

# Women Representatives Acting for Women: Sex and the Signing of Early Day Motions in the 1997 British Parliament

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The return of 101 Labour women MPs in 1997 generated an expectation that their presence would enhance women's substantive representation. And many of Labour's new women MPs claim to have acted for women since their election. Yet demonstrating the difference that MPs make is not easy. Much of what goes on in the chamber of the Commons reflects party identity, and much of what goes on elsewhere in parliament is hidden. Studying sex differences in the signing of early day motions (EDMs) provides one way of testing whether Labour's women MPs are acting for women. Analysis of all the EDMs in the 1997 parliament, some 5,000 motions, establishes that they are more likely than Labour's men to sign 'women's' and especially feminist 'women's' EDMs. There is clear evidence of behavioural differences between Labour's women and men MPs, strengthening arguments that women's political presence is important because of the substantive difference they can make.

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The return of 101 Labour women MPs in 1997 was accompanied by a widely held expectation that they would make a feminised difference – that the Commons would reflect, to a greater extent than before, women's concerns. This expectation is an articulation, in everyday terms, of the feminist claim that women's descriptive and substantive representation are linked – that when present in politics, women representatives act for women (Phillips, 1995, 1998; Mansbridge, 1999).

The potential for Labour's women MPs to act for women is clear (Lovenduski, 1997; Lovenduski and Norris, 2003). Attitudinal differences between women and men MPs have long been established in the UK. Both the British Candidate Studies (1987 and 1992) and the British Representation Studies (1997 and 2001) have consistently found that, within political parties, women are more liberal than men and 'more likely to take a pro-woman line than men'.<sup>1</sup> In addition, interview-based research amongst half of Labour's women MPs who were first elected in 1997 suggests that these attitudinal differences inform parliamentary behaviour, with many of the women claiming to have acted for women since their election (Childs, 2004).

Yet Labour's women MPs, and especially those first elected in 1997, have been repeatedly depicted not as champions of women and women's concerns, but as having failed women – the 'proof' being their failure to rebel against the

government's reduction in lone-parent allowance in December 1997 (Cowley and Childs, 2003). Collectively dismissed in the media and amongst some of their parliamentary colleagues as 'Blair's babes', 'clones' and 'Stepford wives', the only difference their presence made, the critics decried, was in the government's favour: too spineless to rebel, they were regarded as Blair's lobby fodder. But the difference they have made, many maintain, is 'behind the scenes' or away from the chamber: they have held private conversations with ministers and have raised women's concerns in backbench groups (particularly the parliamentary Labour Party's women's group), in select committees and through the signing of early day motions (EDMs) (Childs, 2004).

EDMs concerning VAT on sanitary products, Mike Tyson (the American boxer and convicted rapist), domestic violence and the right to breastfeed in the House of Commons have all been identified by Labour's women MPs as examples of where they have collectively and disproportionately signed EDMs. For example, despite constituting only 15 percent of the Commons, they accounted for 22 percent of the 249 MPs who signed EDM 89 (99/00):

That this House believes that sanitary products should be classed in the category of essential to the family budget, just as food, children's clothing and books already are, and that, like such products, they should be classed as VAT-free under the EC sixth Directive.

In this case, it appeared that Labour's women MPs did act for women by 'signing for women'. But was this EDM part of a wider pattern of behaviour? Did they collectively and disproportionately sign 'women's' EDMs? And if so, what can this tell us about the effect of their presence on the 1997 parliament?

An EDM is a notice of a motion given by an MP for which no date has been fixed for debate (House of Commons, 2003). They allow MPs to 'put on record' their views and to garner support from amongst their parliamentary colleagues. MPs give notice of the motion by handing its text to the Table Office. It is then included in the 'vote bundle', the daily working documents of the Commons. Other MPs will sign the EDM if they agree with the stated proposition. Early Day Motions remain current for the rest of the parliamentary session and can be reintroduced in the following session. Amendments are regularly put down, many of which fundamentally alter the meaning of the original motion. In recent decades, the number of EDMs has increased significantly, with more than 1,000 per session now regularly tabled (House of Commons, 2003).<sup>2</sup>

