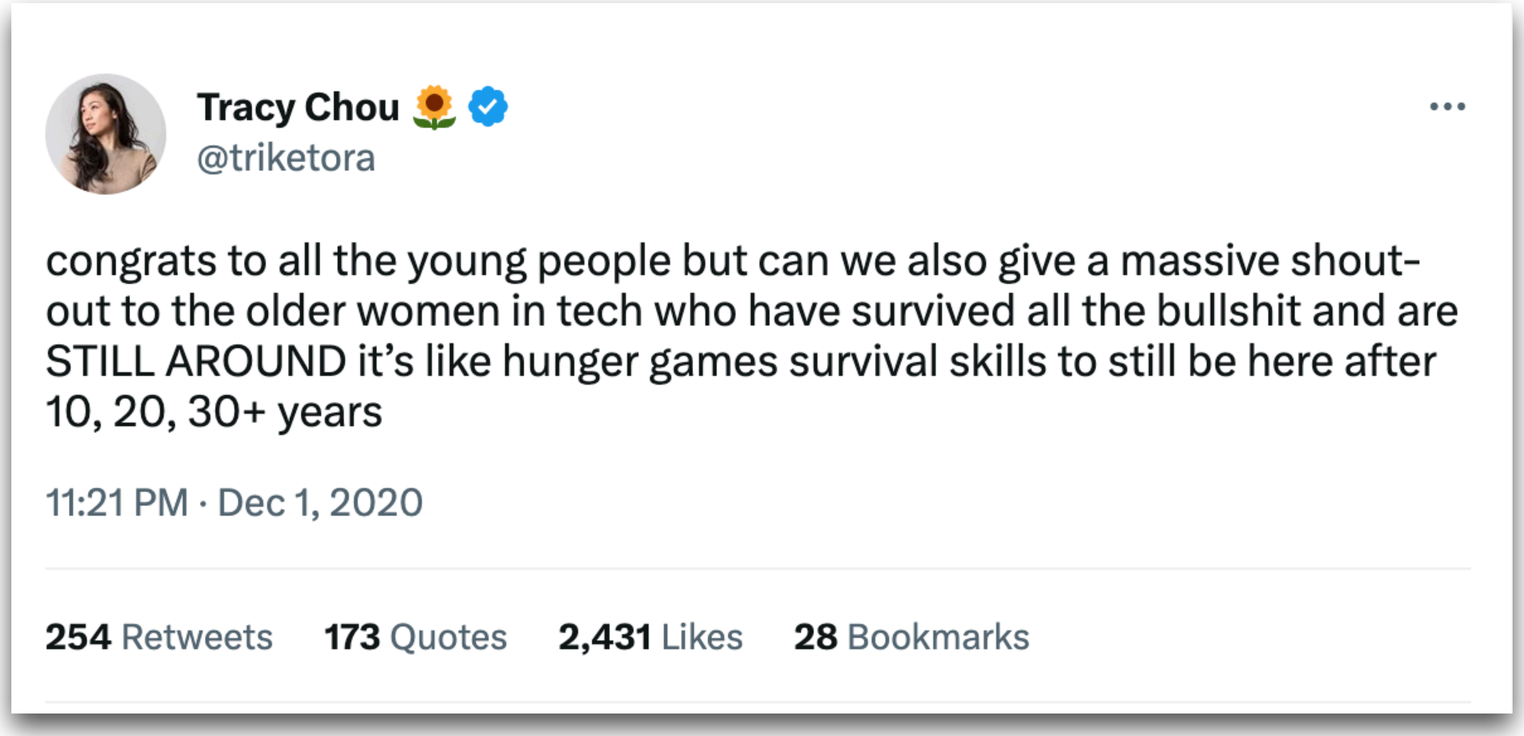
“STILL AROUND”: EXPERIENCES AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF **VETERAN WOMEN** SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS



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Tracy Chou 🌻 @triketora · Dec 2, 2020

i made it to 10 years in tech this year!! in my first year ft, there was a stretch where i was crying myself to sleep every night wondering why everything was so hard. i loved software engineering but i hated the environment. also didn't know if i had any other marketable skills

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Tracy Chou 🌻 @triketora · Dec 2, 2020

