A Phenomenological Study of the Impact of Shaming on the Self Developmental Process in Gestalt Therapy Training

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Acknowledgements

This study is a result of my contact-in-the-field with many people. First of all I want to thank my four co-researchers who so openly and willingly shared their many painful moments of shame with me. I am in many ways in dept to my teachers at the Master program; Ken Evans, Andy Fookes and Bob Shaw. They have taught me about shame and helped with my research in a very profound and professional way. My co-students at the Masterprogram have supported, cared and become true friends. I thank them all for sharing their lives and wisdom with me. I thank Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb and Giovanni Saloni for their major contribution to my study. They have shared their theoretical insights and the ”beauty” of Gestalt Therapy and inspired me to use their model as a fundament for this study. I want to thank my supervisor Jostein Kleiveland who have supported me during the whole research process. His positive and wholistic perspective have help me not to drown in details. I thank my husband, Svein Stensaasen who have helpt, supported and supervised my research in his unique ability to ”let me find the answers myself”.
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A phenomenological study of the impact of shaming on the Self developmental process in gestalt therapy training
Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of shaming in Gestalt Therapy Training. A phenomenological method was used to collect and analyse data from four co-researchers. The Self development model has been the theoretical-analytical reference in the analysis of findings. The result of the study reveals that shaming may have a profound impact on the Self developmental process of students. Shaming that is not dealt with in a proper way, may create unfinished business and prohibit a sound and healthy individuation. To secure the quality of Gestalt Training, the Self Development Model is recommended as a useful tool.

Introduction

"Teaching psychotherapy is giving the aspiring therapist the possibility of becoming an "artist" in Otto Rank`s sense" (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992)

Why do I want to study shaming in psychotherapy training? Although the litterature on shame is increasing, little awareness seems to have been given to what constitutes the essential structure of shaming in training of psychotherapists. The litterature of shame is mostly concerned with the phenomenon of the intrapsychic experience of shame (Wurmsen 1997, Nathanson 1992, Lewis 1992, Middelton-Moz 1990). This study will focus on the interpersonal phenomenon and the impact of shaming regarding the Self development process. As Gestalt Therapy holds a holistic and relational view, we can not seperate one part from the whole. (Polster 1974, Perls, Hefferline, Goodman 1977, Perls,1981, Hycner and Jacobs 1995, Korb, Gorell and Van De Riet 1989). Being shamed is a result of a shaming interaction with others either in the past or in the present. "The awareness of a distinction while experienced as an individual phenomenon, is actually the result of social interaction between human beings” (Karl, Cynthia, Andrew and Vanessa 1996 In: NeNamee and Gergen 1999, p.117.) According to theories of shame and Self development a person can develop a shamebased system (Erskin 1995, Gilbert 1999, Yontef: In The Gestalt Journal, Vol.XX. No 1). This became very apparent to me in joining this Master Program at Derby University with Andy Fookes beeing our teacher. Andy started to tell us about shame. I then suddenly got an aha-experience and this feeling of «that`s what it is all about» when it comes to many of my frustrating experiences during both my private and professional life. It came as a reveling and shocking experience. I remembered many painful moments where I had had the experience of being totally stuck with my negative
feelings and thoughts about myself. I did not know how shamebased I was and it made me quite angry. Why had I not learnt something about this issue in my 6 years training as gestalt therapist? It seems to me to be a neglected theme in both training and therapy. At first I wanted to use this study to deepen my own knowledge and understanding of shame and shaming per se. A meeting with Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb at The Italien Gestalt Institute in 2001 made me aware of how important it is to look at my data in the context of Self development in training of psychotherapists. I therefore decided to study shaming in this specific context.

1 The Problem

The purpose of this study is to incorporate a better understanding of shaming in training of gestalt-therapists. My main research question will be: What is the impact of shaming on the Self developmental process in Gestalt Therapy Training? I want to do a phenomenological, explorative and descriptive study. A differentiation must be made explicit between shame and shaming. My focus will be on the students experience of being shamed by members of the faculty. The members of faculty in a training institute has a special role and even if they not deliberately want to shame their students, some students might feel shamed by their teachers. In my study I am not interested in finding the ”objective truth” or the ”correct answer” or to blame any faculty members for their behavior. I want to investigate how the students experiences of specific interventions led to shame and what meaning they give to such experiences. I am interested in how my co-researchers constructs his/her narratives about shaming experiences in different phases of their Self development. What meanings do they attribute to their own and others behaviours? Human mind is fundamentally a social phenomenon, and only secondarily a psychological phenomenon (Bateson 1972, Mautura and Varela 1980). We know from Gestalt and other Self theories that a child develops through different stages in her/his individuation process (Perls 1969, Stern 1985, Spagnuolo Lobb 1994, Saloni 1992). The student of psychotherapy will also go through a similar existential process to become a fully competent, individuated and creative therapist. ”Carrying on a professional activity as participation in an existential project – which is also a collective one – allows the person to rediscover his individual integration and his political character –” (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p. 21)

Justification of the Problem

The students of psychotherapy are at risk in may ways. They come to the training to learn a
profession and thereby develop themselves as an instrument in a therapeutical setting. This means that students have to know themselves, be aware of who they are and how they make contact with inner and outer environment. As such, training in psychotherapy becomes an existential project (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992). Students will during their training be exposed to many parts of themselves that might make them vulnerable to shame. Shaming are connected to dynamics like oppression, power, blaming, moralizing, withholding and all other forms of topdog – underdog relations (Guggenbühl-Craig 1999, Omelich & Covington 1980, Goetz & Dweck 1980, Hycner and Jacobs 1995). "Shaming that is induced, triggered, or reinforced in training is a serious impediment to both the growt of individual trainee and growth of Gestalt therapy" (Yontef 1997, 1999).

Howard and Strauss (1975) describes depersonalization as a tendency to treat people as things whereby people are looked upon as objects rather than subjects. This tendency in our educational (Skinner 1984, Leitch (1999), social- and health care systems ( Riemen 1986) are contrary to the very heart of Gestalt therapy. Gestalt is concerned with the I-Thou meeting and dialoging between client and therapist as main philosophy and tool for healing. By this study I want to contribute to local knowledge of how Gestalt training might develop ways of handling its quality of training in a non-shaming way (Gilbert & Evans 2000). Nathanson (1996), Yontef (1995) and Kaufman (1996) all argues that therapists needs a proper understanding, consciousness and knowlegde about shame to handle this issue professionally. «Therapists who have never been trained or treated in the area of shame can neither recognize nor treat the shame of another» (Nathanson 1992, p. 22).

In accordance with the philosophy of Foucault (1980) this study will focus on a spesific sector, at the precise points where my co-researchers life have been lived. By grasping the essence of lived life I hope to contribute to a concept of "lived theory" in psychotherapy training. The concept of "lived theory" might highlight the dilemmas, paradoxes and also a training systems lack of theoretical-practical congruence. I will explain "lived theory" as: A person`s or a system`s ability to behave congruent regarding her integrated theories, beliefs and values. But even having integrated a theory does not mean we know how to practice our own theories in a way that is perceived by others as congruent practice. This is a matter of openness towards our own shadows and shortcomnings and to get feedback from the field we are working in (Guggenbühl-Craig 1999).
2 The phenomenological approach

The classical philosophical question whether reality is "real" in an objective sense or a human or social construction is essential to the perspective and paradigm in research (Andersen (Ed) 1990). As researchers we will have to make choices based on our belief systems and what we know from acquired research and philosophical discourses. In the humanistic qualitative research tradition (Andersen 1990, Bell 1999, Brown 1996, Moustakas 1994, Strauss & Corbin 1998) certain characteristics seems to be agreed upon:

There can be no objective truth about an individual human experience. Phenomenology focuses on the appearance of things as they are given and seeks to find the meaning of experiences as they are subjectively perceived by the informants of the study (Moustakas 1994). Phenomenology is concerned with the wholeness, with examining entities from many sides, angles and perspectives until a unified vision of the essence of the phenomenon or experience is achieved. The characteristics of phenomenology that suits my investigation, is that it allows and presuppose the use of intuition and reflection on the conscious acts of experiences. Phenomenology is committed to stay close to the original texture of the subjective perception. Using phenomenology allows for a contactful process between the researcher and her co-researcher. They can share a common interest in exploring the phenomenon in great detail. The specific characteristic of the experience may be described and explored as to what images, verbal pictures, feelings, thoughts, impressions that stands out as figure or ground in the moment (Moustakas 1994).

The researcher can not be isolated from the research (Brown 1996). She is part of the investigation as she will bring her own biases and perceptions when she collects and analyses her data. As researchers we are engaged with our whole being in relation to our co-researchers: seeing, hearing, sensing, feeling and thinking to make the objective subjective and the subjective objective (Brown 1996, Moustakas 1994). This dynamic relationship between the researcher and the informants influences the process and outcome of the investigation. The researcher as a person is the foremost instrument in this type of study (Brown 1996). Even if the researcher will have to make interpretations of the linguistics of information being gathered, the findings should be linked as close as possible to the collected data. The research question is the focus that guides the investigation. The problem needs to be carefully constructed, every word deliberately chosen and ordered. In this way the problem capture the attention and guides and directs the phenomenological process of seeing, hearing, reflecting and knowing (Moustakas 1994).
I have chosen a phenomenological approach as my method as I am interested in exploring how my co-researchers experiences and gives meaning to the phenomenon of shaming. My co-researcher are the experts to identify and describe the phenomenon. They have the "real life" experience, the feelings and thoughts about being shamed. It is the description of the individual experience that is the goal of this study, without regards to what really happened, without regard to what others may have experienced or thought, without regard to the distribution of the phenomenon in a wider population. The findings may or may not, in part or in whole, be applicable to other people. This study will only give us a "local theory" about 4 specific students/therapists in a specific situation in a specific time of their life. This is in accordance with the philosophy of Foucault (1980, p. 126) talking about the "specific intellectual" in contrast to the "universal intellectual". "Intellectuals have gotten used to working, not in the modality of the "universal", the "exemplary", "the just-and-true-for-all", but within specific sectors, at the precise point where their own conditions of life or work situate them".

3 Theory
What is shame? The history of shame/shaming is also a history of an idea (Kaufman 1996). Under what linguistic- and belief-system have shame been developed and used? Human systems are language-generating and, simultaneously, meaning-generating systems. The human interactions are linguistic systems for which the communication has relevance to its dialogical exchange (Anderson & Goolishian 1996, p.27). This exchange process is rather complicated and delicate as much as each person has their own narrative reference and perception system. Generating common ground is what communication is all about.

Shame and shaming has a long history in mankind's history. We know from religious literature (The Bible) that shame was a crucial word and phenomenon. Humans were looked upon as sinful, shameful and guilty by birth. Only by surrendering to God could humans be free. As such, shame lies within our common mythology in Western society. The linguistic polarity of shame is being shameless. In our society this is mostly regarded as being immoral e.i. without control. To interpret shamelessness as being a free and responsible person is not part of our Western philosophy and culture. Man has to be controlled and shame seems to fit well as a social/religious control mechanism.

The phenomenon of shame has been integrated in many narratives told by authors from ancient times (Rumi, Appendix 1), but in psychological literature it has not until the last decade been on the agenda in a
more indepth way. After 1970 there has been a flood of litterature about shame - for which reason we don’t know.

