersubjective situations, or within particular types of events, etc. When we do the latter, we are often carrying out eidetic or static analyses *outside of the epoché*. In other words, we do not need the epoché in order to identify essential structures, and actually, quite a bit of applied phenomenology is carried out without requiring that move. For our purposes, we will start out by employing a combined eidetic and static analysis as we seek the essential structures that underlie the experience of gender. Our epoché will be a loose form of epoché that brackets all presumptions about what we think gender is from the natural attitude, including theoretical and scientific positions within the natural attitude.

That said, I would like to ask you, the reader, to “do” some phenomenology with me:

Do your best to set aside all of your assumptions about what gender is or should be. Now, try to carry out your own brief eidetic variation of gender. Think through all the different ways that whatever we call “gender” might appear. In order to do this properly, stop reading for a moment...

Hold onto your own phenomenological insights and see how they compare with what follows.

When I do my own eidetic variation of gender, the first thing I come across is my body, or *Leib*.⁶ Now, gender is not the same thing as the *Leib*, and there are many experiences of my embodiment that don't seem to point to gender for me—although some gender theorists do argue that all experiences of myself as a person will imply my gender in some way.⁷ But we have bracketed all theories, so let's focus on the body: In what ways does gender appear here? How does the *sense* of gender arise, whether as a sensation or a meaning? Perhaps we can identify sensations and feelings that indicate desires or revulsions, yearnings or recoilings, pleasures or pains, as well as the surfaces and depths of the body through which these feelings might appear. These feelings can be immediate, or they can be anticipated, phantasized, wished-for, or remembered. These feelings indicate how my gendered body appears to me—and how it appears to others. As I run through these sensations, though, I realize that they are not gender itself. In other words, gender is not reducible to any particular sensation or feeling, nor to any set of sensations or feelings. On the other hand, these sensations or feelings can indicate my gender through pointing to aspects of my body that have been associated with my gender, and by indicating sensations or feelings that might refer to my gender or to gendered aspects of my body. This is not to say that all of these sensations are consistent with one another, nor that they are all comfortable. There may be a disconnect between my desires

I.b Eidetic and Static Analysis

4 For a brief overview in Husserl's work on the difference between an empirical approach and an eidetic approach, see *Ideas I*, §§2-9 (1983).

5 See *Ideas I*, §33 (1983).

6 This concept of *Leib* was introduced and developed in Husserl's *Ideas II* (1989), although it has been worked with significantly since then in both primary and secondary literature.

7 See, for example, Judith Butler in her 1999 Preface to *Gender Trouble*: “To the extent the gender norms [...] establish what will and will not be intelligibly human, what will and will not be considered to be “real,” they establish the ontological field in which bodies may be given legitimate expression.” (Butler, 1999, p. xxiii)

and the bodily aspects with which I am concretely embodied. Or my sensations or feelings may not resonate with what others desire or expect of me. Even my own desires may be counter to what I want as a person. And the actions that I take—as well as the actions of others towards me—may contradict how I feel or what I want. Nevertheless, these sensations and feelings often give rise to what I think of as my gender, whether it is through my gender identity, my sexuality, my concrete embodiment, or more. Thus, sensations and feelings provide an immediate grounding for my gender, even if we cannot reduce gender to them.

So, my body points me toward bodily sensations which ground both that body and the sense of gender associated with it. These sensations are felt by me, not anyone else, and so they are “my own” in a way that other meanings and objects are not. But let’s return to the body as a whole. Beyond sensations which can be understood as “my own”, we have already begun to notice that my sense of gendered embodiment carries a relational aspect with it: I find myself gendered in relation with, and in comparison to, other gendered subjects. My encounters with other people call up the gender with which I have been associated and/or the gender through which I would like to connect with those other individuals (and these may not be the same), and this highlights not only my own gender, but also the gender of the other. In other words, my relationships with others bring to the fore the gender through which I seek to relate with them, the gender with which they associate me, and the gender(s) through which they appear to me. For example: A nonbinary individual might find their nonbinary sense brought to the fore in their relations with others, even while, at the same time, others are identifying them through their gender assigned at birth. Simply put, my connection to other people often highlights gender for me—whether in pleasurable, painful, or conflicting ways—and so we find that gender appears not just through my embodiment, but more accurately, through my embodied interpersonal relations with others.

