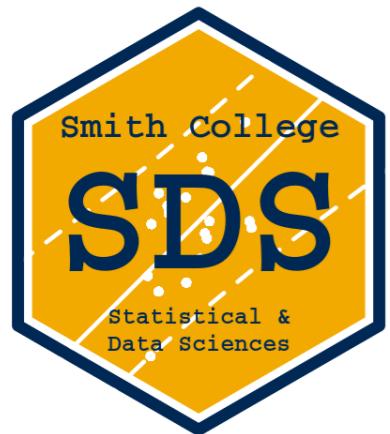


# Using Slack for Communication & Collaboration in the Classroom



Albert Y. Kim  
[@rudeboybert](https://twitter.com/rudeboybert)

Symposium on Data Science & Statistics  
Bellevue WA  
Thursday May 30, 2019



What is Slack?  
Answer via HBO

# Components of Slack

## Workspace:

Think *projects*

Within 220

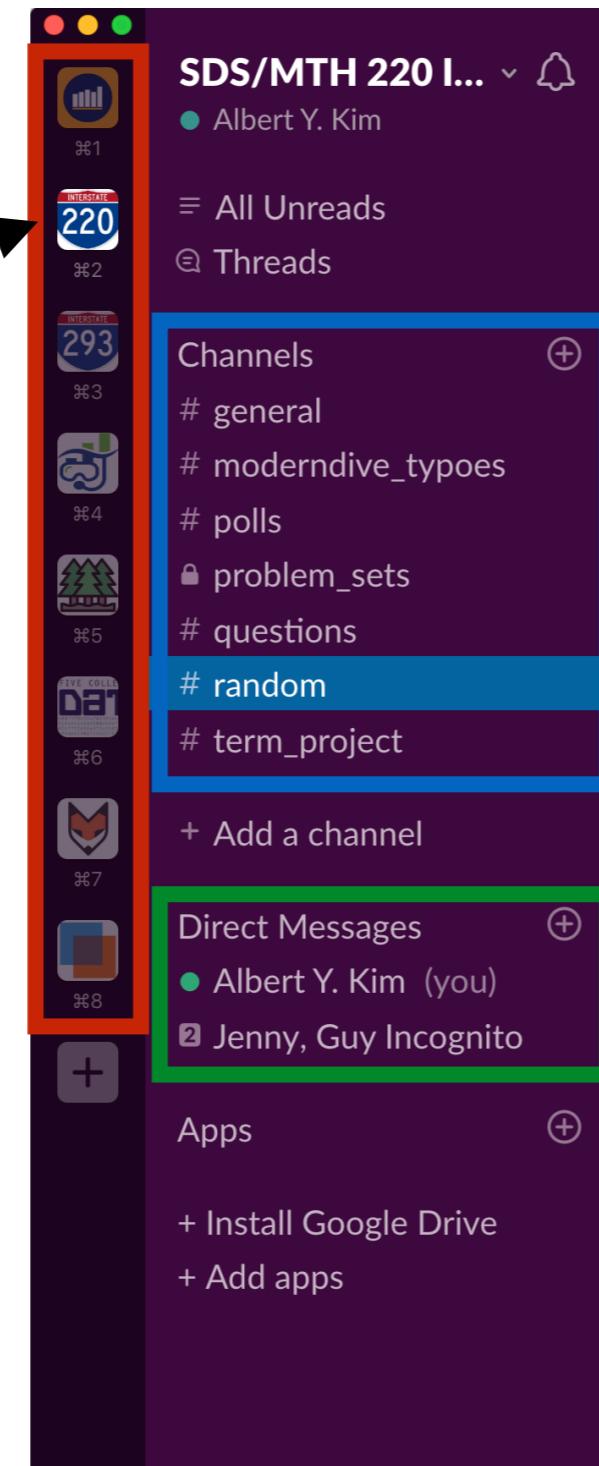
Workspace:

### 1. Channels:

Think  
*forums* (public  
& private)

### 2. Direct Messages:

Think *group  
texts*



#random

☆ | 44 | 0 | Non-work banter

Thursday, May 2nd

4:52 PM

@everyone Hi Stat Class, Albert has been selected as one of the professors who will get pied tomorrow. The pie'ing is happening from 1-1:30 pm at Chapin Lawn during the wellness carnival. Please stop by and enjoy the event host by the Global Medical Brigade.

