

# An Introductory Analysis to Nonverbal Communication in the Workplace



Natalie Hahn, Mike Meholic, Cory White, Kimberly Ventura  
COM 219: Speech Communication Professor: Dr. Joanne L. DeTore

## Background

Artefactual communication, also known as nonverbal communication, "all send messages to receivers who intercept messages whether we intend for them to or not" (Zelley, 2007). These messages can include the clothes an individual wears, body modifications, and also the makeup applied. Originally, makeup, "was the earliest form of human ritual" (Power, 2010). When worn, too much makeup can "draw undue attention and can send the wrong signals" (Ivy, 2009). However, in a professional setting, how much is the right amount? Does how much makeup an individual wear effect how they are viewed professionally? We were also concerned that in some jobs, makeup is required for women. This was the case in *Jespersen v. Harrah's Operating Co.*, where a bartender was found to have been legally fired for refusing to wear makeup. The Supreme Court created a precedent in this case "where [they] set forth the applicable legal standards governing workplace dress and workplace standards" (Patrick 2006). These "grooming standards" can include makeup, and can be regulated by the employer. Must women have to wear makeup to be considered competent and thus employable?

## Abstract

Our group studied makeup as a nonverbal artifact and created an online survey to ascertain if there was a connection between the amount of makeup that a woman wore and her perceived levels of competence. Moreover we wondered whether or not this would ultimately effect whether or not she was hired. We created an online survey instrument and garnered 48 survey respondents who reacted to three photographs of one of our female team members in various degrees of makeup ranging from natural to heavy. The respondents were generally professionals associated with S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematical) companies. We discovered that there was a correlation between the amount of makeup that a woman wore and her perceived levels of competence and hireability.

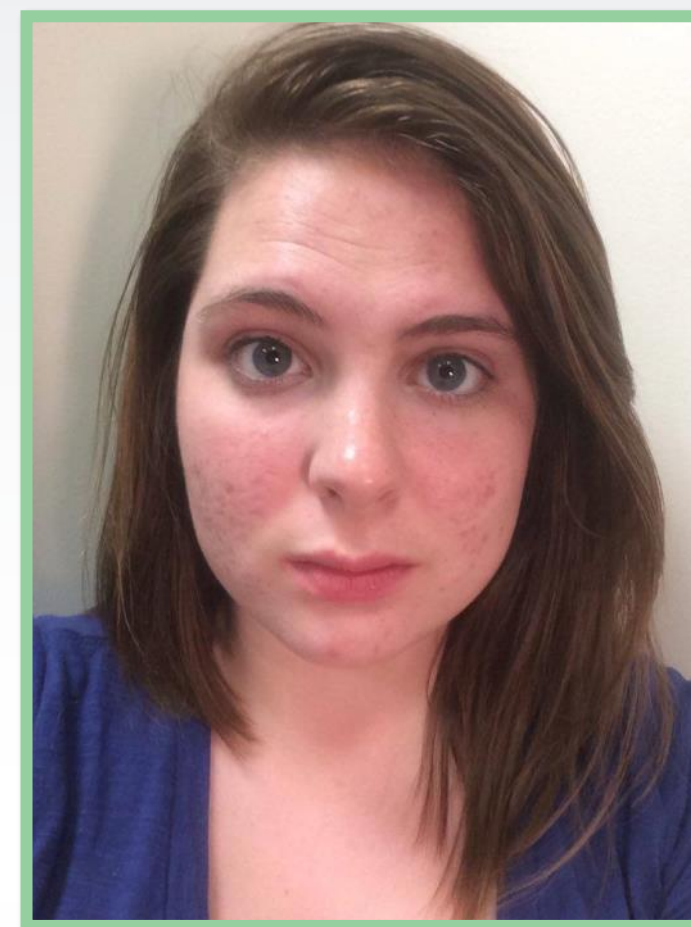
## Hypothesis

Our team's hypothesis was that the amount of makeup would impact the perceptions of the woman in our survey in terms of her competence levels and, ultimately, impact a company's decision to hire her. We surmised that the medium amount of makeup would present itself as the most employable. Due to the pressures of women to conform to an enhanced ideal of beauty drawn from media, we also hypothesized that the no makeup or "natural" look would not be as desirable. Finally we hypothesized that the third level would not receive much positive feedback, mainly because that level of makeup would be perceived as more intense and dramatic than usually acceptable for such a situation. We also hypothesized that the second level would outperform in perception of relative attractiveness, competence, trustworthiness, likeability, and overall professionalism.

