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“Wait for a permanent contract”: The temporal politics of (in)fertility as an early career researcher

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journals.sagepub.com/home/epc**Sarah M Hughes** 

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Abstract

The impetus for this intervention comes from my own experiences of advice to ‘wait for a permanent contract’ before trying to conceive a child. I contend that this considerate guidance, frequently given to Early Career Researchers, nonetheless re-inscribes a linear capitalist temporality, and that there is a need to resist this binding of the temporalities of (in)fertility to the metrics of the neoliberal academy. I suggest that to promote ‘waiting’ negates the nonlinear, everyday and intimate politics of our varied, embodied experiences of (in)fertility. It is also grounded within problematic assumptions: first, that waiting is linear; that we will arrive at a permanent job in the future, if we persist with the present; and second, that our (in)fertility is known to us, that we are able to, and will, make a rational decision to conceive a child. These are pervasive assumptions with deeply personal implications. Moreover, they are compounded by the short-term contracts, and expectations of institutional mobility that characterise many experiences of UK academia. My hope for this piece is that it invites geographers to further explore embodied politics of (in)fertility.

Keywords

Feminism, political geography, fertility, early career researcher, temporality

Introduction: (In)fertile subjects in a neoliberal academy

Where to place the (in)fertile subject within the neoliberal academy? How do the intimate politics of (in)fertility fit within the ideal of the metricised, autonomous, and rational neoliberal academic subject?; What can an attention to temporality bring to these accounts? The impetus for this intervention comes from my own experiences of advice, care-fully given, to

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‘wait for a permanent contract’ before trying to conceive a child.¹ I contend that this considerate guidance which has come from a wide spectrum of senior colleagues, PhD students and other Early Career Researchers (ECR) of all genders, nonetheless re-inscribes a linear capitalist temporality, and that there is a need to resist this binding of the temporalities of (in)fertility to the metrics of the neoliberal academy. I suggest that to advise ‘waiting’ negates the nonlinear, everyday and intimate politics of our varied, embodied experiences of (in)fertility. To be clear, my critique here is directed at the structures and cultures of the neoliberal academy that underpin this advice rather than the advice itself. Taking inspiration from Mountz et al.’s (2015: 1236) call for feminist scholars to examine the “temporal regimes of the neoliberal university and their neoliberal effects,” I explore the temporal politics of (in)fertility as an ECR.² It is important to state from the start that in this intervention I do not attempt to map out the relative merits of ‘if’ or ‘when’ ECRs should approach fertility ‘decisions’, not least because to do so would be impossible, inappropriate and furthermore, in positing that there could ever be a ‘right’ time, risk re-inscribing the metric-based temporality of the neoliberal academy that this paper goes forth to critique. This intervention is limited in that it does not discuss adoption, surrogacy or fostering. Moreover, I identify as a white, middle-class, cisgender woman and, as Young and Hines (2020, see also Gabriel and Tate, 2017) powerfully detail, black female academics face compounded barriers around family growth in the academy, due the “presumed incompetence” associated with their pigmentation. By extension, those with tenure or permanent academic jobs are not immune from these intersectional discussions: our (in)fertile subjectivity does not always align with the “high productivity in compressed time frames” (Mountz et al., 2015: 1236) that the neoliberal academy promotes even if/when relative job security is attained.

I place brackets around (*in*)fertility to signal that our abilities to reproduce are not a binary, and neither are they natural or static (c.f. Hutter Epstein, 2010). This goes against the grain of previous geographic scholarship on fertility which has largely focussed upon fertility as a *rate* (Szreter and Garrett, 2000), or a spatial distribution (Boyle, 2003). My contention here is that (in)fertility can be productively framed as an embodied condition of possibility: that (in)fertility should not be read solely with recourse to pregnancy, but instead as percolating and shaping our everyday. We may encounter (in)fertility through the varying rhythms of periods, ovulation, hormone changes and menopause which do not always sit easily within “neoliberal university time as imagined by these metrics-based regimes . . . [as] compressed and all-encompassing” (Mountz et al., 2015: 1241).

My point within this intervention is that our presumption to ‘wait for a permanent contract’ does little to counter these hegemonic temporalities, and is grounded within problematic assumptions: first, that waiting is linear; that we will arrive at a permanent job in the future, if we persist with the present; and second, that our (in)fertility is known to us, that we are able to, and will, make a rational decision to conceive a child. These are pervasive assumptions with deeply personal implications, and my hope for this piece is that it invites geographers to further explore embodied politics of (in)fertility.

