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## CHAPTER 5

# The Influence of Arousal

### *Why Hot Is Much Hotter Than We Realize*

Ask most twentysomething male college students whether they would ever attempt unprotected sex and they will quickly recite chapter and verse about the risk of dreaded diseases and pregnancy. Ask them in any dispassionate circumstances—while they are doing homework or listening to a lecture—whether they'd enjoy being spanked, or enjoy sex in a threesome with another man, and they'll wince. No way, they'd tell you. Furthermore, they'd narrow their eyes at you and think, What kind of sicko are you anyhow, asking these questions in the first place?

In 2001, while I was visiting Berkeley for the year, my friend, academic hero, and longtime collaborator George Loewenstein and I invited a few bright students to help us understand the degree to which rational, intelligent people can predict how their attitudes will change when they are in an impassioned state. In order to make this study realistic, we needed to measure the participants' responses while they