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Do Women Sign for Women?

Sex and the Signing of Early Day Motions in the 1997 Parliament

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Abstract

The return of 101 Labour women MPs to the House of Commons in 1997 was accompanied by an expectation that their presence would enhance women's substantive representation. Indeed, many of Labour's newly elected women MPs claim to have acted for women since their election. Yet, demonstrating the difference 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 provides one way of testing whether Labour's women MPs are acting for women. Analysis of all the early day motions in the 1997 Parliament, some 5000 motions, establishes that Labour's women are more likely than its men to sign 'women's' and especially feminist 'women's' early day motions. This finding constitutes clear evidence of behavioural differences between Labour's women and men MPs. In turn, it lends support to arguments that women's political presence is important because of the substantive difference they might make.

The return of 101 Labour women MPs to the House of Commons in 1997 was accompanied by a widely held expectation that they would make a feminised difference; that the House 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’.² In addition, interview-based research amongst half of Labour’s women MPs who were first elected in 1997, suggests that these attitudinal differences inform MPs’ 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, their critics decried, was in the Government’s favour: too spineless to rebel they were regarded as Blair’s lobby fodder. But the difference Labour’s women MPs have made, many maintain, is ‘behind the scenes’ or away from the chamber: they have held private conversations with ministers, raised women’s concerns in back bench groups, particularly the parliamentary Labour Party’s women’s group, in select committees; and through the signing of early day motions (Childs 2004).

Early day motions concerning VAT on sanitary products, Mike Tyson (the American boxer and convicted rapist), domestic violence and the right to breast feed in the House of Commons have all been identified by Labour women MPs as examples of where they have collectively and disproportionately signed early day motions. For example, despite

constituting only 15% of the House of Commons, Labour women MPs accounted for 22% of the two hundred and forty-nine 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 women MPs did act for women by 'signing for women'. But was this early day motion part of a wider pattern of behaviour? Did Labour's women MPs collectively and disproportionately sign 'women's' early day motions? And if so, what can this tell us about the effect of Labour's 101 women on the 1997 Parliament?

An early day motion is a notice of a motion given by a MP for which no date has been fixed for debate (House of Commons 2003). Early day motions allow MPs to 'put on record' their views and to garner support from amongst their parliamentary colleagues. MPs give notice of their motion by handing its text to the Table Office. It is then included in the Vote Bundle, the daily working documents of the House of Commons. Other MPs will sign the motion if they agree with the stated proposition. Early day motions remain current for the rest of the parliamentary session and can be re-introduced in the following session. Amendments are regularly put down to early day motions, many of which fundamentally alter the meaning of the original motion. In recent decades the number of

early day motions has increased significantly, with more than 1000 early day motions per session regularly tabled (House of Commons 2003).³

The impact of early day motions is, however, debated. The impact of a motion is said to be limited, not least because individually they are only one amongst many and collectively they address a diverse range of topics. Motions can also be congratulatory, idiosyncratic or simply state the obvious (Blackburn and Kennon 2003, 537). Moreover, only a few motions receive significant support whilst 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 early day motions may influence government, (Blackburn and Kennon 2003, 537; Norton 2000).⁴

The value of studying early day motions lies, here, in what they say about MPs’ individual and collective concerns. Long studied as indicators of MPs’ attitudes, beliefs, concerns and priorities, because they constitute an opportunity for MPs to put issues they care about on to the parliamentary agenda,⁵ early day motions are also indicators of behaviour. Since there is little cost or effort involved, the signing of a particular early day motion can be taken to signal that an MP ‘freely and publicly’ commits themselves ‘to a particular point of view’ (Finer et al 1961, p. 9; Berrington and Hague 1998, p. 70). Women MPs should, if they want to sign ‘women’s’ early day motions, feel free to do so.