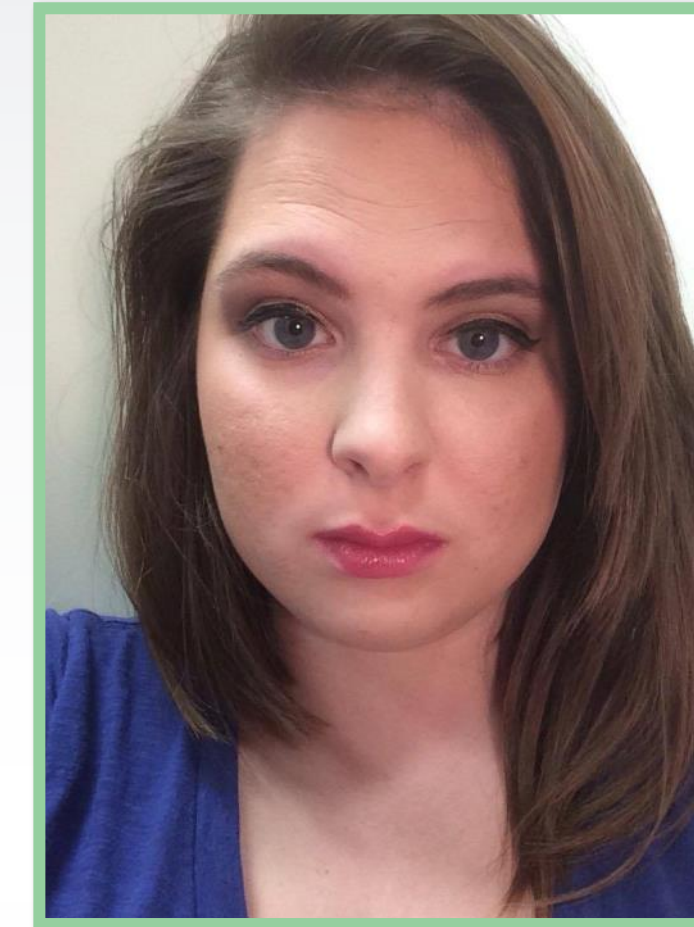
## Methods

Our group created a survey instrument on Survey Monkey to test our hypothesize that makeup would impact the perception of competence levels for women. One of our group members posed for three "looks" comprised of a natural (no makeup) look, an average (medium makeup) look, and a heavy makeup look drawn from a similar study. Participants in this study included 36 females and 12 males, for a total sample size of 48 individuals. The majority of the participants were female Caucasians. There was not a single question that asked for personal information. This was done to allow anonymity for all of the participants, protecting the privacy of their responses. The images used were of a candidate who was a 19 year old college female. She was photographed with a neutral facial expression, and the final images were cropped to remove any outside influences. The candidate was photographed without makeup and with two following makeup styles ranging from minimal to intense (see "Survey Photos" section). The respondents of the study were presented an online survey. The survey was distributed through various social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. Each participant was able to look at all three pictures of the candidate with the varying levels of makeup. Questions asked for the respondents to select the candidate that embodied the following qualities the most: professionalism, attractiveness, likability, trustworthiness, competence, and hireability.

