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Validating the Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS) Using Behavioral Indicators



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Introduction

Dibble, Levine, and Park's (2012) Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS) has been shown to be reliable and valid for a variety of relationship types, based on self-reports. However, the scale has not yet been validated through the use of behavioral indicators of closeness.

This study provides further validation for the URCS by examining whether scores on the URCS relate to the physical distance between two people in the context of a casual conversation.

Hypothesis

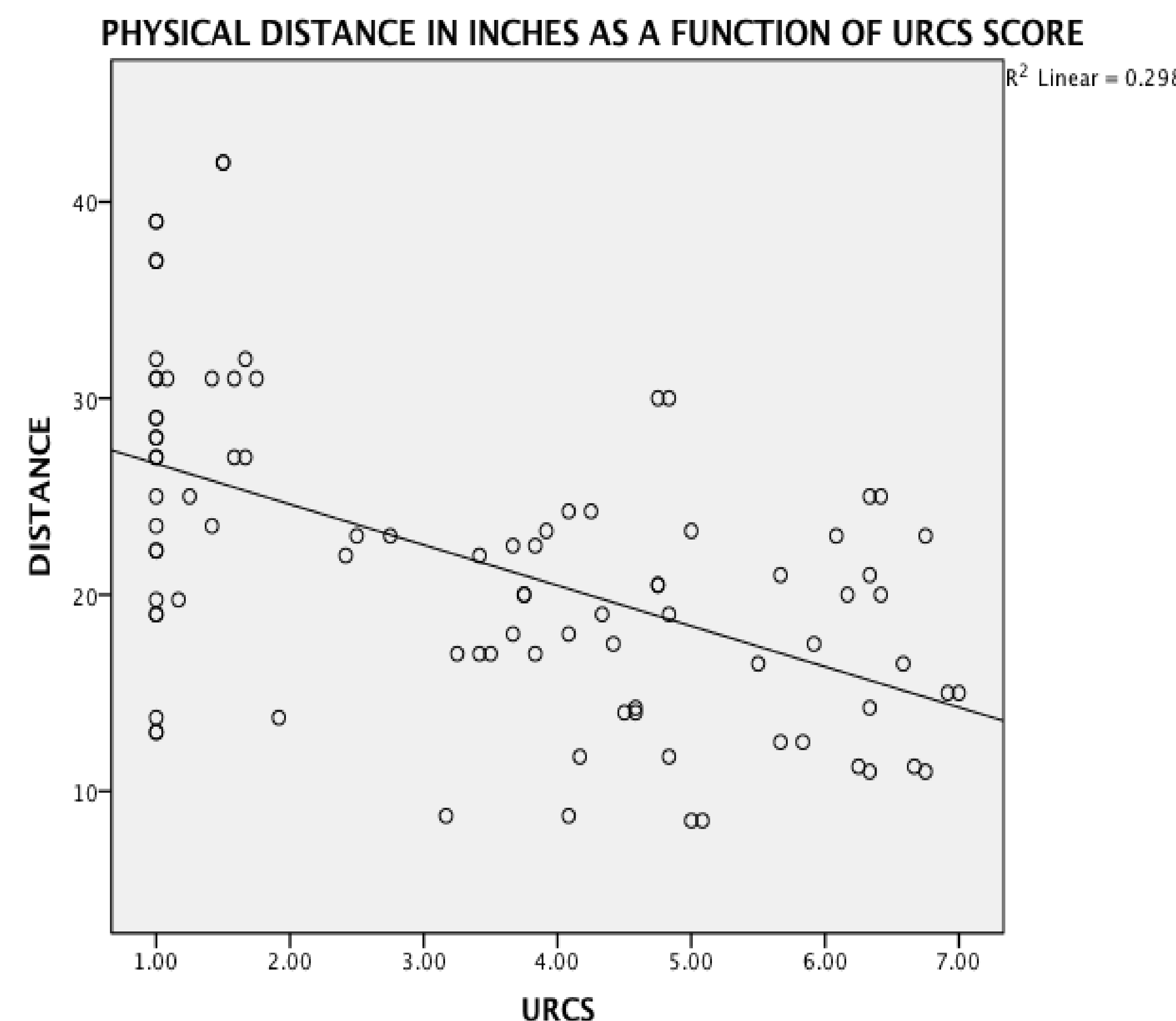
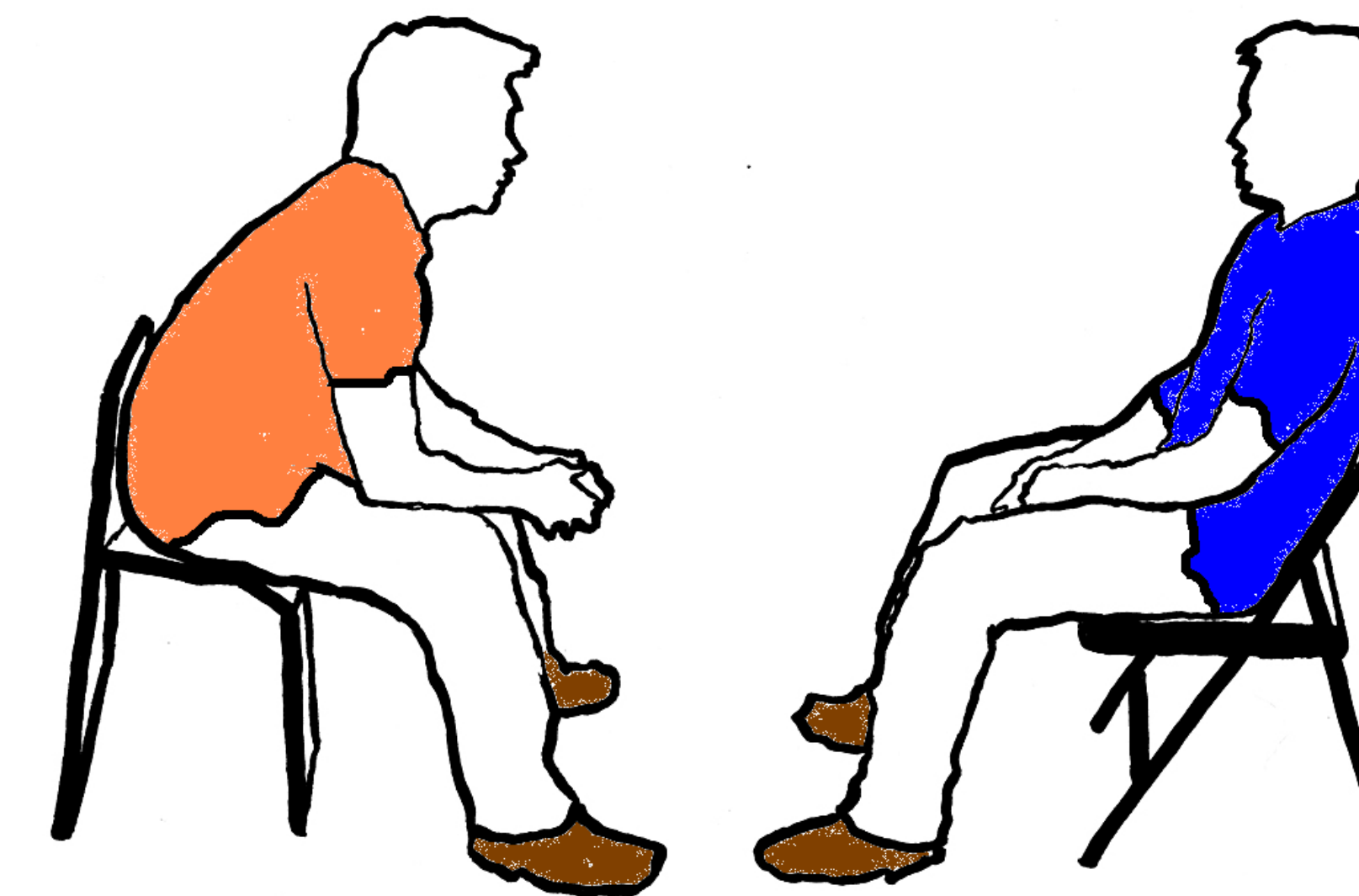
Higher scores on the URCS should correspond to lower distances between two people. i.e., URCS scores and physical distance will be negatively correlated.