Beyond sensation and embodiment, of course, there is much more. I am informed about gender (my own and that of others) through social meanings that are both explicit and implicit. Social cues, peer assessment and judgment, media representation, policies, laws, scientific and theoretical studies, bodies of knowledge—all of these contribute to my sense of gender. And these can filter into my embodied relations and my own sensations and feelings, affecting my sensations. Here, though, we have stumbled back into the theoretical world, and it brings us to a conflict that we often see between phenomenology and other theoretical approaches about embodiment, subjectivity, and gender: On the one hand, phenomenology claims to be able to analyze sensations, sensory embodiment, etc. for themselves. On the other hand, theories from gender studies, psychology, and other areas argue that there is no sensation or embodiment for itself, that these things are always, already filtered through social meanings. Given this, the latter approaches often dismiss phenomenology as naïve or presumptuous, claiming that it ignores the importance and influence of social factors. I would like to offer a response here, one that would allow us to move forward with our phenomenological analyses, and further, one that will be further substantiated in our analyses to come: While I will not argue that phenomenology is never presumptuous or naïve, its approach is much more sophisticated than any quick dismissal will allow. First, while the phenomenological epoché sets aside theories with respect to their underlying positing of reality, the *content* of those theories is certainly allowed into the phenomenological sphere for analysis. So, beliefs and assertions about gender, social cues and implications, etc. are brought into our phenomenological analyses as valuable meanings. In fact, a phenomenological method is an excellent approach for examining both our individual sensations and our social systems *together*, looking at their mutual influences. So, phenomenology should not be dismissed; rather, it can be an essential methodological component for a complete theoretical approach to the experience of gender. Second, a phenomenological analysis that takes up

“pure” sensation does not need to assert that sensation is unaffected by social meaning. Instead, phenomenology merely recognizes that I have access to my pain, my pleasures, my desires, etc. in ways that other people do not. These sensations are mine—even if we accept the argument that my very sense of “mine” is heavily socially constructed—because no one else *feels* them. But that they are mine does not exclude that they are also usually filtered through the meanings that surround me and within which I live. Thus, I can examine my sensations through a phenomenological approach without denying that they arise within the context of my cultural and social surroundings. And a phenomenological approach allows me to recognize feelings that are not recognized within a specific culture or discourse—sensations that might surprise me, or sensations for which I can find no name.

So, let’s return to our preliminary analyses: Have we identified any essential structures so far? What might they be? It appears that we have discovered that gender is grounded in the sensory body in some way, but is, at the same time, neither reducible to the body as a whole nor to any specific aspects, sensations, or feelings of the body. Instead, it can arise through sensory experiences and feelings that are based in the body, but not necessarily through any single type of experience. Further, when we consider social influences—which we will be addressing more in a moment—we find that discursive definitions of gender, social implications, and so on, are also directed toward bodies in one way or another. So, the body may be *necessary* for gender to appear, but at the same time, it does not appear to be *sufficient*: Bodily sensations and feelings are just that—sensations and feelings. These sensations and feelings, without an intersubjective context, could, at best, only give me a vague or rough sense of gender, if anything—and this point is quite debatable. Rather, gender seems to come to the fore through my relations with other individuals and/or with society and culture in general. And further, it may only be through the meanings I gain from intersubjective experience that I am able to recognize gendered sensations as gendered. In other words, while I can recognize gendered sensations as *sensations* without a social context, it is the social context that enables me to recognize them as *gendered*. So, sensations do arise and are experienced, and I could recognize them as sensations, even if I were without an intersubjective context that would provide a gendered framework. Within a discursive, social network, however, these sensations are given with a new, gendered layer. This additional layer, however, does not replace the original sensory experience: For example, when a gendered, intersubjective context is in place, how my body feels its own gender may actually conflict with the gender that is assigned to me through that context. That conflict could not arise without a body whose sensations are my own. So intersubjective relations are important—even necessary—to our experience of gender, but they cannot fully determine *my* gender. Simply put, gender is not reducible to intersubjective relations, either. Instead, gender appears to arise through dialogue between personal embodiment and social context. My gender, we could say, is co-constituted through my sensations and embodiment, on the one hand, and intersubjective meanings and contexts about gender, on the other.

