

# JUDGMENTS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AS A FUNCTION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND CONTEXT

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First page only. If you wish to see the full article, email me at [rgifford@uvic.ca](mailto:rgifford@uvic.ca)

**ABSTRACT** Variation in evaluations of the built environment was hypothesized to be associated with differences among observers and the context of the ratings. Judgments of non-spectacular public-access interiors were made by a heterogeneous community sample of raters. Personality, biographical and context variables were examined as correlates of a reliable composite measure of overall impression termed Appeal (an index of beauty, friendliness and pleasingness). Appeal was significantly related to age ( $p < .001$ ), educational level and mood ( $p < .01$ ) and sex ( $p = .05$ ). Settings had more appeal for those with less education, those who were older, those in better moods and females. Among non-significant correlates were extraversion, I-E control, weather conditions, neuroticism and others. The desirability of approaching the environment assessment problem within a multivariate framework is discussed.

Not infrequently, observers of an environmental setting will disagree in their estimations of its beauty, usefulness or other quality. This paper reports a relatively broad attempt to determine whether variation in assessments of public building interiors is predictable from individual differences among the assessors and characteristics of the context in which the assessments are made. In his seminal article on the comprehension of the everyday physical environment, Kenneth Craik (1968) posed this question: what are the factors that influence the particular way a specific person comprehends his physical surroundings? As an example, Craik suggested that extraverts would respond to physical settings in a manner characteristically different from that of introverts.

Over the last ten years a small literature of individual differences in response to the environment has grown. Most of