

How to Catch an Employer's Eye: A Pilot Study

Emily Rickel, B.S., Devin Kelley, B.S., Kobe Reese, & Barbara Chaparro, Ph.D.
Department of Human Factors & Behavioral Neurobiology



Introduction

- Resumes provide an overview of an applicant's academic and professional experience
- Employers spend an average of 8 to 10 seconds on a resume before moving onto the next one
- Eye-tracking data allows for a better understanding of eye movement and fixation points on a resume

Pilot Study Objective

To refine and practice procedures for future studies that aim to understand how employers read resumes by using eye-tracking technology to monitor eye movements as participants read a student resume.



Figure 1: Tobii Pro Glasses 2

Method

Pilot Participants

- 12 college students (8 female, 4 male; 19-24 yrs old)
- 41.7% reported experience writing resumes
- 16.7% reported experience reviewing resumes

Procedure

- Participants received study briefing and filled out demographic questionnaire
- Participants fitted and calibrated with glasses
- Participants given scenario and asked to view the following resumes as an employer

Task 1 6 participants viewed the "original" resume, while 6 viewed the "modified" resume for 10 seconds to capture their first impressions

Task 2 Participants told to look for traits to fulfill a specific job opening, then viewed the same resume for another 10 seconds

Participants answered open-ended questions to investigate likes, dislikes, and suggestions

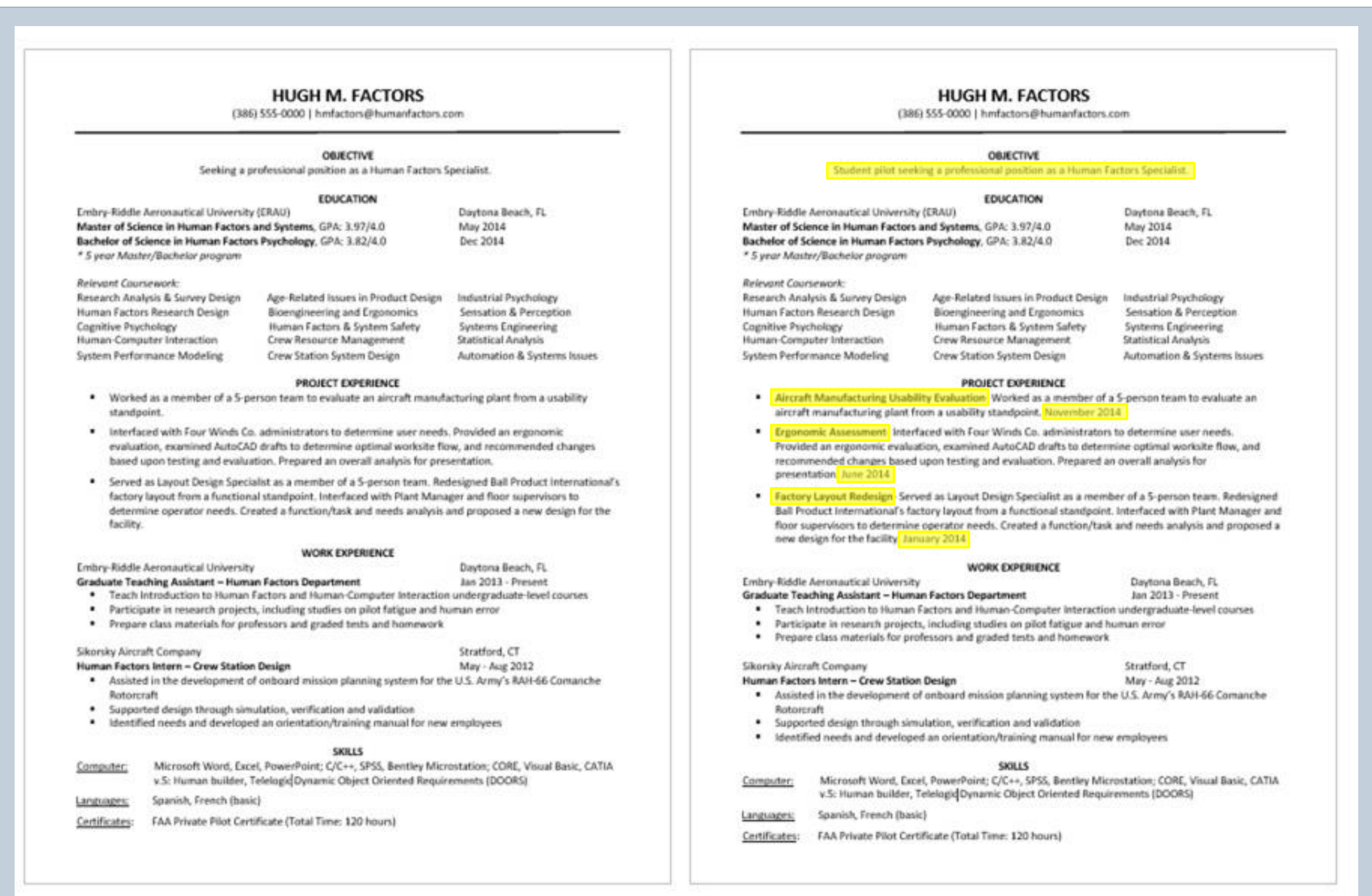


Figure 2: Original resume (left), Modified resume (right)

The "modified" version had the same content as the "original", along with a more specific objective statement and the addition of project dates and bolded project titles (Yellow Highlight).