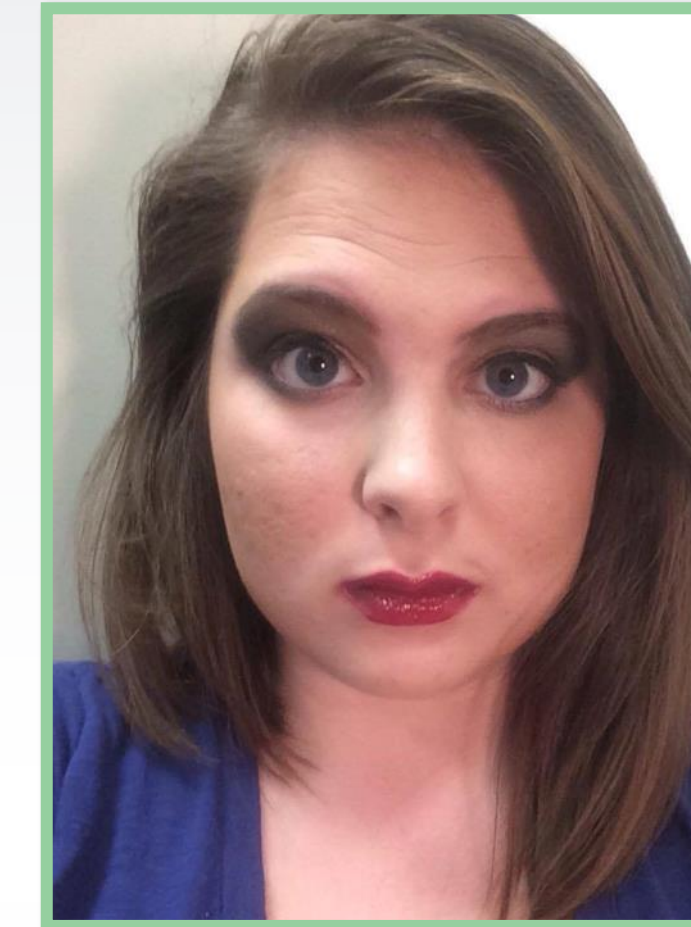
## Survey Photos