Demonstrating that Labour’s women MPs are more likely to sign ‘women’s’ early day motions than Labour men, over and above their tendency to sign early day motions in general, would establish both attitudinal *and* behavioural differences between MPs.⁶ 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 (Childs 2004; Lovenduski and Norris 2003, p. 86). 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 argue, however, that the relationship is not straightforward (Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Childs 2003, 2004; Grey 2002). They claim that the differences which 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.⁷ Because early day motions 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, 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. 222-223; Dodson 2001, pp. 23-5, 28).⁸

Methodology

This paper analyses sex differences in the signing of early day motions by Labour 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 whilst controlling for party. While an MP might sign an early day motion for various reasons – to support friends, out of a sense of obligation to a colleague or because a particular MP is a prolific signer - their motive for signing is, in this instance, irrelevant (Berrington 1973, p. 6). The signing of an early day motion signals that the MP is publicly committed to the point of view expressed in that early day motion (Finer et al 1961, p. 9). Importantly, all backbenchers have the opportunity to sign an early day motion even if they are not invited to do so by the MP who tables it or if they are away from the House when it is tabled.

The dataset of early day motions used in this paper was created using the electronic information available on the Parliamet website (<http://www.parliamet.co.uk>).⁹ All open early day motions in the four sessions of the 1997 Parliament, some 5274, were examined. Amendments to early day motions were treated as discrete motions because they often substantially alter the meaning of, and may put forward completely opposite views to, the original early day motion. An SPSS data file was created which tabulated which MPs had signed each early day motion. The file noted simply whether an MP had

or had not signed the early day motion, MPs 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 backbenchers for the whole 1997 Parliament. Labour MPs who were members of the Government at any time in the 1997 Parliament were excluded as they are not expected to sign early day motions.¹⁰ 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 early day motions: 172 men and 51 women.

The statistical tests used took two forms. For analyses on individual early day motions where the available responses were either 'signed' or 'not signed' then simple chi squared tests were used; when cumulative signings were considered, that is to say when early day motions addressing similar topics were grouped together, then the mean number of early day motions 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' early day motions it is necessary to distinguish between 'women's' and 'non-women's' early day motions.¹¹ The coding scheme relied on an informed interpretation of whether an early day motion had, as its 'primary subject matter', women and/or their concerns (Reingold 2000, pp.

166-67). '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 author coded all of the early day motions tabled in the 1997 Parliament, with the coding deliberately inclusive. The second stage was more discriminating with both authors independently coding all those motions initially labelled 'women's'. These early day motions were then coded for direction, namely, whether they were feminist, anti-feminist or neutral (Reingold 2002, pp. 138, 166-167). Those that sought to expand women's opportunities were coded as feminist while 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 early day motions are those that address women's health. Early day motions that discussed issues over which there is debate amongst feminists or which 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 motion itself.¹²

According to our classification, in the 1997 Parliament there were 239 'women's' early day motions, of which 144 were coded feminist, constituting 4.5% and 2.7% of all early day motions respectively. At this point, early day motions signed by four or fewer MPs were excluded from our data set. Our analyses of grouped early day motions are based on 213 'women's' early day motions. When individual early day motions are considered a further 24 early day motions had to be excluded because of small cell counts.

