Is a Ph.D. right for me?

ASECS Fall 2023
Based on blog post @ github.com/sueszli/blog

Defining Success

Be deliberate.

1. Recognise that there are **multiple definitions of success** and multiple ways to succeed.

2. Understand that choices come with **opportunity costs**.

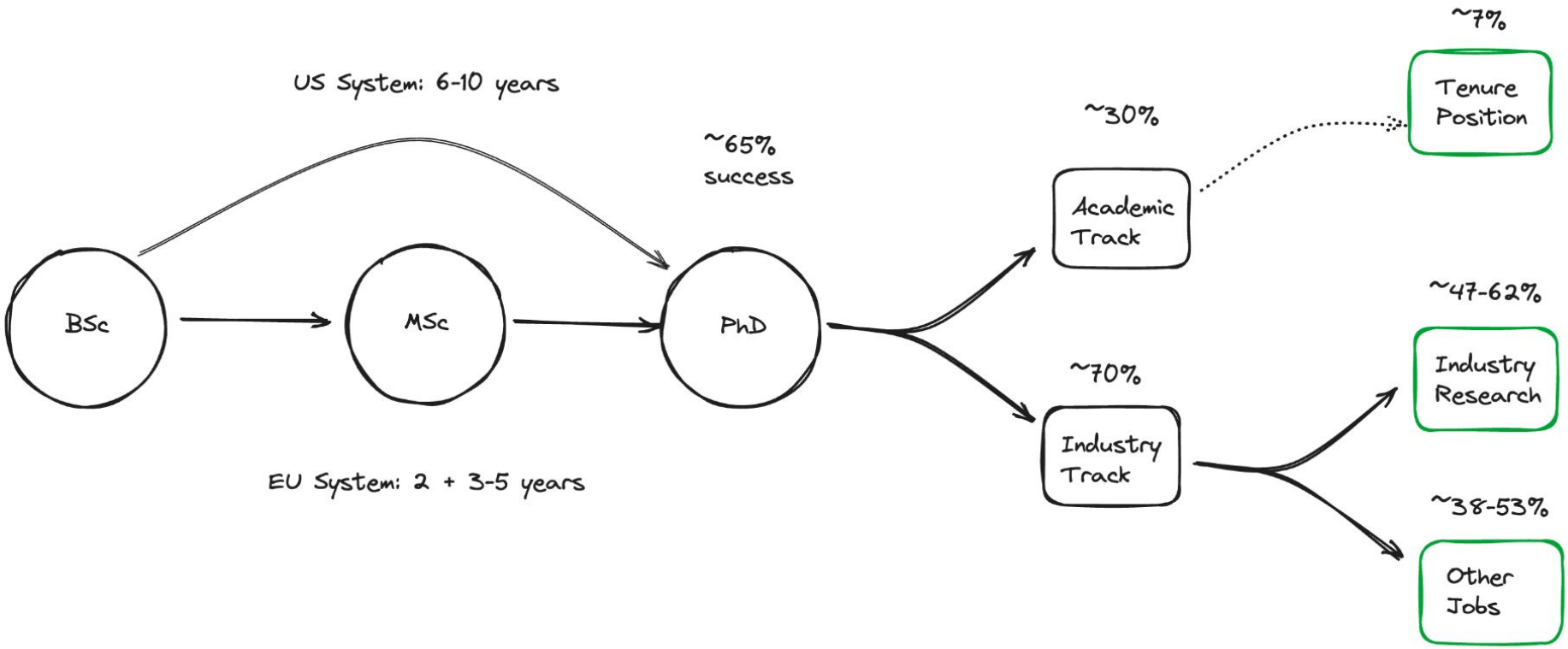
3. Accept the role of skill as well as **luck**.

