

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 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 2020 by a committee of three professors who concluded I was professor ('dosent' in Norwegian) competent.¹ I also have a small private practice where I offer therapy and supervision.

The committee of professors evaluating me 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).

¹ This is in accordance with Norwegian law regarding academic positions and advancement.

See also NGF (2020). Vår første «Professor of gestalt therapy» (In Norwegian). Available at <https://ngfo.no/var-forste-professor-of-gestalt-therapy/>

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Main research interests

Gender and sexuality

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.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 will be included in the strategy for research and development at NGI, and I will head the project.

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.⁷ The first scientific article I wrote in the field of gestalt dealt with what gestalt therapy can contribute to climate transformation.⁸ In a more recent paper I return to this topic; more

² Kolmannskog, V. (2014). Voldtekt og konfluens. En kasusstudie av terapi med en overgrepssatt kvinne. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, XI(2), 28-45.

³ Kolmannskog, V. (2013). What Gestalt Approaches Can Contribute to Climate Change Transformation. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6(10), 78-86.

Kolmannskog, V. (2013). Kjønnssidentitet og polaritetsteori. En kasusstudie av en samtalegruppe med transpersoner. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, X(2), 43-55.

⁴ Kolmannskog, V. (2020). Jeg antok hun var forelsket i en mann. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, XVII(2), 22-33.

Kolmannskog, V. (Forthcoming). '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 de la Osa, A., ed., *Gender, Sex & Relationship Diversity in Gestalt Psychotherapy*. London: New Gestalt Voices.

Kolmannskog, V. (2021). Queering psychotherapy training and research. Key note, Research Academy, Metanoia Institute, 19 February 2021.

⁵ Kolmannskog, V. (Forthcoming). 'Right to love': India's decriminalization of homosexuality understood in light of contact. *Gestalt Review*.

⁶ Kolmannskog, V. (2019). *Lord of the Senses. Stories*. London: Team Angelica

⁷ Kolmannskog, V. (2017). *'We Are In Between': Rights for People Displaced In the Context of Climate Change*.

Available as free (self-published) e-book at

https://books.google.no/books/about/We_Are_In_Between_Rights_for_People_Displaced.html?id=2Kg5DwAAQBAJ&source=kp_book_description&redir_esc=y

⁸ Kolmannskog, V. (2013). What Gestalt Approaches Can Contribute to Climate Change Transformation. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6(10), 78-86.

specifically, I have become interested in how therapy training can help address the ecological crisis.⁹ I am also interested in this topic in my works of fiction.¹⁰

Mindfulness

I am a life-long meditator.¹¹ 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.¹² I intend to focus more on researching the intersections of mindfulness and gestalt therapy, including how the two fields can enrich each other. This will be included in the strategy for research and development at NGI, and I will head the project.

Research approaches / methodology

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

Research groups

RESEX (Research Group in Sexology) led by professor Elsa Mari Almås at University of Agder.¹³

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.¹⁴

⁹ Kolmannskog, V. (2019). Menneskesyn og gresstrå. Hvordan kan gestaltutdanningen bidra til å adressere den økologiske krisen? *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, XVI(2)

¹⁰ For example, the poem 'Po'o-uli' in *Poetry Is Possible* (Leadstart, 2018) deals with birds that are going extinct.

¹¹ 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>)

¹² <https://mmtcp.soundstrue.com/>

¹³ <https://www.uia.no/en/research/helse-og-idrettsvitenskap/resex-research-group-in-sexology>

¹⁴ <https://www.usn.no/forskning/hva-forsker-vi-pa/humanistiske-fag/tekst-i-kultur-og-utdanning/> (In Norwegian)

In addition, I head the Research and Development committee at NGI.¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://gestalt.no/om-ngi/forskning-og-utvikling/>

Education

- 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)

- 18.03.2010: Conflict Resolution Council, Norway
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

- May 2020 - : **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-May 2020: **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

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)

Kolmannskog, V. (forthcoming). Right to love': India's decriminalization of homosexuality understood in light of contact. *Gestalt Review*.

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 LGBT 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.

Kolmannskog, V. (forthcoming). Gestaltterapi. I: Per-Einar Binder & Lennart Lorås (red.) *Håndbok i individualterapi*. Fagbokforlaget.

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2020). «Jeg antok hun var forelsket i en mann.» En studie av heteronormativitet i gestaltterapiutdanningen. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, XVII(2), 22-33.

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2019). Menneskesyn og gresstrå. Hvordan kan gestaltutdanningen bidra til å adressere den økologiske krisen? *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XVI(2)*

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2019). «Vi blir bedre håndverkere.» En studie av den akademiske studentoppgaven ved Norsk Gestaltinstitutt Høyskole. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XVI(1)*, 31-54

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2017). 'Are we becoming bullies?' A case study of stress, communication, and gestalt interventions among humanitarian workers. *British Gestalt Journal, 26(1)*, 42-49

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2017). «Frontene er steile.» Et gestalteksperiment og en studie av innvandringsdebatten. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift, XIV(1)*, 8-28

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2014). Gestalt Approaches to Gender Identity Issues: A Case Study of a Transgender Therapy Group in Oslo. *Gestalt Review, 18(3)*, 244-260

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

Kolmannskog, V. (2014). Voldtekt og konfluens. En kasusstudie av terapi med en overgrepsofsatt kvinne. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, XI(2), 28-45

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2013). Kjønnssidentitet og polaritetsteori. En kasusstudie av en samtalegruppe med transpersoner. *Norsk Gestalttidsskrift*, X(2), 43-55

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.

Kolmannskog, V. (2013). What Gestalt Approaches Can Contribute to Climate Change Transformation. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6(10), 78-86

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
German:	Good
Hindi:	Good

References

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