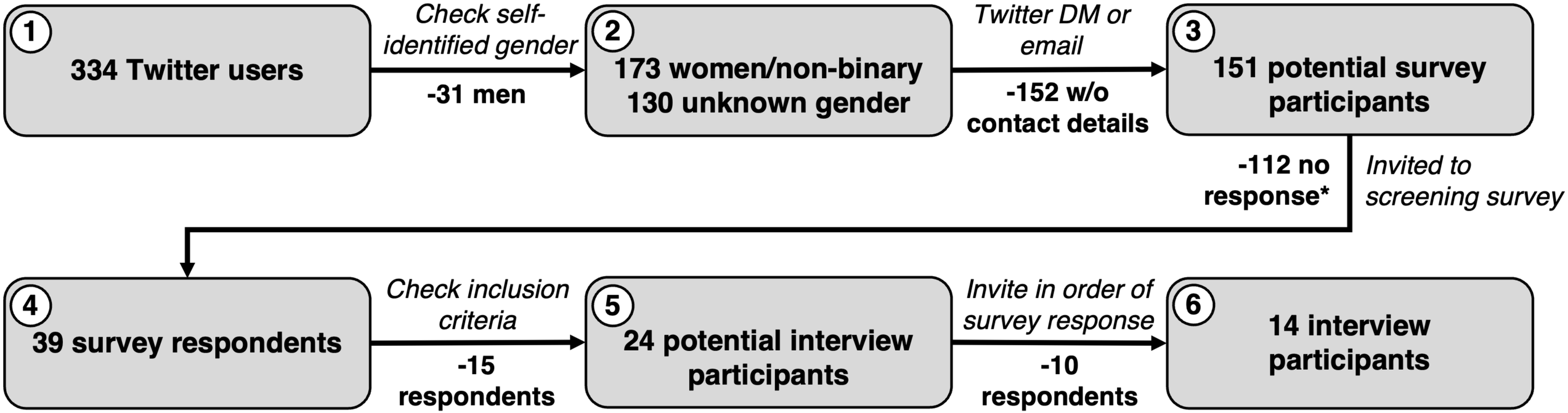
being told "there's no sexism, it's only because you think there's sexism that you're projecting it around you" wasn't super helpful when i was young and naive and didn't have any idea what the concept of gaslighting was. but now i know!!

4 13 407

Tokyo. Japan. 1997. Peter Marlow Foundation Photographer Member of Magnum Photos

RQ1. What **age- and gender-specific experiences** have veteran software developers of marginalized genders had in their careers?

RQ2. What **strategies** have veteran software developers of marginalized genders adopted that they perceive as contributing to their **survival** in software engineering?

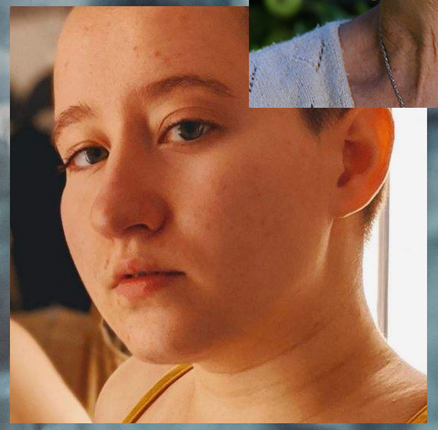


van Breukelen, Barcomb, Baltes, Serebrenik "STILL AROUND": Experiences and Survival Strategies of Veteran Women Software Developers. 45th International Conference on Software Engineering, 2023