I would like to pause again briefly, this time to look more closely at the intersubjective context to which I have been referring. In my analysis so far, my references to intersubjectivity could have implied interpersonal relations (so, one-on-one relations or small groups of people) as well as more general notions of intersubjectivity that include broader cultural contexts and discursive meaning construction. Each of these aspects of intersubjectivity function in their own way, though: The interpersonal relationships that highlight my gender function through shared communication as well as, depending upon the situation, bodily contact or presence with one another. But it is on the broader, cultural level that specific meanings about gender, how gender should be presented, how it should be experienced, its association with bodies and sexual orientations, etc., is primarily based. Those

meanings filter into how I relate to others, how they relate to me, and how I relate to myself. Further, those meanings often seem to have a life of their own—a discursive or performative life—that is reinforced through repeated individual behaviors and invocations. This latter understanding of intersubjectivity, which is much more abstract and conceptual than interpersonal relations, corresponds with contemporary gender theories that establish gender within discursive and performative contexts.⁸ Those theories argue that the discourse and performativity of gender usually brings about how gender appears in individual cases. In fact, interpersonal relations act as enforcement, affirmation, or rejection of different discursive aspects of gender. This enforcement arises out of a general social meaning, but it plays out in our one-on-one and small group encounters most effectively. Thus, the cultural understanding of gender is what provides the context within which gender can appear for you and for me, but, as we can see, it becomes concrete in our embodied encounters with others. For this reason, it might be useful for us to understand intersubjectivity through these two prongs: an abstract discursive meaning structure and a relatively concrete embodied set of relations. Engaged with both of these layers, as we have established, is my sensory living body.

So, let's review what we have established so far—our preliminary essential structures:

1. We have found that the body and its sensations and feelings act as a necessary ground for the experience of gender.
2. At the same time, this gender is brought forth through interpersonal, embodied relationships with others.
3. And finally, the cultural and discursive frameworks within which we live provide an essential context through which we identify, place, and connect our gender.
4. These structures (1-3), I would argue, must work together. In other words, none of them is sufficient for gender on its own. We might even say that the experience of gender is co-constituted through my embodiment and sensations, on one side, and intersubjective meaning and encounters, on the other.

Excellent! We have done some good, static phenomenological analyses so far! Now, I would like to turn to a genetic analysis in order to work through the layers not visible in a static approach.

II.a Genetic Analysis: Preliminary Definitions and Reflection

So far, we have carried out our eidetic, static phenomenological analyses, to some success. A genetic analysis, though, examines the layerings and buildup of experience, and how that plays into present constitution. More specifically, genetic analysis takes up how experiences are sedimented, how they associate with one another, how habits develop, and how specific experiences affect us or call forth other experiences.

So, I ask you to pause again for another phenomenological reflection. This time, I want you to think about how your own gendered experiences might have built up and developed. What habits or associations might you have formed over your lifetime? How might deeply embedded experiences continue to rise up into your current gendered experiences?

Once again, stop reading for a moment...

Ok, hold onto those insights to see how they line up with my own reflections.

II.b Genetic Analysis

I want to start again at the level of sensation and feelings: For sensations and feelings to arise for me, they must persist, at least for some amount of time. Further, as sensations persist

⁸ Once again, I am thinking primarily of the works of Foucault and Butler here, as well as the works that have followed from their positions.

