



## **A Critical Discourse Analysis of how radical Nick Clegg's 'Greater Equality for a Stronger Economy' speech on 13th November 2012 was in relation to dominant gendered discourses in Britain.**

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### **Introduction**

In this study I will use the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) to assess how Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's 'Greater Equality for a Stronger Economy' speech (2012: Appendix 1) intervenes in or reaffirms gendered discourses within British society. Joseph (2006) argues that 'despite being so controversial, CDA is without question the most important mode of analysis of political discourse at the present time' (131). CDA is useful to sociolinguistic analysts as it destabilises the 'naturalization' that occurs in discourse, showing that "the way things are" is not inevitable or unchangeable' (Cameron 2001: 123). The controversy of CDA stems from its own inherently ideological nature as analysts tend to have personal goals in utilising this model. This study is not unique in this instance, as I am assessing this speech from the stance that we should not just have 'greater equality' but total equality between masculine and feminine identities and discourses. Although a multitude of analyses of political and gender discourse have occurred and are continually occurring (Fairclough 2000; Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002), it is important that with each step towards an egalitarian system, away from the dominant discourse of normative masculine heterosexual thought, the long-running debates about gender and sex are revisited.

The policy outlined in this speech contains three main parts: flexible working and shared parental leave will be introduced in 2015 for all workers, with equal rights being given to mothers, fathers and adopting parents; a rebalancing of the tax system will occur, benefiting those earning the least, including many women; and more childcare benefits will be provided to low income earners and single-parent families (Clegg 2012). This study focuses on 'flexible parental leave' and its ramifications for gendered discourses within Britain. Thinking through the lens of Butler (1988) and Cameron (2006), that gender and gender relations are performative and dynamic, a social construct rather than a biological fact, I will assess whether this policy is as radical as it seems for gender relations within Britain. This being the first time that parents will be allowed to divide their year of parental leave between them in an individual way is indicative of a changing discursive approach to gender identity and biological sex that no longer renders the biological mother the necessary primary carer. Through a CDA approach I will look at the extent to which this speech is a discursive episode which changes social practices and to which it is shaped by pre-existing discourses of gender. As well, I will see if it really is a significant step towards equalising the roles of mothers and fathers within childrearing and normalising the position of adoptive parents within both discourse and society.

### **Background**

Evans (2011) argues that while the Liberal Democrat Party seem to promote feminist policies there is a ‘gap between the[ir] rhetoric and underlying beliefs’ which has resulted in ‘a hesitant and somewhat confused approach to achieving gender balance’ (154). CDA is an expedient tool for gauging the extent of these hesitations in the shared parental leave policy. The main premise of CDA originates with Foucault’s (2002) understanding of discourses as ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (42), while concomitantly being formed by a ‘specific history’ (143). Following Althusser (1976) and Williams’ (1977) ideas that language plays an ideological role in the creation and maintenance of hegemonic systems it can be argued that discourse is both constructed by social practices and constitutive of them. Like Williams’ notion of ‘tradition’, all discourse is ‘*selective*’ and thus ‘vulnerable’ under analysis (116). Therefore, just as historians can destabilise the tradition through counter-hegemonic work, sociolinguists can reveal dominant ideologies within discourses through CDA. According to Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) one of the main purposes of CDA is to ‘*expos[e]* the often subtle role of discourse in the construction and maintenance of injustice, inequality and domination’ (19). Wodak (2001) verifies this ‘fundamental concern with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language’ (2). In exposing this dialectical relationship between discourse and society, CDA allows the analyst to intervene in discourses by revealing patterns of hegemonic thought, systems and practices embedded within the discursive language (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002: 8-22; Conboy 2010: 10-11). Encouraging the analyst to understand the ideological context of every discursive moment is useful for this study in looking beyond Clegg’s abstract policy into the metaphorical and discursive constructions within his speech.

