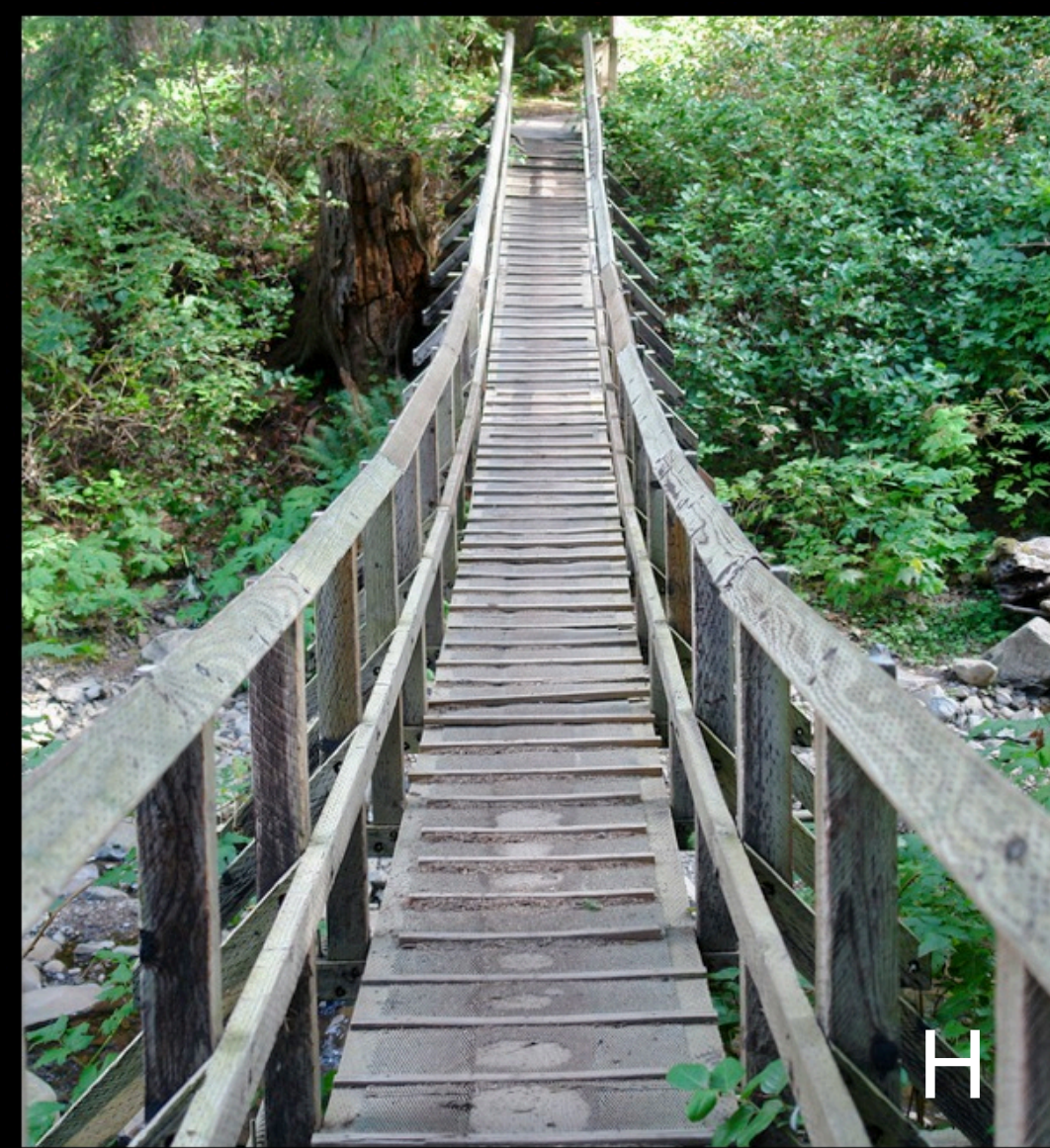