With this in mind, this short reflection is grounded within the singularities of my own experiences, and yet, from a myriad of informal conversations with friends and colleagues across multiple institutions, continents and disciplines, I am aware that they resonate beyond my own narratives.³ I am deliberately vague here to protect the identity of these individuals. They have all read and consented to this paper. I weave some of their accounts through this intervention, anonymously, and with their consent. I form one-half of an ECR heterosexual academic couple. When first drafting this paper, both of us were under 30, childless, and employed on fixed-term contracts. Our situation has

recently changed, and we are now both on permanent contracts at the same institution which is, to be frank, given the current job climate, a miracle. Experiences of precarity and of embodied (in)fertility are also raced, classed and gendered (Berg et al., 2016; Cardozo, 2017; Gabriel, 2017; Grönlund, 2020; Lyons, 2015; Maddrell et al., 2016, 2019; Webster, 2018; Young and Hines, 2020); my accounts reflect that I identify as a cisgender woman. In this intervention, I focus first upon the structural production of ECR precarity in the context of (in)fertility (specifically short-term contracts and expectations of institutional mobility), looking at what forms of politics this highlights, and what it risks foreclosing. I then move to look at the multiple temporalities of (in)fertility, arguing for attention to the politics of the multiple rhythms, and ambiguous, visceral intimacies of (in)fertility that a linear temporal framing negates. I end by suggesting some of the possible ways that we can resist these neoliberal logics.

The structural production of ECR precarity: Implications for (in)fertility politics

“[P]recarity in academia is deepened and exacerbated by other processes attuned with neoliberal logics and that are transforming universities and academic work in specific ways” (Montoya and Pérez, 2016). It has become a truth universally acknowledged⁴ that with the neoliberalisation of Higher Education, ECRs must navigate multiple, casualised contracts (Castree and Sparke, 2000; Maddrell et al., 2019). This short intervention is grounded in a UK context, but these employment conditions are echoed in many Northern European states (Berg et al., 2014, 2016; Webster, 2018). Within the UK, the Higher Education Statistics Agency data for 2017–2018 note that that 67% of *all* research jobs are insecure, and a recent report on the impacts of casualisation in UK Higher Education noted that:

According to the results of UCU’s [University and College Union] ‘Counting the Cost of Casualisation in HE’ (2019) 83% of respondents agreed that their contractual status made it hard to make long-term financial commitments such as buying a house and plan for a family (Megoran and Mason, 2019: 8)

Furthermore, the UCU (2016) also has argued that “precariousness and insecurity are concentrated at the lower levels of the career path and especially among those people likely to have heavier teaching burdens, particularly the growing numbers of people on fixed-term teaching focused contracts” (p. 7). This “casualized and predominantly female teaching class in higher education follows longstanding patterns of devaluing socially reproductive work under capitalism” (Cardozo, 2017: 405). This intervention then, also reflects upon the impacts of uneven reproductive labour in the context of female academics’ career trajectories (hiring, promotion), and that creating space for (in)fertile subjectivities is enmeshed within a wider legacy of feminist politics within the neoliberal academy (Caretta and Faria, 2020; Rose, 1993; Webster and Caretta, 2019). To clarify, I do not prescribe to a singular meaning of neoliberalism; the term is used here to refer to the multiple implications of subjecting universities to the free market economy, the resultant model of fee-paying students as consumers, and the proliferation of metric-based markers of quality (Castree and Sparke, 2000). In the UK, one example of how this is manifested is within the numerical metrics assigned to individuals’ teaching, together with the relative grading of our research outputs, hiring cycles and the rhythms of publication surrounding the Research

Excellence Framework (Saunders and Blanco Ramirez, 2017). Indeed, such a prevalence of precarity risks insecurity becoming framed as a ‘rite of passage’ for ECRs, reproducing the meritocratic myth that those who successfully ride out, and survive, this instability will be rewarded with a stable contract (see Maddrell et al., 2019). The implications of this can serve to “effectively exclude from academia anyone who lacks a middle-class safety net”, and those with caring responsibilities, health issues and visa restrictions (Anonymous Academic, 2017; Jovanović, 2018).