Results

Task 1: What are viewers' first impressions?

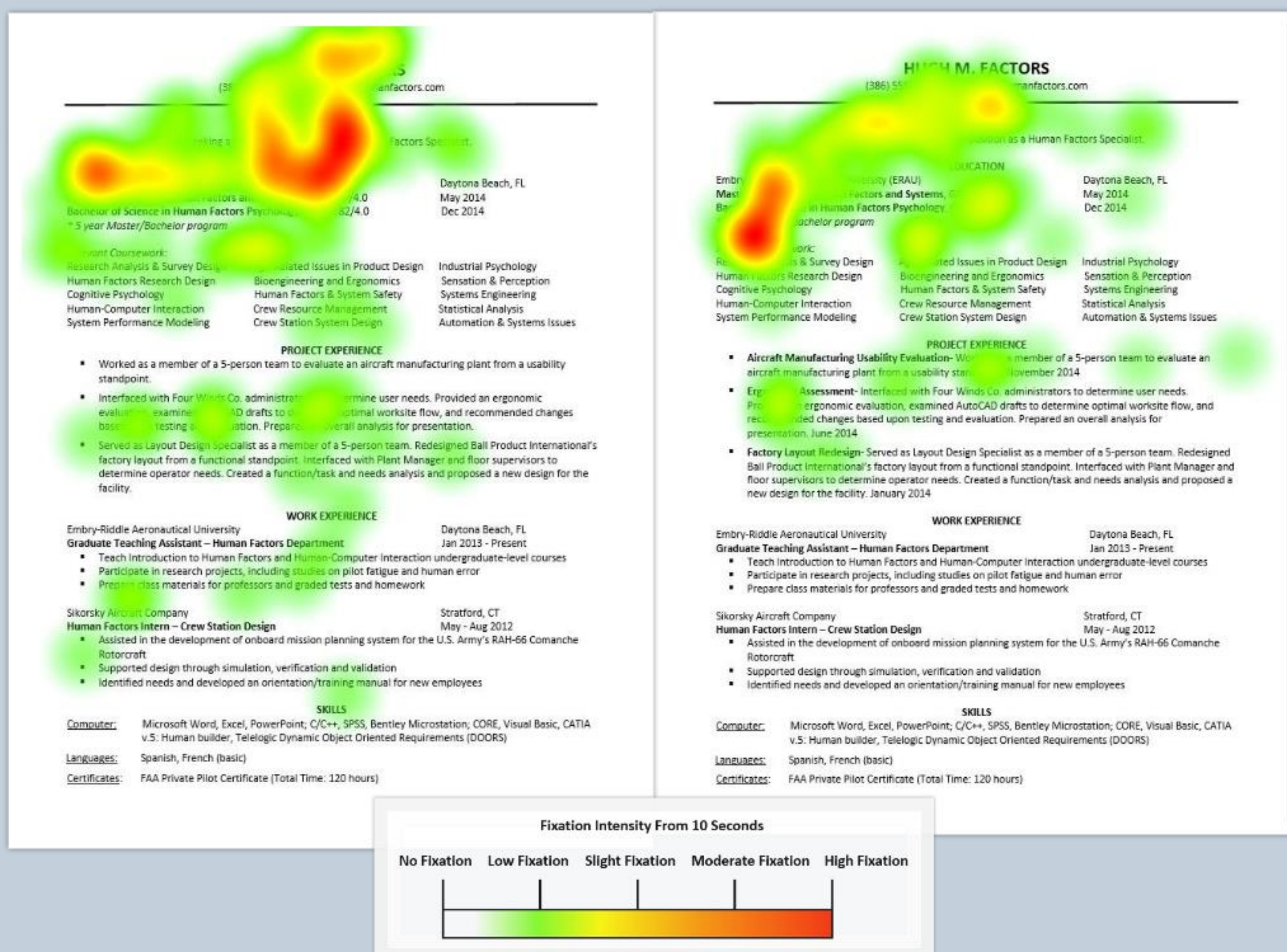


Figure 3: Original resume (left), Modified resume (right)

With only 10 seconds to view the resume, most participants didn't make it past the first half of the page.

Task 2: Is the resume appropriate for a specified job?