How is shame defined in litterature? Shame is defined in psychological litterature in different ways: Shame as:1. an emotion, 2. an experience, 3. an affect, 4. an interpersonal transaction, 5. a moral shame (Kaufman 1996, Erskine 1995). In a common daily conversation we might probably say that shame is a negative feeling I have for myself - inside me. In Gestalt therapy, field theory has become the tool to understand the self and what is going on between you and me (Perls, Hefferline and Goodman 1977, Lee and Wheeler 1996) To understand shame and shaming as a field problem gives us a tool to discuss shame phenomena as dynamic processes in the social field perception, rather than looking at them as individual entities that live their own lives (Kaufman 1996, Resnick 1997, Jacobs 1989 & 1995, Evans 1994, Lee 1994). But before we go further to develop an understanding of shame and shaming as field phenomena, I will briefly describe shame as it is looked upon in most of the litterature - as a intrapersonal and indivualistic phenomenon.

In everyday language we use the term shame occasionally for scoulding our children when they perform in a way we find impropriate: Many children have heard: ”Shame on you!”. But mostly the ”message about shame” comes through in a more subtile way. As a child you learn to ”read” your parents body language, tone of voice etc. so you know when to be ashamed. Whether the feeling is universal is not known. Tomkins (1963) speaks of shame as one of 6 primary/ innate affects that each has a modulator function in regulating other affects. His theory is that the child has an intensity in its affects that has to be governed to protect the Self. He sees shame as a modulator for the affect ”interest-excitement”. Its like a corrective process structure that safeguards the childs Self.

Whether we see shame as a sterotyped socio-cultural behaviour, individual psychological emotion and/or a primary affect this feeling of shame is distributed differently because of historical, cultural and social developments (Nathanson 1992). Shame can be experienced as everything from a mild embarrassment to the utmost despair. According to Yontef (1995, p. 28) ”shame is an emotional and cognitive reaction to one’s being, especially a reaction to primary affects and needs - e.g., love, acceptance, attention, recognition, or nuturance». It is a feeling of being imperfect, incompetent, not good enough, unloved and not deserving to be loved either by oneself or others (Fossum & Mason 1986, Kaufman 1996, Lee &
Wheeler 1996, Lewis 1995, Nathanson 1992, Perera 1986, Wurmser 1997). Shame can be situational and/or global. When shame becomes global, rather than situational, it can be toxicating for the person. It becomes a background that shapes the perception and meaning the person gives to nearly all situations. A shamebased person is more vunerable to shame than persons that are more free of shame (Gilbert & Evans 2000, Hycner & Jacobs 1995, Levang 1994, Fossum and Mason 1986, Kaufman 1992). When shame become crippling to ones life we call it patalogical shame - or in gestalt terms a patalogical retroflection. We could say that shame forms a special perceptual blocking habit. Its like having someone inside you alway watching out for signs to activate the shamebound part of you. As seen by Erskine (1995) and Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1977) and Kaufman (1996) shame is a defence mechanism against possible humiliation from others and as such an important self-protective element and an entrance to the self. Gershen Kaufman (1996, p. 5) is one of the foremost theorists in the area of shame describes how deeply feelings of shame can effect our self-esteem: “Shame itself is an entrance to the self. It is the affect of indignity, of defeat, of transgression, of inferiority, and of alienation. No other affect is closer to the experienced self. None is more central for a source of identity. Shame is felt as an inner torment, as a sickness of the soul”.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962) the child can develop either a pride-bound system or a shamebased system in their lived body. The childs earliest relationships with parents determines what modus the child develops. A shamebased person will more often than those that are not shamebased generate psychosomatic symptoms (Shaw 1997) and psychological disturbances (Gilbert 1999).

For a deeply shamebound person any interaction might activate shame. For this person it is shameful to be in this world and make her/him visible. And it is another burden attached to this – it is also shamful to be shameful, so there is a double-bind that is very hard to live with for such wounded persons. But for the person who have never identified shame as one of his inner feelings, can he still be shamed? I think so. Its is more a matter of knowing what we call the different emotional experiences we have and how sensitive and contactful we are to our needs and bodily sensations. A person who have none or little shamebindings in her will not easily be shamed.
Self development theories

Gestalt therapy differs from the monadic Self model in a radical way. The traditional Western way of understanding Self and relationship is coloured by the dominant paradigm of individualism (Wheeler 1989). The founders of Gestalt (Perls, Hefferline, Goodman 1977) were all inspired by many sources of philosophy, like existentialism, phenomenology, eastern wisdom, psychoanalyses, and social psychology. They saw the Self as a function of the organism-environment field. Self to them is the experience of the field of organism and environment (ibid, p. 85). The essence of phenomenology was then brought into the clinical field by Gestalt therapy, by placing the Self in the "middel mode" of boundary between organism and environment. "The self is never simply on the side of the organism nor ever simply on the side of the environment, nor simply active, nor simply passive. By looking at the self as a function totally centred at the contact boundary, and thus it is able to grasp both what is internal and external, both the needs of the individual and the demands or conditions of the environment" (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992).

The forces of the field are given by the perception of all the elements making up the field and as such the Self is in a uniquely relational position. The founders of Gestalt also thought of the human nature as a self-regulating organism. They thought that man was able and capable to adjust to both his own needs and the environment. Along with this thought, Perls (1942) created the idea of dental aggression. The child's ability to bite accompanies her competence to destructure reality. In this way the child allows to use her spontaneous aggression to destructure reality and integrate the bits and pieces that fits with her own needs. The Self in Gestalt therapy stresses the organism's ability to spontaneously and deliberately make contact with the environment, without holding back. Contact is the end of Self. "But where one is in contact with the need and the circumstances, it is at once evident that the reality is not something inflexible and unchanging but is ready to be remade: and the more spontaneously one exercises every power of orientation and manipulation, without holding back, the more viable the remaking proves to be (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman 1977, Ch. 2, p. 9). Awareness is the capacity to respond to the field from moment to moment. Self-awareness is to be aware of what I am doing, while I am doing it (Wheeler 2000).

How can we understand shame in this Gestalt concept of the Self? With this model we no longer can look at Self as an entity separate from the environment. Your inner process, like mine, is part of the whole field. To understand the shaming processes as part of this interrelated field model, we will look at what kinds of integrated resolutions of inner and outer world are possible. Which roads to integration of the whole field is open or closed (Zinker 1998)? On an individual level we could be more specific and ask what part of me
can be received and connected with my social environment, and what parts will be met by pulling away, excluded or disconnected?

In Gestalt therapy we understand shame as the affect of that disconnect in the field (Wheeler 2000). Shame is the experience of an unwilling (to me) disconnect with my vital social field. The field, in our model, is an essential and integral part of myself, so the disconnect in the field, either inner or outer, has always the potential of break in the selfprocess and cohesive self-integration. We know from the psychology of infants that a break in contact can be damaging to the point where young children shuts of the contact with their inner feelings and the environment. It becomes a narcissistic wound and every time the child or the grown up with such history, experiences a similar situation to the primary wounding, the self might "collapse" in a shameattack. The shamebound person have not any experience of the possibility to reach out for support either from inner or outer environment. On the contrary many shamebound persons will, in their fantasy, be even more shamed to connect to the outer environment. That would be to go public with something that is a private secret. This double-bind mechanism, makes shame one of the most self-inhibiting processes of the Self's creative adjustment (Mackewn 1997). You are stuck within your own blocked image of your Self, as an isolated and defective human being. There is no room for you either inside you or outside you. It is the most poignant experience of self by the self – a wound felt from the inside, dividing us both from ourselves and from one another (Kaufman 1996). Wheeler (1997) states that we do not "out-grow" our field-orientation, our sensitivity to our reception or response in the field. Our field-sensitivity and field-interdependence is lifelong and will belong to the polarities of our Self-experience. The rupture is there and without strong additional support to reconnect elsewhere in the field, people will do whatever it takes to escape those unbearable feelings (Wheeler 1997).

A shamebound person will most often stay with a pathological pattern of retroflection, projection or go confluent in threatening situations. Severe retraumatization of shame can activate a need for revenge to make up for being hurt. Shame also has an upside. Shamebased people often compensate for this existential shamebased system by being very clever to manage their lives alone and also become very clever in their profession. They are often either very clever at adjusting to the demands from the environment (helping syndrome) or can become extrememly narcissistic personalities (psychopaths) to avoid being hurt again.
**Self development in training of therapists**

*The goal of Gestalt therapy is to encourage creative adjustment of the Self in its contacts with the environment* (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992). The ability to be a "good" Gestalt therapist is dependent on a "good" learning process where the student have the possibility to become a model for her future clients. The concept of Self and Self development might play a central role in both understanding the students existential themes and how a didactic program and training process can support the growth process (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992). The question about shaming in training of psychotherapists is closely attached to how the theory of Self development is understood and "lived" in the training process.

How is possible to transmitt the theory and technics of Gestalt in a non-projective and non-introjective way? This seems to be of crucial importance when we know how the shamed person easily will disconnect to the social field if s/he feels threatened. The breakdown of contact with both inner and outer environment, makes growth difficult. It will usually be experienced as retraumatization by the student, who will regress to earlier neurotic/ creative defences.

The Gestalt cycle of contact, as described by Spagnuolo Lobb (1992) as a process of precontact, contact, final contact/postcontact can help us to be aware of what is happening in the overall development of the students personal growth. This model may also help us to be aware of the present learning situation, regarding the functioning of the Self. But before we go on to explain this further, we shall first have a look at the three different functions of the Self. The founders of Gestalt Therapy (Perls, Hefferline and Goodman 1977) found it necessary to differentiate the functions of the Self. They used the terms Id, Personality and Ego to describe the properties of Self. It is the functions Self has created for creative contactmaking. They are the major stages of creative adjustment (ibid. p. 441). The Id-function is the given background dissolving into its possibilities, including organic excitations and past unfinished situations becoming aware, and the environment vaguely perceived, and the inchoate feelings connecting organism and environment (ibid p. 441) The Id-function of the Self is "in the skin" as a unconscious and sometimes hidden background of past bodily, psychological, social and emotional "memories", of assimilated contacts, ready but not ready, resting, but not unactive at the same time. The Id exists as mere impulsive potentiality. It is the Self`s "handbook of accumulated experiences" that gives the Self an experience of basic trust or basic untrust when making contact with the environment. The basic structure of the Id-function in a shamebased
person will probably be more or less untrust. Untrust will make a background in the Self’s figure/ground organization of the actual field.

The Personality function is the system of attitudes assumed in interpersonal relations about who I am. It is how Self presents itself through social classification and preferences. Personality functions expresses the frame of reference and the basic attitudes of the person and is the social interaction adjustment of the Self (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992). A person who is homosexual might—as an example - define her personality structure as: I am homosexual and I am different from the majority heterosexual community and I am a victim of their oppression – or - I am a homosexual who is proud of myself and enjoys being different from the majority.

The Ego function of the Self is the ability to identify or alienate oneself from part of the field (ibid. p. 10). It is the part of Self that exercises its power to decide what is me and not me. The Ego have an awareness of choises, of ability to adjust creatively to inner and outer stimuli. It constitutes the creative expression of the whole person as an active and deliberate human being. The Ego is spontaneous, motorically aggressive and sensorically alert to the wholeness in the field, and also conscious of itself as isolated from the situation (Perls, Hefferline and Goodman 1977). The Ego-function works as a motor in the interchange of all the other structures of the Self, og the creative adjustment of the field (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992). To perform as this integrating device in the whole machinery of the Self, it is a matter of the Egos ability to introject, project, retrofitlect and make full contact.