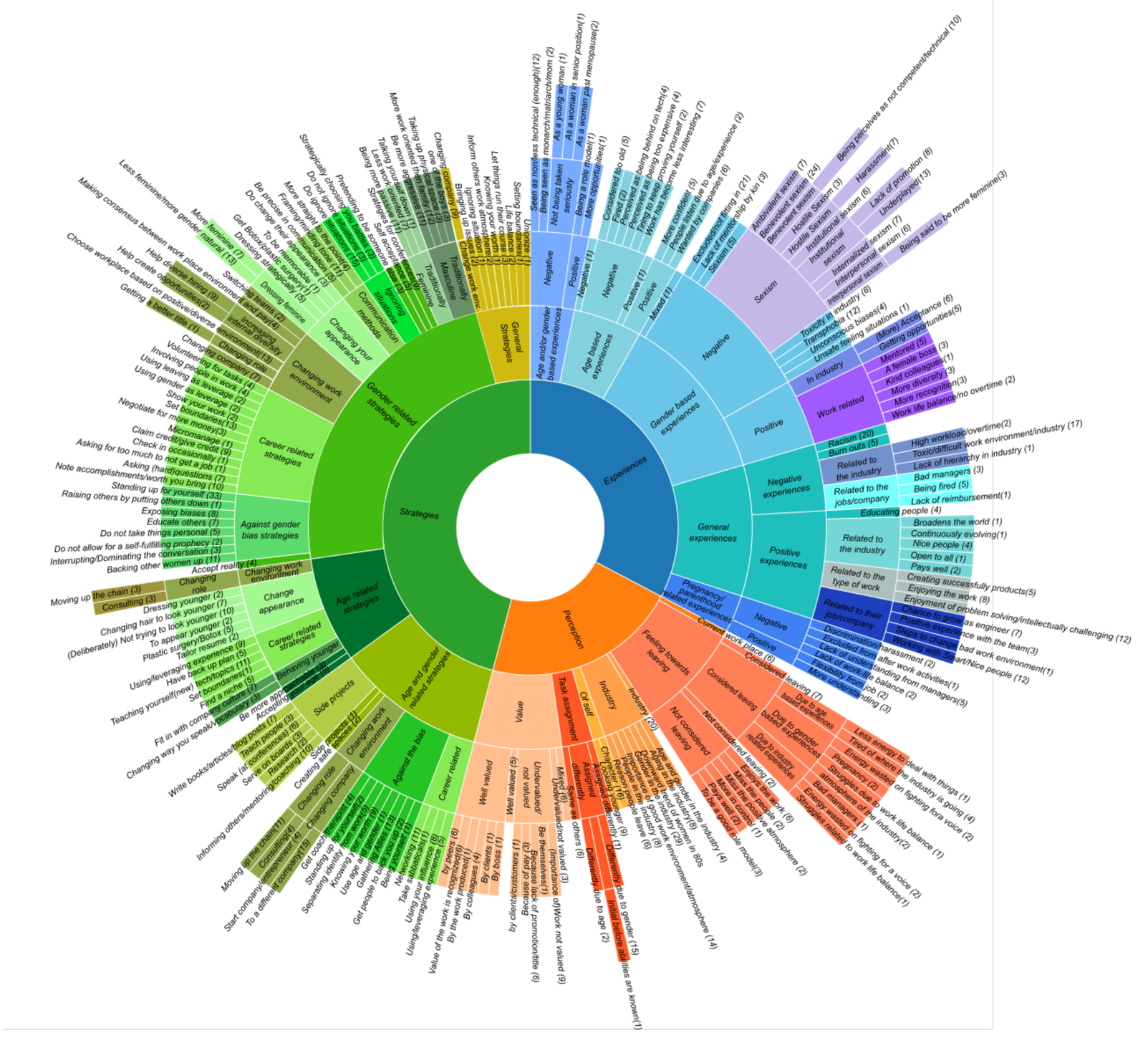
HOW OLD IS "OLD"?

