

the elephant in the room

why did I leave academia?

it's personal

it's about the system

21% in university

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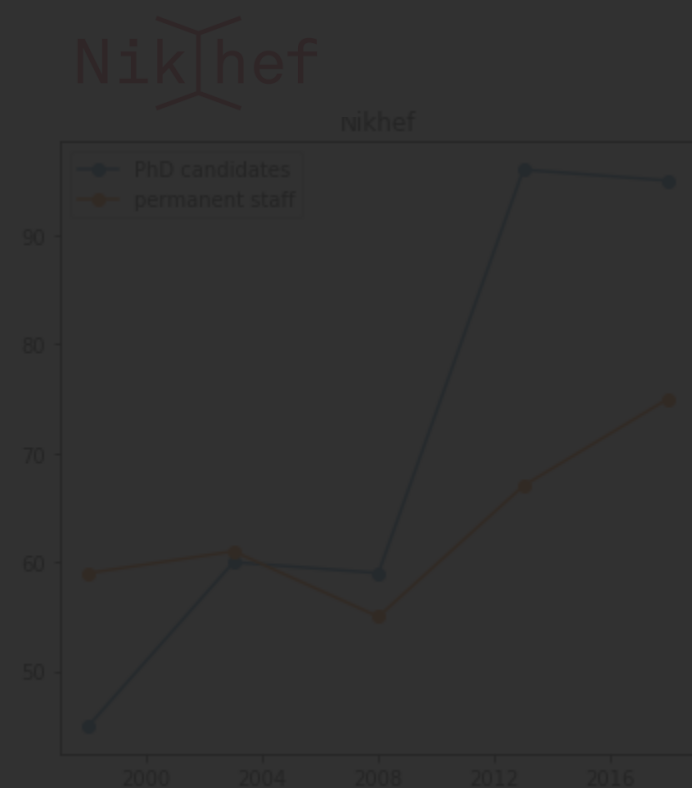
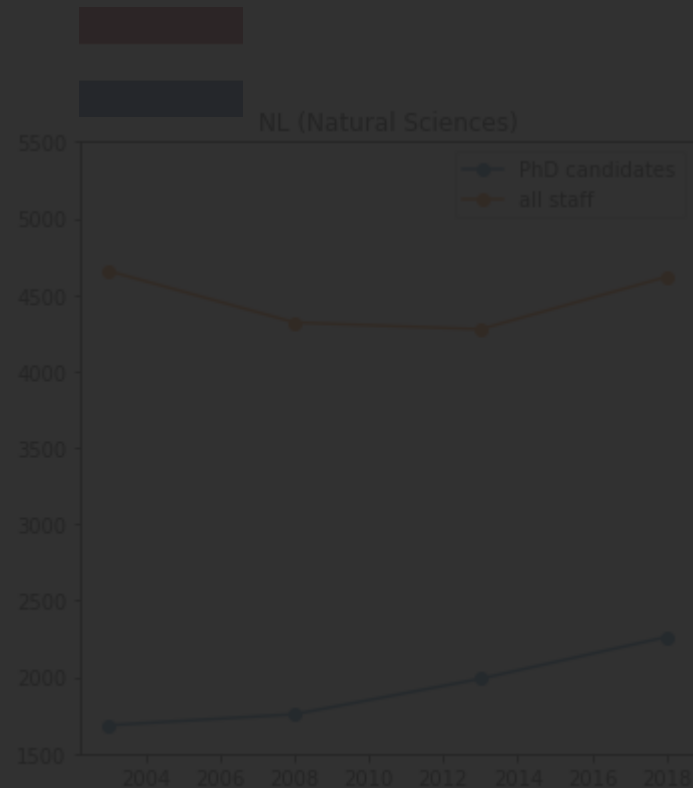
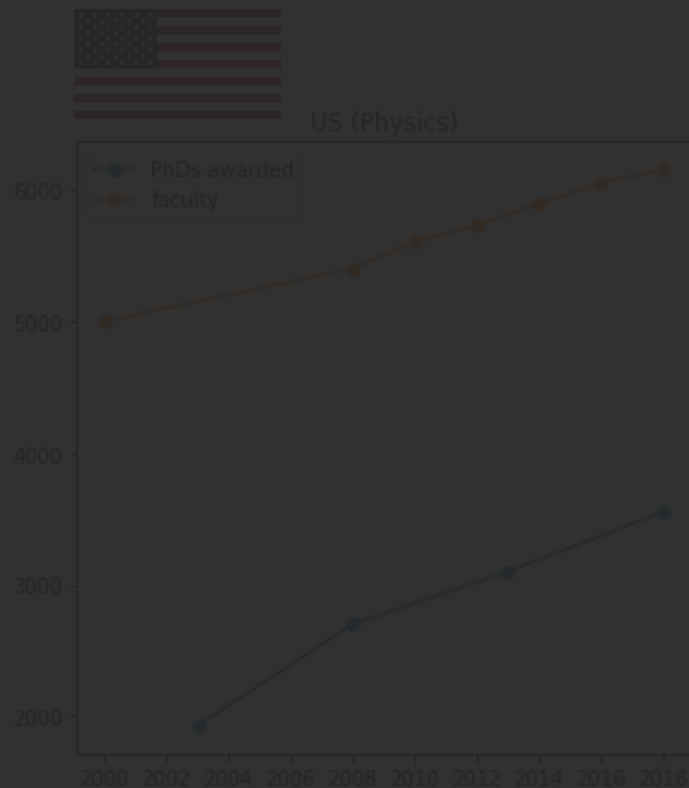
17% in academia