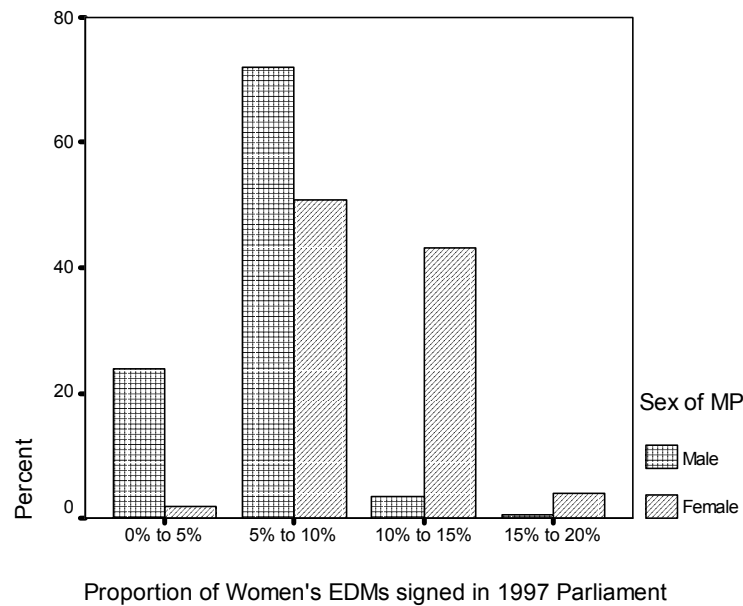
Findings

In order to draw any conclusions about Labour MPs' behaviour in the signing of 'women's' early day motions it is first necessary to examine the MPs' general signing patterns. Otherwise, what looks like Labour women MPs signing for women may be just an extension of their greater propensity to sign early day motions in general. Although not significant, Labour men sign slightly more early day motions than Labour women. The average number of early day motions signed over the whole Parliament is 629 for men and 483 for women.¹³ However, when the signing of 'women's' early day motions rather than all the early day motions, are examined the sex differences are reversed. Over the whole Parliament, women signed an average of 43.3 'women's' early day motions 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' early day motions MPs signed from the total number of all motions signed, the sex differences between women and men are highly significant.¹⁴ As can be seen in Figure 1, over the 1997 Parliament, Labour's women MPs are significantly more likely to sign 'women's' early day motions than its men ($p=0.000$). Given that 'women's' early day motions constitute 4.5% of all early day motions, it might be expected that, on average, women would sign 4.5% of all 'women's' early day motions. Yet, for only 1 woman (Geraldine Smith) did the proportion of 'women's' early day motions signed constitute less than 5% of all the motions she had signed. This compares with 24.1% of men who signed so few 'women's' early day motions. Indeed for 95.9% of men, the proportion of 'women's' early day motions that they signed

constituted less than 10% of all the early day motions they signed; the comparable figure for women was 53.0%.

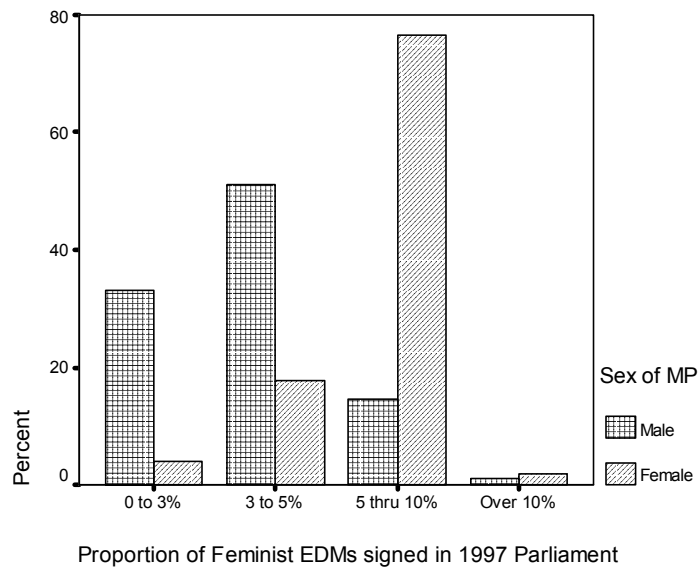
Figure 1 Proportion of ‘women’s’ early day motions signed as a total of early day motions signed in the 1997 Parliament by sex¹⁵



The sex differences in women and men’s signing of early day motions is, then, markedly different between early day motions in general and ‘women’s’ early day motions. On average men sign more early day motions than women, yet women sign more ‘women’s’ early day motions than men. Importantly, this means that women’s greater tendency to sign ‘women’s’ early day motions can not 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’ early day motions seems to be real.

When the ‘women’s’ early day motions 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’ early day motions,¹⁶ there are significant differences between the MPs regarding feminist ‘women’s’ early day motions. During the whole 1997 parliament, women signed an average of 28.7 feminist early day motions compared with 23.4 for men; a statistically significant difference ($p=0.009$). Moreover, Figure 2 confirms that the proportion of feminist early day motions signed is also higher for Labour’s women MPs – a difference that is also statistically significant ($p=0.000$). Overall, 78.5% of Labour’s women signed at least 5% of the feminist ‘women’s’ early day motions. This compares with just 15.7% of the men who signed similar proportions.

Figure 2 Proportion of feminist early day motions signed as a total of early day motions signed in the 1997 Parliament by sex



Are women signing ‘any old’ ‘women’s’ early day motions?

