Academic CV

Vikram Kolmannskog, Professor dr. philos.

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Key words

Gestalt Therapy; Human Rights; LGBTQ; Ecology; Mindfulness; Fiction

I am a queer-of-colour man living in the outskirts of Oslo, Norway. My father is Norwegian while my mother is Indian-origin. Queerness and the dual heritage influence my practice, teaching and research.

I work as a professor of gestalt therapy at the Norwegian Gestalt Institute University College (NGI). I got this position on the basis of an evaluation report (only available in Norwegian) delivered to NGI in March 2022 by a committee of three professors who concluded I was professor competent. I also have a small private practice where I offer therapy and supervision.

The committee of professors particularly praised my multi-disciplinary competence and radically cross-disciplinary nature of my therapy practice, pedagogy and research. In addition to my training in gestalt (therapy, supervision, and pedagogy) at NGI, I have trained in the humanities, social sciences and law. My doctorate (dr.philos.) is in sociology of law. The research approach had similarities with gestalt involving action research, case studies, and phenomenology. My training in human rights law and sociology of law still informs my field-sensitive therapy practice and research. In addition, I am a poet and fiction writer. My writing is influenced by my therapy approach and in turn influences it, not least my interest in stories, and I am the author of *The Empty Chair. Tales from Gestalt Therapy* (Routledge, 2018). In this academic CV, the focus is on my work within gestalt therapy.

¹ This is in accordance with Norwegian law regarding academic positions and advancement. See NGI (2022). Verdens første professor i gestaltterapi (In Norwegian). Available at https://gestalt.no/2022/03/verdens-forste-professor-i-gestaltterapi/

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Main research interests

Gender, sexuality and relationship diversity

Early on as a therapist-researcher I did a case study on sexual abuse and therapy.² Another early interest has been gender identity/diversity and therapy. I have done case studies based on groups I have facilitated for trans folks, seeking to develop trans-positive therapy.³ On the basis of a poster presenting some of this work I won the Young Researchers Award at the International Gestalt Conference in Taormina, Sicily, in 2016. A current focus is heteronormativity in therapy and therapy training. In addition to contributing a chapter on this, I am co-editor of a book that is due to be published by Routledge.⁴ As a human rights lawyer, I have also explored LGBTQ struggles from a legal and socio-legal perspective. In a recent study I draw on several disciplines and explore the Indian decriminalisation of homosexuality in light of contact theories from both gestalt, law and the social sciences.⁵ As a fiction writer and poet, I have also focused on sex, gender and in particular LGBTQ issues in a literary way. 6 As a meditator, I am interested in the intersections of spirituality and sexuality. This is also reflected in my books; in Lord of the Senses (particularly Hinduism), in Taste and See (Christianity), and in my latest Becoming Buddha (Buddhist meditation). The topic of gender and sexual diversity has been included in the strategy for research and development at NGI, and I will head the project.

² Voldtekt og konfluens. En kasusstudie av terapi med en overgrepsutsatt kvinne, Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XI (2), 2014

https://www.academia.edu/9953746/Voldtekt_og_konfluens_En_kasusstudie_av_terapi_med_en_overgrepsutsatt_kvinne

³ Kjønnsidentitet og polaritetsteori. En kasusstudie av en samtalegruppe med transpersoner, Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, X (2), 2013

https://www.academia.edu/9953716/Kj%C3%B8nnsidentitet_og_polaritetsteori_En_kasusstudie_av_en_samt_alegruppe_med_transpersoner

Gestalt approaches to gender identity issues, Gestalt Review, 18 (3), 2014 https://www.academia.edu/11627473/Gestalt Approaches to Gender Identity Issues A Case Study of a Transgender Therapy Group in Oslo

⁴ Jeg antok hun var forelsket i en mann. En studie av heteronormativitet i gestaltterapiutdanningen, Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XVII (2), 2020

https://www.academia.edu/44836690/Jeg antok hun var forelsket i en mann En studie av heteronorma tivitet i gestaltterapiutdanningen