There are multiple different models of CDA which can be used for such an analysis: as Meyer (2001) argues ‘one of CDA’s volitional characteristics is its diversity’ (30). I have chosen to employ Fairclough’s (1992) approach over other influential models, such as those of van Dijk (1993) and Wodak (2001), as this best befits my understanding of language and discourse as a social institution. Meyer roots Fairclough’s approach to CDA in ‘Marxist tradition’, arguing that CDA for him is ‘the analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis [...] and other elements of social practices’ (22). This is exemplified in Fairclough’s description of ‘discourse as a political practice establishes, sustains and changes power relations’ (67). Contrary to Fairclough who focuses on the language of each text and how it intersects with the wider discourse, van Dijk’s (1993) model aligns with work in cognitive psychology. He focuses on the ‘influence’ of discourses on ‘the minds of others’ as he believes CDA is only effective if it can specifically ‘account for the role of language’ in structures of ‘dominance’ (279). However, as Cameron (2001) shows, if the text in question is ‘composed for presentation to a mass media audience’, as this speech was, ‘the analyst will not be able to make reference to any evidence in that text of how the audience understands it’ (137). I am thus more interested in how Clegg’s speech is informed by and attempts to re-inform gendered discourses within Britain than analysing its specific effects which is why I have chosen Fairclough’s approach.

Fairclough’s (1992) model for CDA focuses on the individual text at the centre of both discursive and social practices:

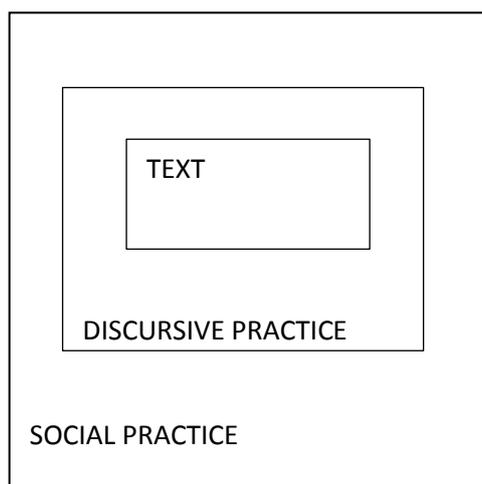


Figure 1: a representation of Fairclough's (1992) model for CDA (73)

Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) show that there is no set method for conducting a 'critical (feminist) discourse analysis' but that some of the items that could be of interest are 'recurring lexical items', 'lexical *absences*' and 'words or phrases salient in content' (21-22). Similarly, even though Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) outline a five stage model for CDA they observe that their framework has a 'capacity to produce theoretically grounded analyses in a wide range of cases' (60) because it is malleable. The individual text must inform the specific analytical methods used: for example, Fairclough (2000) outlines that a significant 'part of what distinguishes one political discourse from another is how collective identities are constructed' (35). Therefore in analysis of spoken political discourse the pronoun structures can be very ideologically telling. However, as each moment of discourse is unique and composed of a vast array of intertextual elements (Fairclough 1992) I decided to approach my analysis of the linguistic features of this speech with a bottom-up approach, focusing on the text at the centre as shown in Figure 1. For this specific speech the linguistic features I am focusing on are narrative construction (Labov 1972), speech acts (Searle 1999) and grammar and vocabulary (Fairclough 1992 and 2000; Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). I will assess each of these textual features in terms of their relevance to discourses of gender and gender relations.

