PARTICIPANT MAKEUP AND INVOLVEMENT IN CORPORATE ALUMNI RELATIONS PROGRAMS

by

JACLYN T. WEST

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2015

Copyright © by Jaclyn T. West 2015

All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my mom and stepdad for making my education possible, for their encouragement, and for inspiring me to continue learning. I'd like to thank my Faculty Advisor and Thesis Committee Chairperson Dr. Craig Nagoshi for his guidance and input on this project.

In addition, I'd like to thank Dr. Nicolette Lopez and Dr. Shannon Scielzo for teaching me what I know about I/O Psychology and encouraging me to continue with this vein of research. I'd also like to thank Anna Park and Catherine Spann who have been instrumental in helping me understand and be able to use statistics and who have also helped me learn how to navigate graduate school in general.

April 23, 2015

Abstract

PARTICIPANT MAKEUP AND INVOLVEMENT IN CORPORATE ALUMNI RELATIONS PROGRAMS

Jaclyn West, M.S.

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2015

Supervising Professor: Craig T. Nagoshi

This study investigates the participant involvement of users within a corporate alumni relations program by comparing groups based on employment status, job title, and number of skills listed in system user profiles. The researcher selected variables pertinent to the investigation of participant involvement from an archival dataset containing U.S. alumni program data. We chose t tests, correlations, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to compare groups on levels of involvement, which was determined by creating a composite variable of two involvement characteristics, unique number of login days over pages visited within the alumni system. Groups based on employment status, either active, separated, or retired employees, were compared on levels of involvement. Groups based on number of skills listed in user profiles, either high or low, were compared on levels of involvement. Finally, groups based on job title, either managerial or non-managerial, were compared on levels of involvement. No significant differences were found between groups on levels of user involvement in the corporate alumni program. Limitations and future directions for research are discussed.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Abstract iv

List of Illustrations vii

List of Tables viii

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

1.1 Defining Corporate Alumni Programs 2

1.2 Theory of Alumni Motivation to Join an Alumni Program 4

1.3 Legacy of University Alumni Program Research 5

1.4 Involvement Construct 7

Chapter 2 The Current Study 10

2.1 Hypotheses 10

2.2 Methods 11

Chapter 3 Results 13

3.1 Recruitment 13

3.2 Data Analysis 13

3.3 Data Screening 14

Table 3-1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables 17

3.4 Hypothesis 1 17

3.4.1 Employment Status and Involvement 17

Figure 3-4 Differences in Involvement based on Employment Status 18

3.5 Hypothesis 2 18

3.5.1 Skills Listing 18

3.6 Hypothesis 3 19

3.6.1 Job Title 19

Table 3-2 Partial Listing of Job Titles 20

Chapter 4 Discussion 21

4.1 Limitations 23

4.2 Future Directions 24

References 27

Biographical Information 29

List of Illustrations

Figure 3-4 Differences in Involvement based on Employment Status 18

List of Tables

Table 3-1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables 17

Table 3-2 Partial Listing of Job Titles 20

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the spring of 2014, I was assigned a project to research a little known subject for an organization with ties to the I/O industry. The I/O industry includes areas such as organizational behavior and development, talent management and sourcing, employee attitudes, and employee selection processes, among others. This organization fell within the talent management portion of the industry. Specifically, it was a project to discover the best practices and innovations used in corporate alumni relations programs, which are entities which add value to organizations by increasing the organizations' ability to manage and source talent. I would later have the opportunity to work for the organization requesting these best practices and thereby learn a bit more about these relatively unknown yet highly valued programs and endeavors. This organization provided the data upon which this study was based. Utilizing the research I have done over the past year and my internship experience, what follows is a brief background on what exactly a corporate alumni program is, how these programs are related to university alumni programs, and the importance of continued examination of the makeup of corporate alumni programs which is the purpose of this project.

Over the course of the project and internship, the dearth of academic research existing on corporate alumni relations programs was confirmed. This study will be one of the first formal research endeavors using actual corporate alumni program data which will attempt to describe the participant makeup of a well-established alumni relations program, thereby encouraging future research in this area and potentially creating more access to alumni program data and beginning to shed light on how corporate alumni programs function.

1.1 Defining Corporate Alumni Programs

To begin we must first define what a corporate alumni relations program is and outline its benefits and uses. Put simply, corporate alumni programs are networks that are created as separate entities from their parent organization. The term corporate alumni program and alumni program will be used interchangeably in this paper. The dictionary defines alumni as former students, typically male, of a university or as former employees of a given organization (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). For the purposes of corporate alumni relations programs, alumni refer to former employees of both genders, as well as current employees of an organization. Current employees are future alumni while past employees are current alumni. Alumni are typically in good standing with the organization whose alumni program they join (West, 2014). Terminated employees are not as likely to be part of the alumni program because of the possibility of bad blood between them and their former organization. Alumni programs are typically established by large companies of at least 500 to 1000 employees in order to have an effective return on investment (West, 2014).