However, there is debate about the impact of EDMs, which is said to be limited – not least because individually they are only one amongst many and collectively they address a diverse range of topics. They can also be congratulatory, idiosyncratic or simply state the obvious (Blackburn and Kennon, 2003, p. 537). Moreover, only a few receive significant support, whereas some MPs seem to be 'serial signers', prepared to put their names to almost anything. At the same time, however, it is claimed, though harder to demonstrate, that well-supported EDMs may influence government (Blackburn and Kennon, 2003, p. 537; see also Norton, 2000).<sup>3</sup>

The value of studying EDMs lies, here, in what they say about the individual and collective concerns of MPs. Long studied as indicators of their attitudes, beliefs,

concerns and priorities, because they constitute an opportunity for them to put issues they care about on to the parliamentary agenda,<sup>4</sup> EDMs are also indicators of behaviour. As there is little cost or effort involved, the signing of a particular EDM can be taken to signal that MPs 'freely and publicly' commit themselves 'to a particular point of view' (Finer *et al.*, 1961, p. 9; Berrington and Hague, 1998, p. 70). If women MPs want to sign 'women's' EDMs, they should feel free to do so.

Demonstrating that Labour's women MPs are more likely to sign 'women's' EDMs than Labour's men, over and above their tendency to sign EDMs in general, would establish both attitudinal *and* behavioural differences between MPs.<sup>5</sup> In itself, this would be an important discovery. Such findings, particularly of behavioural differences, might make the self-reported claims of Labour's new women MPs to have acted for women – particularly behind the scenes – more convincing (Lovenduski and Norris, 2003, p. 86; Childs, 2004). It might also help in better understanding the relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation (Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 1999).

This relationship is often understood in terms of the concept of critical mass. This suggests that once the numbers of women reach a particular point, political behaviour, institutions and public policy will be feminised (Studlar and McAllister, 2002). Feminist critics of the theory, however, argue that the relationship is not straightforward (Grey, 2002; Lovenduski and Norris, 2003; Childs, 2003, 2004). They claim that the differences that follow from the presence of women representatives are not simply a result of their increased numbers, but are contingent and mediated by other determining factors such as the representative's gender and party identity and the actual environments in which women representatives act.<sup>6</sup> Because EDMs are relatively cost-free, they may constitute an important space within parliament where women MPs can translate their attitudinal differences into behavioural ones – where they can make a difference by placing women's concerns on the parliamentary agenda. Rather than looking at the division lobbies, where their behaviour is likely to be constrained by party loyalty and parliamentary and political norms, the earlier stages of agenda-setting and policy formation might be precisely where women representatives are able to make a difference (Tamerius, 1995, p. 96). Accordingly, the signing behaviour of Labour's women MPs might be suggestive of how women MPs would act elsewhere in parliament if they could (Reingold, 2000, pp. 222–3; Dodson, 2001, pp. 23–5, 28).<sup>7</sup>

## Methodology

This paper analyses sex differences in the signing of EDMs by Labour's MPs in the 1997 parliament. This approach is, in part, because 101 of the 120 women MPs are Labour, although it also allows an examination of sex differences while controlling for party. An MP might sign an EDM for various reasons – to support friends, out of a sense of obligation to a colleague or because a particular MP is a prolific signer – but the motive for signing is, in this instance, irrelevant (Berrington, 1973, p. 6). The signing of an EDM signals that the MP is publicly committed to the point of view expressed in that motion (Finer *et al.*, 1961, p. 9). Importantly, all backbenchers have the opportunity to sign an EDM, even if they

are not invited to do so by the MP who tables it or if they are away from the House of Commons when it is tabled.

The dataset of EDMs was created using the electronic information available on the Parliamet website.<sup>8</sup> All open EDMs in the four sessions of the 1997 parliament (some 5,274) were examined. Amendments were treated as discrete motions because they often substantially alter the meaning of, and may put forward completely opposite views to, the original motions. An SPSS data file that tabulated which MPs had signed each EDM was created. The file noted simply whether an MP had or had not signed; those who had withdrawn support were coded as if they had not signed at all.