### Methodology

My method for data collection happened in an ad hoc manner rather than being rigidly planned, after all 'there is no typical CDA way of collecting data' (Meyer 2001: 23). As I originally wanted to look at how gender is represented in the British media I chose one story which was represented across multiple sources: shared flexible parental leave. This is a current political topic heavily influenced by discourses of gender and heterosexual norms, as Sunderland (2002) argues parenthood is 'an important epistemological site for feminist linguists' (294). I decided to use data from the national daily British newspapers which were members of the Newspaper Publishers Association (2012) ('the association for Britain's national newspapers') who published an article about Clegg's speech on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012. As I wanted to assess Clegg's speech for myself and then intersect my analysis with how the media had interpreted it, I decided to transcribe the clipping which was provided by the *Guardian* (2012) and *Telegraph* (2012). However, on reading further and watching a clip on *Mail Online* (2012) I realised these clippings all neglected significant amounts from Clegg's original speech. Eventually I managed to find a full transcription of 'Greater Equality

for a Stronger Economy' through the Cabinet Office (2012) which provides enough data alone for this study. As a scripted piece directed at the cameras, both the content of this speech and its delivery are highly structured, thus I conducted my analysis on the Cabinet Office's transcription as opposed to my own. In the section which I transcribed the only differences were that Clegg stumbled over his words twice, saying 'they can tike take time off together' and 'so we looked at externing exte- extending paternity leave that's the two that's the two weeks' (Appendix 2). Both these errors seem to be in anticipation of what is coming next rather than errors which would be telling in an analysis. Although Clegg did stress a few words within the spoken performance of this speech the importance of these seems minimal in a focus on how this text intersects within gendered discourses in British society, and rather a product of political discourse and speech delivery (Fairclough 2000). Because this study is a CDA of the implications of this speech in gendered discourses I also removed a section which focused on the specifics of the new tax system, indicated in Appendix 1 by '[...]'.

The main limitation of this study is my own ideological position which renders my analysis biased. It could be argued that as critical discourse analysts 'take an explicit socio-political stance' (van Dijk 1993: 280) its goals of dissecting the ideological foundations of discourses are undermined. Joseph (2006) de-problematizes this ambivalence between CDA's aims and methods in arguing that because it 'wears its political commitments on its sleeve [...] in principle they are detachable' (130). Unlike the discourse which CDA works upon, whose 'ideological dimension' is in the form of a 'hidden agenda' (Cameron 2001: 123), authors of CDA explicitly 'signal their political standpoint' (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002: 21). It is because of my interest in intervening in dominant heteronormative discourses of hierarchical gender relations (specifically in parenthood and employment) that I have chosen to conduct this particular study. As a Liberal Democrat supporter and critic of Nick Clegg myself, I understand that my position towards this speech may be weighted in a certain way. Moreover, following the seminal works of feminists Butler (1988) and Cameron (2006) I also believe that gender is performative and thus separate to biological sex, thus disagreeing with deterministic views about mothers as primary carers and fathers as bread-winners. My main focus here is based on the latter ideological commitment to intervening in dominant hegemonic modes of thinking about gender divisions, thus I will try to ensure that I am not influenced by the former commitments.

### Data Analysis

'Greater Equality for a Stronger Economy' (Appendix 1: all further quotations are from this speech unless otherwise stated) is structured around a narrative about a heteronormative 'young couple' deciding it is time to start a family. The listener is interpellated to 'imagine a young couple expecting a baby, sat around the kitchen table, planning how they'll divvy up their new responsibilities'. In this orientation (Labov 1972: 363) Clegg intervenes in traditional gendered discourses by rejecting that 'Mum [is] in the kitchen, Dad in the office', instead applying the couple to a masculine task in a feminine space. Interestingly, 'divvy' is etymologically a descendent of 'dividend' which indicates Clegg's fusion of gender relations and the economy (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2012). This metaphor continues when he argues 'it's an equation where the answer is almost always rigged because, whichever way you look at it, the solution ends up being the mother doing more of the caring, and the father doing more of the earning'. Clegg does not quantify this assertion with any evidence or explanation which indicates that it is an evaluation rather than part of the complicating action (Labov 1972). The narrative then builds to the resolution that 'we're making the changes that will give you a route back', that will allow women to 'keep their independence' and 'children up and down the country benefitting from have their