Personally, I was made to feel ridiculous to expect stable employment ‘so soon’ after completing my PhD (this is echoed by many others e.g. Lyons, 2015; Montoya and Pérez, 2016). I worried that placing the title of this themed issue on my C.V. would make it appear that if I were to be awarded a permanent job, I would immediately take maternity leave. Returning to edit this paper from the position of a permanent contract, I am now worried that this makes me a fraud, as I am not in a precarious situation anymore. I worry how this looks to my friends and colleagues, and I am acutely aware that this worry over whether I am a ‘good enough’ ally, is itself, a privilege. This paranoia is structurally constructed; it is negated by the care, time and advice generously given by colleagues, but the worries remain. I am also aware of my privilege as a British citizen and my current entitlement to free healthcare, contraception, abortion and parental leave. Berg et al. (2014: 1; see also Maddrell et al., 2019; Webster and Caretta, 2019) comment on the intersectionality of such forms of privilege, noting that the neoliberal academy produces new forms of academic subjectivity that “interlock with forms of exclusion including patriarchy, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and racism.” The employment experiences of ECR are well-documented: short term contracts, hourly paid work, the expectation of institutional mobility, heavy teaching loads, poor pay and lack of career support (O’Dwyer, 2018; UCU, 2018), but the implications of this for (in)fertility have not been explored. I now turn to look at two of the most pervasive aspects of early career academia - short term contracts, together with the expectation of mobility in the context of the temporal politics of (in)fertility for ECRs.

(a) Short term contracts

My first point is that a series of short-term contracts, often book-ended by extended periods of academic-unemployment, means that planning for the future is challenging. The aforementioned UCU survey of casualisation in UK academia found precarity made planning a family harder (Megoran and Mason, 2019). In the UK, it is possible to equally split state-legislated 39-week parental leave, but this leave is conditional upon employment “by the same employer continuously for at least 26 weeks into the 15th week before the week of your due date,” (gov.uk, 2018) which makes planning pregnancy attempts additionally challenging for ECRs on short term contracts, assuming that this is a choice that we are able to make. Whilst rights to parental leave are ostensibly equal in the UK, due to corporal differences women are hampered. Maternity leave is not a choice when a woman is the one giving birth and possibly breastfeeding. Unlike a male colleague, a woman cannot simply choose to prioritise work and remain equally competitive in the job market. These “[u]nstable labour conditions make slowing down the rhythm of production a risky possibility for early career scholars wishing to pursue an academic career” (Montoya and Pérez, 2016). Such are the envisaged potential risks involved in slowing down a career that several of my ECR colleagues across multiple institutions and disciplines have had abortions, or placed family plans on hold, when awarded competitive, fixed term research positions. The reasons for these decisions cannot be reduced to a simplistic causality, in part because it is –

and must remain - an individual's right to make this choice (and many are not afforded it), but I raise this here to suggest that such accounts are perhaps reflective of the "hidden injuries of the neoliberal academy" (Gill and Donaghue, 2016: 91). On the other hand, receiving a research grant can provide ECR with the time, relative job 'security' and parental leave benefits to decide to plan for a child.

Further, it is common for ECRs to be employed as part of a research team on larger projects, which may be scheduled to end during parental leave, meaning that there is no job to come back to. Relatedly, despite well-meaning reassurances of post-partum productivity - books completed during nap times, conferences attended, grants successfully written, and papers 'finally' submitted for publication - the ability to be academically active depends upon the post-partum health of mother and child, together with the availability of a support network around them (which many ECRs do not have access too, because they cannot plan to live near family or friends). The reasons behind continuing work on parental leave are personal, but I argue that normalising this temporal narrative risks re-inscribing the view onto others that there is a need to 'keep up' with expectations of career trajectory (or exceed them) during this time. The (contested) claim that it is both possible and necessary to retain productivity on parental leave, is gendered for females do the majority of the work of social reproduction, which intersects and compounds issues of race, class and gender and likely has particularly negative implications for ECR academics, a consequence of our common lack of job security, coupled with the likelihood of fewer publications, grants and research networks in the early stages of a career (see Special Issue on *Early-career women in geography. Practical pathways to advancement in the neoliberal university* edited by Webster and Caretta 2019 for a wealth of scholarship on this issue). In short, as an academic community we need to be careful about the possible consequences of our accounts of productivity whilst on parental leave.