21% in university

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10% *permanent* in academia

PhDs vs Staff



PhDs

+65%

+34%

+111%

staff

+23%

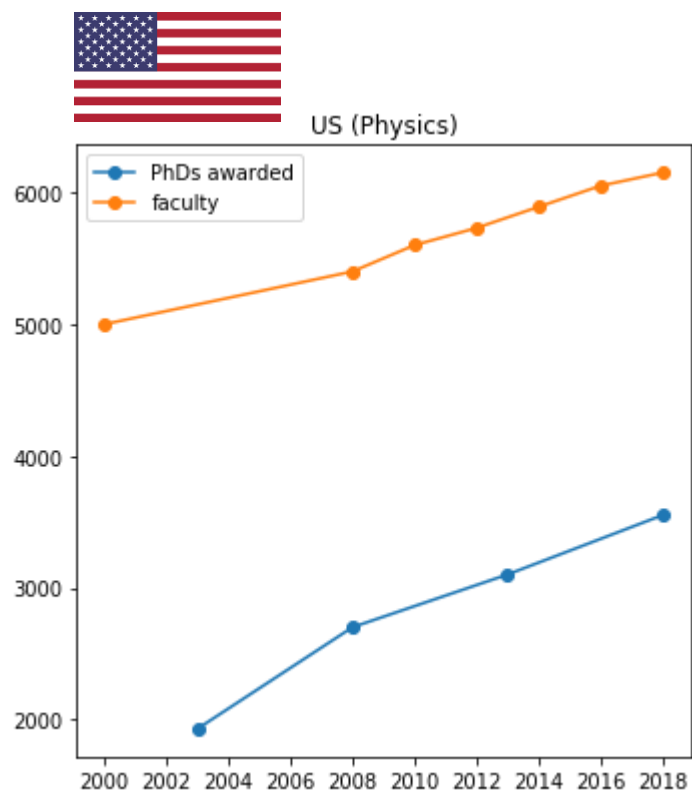
-1%

+27%

US: NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates (2018), AIP Data on faculty employment

NL: VNSU (Vereniging van Universiteiten)

PhDs vs Staff

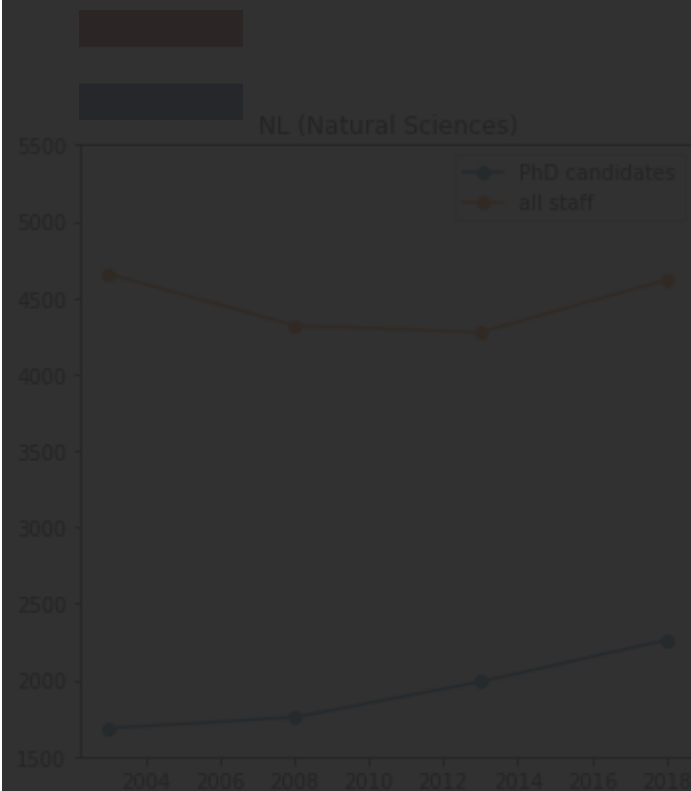


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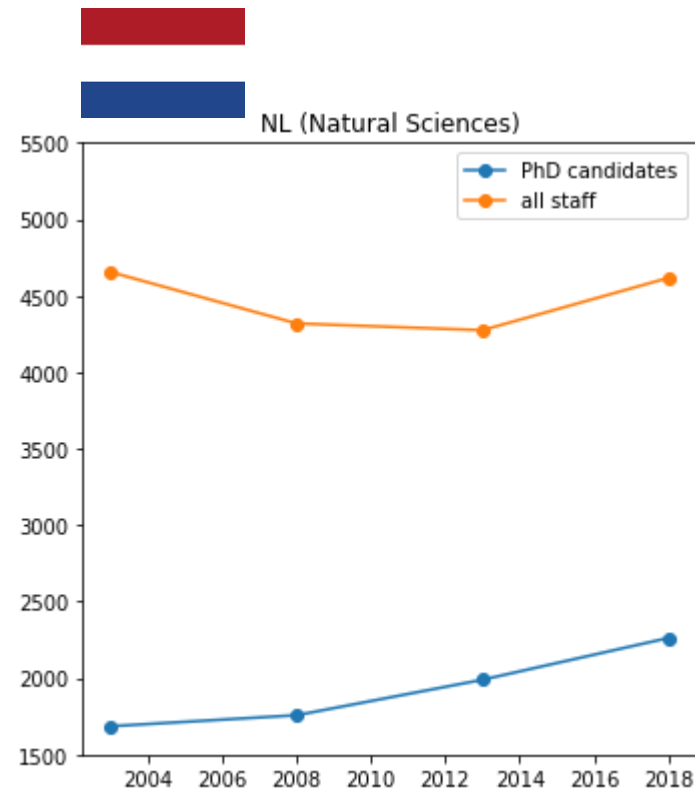
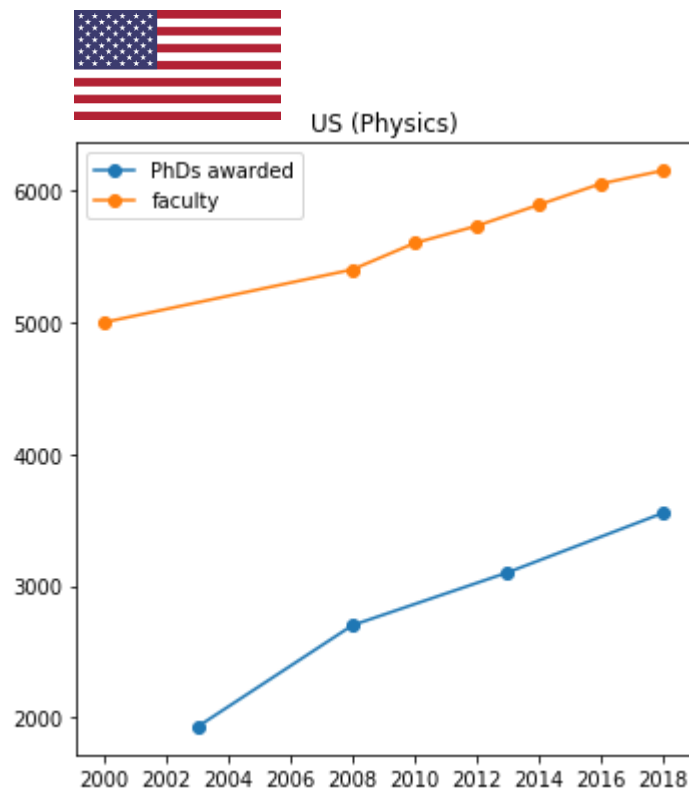
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PhDs vs Staff