fathers in their lives'. While this narrative appears to intervene in conventional gendered discourses about heteronormative patriarchal relationships, the resolution signalling women as 'you' divides them as a group of listeners from. Moreover, his only references away from the normative heterosexual discourse of the family are: 'for single mothers it can be even harder' and 'if a woman, or man, adopts a baby' which is shortly followed by 'So, back to our young couple'. He concludes that these policies 'have the potential to transform that conversation, for that young couple'. The repetition of the concrete demonstrative pronoun 'that' highlights that the discourse focused on and potentially intervened in in this speech is a very limited one. Therefore, while the policy itself accepts deviations from heterosexual norms in 'single mothers' and potential homosexual adoptive parents, the rhetoric which accompanies it is rooted in hegemonic discourse.

Analysis of the grammatical composition of this speech reveals a significant amount about the ideological structures at play within it. In particular, the pronoun and noun usages highlight it is not as revolutionary within dominant gendered discourses as it might appear in the skeleton of the policy. He utilises a rhetorical 'us vs. them' pronoun structure which confuses who his target audience and where the agency for the historical development and future progression of gendered discourses lies. Clegg opens with a gender-ambiguous personal account of 'my purpose' that speaks to 'everyone in Britain'. However, after only three sentences this individual 'I' has become a collective yet divisive us positioned against 'them' who are 'women'. Fairclough (2000) argues that New Labour employed a similar rhetoric, with 'we' either posing as 'the Government' or 'Britain, or the British people as a whole' (35). However, he acknowledges that it was also often used with ambivalence and a failure to 'sustain an inclusive discourse and avoid divisions' (36). Similarly, Clegg excludes the group which he is claiming to speak for: these 'women [...] find themselves locked out [...] when they choose to start a family', a 'problem we can no longer afford'. This conflation of gender and biological sex enforces a dichotomous gendered relationship between a masculinity associated with the economy and the absent 'million' women who disappear in parenthood. This metaphor of women as a commodity excluded from the masculine economy continues 'this absence of women is costing us dearly'. A common idea in linguistics and CDA is that 'metaphors structure the way we think [...] and act, and our systems of knowledge and belief in a pervasive and fundamental way' (Fairclough 1992:194). The main premise that 'Gender Equality' will lead to a 'Greater Economy' is shown in this metaphor to only refer to equality within the private sphere, for the benefit of the public sphere. This reinforces rather than undermines discourses of women as 'primary carers' and men as 'bread-winners'.

This isolation of women from working spheres is further highlighted in the semantic non-equivalence (Spender 1980) of the noun-phrase 'female entrepreneurs'. Speaking under the *a priori* that entrepreneur is gendered masculine; Clegg here laments societal exclusion of women, while cementing their discursive exclusion. Discursively there is gender bias associated with the noun 'entrepreneur': two of the nine examples of its use in *Oxford English Dictionary* (2012) are specifically masculine. However, in their suggestions for prescriptive 'gender-neutrality' language changes the Canadian Department of Justice says 'entrepreneur' should be used instead of 'businessman'. Clegg's ambivalent masculine-dominant rhetoric continues in an attempt to unite 'women' with success through divisive and gender-biased language: 'they are just as ambitious' as men. This culminates in the rhetorical question 'how do we give them a route back?' which gives agency not to women but to men/the empowered. While it is masculine personalities who can affect this change Clegg does not use an agent in the blame for these hegemonic gender divisions. Rather he claims 'the problem comes down to a whole range of clapped out systems and arrangements',

personifying the current rules and practices, or discourse itself, as the factor holding women back. This is seen in the rhetoric of control and domination in society's use of directive speech acts towards women (Searle 1999: 44): 'we, as a society, we have got so much better at telling young women: the sky's the limit [...] get a job'. While Clegg accepts that the explicit 'we' utter the locution of this speech act, he denies that the failure of their perlocutionary force (Searle 1999) is the fault of the speaker in stripping the simile 'it's like a rubber band snaps these women back' of any agency. The selective pronoun 'these' indicates that not all women attempt this progression but those that do are inevitably pulled back because of biological reasons. As this policy shows, gender relations are not inevitable but are socially determined: therefore it is not because of their sex that women are held back but because of the pervasive masculine dominant ideas expressed in this speech.