If Labour’s backbench women MPs were acting for women in the 1997 Parliament by signing ‘women’s’ and particularly feminist ‘women’s’ early day motions, this begs the question, what type of women’s concerns are being addressed in the early day motions that they signed? The ‘women’s’ early day motions covered an extensive range of women’s concerns - from the relatively superficial to questions of life and death. In order to identify which motions garnered women’s signatures, the 200 plus ‘women’s’ early day motions were grouped into larger 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 WW2, midwives and ‘Ellen Macarthur’ (the award winning sailor). Some of these categories were then broken down further. For example, the category ‘violence’ includes: violence against women, domestic violence, rape, women’s safety, sexual harassment and early day motions concerned with Mike Tyson. The category of women’s health includes: infertility and cancer (which is itself subdivided into breast cancer, ovarian cancer and cervical cancer).¹⁷

Sex differences were not always found when the individual early day motions were grouped in this way. They were, for example, absent from early day motions concerning women’s imprisonment, widows, women’s experiences in WW2 and those congratulating Ellen Macarthur; these categories are those that are mainly comprised by neutral ‘women’s’ early day motions. There were also no significant sex differences in the signing of early day motions concerning women’s health although when this broad

category was broken down further, significant differences were found with regard to early day motions dealing with ovarian cancer ($p=0.000$) and breast cancer ($p=0.020$). In both instances women were more likely to have signed the early day motions. The sexes were remarkably similar in their signing behaviour towards the cervical cancer early day motions.

More surprisingly, sex differences were absent from the early day motions discussing proposals for the establishment of a Crèche in the House of Commons. This issue received widespread media coverage and was often discussed in terms of how it would disproportionately benefit women MPs.¹⁸ Neither was there a difference in respect of early day motions 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' early day motions. For example, Labour's men appear at ease in signing early day motions related to equal opportunities but less so when they are related to equal rights: 41.9% of men did not sign any of the equal rights early day motions compared with 12.8% of men who did not sign any of the equal opportunity early day motions.¹⁹

When it comes to pro-abortion and pro-emergency contraception early day motions, it is, once again, the women in the PLP who are doing the signing. More than half of the men (57.6%) did not sign any pro-abortion early day motions compared with just under a third of the women (31.4 %) ($p=0.002$). Likewise 64.0% of men did not sign any of the nine pro-emergency contraception early day motions compared with 45.1% of women ($p = 0.035$). The men were also more likely to sign the anti-emergency contraception early day motions than the women ($p=0.035$).

There are also significant sex differences in the signing behaviour of ‘women’s’ early day motions concerning violence.²⁰ Women on average signed 8.1 violence early day motions, whilst men signed 6.6 ($p = 0.009$). Furthermore, 14% of men but only 3.9% of women, (just two women) failed to sign any of the violence early day motions. Within this large category of violence, women were slightly more likely to sign the rape early day motions ($p=0.030$) and those which addressed issues of women’s safety ($p=0.009$). Only 23.5% of the women did not sign any of the safety early day motions compared with 45.9% of men.²¹ Much of the explanation for the differential signing of the violence early day motions lies with the presence of the Tyson motions. It seems that many of Labour’s women MPs felt sufficiently strongly about Mike Tyson to repeatedly sign early day motions critical of him and critical of the Government’s decision to allow Tyson to box in Scotland.²² While 63.4% of men signed none of the Tyson early day motions the comparable figure for women was 41.2% ($p=0.015$).

Whilst sex differences are not always evident in the signing of some ‘women’s’ early day motions, Labour’s women MPs can be seen to be clearly acting for women, as Table 1 shows. Labour’s women MPs are then, as some of them claimed, collectively and disproportionately signing ‘women’s’ early day motions, particularly those related to women’s bodily integrity, many of which were coded feminist.