The following analyses examine the behaviour of Labour MPs who were back-benchers for the whole 1997 parliament. Those who were members of the government at any time in the 1997 parliament were excluded, as they are not expected to sign EDMs.<sup>9</sup> Any MP who was not present for the whole parliament was also excluded. Our population, then, is 223 MPs who were always free to sign EDMs – 172 men and 51 women.

The statistical tests took two forms: for analyses of individual EDMs where the available responses were either 'signed' or 'not signed', simple chi-squared tests were used; and when cumulative signings were considered – when EDMs concerning similar topics were grouped together – the mean numbers of EDMs signed were compared. The nature of the data meant it would be unwise to use *t*-tests to compare means; the data was skewed in nature and the two sex groups were of very unequal size. As such, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used.

To test whether women were more likely than men to sign 'women's' EDMs, it is necessary to distinguish between 'women's' and 'non-women's' EDMs.<sup>10</sup> The coding scheme relied on an informed interpretation of whether they had, as their 'primary subject matter', women and/or their concerns (Reingold, 2000, pp. 166–7). 'Women's concerns' are understood as 'issues that bear on women' for either 'biological' or 'social' reasons (Cockburn, 1996, pp. 14–15; Lovenduski, 1997, p. 708).

In the first instance, one of us coded all the EDMs tabled in the 1997 parliament, with the coding deliberately inclusive. The second stage was more discriminating, with both of us independently coding all those initially labelled 'women's'. These were then coded for direction – whether they were feminist, anti-feminist or neutral (Reingold, 2000, pp. 138, 166–7). Those that sought to expand women's opportunities were coded as feminist, and those that sought to restrict women's opportunities (in most cases, women's access to abortion and contraception) were coded as anti-feminist. Many of the neutral EDMs are those that concern women's health. Those that concerned issues over which there is debate amongst feminists, or that called for action that was difficult to interpret as either feminist or non-feminist, were also coded as neutral. Prayers against statutory instruments were excluded from the directional coding because it proved impossible to identify their direction from the EDM itself.<sup>11</sup>

According to our classification, there were 239 'women's' EDMs in the 1997 parliament, of which 144 were coded as feminist (constituting 4.5 percent and

2.7 percent of all EDMs, respectively). At this point, those signed by four or fewer MPs were excluded from our dataset. Therefore, our analyses of grouped EDMs are based on 213 'women's' EDMs; and when individual EDMs are considered, a further 24 are excluded because of small cell counts.

## Findings

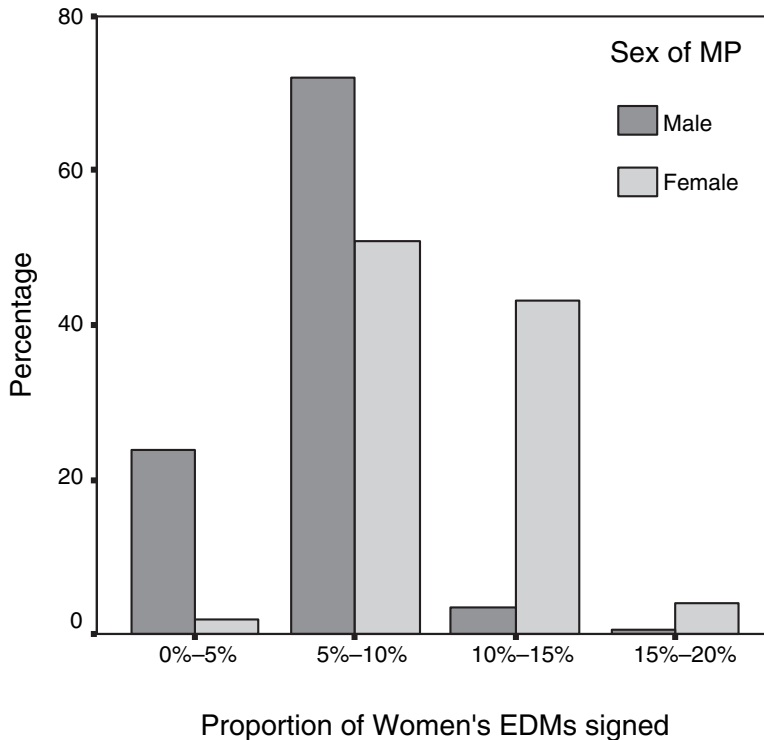
In order to draw any conclusions about the behaviour of Labour MPs in the signing of 'women's' EDMs, it is first necessary to examine their general signing patterns. Otherwise, what looks like Labour's women MPs signing for women may be just an extension of their greater propensity to sign EDMs in general. Although not significant, Labour's men sign slightly more EDMs than Labour's women. The average number signed over the whole parliament is 629 for men and 483 for women.<sup>12</sup> However, when the signing of 'women's' EDMs rather than all the EDMs is examined, the sex differences are reversed. Over the whole parliament, women signed an average of 43.3 'women's' EDMs, compared with 38.6 for men. The difference here is just outside of the 5 percent significance level ( $P = 0.058$ ).