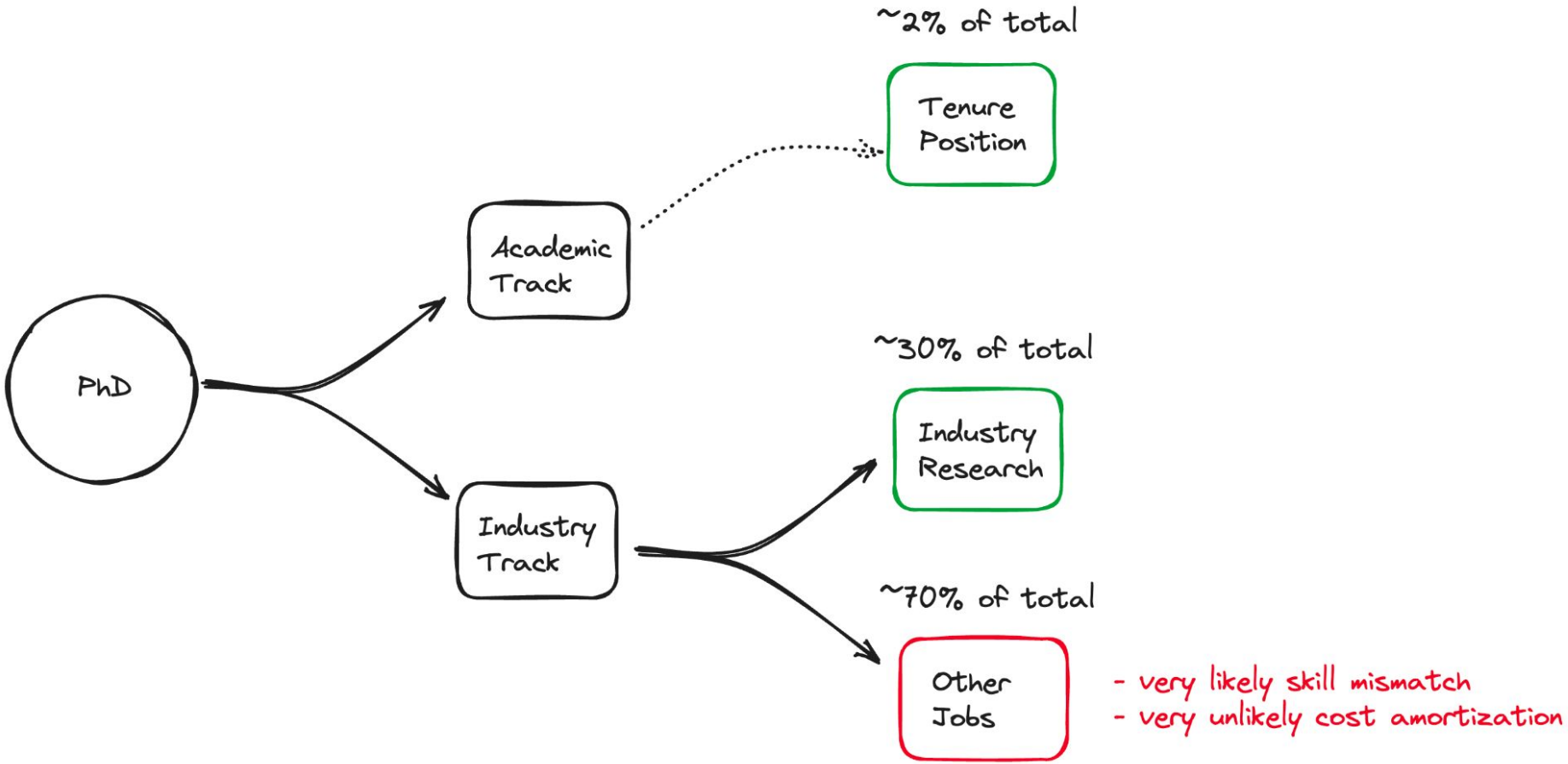
4. Think about **distributions** vs. **samples**.

5. Reflect on the differences between **normative** vs. **positive** approaches.

Paths and Probabilities

Disclaimer: CS/Math degrees in **North America**


US System: 6-10 years
~65%
success
BSc
MSc
PhD
EU System: 2 + 3-5 years
~30%
Academic Track
~7%
Tenure Position
~70%
Industry Track
~47-62%
Industry Research
~38-53%
Other Jobs


~2% of total
Tenure Position
Academic Track
PhD
~30% of total
Industry Research
Industry Track
~70% of total
Other Jobs
- very likely skill mismatch
- very unlikely cost amortization

Opportunities

O1 Visa

the opportunity to live in the United States.

Access to world’s largest tech market and highest tech salaries.

$300k+

per year for research roles in the industry or academia (if tenured).

Opportunity Costs

~70%

end up in non-research related positions.

Most skills they learned in grad school aren’t directly applicable to their jobs.

>$1Mio.

in lost paychecks, if you don’t get those prestigious jobs.

And many lost industry career advancement opportunities.

Overqualification

A Ph.D. can shut as many doors as it opens.

Personal Takeaway

When does it make sense?

When you are...

1. enjoying the process.
2. trusting your advisor.
3. prepared for non-research industry roles.