

# **U=U and sero-different couples, evidence of change**

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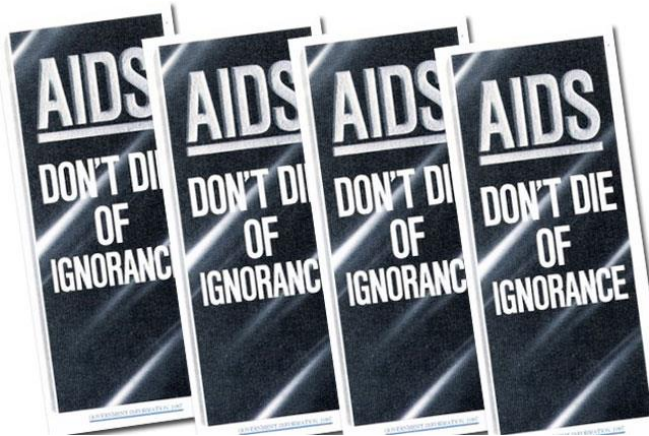
## Declaration

My research is fully funded by a studentship from the Open University

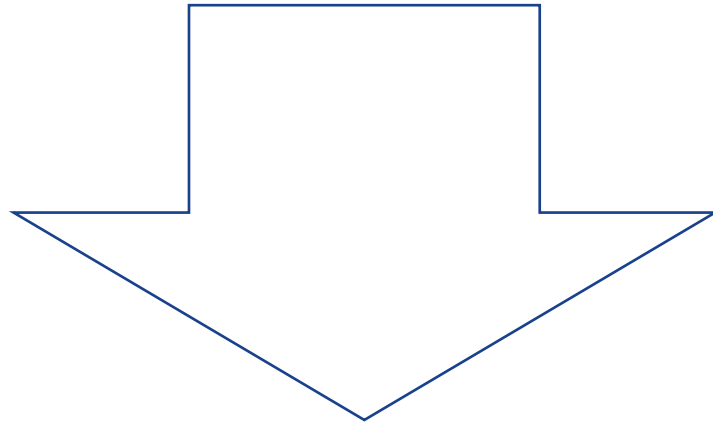
I am currently employed part-time by a company which provides communications services to pharmaceutical companies

In the era of U=U, in what ways does HIV matter to gay/bisexual men in sero-different relationships?