The return on investment from alumni programs comes in the form of benefits both to the participants and the parent organization. The main goals of corporate alumni programs vary from organization to organization, however, the three universal goals of any corporate alumni program are business development, recruitment and brand awareness. Referred to as the “alumni value triad,” these overarching goals drive the need for alumni programs (West, 2014).

Business development focuses on exchange of information with the alumni participants in a way that the company can use to evolve their business processes, services, or products. The alumni provide valuable perspective on the organization, since

many of them may be consumers of the organization's products or services during and after employment.

Recruitment focuses on management of human capital, bringing in new human capital via their current employees' connections, and developing future human capital through boomerang hires. Boomerang hires are employees who worked for a certain organization, left that organization, but later came back to work at that same organization. Alumni programs can develop boomerangs by staying in contact with and supporting their past employees who are part of their alumni program. These employees may leave to gain further experience at one or more other organizations, returning years later with developed skills and abilities, which they then employ for the benefit of the organization they originally left. The main reason to invest in boomerangs is because they save companies time and money, since they may be trained in up to 40% less time than a new employee and are often still well versed in organization policy and procedures for their job (West, 2014).

Last in the alumni value triad is brand awareness. In brand awareness, companies leverage their alumni as brand ambassadors. This works especially well when employees have positive attitudes toward their organization. When this occurs, the employees will naturally spread the word about the products or services of the organization for which they are alumni, since people talk about the things they like. Brand ambassadors are an investment and must be fostered over time within the relational context an alumni program offers. When looking for other jobs, brand ambassadors will mention their former organization, as they are narrating their career milestones. This disseminates the former brand, not just to other potential consumers, but also to competitor businesses, thus increasing awareness. Brand dissemination is also encouraged by the benefits directly incurred by employees in an alumni program. Often

there are perks to being a member which might also lead to increased discussion of an alumni's former organization, such as access to alumni events for networking purposes, discounts for various necessities, such as insurance and luxury items, as well as the potential for mentor/mentee relationships. In fact, companies benefit from sharing and exchanging alumni. As alumni move between companies, they are able to develop their skills and abilities. Sometimes companies select employees in part based on their former organization. If the employee's former organization has a good reputation, that makes the employee more valuable to other organizations.

1.2 Theory of Alumni Motivation to Join an Alumni Program

The motivation behind joining an alumni program should be theoretically examined prior to probing the participant makeup and involvement of these programs. This way, any results may be seen in light of participant motivations to join said program. Hackman and Lawler (1971) posit that program involvement is tied to motivation (Stoner & Gallagher, 2012). For instance, the most salient theory accounting for participation in alumni programs comes from social psychology and, specifically, the constructs of interpersonal and group relationships. In social identity theory, Tajfel and Turner (1985) conceptualized the self in terms of two identities – the personal identity and the social identity (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Specifically, they claimed that personal identity consists of all the personality characteristics and individual differences that make a person unique, whereas social identity is comprised of the groups to which a person belongs. In the context of alumni programs, the alumni program itself is a specific group of which participants are a part and which the organization aims to incorporate into part of the participant's identity. Organizations do this by defining a role for the participant – alumni – and by fostering a reciprocal relationship with the alumni, earning their loyalty and trust,

thereby enabling the organization to use their participants' human capital in a mutually beneficial way.

Social exchange theory can also help explain employee motivations to join an alumni program. This theory emphasizes the significance of understanding employee motivations and how those motivations are related to corporate goals (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). Gouldner (1960) noted that the norm of reciprocity is particularly salient within this theory, as its premise is that people are obligated to others where favorable treatment is concerned, such that when someone does something for another person that is altruistic or positive, the recipient will be inherently motivated to pay back the person who did them the favor (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). This powerful effect manifests in corporate alumni programs, since sometimes those becoming alumni do so in an effort to pay back their organization for taking care of them during their job. Another example prompting the norm of reciprocity is the mentor relationship that may ultimately stem from involvement in an alumni program. Retired or near retirement employees, in an effort to remain a part of or benefit their former firm, will often join alumni programs to pass on their knowledge in an assigned mentor relationship, if their program allows for such connections. Picket (1986) described how this behavior provides a sense of intellectual stimulation, meaning, and the feeling of being a benefactor within the context of university alumni programs, which translates to retirees feeling as though they are reciprocating the care of their former organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

1.3 Legacy of University Alumni Program Research

When considering corporate alumni programs, one will naturally gravitate to the concept of university alumni programs, which were established around the turn of the nineteenth century, well before corporate alumni programs were conceived. Looking to theories of how university alumni programs work will enlighten theory concerning how

corporate alumni programs work. Corporate alumni programs were likely born from the concepts proven within university alumni program practices and structures.