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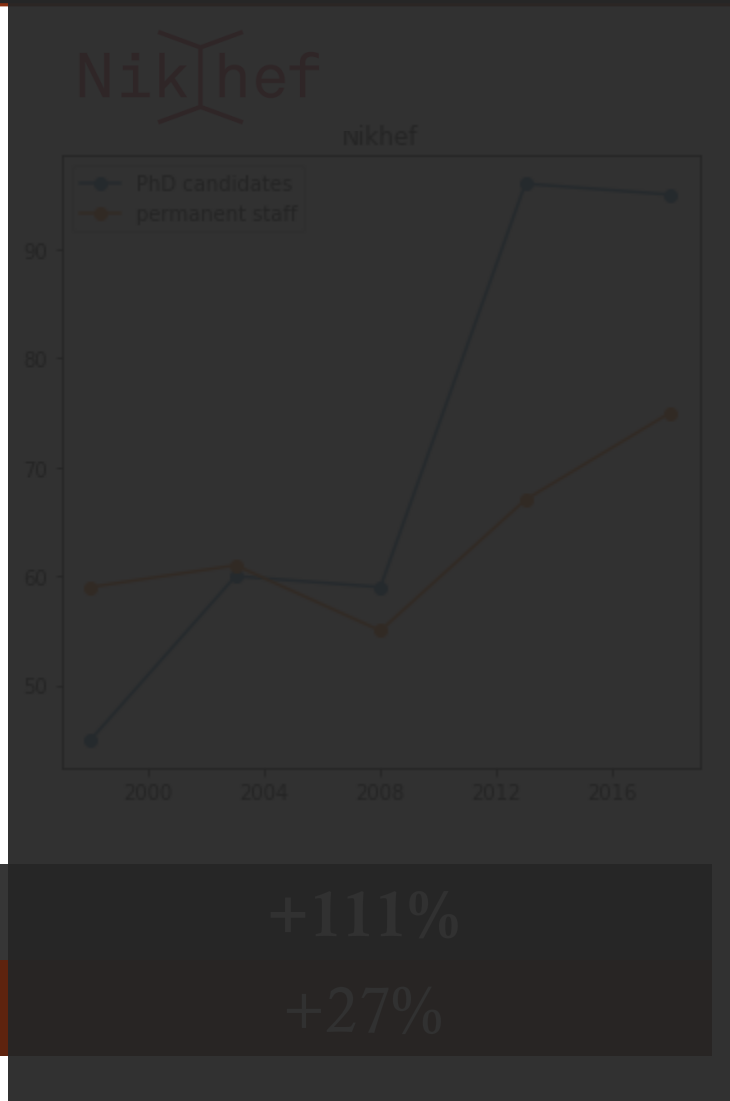
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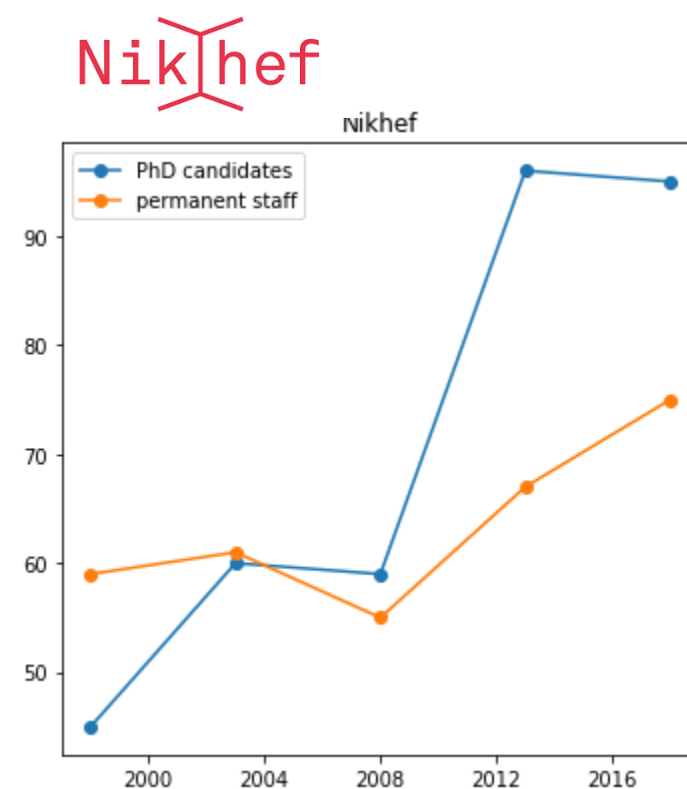
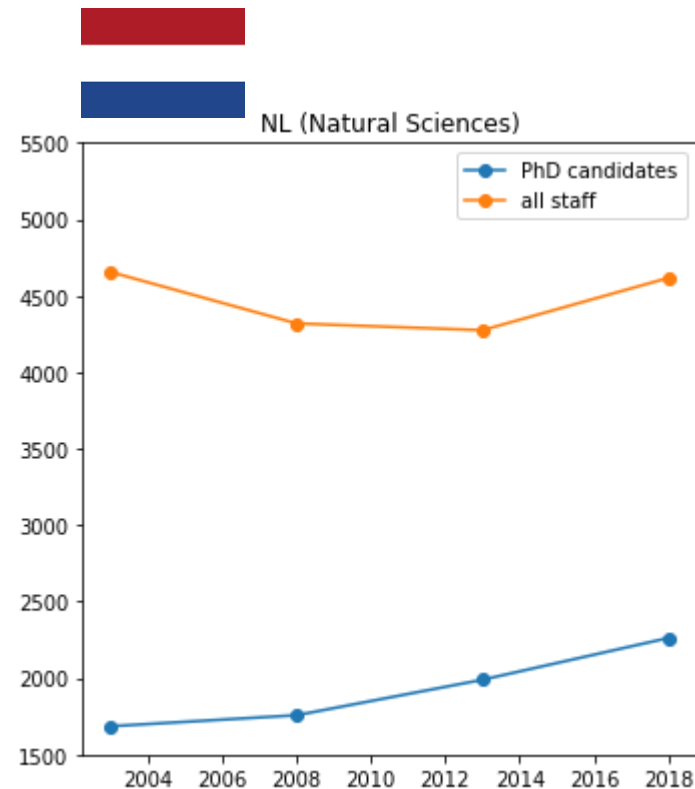
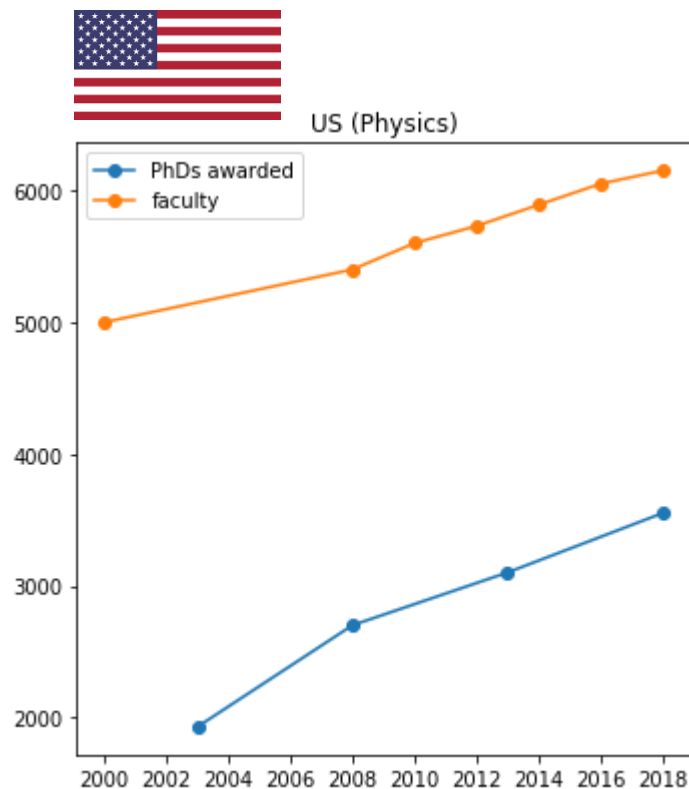
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selection criteria