^{&#}x27;I assumed that it was a man she was in love with.' A queer experiment and study with gestalt therapy students. In Gillespie, J., Alman, A., & Kolmannskog, V. eds., *Queering Gestalt Therapy*. London: Routledge, forthcoming

https://www.academia.edu/45092608/I assumed it was a man she was in love with Heteronormativity and queer experimentation in gestalt therapy training

Queering psychotherapy training and research. Key note, Research Academy, Metanoia Institute, 19 February 2021 https://www.academia.edu/video/jYvpZ1

⁵ Right to Love: India's Decriminalisation of Homosexuality Understood in Light of Contact, Gestalt Review 25 (2), 2021

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356378287 Right to Love India's Decriminalization of Homosex uality Understood in Light of Contact

⁶ See for example Lord of the Senses. Stories. London: Team Angelica http://www.teamangelica.com/68

Climate change and ecology

This is a topic I have been interested in for many years. Most of my legal and socio-legal work, including my doctorate, deals with the situation of so-called 'climate refugees', exploring connections between climate change, disasters and various human responses. The first scientific article I wrote in the field of gestalt dealt with what gestalt therapy can contribute to climate transformation. In a more recent paper I return to this topic; more specifically, I have become interested in how therapy training can help address the ecological crisis. I am also interested in this topic in my works of fiction.

Mindfulness and Buddhist practices

I am a life-long meditator.¹⁰ I am familiar with meditative practices in various traditions, including the Hindu and Christian, but mostly draw on Buddhist practices. My therapy is informed by this, as is my research. I have published one book specifically on meditation: *Becoming Buddha* (Mohini Books, 2020). I have also worked with academics within the field of mindfulness, including by providing input on a mindfulness-based supervision course at another university college. Currently, I am in a two-year training programme headed by Tara Brach and Jack Kornfield, both clinical psychologists as well as authorities in the field of mindfulness meditation.¹¹ I intend to focus more on researching the intersections of mindfulness and gestalt therapy, including how the two fields can enrich each other. This has been included in the strategy for research and development at NGI, and I will head the project. Currently, I am working on a chapter where I reflect on how I explored death from Zen and Gestalt approaches during a workshop.¹²

Other

I have recently started focusing more on whiteness and race in gestalt therapy. I have published a paper on this, and am currently working with some students on this in a form of participatory research.¹³

⁷ Kolmannskog, V.(2017). 'We Are In Between': Rights for People Displaced In the Context of Climate Change https://books.google.no/books/about/We Are In Between Rights for People Disp.html?id=2Kg5DwAAQBAJ&source=kp book description&redir esc=y

⁸ What Gestalt Approaches Can Contribute to Climate Change Transformation. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, *6*(10), 2013

https://www.academia.edu/80239312/What Gestalt Approaches Can Contribute to Climate Change Tran sformation

⁹ Menneskesyn og gresstrå. Hvordan kan gestaltutdanningen bidra til å adressere den økologiske krisen? Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XVII (1), 2019

https://www.academia.edu/41012861/Menneskesyn og gresstr%C3%A5 Hvordan kan gestaltutdanningen bidra til %C3%A5 adressere den %C3%B8kologiske krisen

¹⁰ Some of the meditations I have recorded are available as part of the podcast 'Becoming Buddha' as well as on Insight Timer (https://insighttimer.com/vikram)

¹¹ https://mmtcp.soundstrue.com/

¹² The anthology is about reflective practice research in higher education and edited by Guro Hansen Helskog and Michael Weiss and will be published by LIT Verlag.

¹³ Taking (white) space. Reflections from a queer-of-colour Gestalt therapy trainer. British Gestalt Journal, 31(1), 2022

Research approaches / methodology

Case-study research;
narrative approaches;
phenomenology;
feminist and queer;
action research;
practitioner-research;
reflective practice research;
field- and human rights-sensitive/informed.