One of the theories supporting employee motivation to join an alumni program is that of symbolic interactionism. This theory by Stryker posits that people develop a sense of identity from and select behaviors for every role they possess by observing social cues and others' expectations in a given situation (McDearmon, 2013). Stryker framed the roles as the expectations in a given situation in which the subject takes social cues from relevant others. When expectations and behavioral cues interact, they create behaviors where some participants in an alumni program will act as active participants in the program and some will not. This theory would suggest that acting in accordance with their role comes from adoption of that role into their self-concept. For instance, thinking of the program as theirs instead of one of many. Involvement comes into play here as those with high involvement will be essentially be identifying as alumni and those with lower involvement will be characterized as not identifying as alumni. Involvement levels, as far as those can be determined, are what this project attempts to uncover.

Another theory that may help explain alumni involvement is impression management theory by Schlenker (as cited in Zhao, 2011). This theory poses the idea that people, consciously or unconsciously, manipulate how others view them by controlling what others see them doing. Managing others impressions can sometimes bring about desired rewards or social connections. Essentially, one might choose to be involved in an alumni program for the sake of trying to communicate to others that they are hard workers, have positive affect for the parent organization, or that they merely want to appear as if they have loyalties to the parent organization when they really do not.

Callero (1985) spoke of role identity as a separate entity, a salient entity brought about by an individual's readiness to act out a particular role which adds to or is consistent with their sense of self (McDearmon, 2013). Alumni identity stability would be enhanced through longer membership and more involvement in the program. Intellectual stimulation, requiring more time, effort, and therefore involvement, is often a motivating factor for alumni who function as mentors to less experienced employees.

Within university alumni programs, alumni perform tasks that may not be relevant to corporate alumni program participants. Participants in university alumni programs may be tasked with helping select new incoming students via interviews and phone calls at highly selective institutions, and alumni may even call undecided candidates in an effort to encourage them to commit to their school (Singer & Hughey, 2002). These behaviors could be adapted to corporate alumni programs, especially if the program valued recruitment as one of its highest goals. In this way they might adopt the practice of pursuing specific job candidates for the purposes of recruitment in the same way as university alumni programs do.

1.4 Involvement Construct

As formerly mentioned, in order to be able to examine the possible outcomes of corporate alumni programs, it is first important to examine why participants might choose to join alumni networks. Several theories may be brought to bear in an effort to explain this phenomenon. At first glance a corporate alumni program might seem superfluous or even costly to an organization's business needs, however, companies are finding that the resulting resource and social exchange alumni programs provide more than compensates for any perception of superfluity or costs therein. It is important to know what factors play a role in participant involvement in order to estimate how to influence them. This could benefit companies in many ways, particularly monetarily, but also in

terms of the quality of participants within their alumni program and future employees. It might be that requiring a certain level of involvement and screening out those who do not meet the criteria could alter the makeup of alumni programs and end up saving organizations money, since they would not be supporting those who are not involved in the program and therefore not benefitting the firm in the ways the alumni program is designed to mutually benefit both parties. Screening would be a selective process within the alumni program but would not affect the employee's job at the parent organization.

The proposed study will examine the makeup of participants within an alumni program in terms of how involved the participants are. Criteria of involvement must be designated and then all targeted groups compared on that scale of involvement to see if there are meaningful differences between the levels of involvement for certain participant groups. To create a framework for defining involvement in an alumni program, current research considering involvement in social media will be examined.

Alberghini, Cricelli, & Grimaldi (2014) conceptualized participation as the number of users in a system, as well as their access frequency of web content. This study will do something similar, conceptualizing involvement by examining the unique number of login days per user, as well as how many unique pages are accessed by a given user during those login days. For instance, the more times a user logs into the system the more pages they will be likely to access.

Diefendorff, Brown, Kamin, & Lord (2002) examined the role of job involvement on work centrality in predicting organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and job performance. They found that job involvement predicted job performance, even when work centrality was controlled for. Based on this pattern, it is possible that member involvement in an alumni program could be used to infer member participation within the program. In the alumni context, participation would be defined as behavior by the

member due to activities undertaken within the alumni program system, such as registering for an alumni event (involvement) and then attending said event (participation). Alberghini et al. (2014) listed some key performance indicators (KPI's) gleaned from other authors in systems research for designating involvement and participation within online systems. Of the 10 KPI's he found, those relevant to this study include "standardised data formats or application interfaces; distinctiveness (how distinctive the information is compared to other information); target-orientation (the specificity of the target which the initiative aims to directly influence); degree of involvement; measure of participation (p. 261)."

While it may be argued that alumni programs are not as social as social media, it is the fact that they can and are intended to lead to interpersonal interaction which then leads to influence and information transfer that provides their social element. In this way, the research supporting social media may be applied to alumni programs and especially software management of alumni programs.

