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Psychiatrist retracts controversial study that claimed gay men and women can be turned heterosexual by therapy

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In 2001 U.S psychiatrist Robert Spitzer conducted a study that claimed gay men and women could be turned straight through psychotherapy.

He has now retracted the highly controversial view.

Spitzer told American Prospect: 'In retrospect, I have to admit I think the critiques are largely correct. The findings can be considered evidence for what those who have undergone ex-gay therapy say about it, but nothing more.'



Retraction: Dr Robert Spitzer has said the critics were right about his infamous 2001 study on homosexuality

Wayne Besen, author of *Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth*, told The Huffington Post: 'Dr Spitzer's repudiation of his 2001 study is an earthquake that severely undermines the validity of "ex-gay" programs.

'Spitzer just kicked out the final leg from the stool on which the proponents of "ex-gay" therapy based their already shaky claims of success.'

The study claimed that of 200 homosexuals and lesbians given the treatment, 78 per cent of males and 95 per cent of females reported a change in their sexuality.

The findings reignited the debate over what determines sexuality, as they contradicted the widespread view

that it is 'hardwired' at birth.

Gay rights groups were outraged by the study, claiming it was flawed and treated homosexuality as an illness.



The study was carried out at Columbia University in New York

However, it was given more credence by the pedigree of Spitzer. He is the man who helped have homosexuality removed from the American Psychiatric Association's list of mental illnesses in 1973.

He insisted his study was valid and said some gays 'bothered' by their homosexuality wanted to be heterosexual and had a right to such treatment.

He said at the time: 'The current, politically correct view is that this therapy never works. I think it doesn't work a lot of the time, but in some people it does.'

'In some of the subjects, the reports of change in sexual orientation were substantial, credible and believable.'

Professor Spitzer's study involved 143 gay men and 57 lesbians who volunteered to have 'reparative therapy' with religious organisations.

'This is dangerous, sinister nonsense,' said Stonewall

This involved 'self-control' psychological techniques such as making greater efforts to mix socially with straight men and women in non- sexual settings, and avoiding 'temptation'.

Researchers asked the volunteers to describe their attraction to people of the same sex, their sexual desires and behaviour in the year before beginning therapy and then at the end of it.

Professor Spitzer and his team at Columbia University, in New York, found most participants had become either wholly or predominantly heterosexual, with women more likely to have changed than men.

The findings, published in the U.S. journal the Archives of Sexual Behaviour, were dismissed by the gay rights group Stonewall.

'This is dangerous, sinister nonsense - there's no evidence gay people can be "cured" as if it's some kind of illness,' declared a spokesman at the time.

'It would be interesting to see research on whether straight people can be made to be gay.'

Peter Tatchell, of gay activists Outrage!, said: 'Everyone I have spoken to who has been through this so-called treatment says it has not only failed to convert them to heterosexuality but has caused them immense psychological and emotional harm.'

Critics of Professor Spitzer said the study involved only individuals known to view sexuality change as 'both possible and desirable'.

Spitzer, who is now 79 and suffers from Parkinson's disease, asked American Prospect to print the retraction 'so I don't have to worry about it', according to the New York Daily News.

Find this story at www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2128750/Robert-Spitzer-retracts-study-claiming-homosexuals-turned-straight.html

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