

# MAY WE RECOMMEND: SEXUAL ATTRACTION ON A FEAR-AROUSING BRIDGE

*An item that merits an extra look*

*compiled by Stephen Drew, Improbable Research staff*

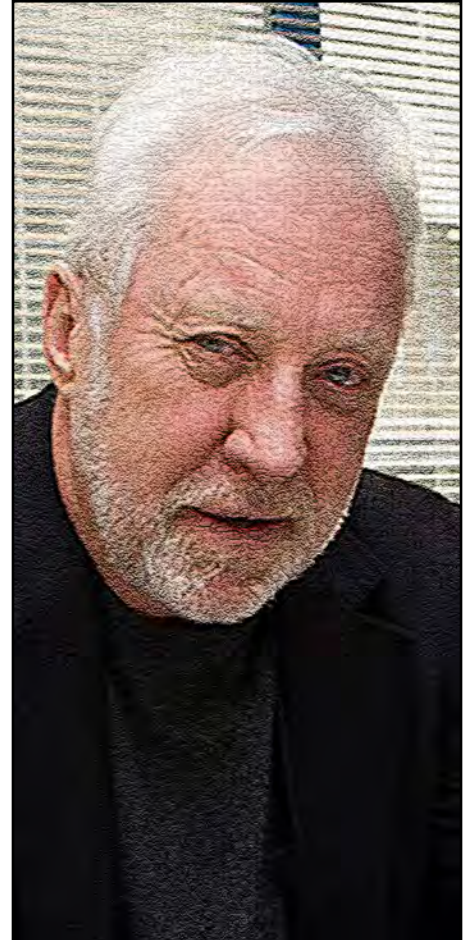
This study of sexual attraction on a fear-arousing bridge compared with sexual attraction on a non-fear-arousing bridge is perhaps the most influential of all studies of sexual attraction on a fear-arousing bridge compared with sexual attraction on a non-fear-arousing bridge.

## Sexual Attraction on a Fear-Arousing Bridge

“Some Evidence for Heightened Sexual Attraction Under Conditions of High Anxiety,” Donald G. Dutton and Arthur P. Aron, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 30, no. 4, October 1974, pp. 510-517.

85 male passersby were contacted either on a fear-arousing suspension bridge or a non-fear-arousing bridge by an attractive female interviewer who asked them to fill out questionnaires containing Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) pictures. Sexual content of stories written by Ss on the fear-arousing bridge and tendency of these Ss to attempt postexperimental contact with the interviewer were both significantly greater. No significant differences between bridges were obtained on either measure for Ss contacted by a male interviewer. A 2nd study using 34 males involved a similar field setting and attempted to clarify findings of Study 1. A 3rd study in a laboratory setting manipulated anticipated shock to 80 male undergraduates and an attractive female confederate independently. Anticipation of own shock but not anticipation of shock to confederate increased sexual imagery scores on the TAT and attraction to the confederate.

*Donald G. Dutton, lead author of the study. Drawing by Nan Swift, Improbable Research staff.*



∨ *Detail from the study.*

SEXUAL ATTRACTION UNDER CONDITIONS OF HIGH ANXIETY					513
TABLE 1					
BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES AND THEMATIC APPERCEPTION TEST IMAGERY SCORES FOR EACH EXPERIMENTAL GROUP					
Interviewer	No. filling in questionnaire	No. accepting phone number	No. phoning	Usable questionnaires	Sexual imagery score
Female					
Control bridge	22/33	16/22	2/16	18	1.41
Experimental bridge	23/33	18/23	9/18	20	2.47
Male					
Control bridge	22/42	6/22	1/6	20	.61
Experimental bridge	23/51	7/23	2/7	20	.80