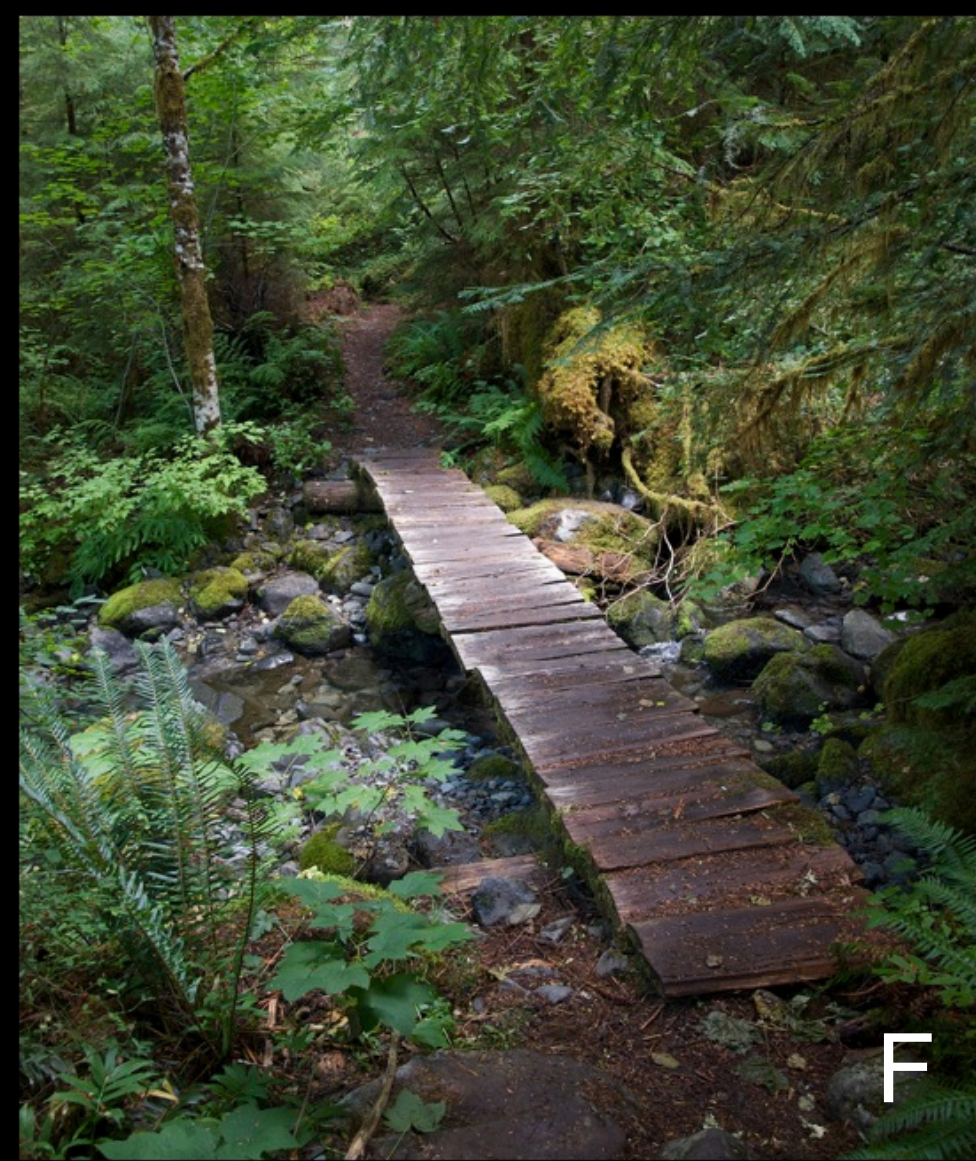
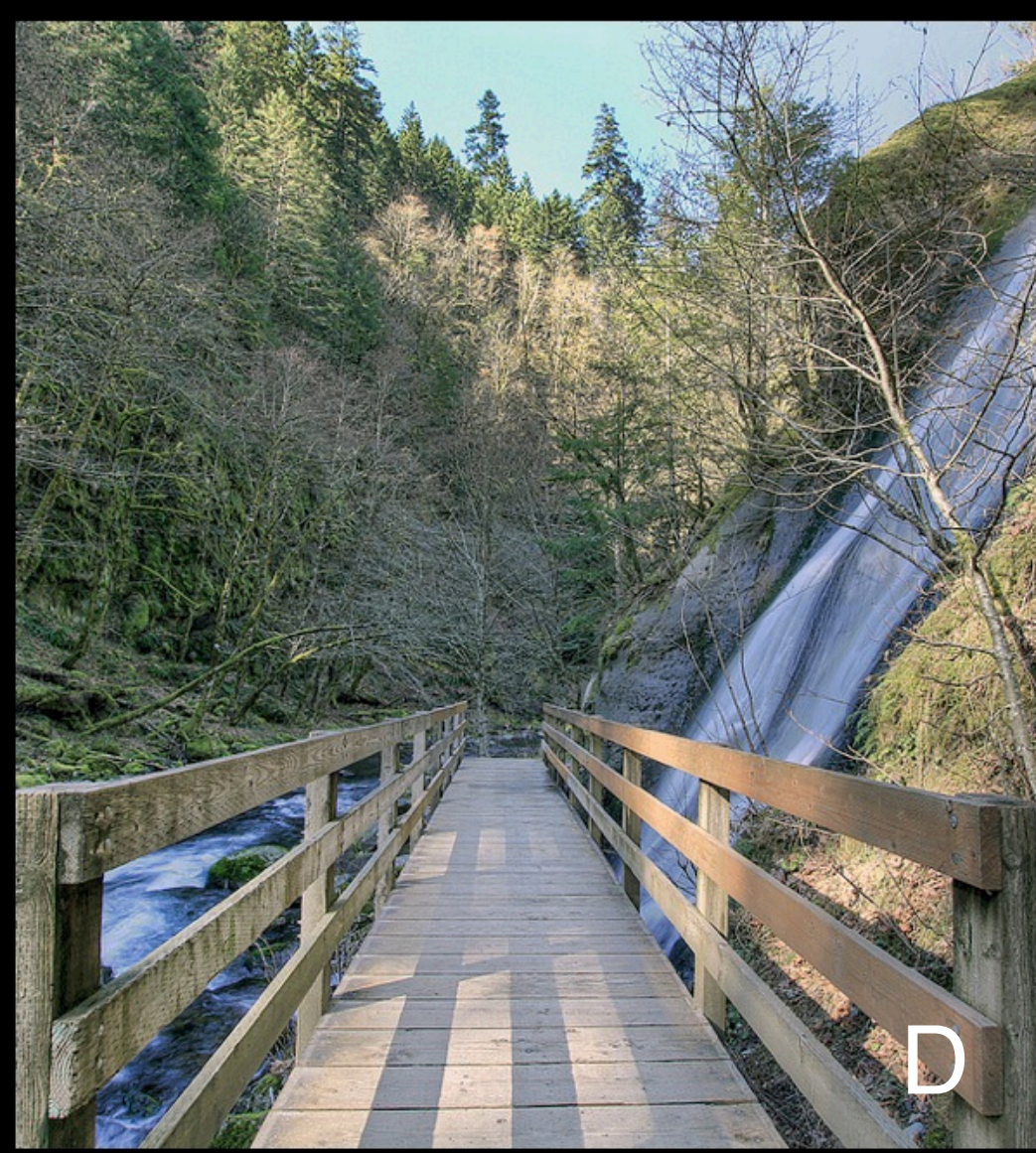