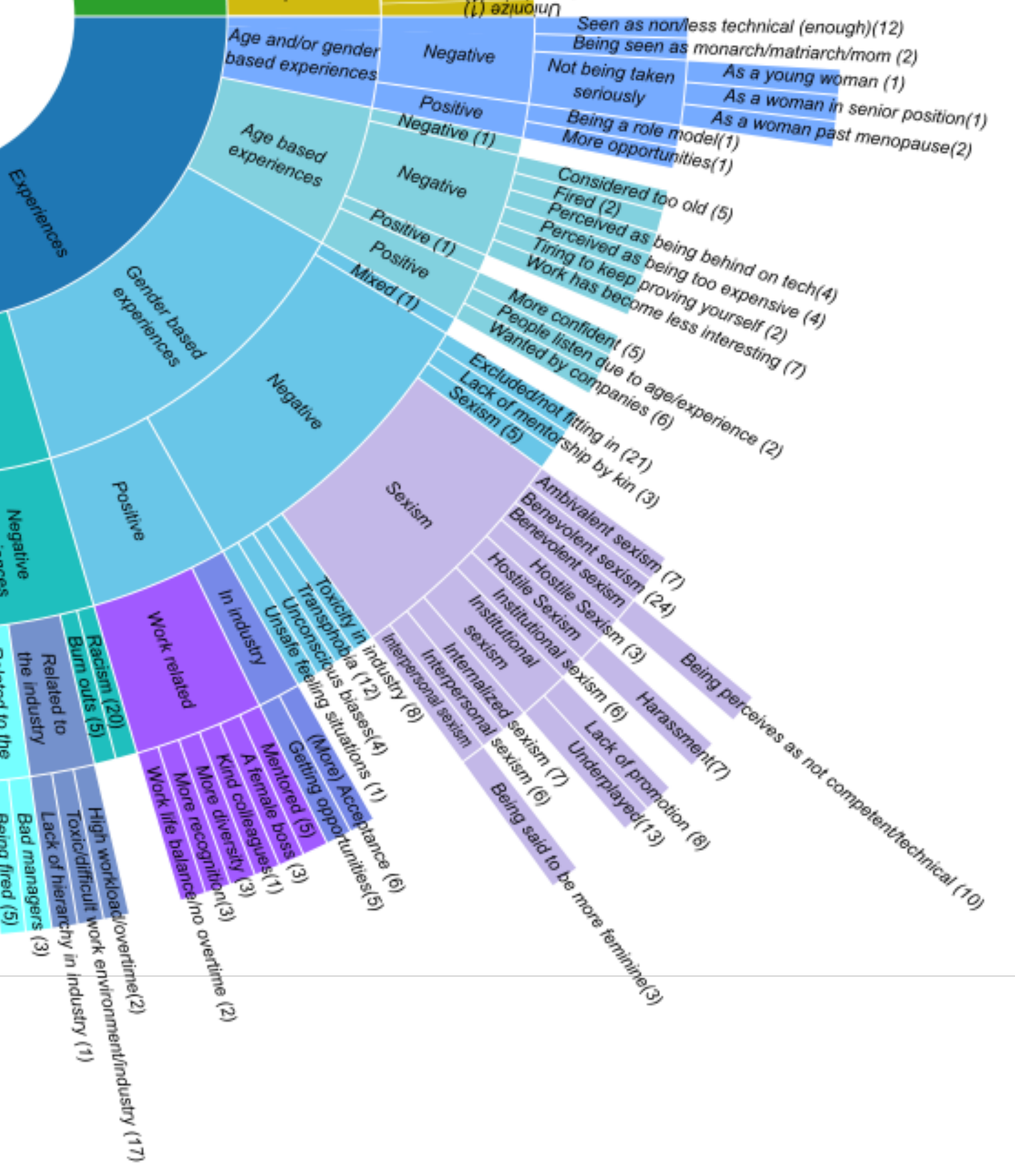
30 or older	4
35 or older	3
35-40 or older	2
40 or older	**7**
45 or older	2
50 or older	1
Not stated explicitly	5

Baltes, Park, Serebrenik. Is 40 the new 60? How popular media portrays the employability of older software developers, IEEE Software, 37(6):26-31, 2020