Chapter 2

The Current Study

2.1 Hypotheses

H1: The amount of involvement will differ between users with different employment statuses. Specifically, active employees who are currently working for the company will exhibit higher involvement levels than those who are separated from the company (former employees) and those who are retired.

H1a: The unique number of login days will be positively related to the number of pages visited per participant.

H2: Those who list more skills are hypothesized to exhibit more involvement in the alumni program than those who list fewer specialization skills. It is important to examine number of user skills listed in user profiles due to the fact that the people who use the system often and for long enough periods to know the skills fields exist should be more likely to fill in more of those fields. Since the skills fields take more thought, time and effort to complete, this should indicate more involvement in the alumni program.

H3: Job title influences alumni program involvement. Those with managerial job titles will exhibit more involvement in the alumni program than those with non-managerial job titles. It is hypothesized that those with managerial job titles will have more involvement in the alumni program since they may be more apt to rationalize the program as a potential career development resource. Managers tend to have a more global perspective which enables them to think more broadly and long term when relating to their career. Managers also tend to be more driven than non-managers which might prompt them to further their career more intentionally than those in non-manager positions. Lounsbury, Steel, Gibson, & Drost (2008) found that HR managers had significantly higher work drive compared to a sample of managers from other professions.

It is thought that those without managerial job titles will be less concerned about their career path and therefore less likely to engage actively with the alumni program in utilizing its benefits and connections.

2.2 Methods

All analyses were performed with U.S. data only. Analysis of variance and t tests were used to assess the differences in involvement between groups, namely employment status in the program as stated above (H1), those who fill out more skill fields than others (H2), and managerial versus non-managerial job title (H3), in program involvement. Involvement was defined as number of unique login days over how many pages are accessed by a given user during those days. A random sample of users was selected for each hypothesis, since the databases are considerably large, and this provided a sample of login frequency and pages accessed by a handful of users.

For H1, groups were uneven, so stratified random sampling was necessary. A random sample of 50 was taken for each group – active employees, separated employees, and retired employees – in order to create the role variable with a total of at least 150 in the sample. Each of these groups was compared on levels of involvement.

For H2, a random sample was taken from those participants who listed skill specializations and this sample was compared to the sample taken for H1 to see how their skills specialization listings compared. We then wanted to compare these two samples of skill listings to examine differences in involvement between those listing skills specializations and those not listing skills specializations. However, because of the lack of involvement scores for those not listing any skills, another means of comparison was sought.

For H3, the existing sample pulled for H1 was coded for managerial role. Those job titles that typically comprise leadership level positions in a business hierarchy were

used to create the managerial grouping. Since the overall database contained roughly equal groupings of managerial and non-managerial positions, the sample from H1 was used for this hypothesis. The managerial grouping included C-level positions, board of directors, vice presidents, and directors among others. The non-managerial grouping included job titles seen as non-management positions in typical business hierarchy, such as assistants, business development, accounting, and administration among others. The resulting managerial and non-managerial groupings were then be compared on levels of involvement.

Chapter 3

Results

3.1 Recruitment

The data used for this project was received by permission from a company that tracks alumni participant involvement in an online corporate alumni network system. All participant identifying data was removed from the dataset before the researcher received it. Archival data from the U.S. only and alumni participation in the alumni program was examined over the period of 2013 to 2015. The number of participants randomly selected for the sample of H1 was 165. The number of participants randomly selected for the sample of H2 was 115. The number of participants randomly selected for the sample of H3 was 160. All samples were selected to meet the requirements of the power analysis completed beforehand which required at least 50 participants per group. No statistical demographics were available with use of this data.

3.2 Data Analysis

The first hypothesis examined was that participant involvement would differ between employment status categories. Specifically, active employees would exhibit higher levels of involvement in the alumni program than either separated employees or retired employees. Involvement was measured by combining number of unique login days and number of pages accessed per participant such that number of unique login days was divided by number of pages accessed to create an overall involvement variable as a ratio and transformed as necessary. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the difference between employment statuses in levels of involvement. An ANOVA was selected to best address the categorical variable of employment status and the continuous outcome variable of involvement.

The second hypothesis was that participant involvement would differ between those listing a high number of skills in their user profile and those listing a low number of skills in their profile or no skills at all. Involvement was measured by combining number of unique login days and number of pages accessed per participant such that number of unique login days was divided by number of pages accessed to create a composite involvement variable as a ratio and transformed as necessary. An independent samples t test was used to determine the difference between groupings of skills listed. Although, the number of skills listed was originally going to be compared by using a sample of user listing no skills to a sample of user listing skills, the limits of the available involvement data required another method of comparison.