IMG\_6932.jpg

SMITH COLLEGE GB PRESENTS:  
SPRING FLING PIE THROW  
You voted for the professors you wanted to see pied, here are your top 3:  
Steve Williams from 2-2:30  
Albert Kim from 1-1:30  
Miles Ott from 1-1:30  
Come out on May 3rd to see them get pied during the Wellness Carnival!

+ Message #random

# Context to keep in mind in this talk

- Baseline for comparison in this talk is email & Moodle-like course management systems
- I have heard of other platforms like Piazza, but haven't use it. I'm open to comments!
- At Smith College Statistical & Data Sciences (SDS) program we're *very* pro-Slack...

# Context to keep in mind in this talk



This Slack post speaks to:

- Large existing buy-in of Slack in our program
- Casual nature of interactions

# Why Slack?

# Above all else



Forced compartmentalization & centralization into Slack Workspaces

As opposed to 😔 context switching in email

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>		me, Courtney (2)		ers	Me	new post
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>		Buffer iDoneThis		ethis	Buffer digest	
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# Why Slack?

- Seamless transition between *slick* interfaces:  
browser to  &  to 
- Vast array of [apps](#)
- For instructors in particular:
  - Coordinate between people with many roles:  
instructors & TA's & graders & students
  - Getting us one step closer to promised land  ...

# From Machine Learning 293 Slack Workspace

SDS/CSC 293 ... 

Albert Y. Kim

All Unreads

Threads

Channels 

# ethics\_discussion

# general

# mp1

# mp2

# mp3

# mp4

**# mp5** 

# pol's

# questions

# random

+ Add channel

Direct Messages 

Apps 

+ Install Google Drive

+ Add apps

**Mini-Project 5 Channel**

#mp5    

Wednesday, May 1st

write\_csv("submission.csv")

(edited)

   5 replies Last reply 28 days ago

5:44 PM  [REDACTED] On your Kaggle submission? Ours was also really high. I think it's illustrating how poor the model is? Which kind of makes sense since we just threw all the variables at it

6:44 PM  [REDACTED] For our lasso model all of the coefficients are coming out as zero, regardless of what we set our lambda to. Is anyone else having this issue?

1 reply 28 days ago

Thursday, May 2nd

 **Albert Y. Kim** 3:18 AM

Here is what I got. Note, I may have still made a mistake and your answers may vary depending on the data wrangling you did and what lambda you chose. but the story is consistent with the themes of yesterday's lecture

Screen Shot 2019-05-02 at 6.15.54 AM.png

Method	RMLSE on training	RMLSE on test (via Kaggle)
Unregularized lm	0.04755788	0.17096
LASSO	0.08869404	0.16130

1 reply 28 days ago

 10:18 AM  to remove N/A's from a variable

test <- test %>%  
mutate(GarageYrBlt = ifelse(is.na(GarageYrBlt), mean(GarageYrBlt, na.rm=TRUE), GarageYrBlt))

1

## Promised land! Students answering questions!

# Why Slack for Students?

# Above all else

Reducing instructor/student barriers:



francesca

@franch787

Following



i love slack because its the only acceptable way to communicate via profs in a less formal way than email

1:19 PM - 30 Mar 2019

---

6 Likes



1



6



Tweet your reply

# Student Feedback

From two Spring 2019 courses:

- Intro stats: 36/40 responded
- Machine learning: 47/50 responded

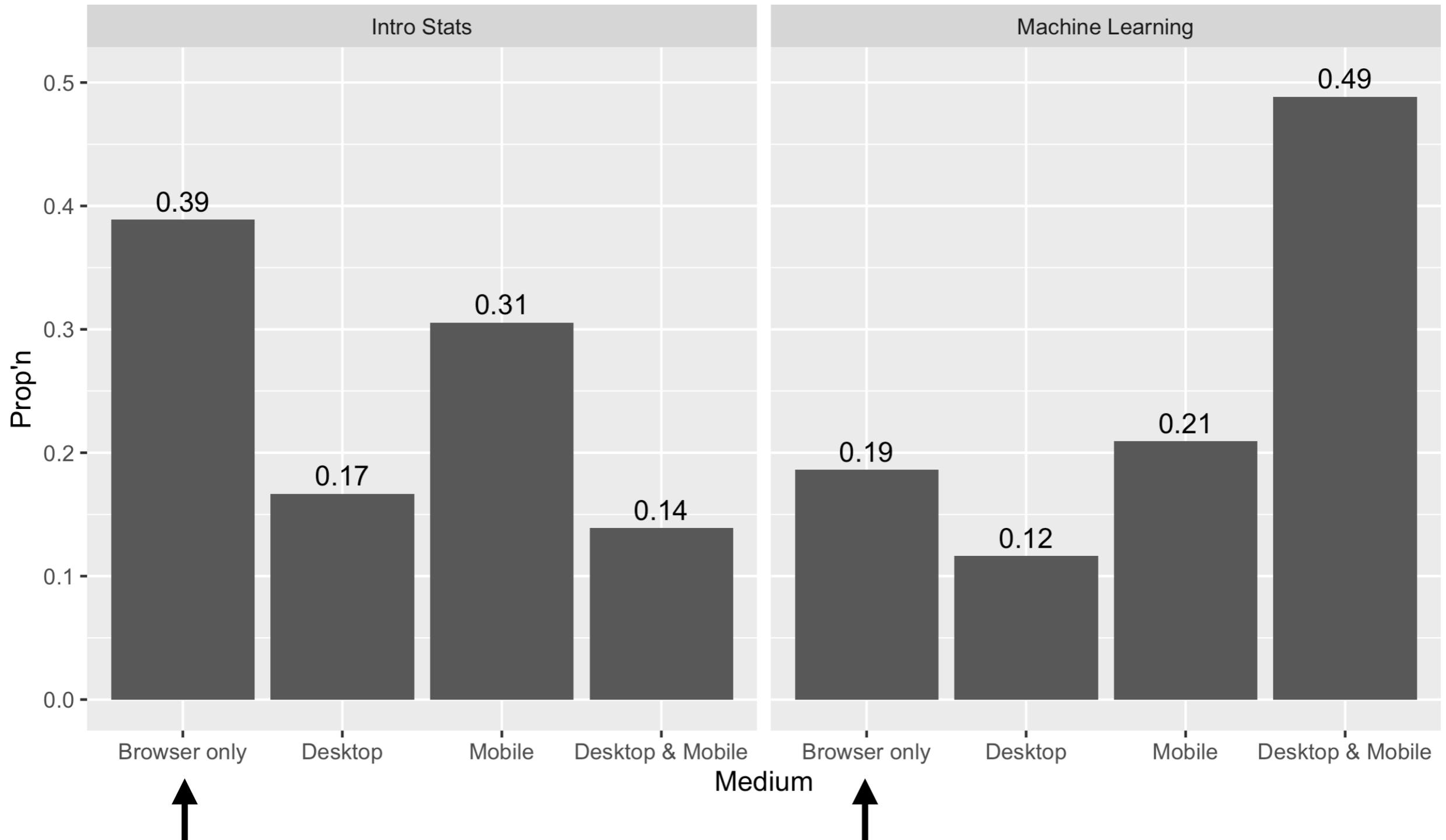
Asked:

1. Interface used: Browser, desktop, mobile
2. Overall feelings about Slack
3. And four other questions

All responses [here](#) (with permission to share).

