

## Guttman Scale Analysis Confirms the Effectiveness of Reorientation Therapy in Spitzer's Study

by A. Dean Byrd, Ph.D., M.B.A., M.P.H.

*"The orderly, law-like pattern of changes....observed in Spitzer's study is strong evidence that reparative therapy can assist individuals in changing their homosexual orientation to a heterosexual orientation."*

—Scott L. Hershberger, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, California State University, Long Beach

The skeptics of Spitzer's study continue to rail against his research.

As a self-identified "secular humanist, atheist Jew" who remains an outspoken supporter of gay rights, Spitzer might have been expected to have been spared some of the gay community's ire. However, a recent issue of the *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy* was entirely devoted to an attempt to discredit his recent research.

The arguments presented in this gay-activist journal do not address the merits of the Spitzer study, which is an all-too-common approach in academia in lieu of constructive criticism. Rather, the activists in this journal typically offer the discarded essentialist theory of homosexuality as the basis for their criticisms.

LeVay, Hamer, Bailey and Pillard all have conceded that the biological argument has failed. The status of the essentialist (biological) research on homosexuality was best expressed by LeVay, who noted:

"It is important to stress what I did not find. I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn't show that gay men are born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay center in the brain."

Then LeVay offers an interesting suggestion why activists may have so widely employed the biological argument. He noted, "...people who think that gays and lesbians are born that way are also more likely to support gay rights."

Psychologist Scott Hershberger, a strong supporter of gay rights, continues to define himself as an essentialist. However, as a mathematical psychologist of some renown, he elected to approach the Spitzer research as a scientist seeking an empirical answer to the question of change.

Using the Guttman scales (this is a scalogram analysis which determines whether or not reported changes occur in a cumulative, orderly fashion), Dr. Hershberger proceeded to determine if the coefficient of reproducibility (CR) was sufficiently high to conclude whether or not such orderly changes had indeed occurred in Spitzer's subjects. An analysis yielded a CR of 0.92, which indicates that the "pattern of change does fit the Guttman scale well." Hershberger noted that the CR of 0.92 is particularly impressive when you consider that it is really an underes-

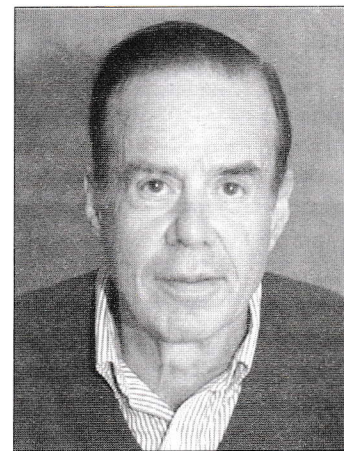
timate of the true value of the real data because of the randomness of the sampling procedure.

As a scientist, Dr. Hershberger offered the following conclusion: *"The orderly, law-like pattern of changes in homosexual sexual behavior, homosexual self-identification, and homosexual attraction and fantasy observed in Spitzer's study is strong evidence that reparative theory can assist individuals in changing their homosexual orientation to a heterosexual orientation."*

He adds,

"Now it is up to those skeptical of reparative therapy to provide comparably strong evidence to support their position. In my opinion, they have yet to do so."

Though the biological argument for homosexuality is not likely to go away any time soon, a number of scientists, many of whom are supportive of the expansion of gay rights—including gay marriage—are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the replacement of science with activism.



Robert Spitzer, M.D.

Friedman and Downey noted, "The assertion that homosexuality is genetic is so reductionistic that it must be dismissed out of hand as a general principle of psychology."

Considering the malleability of homosexuality, Dr. Lisa Diamond concluded, "Sexual identity is far from fixed in women who aren't exclusively heterosexual."

Dr. Kenneth Zucker, the editor of the prestigious journal, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, cites a long list of references from both sides of the ideological spectrum, including many that conclude that sexual orientation is more fluid than fixed.

Perhaps it is time that the caretakers of the national organizations begin to address the ethicality of some of the anti-scientific positions taken by their members, particularly when such positions infringe on patient self-determination and have the potential to cause harm.

Activists who discourage the study of homosexuality for ethical reasons would do well to listen to the exceptional

argument of Friedman and Downey:

"We believe that it is ethical to investigate genetic influences on homosexuality (or other controversial areas such as intelligence, for example) with appropriate ethical scientific guidelines in place...Even the most well-intentioned social policymakers slide down a slippery slope when advocating censorship of scientific investigation."

Psychologist J. Michael Bailey offers the following response to the activists who suggest that studying homosexuality will cause harm to homosexually oriented people: "The belief that studying the causes of homosexuality will eventually harm gay people is highly speculative."

Dr. Hershberger noted the following:

"...I think those researchers/political activists who insist that nothing can be done to moderate homosexual behavior are being disingenuous, as well as extremely intolerant. They are way out of line in trying to throw roadblocks in the way of people who with very good reasons (e.g., religious) want to at least lessen their identification as homosexuals."

"Also," Hershberger adds, "it is problematic to hold this type of research [such as Spitzer's] to a higher standard than others."

Indeed, one could argue that the Spitzer study received an extraordinary amount of scrutiny and mean-spirited commentary, most notably from gay-activist commentators who questioned everything from his study methodology to his personal character.

Dr. Robert Epstein, editor of *Psychology Today*, was the recipient of some of the mean-spiritedness of activists who accused him of being "anti-gay" because of his insistence on the individual's right to self-determination.

Epstein noted that he had been given a harsh introduction to "a dark, intolerant, abusive side of the gay community"; nevertheless, he added, "I will continue to be a strong advocate for gay and lesbian causes, to champion the individual's right to self-determination, and to condemn any attempts by anyone to suppress the truth. So am I anti-gay?"

A number of respected scientists are beginning to resist the intimidations of the activists and are coming out of the academic closets to support science and the search of truth. Many are beginning to agree with Dr. Robert Spitzer, who says:

"Science progresses by asking interesting questions, not by avoiding questions whose answers might not be helpful in achieving a political agenda."

Dr. Hershberger is one of those scientists whose interest in truth rises above political agendas.