CANDIDATE ONE

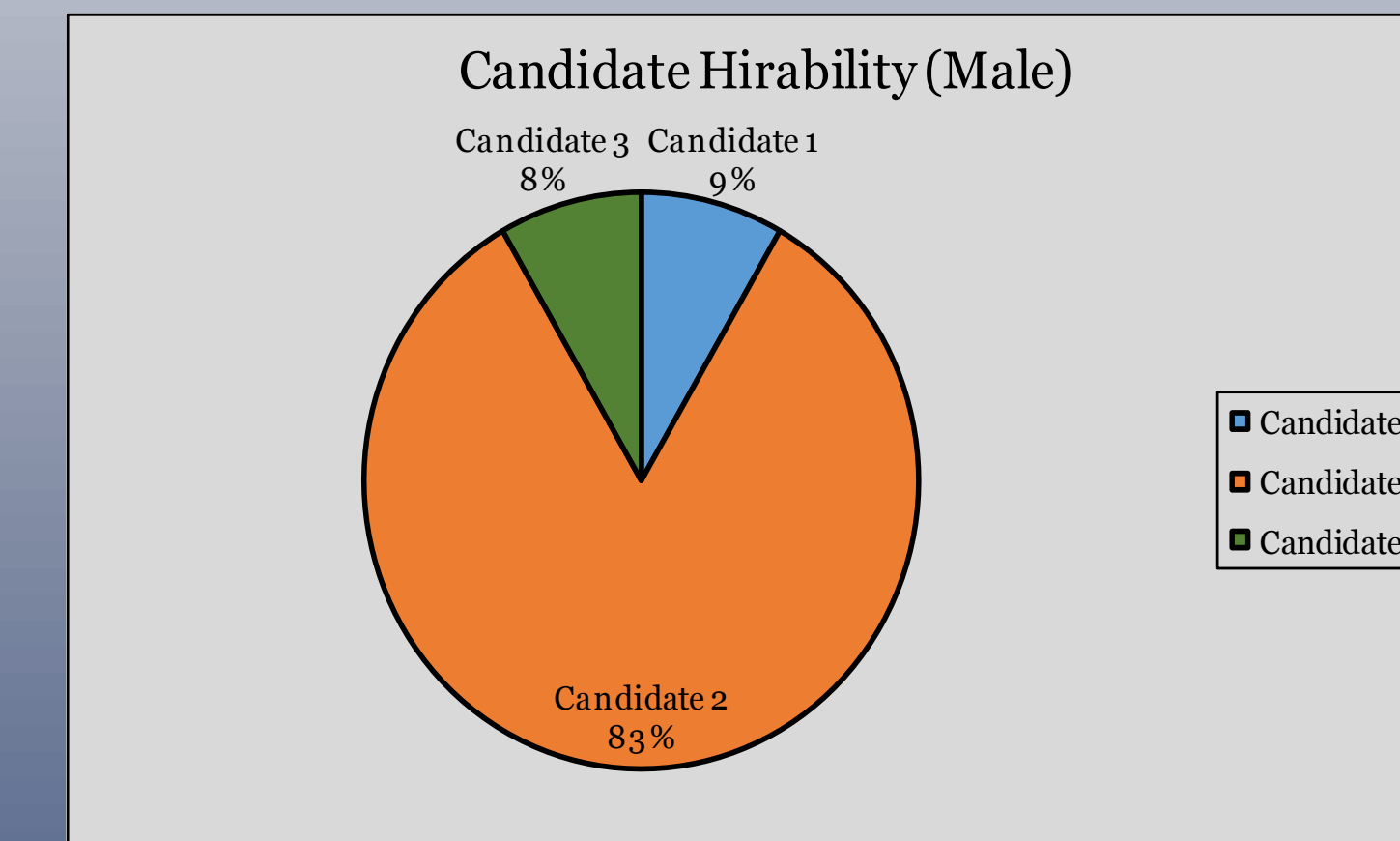