In the following we will use this Gestalt theory of Self and Self development to understand how shaming can impact the learning process and personal growth in Gestalt Therapy Training. We stated earlier the goal of Gestalt training. It is a process through whitch the student gets the opportunity to rediscover her true charater and ability to exercise her power to operate in the social and professional world with flexibility and dignity (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992). This is a challenge both on a existential, developmental and didactic/pedagogical level. How is it possible both to transmit a general theory, methods and technics and at the same time have the students individuation process as first priority? The Italien Gestalt Institute (Spaguolo Lobb and Saloni 1992) have based their training on the Gestalt Self development theory and are an example of how it is possible to unite the complexity of this task. ”I could say that to teach psychotherapy means giving the aspiring therapists the possibility to become an artist, that is, using
personal qualities – or those that seem negative to him and at the base of his neurosis – as basic resources of awareness and of therapeutic contact (ibid. p. 23).

The basic principle is the growth process of the individual student. Each student have their own specific history, desires and goals (Id-function) character and personal themes (Personality function), social competence, learning style and energy (Ego-function). To help the student grow, the teachers have to surrender to the uniqueness of each student, and be aware of the various phases they pass during the learning process, which is in some way, is a repetition of the healthy process of development in the human organism (ibid. p. 23). Teachers who supports the students in coherence with this didactic developmental principle are aware “of the difference in meaning that the various communications from the students bring according to the phase they are; precontact, contact, final contact or postcontact” (ibid. p. 24). As we shall see in the data I present in this study, the teachers response makes a significant difference in the students growth process.

**The phases of the individuation process in training**

Introjecting, projecting, being confluent, retroflecting and egotism are the terms the founders of Gestalt used in order to identify the interruptions that can block the contact-withdrawl process (ibid. p. 25). At the same time they also serve as healthy and functional behavioral processes in the contact process (Polster 1974). How can this be? The organism is always striving for equilibrium by adjusting the new to the old, the unknown to the known. Being in experiential contact with the new means to introject - to take in. Knowing what fits the organism and not, means to chew, bite and to spit out – that is projection. To find a balance in what fits and what doesn`t, is retroflection - taking in, saying stop and give away what doesn`t fit the organism. When the organism withdraws from contact to digest and let the new ”sink in” we call that phase postcontact. Egotism is a pathological aspect of this phase, where the organism is unable to stay in contact and have one`s boundary open. The results is a block in assimilation of the ”new” coming from the environment. A healthy modality is to be confluent in this face, allowing the new to come and ”sink” in, without restrictions (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992).

We call all these behaviors-abilities pathological or dysfunctional when they have become habits and no longer serves the creative adjustment and the Self`s spontaneous organization in the actual field. These
blocks have become "reminiscenses" of the earlier survival kit of the organism but have gone "out of date" as tools for present awareness, contact and spontaneous life.

The phenomenon of confluence must be considered separately. Confluence is the ability to be at one with the environment, as it is for the newborn child in contact with his mother. It is the "experience of the we" where there is no experience of boundaries between the organism and the environment. There is a healthy and unhealthy side of being confluent. In every precontact phase there is a need to be confluent with the environment. Its a healthy modality that serves the organisms need in the preparatory phase to enter a new field in being in a "relational blindness".

In the postcontact phase, confluence serves the organisms need to integrate new material. A healthy confluence will not block an adequate Ego-functioning, but if the confluence maintains beyound the need, it will result in separation anxiety (ibid. p. 24). In a healthy contact phase the organism has reached its goal of meeting its needs in a way that leaves no room for "unfinished business". The organism is at rest, digesting and integrating the new and the Self is in a state of healthy confluence. In presenting the results from this study I will describe the different phases; introjection, projection, retroflection and final contact in more detail.
4 Research design

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Training in Gestalt-therapy - training program that lasts at least 4 years with a minimum of 700 hours training.

The impact of shaming – how the student/therapist experienced to be shamed and the meaning they give to these experiences for their learning and growth process.

Self-development in training of Gestalt Therapists – a Gestalt model of human development applied to the training of gestalt-therapists by Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb (1992)

Student – the person attending a Gestalt training program

Co-researcher - the persons interviewed in this study that have all been subjected to shaming during their training as Gestalt-therapists.

Teacher/leader – person who is involved in the training of Gestalt-therapists.

Ethics

To attain an informed consent from my co-researchers I had a preinterview with each person and gave them a verbal and written information about the context of this study, the research process, and how I would report the findings (Appendix 2). I asked for their permission to tape record the interviews and to publish the data in my dissertation. I invited them to consider every step in the study and gave them some days to consider their participation. To secure my co-researchers confidentiality I ensured them that all data are made anonymous and will be stored in a secure manner. I told them that they are free to withdraw from the study at any point in the process. If they decided to join the study they would have a copy of the final report. I ensured them that even if they are co-researchers I will be totally responsible for the content and outcome of the study. I was also aware that such a painful matter might bring my participants in a vulnerable process during the research and I made sure that I had time for debriefing after interviews.

Data collection

How did I select my co-researchers?

Four requirements had to be met for selecting co-researchers:

The persons had to be students of Gestalt training or gestalt therapists having finished their training

The persons had to have had experiences of being shamed by members of the faculty in their training as gestalt-therapists
They had to be willing to share their experiences as openly as possible with me.
They had to have time to participate in the study.

To meet these requirements I had to select my population. I knew of some students and colleagues that had told me about shaming incidents in their training and I asked 4 of them to be my co-researchers. One was not available at the time and I had to drop this person and ask another colleague. I ended up with three men and one woman co-researcher. Due to confidentiality I will describe my co-researcher very briefly: One is in the 3rd year of training, one had quitted training after the 3rd year. Two finished their training more than 5 years ago. My co-researchers have attended two different Gestalt training programs in Scandinavia.

There can be pro and cons to ask people you know to participate in your research. It means that the researcher have to be extremely cautious about integrety, confidentiality, and anonymity (Bell 1987). Having a former relationship with co-researchers can also be a help in collecting sensitive data, as long as co-researchers trust that they will not be misused. My experience is that this study profited by the trustful relationship that was already established between my co-researchers and my self. They all gave voice to a keen interest in the study and willingly shared their experiences with me. As I had made few assumptions in beforehand, I felt really free to listen to my co-researcher during the interview.

I conducted open interviews with my co-researchers for about 1 hour each. I selected this method because this is a method that I am trained to use as a gestalt-therapist every day. Secondly because I thought that this method was be the best among others to answer my research question. I used a interview guide with my main research question and other open ended questions as helping questions during the interview (Appendix 3).
I was aware that I might get caught in my own stuff and biases. To prepare the interview guide I wrote down some incidents of being shamed from my own training as gestalt-therapist and reviewed them with my supervisor. Then I had a pilot interview with myself and discussed the interview with my supervisor (Appendix 4). Afterwards I reformulated some of the questions to make them better fit for my interview with my co-researchers. The interviews with my co-researchers were taperecorded and transcribed.

Immediatly after the interviews I took notes about how I had experienced the interview process, how I had experienced to be part of this inquiry process and what impressions I had concerning the content. As a mean to validate the data collected I asked my co-researchers to review the transcription of the interviews. I asked them to be free to correct, add and remove any statements in the interview (Appendix 5). Three of my co-researchers had no objections to the transcribed interviews. The fourth co-researcher needed to have a postinterview 3 months after the first interview. She wanted to tell how she had discovered more about her shamebound system and past experiences of shame. I also had brief unstructured post-interviews with each of my co-researcher 3 months after the first interview, to get a better understanding of when in their training they had been shamed, and what consequences it made to them.

**Treatment of data**

I read the transcript of the interviews several times to get a firm grip of the whole material. I used some month to ”digest” each persons story and see what became foreground for me. I discussed the theme of shaming with my supervisor, colleges and clients. I regulary made notes of how my process of digesting the interviews went on. As my study seemed to lean on the narratives of my co-researchers I also read some novels about people being shamed in their lives.

**Analysis of data**

The research question was: What is the impact of shame on the Self-development process in Gestalt therapy training? Taped interviews of the four co-researchers were transcribed, and significant statements was extracted from the raw data for analysis. To get an understanding of how my co-researcher defined shame and the opposite, I had asked them: **What is shame?** and **What is the opposite of shame.** The answers to these questions were analyzed as to units. By extracting all the significant statements from the four interviews and eliminate dublicate statements, I ended up with a list of remaining statements listed in
Table 1: Statements of shame (Appendix 6) and Table 2: Statements of the opposite of shame (Appendix 7). Meanings were formulated into exhaustive descriptions. A validation of the exhaustive descriptions was made by returning to the original significant statements to check if all the significant meanings were covered in the final description.

To analyse the rest of my data concerning the impact of shaming in training, it became clear to me after I had read Margherita Spagnuolo Lobbs (1992) article ”Training in Gestalt Therapy” that my data had to be analyzed in an individual and contextual way. Spagnuolo Lobb (1992, p. 24) writes ”In management of the training process in Gestalt Therapy, the difference in meaning that the various communications from the student brings according to the phase in which they are; precontact, contact, final contact or postcontact”. I had to look to who, where, when and how the shaming was experienced. This was not in my mind when I made the interview guide and carried out the interviews. I think this was an advantage as I imagine that I would have been too keen to have my co-researchers ”fill in the model”, and that I would have been more biased and preprogrammed during the interview.

How did I analyze my data according to this new discovery? All statements from each co-researcher concerning their different experiences of shaming were listed continuously per co-researcher. The significant statements of meanings concerning the story they told, were listed continuously and analysed per co-researcher and in the context of their shaming experiences.

The co-researchers tell of incidents that have happened from 2 to many years ago. Their experiences and meanings of the incidents were sometimes different from what they were at the actual point of shaming. In my interview I made a point to let my co-researchers differentiate what were their immediate reactions and reflections, and what meaning did they give to the shaming experience in the present – in the broad light of ”their belated wisdom”. An example of the difference is a statement from one co-researcher about the shaming experience when it happened (in a preparatory-course) ”I defined the problem as mine. I thought I was the problem”. The statement made more than 5 years afterwards about the same incident: ”She should have noticed and checked me out. It was not necessary to go through this. I can feel I get angry and want to shake her. – I was not aware of it then”.

I analysed the data of shaming according to what phase the student/therapist seemed to be in at the actual point of shaming. This is not so obvious as it might seem. According to the model of Self development, the
student ideally, should pass the different stages during the 4 years of training. From this perspective it would not be too strange to think that the student is in the introjection phase the first year, in the projection phase in the second year and so on. This would be to simplify the whole process. Students have their personal history and dynamics and they grow in their individual pace. All my co-researchers reveal a pattern of shame and guilt in their personal biography. This fact influences the Self development in a profound way, and had to be included as a significant factor in the analysis. The student is also part of a group process and training system that may hinder or accelerate the Self development. All these elements are part of each co-researchers way of experiencing shaming. As I am concerned with what is the phenomenological experience of the individual student I had to grasp as much as possible of his/her total presence and perspective. I had to take a wholistic perspective on shaming experiences as seen from each co-researcher. To do this the following elements had to be considered in the analysis:

What personal dynamic is characteristic for each co-researcher?
What phase are they in when shaming occurred?
What was the context and interaction concerning the shaming experience?
What meaning did the co-researcher give to the shaming experience when it happened and at the time of the interview?
How does the data confirm or invalidate the model of Self development?

To grasp the wholistic perspective, I had to search the interviews again and again and combine the different episodes and statements according to the different phases of development. The co-researchers also had some statements about their experiences of the opposite of shaming. These statements are embedded in the section of pedagogical implications in each phase. My co-researcher also had some statements of the positive outcome of being shamed. These are added in the ending section of this chapter.