Greta Hoffman from Pexels


Experiences
Gender based experiences
Negative
Sexism
Ambivalent sexism (7)
Benevolent sexism (24)
Hostile Sexism (3)
Institutional sexism
Internalized sexism (7)
Interpersonal sexism (6)
Being perceives as not competent/technical (10)
Harassment(7)
Lack of promotion (6)
Underplayed(13)
Being said to be more feminine(3)
In industry
Toxicity in industry (6)
Transphobia (12)
Unconscious biases(4)
Unsafe feeling situations (1)
Work related
(More) Acceptance (6)
Getting opportunities(5)
Mentored (5)
A female boss (3)
Kind colleagues(1)
More diversity (3)
More recognition(3)
Work life balance/no overtime (2)
Positive
Racism (20)
Burn outs (5)
Related to the industry
High workload/overtime(2)
Toxic/difficult work environment/industry (17)
Lack of hierarchy in industry (1)
Related to the jobs/company
Bad managers (3)
Being fired (5)
Lack of reimbursement(1)
Educating people (4)
General experiences
Negative experiences
Positive experiences
Related to the industry
Broadens the world (1)
Continuously evolving(1)
Nice people (4)
Open to all (1)
Pays well (2)
Related to the type of work
Creating successfully products(5)
Enjoying the work (8)
Enjoyment of problem solving/intellectually challenging (12)
Chance to grow as engineer (7)
Positive experience with the team(3)
Related to their job/company
Steps to change bad work environment(1)
Working with Smart/Nice people (12)
Pregnancy/ parenthood related experiences
Negative
Discrimination/harassment (2)
Excluded from after work activities(1)
Lack of understanding from managers(5)
Positive
Lack of work-life balance (2)
Flexibility from job (2)
More understanding (3)
Age based experiences
Negative
Considered too old (5)
Fired (2)
Perceived as being behind on tech(4)
Perceived as being too expensive (4)
Trying to keep proving yourself (2)
Work has become less interesting (7)
Positive
More confident (5)
People listen due to age/experience (2)
Wanted by companies (6)
Mixed (1)
Age and/or gender based experiences
Negative
Excluded/not fitting in (21)
Lack of mentorship by kin (3)
Sexism (5)
Positive
Seen as noiseless technical (enough)(12)
Being seen as monarch/matriarch/mom (2)
Not being taken seriously
As a young woman (1)
As a woman in senior position(1)
As a woman past menopause(2)
Being a role model(1)
More opportunities(1)
Mixed (1)
Strategies
Gender related strategies
Career related strategies
Changing work environment
Changing role
Changing company (7)
Changing role (13)
Increasing internal visibility
Getting a better title (1)
Increasing salary/ get paid(4)
Switching teams(2)
Changing your appearance
Dressing strategically (5)
Dressing feminine
Get Botox/plastic surgery(1)
Dress more feminine (2)
Against gender bias strategies
Changing work environment
Accept reality (4)
Backing other women up (11)
Interrupting/Dominating the conversation (3)
Do not allow for a self-fulfilling prophecy (2)
Do not take things personal (5)
Educate others (7)
Exposing biases (8)
Raising others by putting others down (1)
Standing up for yourself (33)
Note accomplishments/worth you bring (10)
Asking (hard)questions (7)
Asking for too much to not get a job (1)
Check in occasionally (1)
Claim credit/give credit (8)
Micromanage (1)
Negotiate for more money(3)
Set boundaries(13)
Show your work (2)
Using gender as leverage (2)
Using leaving as leverage (2)
Involving people in work (4)
Volunteering for tasks (4)
Changing company (7)