## Some personal context



## A model of serodiscordant relationships before U=U



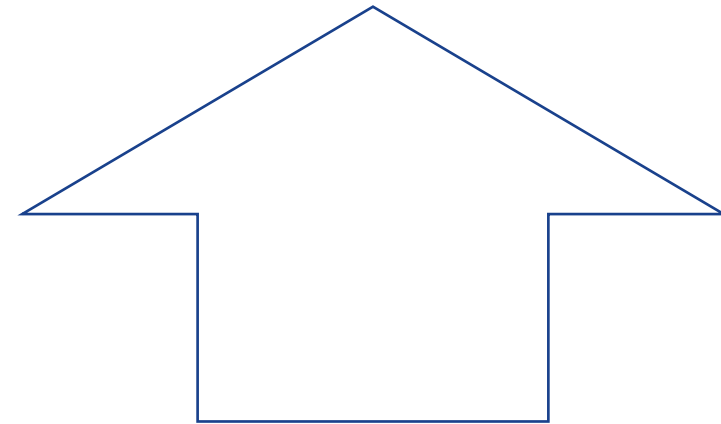
### Viral management

- Abstinence
- Condoms
- Strategic positioning

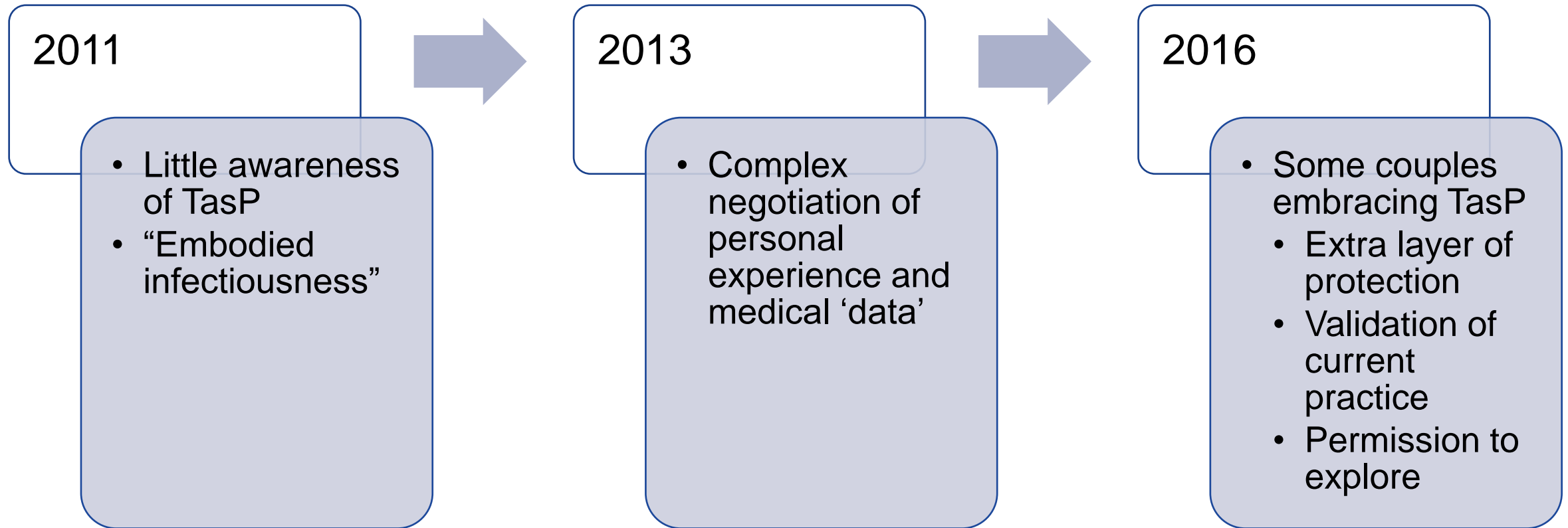


### Relationship management

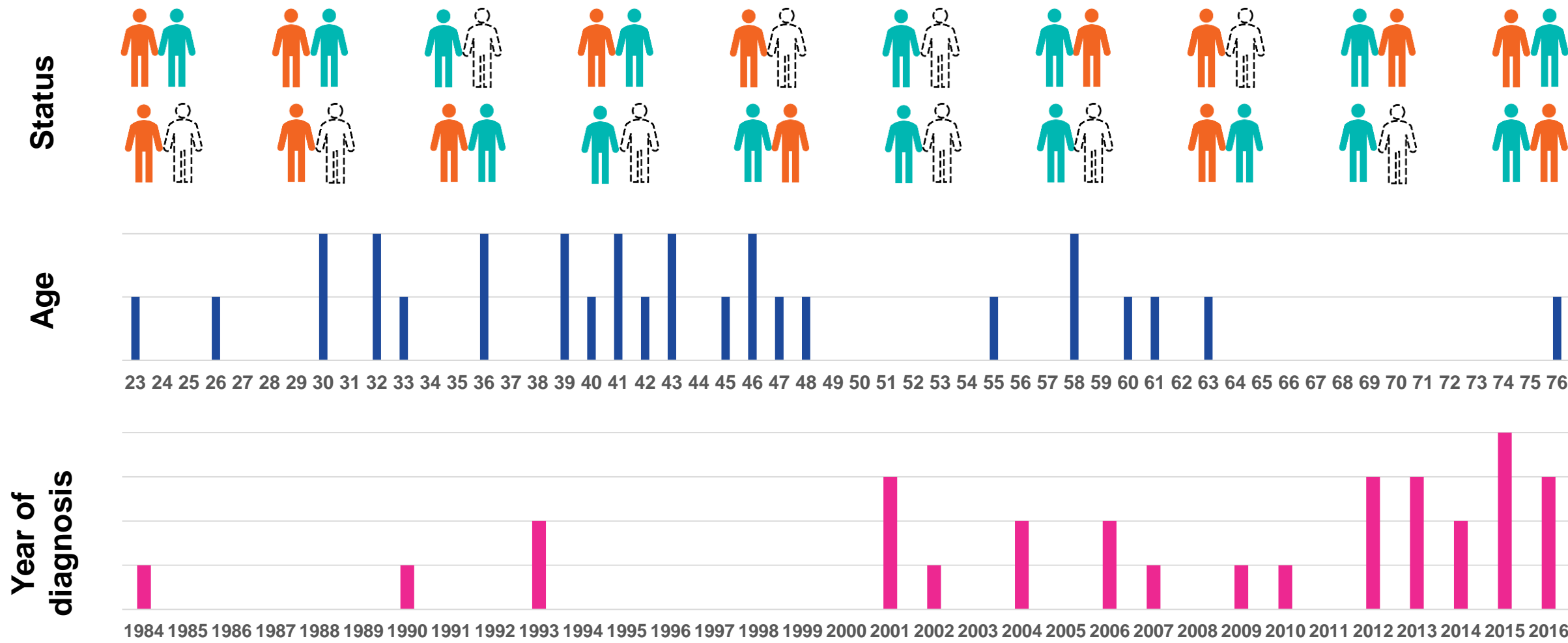
- Expressing intimacy
- Demonstrating love and commitment
- 'Silencing' HIV