However, the implications of short-term contracts for ECR (in)fertility can be considered to extend beyond the politics of productivity on parental leave. Understanding (in)fertility as an embodied condition of possibility means taking seriously the impact of the:

[D]eep crisis affecting universities, as large scale institutional and structural transformation produce a psychosocial and somatic catastrophe amongst academics (and other university workers) that manifests in experiences of chronic stress, anxiety, exhaustion, insomnia and spiralling rates of physical and mental illness. (Gill and Donaghue, 2016: 91)

The diverse impacts of the neoliberal academy on our physical and mental health are entwined with our lived experiences of (in)fertility. Stress impacts our fertility (NHS, 2010).⁵ For example: stress can cause the menstrual cycle to "become longer or shorter ... [periods] may stop altogether, or they might become more painful" (NHS, 2016); stress can delay ovulation (NHS, 2016); may result in lower sperm counts (Jurewicz et al., 2010) and can cause difficulties in maintaining erections (NHS, 2017). Stress has associated mental health implications of depression, anxiety and mood changes, which are also bound up within our experiences of (in)fertility, together with the decisions and ability to reproduce. Framed in this way, (in)fertility is neither 'confined' to a quantifiable rate and nor is it reducible to pregnancy. Rather, the temporalities of (in)fertility conditions our experiences of the everyday, whether through pain, pleasure, discomfort or inconvenience, our encounters with fertility are embodied: they interject and shape our everyday lives.

This embodiment is political; it is produced by structural power relations and manifested within our bodies (Horton and Tucker, 2014; Tytherleigh et al., 2005). The implications of this for ECR on short term contracts are unknown. However, what this does illuminate is

that the advice to ‘wait for a permanent contract’, misses the implications of the contradictory politics of the meantime(s) (Cloke et al., 2017). That is, suggesting that we need to ‘wait for a permanent contract’ is important in that it takes account of the precarious politics of early career academia, but it risks foreclosing the politics of the lived experiences of this precarity; the embodiment of the neoliberal academy on our (in)fertility that endures beyond the myths of linear progression to permanency. Furthermore, as this intervention now continues to discuss, to reduce the politics of (in)fertility for ECRs to the requirement of job security, is to miss the point that, as Meyerhoff et al. (2011) argue, we do not need *more* time in the neoliberal academy. Instead we need a revisioning of the temporal conditions of our work, and our relationships to temporality outside of a capitalist linear framework that colonises, shapes and metricises ‘our’ time (Meyerhoff et al., 2011).

(b) *Expectations of institutional mobility*

“I hear the same stories. Four moves in five years. Five moves in seven. Young academics are expected to uproot repeatedly, often internationally, too, in order to maintain the hope of a career.” (Lyons, 2015). Bound up within the churn of short-term contracts are the expectations of institutional mobility for ECRs (Pitt and Mewburn, 2016). That is, ECRs are often required, or advised, to work within multiple different Universities before they are considered competitive for a permanent contract (Manzi et al., 2019). Several research fellowship schemes also prefer institutional mobility. For example, the Leverhulme Trust’s (2018) Early Career Fellowships, are targeted at “early career researchers, with a research record but who have not yet held a full-time permanent academic post, to undertake a significant piece of publishable work” specifically state that: “The Trust believes that the development of an academic career is best served by gaining experience at different institutions.” In this context, academic stasis must be justified. In other contexts, including for example the European Union’s Marie Skłodowska Curie awards, international mobility is necessitated in order to qualify for the fellowship. Notwithstanding the presumption of the individual and institutional benefits of scholarship that has been exposed to a wide range of departments, schools of thought and educational contexts, this requirement for mobility is hugely disruptive to our lives (Schaer et al., 2017). Moving is unfeasible for many, expensive for most, and – to varying degrees - disruptive for all (Pitt and Mewburn, 2016). It is also gendered, for women are more likely to have caring responsibilities, which tie them to a place, limiting employment mobility and impacting upon employment security and promotion opportunities (Berg et al., 2014; Pitt and Mewburn, 2016; Webster and Boyd, 2019). A recent commentary in *Nature* (Gewin, 2018) discussed research published in the *Journal of the Royal Society Interface* by Alexander Peterson, used citation rates to argue for international, institutional mobility stating that: “Mobile researchers gain up to 17% more citations compared to non-mobile scientists.” The Royal Society tweeted a link in support of this article, which received a torrent of backlash as academics pointed out that this ignored the gendered, familial and personal implications of uncritically perpetuating a requirement of mobility. Indeed, such was the negative response to this piece that The Royal Society subsequently deleted the tweet and retracted their support.