Changing role
Communication methods
Ignoring situations
Be more assertive (5)
Strategies for self acceptance (3)
Being more passive (1)
Talking yourself down (1)
Be more oriented (1)
Less work oriented (1)
Taking up physical space (2)
More work oriented (1)
Changing company (9)
Bringing up issues (2)
Inform others work environment (2)
Ignoring situation (2)
Change work env. (2)
Let things run their course (1)
Knowing your limits (1)
Life balance (3)
Setting boundaries(1)
Unionize (1)
General Strategies
Age related strategies
Career related strategies
Behaving younger
Be more assertive (5)
Accepting (3)
Changing work environment
Change appearance
Dressing younger (2)
Changing hair to look younger (7)
(Deliberately) Not trying to look younger (10)
To appear younger (2)
Plastic surgery/Botox (5)
Tailor resume (2)
Using/leveraging experience (9)
Have back up plan (5)
Teaching yourself(new) tech/topics (11)
Set boundaries(1)
Find a niche (5)
Fit in with company culture (3)
Changing way you speak/vocabulary (3)
Changing role
Consulting (3)
Moving up the chain (3)
Age and gender related strategies
Side projects
Side projects (1)
Side projects (2)
Changing work environment
Creating safe spaces (2)
Changing role
Changing company
Against the bias
Career related
Write books/articles/blog posts (7)
Teach people (3)
Speak (at conferences) (6)
Serve on boards (3)
Research (4)
Informing others/mentoring/coaching (10)
Moving up the chain(11)
Consulting(4)
Start company/entrepreneur(4)
To a different company(15)
Get coach/therapist (4)
Changing company (2)
Standing up for yourself (7)
Separating identity from work (1)
Knowing your worth (2)
Use age and gender as leverage (3)
Gathering data (1)
Get people to back you up (1)
Being more assertive (1)
Networking (7)
Take satisfaction (1)
Using your influence (3)
Using/leveraging experience (8)
Perception
Feeling towards leaving
Considered leaving
Considered leaving (6)
Due to age based experiences
Due to gender related experiences
Due to industry related experiences
Not considered leaving
Not considered leaving (2)
Enjoys the work (6)
Miss the people (2)
Miss the positive atmosphere (2)
Pays well (2)
More in control (1)
To be a good role model(3)
Industry
Industry (20)
Age and gender in the industry (4)
Dominance of men in the industry(8)
Dominance of the trend of women in 80s (29)
Importance of good work environment/atmosphere (14)
Lack of role models in industry (8)
Pressure people leave (6)
Reason people leave (16)
Changing/leaving company (9)
Changing/leaving industry (1)
Of self
Task assignment
Assigned differently
Same as others (6)
Mixed (6)
Undervalued/not valued (9)
Value
Well valued
Well valued (5)
Undervalued/not valued
Be themselves(1)
(Importance of)Work not valued (3)
Kind of work/lack of promotion/title (6)
Beg
by clients/customers (1)
By boss (1)
By clients (1)
By colleagues (4)
By peers (6)
By the work produced(1)
Value of the work is recognized(6)
Differently due to gender (15)
Differently due to age (2)
Initial before abilities are known(1)
Struggles related to work life balance(1)
Struggles due to work life balance (1)
Energy wasted on fighting for a voice (2)
Pregnancy (2)
Energy wasted
Bad managers (1)
atmosphere of the industry(2)
Tired of where the industry is going (4)
Tired of fighting for a voice (2)
Less energy to deal with things (1)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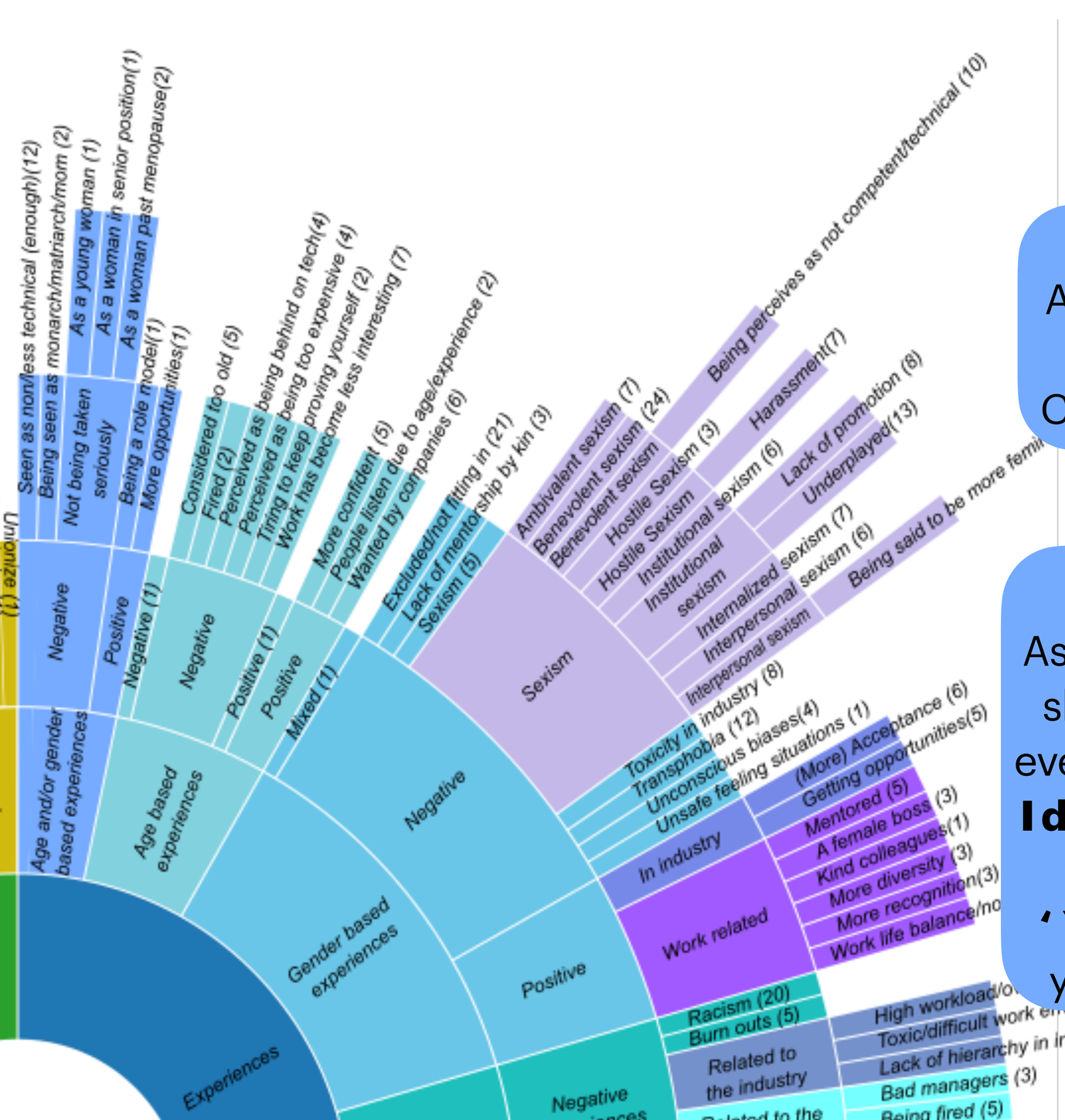