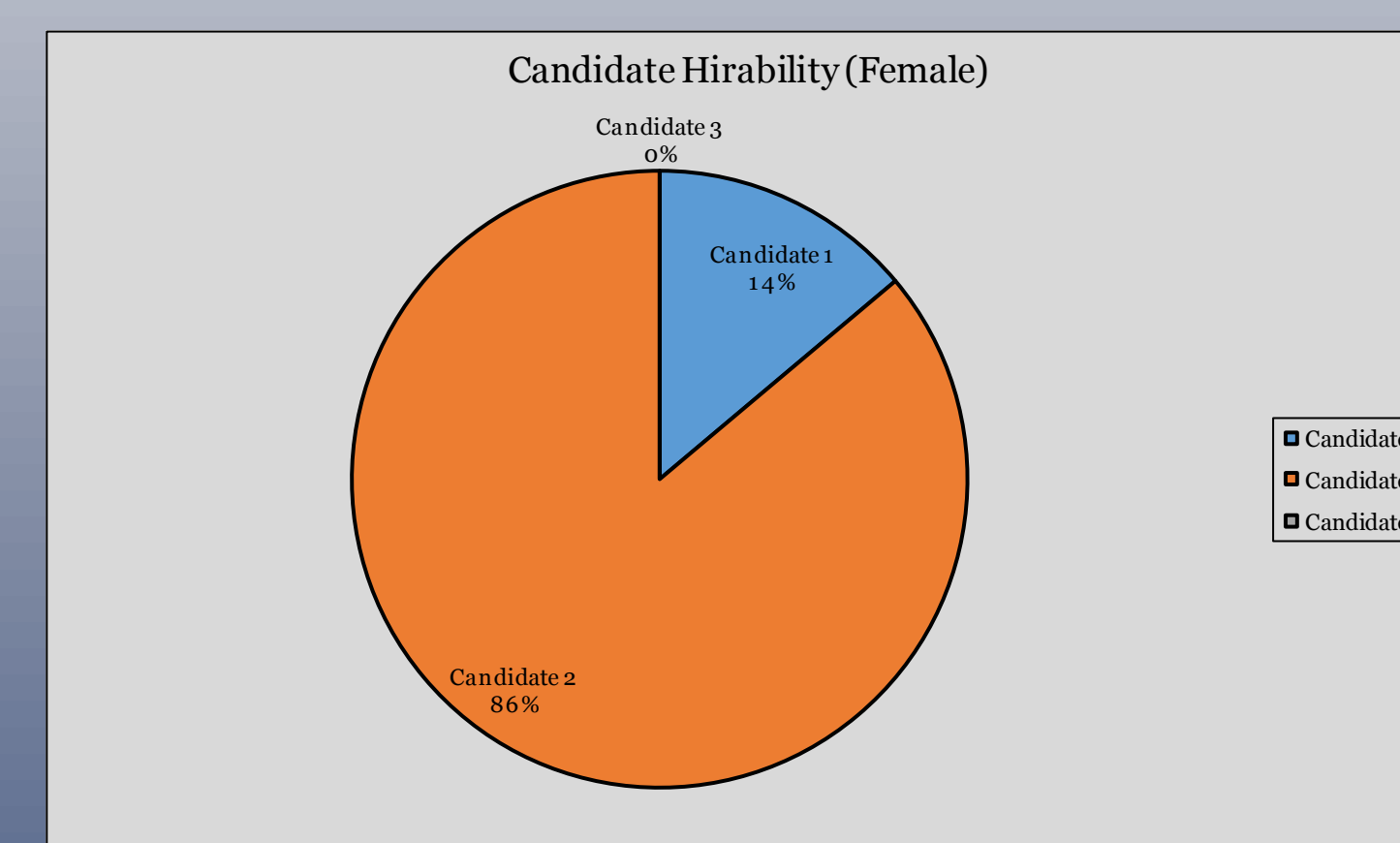
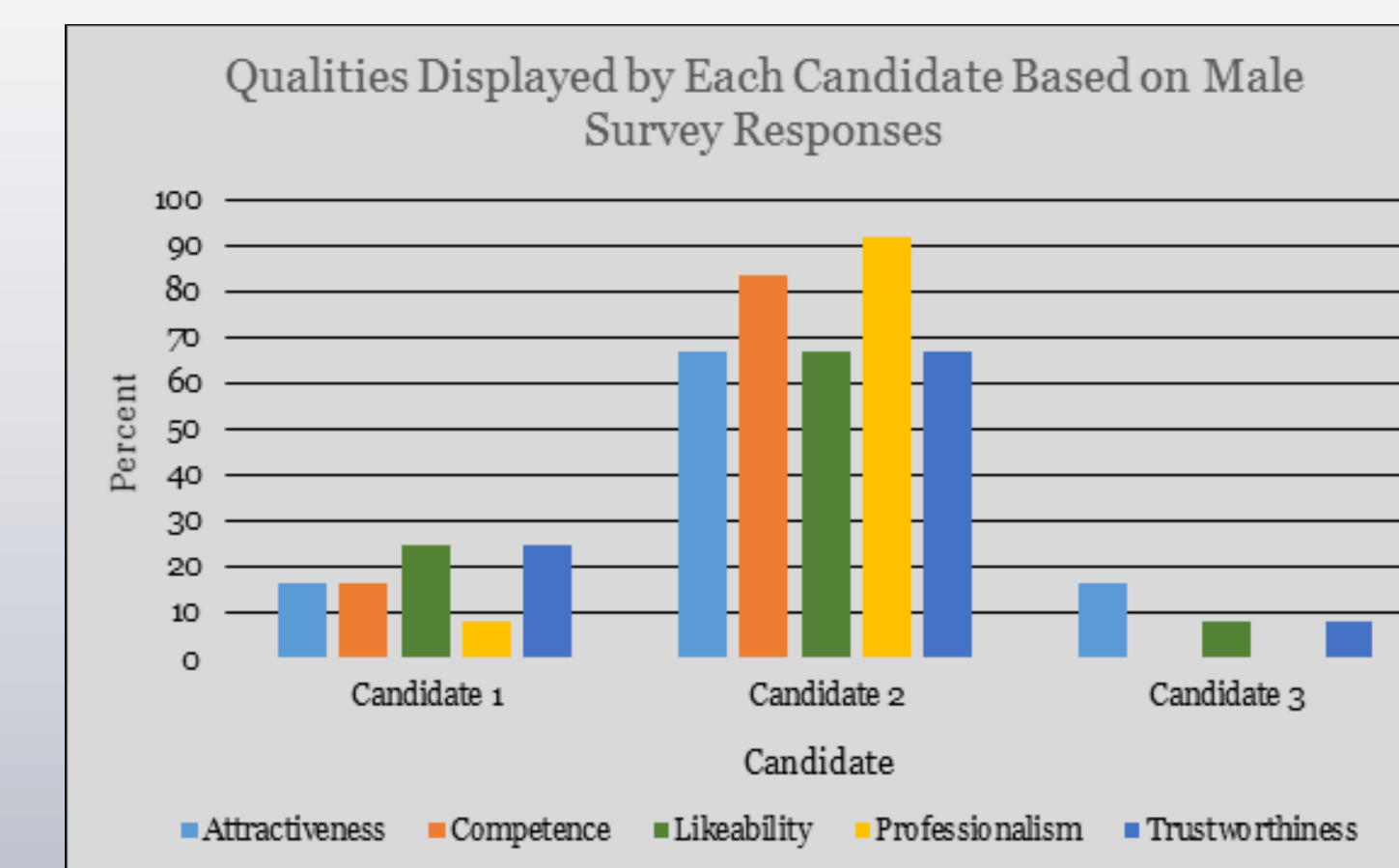