### Discussion

A CDA approach to 'Greater Equality for a Stronger Economy' has shown that although this policy seems to intervene in traditional dominant heterosexual discourses of the family and childcare, the rhetoric which surrounds it is cased in normative ideas about gender, biological sex and patriarchy. In using CDA to 'make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden and thereby to derive results which are of practical relevance' (Meyer 2001: 15) it can be seen that a change within the ideology of the government needs to occur for gender discourses to be radicalised. The discursive engagement of this speech is with the workings of a masculine-dominated gendered discourse, while the policy radically overturns notions that biological sex determines which partner should take the majority of parental leave. A decade ago Sunderland (2002) argued that 'New mother who also works outside the home' is 'potentially destabilising to the whole discursive structure underpinning "Western" gendered parenthood'. While she realised it was 'unlikely to bring any straightforward redistribution' (316), she probably did not expect that the redistribution would occur in a complete dislocation between discourse and social practice. The detachment between the discursive and social practices in this speech completely undermines Fairclough's (1992) argument that relationships and roles within the family 'are all constituted partly in discourse' (65). While I decided to focus solely on Clegg's speech, the majority of sources available on the topic were media texts, which focus on the practicalities of the policy rather than the narrative and discourse of the speech (*Guardian* 2012; *Mail Online* 2012; *Telegraph* 2012). It is therefore possible that the relationship between discourse and social norms is not as dialectical as proponents of CDA argue. Luke (2002) argues that CDA is too focused on 'analysis of economic and cultural disparity, political oppression and repression' and that we need a new mode of analysis that 'questions the essentialist symmetries between language, culture, and nation that we continue to take for granted' (108). Gender relations within society are far less dichotomous than this speech implies and this policy reflects changes which have already occurred rather than 'driv[ing] a culture shift'.

### Conclusion

Evans (2011) shows that it is the lack of physical feminine representation within the Liberal Democrats which engenders their conflicting views about gender and gender relations. Exemplifying this is Clegg's attempt to speak for women which results in silencing them and reinforcing the heteronormative dominant masculine discourses which pervade British society. This study has shown that while the gendered social practice of childcare is changing, the discourse surrounding it has remained fairly static. While I did not have enough space to discuss the wider interpretation of this policy of flexible shared parental leave within the media, the analysis of Clegg's speech provides a starting point for looking at how the information was publically assimilated. I hope that in continuing to signal areas of bias within

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gendered discourse social and discourse practices can align with the theoretical idea of Butler (1988) that gender is performative, not deterministic and thus hegemonic ideas of patriarchy should no longer be foregrounded within our society.

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## Appendix 1

Clegg, N. (2012). 'Greater Equality for a Stronger Economy - speech by the Deputy Prime Minister'. Cabinet Office. <http://www.dpm.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/greater-equality-stronger-economy-speech-deputy-prime-minister>. [Accessed 09 November 2012].

My purpose in government is to build a stronger economy in a fairer society – so that everyone in Britain is able to get on in life.

That's why I was so struck a few weeks ago by new research from the Resolution Foundation. It shows that compared to the best performing countries, there are about one million women missing from the UK economy.

Women who want to work, although not necessarily full time, but who find themselves locked out of the labour market – particularly when they choose to start a family. On rates of female employment the UK ranks 15th in the OECD.

This isn't a new problem: despite rising since the 1960s, female employment has stalled over the last decade.

It is, however, a problem we can no longer afford. Just as working women drove up living standards in the latter half of the 20th Century, after the Second World War, the evidence suggests that living standards in the first half of the 21st Century will need to be driven by working women once again.

