

## Open Your Class With This Tomorrow

### *The Capilano Suspension Bridge Study and the Two Factor Theory of Emotion*



#### **Directions:**

After students have learned about the two-factor or Schachter-Singer theory of emotion and the original research associated with that theory, introduce students to the less familiar Capilano Suspension Bridge Study. This study provided further evidence of the impact of cognitive appraisal on the experience of emotion. In this study researchers Donald Dutton and Art Aron of the University of British Columbia used the famous Capilano Suspension Bridge, which runs for 450 feet across a steep river valley to conduct research into how the situation impacts how emotion is experienced.

The Capilano Suspension Bridge is a major tourist attraction in Vancouver and pedestrians crossing this structure find themselves 230 feet above the Capilano River on a five-foot wide path made of pliable wood planks attached to elastic wire cables. Individuals crossing this structure will notice that it sways, bounces, and wobbles. For impact you may want to show photos or the video provided below to illustrate the experience of crossing this bridge. In the study, the researchers had an attractive female confederate approach men half-way across the Capilano Bridge and also attractive female confederate approach men half-way across another bridge farther up river that is stable and sturdy. In each case the confederate asked the subjects to take part in a study on scenic views and creativity. At the end of the task the female confederate gave each participant her phone number and told them to call her if they had any questions. The confederate gave out the same fake phone number to every participant, but used the false name Donna while standing on the shaky bridge, and the false name Gloria while standing on the sturdy bridge. Interestingly, "Donna" received four times more calls from participants than Gloria. In fact, over half the men approached on the shaky bridge called the number to follow up. Researchers concluded from this and other variations of this study that the shaky bridge increased physiological arousal and as a consequence created romantic feelings for the confederate. After introducing the study, have students answer the following discussion questions. A link below is provided for a short video that briefly reenacts the original experiment which can be shown prior to utilizing the discussion questions.

Books For Psychology Class

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## **Discussion Questions – Capilano Bridge Study**

1. Why did researchers Dutton and Aron use two different types of bridges?
2. Which group represented the control group and which group represented the experimental group in this experiment?
3. What was the independent variable?
4. What was the dependent variable?
5. Ask students to design an idea for an original experiment to test this same hypothesis without using the bridge?
6. How might this theory be used to explain why individuals who meet on reality television shows fall in love quickly, or why actors working together on action movies fall in love?

## **Video Clips**

The following video illustrates the amazing Capilano Suspension Bridge used in emotion research conducted by the University of British Columbia.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJdkKFNLyOE>

The following video is a reenactment of the original Capilano Suspension Bridge Study which can be used with the open your class today activity on misattribution of arousal.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0aMEkGlcQE>