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- **educate the public**

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- **show that it's profitable**

**56% of PhD students want a
career in academia**

Nature's graduate survey (2019): 6,300 PhDs

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76% are likely to try, *anyway*

75% at least satisfied with the PhD

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**36% sought help for anxiety and/or
depression**

**31-40% show clinical signs of anxiety
and/or depression**

WHO World Mental Health Surveys 2018: 13,984 college students (PhDs and non)
Evans et al., 2018. *Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education*: 2,051 PhDs

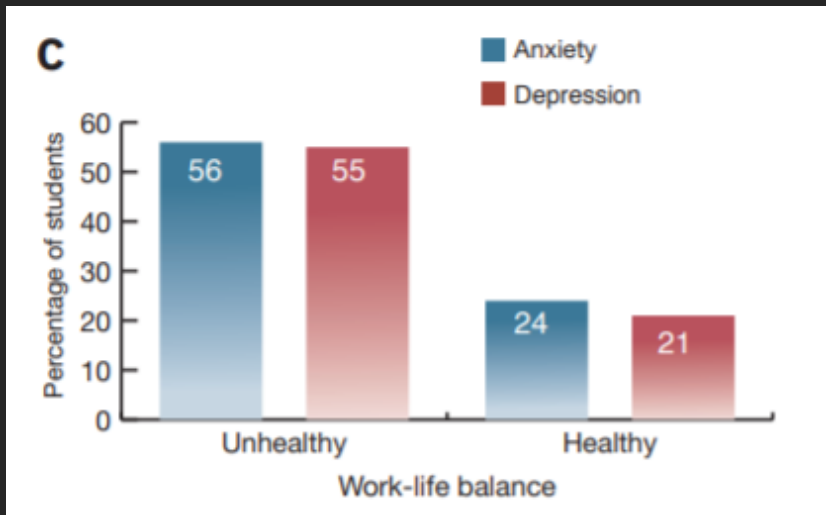
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6% in the general population

mental health: drivers

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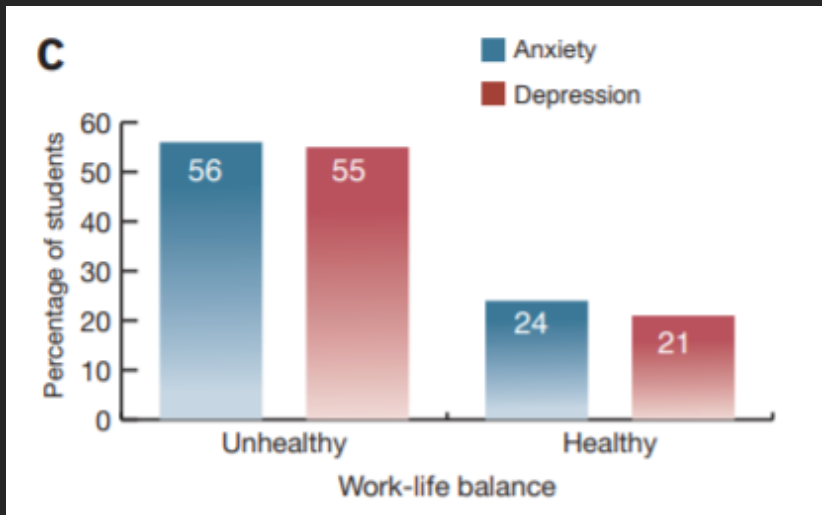
work-life balance