So this absence of women from our economy is costing us dearly. If the United Kingdom had, for example, the same proportion of female entrepreneurs as the United States, we would see an extra £42bn on GDP.

Women in this country are now better qualified than men. Girls do better at school; more go to university; they are just as ambitious. And, in the words of the World Bank, gender equality is 'smart economics'.

It isn't just the key to a fairer society. It's the key to prosperity too.

So the challenge I want to address today is this: when women take a break from work to have children, how do we give them a route back?

This isn't about forcing mothers to work when they don't want or need to, but it is about giving them a real choice.

The problem comes down to a whole range of clapped out rules and arrangements.

Whether that's the balance between maternity and paternity leave, or the childcare that's available, or the way our tax and welfare systems don't fully reward part-time work.

Arrangements which assume that families are still comprised of one bread winner and one homemaker: Mum in the kitchen, Dad in the office.

Even though the reality is that, in many families, both parents work, often juggling busy lives, often working part-time, often without relatives or friends close by who can help out.

So we are shaking up those various rules and arrangements – and I'll come onto how.

But before I do, let's just be clear on the dilemma so many mothers – and fathers – face.

We, as a society, we have got so much better at telling young women: the sky's the limit. Get a job, be independent, be the boss. Run as far and as fast as your talents can take you. Then, suddenly, when women hit their late 20s, their early thirties, despite all their earlier momentum, despite all the endless possibility, they are suddenly stopped in their tracks.

It's like a rubber band snaps these women back. Because, the moment they start planning a family, their options begin to narrow.

Imagine a young couple expecting a baby, sat around the kitchen table, planning how they'll divvy up their new responsibilities. That is a hugely exciting time. But that conversation can be extremely stressful too:

What's going to happen to their income, and will they manage?

How much will their bills be?

How many hours does that mean they need to work?

How does childcare fit in?

They are about to embark on a monumental, life changing experience, yet it's boiled down to some very basic sums, and so many couples feel like they are facing an impossible mathematical equation.

And it's an equation where the answer is almost always rigged because, whichever way you look at it, the solution ends up being the mother doing more of the caring, and the father doing more of the earning.

She gets the year long maternity leave; after that, the expectation is she'll continue to be the primary carer – so she's the one who goes part-time.

That, very often, means she ends up on lower pay, with fewer chances for promotion, and it's at exactly this point that the pay gap begins to widen. Just last week two separate reports reminded us what a problem that still is.

Then, as time passes, as more children arrive, women get caught in a kind of cycle: have a baby, work less, so earn less.

Earn less and – because childcare costs so much, because your partner is now earning more than you – work less.

Even when the children are grown up, working full time isn't possible for many women. With the population living longer, we've seen the emergence of the so-called sandwich generation: women who spend their thirties raising young children and their fifties caring for elderly parents.

And for single mothers it can be even harder. They have a greater need to go to work, but much less help at home.

I don't pretend there's an easy answer. And if more traditional arrangements suit a couple, they should absolutely have the right to pursue them. But we cannot continue to shrug our shoulders at the inevitability of it all.

Many families want and need to tread a different path. We have made so much progress on greater equality between the sexes – especially in terms of enshrining equal rights in our laws, and the previous Government certainly deserves credit for that.

But we still have work to do – for the sake of men and women.

It's heartbreaking to see fathers missing out on being with their children.

It's heartbreaking to watch women lower their ambitions for themselves.

Equality's promise must not end at 30.

So we have to give these parents more options; more choice; the support they need to make the right decisions for their families.

That isn't easy when there's no money around.

We've had to make some difficult cuts to public spending in order to restore stability to the economy, and families up and down the country have felt those. But we can – and we are – spending the money that is available in ways that empower these families, and we are modernising the rules and practices that affect their ability to balance work and home.

That's what governing from the centre is all about. It's not up to us to tell you how to live. It's up to us to make more of your choices possible.