Table 1 Grouped ‘Women’s’ early day motions with significant pro-women sex differences in the 1997 Parliament

Category	Number of EDMs	Statistical significance
Rape	11	p=0.001
Pro-Abortion	7	p=0.002
Infertility	3	p=0.006
Violence (overall category)	36	p=0.009
Women’s safety	8	p=0.009
Violence against Women	9	p=0.011
Equal Rights & Opportunities	8	p=0.013
Tyson	7	p=0.015
Pro-Emergency Contraception	9	p=0.035

Individual early day motions

Analyses of individual early day motions demonstrate a similar tendency amongst Labour’s women MPs to act by signing for women. Of the 189 ‘women’s’ early day motions suitable for individual analysis, 30 had statistically significant sex differences at the five percent level.²³ As Table 2 shows, there were 26 individual ‘women’s’ early day motions 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 the

early day motion (three were concerned with midwifery and one with Home-Start).²⁴ Of the 26 early day motions where women were more likely to sign, 21 (81%) were coded as feminist and five (19%) neutral. There were no anti-feminist ‘women’s’ early day motions which were disproportionately signed by Labour’s women.

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 difference of 46.0 percentage points), EDM 119 (99/00), which congratulated the Women’s National Commission (WNC) 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), that 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).

Table 2 early day motions with pro-women significant sex differences (5%)

Session	EDM No.	Title	χ^2 p-values	Total Men Signed	Total Women Signed
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 ²⁵	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 ²⁶	0.048	46	21
98/99	EDM 380	Vat On Sanitary Products	0.050	95	36

EDM 119 (99/00) saw numerically more women than men signing. In this instance, some 57% of the women but only 11.6% of men signed it. In total there were 10 individual 'women's' early day motions 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% of women and 55.2% of men.

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

Conclusion

As initially claimed by some of Labour's new women MPs, our analysis of early day motions in the 1997 Parliament shows that the Labour women MPs did indeed act for women by signing for women. Labour's women were more likely than its men to sign both 'women's' and feminist 'women's' early day motions. Importantly these sex differences are evident despite women's lesser propensity to sign early day motions in general. The signing of early day motions constitutes then, a clear example of behavioural differences between women and men MPs.

Through the signing of early day motions, 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' early day motions, predominantly those that are coded neutral, there are important behavioural differences between the sexes. Those MPs who disproportionately sign the feminist 'women's' early day motions are women. The difference Labour's women have made, is, then, a feminist one. It is, for example, in respect of those early day motions that seek to extend women's (especially young women's) access to the means to control their reproduction and those that highlight 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 early day motions 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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Appendix 1: Coding

Stage 1 coding

To test whether women were more likely than men to sign ‘women’s’ early day motions it is necessary to distinguish between ‘women’s’ and ‘non-women’s’ early day motions. To be classified as a ‘women’s’ early day motion a motion has to have as its ‘primary subject matter’ women and/or their concerns (Reingold 2000, pp. 166-167). ‘Women’s concerns’ refer to ‘issues that bear on women’ (Cockburn 1996, pp. 14-15) for either ‘biological’ or ‘social’ reasons (Lovenduski 1997, p. 708). In addition, and bearing in mind the ‘difficulties in assigning early day motions to unique classifications’, we argue that ‘women’s’ early day motions do not have to *solely* be about ‘women’s concerns’ (Nason 2001, p. 2). For example, EDM 631 (00/01), an early day motion that considers infertility, might be coded as a ‘women’s, ‘men’s and/or ‘parental’ early day motion; all that matters here is that can be coded as a ‘women’s’ early day motion. Furthermore, because our analysis is interested in distinguishing between ‘women’s’ and ‘non-women’s’ early day motions all motions are treated in the same way irrespective of whether they are congratulatory, substantive, all-party early day motions, amendments to early day motions or prayers against SIs. Consequently, an early day motion congratulating the Arsenal Ladies Football team (EDM 616 98/99) is treated in the same way as an early day motion that offers its support to the ‘women of Afghanistan’ (EDM 339 98/99).

The Stage 1 coding was deliberately inclusive. Illustrative examples of EDMs coded as ‘women’s’ include:

EDM 1689 97/98

That this House is horrified that tobacco companies are aggressively targeting women and children in the Third World with marketing tactics which are being banned in the Europe; is concerned that the projected number of deaths from smoking related diseases in the Third World will rise from one million per year to seven million per year by the year 2030; notes the European Union directive banning tobacco advertising, sponsorship and promotion; and believes that the Government should include a firm commitment to global standards on the marketing of tobacco in the forthcoming White Paper on Tobacco so that the same basic rules apply to tobacco companies wherever they operate.