76% work more than 41 hours a week

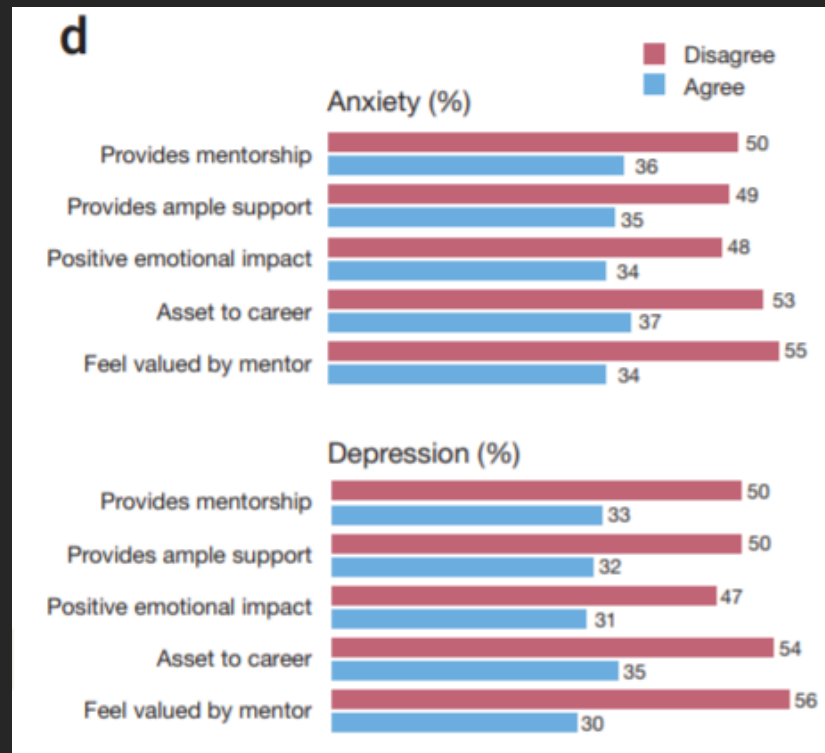
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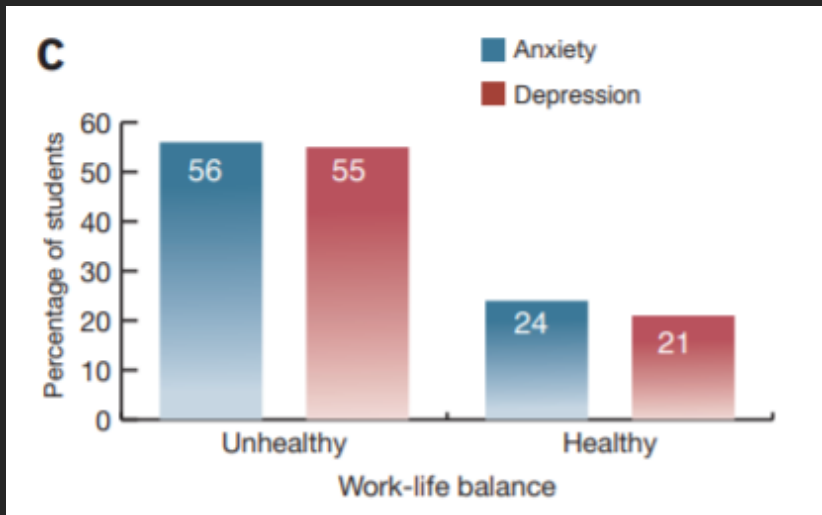
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supervision