Many of my colleagues work away from their partners: I’m sure many of yours do as well. They rent in the week/term when teaching, and then travel (sometimes internationally) to spend time with their loved ones when they have time and funds to do so. Conversely, I have many ECR friends and colleagues on short term contracts who are unable to move due to caring, family and child responsibilities. We also become attached to, and embedded within, our communities. Being unable or unwilling to move limits our ability to gain the

experience of other institutions which then harms our future job security (Manzi et al., 2019). Glib comments from more senior researchers that we need to ‘move away to come back’ to have a hope of permanency in those elite institutions that do not typically hire ECRs, do little to negate the implications of this requirement on our lives (including our mental health). Institutional mobility should not form an implicit (or explicit) requirement for career success. Here we impose structures that effectively discriminate against families, carers, those with health issues, and migrants. This risks those already marginalised within this sector being held back from permanency (see also Webster and Caretta, 2019). Understanding the breadth of the instability generated by an expectation and/or requirement of mobility is key to understanding lived experiences of (in)fertility for ECRs, in part because:

Fewer female than male academics have children (Mason, 2011), and the reasons for this are not well understood – though the systematic casualisation of the profession, which means that one may work, after having completed a PhD, on repeated short-term contracts for many years, is likely to play a part, as is the ‘mobility’ increasingly required of a flexible and agile academic workforce. (Gill and Donaghue, 2016: 94)

At one level, the combination of multiple short-term contracts across different institutions, together with a geographical distance from one’s partner means that many of us put off any decision to have a child. That the future employment landscape does not promise stability further exacerbates this uncertainty. The expectation of ‘waiting for a permanent’ contract is based upon the assumption that there will be a permanent contract in the future if we persist in our meantime. Furthermore, it also presumes that we can map the rhythms of an academic career onto the temporalities of our relative fertility. In the context of institutional mobility this assumption is particularly problematic for a number of reasons: first, because it is grounded in the belief that we know our fertility, when we may not become aware of this until we try to conceive. As a woman, the closer we come to 40, the harder it is to conceive naturally.⁶ Beginning to try for a child in our mid-30s, after many years of demonstrating academic productivity across institutions on short term contracts, may not align with our own reproductive rhythms (NHS, 2018a). Moreover, some fertility treatments on the NHS (e.g. IVF) are only offered after a couple has “been trying to get pregnant through regular unprotected sex for 2 years” (NHS, 2018b) and this requires at least some semblance of regular contact with a partner. Moving between multiple (inter)national health providers may further hamper this process.

The temporal politics of (in)fertility then do not necessarily sit well within the short-term contracts across multiple institutions that an ECR must increasingly navigate (HESA, 2017). It is not the case that we simply need to calve out ‘more time’ in a metric and market driven academy, but that we need to collectively push back against the rhythms of the neoliberal academy (and the associated short term contracts, expectations of mobility, and pressures to be active on parental leave) to foreground other rhythms, those of our (in)fertility. Therefore, instead of placing fertility ‘decisions’ as outside the remit of the neoliberal academies’ ideal hyper-mobile, international, metric-aligning subject into the ‘private’ sphere, we need to frame the politics of (in)fertility as conditioned by the neoliberal academy. For in the context of a publish or perish, REF-driven,⁷ audit based academy, “aspects of life that limit academic production – such as motherhood, or the refusal or inability to relocate for the next job – may become an obstacle for advancing or even pursuing an academic career at all (Montoya and Pérez, 2016).

Conclusion, or this is not ‘just the way things are’

When I try to talk about job insecurity with senior researchers, they brush it off. They tell me I will be fine in a few years [...] They don’t understand that this is not just about me. It is endemic. Almost everyone else I know at my level, and below, is in the same situation. (Anonymous Academic, 2017)

We need to resist University management’s excuses that ‘this is just the way things are’ within the contemporary academy. This can never be an excuse for complicity with potentially harmful policies. Universities should care about (in)fertility because, as an ECR acquaintance⁸ put it: “they have a moral duty to support the welfare of their staff; they should care because this is a gender equality issue, and that is something that most universities have explicitly committed to addressing; they should care because they are perpetrating a form of slow violence against people, especially women, by interfering with their reproductive rights; they should care because they risk losing talented scholars who cannot find space for both family and work – it is not sustainable (or ethical) for universities to rely solely on people who are willing to sacrifice everything else just to work in academia.” In short, the intersectional politics of gender, race, class, migration background, ability and age are revealed and exacerbated by (in)equality.