And EDM 657 00/01

That this Houses welcomes National Cot Death Awareness Week, 7th to 13th May, and acknowledges the work of the Foundation for the Study of Infant Death and the Scottish Cot Death Trust; notes that cot death remains the biggest single cause of death in children, often in the first week of life and that on average almost eight babies die every week in the UK; and calls upon her Majesty’s Government to work with the FSID and the SCDT to fund research, support families whose babies have died suddenly and raise parents’ awareness of the risks of cot death.

EDMs that named individual women were also coded ‘women’s’. For example:

EDM 385 97/98

That this House notes the work done by Mother Theresa with the poor and needy during her lifetime’; notes that she maintained the work into her final years despite often delicate health; notes that her actions came from a desire to emulate the example of Christ; acknowledges her care and compassion for the poor, the sick, the needy and children both born and unborn; and applauds the continuing work done by her Order, the Missionaries of Charity, in the streets of Calcutta and worldwide, including the United Kingdom.

EDM 888 99/00

That this House congratulates Ellen MacArthur on becoming the youngest person to win the Europe 1 New Man Star single-handed trans-Atlantic race and the first Briton to score an overall win in the race since 1968; commends Ms MacArthur, her project Manager Mark Turner and their team for securing such a brilliant victory; and looks forward to similar success for Ellen and her boat ‘Kingfisher’

in the Verde's Globe in November.

The initial coding also included EDMs that were less clearly about women and/or their concerns. For example:

EDM 632 (98/99)

That this House deplores the sexually abusive insult directed at the Paymaster General [Dawn Primarolo] by the honourable Member for Guildford during the Finance Bill Committee.

Coding of Prayers against Statutory Instruments relied upon specific mention being made of women and/or their concerns in the early day motion itself - reference was not made to the Statutory Instrument.

Stage 2 coding

In the second stage all the 'women's' early day motions were re-examined. A number of rules were devised. Early day motions that were recoded as 'non-women's' included those that:

- were, on reflection, considered not to have women or their concerns as their 'primary subject matter'
- discussed an aspect of women's health but did so only in passing,
- named an individual woman or women's organisations but did not go on to address women's concerns and/or congratulate the woman or organisation *for* or *as* women,
- were concerned with nursing and nurses, but did not praise *women* nurses or nurses for actions *regarding* women

- cited widows *in place of* their dead husbands, and
- those that addressed issues of sexuality and gay rights but did not directly discuss women.

All early day motions dealing with the issue of lone parent benefit (EDMs 337, 337, 514, 702, 769, 964, 1110 97/98) remained coded as ‘women’s’ early day motions’. Although some lone parents are men, this issue dominated the first session of the 1997 Parliament and was accompanied by a widespread expectation that Labour’s women MPs should have acted for women by rebelling over this issue (Cowley and Childs 2003).

Similarly, all early day motions concerned with the boxer and convicted rapist Mike Tyson were coded as women’s early day motions. This was because his proposed fight in Scotland became an issue around which women’s groups actively mobilised.

A small number of early day motions discussed eating disorders - a condition that is often regarded as a ‘women’s’ concern. These were recoded as ‘non-women’s’ if they made no explicit reference to the issue impacting specifically on women nor discussed the disorder in gendered terms.

Early day motions that addressed sexuality and gay rights but which failed to consider the issue of sexuality and women directly were also recoded.

A handful of early day motions were re-coded as ‘non-women’s’ because although they mentioned women’s concerns they were arguably more concerned with partisan politics. For example EDM 208 (97/98) and 208A1 (97/98) both discussed the cost of nursery vouchers but their main point was to highlight, in a partisan way, the previous Governments’ behaviour rather than constituting a discussion of the advantages or otherwise of nursery vouchers.

Three early day motions were removed from the data set due to difficulties in coding them. The authors could not agree over EDM 293 (98/99) which noted the use of Agent Orange by the American military in the Vietnam War and included a statement that discussed the impact of Agent Orange on women’s reproductive health – miscarriages, natural abortions and stillbirths. However, the early day motion was concerned more with the impact of chemical weapons and their long term effects. EDM 605 (00/01) was felt to be impossible to code. It made reference to a ‘near assault’ of the female winner of the London Marathon but it was not clear whether this was due to the runner’s sex. EDM 1247A3 (97/98), though an amendment to EDM 1247A2, concerned with abortion was phrased in such a way– ‘leave out from ‘it’ to end’ - that its meaning was unclear.