The third hypothesis was that participant involvement would differ between those with managerial job titles and those with non-managerial job titles. Involvement was measured by combining number of unique login days and number of pages accessed per participant such that number of unique login days was divided by number of pages accessed to create a composite involvement variable as a ratio and transformed as necessary. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the difference between job titles on levels of involvement. An ANOVA was selected to best address the categorical variable of job title and the continuous outcome variable of involvement.

3.3 Data Screening

All data were examined using a dataset which the student investigator requested from a company that tracks corporate alumni program participation. The variables used in the study included unique identifiers for the participants, unique login days per participant, pages accessed per participant, employment status, number of skills listed in user profile which was calculated, and job title (manager or non-manager).

Before analysis, all continuous variables, as shown in Table 1, were aggregated as necessary and examined through various IBM SPSS and Microsoft programs for accuracy of data entry, missing values, and fit between their distributions and the assumptions of the selected statistical analyses. Three separate datasets were created to test each hypothesis leading to three involvement variables, one for each hypothesis. Although all involvement variable composites were created the same way, they underwent different transformation as necessary.

A composite variable of the involvement scores consisting of unique days logged in by a user divided by unique pages visited per user was created for the involvement construct for each hypothesis. Exploration of the boxplots, histogram, and skewness values for the involvement variable for Hypothesis 1 indicated that it was moderately to heavily positively skewed, therefore, a log transformation was performed on the involvement composite variable which yielded a more normal, although not ideally, normal distribution for the variable. All subsequent analyses were performed using the variable in its transformed format. Examination of the boxplots, histograms, and skewness values indicated considerable skewness and kurtosis on involvement composite variables for Hypotheses 2 and 3, therefore, the involvement composite variable for Hypothesis 2 was transformed using a reciprocal square root function to correct this. Positive skewness was considerably reduced using this method and all subsequent analyses were performed using this variable in its transformed format. The involvement composite variable for Hypothesis 3 was also considerably positively skewed so a reciprocal square root transformation was applied to this variable reducing the positive skewness considerably. All subsequent analyses were performed using this variable in its transformed format. One extreme outlier was eliminated from the

Hypothesis 1 sample and one extreme outlier was eliminated from the Hypothesis 2 sample, after which analyses occurred.

Exploration of the boxplots, histogram, and skewness values for the number of skills listed variable for Hypothesis 2 indicated that it was moderately positively skewed. Therefore a log transformation was applied reducing the positive skewness considerably. All subsequent analyses were conducted using this variable in its log transformed format.

Frequency analysis of the employment status variable and the job title variable revealed approximately equal groups, although not ideally equal, for these categorical variables. Job titles were subjectively grouped into the two main categories of manager and non-manager, as shown in Table 2, based on common knowledge of their level within standard organizational hierarchies.

A correlation was conducted to test the relationship between number of unique login days per participant and the number of pages accessed per participant. Number of unique login days was significantly positively correlated to number of pages accessed, $r(162) = .85$, $p < .001$. Since the correlation was significant, a composite variable for involvement criteria was created in which the unique number of login days per user was divided by the number of pages accessed during those logins per user. This composite variable was transformed as necessary for each hypothesis in an attempt to achieve normality for use in analyses.

Table 3-1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	95% CI
H1 Involvement*	164	0.31	0.04	[.30, .32]
H2 Involvement *	114	0.97	0.19	[.93, 1.01]
H3 Involvement*	160	0.97	0.17	[.94, 1.00]
Number of Skills Listed*	114	0.49	0.34	[.43, .55]
Employment Status	164	%		
Active	63	38.41		
Separated	61	37.2		
Retired	40	24.39		
Job Title	160	%		
Manager	71	44.37		
Non-Manager	89	55.63		

*Transformed variable data.

3.4 Hypothesis 1

3.4.1 Employment Status and Involvement

A one-way ANOVA was conducted for Hypothesis 1 to examine the mean differences in involvement between employment status groups. One extreme outlier was eliminated from the dataset for Hypothesis 1. The transformed involvement composite variable did not meet the assumption of normality but did meet the assumption of homogeneity of variance. Hypothesis 1 was not supported, as no significant differences in levels of involvement were found between the employment status conditions of active employees (*M* = .32 *SE* = .01), separated employees (*M* = .31, *SE* = .01), or retired

employees (M = .31, SE = .01; $F(2, 161) = .33$, p = .72, η^2 = .01), (Figure 3-4). No ancillary analyses were necessary for this hypothesis.