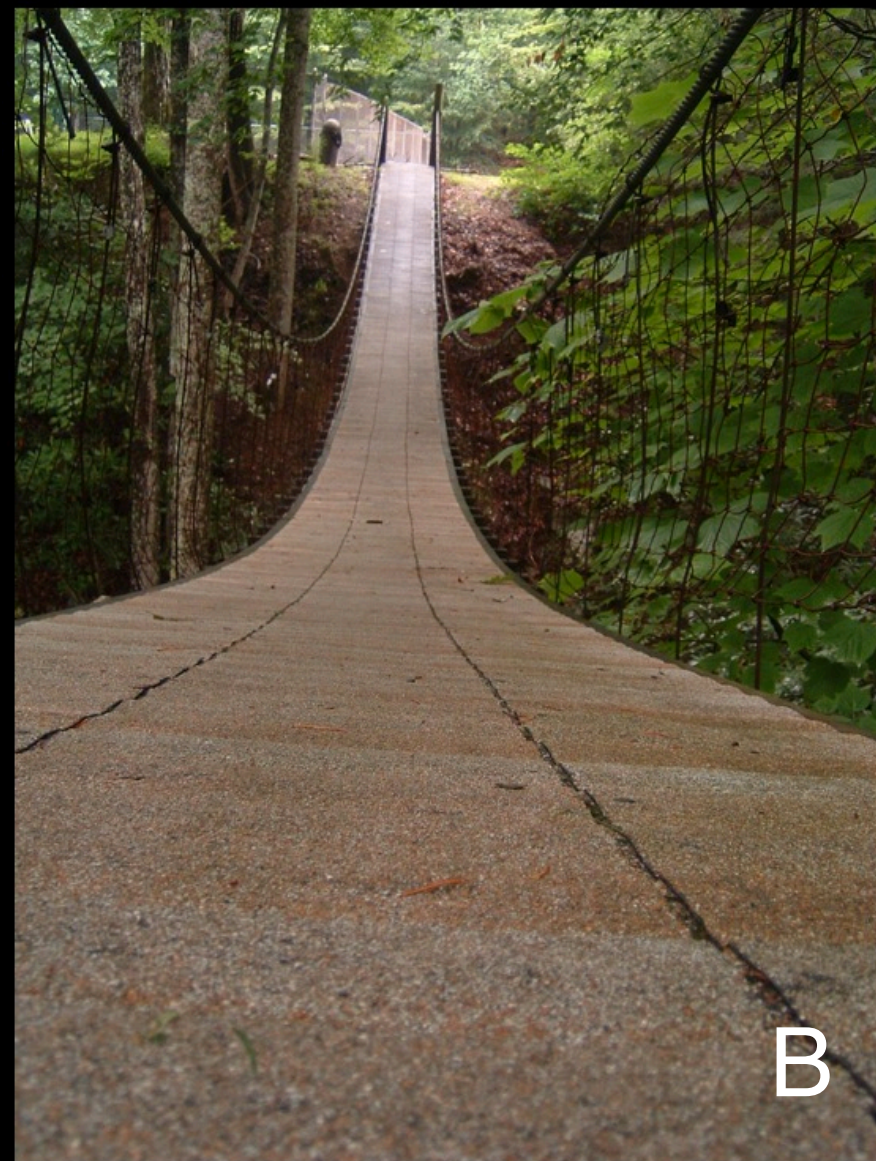