## Evidence of an impact of U=U?



# My sample



My data



36 hours of  
interviews





## Stigma and side effects

- HIV identity often carefully managed (by both partners) – particularly those with open relationships
- Side effects of treatment were not frequently discussed but were a concern
  - Twenty years(!) of diarrhoea
  - Was he always this forgetful or is it the treatment?





“HIV is there, but not as  
it used to be”

“Nowadays when you’re on meds, you’re undetectable, like, you can live a normal life. [...] he takes his pills when he needs to... and that’s that.”

**Nick, 32, HIV negative**



“It means nothing because it’s managed by medication. In terms of who I am as an individual, it has little to no impact on me, day to day.”

**William, 32, HIV positive**

“It was like winning the lottery, now we can fuck without condoms and without, I mean, without the HIV thing .”

**Matt, 45, HIV negative**



HIV is  
irrelevant

We went and saw the doctor  
[...] her statement, was, he  
will live a normal life [...] from  
that point onwards I stopped  
worrying, it was like I can  
cope with anything else that  
comes along now  
**Nathan, 55, HIV negative**

“It’s almost like it isn’t there in the way it was. It is there. But isn’t half as impacting.”

**Ben, 48, HIV positive**



HIV is muted

“We just never really discussed it, it’s never been a thing. Not in a kind of... it’s not open for discussion, it’s just never really affected us.”

**David, 38, HIV positive**

“Joe had fallen and cut himself quite badly and was bleeding quite a lot [...] there was just like, just something at the back of my mind going, oh God. Is he... is he going to have to disclose?”

