

## Educator Examines “Coming Out” Process, Sexual Fluidity In College Students

*Curriculum Should Be Used,  
She Says, to “Destabilize Heterosexuality”*

The process of coming out of the closet in a college setting is examined by Mary Ann Rasmussen, writing in the Spring, 2004 issue of *Theory Into Practice*, published by the College of Education at Ohio State University.

Rasmussen examines the views of various advocates of coming out in college, including Harbeck’s *Coming Out of the Classroom Closet* (1992), Sears and Williams’ book, *Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work*. Sears and Williams refer to closeted gay professors as “cowering, cowardly” individuals for failing in their duty to announce their orientation to students.

### **On Sexual Fluidity**

Rasmussen reviews the work of Jonathan G. Silin in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. In Silin’s essay, “Teaching As A Gay Man,” he states that he tells stories to his students about his sexual identity and that these “change over time and are transformed by the times.”

Rasmussen believes that Silin’s stories may encourage students to consider that sexual identity isn’t stagnant and is not imposed upon them. In fact, sexual identity will “change over time, and students are involved in negotiating these changes.”

In the same issue of *GLQ*, writer Didi Mahiha Khayatt states that coming out and making a declaration of one’s sexual identity may be inadvisable because one’s identity is “in flux.” Khayatt urges gay teachers to be less concerned about self-identifying to their students as gay, but to introduce erotic texts into the curriculum that will help students grapple with their own sexual identities.

Rasmussen concludes by reaffirming her belief that examining gay themes in class is important because it has the “value of destabilizing heterosexuality” through curriculum content.”