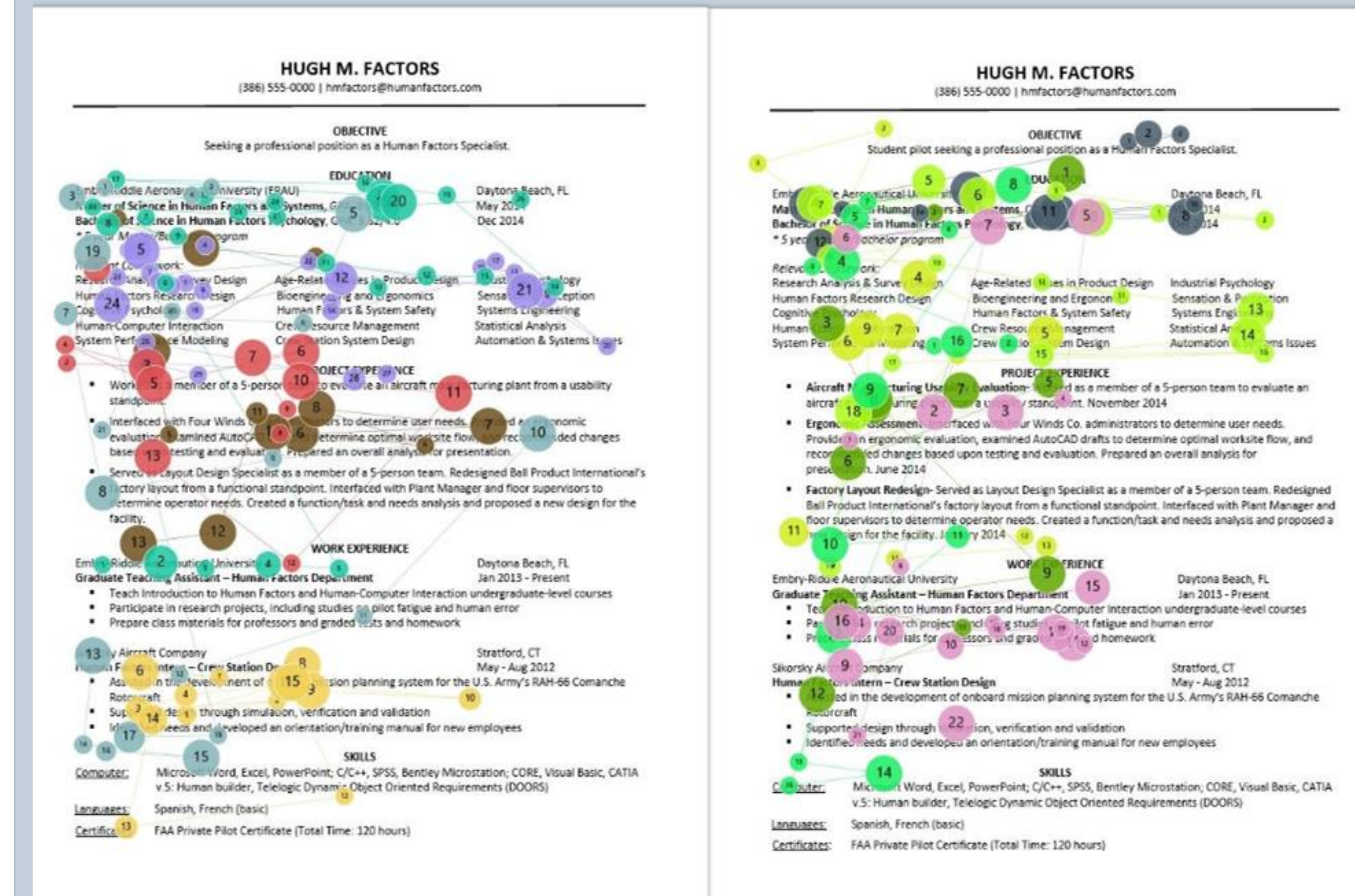


Figure 4: Original resume (left), Modified resume (right)

When asked if this candidate was appropriate for a specific job, participants tended to look at the more defined objective statement and project headers on the modified version.

Recommendations

Based on the eye-tracking and qualitative results gathered during this pilot study, students should consider implementing the following recommendations when updating their resume:

- List relevant project experience, work experience, and skills in the top half page
- Create and bold titles in the project and work experience sections
- Include a specific objective statement

References

Greenly, R. (1993). How to write a resume. *Technical Communication* 40(1), pp. 42-48
Rickel, E., Kelley, D., & Reese, K. (2020, March 2). The science behind standing out. *The Avion Newspaper*. Retrieved from <http://www.theavion.com>
Sample Resume. Retrieved from <https://careerservices.erau.edu/resources/resume-cv-tips/>
Tobii Pro. Tobii Pro Glasses 2. Retrieved from <https://www.tobii.com/product-listing/tobii-pro-glasses-2/>
Tobii Pro. What is eye tracking? Retrieved from <https://www.tobii.com/blog/what-is-eye-tracking/>