**Sean, 35, HIV negative**

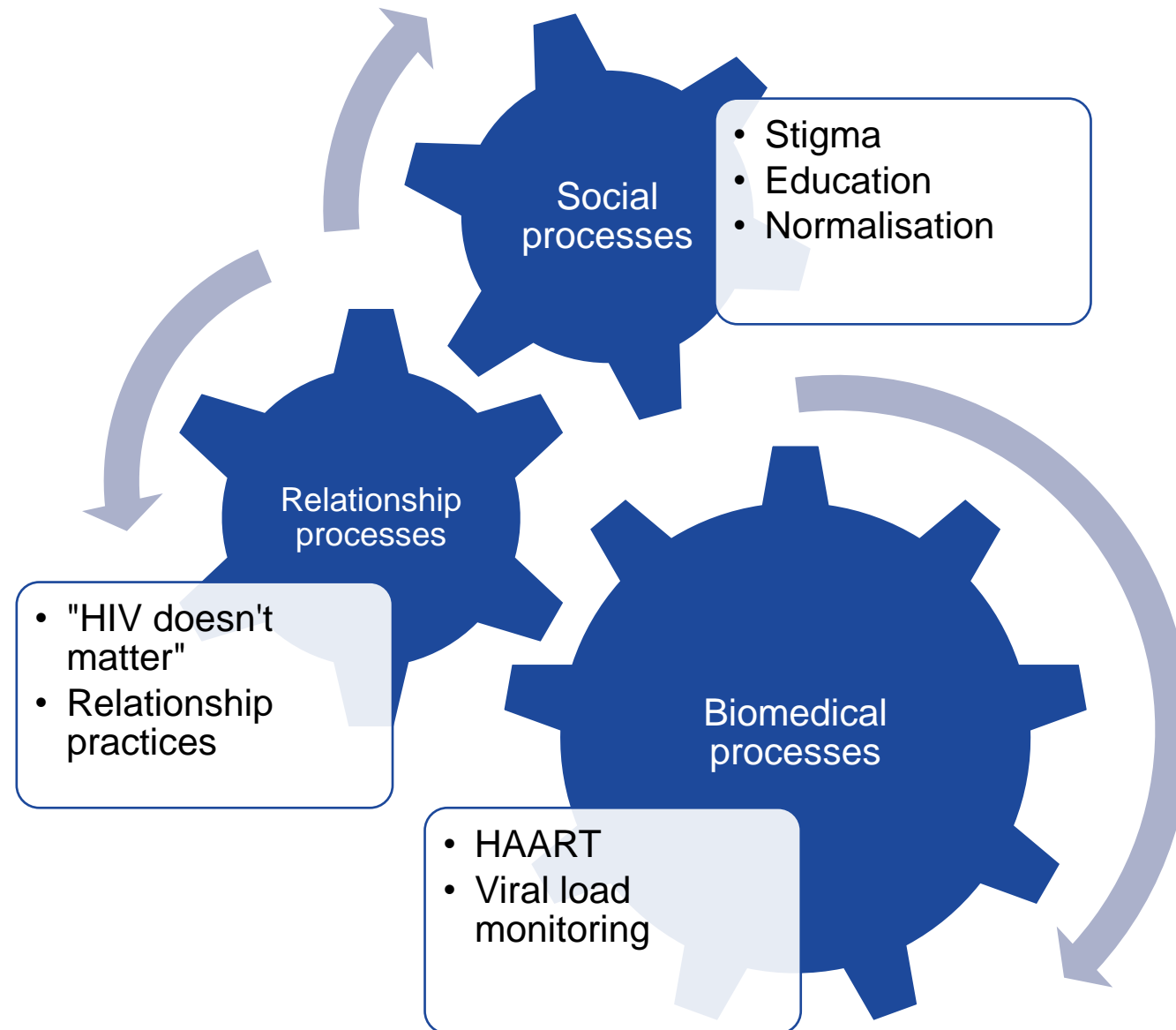


## ‘Spectres’ of HIV

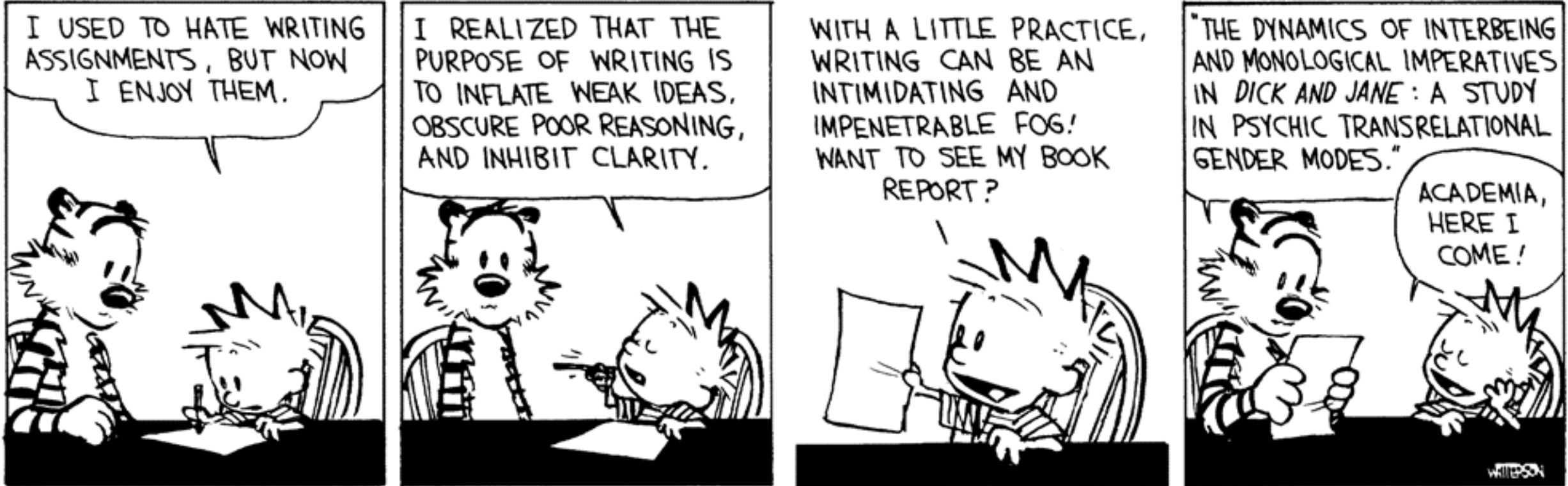
“Of course, I know my status *was* undetectable. But I don’t know what I am now. And that triggers me sometimes.”

**Terry, 33, HIV positive**

## Creating U=U



Thank you



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