(especially over longer periods), it is also possible that they shift and change. Throughout this persistence and change, though, they arise as sensations and feelings related to my body, and so my body remains relatively consistent as the center for all my sensory experiences. The recognition of both consistency and change is made possible through inner time-consciousness, which maintains experiences as they endure, and extends beyond the immediate moment to identify development and change as well as similarity and persistence. In fact, this structure of inner time-consciousness is what makes possible my association between similar experiences, even when they take place in different contexts or at different times of my life. Thus, over time, the sensations and feelings that indicate my *gendered* embodiment can be connected with one another through inner time-consciousness, which is an essential structure of my embodied consciousness. By developing associations with one another, gendered experiences provide a background of lived experience of gender, so that when a new gendered sensation or feeling arises, it can be experienced within the context of those that have come before—even if the new experience is relatively different from those that came earlier. These associated sensations and feelings then contribute to my sense of my own gender as well as my embodiment overall.

The association of sensations and feelings thus gives me a sense of my gendered embodiment over time. In other words, my sense of gender does not appear at the first instance of sensation or feeling, but rather, through the persistence and repetition of sensations and feelings of specific types—even if there is variance between the specific sensations or feelings themselves. These gendered associations connect with one another, building up a gendered embodiment that is mine. However, we should note that (as we noticed earlier), while similar sensations will develop associations with one another in any case, the fact that certain sensations become associated *as gendered* is due to my living within a context of interpersonal relationships and cultural and linguistic contexts that provide me with the framework of gender. Within an interpersonal situation, my associated sensations and feelings reach out toward, pull back from, and reside alongside other embodied subjects. In these personal relations, in other words, I am affected by the genders that are presented to me. This effect also includes the development of my identity. I may be identified by others as a woman, a man, intersex, or non-binary, and I may resonate with the identity assigned to me or not. This resonance or resistance arises through my own (associated) sensations and feelings that coalesce as my gender, grounding my response to how others identify and relate with me. In this way, my own gendered sensations and feelings are in dialogue with interpersonal gendered meanings as they are presented via other subjects. So, I develop my sense of my gender through repeated exchanges with other individuals, which also give me direction in my sense of identity. That sense of identity, usually connected with my gender, gains depth through repeated, similar experiences that build up for me over time—all the while in dialogue with the sensations and embodiment that are mine.

But these interpersonal moments express the cultural and discursive contexts of gender within which they take place. The approvals or rejections that are expressed individually to me do not merely reside in the individuals who enact them. Rather, as mentioned in our earlier analyses, we are surrounded by meanings that present gender in very specific ways. So, individual expressions of gender are usually repetitions and voicings of more general traditional attitudes, cultural meanings, social limitations, etc. In addition, each voicing or expression contributes to the reification and affirmation of the attitude being expressed. What is important in our analyses is our recognition of the *dialogue* that takes place between my own individually associated sensations and these discursive practices, both through their expressions in interpersonal relationships and their formative presence as intersubjective meanings.

So how, phenomenologically speaking, can discursive meanings be assimilated into individual embodiment? And how can the body resonate or resist? The former question highlights the notion of association, which we have already been discussing, and more generally, it brings us to the structure of passive synthesis. Passive synthesis is the layering of past experiences within embodied consciousness, connecting similar meanings and events with one another, retaining meaningful moments while letting ordinary moments blend more quickly into others, and relating these processed meanings and experiences to our current experiences. Simply put, we do not face each current moment in an absence of meaning; rather, all of our prior experiences are organized and maintained to provide an individual context with which I address the current situation. This organization allows for associations: I connect a current meaning with a similar, past meaning, which makes it easier for me to deal with what is happening now. Gendered meanings coming from a discursive context will be retained in this way as well. When I enter situations with other subjects, I employ the meanings of gender that have already been processed in the past. These have been retained—sometimes as concrete moments to be recalled, but also as general meanings that weave the tapestry of my gendered social contexts.

When specific meanings are repeatedly absorbed by me, they become part of how I see things, how I constitute others, and how I constitute my own gendered embodiment. This results in “habitualizations” of constitution, or in other words, habits in how I constitute meanings. Specifically, I habituate how I constitute the gendered meanings that I encounter, including the embodied gender of other subjects. These associations and habitualizations also influence how I comport my own body: When I associate myself with a specific gender, then I tend to express that gender in movement, posture, voice, etc. Sometimes I do this consciously, but much of this has been honed through repetition, so that I do not notice it. Of course, we can always counteract these tendencies: I can decide upon and practice specific movements and comportments that accentuate or confuse a certain gender identity. Actors do this as a matter of course. Trans individuals might also choose to practice the bodily comportment that is considered “appropriate” for their gender identity. Cisgender women gender theorists have also described how they, as young adults, have practiced a special kind of walk, hand motion, or voice so that they could fit into their gender as women.⁹

