

## **Abstract**

This autoethnographic research explored the cis female researcher's experience of masculine gender expression. Being positioned outside gender expression norms the researcher's sensitivity to social practices illuminated aspects of experiencing which is not addressed in the person-centred literature in which the focus is gender identity rather than gender expression.

The researcher's personal journal entries were the primary source of autoethnographic data and the resultant timeline was enriched with personal memory and contemporary self-observational information. Analysis utilised Jung and Hecht's (2004) "identity gap" elaboration of the Communication Theory of Identity, together with Goffman's (1959 in Metts and Grohskopf, 2003, 360-361) concept of "front stage" and "back stage" presentations of self. Alongside analysis in person-centred terms this created a dense layered account weaving together the personal with cultural understanding and critique.

Evidence of dominant discourses that women should be feminine and that masculine women are lesbian were identified, resulting in a clear intersection with the researcher's lesbian identity. The impact of gender expression on psychological contact was explored, revealing more than one level of contact. Analysis also revealed the impact of the objectifying 'gaze' on the researcher's experience of gender expression.