And so, because of a range of Coalition reforms, when that young couple sits down to plan their family, they are going to have that conversation on different terms.

Question one: who'll stay home when a child is born?

That can feel like a no-brainer when a woman gets a year off – 9 months of it at statutory pay – and a man gets two weeks.

So in the Coalition Agreement, we committed to creating a new system, where mothers and fathers can share leave more evenly.

As an intermediary step, we implemented the previous government's proposal to allow fathers to take over care at five months, allowing mothers to go back to work earlier. But we wanted to go further and I announced a consultation at the start of last year.

Since then, we've been processing the responses, working with business and family groups, taking our time to make sure we get this right. And we have now come to a decision.

I can announce today that, from 2015, the UK will shift to an entirely new system of flexible parental leave.

Under the new rules, a mother will be able to trigger flexible leave at any point, if and when she feels ready.

That means that whatever time is left to run on her original year can be taken by her partner instead. Or they can chop up the remaining time between them – taking it in turns. Or they can take time off together – whatever suits them.

The only rule is that no more than 12 months can be taken in total, with no more than 9 months at guaranteed pay. And, of course, couples will need to be open with their employers, giving them proper notice.

I had originally been very attracted to a period of time reserved, specifically, for fathers.

The international evidence shows, overwhelmingly, that these so-called 'use-it-or-lose-it-blocks' of paternity leave drive take-up. So we looked at extending paternity leave – that's the two weeks fathers get, guaranteed, after the birth.

Any extension would, of course, have to be in addition to the total time parents already get, otherwise you'd end up taking time away from mothers – which wouldn't be right..

But, both within Government and among business, there has been real concern over the cost of doing that now. So I've accepted that extending paternity leave should be revisited when the economy is in a stronger state.

These are major reforms and, at a time of continuing economic difficulty, it's sensible to do them in a number of steps rather than one giant leap.

More and more men are taking on childcare duties – or want to – and flexible leave builds on that.

The next stage will be assessing if couples are using this new freedom. So flexible leave will be reviewed in its first few years, by 2018, and extending paternity leave will be looked at as part of that.

I can however confirm that we are going to create a new legal right for men to take unpaid leave in order to attend two antenatal appointments, so that they can be more involved from the earliest stages of pregnancy.

Lots of fathers will tell you that these moments are when it can start to feel real for them.

Whether that's at the 12 week scan – the first time they see their child on a screen - or a bit further down the track, when they can find out if they're having a girl or a boy.

This new right means no father will ever need to miss out.

I can also announce today that parents who adopt their children will be eligible for the new flexible parental leave.

They will have equal rights to biological parents. That will end a couple of big discrepancies which currently exist.

Right now, if a couple are adopting a baby, they can only take their equivalent of maternity and paternity leave if they've been in a job for 6 months. If a couple are having a baby, they can take their leave no matter how long they've been in post. In the future, leave will be a day-one right for all parents.

And, at the moment, if a woman gives birth to a baby she gets the first six weeks at 90% of her pay. On average, if she's working full time, that's around £400 a week.

However, if a woman, or man, adopts a baby that's capped at £135 a week. It's ridiculous that adopters should be financially worse off, so we'll make sure the primary adopter is guaranteed 90% of their salary too.

We expect around 4000 families to benefit from these changes each year.

So, back to our young couple.

Now they've split their leave more evenly, what will they do after the first year? So often that's the next question. The mother wants to go back to work, but does it make financial sense?

How much mothers want and need to work will depend on their situations but, by raising the personal allowance threshold – the point at which you start paying income tax - we are making sure that women on low and middle incomes can keep more of the money they earn.

[...]

So, in the Coalition Agreement, we committed to extending this right to all employees. We've consulted on the best way to do that and we'll be changing the law as soon as parliamentary time allows, giving everyone this new right will help drive a culture shift in the workplace.