Passive synthesis, then, offers an intermediate step between the “hegemonic discourse” that enforces a gender binary along with cisgender heterosexuality described by discourse theorists, and those individual bodies that take up that discourse in ways that usually reinforce it. Our associations of sensations and feelings provide an embodied ground that resonates with that discourse—or doesn’t. Thus the dialogue between the passive synthesis of my sense of embodied gender and social discourses is the grounds from which I can resist or challenge the discourses that impose themselves upon me.

So, what structures have come to the fore in our genetic analyses? We have found that:

1. My sense of gender arises through the associations of my gendered experiences with one another, creating a sense of my own gendered embodiment as well as gender in general. In other words, association is a key structure underlying our experience of gender.
2. I can associate meanings at several levels: a) at the level of basic sensations and

⁹ See, for example, Iris Marion Young’s description in her “Throwing Like a Girl,”: “The young girl acquires many subtle habits of feminine bodily comportment—walking like a girl, tilting her head like a girl, standing and sitting like a girl, gesturing like a girl, and so on. [...] When I was about thirteen, I spent hours practicing a ‘feminine’ walk, which was stiff and closed, and rotated from side to side.” (Young, p. 153)

feelings, b) through interpersonal experiences, and c) at the more abstract level of social definitions and customs. This demonstrates a structure of levels that allows for the different dimensions of gendered experience. We will address these levels more in a moment.

3. The build-up of associations, along with my habitualizations of constitution, comportment, etc., take place through passive synthesis, which provides the bridge between intersubjective meanings and individual sensory experience. This bridge explains, phenomenologically, how discursive meanings can become part of how I sense my own gendered embodiment. It also explains how embodied gender might resonate with or resist the gendered meanings that surround it or that are imposed upon it. Thus, the level of passive synthesis offers an important phenomenological structure in an analysis of gender.

We have accomplished quite a bit! Not only have we demonstrated the depth of our experience of gender, but we have also provided phenomenological grounds for important definitions brought forth by gender theorists. And we have offered insights through phenomenology that often remain absent in theoretical work on gender.

Along the way, though, we have made several references to certain phenomenological “levels” through which we experience gender. At this point, then, I would like to take a moment to describe these levels—as I understand them through the phenomenological work of Edmund Husserl—and connect them to the work we have already done with regard to gender.

The levels, from “highest” to “lowest”, are roughly as follows: At the “highest” level we find intersubjective community, which is the historical, intergenerational stratum of meaning. This level describes the cultural and social aspects of gender that we have been discussing from a phenomenological perspective.

At the next level “down”, we encounter the interpersonal intersubjective level. This level describes our one-on-one interaction with other individual subjects and in small groups, and how our own bodies gain their objective sense through the perception of others. This level shows how interpersonal relations are fundamental to how we experience our gender, beyond a more general sense of discursive meaning.

Next comes the level where we take up the meaningful contents of our experiences. This level attends to the fact that each individual takes up meaning in their own way, based upon their own history and culture as well as their individual embodied experiences. This is the level where I sense my body as a whole, and where I understand my own identity.

The level of passive synthesis is where associations and habitualizations arise. This layer addresses what takes place often without our awareness, such as our associations between similar things, habituations of constitution and decisions, sedimentations of memories, etc. Passive synthesis thus makes possible my sense of gender, which arises through the interaction of my embodied sensations and my intersubjective experiences. It also explains the process of how I am able to absorb social presumptions about gender into my own gender identity.

Finally, the lowest level of experience is that of the flow of primordial material, often referred to as a “hyletic flow”. In our discussions earlier, we often referred to our sensations and feelings, which appear in the hyletic flow. These sensations are the basis for my sense of embodiment, and they are in dialogue with intersubjective discourses. This is how I can have experiences that are “my own” while also recognizing that my experiences usually arise in relation to social and cultural contexts.