Research groups and affiliations

Member of RESEX (Research Group in Sexology) led by professor Elsa Mari Almås at University of Agder.¹⁴

Member of Philosophical and Hermeneutic Pedagogy, a thematic sub-group of Text in Culture and Education (Tekst i kultur og utdanning), led by associate professors Guro Hansen Helskog and Michael Noah Weiss at University of South-East Norway.¹⁵

Affiliate of Center on Law and Social Transformation, directed by Professor Siri Gloppen at University of Bergen. 16

I am a member of the Scientific Board of EAGT (European Association for Gestalt Therapy).

In addition, I head the Research and Development committee at NGI.¹⁷

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360972481 Taking white space Reflections from a queer-of-colour Gestalt therapy trainer

¹⁴ https://www.uia.no/en/research/helse-og-idrettsvitenskap/resex-research-group-in-sexology

¹⁵ https://www.usn.no/forskning/hva-forsker-vi-pa/humanistiske-fag/tekst-i-kultur-og-utdanning/ (In Norwegian)

¹⁶ https://www.lawtransform.no/

¹⁷ https://gestalt.no/om-ngi/forskning-og-utvikling/

Education & Formal Qualifications

March 2022: Declared **professor competent** in Gestalt therapy

Autumn 2020: Pedagogical competence development and educational quality, doctoral-level

course, University of South-Eastern Norway

Spring 2018: **Gestalt supervisor**, Norwegian Gestalt Institute (NGI)

Spring 2015: Gestalt teacher training, Norwegian Gestalt Institute (NGI)

Spring 2014: **Gestalt therapist**, Norwegian Gestalt Institute (NGI)

A on the practical exam as well as the case study

Spring 2014: **Dr. philos**., doctorate degree in sociology of law, University of Oslo (UiO)

Thesis: 'We are in between' – Securing effective rights for persons displaced in

the context of climate change and natural hazard-related disasters

Spring 2011: Introduction to general psychology, University of Oslo (UiO)

Autumn 2010: Introduction to comparative religions, University of Oslo (UiO)

Autumn 2007: Specialised LLM in human rights and int'l law (distinction)

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

Thesis: On the sacred, our stories and suffering – How does the ethical value

of human dignity work in the European Court of Human Rights?

Autumn 2007: Master of Laws (LLM), University of Oslo (UiO)

Autumn 2005: B.A. Culture and society, University of Oslo (UiO)

Double major in history of ideas and Spanish

Spring 2003: Cand.mag. (with Spanish major), University of Oslo (UiO)

Thesis: Social, economic, political consequences of the Spanish civil war

In addition I have done various other courses, including:

Ongoing - 2023: Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Certification Programme

Led by Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach, Awareness Training Institute / Greater

Good Science Center at University of California

Dec 2010: Improvisation theatre, instruction by Gjermund Mathiesen

June 2010: Yoga Teacher Training Course, Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre,

Woodbourne, NY

20.05.2010: Conflict resolution council's seminar in restorative approaches and large

group meetings

(18.-20.05.2010)

Conflict Resolution Council, Norway

18.03.2010: Conflict resolution council's seminar for mediators

(20.-21.01 and 16.-17.03 with supervision in between the courses.)

Conflict Resolution Council, Norway

11/2007: National Course, International Humanitarian Law,

Military University College

Work experience

March 2022 -: Professor of Gestalt Therapy

50 % position, Norwegian Gestalt Institute (NGI)

- Teaching and supervising gestalt therapy students
- Lectures in scientific method and research for coaching and therapy students
- Research, including research on the therapy training and with students as co-researchers
- Head of Research and Development at the institute, including supervising other colleagues in their research
- Public engagement through writing op-eds, participating in podcasts, etc.
- Developing and ensuring curriculum is updated and research-informed
- Presentations at international conferences
- Collaboration with other institutes and universities
- Participating in various research groups
- Peer-reviewer on work related to gestalt and other modalities of psychotherapy

Aug 2015-March 2022: Associate Professor of Gestalt Therapy

50 % position, Norwegian Gestalt Institute (NGI)

- Teaching, lecturing and supervising gestalt therapy students
- Research
- Public engagement through writing op-eds, participating in podcasts, etc.