The interviews were held in Norwegian. The quotations are translated into English by me. Quotations of statements from the co-researchers are all written in italics.

5 Findings and discussions

I will present the findings and discussion in the following way. First I give an exhaustive description of my co-researchers meanings of shame and the opposite of shame. I will then compare these descriptions with definitions of shame given in the literature.
Secondly I present the findings by describing each phase of Self development; introjection, projection, retroflection and final contact. For each phase I present the findings by giving some examples from the empirical data. The essential structure of the experiences of shame is then formulated for each phase. I discuss the findings as to how the data confirms or not with the model of Self development. The description and discussion ends up with reflections about the pedagogical implications we might draw from the findings. Lastly in this chapter I present a summary of my co-researchers statements about positive learning outcomes from being shamed.

**Formulated meanings about shame**

How does my co-researches describe shame? Here is the exhaustive formulation of the answers my co-researchers gave to this question:

"Shame is experienced by bodily sensations; stiffness in stomach, varmness in cheeks, prickling in the back, and to be heavy and sad in the body. You might sweat, feel fear, anxiety and horror. It can be like a little depression. You might feel sorrow, feel guilty and be sorry. Shame is connected to have said or done something stupid, and a feeling of having made a fool of yourself and done something socially unacceptable. Shame might be activated if you demand a little more than you really need – ask for a little extra. You think you are bad, bader than others and very quickly gets retroflective and you start to bang yourself. Shame is connected with a low self-esteem. Feelings are wiped out, you disappear and have the experience of shrinking and getting smaller and smaller. You have no ground contact. Shame is connected to a feeling of being dismissed, with distastlessness and a situation you want to get away from. Shame is a remembrance of mother who told me to go and shame myself when I had done something she didn’t like. You hide in the shamecorner and don’t want anyone to find you. You are afraid to maintain yourself and to take your own space. You are shamed to be ashamed and don’t talk about it. Instead you can behave in an arrogant and grandious way”.

**Formulated meanings about the opposite of shame**

Here are the exhaustive description on how my co-researchers described the opposite of shame:

"The opposite of shame is connected to the feeling of being free in contact with yourself and other people. It means to be able to express yourself without comming in affect. It is about not putting yourself down but
estimate yourself for the one you are and be confirmed in that by others. The opposite of shame might also be connected with joy, freedom, the positive things and the experience of being carried, lifted and a little rushed off in a joyful contact with others. The opposite of shame might also be to be safe enough to not go and hide, but be there with your shame and really feel it”.

The findings indicate that shame is a well-known and a common feeling among the co-researchers. The experience of shame is connected to painful bodily and emotional sensations and to negative self-judgment. The co-researchers descriptions and experiences of shame and the opposite coincide well with theoretical definitions made by Yontef (1993), Wurmser (1997), Natanson (1994), Kaufman (1996), Lee and Wheeler (1996) and Erskin (1995).

**Presentation of findings about shaming in the different Self developmental phases**

When we look at the findings we have to bear in mind that all the four participants were asked to be co-researcher because they were more or less vulnerable to shaming. As such their pattern of retroreflection will be part of their way of organizing the field in any phase they are in. This extra dimension have to be added to the analysis of the findings and to the model of Self development for our purpose.

As described earlier the Self development model starts by the modality of confluence. Confluence seems to be a common trait in every new experience. I will pass this phase of confluence as it can’t be considered among the modalities of the Ego-function. It is a state of ”relational blindness”. In the case where the students has a unhealthy confluence the teacher must attend to support the Ego-function, so the separation anxiety can be manageable to the student (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992).

**Shaming in the introjection phase**

The introjecting phase is best described as an attitude of dependence (Spangnuolo Lobb 1992). The student is ”filling up” the new; environment, theories, cultural norms in the training setting, getting to know the teachers and other students and so on. S/he also takes in what the teachers transmit without caring much whether it sustains her/his own needs or not. The student is usually eager to conform to norms and to please the environment, even when it puzzles her and demands are unfamiliar to her. **The existential theme** of this phase is to get to know ones Self in the new environment: Who am I to be here? How shall I define myself in these new surroundings? What is expected of me? Am I good enough? **The developmental goal**
of this phase is to experience a healthy nourishment. The student needs to "learn from the adults" to know what will suit her or not at a later stage. **Environmental support** in this phase is to pass on the contents without activating anxiety, blaming and shaming. The student is in this stage "a vulnerable baby" in her new environment and needs the support to "eat the right food", without the fear of "being wrong". A student that introjects in an unhealthy pattern need help to "restore the direction of energy of the organism in contact" (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992).

We will now explore what the empirical data says about the impact of shaming in the introjecting phase. To give a feeling of what shaming in training is all about on an experience level, I will go directly to present co-researcher C's description about a shaming episode in her the first year of training. At the time of the interview she is in her 3rd year of training.

"It happened in my first year of training. We had an exercise that was about mirroring each other. I mirrored a co-student and that is, I didn't really succeed. Something happened with me at the moment I was to become him, because I didn’t feel I could be him because he stood out for me as such a strong, great consistent person. And I didn’t feel I was that at all, jumping from being so fragile and little. I didn't make it. When I was about to tell how difficult it was for me, on how little I felt I was, on how insecure I felt, I became very reflective. My body got locked and I started to bang my head in the wall and changed from being totally away and totally present. The teacher reacted in a way that he, ehm, seemed very annoyed with me and I remember I thought that was very unfair because he focused on that I was self-harming myself. Ehm, I sat and felt that I did not harm myself because I do not consciously bang my head against the wall. It is something that happens with my body when it locks like this and I have no control, I can’t just tell myself to stop. I remember that he urged me to stop. And I remember I felt that I could not be there. That there was no room for me there and that I should be allowed to go home and take care of myself. And he did not allow me to do that. And he wanted me to stay in the classroom, just sit there, and I remember it was terrible to have everybody’s attention in this way, because I suddenly – didn’t know them as well - and suddenly I was totally undressed and naked. --- And I become aware when I start to talk about --- cramps – when my body got stuck – then it is not guilt – it is such a deep feeling of shame that it is sheer madness".

The student tells how the **Id-function** is activated: "My body gets locked". Her **Personality-function** expresses her definition of herself in this situation: "I can’t mirror this person". Her **Ego-function** tells of her need: "I want to go home". As the teacher interpretate her behavior as self-harming and forbid her to follow her own energy in the situation, she gets even more shamed. Her energy is utterly blocked, she is
more frightened and becomes totally isolated from contact with the environment. In her comments to this incident she seems to have introjected messages like: ”I have to do what the teacher says”,” There are two ways of doing this exercise; right or wrong. These introjects make her anxious ”to do the right thing” and creates a lot of anxiety that is unsustainable for her. This situation is well known in her history; being the clever girl. As her Id-function is activated in bodily cramps, she loses control. The body seems to do what is necessary for her. The teacher seems to interpretate and objectify the student by telling her that she consciously is harming her self, and he does not give her the support she needs; as she formulates it herself: ”Support, don’t turn against me, but come and stand beside me, put a cushion between my head and the wall, and let it be until it stops”.

The next example from the empirical data is from Co-researcher B. He finished his training more than 5 years ago. He tells of two shaming episodes that happened in the beginning of his Gestalt training: ”It happened during the preparatory course with a woman therapist. I remember I was very fascinated and such, nearly up to being childishly in love, like being in love with mother, and I remember I was looking much at her and she looked at me and then - I told her. And she denied it, and said that it was mine. I remember being very ashamed -- and I thought- oh, I have problems with my own borders. With borders and contact and such”

The co-researcher is in this introjection phase open as a child, falling in love with ”mother”. As he expresses himself openly, he makes himself vulnerable, still he takes the risk. When the teacher immediately seem to turn away this beautiful expression of ”admiration”, the student feels rejected and shamed and tells himself; ”it is something wrong with me”. He activates his unhealthy retroflection, and immediately decides: ”I will take distance to this therapist and not express myself spontaneously”. One shaming episode in the introjection phase seems to have a catastrophic effect on the further Self development process of this student. He tells that he never after let himself do personal work in the training, before he ”had prepared himself thoroughly”. He decided he would not take the risk to be shamed again, by being spontaneous.

He also tells of another episode during the first year of training: ”There was another, it was a male therapist where we should work with body and sexuality and do massage at one another. I remember being very shy in this period and I felt clumsy and awkward and stupid and uneasy in the situation, and I did not know what to do. I could barely stand to be there in the room. We were to massage each other on the back
and there was much about sexuality and body, and I felt it embarrassing. ------ I did not manage to say anything.------I felt it was my problem, that I had to learn to be more free, that I was unfree. --- It was shameful to touch strangers, as they were in this respect. ----- And in this there also was something about sexuality – that my homosexuality never was acknowledged. My homosexuality was non-existing”.

This co-researcher’s experiences tells of the vulnerable and naive "child within” and how unsafe he is when he has to perform experiments that he is uncomfortable with. His introjects seems to be; "I am not allowed to withdraw from exercises that I am not comfortable with”. The teacher did not notice or give the student any choice or support in this difficult dilemma, and the student ends up being stuck with his pattern of unhealthy retroreflection: ”There must be something wrong with me”.

**What is the essential structure of being shamed in the introjection phase?**

Shame is activated when the students’ experiences that s/he is unable to fulfill introjected or given expectations from the environment to be or behave in a specific way. Shame may be when the student gives spontaneous expressions of personal feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations and are being judged, evaluated, interpreted, labeled, laugh at or not taken serious by the environment. Shame occurs when the students existential ground is not acknowledged or is threatened, experienced as a bodily stuckness, emotional pain, negative thoughts about oneself and a strong urge to get away from the situation. When there is a lack of congruence between theory and ”lived theory” the student seems to get confused and more vulnerable to shame. When shame occurs and there are no external supports to regain contact with the environment, the students’ energy stays blocked for shorter or longer intervals. Lack of support, presence and empathic contact from significant others will make the student utterly shamed and isolated.

**How does the empirical data support the theoretical model of a healthy Self development process?**

The empirical data seems to verify the model of Self development in training in three ways. Firstly the data shows how vulnerable and "little” the student is at this stage. Secondly the data shows how introjected "messages”, whether they are expressed directly or indirectly, whether they belong to the students history or fantasy, will effect the learning process. Thirdly, the data shows that shame that is not adequately dealt with, tends to stay on as ”unfinished gestalts” and make the student more on guard and insecure in exposing herself in the training process. When teachers are uninformed about shame and not capable to be ”a good parent” and confirm the students existence and have an ”existential solidarity” with the shamed student, the student will not learn to adjust more creatively. The student will hold on to earlier patterns of
(pathological) retroflection and/or introjection. This seems to make the possibility of developing the Self in the next projection phase more limited.

**Pedagogical implications to handle shame in the introjective phase**

For the teacher to be a **good enough parent** in this period, seems to depend on her/his knowledge of shame. When the teacher introduces exercises or experiments, there needs to be an introduction that clearly states that these are voluntary and that there are no right or wrong behaviour or reactions. The teacher needs to be present in the interaction with the students and observe what goes on in the process of learning. Being present not only physically and mentally, but also able to meet the student on a profound emotional and existential level. The philosophy of existentialism has a spokesman in Marcel writing about availability (1971, p.25): "(T)he most attentive and most conscientious listener may give me the impression of not being present; he gives me nothing, he cannot make room for me in himself, whatever the material favors he is prepared to grant me. ------ (P)resence is something which reveals itself immediately and unmistakably in a look, a smile, an intonation, or a handshake". To help the shamed student "back to reality" and connection to the field seems to require this unmistakable quality of a profound and caring interaction from the environment. To finish the Gestalt in shaming incidents and to learn from it, it also seems necessary to process what happened afterwards. The teacher needs to be genuine and open to explore the field and take part in the ”healing” process without hiding himself behind a role or fixed interpretations.