Looking at the percentage of 'women's' EDMs that MPs signed from the total number of all EDMs signed, the sex differences between women and men are highly significant.<sup>13</sup> As can be seen in Figure 1, over the 1997 parliament, Labour's women MPs were significantly more likely to sign 'women's' EDMs than its men ( $P = 0.000$ ). Given that 'women's' EDMs constitute 4.5 percent of all EDMs, it might be expected that, on average, women would sign 4.5 percent of all 'women's' EDMs. Yet, for only one woman (Geraldine Smith) did the proportion of 'women's' EDMs signed constitute less than 5 percent of all the EDMs she had signed. This compares with 24.1 percent of men who signed so few 'women's' EDMs. Indeed, for 95.9 percent of men, the proportion of 'women's' EDMs that they signed constituted less than 10 percent of all the EDMs they signed; the comparable figure for women was 53.0 percent.

The sex differences in women and men's signing of EDMs, is then, markedly different between EDMs in general and 'women's' EDMs. On average, men sign more EDMs than women, yet women sign more 'women's' EDMs than men. Importantly, this means that women's greater tendency to sign 'women's' EDMs cannot be explained away as a feature of their greater tendency to sign in general; the sex difference in women's favour in respect of 'women's' EDMs seems to be real.

When the 'women's' EDMs are coded for direction, sex differences between the signing behaviour of Labour's women and men MPs are even more apparent. Although there are no significant differences between the sexes in the signing of anti-feminist and neutral 'women's' EDMs,<sup>14</sup> there are significant differences regarding feminist 'women's' EDMs. During the whole 1997 parliament, women signed an average of 28.7 feminist EDMs, compared with 23.4 for men – a statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.009$ ). Moreover, Figure 2 confirms that the proportion of feminist EDMs signed is also higher for Labour's women MPs – a difference that is also statistically significant ( $P = 0.000$ ). Overall, 78.5 percent of Labour's women signed at least 5 percent of the feminist 'women's' EDMs, compared with just 15.7 percent of its men.

**Figure 1: Proportion of 'Women's' Early Day Motions (EDMs) Signed as a Total of EDMs Signed in the 1997 Parliament by Sex**

