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Looking at the Social Dynamics of Viewpoint

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Abstract: Allocentric perspectives are more common when describing spatial scenes when affordances and language facilitate taking such a point of view (Greenwood et al., 2010). People tend to feel "close" to friends and "distant" from strangers in both a metaphoric and physical sense (Matthews & Matlock, 2010). This work examines the relationship between perspective taking and social distance in a simulated school setting.

Participants imagined attending a meeting with two other students: Mary and John. John's friendship with the participant was varied across conditions. Participants viewed a scene of a table and chairs where each member's location was labeled, then described where Mary was sitting. Egocentric frames of reference were more common when participants were familiar/friends with John and less common when participants and John were unfamiliar with one another.

Many factors influence an individual's perspective, and these results suggest that information regarding social relationships can also influence perspective-taking.