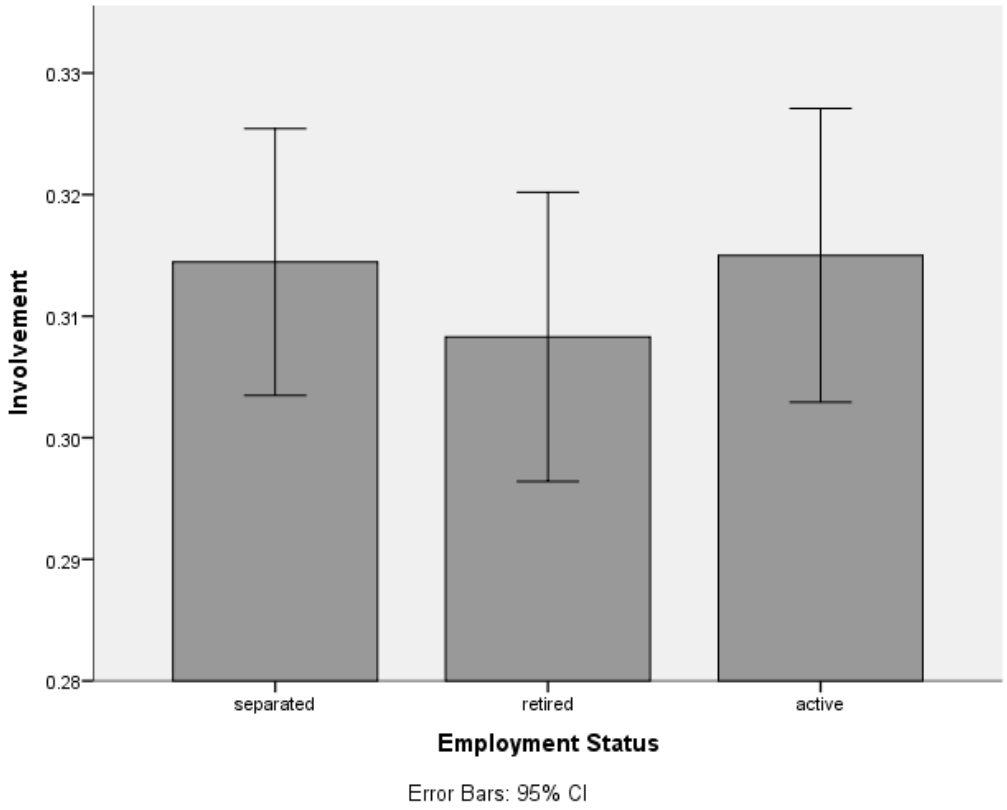

Figure 3-4 Differences in Involvement based on Employment Status

3.5 Hypothesis 2

3.5.1 Skills Listing

For Hypothesis 2, a correlation was conducted to test the relationship between number of skills listed and level of involvement. Surprisingly, number of skills listed was only weakly positively correlated with level of involvement, $r(112) = .13$, p = .15.

An independent samples t test was conducted to test the second hypothesis that involvement levels among participants would differ depending on the number of skills they listed in their user profiles. One extreme outlier was eliminated from the dataset. The

number of skills variable was standardized and then the grouping variable was created. Groups were compared from this variable of number of skills listed at one SD above the variable mean to the group of one SD below the mean of skills listed on levels of involvement. The involvement variable met the assumptions for normality, although not ideally, after being transformed with a reciprocal square root transformation. The involvement variable did not meet the assumption of homogeneity of variance with a significant Levene's test, so a Welch's *F* test was computed with the results reported below. Hypothesis 2 was not supported as there were no significant differences in involvement levels between those who listed a number of skills one SD below the mean (M = .90, SD = .21) vs. employees who listed a number of skills one SD above the mean in their user profile (M = 1.02, SD = .08), *Welch's* $F(1, 10.41) = 2.93$, $p = .12$.

3.6 Hypothesis 3

3.6.1 Job Title

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to test the third hypothesis that involvement levels among participants would differ depending on their job title – manager or non-manager. The involvement variable met the assumptions for normality, although it did not meet the Kolmogorov-Smirnov or Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality after being transformed with a reciprocal square root transformation. The involvement variable did not meet the assumption of homogeneity of variance, with a significant Levene's test, so a Welch's *F* test was computed. Hypothesis 3 was not supported as there were no significant differences in involvement levels between those whose job titles were managerial (M = .99, SD = .17) vs. those whose job titles were non-managerial (M = .95, SD = .16), *Welch's* $F(1,146.89) = 3.09$, $p = .08$.

Table 3-2 Partial Listing of Job Titles

Manager	Non-Manager
• Assistant Manager	• Accounting Manager
• Director	• Audit Manager
• Director of International Tax	• Controller
• Director, HR	• Core Assurance Associate
• Executive Director	• Corporate Development
• Head Rating Actuary	• Industry Analyst
• Manager	• Internal Audit
• Manager - International Corporate Tax	• Legal Entity Reporting Manager
• Manager in Acquisitions and Retention	• Plan Controller
• Owner	• Project Controller
• President	• Senior Financial Management Associate
• Principal	• Senior Internal Auditor
• Senior Actuarial Consultant	• Tax Manager
• Tax Director	• Technical Accounting & External Reporting

*Accounting Manager does not indicate a management position but a manager of accounts.