Autumn 2010 -: Vikram Kolmannskog EPF (private practice / independent)

- Gestalt therapist and supervisor, including the following activities:
 - Individual and couples therapy in private practice
 - Supervision of gestalt therapists and other professionals
 - Group therapy, including two trans groups in cooperation with the national LGBTQ association
 - Seminars and trainings for gestalt therapists, including on gender and sexuality diversity

- Seminars, trainings and lectures for various institutions, including the municipalities (on trust) and The Church City Mission (on fear).
- Therapist and research assistant on pilot project using CORE with clients in Bastøy prison (led by Norwegian Gestalt Institute)
- Debriefing and groups for humanitarian workers seconded by the Norwegian Refugee Council
- Mindfulness courses for general public through gym and wellness centre
- Conflict mediator with Oslo and Akershus Conflict Resolution Council.
- Legal and socio-legal scholar, including the following activities:
 - Member of expert committee of the Nansen Initiative, a state-led initiative to strengthen the protection of people displaced in the context of climate change and disasters
 - Consultant to the Norwegian Refugee Council on climate change,
 disasters and displacement, inter alia authored a series of doctrinal and
 socio-legal studies, carried out policy and advocacy work, participated in
 the climate change negotiations, helped organise and presented at the
 Nansen Conference 2011, helped formulate the Nansen Principles,
 drafted disaster legislation for East African Community, was author and
 expert reviewer of a special report from the Inter-governmental Panel
 on Climate Change
 - Lectured and taught human rights, int'l public law and ex.fac. (sociology of law, legal theory, philosophy of law) at University of Oslo and elsewhere
 - Lectured and presented research at various Norwegian and international universities, including Trinity College in Dublin and Oxford University
 - Supervised and assessed LL.M. dissertations at the University of Oslo
 - Been a member of the Immigration Appeals Court

Writer:

- Peer-reviewed papers and chapters in journals and books
- Op-eds and comments in Norwegian and international media
- Features and other articles in Norwegian and international media
- Fiction, including two short stories collections and two poetry books, as well as short stories and poetry in Norwegian and international media.

Performances of poetry and stories at various events, including Oslo
 Pride

Spring 2010: University Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Oslo

- Head of Immigration Law course (Masters level)

- Created curriculum

Lectured and managed guest lecturers

Created the exam (focused on 'climate refugees')

10/2007 – 12/2009: Legal adviser, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

(from 2008 focusing on climate change and displacement)

Summer 2005: Legal assistant, Norwegian Org. for Asylum Seekers (NOAS)

2001-2002: Form master and Spanish teacher, Oslo Private Gymnasium (OPG)

Upper secondary school

Selected publications

Books

Becoming Buddha. Meditations (Mohini Books, 2020)

Lord of the Senses. Stories (Team Angelica, 2019)

The Empty Chair. Tales from Gestalt Therapy (Routledge, 2018)

Poetry is possible. Selected poems (Leadstart publishing, 2018)

Taste and see. A queer prayer (Mohini Books, 2018)

We are in between. Rights for people displaced in the context of climate change (2017)

Selected scientific papers within the field of psychotherapy

(Many of the scientific papers are available at academia.edu and researchgate.net)

Taking (white) space. Reflections from a queer-of-colour Gestalt therapy trainer. British Gestalt Journal, 31(1), 2022.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360972481 Taking white space Reflections from a queer-of-colour Gestalt therapy trainer

In this paper, I, a queer-of-colour professor of Gestalt therapy, reflect on how race and racism emerged and was explored during a training workshop at the Norwegian Gestalt Institute. The student group, as is quite often the case in the Gestalt world, was majority white. The exploration became heated, but there was also movement through the crises. I make sense of the experience by reflecting on racism as a field phenomenon, the need to increase awareness of power and privilege, and the importance and difficulty of balancing challenge and support in these situations. The paper ends with a short reflection on the importance of self-care and a joyful poem.