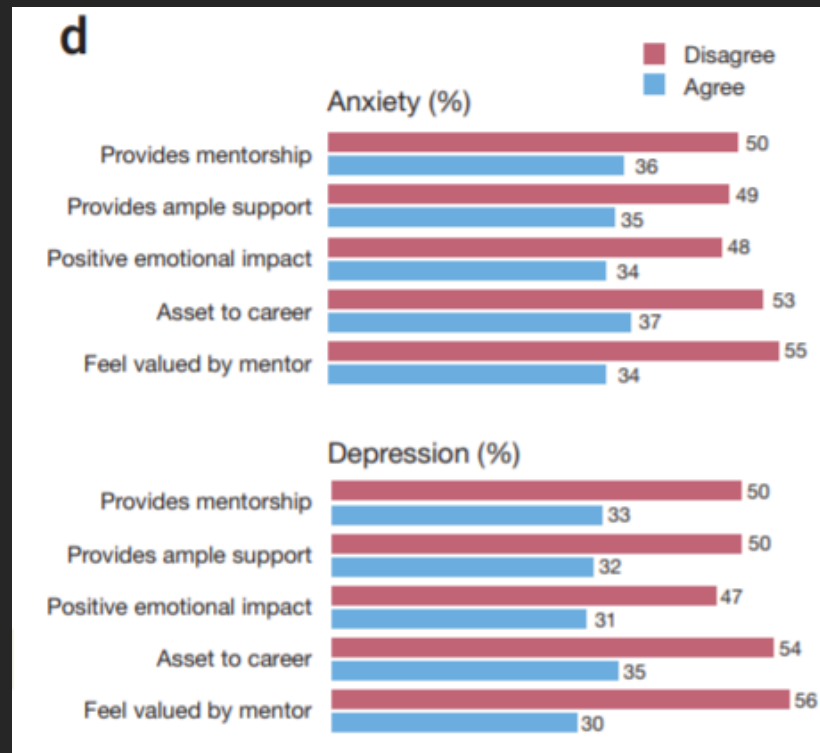
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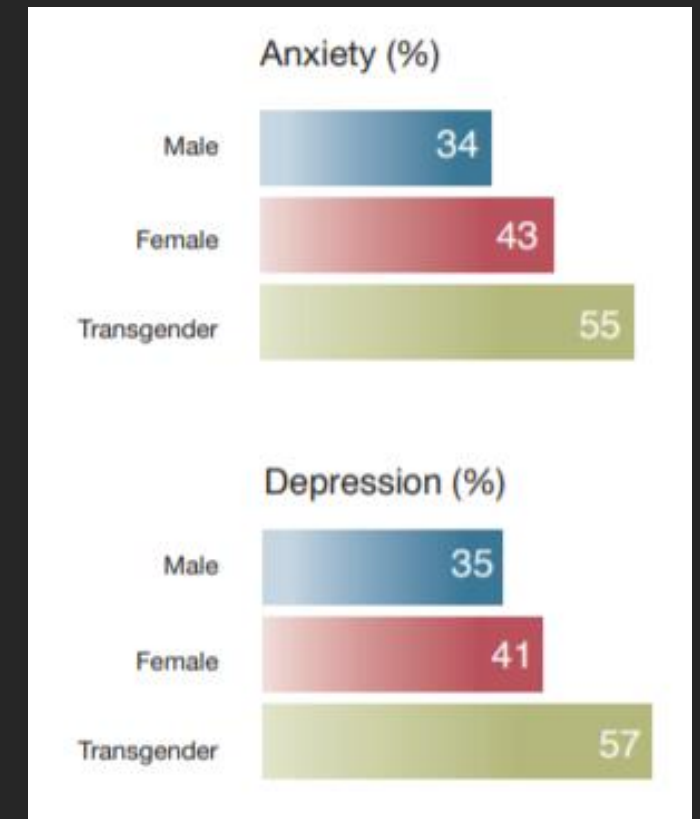


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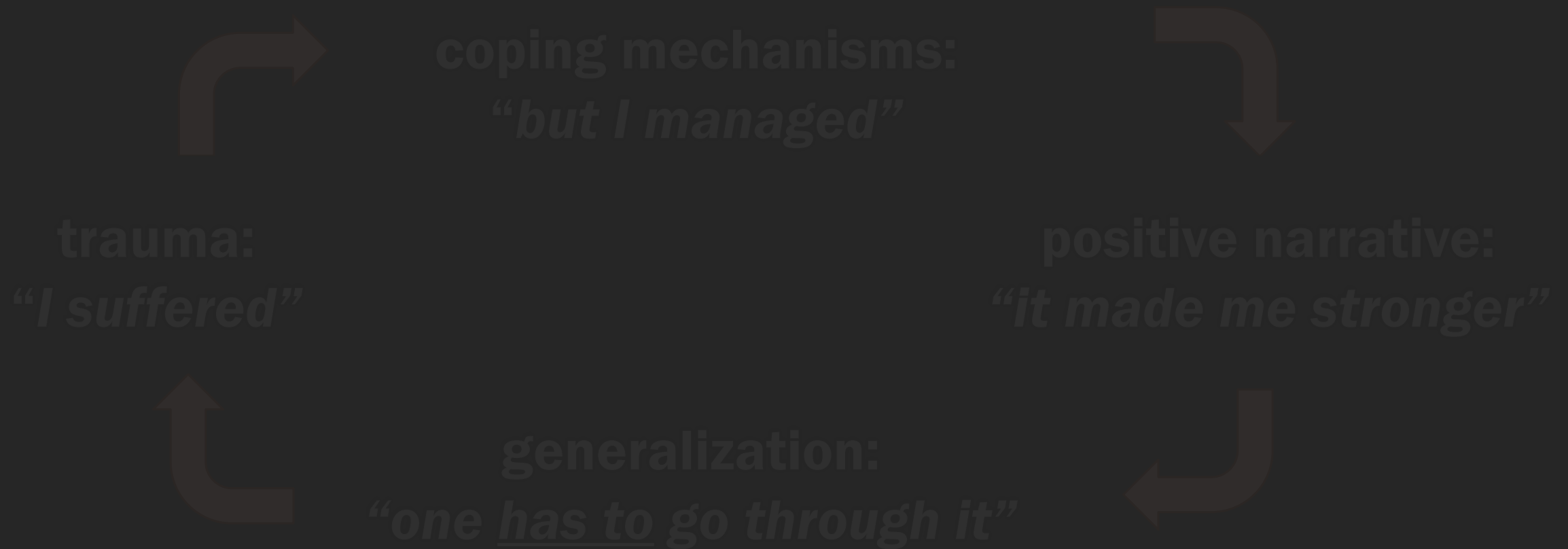
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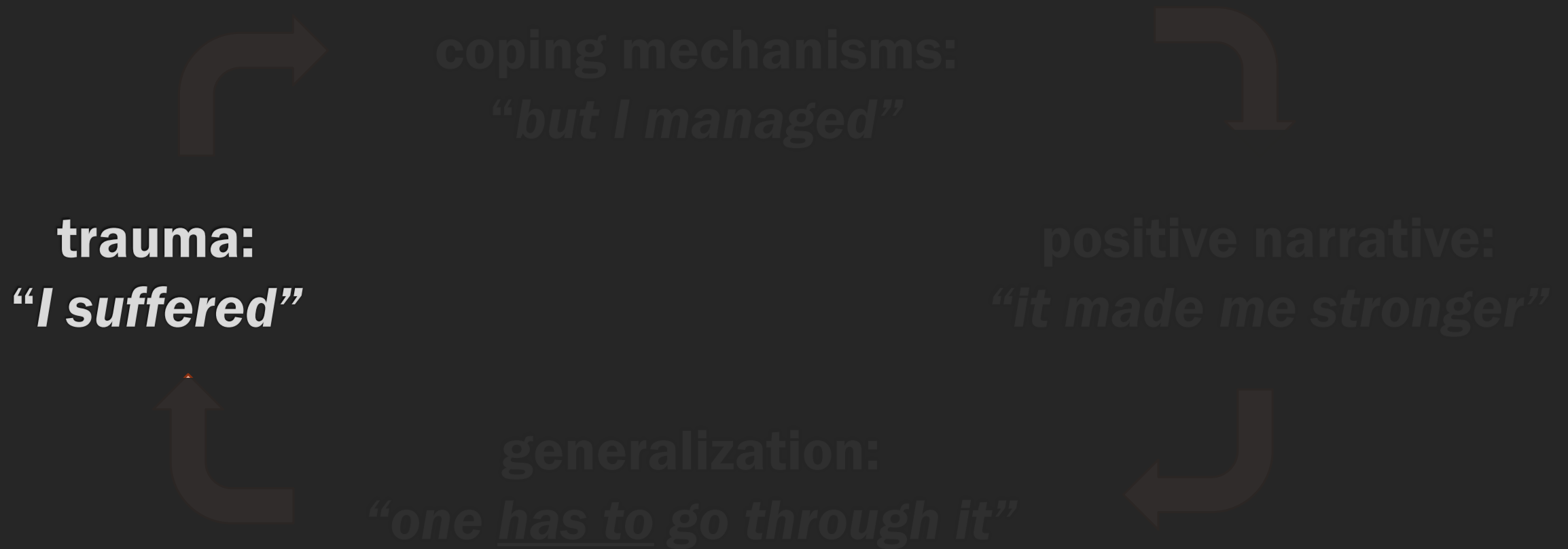
gender