Method

- For each session, two pairs of close friends reported to the lab
- Participants were paired at random with either their close friend (friends condition), or a member of the other pair (stranger condition)
- Each participant filled out the Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale while thinking of their assigned partner (close friend or stranger)
- Each pair took part in a 5-minute, video recorded conversation about what they like most about Hope College
- Prior to beginning the conversation, participants were allowed to place their chairs wherever they felt comfortable while the researcher set up the camera
- The primary dependent measure was the linear distance between the two closest legs of the chairs

Results

- N = 90,
 - Male = 24 (26.7%)
 - Female = 66 (73.3%)
- Age
 - Range = 18-23
 - Mean: 20.07, Std. Deviation: 1.09
- Race
 - Asian = 4 (4.4%)
 - Caucasian/White = 80 (88.9%)
 - Hispanic = 5 (5.6%)
 - Mixed = 1 (1.1%)
- Condition
 - Strangers = 40 (44.4%)
 - Friends = 50 (55.6%)
- URCS $\alpha = .98$
- $r = -.55, p < .01$



Discussion

The results of this study are primarily to add credibility to the URCS scale. It has been useful for measuring emotional closeness in the past, but this is the first study where the URCS was used to predict behavior. As predicted, URCS scores were negatively correlated with physical distance such that participants who reported being relationally close to their partners tended to sit physically closer to those partners.

Implications

The results allow researchers to put more confidence in the URCS scale for future studies on relationship closeness.

The scale has been shown to be capable of predicting behavior based on the feelings recorded in the stems.

Limitations

Limitations include the age range of participants, the lack of diversity in the race/ethnicities of participants, the small school setting where participants in the stranger condition are more likely to be familiar with one another, and chairs with wheels that could be moved easily (possibly contributing to error in measuring physical distance).

Future Studies

We plan to replicate this study using a larger sample. Moreover, we plan to use the video recordings to code other nonverbal closeness behaviors (e.g., eye gazing, body orientation) so as to provide additional construct validation of the URCS.