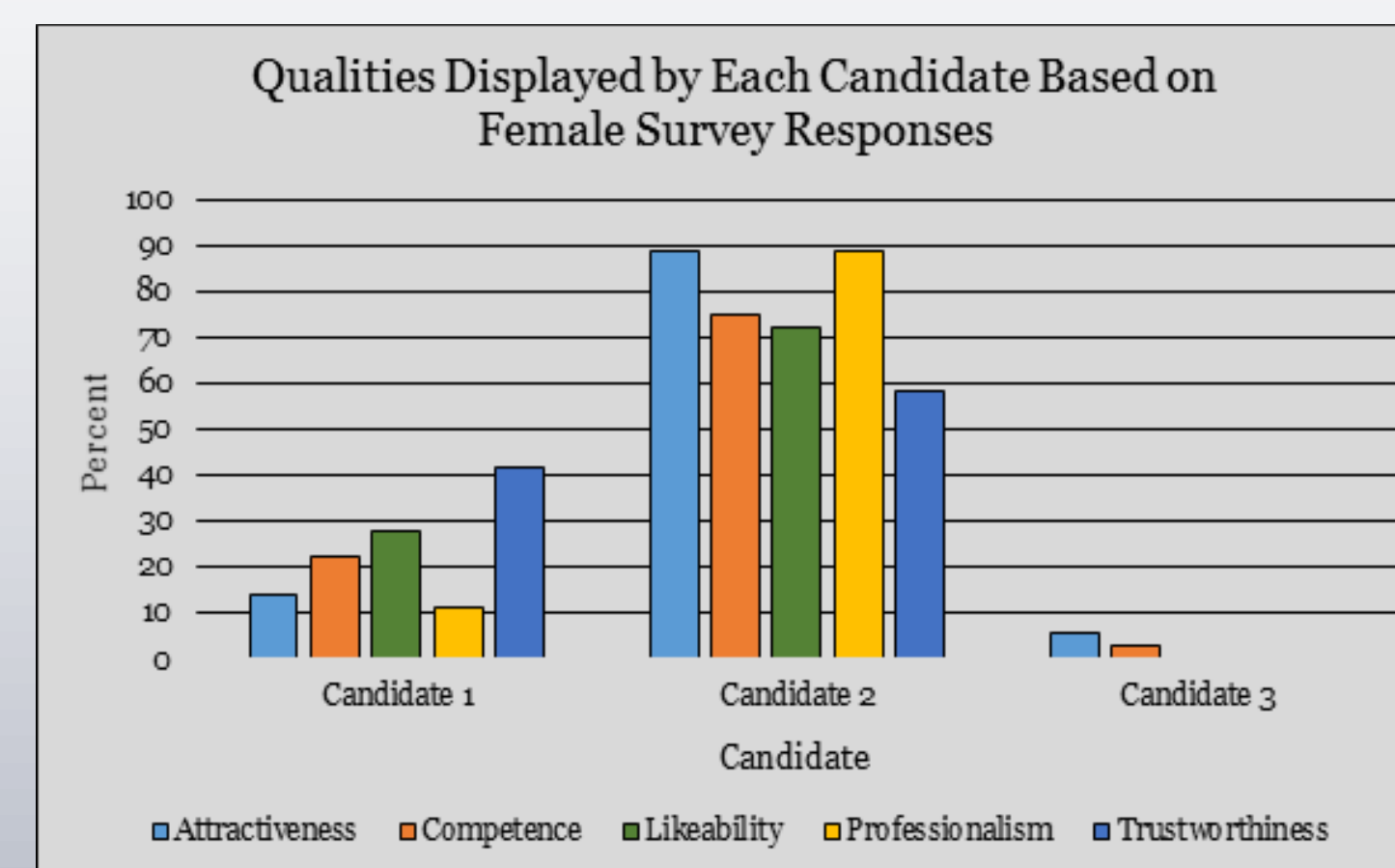