III. The phenomenological Levels of Constitution in Husserl’s work

Regardless of which level might be our current focus, our experiences are working through all of these levels, at all times. When considering gender, we can see how it is experienced in multiple ways when understood through these levels, and how these different manifestations of gender—for example, as both socially discursive and highly individual—are not contradictions that must be resolved, but rather are different dimensions of a complex meaning.

Given these different levels, we can describe our very different experiences of gender coherently: Sensations and feelings that can be associated with gender arise at our most basic level of embodiment, through the hyletic level. On the basis of these sensations, and in dialogue with social meanings, the passive synthesis of my gender can take form. The connection to my sensations gives me “my” gender as “my own”, while the intersubjective framework of meaning provides filters and limitations that can guide, enforce, and/or prohibit the development of these feelings. Arising out of this, I can constitute myself as “having” a gender, and I can sense others as fitting into this framework as well. Here I actively constitute myself as a gendered person, my body as a unity, and gender as a meaning that applies to myself and others. This level, of course, usually functions in connection with my interpersonal relationships. Here we are in direct conversation with one another, often in direct presence, and sometimes in direct bodily contact, with one another. These modes of interpersonal connection reinforce the more abstract definitions of gender, but they can also include moments of personal sharing that can resist certain presumptions or definitions. Finally, the discursive sense of gender—definitions, presumptions, rules, etc.—maintains a social backdrop to all of the prior levels of gender experience. This abstract sense can filter into the more embodied levels of experience, but it can also be influenced or changed on the basis of individual experiences that are expressed one way or another.

Thus we see how each of these aspects of gender plays into the others, and how they each contribute even if there are tensions between them. Carrying out phenomenological analyses of gender with these levels of constitution in mind therefore offers us two major positive outcomes:

1. Understanding gender through these phenomenological levels provides a much more nuanced understanding of gender and our experiences of it. As we have been discussing throughout our analyses, phenomenological analyses of gender can validate the many ways that we experience ourselves as gendered—from immediate sensations to my unified sense of embodiment, from individual encounters with others to social and discursive dynamics—without requiring that we prioritize or prefer one type of experience over the others.
2. In addition, recognizing these levels within phenomenology can provide insight into its approach as a method. In other words, we gain insight into how phenomenology itself can be understood and applied; projects such as this demonstrate how phenomenology can contribute to concrete and practical knowledges and practices well beyond the philosophical realm.

Conclusion We have found that gender necessarily is experienced on multiple levels. These levels, as we saw in our static analysis, indicate a sensory and feeling body as well as interpersonal and discursive intersubjective contexts. We also found that these levels are interdependent—we cannot experience gender on the basis of the body in isolation, nor does it have any experiential meaning in a discourse without embodiment. Finally, when we took up a genetic account, we discovered that a phenomenological approach is able to describe how discursive presumptions and beliefs about gender could filter into my own sense of gendered embodiment, thus filling in a gap often evident in abstract gender theory. We also found that

our experiences of gender at any level can filter into and influence the other levels, so that our gendered embodiment is developed through all levels of experience at once.

With this, I will conclude my (and our) analyses—for now, at least. Of course, as we all know, this is an ongoing project, developing new insights about the meaning and experience of gender, especially through the approach of phenomenology.

REFERENCES

- De Beauvoir, S. (1989). Introduction. In *The Second Sex*. H. M. Parshley, trans. New York: Vintage Books/Random House, Inc.;
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge;
- Foucault, M. (1980). *The history of sexuality: Volume I: An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage;
- Husserl, E. (1983). *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology. (Ideas I)* F. Kersten, trans. The Hague/Boston/Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers;
- Husserl, E. (1989). *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book. (Ideas II)* R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, trans. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers;
- Prosser, J. (1998). *Second Skins: The body narratives of transsexuality*. New York: Columbia University Press;
- Rubin, H. S. (1998). Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies. *GLQ* 4(2): 263-281;
- Young, I.M. (1980). "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Bodily Comportment Motility and Spatiality". *Human Studies*, April 1980, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 137-156.