Right to Love: India's Decriminalisation of Homosexuality Understood in Light of Contact, Gestalt Review 25 (2), 2021

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356378287 Right to Love India's Decriminalization of Homosex uality Understood in Light of Contact

On 6 September 2018, homosexuality was decriminalised in India. It was the result of a rights mobilisation that started almost two decades ago. From the start Indian LBGT activists tried to influence society as well as the judges directly, not least through contact with other judges who happened to be gay. This paper is a first attempt at understanding the mobilisation and decriminalisation in light of contact. It is also a first attempt at combining contact theories from both gestalt and the social sciences, including Allport's contact hypothesis. It seems quite plausible that contact of a certain kind played an important role in the Indian case. This is something other social movements could learn from. Gestaltists, as contact artists could have much to contribute, especially if we also draw upon social sciences and recognise that status, social identity and power play a role in contact.

Gestaltterapi. Håndbok i individualterapi, red. Binder, Lorås & Thuen. Fagbokforlaget.

https://www.academia.edu/51001445/Gestaltterapi H%C3%A5ndbok i individualterapi red Binder Lor%C3 %A5s and Thuen

This is the chapter on gestalt therapy in a handbook on individual psychotherapy. The chapter introduces the reader and clinician to gestalt therapy's history, development and key concepts and explores a case throughout to illustrate and enrich the theoretical part.

Jeg antok hun var forelsket i en mann. En studie av heteronormativitet i gestaltterapiutdanningen, Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XVII (2), 2020

https://www.academia.edu/44836690/Jeg antok hun var forelsket i en mann En studie av heteronorma tivitet_i_gestaltterapiutdanningen

This paper examines heteronormativity in therapy and therapy training. For this purpose, the author of the paper, who is also a teacher at the Norwegian Gestalt Institute, conducted a gestalt experiment with therapy students. Many students expressed no heteronormative assumptions. This may be related to the phenomenological approach of gestalt therapy. However, it also became clear that several had made assumptions. It is important to normalize the phenomenon, to clarify that heteronormativity is a field phenomenon, that it is not about someone being bad people. At the same time, we can try to raise our awareness and become more liberated ourselves and support others in their liberation. One recommendation is that the experiment be included as part of therapy training.

Menneskesyn og gresstrå. Hvordan kan gestaltutdanningen bidra til å adressere den økologiske krisen? Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XVII (1), 2019

https://www.academia.edu/41012861/Menneskesyn og gresstr%C3%A5 Hvordan kan gestaltutdanningen bidra til %C3%A5 adressere den %C3%B8kologiske krisen

This paper examines how gestalt therapy training can help address the ecological crisis. During an intensive training session, the author of the paper, who is a teacher at the institute, chose to experiment with the students outside in nature in a form of action learning. The experiences are in line with existing research showing that nature can have healing effects on us, a love of nature can be cultivated, and we act more sustainably. It is recommended that ecologically oriented literature and exercises be included in therapy training.

«Vi blir bedre håndverkere.» En studie av den akademiske studentoppgaven ved Norsk Gestaltinstitutt Høyskole. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, *XVI*(1), 2019

https://www.academia.edu/40563960/_Vi_blir_bedre_h%C3%A5ndverkere_En_studie_av_den_akademiske_s tudentoppgaven_ved_Norsk_Gestaltinstitutt

This paper describes the emergence of a gestalt research tradition and takes a closer look at the academic student thesis at the Norwegian Gestalt Institute. Findings from a qualitative study are described and discussed. Something has become clearer through this study: The student thesis is close to what is called a pragmatic case study. The overall method and approach can be described as qualitative, phenomenological and possibly participatory observation. While therapy students are trained in open and curious attention and dialogue, we need to develop the second element of good research: scientific rigour.