Chapter 4

Discussion

No support was found for differences in levels of involvement for any of the groups compared in the above hypotheses. There were no differences in levels of involvement found between active, separated, and retired employees. There were no differences found in levels of involvement between participants who entered a number of skills one standard deviation less than the mean amount versus those who entered a number of skills one standard deviation more than the mean amount into their profiles. There were no differences in the level of involvement of participants who possessed managerial job titles as compared to those who possessed non-managerial job titles. There was a small positive correlation between the number of skills a participant entered into their profile and the level of involvement they exhibited but this was not significant. A significant correlation between unique number of login days and number of pages accessed was found which led to the creation of the involvement composite variable.

Some of the reasons for these results could be common among the hypotheses, such as the fact that, if the majority of people enrolled in this corporate alumni program are accessing their system only a few times a year and not accessing many pages within their portal, this might be a good indication that they are not involved in the alumni program in tangible ways. These participants may be disinterested in the benefits the program has to offer because of other alternatives, irrelevance of benefits, or may have found ways of benefiting from the program that do not include being an involved member in the system as far as involvement is conceptualized here. This lack of involvement could be offset by programs that are more experience centered. Perhaps for those programs, involvement can be measured in a way that includes participant presence and RSVP to alumni events, as well as other methods of being involved that are more

physically measurable than system presence. It is also possible that those who show limited involvement in the population were so numerous there was a much smaller chance of representing those who show substantial involvement in the population because of the proportional discrepancy.

The low correlation between the number of skills entered into a user's profile and level of involvement was surprising but this could be due to the fact that neither variable had great dispersion. It is possible that with a sample of participants where the number of skills listed had been on a very broad scale, and involvement was examined among only the apparent outliers whose system access was very high, that the relationship between these variables would have been much more noticeable.

Another reason for these results might lie in sample size. For Hypothesis 2 in particular, an intended sample size was reasonably high enough to provide the power to see differences in involvement if they existed, but after screening the data, a different method of comparison was chosen which ultimately reduced the comparison groups to smaller totals than preferred. Group sizes were stable and larger than the necessary size required for two of the three groups from Hypothesis 1 and for all groups in Hypothesis 3.

The I/O industry in large part is dedicated to the retention of employees through the use of systematic tools that can help place the most qualified people in the job best suited to them. It may, therefore, seem questionable for a company to invest in alumni program if one's goal is to retain employees better than others from the outset. Having an alumni program seems to indicate a company is accepting defeat in its endeavor to retain employees. This is a misunderstood view of corporate alumni programs. Rather, it is more helpful to think of alumni programs as providing a much needed solution to the inevitability of turnover. Companies who can invest in these programs are providing a way to create mutually beneficial relationships and continued opportunities for their

employees at any stage of their career. In this way, corporate alumni programs are a solution to a problem that will always be present.

The data analyses described and compared the amount of involvement between different participant groups of a corporate alumni program which will help establish a depiction of participants within these programs. It is strongly suggested that future directions include a survey conducted by alumni program managers which establishes their own criteria of involvement, assesses how involvement changes over time, as well as appraises attitudes toward the alumni program. This would provide direct rather than inferred data about these topics. The alumni program may wish to use different criteria than this study to quantify involvement on the part of the participants. For the purposes of this study, the variable of involvement was conceptualized in such a way that the differences between groups in program involvement should be salient if present, namely specific unique number of login days and number of pages accessed in the system during those login days. It is possible there are other ways the construct of involvement might be conceptualized in order to view it as a continuous variable, such as using a scale of a different length or referring to subconstructs of involvement.

4.1 Limitations

There are several limitations of this study typically associated with secondary data use. In this instance, much depends on the motivation of the participating employees to keep their information up to date, particularly the skills listed in their user profiles. We believe this data was up to date at the time of receipt and analysis.

Inherent in archival data is missing data. There was a large amount of missing data within this dataset, particularly in terms of involvement data for those who did not list any skills in their profiles. An extreme limitation to this study was the fact that most of the population being sampled did not list skills in their profile and had no user involvement

data associated with their specific user ID. This created a complication in which multiple random samples had to be taken of participants not listing any skills and then these samples sifted through to ensure they had involvement data that could be analyzed. The researcher had to piece together a sample in which all users had involvement data, and the distribution of number of skills listed was relatively narrow.

It is important to note that the experimenter had no knowledge of how the alumni program manager(s) managed their alumni program either in alumni interaction, promotion, motivation, brand awareness, organizational mission promotion, or measures of alumni participation success. Alberghini et al. (2014), posited that research on program involvement is potentially crucial since future directions might consider how employee relationships moderate program involvement within the job environment and how organizations might monitor, encourage, and reward user involvement.