**The impact of shaming in the projecting phase.**

The modality of projection is connected with Perls’ perspective of the **dental aggression** phase. According to the model of Self development this **perspective changes the traditional concept of training** (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p. 21). It seems to be one of the most important phases in building up a personal autonomy. "In this phase the student gives way to an attitude of counter-dependance, of rebellion. The excitement that occurs at the boundary of contact can be better recived by the self, which is able to deny – in all or in part – the preceding learning, to make space for the new" (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p. 25). As the student does not still have a full experience of her own boundaries, s/he tends to see the excitement "linked to the process of contact "in progress” out there, called the modality of projection" (ibid. p. 25). It is a phase where the student in a healthy development, critizies everything about the leader, the school system, theories and all what stands out as ”the not me”. The figural awareness process of projecting is contrary to the introjection phase, where the focus was to learn from ”the Buddhah”. In this phase it is the killing of ”the
Buddah” and destruction of reality that make way for a new construction based on one own's existence and needs. If there has been no or few obstacles in the previous periods, no accumulation thus far of interruptions, distortions, or unfinished aspects of the earlier stages the student will be ready and eager to exercise his newly developed powers and to leave behind the introjected confluence. According to Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1977, p.225) ”it is the tragic fact that this normal sequence almost never takes place in our society, that there is, therefore, imperfect biting off from the beginning. --- If the organism does not develop in continous creative adjustment with its environment, ---- it will be saddled with an ”I” which is a thrown-together collection of unassimilated introjects – traits and qualities taken over from the ”authorities”, which he cannot stomach, relations which he he did not bite off and chew, knowledge he doesn’t understand, sucking fixations he cannot dissolve, disgust he cannot release”.

The existential theme of this phase is characterized by the Self’s exploration of finding and trusting its own resources. Can I trust myself being me, even if I am different from you? might be the crucial question in this phase. The developmental goal of this period is that of leaving the dependence, contain the excitement of projecting it ”out there” and in the end allow one self to trust one own’s resources. The environmental support in this period is most challenging for the teachers. There is a lot of energy and chaos in this period. The students might have a lot of energy bottled up with no clear direction. For the teacher it is a question of being able to support the students energy, excitement and need to express herself spontaneously, without judging, degrading, humiliating, shaming and rejecting her/him on the basis of who s/he is and what s/he produces. It is important for the student to produce something of her own, make the theory her own, and present it her own way. In the case where the projection is tied more to the students personal dynamics, it is a therapeutic goal to provide space and containment ”so the student is able to adjust the perception of his own boundaries to the perception of his own energy” (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992. p. 26).

What does the empirical data of this study tell us of shaming in the projection phase?
There is little evidence in my study that my co-researchers have experienced a full and healthy process of ”dental aggression” phase during their training. My co-researchers seems to have found little or no room to act out their ”projecting energy”, to really have felt the excitement in biting, chewing and deconstruct their introjections. How can this be? All the co-researchers have as their personal dynamics a vulnerability to being shamed. As they all have experienced to be shamed during the introjecting phase, it is natural that the
possibility to project seems a "forbidden" modality to the Self. Still, there are statements and incidents that indicates that the co-researchers have been in the modality of projection during their training, and had the experience of being stopped. This "stopped energy" seems to have been bottled up and at the interviews I noticed how the co-researchers energy increased while talking about shaming in this phase. There was a lot of aggression and criticism coming out in the interviews related to "unfinished Gestalts" from both the introjecting and the projection phase during their training. Here are some statements how my co-researchers experienced obstacles and blocks to freely express themselves:

"I think the methods used in gestalt training is rock-hard", "The rules are contradictory; first they tell you to be there as your self, and really be yourself, and when you are, they tell you that now it is enough being yourself, now you have to be the way we want".

"This woman teacher says to me; "when the child inside you is outside you". I remember her saying to me, without me understanding what it meant, I felt very, very shameful. It is like I had experienced myself as – I had let my self go, been very spontaneous and chaotic, as I also was, that is part of it, and then I was received by a judgement or evaluation and I remember that as shameful"."-- and I get furious in some way, and I think this is what I had with me from my original life, and it should not be necessary to repeat my trauma". "She really hit me in my existence".

" There was no dialog – at all. There was a fixed Gestalt you had to adjust to” – “I remember those times where I, in a very careful way, brought up these things, --- and it was a total mortification” ---- "I was not allowed to be the one I am” - - "It was a matter of being right or wrong and that is very shaming” – ---- "There were no space for critical reflection”---- "I experienced it as a very locked system that wasn’t open to changes”------ "So that was also the case that I was not recognized as homosexual, on the contrary I was wounded in it” ----"I missed humanity”.

All these statements indicate that my co-researchers have experienced a training that was ”fixed” in their own introjects and did not ”live” their Gestalt theory. The training was not rooted in an understanding of the underlying existential themes of the students. Teachers did not seem to know of shame and the importance of supporting the student in his ”dental aggression phase”. The result is that students reinforces their pathological retroflections. The development process of the Self is then utterly hindered.
What is the essential structure of being shamed in the projection phase?
The experience of shame and shameinducing elements in the projection phase seems to be much the same as in the introjection phase; not being confirmed as an unique person, being labeled, interpreted, judged, neglected, made a fool of, or in other ways not experience to be responded to for who you are. The difference to be shamed in the projection phase seems to be that it ”hits harder”. The students excitement and level of anxiety is usually much higher in this phase. As there are more invested ”Self-energy” there are more to lose. Comming out from the ”cupboard” with much chaos and undirected energy seems to leave the student to be even more vunerable to shame than earlier. When a shamed students experiences a re-shaming in the projection phase she seems to ”bottle up” the projecting energy and keep it “underground”. The student withdraws, to some degree, from a further spontanious exploration of creative adjustment as she has to with-hold much of her ”projective” energy. This leaves the student with an unfinished Gestalt and as such, delays and/or prohibits a further healthy Self – development process.

How does the empirical data support the theoretical model of a healthy Self development process?
The empirical data of this study seems to support the Self-developmental model in three ways. First it verifies the natural need of a ”dental aggression” period in the individuation process of the student. Secondly it verifies the importance of the wholistic perspective of the model. If the student is being shamed in the introjection period without learning from it, the student will, in the next step, be even more exposed to shame. It seems to have an accumulating effect, creating a vicious circle in the Self developmental process. If there isn`t enough contrasting experiences that might balance the negative effect, the student will be ”stuck” in the modality of neurotic projection or retroflection. Thirdly it seems that the lack of environmental support to ”the projecting” student seems to be of significant importance for the outcome of this phase and for the possiblity to grow and experience a successful final contact.

Pedagogical implications of shaming in the projection phase
To be a ”good teacher” in this phase seems to demand much the same as being parent to the rebellious youth. The student needs an adult who is well aware of her own boundaries and shortcommings, and are willing and able to meet the students rebellious power with care, openness and firmness. If the student doesn`t have the containment of a safe ”heaven”, the separation anxiety will be unbearable. S/he also needs an open door to let out the energy be welcomed for expressing herself. The student tries in this phase to grow into being a person in his own right. If she is objectified or stigmatized in this phase as being ”the
criticizing student” or “the difficult student” the environment may deprive her of the possibility to growth. Jacobs (1989, p.26) refers to Bubers I-Thou in the dialogical meeting ”Any experience of an I-Thou moment is a confirmation of the possibility of integration and wholeness, a confirmation of the healing process by which one can restore one’s relation to the world”. This underlines the special importance for the teacher to catch up the underlying process and support the ”I”, the uniqueness of the individual student in her projective process.

The impact of shaming in the retroflection phase
What are the characteristic elements of the retroflection phase? This is the phase where the student is trying out his new modality of beginning to be ”grown up”. She is rediscovering and consolidating herself. In a healthy development of the self the student will now ”allow the self to separate the introjection on a perceptive level, from he who provides it” (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p.26). The student can now stay in contact even if s/he rejects what the teacher says. The student becomes more self-sufficient and enjoys doing things by himself as his perception of his own boundaries haven’t yet made him able to risk the contact with the different-from-himself. S/he will often reject supervision, theoretical and emotional exchanges (Ibid. p. 26). It is like the student needs a period of finding her own nourishment and that she wants to digest it by herself.

The existential theme of this phase seems to find out such questions as: What do I need to be on my own – to be me? And who am I- without you? The developmental goal of this phase is connected to the students need to be self-sufficient and to feel his own strength and boundaries. This is the phase where he is empowering himself. He needs to be strong to risk losing his boundaries in contact with ”the new” in the next final contact phase. Environmental support in this phase is that of letting the student have the space to be silent and care for himself. As the student is vulnerable in his loning to ”becoming a good therapist” he needs affirmation to freely explore his capabilities as therapist. Some students may need to work with a pathological retroflection. The teacher must intervene ”in order to help him get over the phobia of bonding through a healthy experience of confluence (committing himself to the environment) of the student, either with the group or with the teacher (Ibid, p. 27).

What does the data tell us about the impact of shaming in the retroflection phase?
Two of my co-researchers have told about incidents of shaming in the end of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} year of their training. These statements seem coincident with the modality of retroflection. During the interview the energy of my co-researchers shifted a lot according to what theme the co-researchers had in focus. When they told about these shaming episodes they seemed to be full of disgust and indignation.

Co-researcher D tells: "We were to stand in a ring and pretend that some should be outside, indicating they were not a part of the community. --- And they should try to come inside the ring, and the ring should close tighter so they didn’t come in. I felt some sorrow – ohj- I am not part of them, they won’t let me in and at the same time I thought: God in Heaven what a gang of soupskulls, I don’t want to be part of such a gang that stand and cling to something peculiar that are intructed by some authority”. The co-researcher apparently separates between the “me”: I feel sorrow and the “not me”; ”the soupskulls that clings to something peculiar” that I don’t want to be a part of. They are different from me. I don’t want to conform to the teacher who is ” outside me”. It is like he says: "I stand on my own feets, using my energy to whatever fits me”.

This co-researcher also tells of another episode: "There was this situation where the group leader then, as I understood it, experienced to be threatened by something I brought up in the group, as I experienced it. He got angry and yes, he indicated that there was no point that I continued to be in this group --- he tried to humiliate me, in a way”, ”And that is one of my complaints, a complaint against what happened, was the feeling I had that there was something outward about it; that there was no genuine solidarity and compassion, and empty, but a rather conventional reeling off: Yes, how is it for you when I say this – an artificial thing, more than something legitimate born from a sight, a meeting, a look, a confirmation”. The student is aware of his needs and how a non-dialogical and technical intervention does not fullfill him. This is a healthy adjustment for the organism in contact with his own needs.

Another shaming incident was experienced by co-researcher A in the end of his 3\textsuperscript{rd} year of training: "This episode is about my sexuality and my homosexuality, where my pedagogical leader, at the evaluation prior to the 4\textsuperscript{th} year of training, told me seriously, that I could not work with couples because I was homosexual. And it took me hours to get out of that humiliation, that shame-attack – because first I said. yes, yes ----. I experienced this episode as extremely insulting. I felt extremely unwell. And I could not take me out of this shame-attack by myself because both being homosexual and shamebound you have this introject so strong in you - that you are bad -- ”The consequences was that I became unsure of my professional identity, and
that developing a identity as homosexual most certainly was delayed and destroyed by the treatment I got in the training”.