'Are we becoming bullies?' A case study of stress, communication, and Gestalt interventions among humanitarian workers, British Gestalt Journal, Vol. 26 No. 1, 2017

http://vikram.no/resources/Stress,-communication-&-humanitarian-workers.pdf

There is an increasing focus on humanitarian workers and stress. At a workshop in June 2015, the author facilitated self-care, group debrief and communication sessions for senior gender advisers deployed by the Norwegian Refugee Council. This paper presents and discusses survey responses relating to the advisers' experiences of stress, communication, and Gestalt interventions. In certain situations, such as humanitarian crises, people – including humanitarian workers themselves – can easily become stressed and their communication violent, which in turn may contribute to more stress and violence around them. However, this cycle can be broken with sufficient support and awareness.

«Frontene er steile», Et gestalteksperiment og en studie av innvandringsdebatten, Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XIV (1), 2017

https://www.academia.edu/40563947/ Frontene er steile Et gestalteksperiment og en studie av innvan dringsdebatten

This paper is based on a relationally-oriented phenomenological study of the immigration debate and the challenges and potential of this debate. The study is based on a workshop at NGI's anniversary conference in 2016. Findings are presented and discussed in the light of research and theory on polarization, polarities and dialogue. The gestaltists who participated in the study experienced strong polarisation, but also that dialogue and appreciation of polarities is possible through increased awareness.

Gestalt approaches to gender identity issues, Gestalt Review, 18 (3), 2014

https://www.academia.edu/11627473/Gestalt Approaches to Gender Identity Issues A Case Study of a Transgender Therapy Group in Oslo

This paper is based on a case study of a transgender therapy group I facilitated in Oslo in January and February 2013. The two interlinked research questions are: How can a Gestalt therapist approach gender identity issues and transgender people in particular? What are the important experiences and changes that transgender people report from a Gestalt-inspired group? The case study particularly highlights the importance of phenomenology, polarities, and certain modes of contact, and it illustrates the practice of the former in three case descriptions and discussions. The paper concludes that Gestalt can work as a transpositive approach in accordance with a new paradigm within transgender health, the "Transgender Model." In addition to working with transgender clients, Gestalt therapists should also address gender identity issues within the larger social field, including norms and polarities on group and societal levels

Voldtekt og konfluens. En kasusstudie av terapi med en overgrepsutsatt kvinne, Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XI (2), 2014

https://www.academia.edu/9953746/Voldtekt og konfluens En kasusstudie av terapi med en overgrepsu tsatt kvinne

Various gestalt therapeutic themes and processes have captured my interest in therapy with survivors of abuse; the contact form confluence, to flow together, is something that stands out. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the development of relational therapeutic approaches. The issue explored here is how a gestalt therapist can understand and work with confluence in therapy with an abuse-survivor client.

Kjønnsidentitet og polaritetsteori. En kasusstudie av en samtalegruppe med transpersoner, Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, X (2), 2013

https://www.academia.edu/9953716/Kj%C3%B8nnsidentitet_og_polaritetsteori_En_kasusstudie_av_en_samt alegruppe_med_transpersoner

For most people, gender identity and expression match the sex registered at birth. For trans people, it's different. This paper explores gender theory, polarity theory and related processes in a transgender group. The paper shows how polarity theory and work make sense and create change for the participants in the group. This approach is in line with the newer paradigm in trans research and challenges prevailing medical practice in Norway which is based on a binary and narrow understanding of gender.

What Gestalt Approaches Can Contribute to Climate Change Transformation. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, *6*(10), 2013

https://www.academia.edu/80239312/What Gestalt Approaches Can Contribute to Climate Change Tran sformation

A main aim of this paper is to show how Gestalt approaches can contribute to climate change transformation. A fictional case loosely based on experiences from the Dadaab refugee camps serves as a basis for theoretical speculation. For many people climate change, natural hazard-related disasters and displacement entail major life changes. This paper discusses certain cross-cutting and overarching concepts that may be of value in the process of transformation in general and transformational adaptation in a refugee camp particular. The Gestalt concepts explored are field theory, existential phenomenology, relationships and contact, and conflict and change. The paper concludes that Gestalt approaches have much to offer and points out future research possibilities, including carrying out actual case studies based on Gestalt-inspired transformation.

Language skills

Norwegian Mother tongue

English: Mother tongue

Spanish: Very good

Hindi: Good

References

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