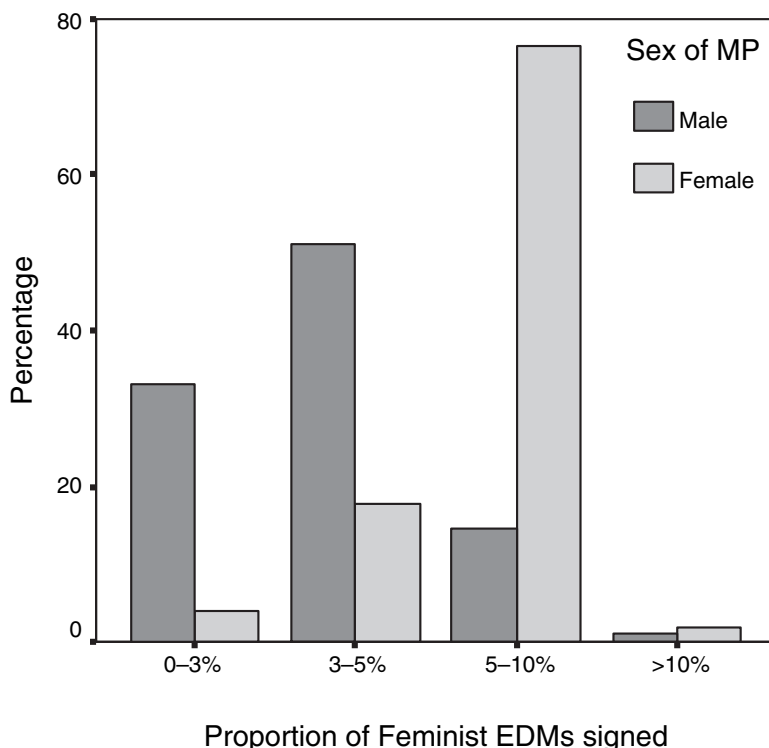


*Note: For analytical purposes, this variable was condensed into four categories.*

### Are Women Signing 'Any Old' 'Women's' EDMs?

If Labour's backbench women MPs were acting for women in the 1997 parliament by signing 'women's' and, in particular, feminist 'women's' EDMs, this begs the question of what type of women's concerns are in the EDMs that they signed. The 'women's' EDMs covered an extensive range of women's concerns – from the relatively superficial to questions of life and death. In order to identify which garnered women's signatures, the 200+ 'women's' EDMs were grouped into the following categories: reproductive rights, women's health, violence, equal opportunities and equal rights, VAT on sanitary products, lone-parent allowance, the House of Commons crèche, prisons, women's concerns as mothers, widows, women's efforts in the Second World War, midwives and 'Ellen Macarthur' (the award winning sailor). Some of these categories were then broken down further. For example, the 'violence' category includes violence against women, domestic violence, rape, women's safety, sexual harassment and EDMs concerned with Tyson.<sup>15</sup> The 'women's health' category includes infertility and cancer (which is itself subdivided into breast cancer, ovarian cancer and cervical cancer).<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 2: Proportion of Feminist Early Day Motions (EDMs) Signed as a Total of EDMs Signed in the 1997 Parliament by Sex**



Sex differences were not always found when the individual EDMs were grouped in this way. They were absent, for example, from those concerning women's imprisonment, widows, women's experiences in the Second World War and those congratulating Ellen Macarthur; these are categories that are mainly composed of neutral 'women's' EDMs. There were also no significant sex differences in the signing of EDMs concerning women's health, although when this broad category was broken down further, significant differences were found with regard to EDMs concerning ovarian cancer ( $P = 0.000$ ) and breast cancer ( $P = 0.020$ ). In both instances, women were more likely to have signed them. The sexes were remarkably similar in their signing behaviour towards EDMs concerning cervical cancer.

More surprisingly, sex differences were absent from the EDMs concerning proposals for the establishment of a crèche in the Commons. This issue received widespread media coverage and was often discussed in terms of how it would disproportionately benefit women MPs.<sup>17</sup> Neither was there a difference in respect of EDMs concerning lone-parent allowance, the issue over which Labour's women MPs received hostile comment for 'failing' to rebel (Cowley and Childs, 2003). Both of these issues had been coded as feminist.



The analyses show that, on some women's concerns, the signing behaviour of Labour's women and men MPs is similar. Yet, in respect of other women's concerns, the sexes diverge significantly. Importantly, the sex differences that have been found suggest that the divergent behaviour occurs in respect of the most feminist and 'radical' 'women's' EDMs. For example, Labour's men appear at ease in signing those concerning equal opportunities but less so when they concern equal rights: 41.9 percent of men did not sign any of the latter, compared with 12.8 percent of men who did not sign any of the former.<sup>18</sup>

When it comes to EDMs concerning pro-abortion and pro-emergency contraception, it is, once again Labour's women MPs who are doing the signing. More than half the men (57.6 percent) did not sign any pro-abortion EDMs, compared with just under a third of the women (31.4 percent) ( $P = 0.002$ ). Likewise, 64.0 percent of men did not sign any of the nine concerning pro-emergency contraception, compared with 45.1 percent of women ( $P = 0.035$ ). The men were also more likely to sign those concerning anti-emergency contraception than the women ( $P = 0.035$ ).