# Bridging the gap between friends: How presence biases distance estimation

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## Question

Will bridges seem shorter when our friends are standing on the other side?

## Background

- Social relationships are commonly described in terms of physical space.<sup>1</sup>
- When drawing simple routes on maps, people draw paths closer to friends than strangers.<sup>2</sup>
- Americans overestimate the distance to cities outside the borders of the United States.<sup>3</sup>
- Inclusive social group words like “we” and “us” facilitate spatial location verification when attached to items shown proximately to a viewer; the opposite pattern is observed for exclusive words like “others” and “them”.<sup>4</sup>
- This work addresses the relationship between social presence and distance estimation.

## Experiment

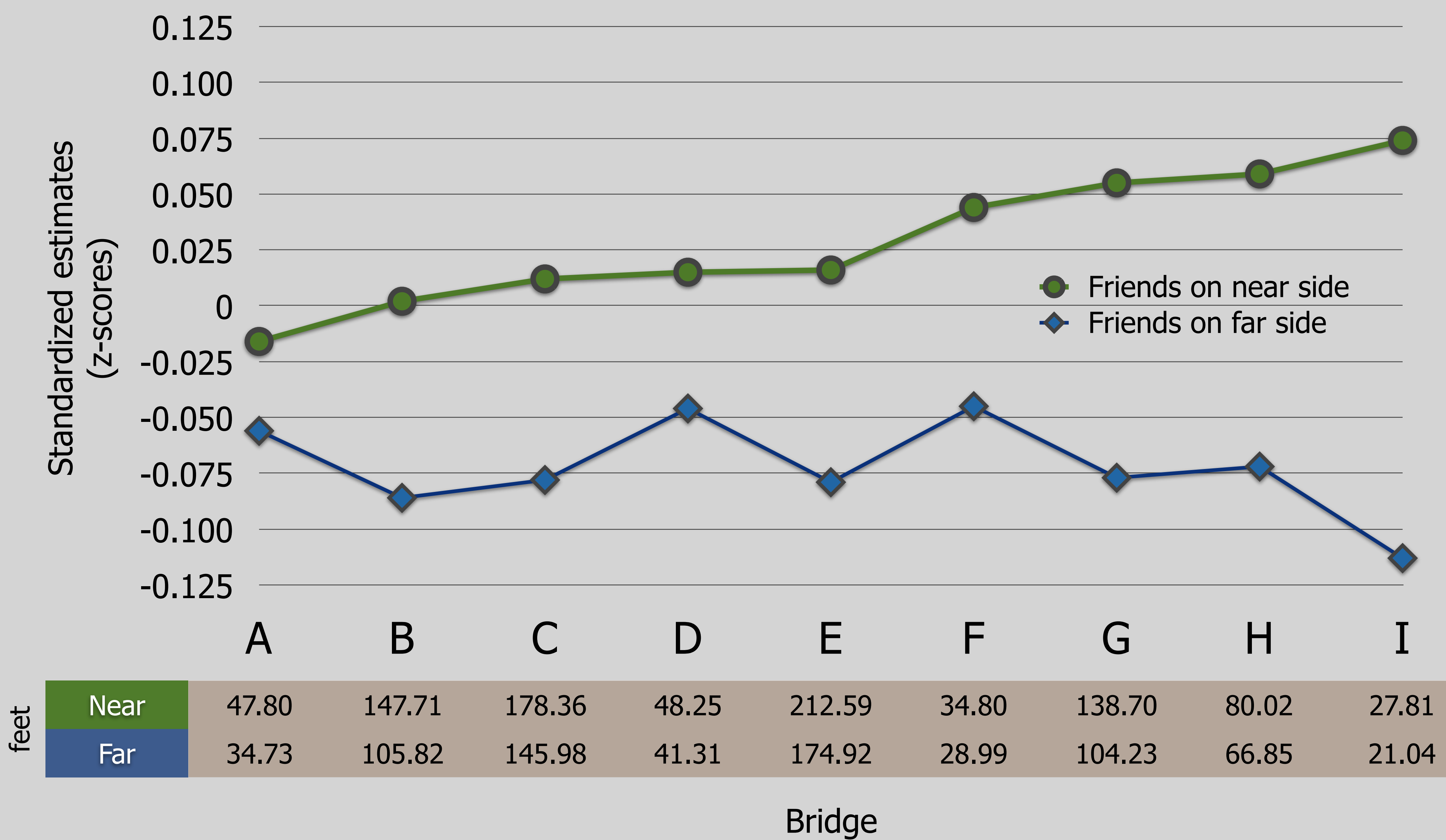
- Participants imagined being a writer for a hiking magazine (see Narrative).
- Some were told their hiking friends were standing on the opposite side of bridges, while others were told their friends were standing on their side of bridges.
- They then estimated lengths of nine randomly ordered bridges (see Bridge Photos).
- Bridge length estimations were standardized within bridge & across conditions.

## How far (in feet) would you have to walk to cross this bridge?

Imagine you are a writer for a hiking magazine.  