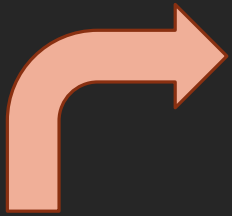
a vicious cycle?



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coping mechanisms:
“but I managed”



positive narrative:
“it made me stronger”

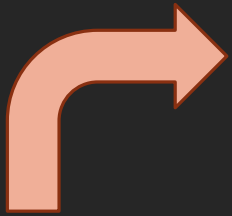
trauma:
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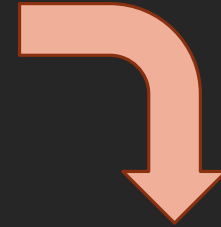
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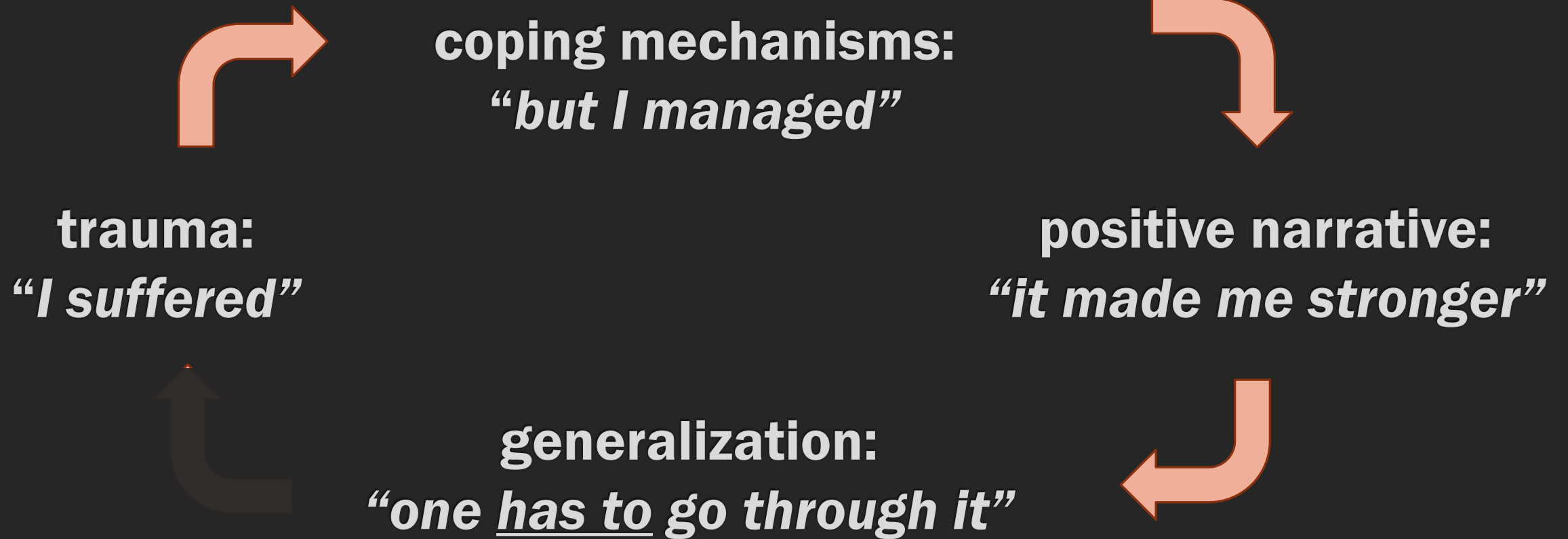