There are also significant sex differences in the signing behaviour of 'women's' EDMs concerning violence.<sup>19</sup> On average, women signed 8.1 of them and men signed 6.6 ( $P = 0.009$ ). Furthermore, 14 percent of men but only 3.9 percent of women (just two women) failed to sign any of them. Within the large 'violence' category, women were slightly more likely to sign EDMs concerning rape ( $P = 0.030$ ) and women's safety ( $P = 0.009$ ). Only 23.5 percent of the women did not sign any of the latter, compared with 45.9 percent of men.<sup>20</sup> Much of the explanation for the differential signing of EDMs concerning violence lies with the presence of those concerned with Tyson. It seems that many of Labour's women MPs felt sufficiently strongly about Tyson to repeatedly sign EDMs critical of him and of the government's decision to allow him to box in Scotland;<sup>21</sup> whereas 63.4 percent of men signed none of them, the comparable figure for women was 41.2 percent ( $P = 0.015$ ).

Although sex differences are not always evident in the signing of some 'women's' EDMs, Labour's women MPs can be seen to be clearly acting for women, as Table 1 shows. They are indeed, as some of them claimed, collectively and disproportionately signing 'women's' EDMs, particularly those concerning women's bodily integrity, many of which were coded as feminist.

## Individual EDMs

Analyses of individual EDMs demonstrate a similar tendency amongst Labour's women MPs to act by signing for women. Of the 189 'women's' EDMs suitable for individual analysis, thirty had statistically significant sex differences at the 5 percent level.<sup>22</sup> As Table 2 shows, there were twenty-six individual 'women's' EDMs where women demonstrated a greater propensity to sign than men. In four further instances, it was the men rather than the women who were more likely to sign (three were concerned with midwifery and one with 'home start').<sup>23</sup> Of the twenty-six where women were more likely to sign, twenty-one (81 percent) were coded as feminist and five (19 percent) as neutral. There were no anti-feminist 'women's' EDMs that were disproportionately signed by Labour's women.



**Table 1: Grouped 'Women's' Early Day Motions (EDMs) with Significant Pro-Women Sex Differences in the 1997 Parliament**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of EDMs</i>	<i>Statistical significance</i>
		<i>(P-value)</i>
Rape	11	0.001
Pro-abortion	7	0.002
Infertility	3	0.006
Violence (overall category)	36	0.009
Women's safety	8	0.009
Violence against women	9	0.011
Equal rights and opportunities	8	0.013
Tyson	7	0.015
Pro-emergency contraception	9	0.035

The largest sex differences in women's favour are in respect of EDM 1292 (97/98), which was concerned with better standards of cancer care and, in particular, ovarian cancer (a sex difference of 46.0 percentage points); EDM 119 (99/00), which congratulated the Women's National Commission on '30 years of ensuring that the views of women in this country are made known to government' (a sex difference of 45.2 percentage points); and EDM 101 (97/98), which called for a review of rape law with the 'removal of the defendant's right to cross-examine the victim' (a sex difference of 36.7 percentage points).

EDM 119 (99/00) saw numerically more women than men signing. In this instance, 57 percent of the women but only 11.6 percent of men signed it. In total, there were ten individual 'women's' EDMs signed by more than half of all of Labour's permanent backbench women MPs. This was true for men only in respect of EDM 380 (98/99), which called for sanitary products to be exempt from VAT and was signed by 70.2 percent of women and 55.2 percent of men.

Others of note include EDM 570 (98/99), which highlighted the provision of public toilets and how the lack of provision disproportionately inconveniences women (54.9 percent of women signed this, compared with 31.4 percent of men); and EDM 507 (98/99), which calls for chess to be recognised as a sport because there are 'no barriers of physical ability or between the sexes' (43.1 percent of women signed this, compared with 22.1 percent of men).

