

Exploring the Motivations Behind MOOC Enrollment

Erin Locey & Dorian Canelas, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted to test if there are differences in the motivations behind taking an online Coursera course depending on if the course participant is a student, employed, or unemployed. I hypothesize that Coursera courses are taken more to aid Coursera participants in their education or career than just for enjoyment. Therefore, students will primarily take Coursera courses to aid in their current studies and/or to supplement an in-person class they are currently taking, while employed participants will take courses for career skills. Non-working participants will take courses more for pure enjoyment students and working participants do.

METHODS

- Surveys were emailed to the participants of 14 Coursera courses, asking questions such as student/employment status, how the Coursera course tied in with their education (if they are a student), and motivation for enrolling in course.
- Participant survey data is stratified into three categories: *Student*, *Working*, and *Not Working*.
- The three categories are compared to see if there is a difference in the motivations for enrolling in a Coursera course based from student/employment status.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

MOOC Name	Invited	Responded
Art of the MOOC	2011	18
Visual Perception and the Brain	6710	228
Music as Biology	17658	616
Tropical Parasitology	2031	72
Human Physiology	128934	2883
Bioelectricity	2206	42
Think Again	45412	995
Business Metrics	64483	18
Challenges of Global Health	16482	434
Medical Neuroscience	38975	379
Genetics and Evolution	21504	617
Advertising and Society	1849	49
Healthcare Innovation	744	18
Dog Cognition	72295	3418
Total	421294	9787

Fig. 1 Number of Coursera students who were invited and responded to the survey.

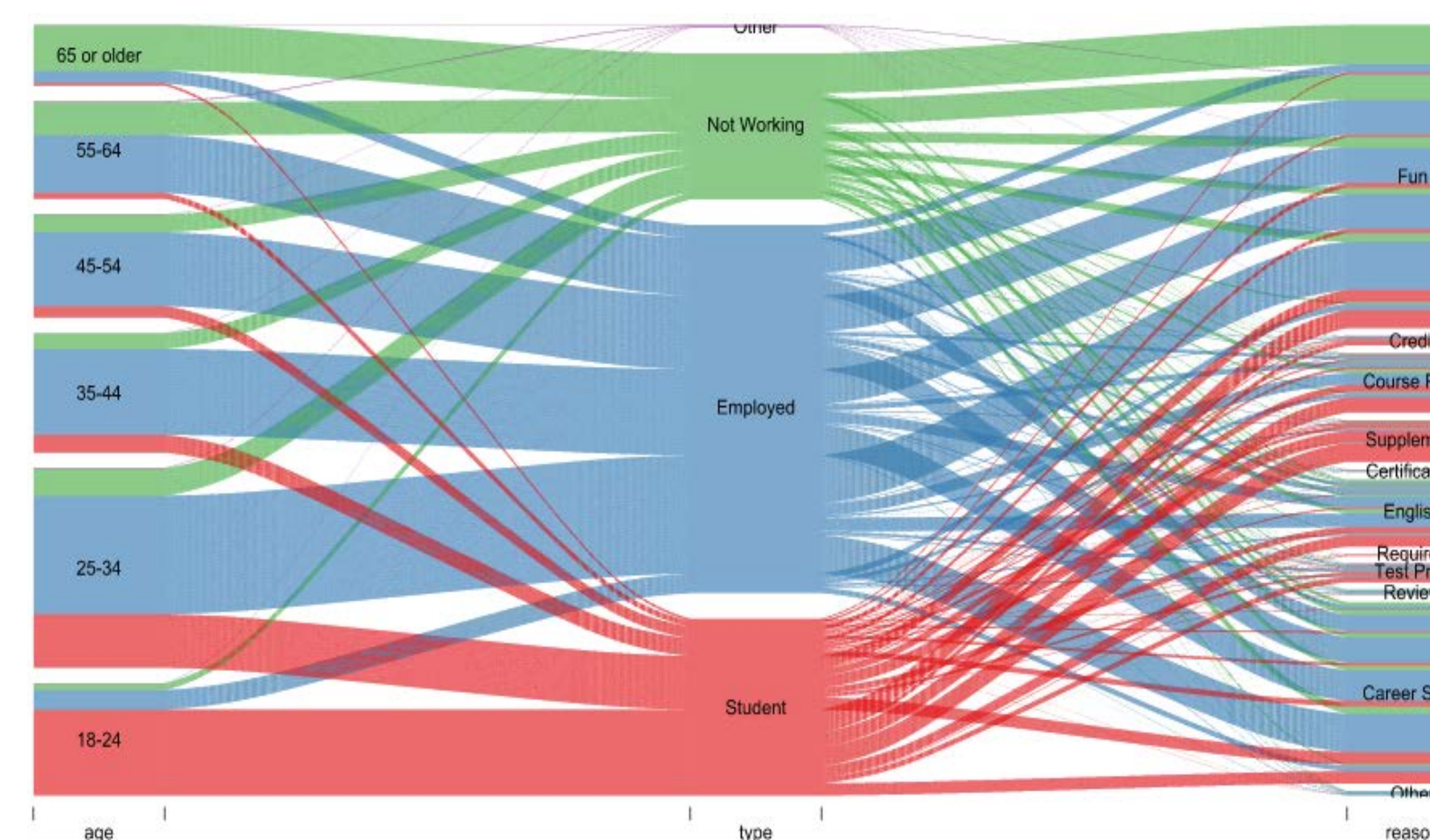


Fig. 2 Alluvial diagram depicting respondent's age, student/employment status, and motivations for enrolling in course.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS (cont.)