Each year you travel the world and hike in different countries.  
Some of the hikes you write about involve crossing different terrain including bridges.  
You like to describe your hikes in great detail, so that others know how difficult the hikes are.  
You prefer to travel with friends, cross bridges one at a time,  
and stay [in front of/behind] them while hiking.

Remember, If you don't know the answer, please do your best, even if it requires you to guess.

Bridges seem slightly shorter when our friends are standing on the other side

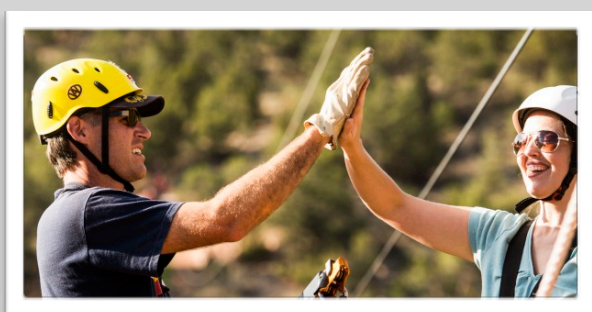


## Results

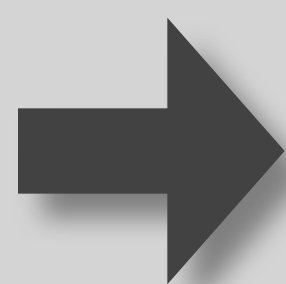
- Bridges are estimated to be reliably shorter when our friends are standing on the other side ( $p=.04$ ).
- Distance estimations did not differ with regard to gender ( $p=.82$ ).

## Conclusion

- These results suggest that the presence of friends can augment how we view our physical environment.
- Results suggest a link between thought about social relationships and physical space.
- People often describe others as “close friends”. These data suggest that this “closeness” can influence the way we perceive our physical environment, in this case, reducing estimations of physical distance to these individuals.
- These results have implications for the understanding of conceptual metaphor as well as how we think about friendship and space.



thought



space

## References

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