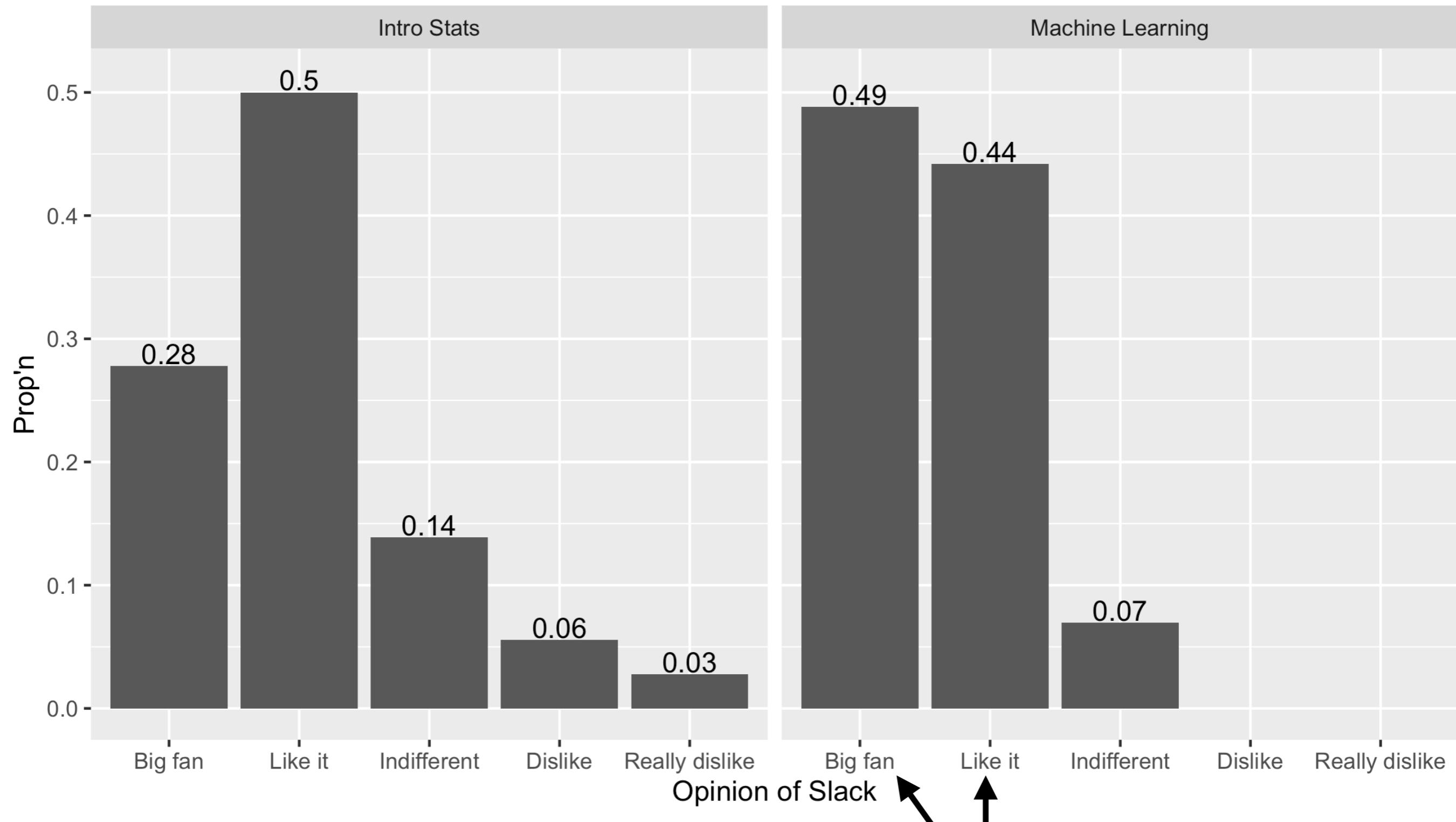
Let's take a look!

# Interface Used by Students



Speaks to issue of notifications. More later...

# Opinion of Slack



Speaks to degree of Slack buy-in within SDS

# Some 🍒 Picked Comments

👍 comments:

- "... has a lot less pressure and necessity to be super formal than email."
- "Slack is better for chatting with group members & sharing files."
- "Liked the code-sharing & emoji features. The threads made it easy to communicate and follow ideas."

👎 comments:

- "I don't like having to check multiple platforms"
- "I didn't like the notification system... I felt like I was always missing things even with notifications on."
- "We hit the free plan's space limit"

All responses [here](#) (with permission to share)

# Potential Pitfalls

# Above all else

Managing notifications:

 **Alex Engelberg**  
@aengelbro

[Follow](#) ▾

1 new message



0:02 | 3M views

11:42 AM - 31 Oct 2018

20,063 Retweets 91,936 Likes

827 20K 92K

# My Attempt at Managing Notifications

- Especially 1st time, create a burner profile (fake student profile) to test. Ex: Guy Incognito
- Inform students of browser & mobile interfaces
- For browser only students: How do I trigger email notifications?
  - Individual and group DM's will trigger
  - In **#general** channel, using **@everyone** will trigger (can set to only admins)
  - In all other channels, using **@channel** will trigger
- Next time: After a few weeks, I will spend time talking about notifications. Probably a good life lesson anyways...

Live demo with  
mystery 🤫 audience  
member!

Screencast will be posted in slides afterwards.

# Conclusion

# Reasons to Use Slack in Class

In my opinion (IMO):

- Are there multiple groups to coordinate: instructors & TA's & graders & students? 
- Does your class involve a lot of group work/collaboration? 
- Does your class involve sharing a lot of **code**?  
Either directly or via GitHub? 
- Do other instructors in your dept use Slack? 
- Do you hate email? 
- Do you care about my students feeling that instructors are more accessible? 

As you accumulate 's, the case for Slack gets stronger!

# Thank you!

Slides available at  
[twitter.com/rudeboybert](https://twitter.com/rudeboybert)