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Eye Contact, Gender, and  
Personality Judgments

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AN EXPERIMENT by Brooks, Church, and Fraser (1986) was replicated at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Videotapes were made in which an opposite-sex interviewer gave instructions to a male or female model who remained silent and reciprocated eye contact for either 5 s or 45 s of the 60-s interview. The video camera was aimed over the head of the interviewer toward the face of the model. Videotapes were observed by 36 male and 47 female undergraduate students, who evaluated the model on a rating form containing 11 bipolar adjectives arranged on a 7-point scale. Subjects were randomly assigned to view one of the four videotapes, with an approximately equal number of subjects in each experimental condition.

Factor analysis of the rating form with principal components solution and varimax rotation identified three factors with eigenvalues  $> 1$ , explaining 66.8% of the variance. Factor 1 (strong, ambitious, assertive, dominant, competent, independent, leader, aggressive) was a potency dimension similar to the one employed by Brooks et al. (1986), Factor 2 was labeled *mature-efficient*, and Factor 3 was labeled *attractive*. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were computed on the three factors with a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  (Subject Sex  $\times$  Model Sex  $\times$  Gaze) factorial design. A significant main effect for gaze on Factor 1,  $F(1, 75) = 19.2, p < .0001$ , indicated that models were evaluated as being more potent when they engaged in high ( $M = 4.08$ ) versus low ( $M = 3.14$ ) levels of eye contact. There were no other significant main effects or interactions on Factor 1. A significant main effect for gaze on Factor 2,  $F(1, 75) = 9.69, p < .008$ , indicated that models were eval-

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*We express appreciation to Bruno M. Kappes for his helpful comments.*

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uated as being more mature-efficient when they engaged in high ( $M = 4.65$ ) versus low ( $M = 3.92$ ) levels of eye contact. There were no other significant main effects or interactions on Factor 2. A significant main effect for model sex on Factor 3,  $F(1, 75) = 40.1, p < .0001$ , indicated that female models were evaluated as being more attractive than male models ( $M_s = 5.57$  vs. 3.97, respectively). There were no other significant main effects or interactions on Factor 3.

This study replicates the results of Brooks et al. (1986), with a refined rating form defined by factor analysis. It also corresponds with conclusions of two major reviews of research literature indicating that people are evaluated more favorably when they engage in high levels of eye contact in a non-threatening interaction (Kleinke, 1986; Webbink, 1986). The present data can be put into a broader perspective by recognizing gazing in Western society as a means of communicating immediacy and openness to personal involvement (Burgoon & Hale, 1984).

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*Received February 13, 1990*