Trends. A Room With a Cue: Validating an Age-Old Intelligence Tool?

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Abstract: This article discusses the psychological implications of the choices regarding physical features of a given individual’s environment (e.g., a person’s office).

A recent study in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology suggests that the choice of the physical features of one’s office or bedroom may be validly suggestive of one’s personality and social characteristics. Moreover, these characteristics may be inferred by others who only have access to the physical features of one's office and/or bedroom.

Gosling et al. (2002) compared observer ratings of individuals based purely on offices or bedrooms with self- and peer ratings of the same individuals. These researchers collected data that might support the hypotheses that—with slight variation across contexts and traits—(1) personal environments elicit similar inferences from observers; (2) observer inferences are at least somewhat accurate; (3) observers rely on valid physical cues to construct inferences of the individuals; and (4) sex and race stereotypes seem to affect both the consensus and accuracy of observers.