This co-researcher is obviously not only shamed for who he is, and his personal identity, but also for not "being useful as therapist”. In the reflective phase the development of the self is closely knitted to developing a therapeutical identity as well. The shaming seems to appear devastating both to his professional identity and his Self even many years after his training ended. The wound made in his training was never healed at that time, even if he made some attempts by himself to work it out with his teacher. On the contrary, the teacher made a fool of him in front of his classmates, reading loud from a personal letter he had written to her about this incident. He was utterly shamed and humiliated by this, and his last year "became a catastrophe”.

What is the essential structure of being shamed in the retroflection phase?
When the student is stigmatized and treated as an object and not as a unique human being, shame may be triggered. Students that are interpreted, rejected and/or scolded by their teachers, on the basis of who they are and what they do or say tend to be shamed. Students tend to be shamed when their competence as therapist are assessed and judged in a way that is incomprehensible and experienced as negative. With a student who is shamebound and has experienced to be shamed in the earlier phases of his training, shaming in this phase can have a toxicating effect, and delay the personal and professional growth.

How does the empirical data support the theoretical model of Self development?
The empirical data supports the model of Self development in two ways. Firstly the data confirms the students needs to bring forth his own resources and opinions and to be respected in that. Secondly the data shows that a pathological retroflection has an inhibiting effect in the students growth and has to be treated separately. The data from this study also adds to an understanding of how the student in this phase is not only concerned with who he is, but also of who he is to become as therapist. He is more aware as to how his professional "Self” is developing. As the connection to who he is as a person and to whom he is to become as therapist are closely linked, the evaluation and assessment of the student seems to be of crucial importance to the growth process. As there are few objective criteria in the assessment of being therapist, the opportunity to shame the student therapist is not far away.
What are the pedagogical implications?

In this phase the student is ”in the middle” of acquiring both a personal and professional identity of his own. S/he needs assurance and confirmation on behalf of his/her self-expression. It is a matter of reassuring the student that “you are still member of this family and you are entitled to be proud of yourself becoming a therapist in your own right”. Assessments and evaluation needs to be done by objective criteria and in a way that is perceived as just and understandable. Subjective preferences and negative personal judgements from teachers is shame-inducing and should not occur. When shame is triggered the teacher needs to relate to what happened in the interaction and find ways to ”heal the disconnection” in a dialog with the student. According to Jacobs (1989, p. 26) a true dialog requires “a non-hierarchical structure and an emphasis on full and genuine engagement between patient and therapist”. We can ask whether this dialog is possible in a usual training setting where the teacher is doing therapeutical work with students and at the same time is given the authority to evaluate the students. This is a structural power-relation, beside the obvious fact that teachers usually are older, more experienced and have a bigger authority as such.

The impact of shaming in the final contact phase

Making contact - in the meaning that Perls (1969) decried - means to have a true learning, opening up our boundaries to let the new in, without defense and hesitation. To do that, the student needs the strength acquired in a healthy completion of all the phases in the contact cycle (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p 27). It is a phase where the student is leaving the ego-modality of ”having”, in Buber’s (1970) philosophy called the relation of the I-It, to gain the modality of ”being”, the relation of I-Thou. ”The basic word I-You can only be spoken with one’s whole being. The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one’s whole being” (Ibid, p. 54). The I-Thou relation has the qualities of immediacy, directness and mutuality and it is the ”full-bodied” turning-toward-the-other, a surrender to, and trust of, the between (Jacobs 1989, p.27). The I-Thou relation is seen, according to Faber (1965, p. xvii):” -- not as a dimension of the self but as the existential and ontological reality in which the self comes into being and through which it fulfills and authenticates itself”.

In this phase the student can trust himself and the environment in a way that makes it possible for him ”to receive something for himself as person-therapist, something that allows him to link the multiplicity of aspects of his own being into a integrated whole” (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p. 27). The student has acquired the competence and the personal strength ”to receive the flow of the dynamic perspective
figure/background without blocking the actual process of contact with the environment” (Ibid, p. 23). This phase calls for a modality of "healthy confluence” as much as the organism has to open its boundaries to take in the "new”.

The pathological dynamics of this phase, in the contact-withdrawal process is called egotism (Perls, Hefferline, Goodman 1977). This dynamic is an inability of staying in contact with the environment, and calls for a further therapeutic process to help the student ”unlock the block”. The existential theme of this phase is that of not having an existential theme, understood as the Self being in full contact, without thinking or experiencing that this is me – meeting you. In full contact, in a dialog, the existence is that of the Self being in a free floating contact - a surrender to the between. The developmental goal of the student should now be attaind. In this phase the student is able to ”meet” the leader, his person and his theory, assuming the new. Environmental support in this phase restrict itself to be at disposal, nourish and supervise the student ”on request”. The teacher should ”let things happen” and interact without taking "therapeutical care” for the student. To give feedback in this phase is relief for both the student and teachers, as the ”message” comes through without introjecting, projecting or retroflecting (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p.27).

What does the data of this study tell us about shaming in this phase?

We have to keep in mind that 2 of my co-researcher C and D, have not ended their training. Co-researcher C is in her 3rd year of training. Co-researcher D quitted the training after his 3rd year due to the fact that the training did not meet his needs. We may understand this as an active manipulation of the environment to fullfill the needs of the Self. As such, we may call this a final contact phase for this student. He takes control of his ”destiny” and make choises on behalf of his own needs. On the other hand he is not fullfilled in gaining his therapeutical certificate. This gain seems to matter less to him than to remain true to his own needs and values.

My two other co-researchers A and B,- who ended their training more than 5 years ago, does not seem to have ”had a healty completion of all the other phases” as Spagnuolo Lobb (1992, p.27) sets as a condition to reach the final contact phase in a successful way. What is ”figure” for my co-researchers when they talk of their training so many years afterwards? What are the unfinished Gestalts and how do they give meaning to what happened?
During the interviews I found both resignation and resentment in the way they talked about their training. I also noticed in their voice and posture some sorrow and sadness when they told me about their experiences. I got this picture in my head that it is like the wounded child that comes to a new world, being naive and trustful towards the environment, and then experiences to be maltreated and rejected by the environment. The possibility of retraumatization is near to hand and a successful final contact seems out of range.

My co-researchers B tells: "I found little resonance in the system and that caused me not to express myself and to hold back”, “I think I all the time went around and searched for a socket that I could contact; Do you have a connection somewhere?”, “It should not have been necessary to repeat my own trauma or to get help to not repeat my trauma”, “I think that here (the training) one has taken a distance to the student”, "Words and action did not coincide”.

In a post-interview this co-researcher tells me that he still feels how deeply he has been traumatized in his training. He has a lot of uncompleted Gestalts and “unfinished business” towards his training institute. It is all about shaming and not being confirmed as a person, as a homosexual and in his unique masculinity. He tells of all the pain he has endured connected to all the unfinished traumatic experiences during his training. He did not experience to get any help from his trainers to sort this out while he still was in his training – or afterwards.

My co-researcher A tells: "There was no dialog – at all – no dialog” “I get very angry when i talk about it”, "There was a fixed Gestalt that one was forced to conform to. And if you didn’t, you had a tough time”, "May be I am a Gestalt-therapist after all. Because I had doubted that many times”, "I stayed to the end of the training because I had started and I very much wanted a therapeutical training. Otherwise I don’t know – I had not stayed on( to the end)”, "It was a not-meeting and absence of contact”, "I was afraid I could not be the one I am, that is really a strong feeling. I could not be the one I was. I did not fit - either as person, therapeut or homosexual”, "You cant only just talk the talk, you have to walk the talk” “It would have been wonderful if I could have got this as a family or platform – that I belonged – Oh, God, that is what I wanted”

In a post-interview this researcher writes to me that he has taken a distance to his former training institute. He don’t want to be part of the faculty in any way. He also tells that the “the feeling of being evaluated and judged negatively is still very much alive in me”.

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The training had not met their needs and they are still very frustrated and unfulfilled, many years after the training ended. This unfinished Gestalt creates a need to restore some fundamental self-esteem that was offended during training. My co-researcher says that the only way to bridge this unfulfilled need is that the leaders of the training take full responsibility and give an unreserved apology. When leaders take responsibility and admits mistakes, humanity becomes visible, hierarchy vanish and dialogue is possible.

**What is the essential structure of not reaching the final phase in the contact cycle?**

The data from this study indicates that the consequences are multiple concerning the student/therapist self development and professional pride. The lack of fulfillment does not allow “him to link the multiplicity of aspects of his own being into an integrated whole, in order to project himself with clear and vibrant energy towards a coherent therapeutic style and towards an existential goal that may or may not coincide with his initial choice to become a psychotherapist” (Spagnuolo Lobb 1992, p. 27). In the post-contact phase the student should normally digest and let the new he has learnt become an integrated part of him. He should be proud of himself, his institute, collegees and this professional identity. When the student experiences an unhealed wound from his training, that seems to live on for years as “unfinished business” and as such hinder the persons from a healthy assimilation process after the end of training. When the student has as his personal dynamic a patological introjection, projection and/or retroflection (are shamebound) and this is not delt with in a healthy way during his training, he will be utterly blocked in finalizing his individuation process. Another price of these unfinished Gestalts seems to be a lack of bonding and pride to be a member of the Gestalt community.

**Did shaming have any positive learning outcomes?**

Some statements from my co-researchers illustrates “the lessons learnt”; ”*It is possible I learnt something from this situation; as Konfusius says: Of the wise man I shall learn what to do, of the unwise I shall learn what I am not to do*, ”*I can’t say that shaming situations should to any price be avoided, but they should be consciously be aware, captured and perceived. – And related to*, ”*It is important to talk about authoritarian bindings, hierarchies, because when it comes to the end, to enter into a meeting, making yourself vulnerable – with openness - that is what it’s all about*, ”*In the end, shame is about being consciousness about the significance of shame, and about being conscious of your own power. Because shame is about humility. And if you disown your own shame, you disown your power*” ”*I have learnt to
open and dare to share with me what happens with me in my encounter with my clients”, ”I feel free in my meeting with my clients”, ” – when everything is in the open there is nothing sinister or then we always can clarify, make it clear and straighten up”, ”It is about being vulnerable and open”, ”The most important thing is to be present, to listen and give support, ”I am less inclined to intervene, than I ordinary would have been”, ”It is like being very unpretentious toward what is going to happen in the therapy --- it is the ”finding-out-together” that matters ---”.

All my co-researchers gives voice to some profound and painful learnings from being shamed in their training that I will discuss in the last chapter.

The essence of lessons learned regarding ”positive” outcomes of being shamed in training
The therapist/teacher needs to know of his own shame and the significance of shame in therapy. The more the therapis/teacher trusts the process and avoid getting hooked in his own agenda, ”try to be clever”, or disconnect with the client, the better. The therapis needs to stay open and vunerable to be able to have a ”dialogical encounter” with his client. When shame is activated or induced, the therapist need to relate to it, explore the process and straighten it out together with her client.