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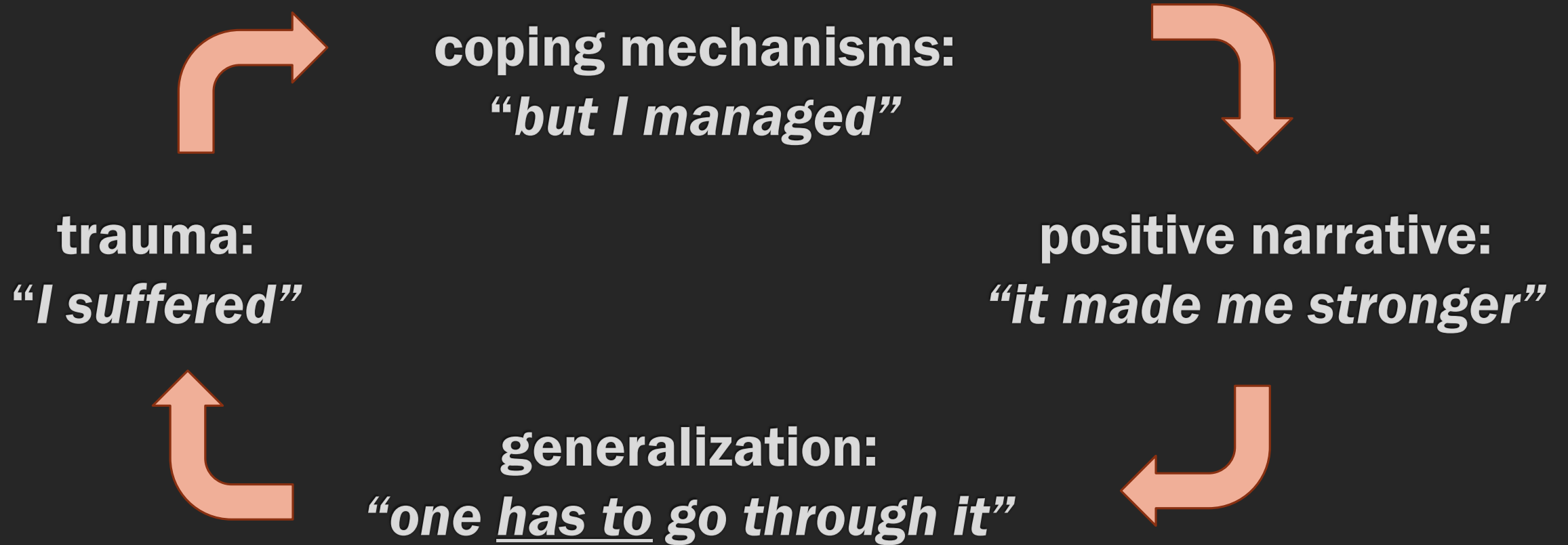
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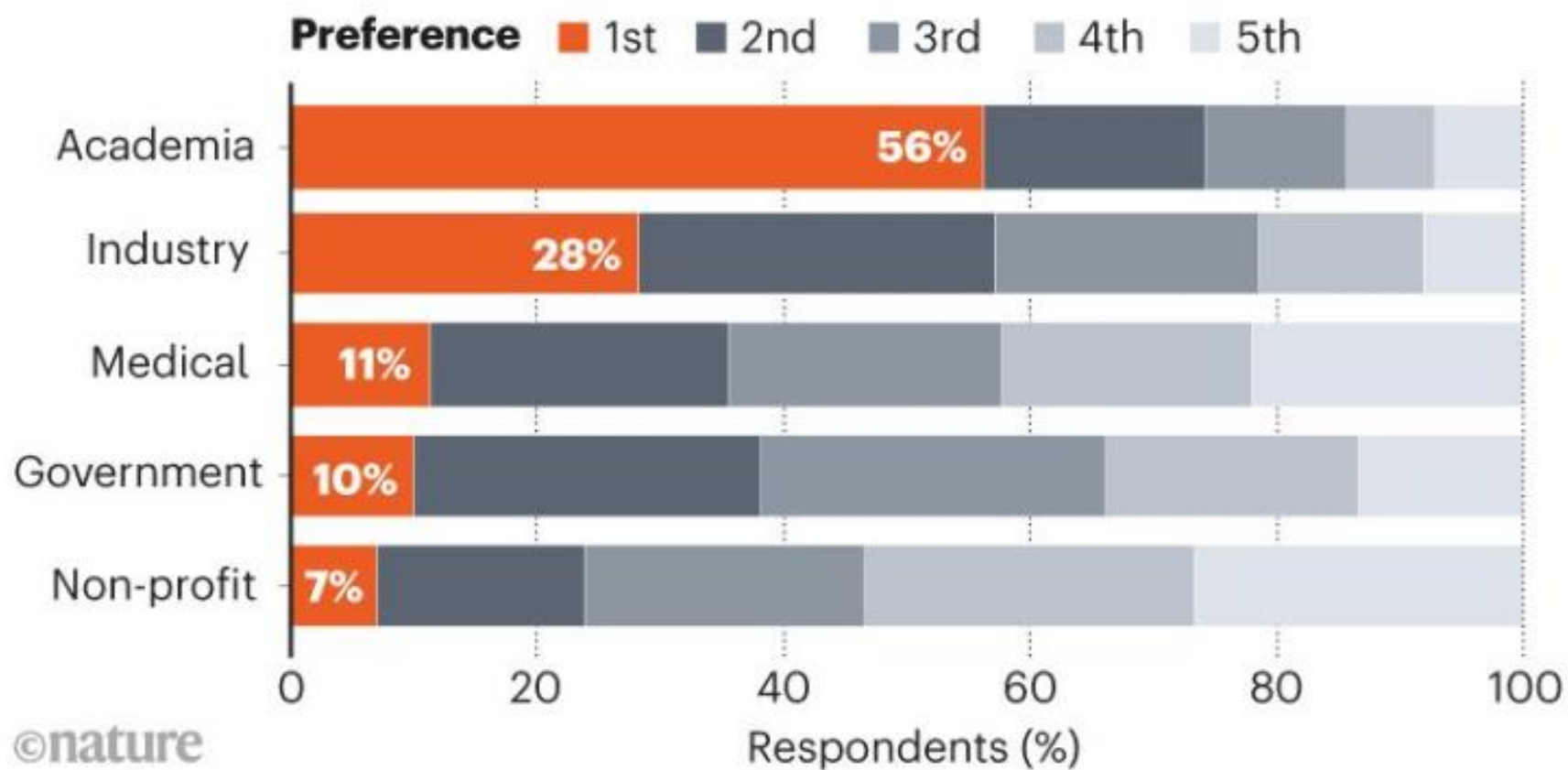
elephants in the room

- **tougher and tougher competition**
- **questionable selection criteria**
- **poor mental health**

we can do better

backup

Q: Which of the following sectors would you most like to work in (beyond a postdoc) when you complete your degree?



Source: *Nature* PhD Survey 2019