And it will be possible for other relatives, grandparents and even close family friends to change the way they work in order to help with childcare.

Employers will have a duty to consider all requests in a reasonable way – we'll publish guidance on that and we're working closely with business to get the detail right.

Ultimately this change is good for business: firms will be able to retain their best staff and it's good for our economy. A modern workforce is a flexible workforce too.

These are real, concrete reforms:

Flexible working, boosting childcare, income tax cuts, a totally new system of flexible parental leave.

Together, they have the potential to transform that conversation, for that young couple.

Transform the opportunities available to women.

You won't get to 30 and suddenly have to choose: motherhood or work, because we're making the changes that will give you a route back.

That means women up and down the country realising their potential, keeping their independence, fulfilling their dreams.

It means children up and down the country benefitting from having their fathers in their lives.

It means an economy running on all cylinders.

And it means a nation reaping the rewards.

Greater equality, a fairer society, a stronger economy too.

## Appendix 2

My transcription of the extract of the above speech on Guardian (2012). 'Nick Clegg announces flexible parental leave – video'. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/video/2012/nov/13/nick-clegg-flexible-parental-leave-video>. [Accessed 01 December 2012].

I can announce today that from two thousand and fifteen the UK will shift to an *entirely* new system of flexible – parental – leave . under the new rules a mother will be able to trigger flexible leave at *any* point - ↓ if and when she feels ready . that means that whatever time is left to run on her original *year* can be taken by her *partner* instead - or they can chop up the remaining time between them taking it in turns *or* they can tike take time off together . whatever - suits - them . the only rule is that no more than twelve months can be taken in total - with no more than nine months guaranteed pay . and of course couples will need to be *open* with their employers giving them proper notice . I had originally been very attracted to a period of time reserved *specifically* for fathers . the international evidence shows - overwhelmingly that these so called use it or lost it blocks of - paternity leave - drive take up . so we looked at extending exte- extending paternity leave that's the two that's the two weeks fathers get guaranteed after the birth . any extension would of course have to be *in* addition to the time total time parents already get . otherwise you'd end up taking time away from mothers - which wouldn't be right . *but* both within government and among business there's been *real* concern of the cost of doing that right now . and so I've accepted that extending paternity leave should be revisited when the economy is in a stronger state . these are *major* reforms and at a time of continuing economic difficulty its sensible to do them in a number of steps - rather than one giant leap . more and more men are taking on c-childcare duties or want to - and flexible leave builds on that . the next stage will be assessing if couples are *using* this new freedom . so flexible leave will be reviewed in its first few years *by* two thousand and eighteen and *extending* paternity leave will be looked at as part of that . I can however confirm that we *are* going to create a new legal right for men to take unpaid leave in order to attend two antenatal appointments - so that they can be more *involved* from the *earlier* stages of pregnancy . lots of fathers will tell you that these moments are when it - can start to to really feel real for them . whether that's the twelve week scan . the first time they see their child on a screen or a bit further down the track when they can find out if they're having a girl or a boy . *this* new right means no father will ever *need* - to miss out . I can also announce today that parents who adopt their children will be eligible for the new flexible parental leave . they will have equal rights to biological parents . that will end some big discrepancies which currently exist . *right* now if a couple are *adopting* a baby - they can only take their equivalent of maternity and paternity leave if they have been in a job for six months - if a couple are *having* a baby they can take their leave no matter how long they've been in post . in the future leave will be a *day* one right for *all* parents . and at the moment if a woman gives birth to a baby she gets the first six weeks at ninety per cent of her pay . on average if she's working full time that's around four hundred pounds a week . however if a woman - or man adopts a baby that's capped at a hundred and thirty five pounds - a week . it's *ridiculous* that adopters should be financially worse off so we'll make sure the *primary* adopter is guaranteed ninety per cent of their salary too . we expect around four thousand families to benefit from these changes ↓ each year