## Conclusion

Our analysis of EDMs in the 1997 parliament shows that Labour's women MPs did indeed act for women by signing for women – as initially claimed by some of those newly elected. They were more likely than Labour's men to sign both 'women's' and feminist 'women's' EDMs. Importantly, these sex differences are evident despite women's lesser propensity to sign EDMs in general. The signing of EDMs

**Table 2: Early Day Motions (EDMs) with Pro-Women Significant Sex Differences (5 percent)**

<i>Session</i>	<i>EDM no.</i>	<i>Title</i>	$\chi^2$ <i>P-value</i>	<i>Total men signed</i>	<i>Total women signed</i>
97/98	EDM 101	Rape Law Review	0.000	55	35
97/98	EDM 1292	Equitable Care for Women with Ovarian Cancer	0.000	39	35
99/00	EDM 420	Women in Parliament	0.000	46	31
97/98	EDM 606	Breast Screening for Women Over 65	0.000	37	29
99/00	EDM 119	30th Anniversary of the Women's National Commission	0.000	20	29
98/99	EDM 570	Provision of Public Conveniences by Local Authorities and Equality of Access	0.002	54	28
97/98	EDM 116	Silicone Implants	0.002	15	13
99/00	EDM 741	Mike Tyson's Visa Application	0.003	49	26
98/99	EDM 507	Recognition of Chess as a Sport in the UK	0.003	38	22
99/00	EDM 997	Kerb Crawling	0.003	33	20
00/01	EDM 351	Infertility Treatment	0.004	47	25
97/98	EDM 344	30th Anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act	0.008	59	28
99/00	EDM 1169	Female Genital Mutilation	0.011	29	17
97/98	EDM 1247	Access to Abortion	0.012	32	18
98/99	EDM 494	Kerb Crawling	0.015	30	17
98/99	EDM 339	Women in Afghanistan	0.019	31	17
98/99	EDM 172A1	Death of Caroline Bacon and the Provision of Contraceptives to Minors	0.020	21	13
97/98	EDM 346	Abortion Law Reform	0.028	27	15
99/00	EDM 740	Breastfeeding in Standing and Select Committees	0.032	56	25
98/99	EDM 193	Contraceptive Advice in Schools	0.033	25	14
97/98	EDM 560	Royal College of Midwives	0.039	23	13
97/98	EDM 805	Lieutenants Melanie Rees and Susan Moore	0.039	9	7
97/98	EDM 1582	Public Service Pension Policy	0.043	67	28
99/00	EDM 290	Mike Tyson	0.043	34	17
97/98	EDM 1548	Lurot Brand House Sales	0.048	46	21
98/99	EDM 380	VAT on Sanitary Products	0.050	95	36

*EDM 805 dealt with equal opportunities in the armed forces.*

*EDM 1548 was critical of an employment advertisement in the Sunday Times that was felt to be discriminatory towards 'women, ethnic minority and the majority of the population who have not had the dubious benefit of private education'.*

constitutes, then, a clear example of behavioural differences between women and men MPs.

Through the signing of EDMs, Labour's women MPs have made a feminised difference to parliament since their election in 1997. Although MPs of both sexes clearly support some of the 'women's' EDMs, predominantly those that are coded as neutral, there are important behavioural differences between the sexes. Those MPs who disproportionately sign the feminist 'women's' EDMs are women. The difference Labour's women MP's have made, then, is a feminist one. It is, for example, in respect of those EDMs that seek to extend women's (especially young women's) access to the means to control their reproduction and those concerning violence against women where the sex differences are most significant.

By revealing these behavioural differences between women and men MPs, this research lends support to the often-contested claim made in feminist theory of a relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation. That Labour's women MPs are behaving differently in respect of EDMs is suggestive of how they might be behaving 'behind the scenes'; perhaps, just as they claim, they have also been acting for women elsewhere in parliament. As such, this research contributes to the debate about the usefulness of the concept of critical mass and provides insights for those seeking a more sophisticated understanding of the complicated relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation. Above all, though, the above analyses demonstrate that the sex of our representatives does indeed matter.

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### Notes

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1 Norris and Lovenduski, 1989, 1995; Lovenduski, 1997; Lovenduski and Norris, 2003.