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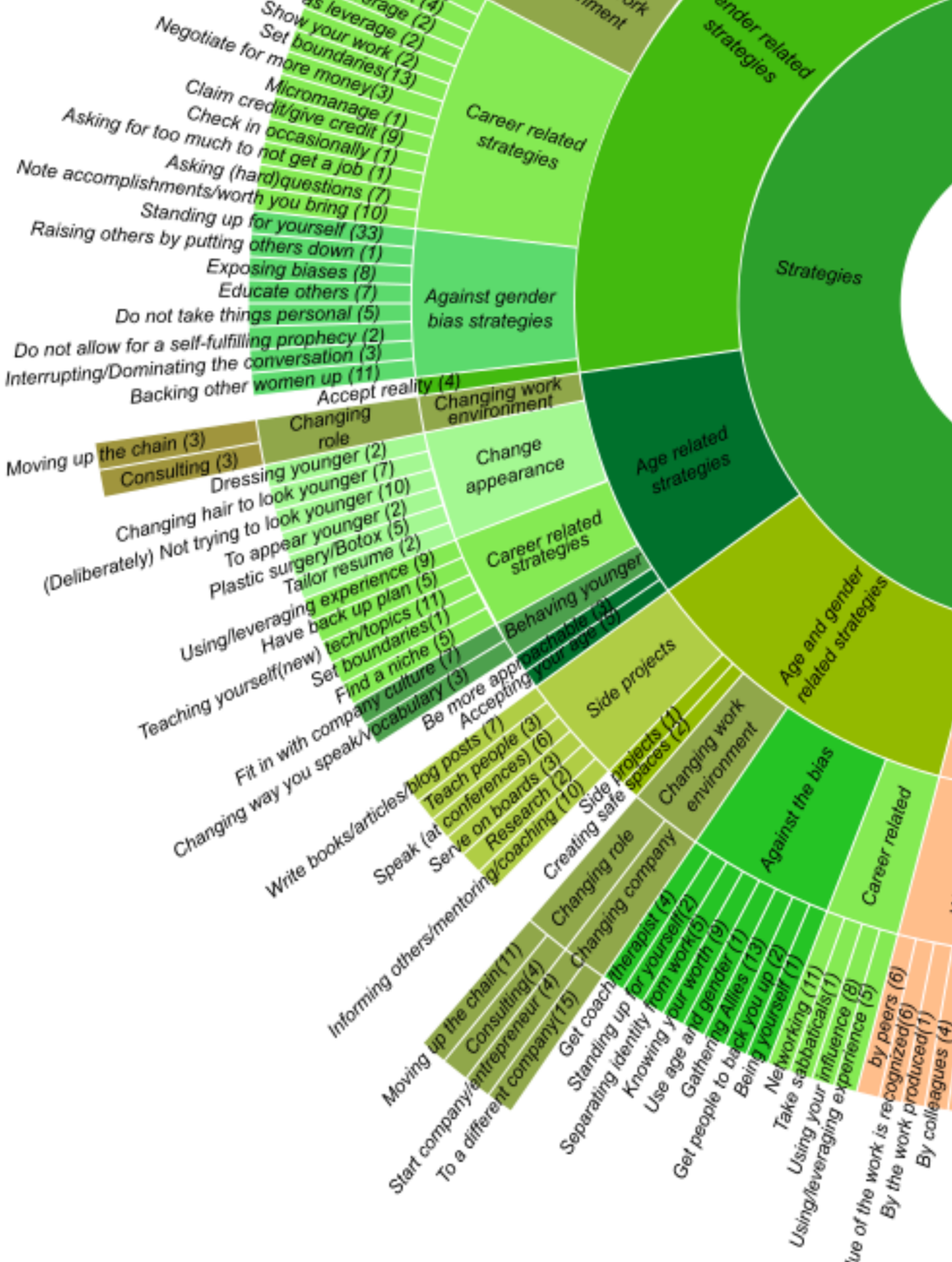
A company approached me. . . They were like ‘our **ideal candidate** would be a Woman of Color [who has] also survived a stroke’. —Elliot