7 Conclusions and implications
The essence of the findings in this study is about human vunerability (shame) and the shortcommings in a training system to relate to such human dynamics. These findings seems to have devestating effect on the Self development prosess of some students in more that one way. According to the theory of Self development (Spagnuolo Lobb 992), the student needs to go through all the modalites in the contact cycle to really become an ”artist” of therapy in his/her own right. It is also assumed that personal blockings combined with hindrances in the learning process will not lead to the desired result. This study seems to validate the theory on all accounts. The findings show us that students with a shamebound system might be utterly shamed and thereby blocked in their growth process if the training system is unable to provide a safe and trustful environment. It seems unlikely that students who come to training in one way or the other,
not have shame, wounds and vulnerability as personal themes. On the contrary, we might assume that students of psychotherapy are overrepresented with these characteristics compared with the general population. I have not found any proof of this assumption, but my own experience is that students of Gestalt often have started their therapeutic "career" as clients. And it may be true that being traumatized in one way or the other is one of various conditions to be a good therapist. But is not enough. The student therapist needs help to work with her unhealthy contact mechanism in a way that is respectful, contactful and fosters growth. This study gives examples of the opposite. Even if the results from this phenomenological study can’t be generalized, the findings indicates a gap between the theory of Gestalt and how it is "lived" in training of Gestalt therapists. We are aware of the limitations of using a theoretical model as an analytical tool for "lived life" experiences. A theory is a theory is a theory. And still, to quote Curt Lewin (Schellenberg 1978, p.65); "nothing is as practical as a good theory". We have also to bear in mind that this study does not give a wholistic picture of the totality of these training programs. Still it remains a fact that these co-researchers, in different degrees, have experienced to be severely shamed during their training.

We can ask ourselves: What are the paradoxes, dilemmas and challenges in the field of Gestalt training according to the results of this study?

Under which training "paradigme" do Gestalt become a "lived theory" in training of therapists? It is not possible within the format of this dissertation to give a complete answer to these questions. And I don’t think it either possible or desirable to find the "truth" about "what fits for all everywhere". Still I like to focus on some crucial questions that might stimulate further research and debate about the quality of training. Quality in psychotherapy training means to me; To fulfill or exceed the students needs and expectations in a wholistic way and with high ethical standards (Tofte 1993 and 1995).

What are the paradoxes that emerged through this study?

Gestalt is based on a humanistic, phenomenological therapeutic healing philosophy. In a training setting the Gestalt philosophy needs to be operationalized in a way that is congruent with its principles. The training represents the students "frame of reference" to what Gestalt is and what it is not. When students are exposed to experiments, interventions and a culture that they experience as shaming and humiliating, the training system demonstrates a style of therapy that is not in accordance with its philosophy (Yontef 2000). We might ask if a "paradoxical intervention" might be desirable? Might it be so that the experience of
being shamed is the best way to give the student a better understanding, empathy and competence to deal with her clients?

In the “older days” of Gestalt we have seen demonstrations of Guru-style therapies that consciously offended their clients to provoke new insights. Yontef (ibid. p. 39) argues that “there has been an ongoing conflict in gestalt therapy, practice, and training between frustrating people to force them into rugged independence and self-reliance and the provision of the support by the environment”.

As Gestalt has developed through the years, I think few will associate themselves with this therapeutic style. Still, Shaw (2000) refers in his doctoral thesis of “guru-style” therapists where the trainers were invested with power, and they were expected to have access to powerful knowledge and not to be challenged. This attitude seems to foster dogmatic, ”fixed” and ”rights” ways of doing therapy. This may lead to a training culture that lacks the flexibility, openness and ”contact-in-the-moment” that is highly valued in the theory of Gestalt. The result of a experiential training ”hegemony” (Shaw 2000) might also be that the training system itself becomes stuck in its own pathalogical confluence (this is the way we do it), pathalogical introjects (I am the best), its pathalogical projections (Pschoanalytic theraphy is bad) or in its own egotism (Don’t interfere with my truth). We know that when a system becomes ”frozen”, it is stuck with no possibility to interact with its environment in a creative and adjustable way (Schein 1987). The system may become a neurotic power system rather than a developmental arena for human growth. It is my belief that a training system that has lost its ability to grow and to question its own theory, methods and practice (Shaw 2000), will most certainly be shameinducing and block their students from a healthy developmental process. Such training systems is not in accordance with he concept of Gestalt, as I see it. On the contrary we can see that the concept of “dialogical encounter” and likewise are given presendence to the ”old ways” (Evans 1994, Jacobs 1989, Hycner and Jacobs 1995, Shaw 2000). I can therefore see no argument to use a shameinducing and/or any other humiliating or confrontive intervention to provoke the students awareness, understanding and ability to become competent therapists.

Future research needs to be done in the area of neuroses in the training system. We need to know more about power issues (Shaw 2000); how power is exercised and how people learn to be helpless in such systems (Goetz and Dweck 1980). A recent debate in the British Gestalt Journal (Vol. 9 No.1) reveals that there are no common agreement to whether the training of therapists should be done in an inductive or a
deductive way. This is also a matter of power: who is to decide what and how students shall learn? Yontef (2000) argues that it is time to make room for disagreement by all parties in the training setting so that “we respect and honour the validity of realities different from the trainer’s, accepting that the change in therapy is by patient and therapist; and the desirability of mutual support” (ibid p. 39).

What dilemmas has emerged through this study?
It seems to be inevitable to avoid shaming in training or in therapy. The question is rather: how do we deal with this phenomenon? What becomes evident in this study is that students might have to split to be able to cope with a training culture that is inconcequent and also incongruent with it’s own philosophy. When students are told to be genuine and themselves and then are juggled, interpreted or shamed when they are spontaneous and express themselves freely, will get confused, utterly shamed and isolate themselves.

How might a training system deal with shame in a way that don’t creates such dilemmas?
First of all it seems to be important that the system deals with its own dynamics. That the leaders are willing to admit, acknowledge and understand their own vulnerability, fears and shame. Admit that training systems, as well as human beings, have shortcomings, dysfunctionalities and other humane characteristics. The faculty in a training system needs to be humble to who they are and what they do. They need to know their boundaries and shadow sides and how they communicate these to the students. In acknowledging such matters, the system does not need to project its introjects to their students in a shameinducing way. The teachers ability to dialog, to respond and relate to the shamed student in an humane and honest way, seems to make a difference to the learning experience. This calls for a well trained staff that know themselves, their own patterns of contacting and about the vulnerability of their students. They need to know the model of Self development and adjust their training according to where the students are in their growth process. The training staff needs be confident and open to meet students in their different modalities of growth.

Another dilemma that has emerged through this study is how students are supposed to reveal their personal biography and personal dynamics in the training setting. The trainer is supposed first of all to facilitate a learning environment by teaching theory, supervise and by experiential work. The trainers also seem to do personal therapy in the class setting. This gives the students a possibility to work on their
personal themes and also to have a demonstration of how therapy is done. I have myself experienced such sessions as learningful and personally rewarding. But I have also had experiences of personal work-sessions that have been contrary. The setting in itself, with co-students as "watchers" might be provoking to many people, especially to shamebound persons. In my study the co-researchers tells of incidents of shameattacks that have accumulated due to the feeling of "being naked", of "making a fool of oneself" in front of an "audience". Even if such personal work is voluntary, there seems to be an implisitt expectation that this is something "you should do". Shaw (2000) tells of how he experienced that to be client in the large group was like an initiation ritual that was part of the "package" to become a fully accepted commerade. Such rituals and implisitt norms and expectations might undergrave a healty and creative adjustment based on the students needs and authenticity.

**Another dillemma is the double function of the teacher/trainer.**

If the trainer-therapist is given the authority to evaluate the student in each year of the training, s/he is then set in a postion where s/he are supposed to split between the function of being "the good mother/father-figure" as therapist for the students and taking the role of the "judge". Even if the evaluation usually is done by several teachers in a team, the students know that there are a possiblity of being excluded from the program on the basis of their teachers evaluations. As the evaluation sometimes seem to be based more on subjective factors than on objective criteeria, the students will have to live in a constant uncertainty about their further career in the training system. Students know that former students have been stopped from continuing their training. No-one is permitted to know the reasons, as confidentialty prohibits the training system to publish anything about personal evaluation matters. This fact gives space for many fantasies, myths and projections about unfair and unjust evaluation. To the shamebound person such uncertainties can inhibit them from a healthy growth process, as much as they will "hide" more from exposing their inner feelings and neurotic pattern of retroflection. More research and debate seems to be needed in the area of the teachers functions in such a program and how evaluation can be done in a just and understandable way.

**One of my questions in this study was: how does a theory become alive – become a "lived theory"?**

How can the "Bible of Gestalt" become more than a written text in training and therapy? We have to get a clearer understanding of the theoretical and practical validity of the original application of Gestalt Therapy. We need to teach Gestalt Therapy that transmit the profound value that it gives to human relationality and to a spontaneous and functional personal growt process where the organism can reach out towards its goal.
(Spagnuolo Lobb 1992). The quality of a training program rests on the quality of trainers, students and the training system. All factors are part of the training field and needs to be planned, executed and evaluated continuously by all parties as a joint venture. This study indicates that the trainers/teachers needs to be more trained in the area of shame and how to deal with their own vulnerability.

**Concluding remarks**

Two of the criteria for assessment of this Master dissertation has not yet been answered:

1. What was the personal learning outcomes of working with this research?
2. How is my ability to be self-critical in assessing the contribution made to learning by this dissertation?

**What are my personal learning outcomes of this research?**

First of all this study has taught me more about the vulnerability of humans. As teacher-trainer-therapist I now know better how shame is activated. I have been taught by my co-researchers how important it is to know my own shadow/shame/vulnerability and be more careful with my interventions. I have also learned more about how important it is to really stay in contact in the-here-and-now with my whole presence when shame has been triggered. I have learned more about how a system can activate shame by not being able to confirm the uniqueness of each individual person. This has made me more aware of the subtle mechanism of power and manipulation in relationships and systems.

I also have learned that a single interview about an essential theme, can activate a lot of personal stuff in the person interviewed. This discovery calls for being careful whom to ask to contribute in a phenomenology. High standards as to the ethics and professionalism in executing interviews have to be required. There also needs to be plenty of time for postcontact communication with co-researchers.

**How do I assess my research in regard to its learning?**

To answer this question I have to take a metaperspective on my own research process and the results of the study. In my point of view this research represents a contribution to our understanding of the core principles of Gestalt Therapy and its practical implications in training of therapists. I have used a phenomenology to get a "thick description" from four therapists/students and found the methodology well suited to explore the theme of shaming. The population I choose gave substantial contributions, and the collection of data was carried out according to well agreed qualitative research requirements. The analysis
of data was critical to answer my research question. I used my professional therapeutic experience, theoretical knowledge and intuition to analyse data in a wholistic and contextual way.

I have reported the findings according to the research question. In the discussion of results I have used relevant litterature and my own experience to reason my arguments for an alternative non-shaming praxis in training of therapists. Only my co-researchers can tell if the results are valid as to their own experience. I have in the conclusive chapter pointed to some paradoxes, dilemmas and questions raised by the results of this study. I have pointed to the limitations of this study. The results are just valid as a ”local theory” and can not be generalized without further research on a representative population. Still, I will propose that the data about shaming revealed in this study may be valuable in questioning the principles, methods and practice of Gestalt training. As such, my study might represent a significant contribution to further our knowledge of Gestalt therapy.

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List of appendixes

1. Rumi: The Guest House
2. Information to co-researchers
3. Interviewguide
4. Interview with myself
5. Letter to co-researchers
6. Table 1: Statements of shame
Appendix 1:

**The guest house**

This being human is a guest house
Every morning new arrival

A joy, a depression, a meanness
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they’re a crowd of sorrows
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture
still, treat each guest honorably
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark though, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

(Rumi 1207- 1273)

Appendix 2: Information to co-researchers

Bjørg Tofte
10.11.00

Informasjon til mine med-forskere

Jeg inviterer deg med dette til å delta i min studie av skam under trening av gestaltterapeuter. Resultatet av studien skal munne ut i en hovedoppgave til Master Degree i Gestaltpsykoterapi ved Universitetet i Derby.

