

# **Dr. Robert L. Spitzer's Letter to Dr. Ken Zucker**

---

**Several months ago I told you that because of my revised view of my 2001 study of reparative therapy changing sexual orientation, I was considering writing something that would acknowledge that I now judged the major critiques of the study as largely correct. After discussing my revised view of the study with Gabriel Arana, a reporter for *American Prospect*, and with Malcolm Ritter, an Associated Press science writer, I decided that I had to make public my current thinking about the study. Here it is.**

**Basic Research Question. From the beginning it was: “can some version of reparative therapy enable individuals to change their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual?” Realizing that the study design made it impossible to answer this question, I suggested that the study could be viewed as answering the question, “how do individuals undergoing**

**reparative therapy describe changes in sexual orientation?” – a not very interesting question.**

**The Fatal Flaw in the Study – There was no way to judge the credibility of subject reports of change in sexual orientation. I offered several (unconvincing) reasons why it was reasonable to assume that the subject’s reports of change were credible and not self-deception or outright lying. But the simple fact is that there was no way to determine if the subject’s accounts of change were valid.**

**I believe I owe the gay community an apology for my study making unproven claims of the efficacy of reparative therapy. I also apologize to any gay person who wasted time and energy undergoing some form of reparative therapy because they believed that I had proven that reparative therapy works with some “highly motivated” individuals.**

**Robert Spitzer. M.D.  
Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry,  
Columbia University**