-

As I approached menopause, there was another shift of just this contempt, because you’re not even a sexually available female. And there’s **‘No, I don’t even have an interest in having sex with you and so why would I ever listen to you?** ‘ You’re going to try and tell me I’m wrong and you’re unattractive.’ So it got worse.. —Emery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Be more approachable (3)
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Side projects (1)
spaces (2)
Creating safe
Changing role
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Get coach/therapist (4)
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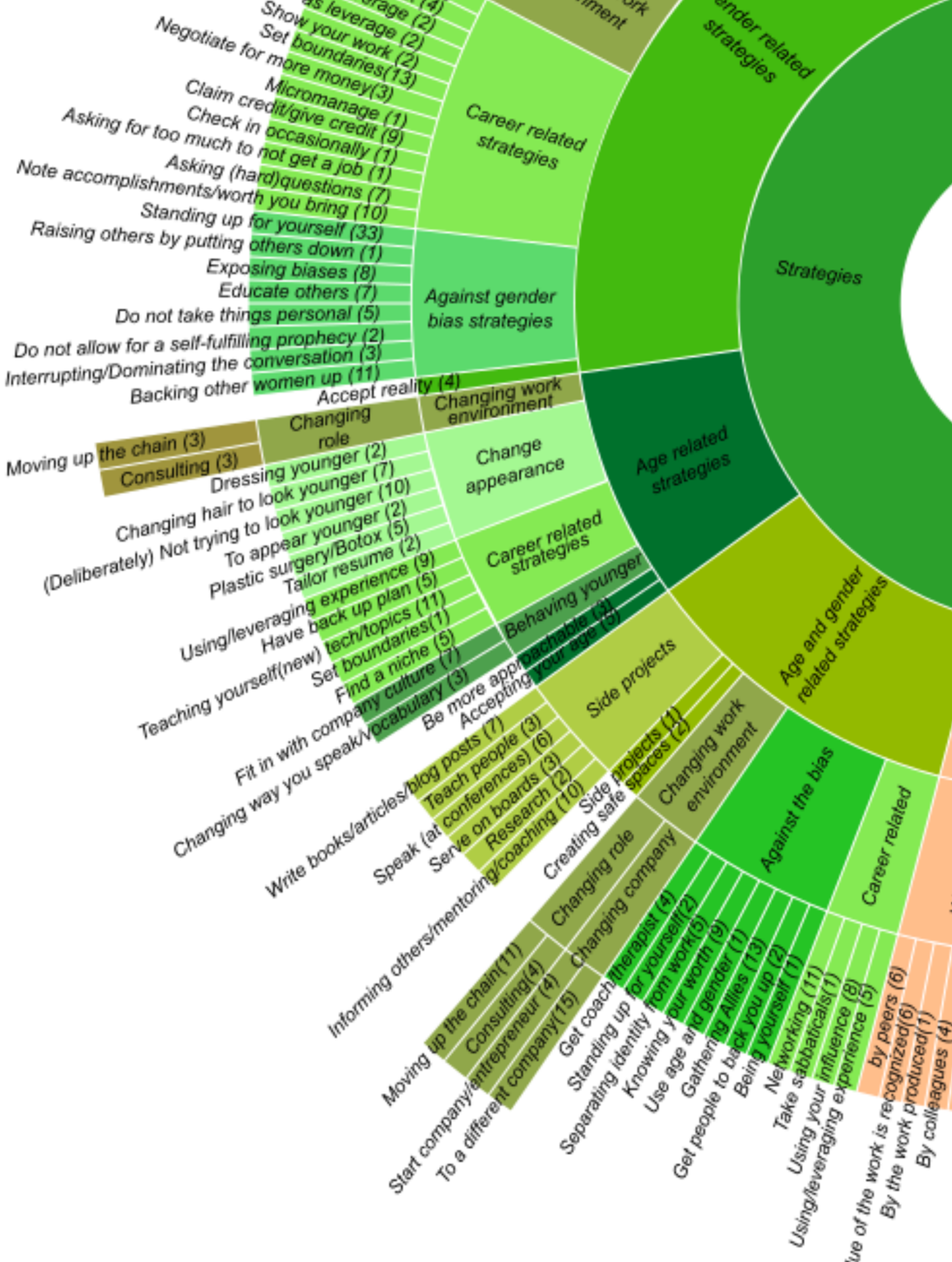
Knowing your worth (9)
Use age and gender (1)
Gathering Allies (13)
Get people to back you up (2)
Being yourself (1)
Networking (11)
Take sabbatical(1)
Using your influence (8)
Using/leveraging experience (5)
by peers (6)
By the work is recognized(6)
By the work produced(1)
By colleagues (4)

All those young guys don’t want their mom programming with them, **their grandmother**, on the other hand. —Dani



Tracy Chou
@triketora
congrats to all the young people but can we also give a massive shout-out to the older women in tech who have survived all the bullshit and are STILL AROUND it's like hunger games survival skills to still be here after 10, 20, 30+ years
11:21 PM · Dec 1, 2020
254 Retweets
173 Quotes
2,431

Greta Hoffman from Pexels