Unfortunately, gender and age variables were not available in the dataset as the company tracking the data for the alumni programs did not keep record of that information. This eliminated the possibility of examining gender or generational differences in program involvement. Future research should examine these variables, if available, since they may be helpful in predicting the level of involvement of other participant groupings.

4.2 Future Directions

A remarkably high number of participants seemed to access the alumni user portal only a few times over the period examined of 2013 to 2015. This would seem to indicate that these users are not using the system but perhaps checking in every now and then to make sure their profile is still working or to see if there is any content that might interest them. Very little system access coupled with very few pages visited seems to imply a lack of depth in terms of system exploration. It was not possible to examine

depth of system access within the limits of this study, and perhaps should be examined in the future. Depth of access would provide an additional perspective of involvement since users who access more pages could be screened for how deep into the system they go and potentially how much time they spend there. A majority of users accessed a password reset page during at least one of their login days. This applied to users both within our sample and outside it. This indicates that these users are not accessing their alumni accounts for long periods of time which may lead to users not remembering their login credentials, and may indicate that that they are not interested in utilizing the alumni program.

In addition, future research might assess the alumni participants' attitude toward the mission of the parent organization. In university alumni program research from Singer and Hughey (2002), alumni who had a strong awareness and visible support of their institution were integral to the alumni program achieving its goals. A survey conducted in the future might focus on how salient the organization's mission is to its employees and how the organization intends to use an alumni program to achieve its mission, which could then be related to how involved alumni become and how they accomplish program goals. Alberghini et al. (2014) also claimed that daily monitoring of the KPI's used to evaluate involvement is helpful to understanding trends that may be present. Although present, the variables used to conceptualize involvement in this study were sparse.

In the future, samples of high frequency access users might be analyzed to see what levels of involvement they demonstrate and how those compare to the proportion of low involvement users as well as what the exact proportion is of high involvement and low involvement users. Once these questions are determined, this and other analyses in this project could be used to analyze involvement in alumni program data of other countries.

Newman and Petrosko (2011) pointed out that research on [university alumni programs] contributes to current knowledge by delving into the theory behind psychological factors, as well as social factors affecting alumni loyalty. This translates well to the corporate alumni programs. Ultimately the goal of corporate alumni program research should strive to predict who the most valuable and involved alumni are and how those participants help achieve alumni program goals. Concentrating on participants who are heavily involved in the alumni program would allow organizations to target these alumni with resources and information more effectively. This study, though limited, is a step in that direction.

References

Alberghini, E., Cricelli, L., & Grimaldi, M. (2014). A methodology to manage and monitor social media inside a company: A case study. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *18*(2), 255-277. doi:10.1108/JKM-10-2013-0392

Alumnus. (n.d.). Retrieved December 9, 2014, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alumnus

Aselage, J., & Eisenberger, R. (2003). Perceived organizational support and psychological contracts: A theoretical integration. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *24*(5), 491-509.

Diefendorff, J. M., Brown, D. J., Kamin, A. M., & Lord, R. G. (2002). Examining the roles of job involvement and work centrality in predicting organizational citizenship behaviors and job performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *23*(1), 93-108. doi:10.1002/job.123

Lounsbury, J. W., Steel, R. P., Gibson, L. W., & Drost, A. W. (2008). Personality traits and career satisfaction of human resource professionals. Human Resource Development International, 11(4), 351-366. doi:10.1080/13678860802261215

McDearmon, J. (2013). Hail to Thee, Our Alma Mater: Alumni Role Identity and the Relationship to Institutional Support Behaviors. *Research in Higher Education*, *54*(3), 283-302.

Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *13*(2), 103-123.

Newman, M. D., & Petrosko, J. M. (2011). Predictors of Alumni Association Membership. *Research in Higher Education*, *52*(7), 738-759.

Singer, T. S., & Hughey, A. W. (2002). The Role of the Alumni Association in Student Life. *New Directions for Student Services*, (100), 51.

Stryker, S. (2002). Symbolic interactionism: A social structural version. Caldwell, New Jersey: The Blackburn Press. (Original work published 1980).

West, J. (2014). *Best Practices and Innovation in Corporate Alumni Relations*. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Psychology, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX.

Zhao, H., & Liden, R. C. (2011). Internship: A recruitment and selection perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(1), 221-229. doi:10.1037/a0021295

Biographical Information

Jaclyn West received her Master's in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from The University of Texas at Arlington in 2015. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Southern Methodist University in 2012. Prior to beginning research on corporate alumni programs, Jaclyn worked in a clinical laboratory during her undergraduate degree investigating anxiety research and treatment. The first year of her Master's program she was a research assistant in a lab facilitating data analysis on a dissertation examining group idea generation and formation. Jaclyn's future research will focus on psychological concepts within and related to organizations.