Hensikten med denne studien er å beskrive hva som ligger i begrepet skam, hvordan det oppleves å bli skammet, og hvilken forståelse og mening som kan utledes av slike opplevelser.


Intervjuet vil ta en time og bli tatt opp på lydbånd. Jeg vil deretter skrive ut intervjuet og be deg lese det for å se om du har kommentarer eller rettelser. Jeg vil deretter analysere og systematisere de opplysningene jeg har fått av deg og mine to andre medforskere og se dem i lys av teori.

Din deltakelse i denne studien er svært verdifull for meg. Jeg er også opptatt av at du skal oppleve det meningsfullt å være med som forsker på dette prosjektet. Hvis du imidlertid skulle oppleve at det ikke gir
noen mening å delta eller av andre grunner ikke skulle ønske å fortsette å delta, er du fri til på et hvert tidspunkt å trekke deg.

For at du skal få en bedre forståelse av dette forskningsprosjektet, legger jeg ved det essayet som jeg har skrevet om prosjektet. Jeg oppfordrer deg til å komme med spørsmål, kommentarer og forslag til forbedringer. Jeg foreslår at vi snakker sammen en gang om opplegget for dette prosjektet før intervjuet, slik at vi er sikret felles oppfatninger om hensikten og opplegget.

Vennlig hilsen

Bjørg Tofte

**Appendix 3: Interview-guide**

**Intervjугuide**

1. Hva forbinder du med ordet skam? Hva vil du si er det motsatte av skam slik du opplever det?


3. Hvilken mening eller hvilken forklaring (forståelse) hadde du den gang av situasjonen?

4. Hvilken mening, forklaring (forståelse) har du av denne situasjonen i dag?

5. Hvilke tanker har du om hva denne hendelsen har betydd for deg som terapeut?

6. Har du noe du vil legge til utover det du har fortalt meg nå, som du mener kan utdype fortåelsen av skamming i utdanning av gestalterapeuter?
Appendix 4: Interview with myself

Intervjuguide prøvd ut på intervju med meg selv 27.10.2000

1 Hva forbinder du med ordet skam?
Jeg forbinder det med en sterk fortvilelse og smerte. Det er som om jeg forsvinner fra jordens overflate og ikke finnes til. Jeg føler meg totalt forlatt og fylt av negative budskap om meg selv – som at jeg er helt håpløs, jeg har gjort noe som er uoppretlig galt, det er min skyld at det som skjer er hendt og jeg har ingen rettssikkerhet – annet enn å forsvinne fra situasjonen og inn i mitt eget redselskabinett. Jeg er helt fylt av denne skamfullhet som består av angst, smerte og fortvilelse.

2 Hva vil du si er det motsatte av skam slik du opplever det?


De neste dagene av kurset bare gråter jeg og er helt sikker på at jeg er total mislykket både som menneske og terapeut. Jeg føler meg skamfull overfor de andre kollegene og klarer heller ikke å ta noe særlig kontakt med dem. Denne episoden har fulgt meg siden som en svært traumatisk opplevelse. Jeg har ikke villet ta kontakt med disse lærerne siden, selv om de flere ganger har forsøkt å ta kontakt med meg.

4 Hvilken mening eller hvilken forklaring (forståelse) hadde du den gang av situasjonen?

erkjennelse den gangen som kunne hjelpe meg å forstå min reaksjon annet enn som at jeg var totalt håpløs. Jeg fikk heller ingen hjelp til å forstå min reaksjon fra mine lærere, og jeg trodde heller ikke den gang at jeg hadde krav på hjelp fra dem. Jeg opplevde at de trakk seg tilbake og gjorde ikke noe forsøk på å gjenopprette kontakten under kurset.

5  Hva fortalte denne situasjonen deg om trening i gestaltterapi?
Jeg opplevde at lærerne var de som satt på sannheten om hva som var de riktige og beste metoder i trening av psykoterapeuter. Jeg opplevde ingen form for ydmykhet eller nysjerrighet fra deres side når det gjaldt denne episoden og min situasjon. Jeg antok den gangen at de visste hva som var best og når de ikke strakk ut noen hånd for å hjelpe meg, fikk jeg en forståelse av at trening av terapeuter innebærer at du må ”stå” i smerten. En kollega sa det slik: ”Du må forstå at når lærerne gjør slik, så er det fordi de stoler på at vi tåler det”. Jeg hadde på det tidspunktet en forståelse av at lærerne var autoriteter og at jeg var lærersvenn, et typisk hierarkisk forhold. Ettersom lærene også så ut til å leve under det samme paradigm, var det ingen vei ut av situasjonen. At jeg ble vettskremt og ikke hadde annet enn å regredere, sette inn mitt forsvaret mot ytterligere invadering, var ikke klart for min bevissthet den gangen. Jeg trodde jeg var feilen og skammet meg dypt over meg selv.

6  Hvilken mening, forklaring (forståelse)har du av denne episoden i dag?
Jeg arbeidet videre med denne episoden i min personlige terapi og fikk etter hvert en forståelse for at det som hendte ikke bare hadde med meg å gjøre, men også med at mine lærere ikke var i stand til å møte meg der jeg var. Det tok meg lang tid å akseptere at det ikke var noe galt med meg, men at det var noe galt med selve situasjonen, kommunikasjonen og mitt møte med mine lærere. Jeg har også tenkt på hvor feil det var for meg å sitte ellom to lærere uten å ha øyekontakt med noen av dem. Mine frenetiske spørsmål om de så meg, tror jeg kunne i at jeg ikke opplevde å ha kontakt med dem. For meg er det helt vesentlig å ha øyekontakt for å oppleve en sann menneskelig kontakt.

Da jeg i 1999 møtte Andy Fookes og fikk innføring i skammens vesen, gikk det et lys opp for meg. Jeg innså at jeg var en person med et skambasert system, dvs. hadde en tidlig såring som var eksistensielt betinget. Denne episoden ble et eksempel på retruaumatisering. Det forklarte ikke bare hvordan jeg hadde reagert i denne situasjonen, men i mange andre situasjoner hvor jeg hadde følt meg avvist eller var blitt truet av andres oppfatninger og tolkninger av meg.


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7 Har du lært noe av denne hendelsen som du har hatt nytte av som gestaltterapeut?

8 Har du noe du vil legge til utover det du har fortalt meg nå, som du mener kan utdype fortåelsen av skamming i utdanning av gestalterapeuter?
Mitt viktigste anliggende nå er å få satt skam på dagsorden i trening av psykoterapeuter, slik at vi lærer hvordan vi skal takle vår egne og andres skam på en ydmyk og respektfull måte i utdanning og terapi. Lærere må lære og erkjenne sin egen skam, vite hva det innebærer og kunne opptre slik at de ikke unødig skammer sine studenter.

Det andre jeg er opptatt av er dilemmaet som oppstår ved at lærere skal lære studenter om det likeverdige møte, også skal vurdere studentene. Dette dilemmaet er ikke løst tilfredsstillende. Det første forutsetter at lærere er villig til selv å stille seg sårbare og lærevillige i møte med sine studenter og ikke som enkelte lærere opphøye seg til guruer som kan og vet det meste. Lærere må undersøke og bevisstgjøre seg hvordan deres innebygde for-ståelser av å herske og underordne seg, påvirker deres relasjoner med studenter. Alle intervensjoner er politiske, i den forstand at de direkte eller indirekte kan innebære bruk av makt. Det innebærer at lærere ikke bare vet hvordan de kan bygge opp og holde fast på en likeverdig relasjon med sine studenter, men at de har en erkjennelse av hvordan deres egne historier, myter og antagelser virker inn på deres egne reaksjonsmønstre.

Å skape likeverdige relasjoner mellom studenter og lærere betyr også at det er etablert et system som innebærer et dialectisk og likeverdig forhold. Jeg mener vi må finne måter å organisere utdanning på som blir en eksemplarisk modell på det likeverdige møte mellom terapeuter og klienter.
Appendix 5: Letter to my co-researchers after the interview

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Kjære medforsker


Jeg ønsker å få en så fyldig og nyansert beskrivelse som mulig av det som er mitt forskningstema;

En fenomenologisk studie av hva som kjennetegner gestaltterapeut-studenters opplevelse og forståelse av å bli skammet av sine lærere

Har du mer å legge til når det gjelder:

- Spesielle kroppslige og følelsesmessige opplevelser ved skamming?
- Hvordan disse skammende opplevelsene fikk konsekvenser for deg?
• Hvilke forandringer disse hendelsene av skamming førte til for deg?
• Hvordan du opplevde lærere som gjorde det motsatte av å skamme deg?


Jeg takker deg for at du bruker av din tid og erfaring til dette forskningsprosjektet. Jeg kommer tilbake senere og spør deg om du vil se på om min analyse av intervjuet ditt stemmer med dine opplevelser og oppfatninger.

Det er fint hvis du kan sende meg kommentarer innen 5 februar.

Vennlig hilsen Bjørg

Appendix 6 : Table 1: Statments of shame

1. En fysisk tilstand – stiv I magen og varm I kinnene
2. Opplever å ha sagt eller gjort noe feil
3. Dumma meg ut
4. At jeg får en tilbakemelding fra et annet menneske jeg fortolker som at jeg har gjort en feil
5. At jeg opplever det som en type avvisning
6. Føler ubehag
7. En situasjon jeg vil vekk fra
8. Gjort noe som ikke er sosialt akseptabelt
9. Noe man ikke snakker om
10. Jeg får skyldfølelse
11. Opplever at det er min feil
12. Slå seg selv I hodet
13. Bli retroflektiv
14. En ugen følelse som setter seg I ryggraden min
15. Har ikke bakkekontakt
16. Har lyst til å gå og gjemme meg
17. Vi skammer oss for at vi skammer oss
18. Går og skammer seg og vil ikke at noen skal finne meg
19. Følelsene blir selvutslettende
20. Jeg blir borte I meg selv
21. Tung og trist I kroppen
22. Akkurat som jeg krymper
23. Føler meg mindre og mindre
24. Akkurat som en liten depresjon
25. Når jeg forlanger litt mer enn jeg behøver – krever litt ekstra
26. Skammekrok
27. Når mor sa at jeg måtte gå og skamme meg når jeg hadde gjort noe hun ikke likte
28. Frykt
Følelse av sorg
Lei meg og litt redd
Lav selvfølelse
Å ha skamattak innebærer at man har angst, svetter og ulike kroppssymptom
Ikke våge å ta plass og hevde seg selv
Tror man er dårlig – dårligere enn andre
Arroganse og gradiositet


Appendix 7: Table 2: Statments of the opposite of shame

1. Å være fri i relasjon til seg selv
2. Å være fri i forhold til andre mennesker
3. Å kunne hevde seg
4. Å kunne argumentere uten å komme i affekt
5. Å kjenne at jeg kan være den jeg er og bli møtt i det
6. Handler om å verdsette seg selv
7. Å ikke sette seg selv ned
8. Glede
9. At jeg merker at det er kontakt med den jeg snakker med og at det oppleves gledesflytt
10. Alle de positive tingene
11. Alt som tenkes rundt det å være riktig
12. Nesten sånn å bli barett litt frem, løftet litt opp, fløyet litt frem
13. Tørre å ikke gå og gjemme seg
14. Tørre å være det og virkelig kjenne den (skammen)