Making time, and space for our (in)fertile subjectivities has no simple solution, and this is why I hope that this themed issue encourages research, and resistance in this area. These issues are inherently entangled with wider questions of care and support within the academy. Borrowing from Mountz et al. (2015)’s instrumental feminist strategies for collective action which foreground slow-scholarship within the neoliberal academy, this resistance may take the form of: organising with colleagues to engage with “university leaders who construct or reinforce time as we know it” (1250); taking care of ourselves and each other, and – where we feel comfortable doing so – not to “shy away from talking about life and how intertwined life and work are” (1251), together with sharing “slow strategies” (e.g. turning off email in the evening) to try and negate the high-paced temporality of the neoliberal academy (1250). Friendships within the academy are crucial here as Webster and Boyd (2019) note, for in providing kindness, solidarity, care, much-needed spaces to vent, and in sharing coping mechanisms, job applications and time, friendships run against the grain of the competitive academy and help us to resist its insipid neoliberalism.

Yet this is not to push the responsibility of resisting onto ECRs, for senior colleagues (e.g. those in senior management, or on hiring panels) need to be at the forefront of the challenges to these structural constraints and cultural norms. Examples of the forms that such a broader understanding of the challenges of (in)fertility within ECR academia could include: institutionally refusing to accept short-term and/or hourly paid contracts; providing mentorship to ECRs (and including the time this takes within staff work load allocations); ensuring that parental leave is considered with ECRs on short-term contracts in mind; rethinking assumptions around institutional mobility when on hiring committees; creating spaces for ECR voices to be meaningfully heard (e.g. including them within departmental decision making); actively participating within Unions, and reflecting upon the implications of narratives of productivity during parental leave (Webster and Caretta, 2019). Funding bodies need to extend contracts to cover parental leave for postdoctoral researchers. Caretta and Faria’s (2020) description of building time and care for slow mentorship is inspiring here, for they worked to create spaces in their lab, and in the field, whereby junior colleagues could explore, and challenge the idea of the ‘super-hero’ academic, and talk through the

everyday ‘ups and downs’ that work and life bring (Pitt and Mewburn, 2016). As academics we can use such testimonies to better understand the temporal politics of ECR (in)fertility as influenced and conditioned by the metric based neoliberal academy, and yet simultaneously place our embodied experiences of this (in)fertility as always-in-excess of its rhythms.

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Notes

1. This deliberate mis-spelling of ‘care-fully’ is borrowed from Mountz et al. (2015).
2. I deliberately do not prescribe a metrical time frame for *Early Career Researchers* as the temporal assumptions behind the term are limited. ECR is not sufficient to include both those just out of PhD, and those who have been navigating short term contracts for decades. *Early Career Researchers* may also not be conducting research, and instead be employed on short-term teaching-only contracts. To complicate this further, not all ECR are on short-term contracts or consider themselves to be in precarious employment. In this paper, I use the term ECR to signal those who have finished their doctoral studies, and who are considered to be, and/or consider themselves to be, at the start of their academic career. I do think that there is further work to be done on the development, politics and assumptions behind the term Early Career Researcher within the academy.
3. I also do not go into further detail on my own experiences, as I do not feel comfortable publishing these.
4. I borrow this phrase from Jane Austen’s 1813 novel ‘Pride and Prejudice’.
5. The National Health Service (NHS) is the public healthcare system in the UK covering doctors, hospitals and emergency responses. It is (currently) free for British and EEA citizens resident in the UK. Please fight to keep it.
6. The NHS (2018a) reports that for couples having unprotected sex every 2–3 days, those “aged 19 to 26–92% will conceive after 1 year and 98% after 2 years” and for those “aged 35 to 39–82% will conceive after 1 year and 90% after 2 years”.
7. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) assesses research outputs, impacts and research environments across Higher Education institutions in the UK every 6–7 years. Government funding is in part allocated on an institution’s REF score.
8. This anonymous acquaintance has read the paper and gives their full consent.

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