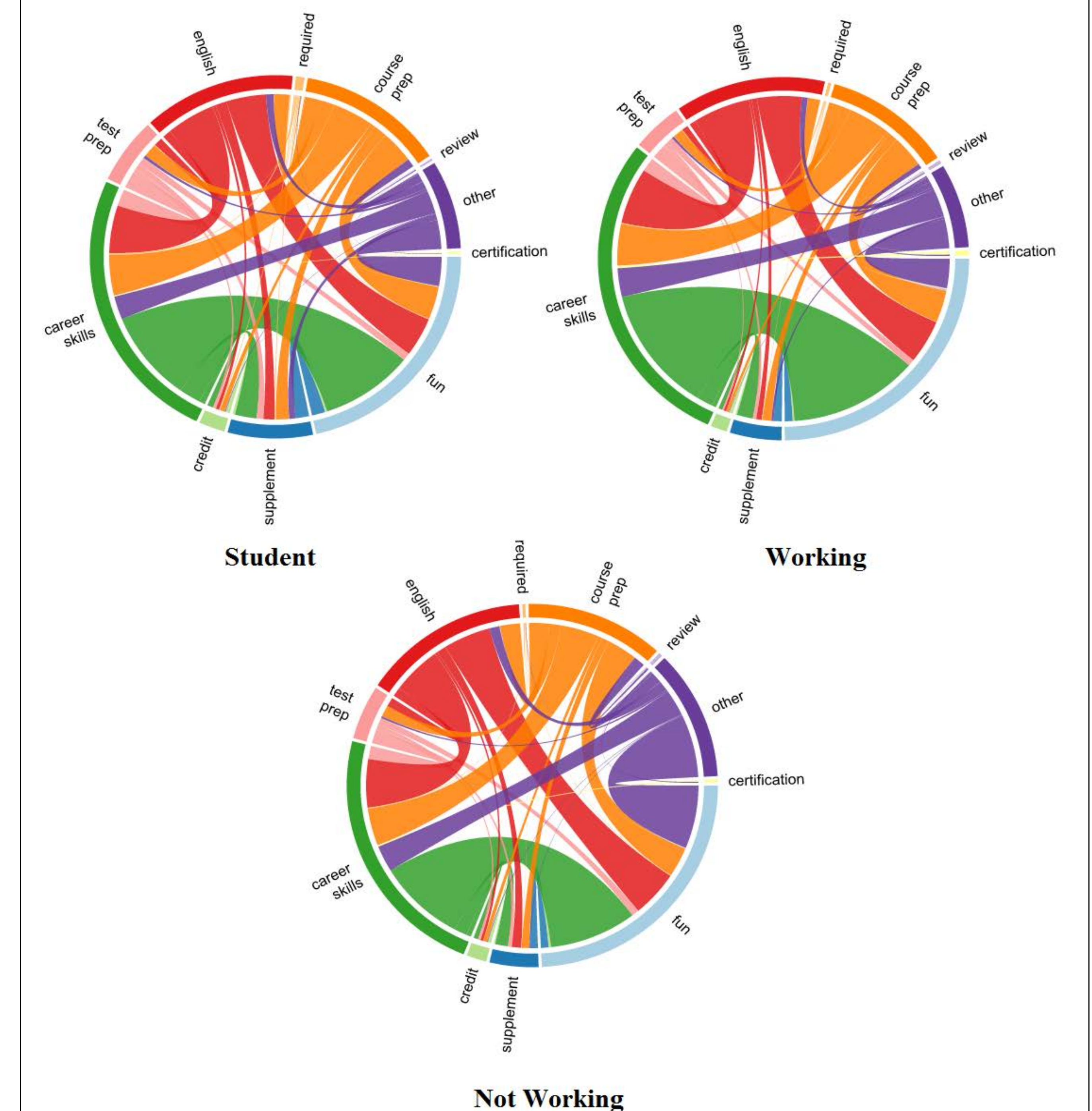


Fig. 3 Motivations for enrolling in Coursera course by student/employment status.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Dorian Canelas, Ben Cooke, Kim Manturuk, Jorgianne Robinson, and Alice Silberstein, for helping me with this research project, and to Amy Finnegan for organizing the EHD and Bass Connections Showcase. Funding for this work was generously provided by Bass Connections.