CANDIDATE TWO



CANDIDATE THREE

## Results



## Conclusion

Analysis of the results showed that there was a strong correlation between candidate 2 and the percentage of people willing to hire her compared to the other two candidates. Candidate 3 did not receive any votes, while candidate 1 only received between 8-9% (dependent on what gender was voting). Additionally, the analysis of the data showed the same trend demographically across the board. Regarding the traits displayed, candidate 2 was chosen more frequently than the other candidate, though candidate 1 received more votes than candidate 3. In 2006, regarding the *Jespersen v. Harrah's Casino Co.*, our results showed a correlation from the implications of this court case (requiring women to wear makeup) and the case made by the defendants. However, this implication is biased. While all of the candidates had the same level of qualifications, candidate 2 was hired more often, based on the fact she was viewed as more attractive, competent, likeable, professional, and trustworthy. This implies that equally qualified individuals may be turned down by what could be interpreted as a sexist connotation. The candidates who received lower marks wore either no or an intense level of makeup. When compared to the results from candidate two, this implies that one must not only wear makeup, but must wear the correct amount of it. How can qualified females be turned down for a job based on the fact that, while she is wearing makeup, she is not wearing the correct amount? Additionally, how can women ever expect to accomplish equality in the workplace when they deal with the unnecessary burden of having to wear makeup to be considered not only professional, but hireable as well? This study is important for employers who may be unaware that hiring managers may hold an implicit bias that can impact which women are hired, and how they are evaluated and thus, promoted or demoted.

## References

Cash, T., Dawson, K., Davis, P., Bowen, M., & Galumbeck, C. (1989). Effects of Cosmetics Use on the Physical Attractiveness and Body Image of American College Women. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 129*(3), 349-355.

Dellinger, K., & Williams, C. L. (1997). Makeup at Work: Negotiating Appearance Rules in the Workplace. *Gender & Society, 11*(2), 151-177.

Eli Nana Brad Jackson Giles St J Burch, (2010), "Attributing leadership personality and effectiveness from the leader's face: an exploratory study", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 31 Iss 8 pp. 720 – 742

Fabricant, S., Gould, M., & Stephen, J. (1993). Women's Makeup Careers: An Interpretive Study of Color Cosmetic Use and "Face Value" *Psychology & Marketing, 10*(6), 531.

Gentina, E., Palan, K. M., & Fosse-Gomez, M. H. (2012). The practice of using makeup: A consumption ritual of adolescent girls. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 11*(2), 115-123.

Ivy, D. K., & Wahl, S. T. (2008). *The Nonverbal Self: Communication for a Lifetime* (1st ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Patrick H. Hicks, Veronica Arechederra Hall, and Deborah L. Westbrook. Gaming Law Review. August 2006, 10(4): 342-346.

Power, C. 2010. Cosmetics, identity and consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies 17, 7-8: 73-94.*

Scherbaum, K., Ritschel, T., Hullin, M., Thormählen, T., Blanz, V., & Seidel, H. (2011). The Eurographics Association and Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 30(2), 485-492 (M. & O., Eds.).

Zelley, E. (2007). What Not to Wear: Sending Nonverbal Messages. Conference Papers National Communication Association, 1.