Hi there! My name is Julianna Donaher, and if you're watching this, you've discovered my case study on motivation in online learning environments.

This study was completed in June of 2021 as part of my M.Ed coursework at Northeastern University in eLearning and Instructional Design. The study focuses on one learner,

[SLIDE: Gathering the gumption]

Adam, as he completes portions of his degree in Biochemistry. In observing his studies and course materials, I will apply the learning theories introduced in my current course How We Learn. I will use those theories to draw conclusions around Adam's education—most importantly I will theorize the role of motivation, or as he calls it: Gumption

[SLIDE: Why this study?]

I came to this topic by way of my own professional mission. Through research and practiced study, I am seeking out patterns and data around what makes a successful online learning experience.

At present, I am specifically focused on how online educators can meet the needs of non-traditional learners. Nontraditional learners in this study will be defined as students who are arriving at their undergraduate education in a later period of life then the typical student. Nontraditional learners will therefore have an entirely different set of given circumstances and responsibilities outside of their studies.

[SLIDE: Statement of purpose]

This case study will observe and analyze a sample learning experience from one such learner.

[SLIDE: Meet Adam]

This is Adam.

Adam speaks: *Well the first thing I'm going to do is, uh, just uh, question how I start it by, you know, starting and restarting about six or seven times at first.* [laughs]

At the moment, he is answering a discussion prompt as part of his online course in International Relations.

Adam is currently 36 years old. As the "Learner" tab of this site details, he has achieved his associates degree, but due to a series of obstacles, was not able to complete the necessary credits to a bachelor's degree. While some would find this sufficient, Adam has consistently felt that his education results in lower income and less fulfilling work.

When the pandemic ushered in a particularly challenging chapter of his last job, Adam decided to dive in and finally accomplish one of his longest standing goals, his bachelor's degree.

[SLIDE: Expectations]

I fully admit that when I selected Adam as a subject for this study, I did so because I had heard about the structure of his current course. The online environment he has described to me was repetitive, largely isolated, and un-engaging. My hypothesis, was that his experience would be negative, and his motivation, low.

And in exchange for patiently sitting through my observation and interviews, I have put this embarrassing picture of Adam on the internet, to embody for you, the negative feelings I expected to find.

[SLIDE: Reality]

In reality, I found Adam to be quite the opposite of my hypothesized outcome. It's possible that he was in a good mood on the day we touched base, but I would argue that the quantitative data is his good grades, and the qualitative data of him being able to clearly describe

the course learnings and their overall purpose point towards a different conclusion.

Adam's developed ability to prioritize and perceive an experience's role in his overall learning journey meant he repelled a majority of the stress. His personalized, time-sensitive dreams and ambitions propelled him through an otherwise un-engaging process.

[Slide: Key theories explored]

In the tabs of this case study you will find further detail on the aforementioned. You will also see more language around what I consider to be some of the key learning theories relevant to Adam's journey.

[SLIDE: Thank you]

I hope that by exploring this study you will make discoveries and fascinating conclusions as I have. I'd also like to thank our subject, Adam for allowing us a brief, but somewhat intense look into his studies.

As always, I welcome any and all questions to my email address listed here.

Thanks for listening and have a great day!