2 For a full account of the procedures for tabling and signing EDMs, see Blackburn and Kennon (2003).

3 Evaluating the impact of any individual 'women's' EDM is not addressed in this paper. See Childs and Withey (2005) for a discussion of the impact of the three tabled in the 1997 parliament that called for the abolition of VAT on sanitary products (683 97/98, 380 98/99 and 89 99/00).

4 See Finer *et al.*, 1961; Berrington, 1973; Franklin and Tappin, 1977; Berrington and Hague, 1998; Nason, 2001; Norton, 2000; Heppell, 2004.

5 Sex differences are not, however, the only 'proof' that women representatives are acting for women. Over time, women's presence may influence men's behaviour so that sex differences narrow (Reingold, 2000; Childs, 2003).

6 Squires, 1996; Reingold, 2000; Dodson, 2001; Duerst-Lahti, 2001; Mackay, 2001; Swers, 2002.

7 See Swers (2002) for an analysis of 'co-sponsorship' in the US, a comparable activity to the signing of EDMs (pp. 57–8), and compare with Dodson's analysis of party and roll-call votes (Dodson, 1998, pp. 147–8; Dodson, 2001, p. 7).

8 As a cross-check for the Parliamet data (<http://www.parliamet.co.uk>), the total number of signatures on each EDM contained in our data file was then compared with the information held on the EDM website (<http://edm.ais.co.uk/>). There were a few discrepancies between the Parliamet and the EDM websites; in all instances, the latter website was taken to be the correct version. For example, there were a group of EDMs in the 97/98 session where the proposer had not been listed as a signatory on the Parliamet website. In these instances, we deferred to the EDM website and our dataset was corrected to reflect this.

9 Here, we take 'in government' to include those who were parliamentary private secretaries (Cowley and Childs, 2003).

10 For a full discussion of the coding process, see the online Appendix (available on the *Political Studies* website).

- 11 'Prayers' is the term given to motions calling for a statutory instrument to be annulled and derives from the form of words used in the motion (Silk and Walters, 1998, p. 148).
- 12 Although this difference does appear to be large, it is not significant because of the large standard deviation figures (for men = 467.2; for women = 394.6).
- 13 The total number of 'women's' EDMs signed is divided by the total number of all EDMs signed.
- 14 Over the entire parliament, 80.4 percent of women did not sign any anti-feminist EDM, compared with 69.8 percent of men. Of those women who did sign anti-feminist EDMs, 13.7 percent (seven women) signed only one anti-feminist EDM over the whole parliament. Of these, five signed the anti-feminist EDM 172 (98/99), which regretted the death of a young woman from complications apparently arising from the contraceptive pill and 'believes' that parents have a right to be informed when girls under 16 are prescribed the contraceptive pill. Only one woman signed two anti-feminist EDMs (2 percent) and two women signed five (3.9 percent), compared with 30.2 percent of men who signed one or more anti-feminist EDMs.
- 15 The clustering of these EDMs reflects feminist conceptions of the continuum of male violence.
- 16 In this instance, cancer only refers to what are predominately 'women's' cancers and excludes general cancers such as lung or bowel cancer.
- 17 However, as one of our anonymous reviewers noted, a crèche would primarily benefit other women working in parliament, not just MPs.
- 18 For example, EDM 93 (00/01), an 'equal opportunities' motion that concerns participation in local government, was signed by 30.2 percent of Labour's men and 31.4 percent of Labour's women. EDM 1582 (97/98), an 'equal rights' motion that concerns sex inequalities in pension provisions, was signed by 39.0 percent of Labour's men and 54.9 percent of Labour's women. For the full texts of these motions, see the online Appendix.
- 19 For examples of EDMs in this category, see the online Appendix.
- 20 Few Labour MPs of either sex signed the EDMs concerning sexual harassment.
- 21 EDM 901 (99/00) was included, even though it made no reference to 'women' or 'rape', because all those concerning Tyson were coded as 'women's', as this was an issue around which women's groups mobilised and which received media coverage in these terms. No women signed it.
- 22 For 'women's' EDMs with pro-women sex differences at the 10 percent level, see Table A1 in the online Appendix.
- 23 This 'home start' EDM talks of providing 'practical help' to families with young children.

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