Stage 3 coding

The third stage coded the ‘women’s’ early day motions for direction, namely, whether the early day motion was feminist, anti-feminist or neutral (Reingold 2002, pp. 138, 166-7).

This addresses concerns that two early day motions ‘falling into a particular category could well propose diametrically opposed views’ (Nason 2001). Whilst there could be feminist ‘non-women’s’ early day motions - for example, men’s right to paternity leave - our focus is only on ‘women’s’ early day motions.

A minimal, liberal, definition of feminism is employed here, informed by bell hook’s definition of feminism as the movement to end sexist oppression (hooks, 1984). In simple terms any early day motion that seeks to expand women’s opportunities is coded as feminist. This follows the convention set by Swers who considers feminist bills those that seek to achieve ‘role equity’ or ‘role change’ for women (Swers 2002, 11). Thus, early day motions that discussed women’s equal opportunities and rights, or were in favour of expanding the provision of contraception and abortion (or at least maintaining current provision) and those that highlighted and sought to end male violence against women are all coded feminist. Consequently, EDMs 805 (97/98) (that welcomed ‘the Secretary of State for Defence’s determination to create equal opportunities throughout the armed forces’), EDM 339 (98/99) that ‘offers support for the women of Afghanistan who have been stripped or rights taken for granted in this country’ and EDM 1053 (99/00) that ‘congratulates Bexley Women’s Aid on its 25th Anniversary’ are all coded ‘feminist’.

Anti-feminist early day motions were those early day motions that sought to restrict women’s opportunities or ‘inhibit role change’ (Swers 2002, p. 11). In practice, apart from EDMs 1556A1 (97/98) and EDM 1556A1A1 (97/98), which were unsympathetic towards the establishment of a crèche in the House of Commons, anti-feminist early day

motions sought to restrict women's access to abortion and/or contraception. For example, EDM 83A1 (97/98) 'observes that abortion has... done nothing to liberate women... and calls upon her Majesty's Government to promote instead practical alternatives to abortion, including adoption to help women under stress'.

Many of the neutral early day motions were those associated with women's health and were straightforward to code. For example: EDM 351 (00/01) 'recognises the anguish caused by infertility' and EDM 329 (98/99) that notes that 'breast cancer is the commonest form of cancer affecting UK women'. Others were more difficult to code. Some discussed issues about which there is feminist debate - for example, EDM 116 (97/98) 'welcomes the Government's announcement of a review into the use of silicone breast implants'. Even though breast implants might be considered to be against the interests of individual women (for health reasons) or women in general (because of the way in which it pressurises women into conforming to a particular norm of beauty) it was felt that to code such early day motions as feminist was too subjective. Other early day motions - such as EDM 635 (97/98) that noted 'with regret the decision of BBC Radio Four to move production of Women's Hour from Manchester and other regional broadcasting centres' - called for action that was difficult to interpret as either feminist or non-feminist.

Early day motions that discussed women's imprisonment were also coded neutral. Although many of the early day motions implied that women's treatment in prison, particularly the extent to which they were prescribed drugs, was unacceptable, it was

impossible to say whether the intent of the early day motion was to suggest that women were systematically being prescribed such drugs *because* they were women (and, crudely, therefore a patriarchal act). For this reason it was decided that these early day motions should not be coded as feminist. For illustrative purposes EDM 1677 (97/98) is clearly more strongly worded than EDM 1768 (97/98) but still lacks an explicit feminist criticism:

EDM 1677

That this House is gravely concerned at evidence of the over prescription of damaging and addictive medicinal drugs in women's prisons; believes that powerful medicinal drugs prescribed to the late Emma Humphries and one other woman may have caused their premature deaths; is alarmed by the claims made by a distinguished author that neuroleptic drugs are routinely prescribed to young women prisoners who mutilate themselves, and that medicinal drugs are used as pacifiers which move prisoners from non-addictive illegal drug use to highly addictive medicinal drug use; and calls for a full inquiry into all drug use in women's prisons.

EDM 1768

That this House is horrified at further evidence of the over-use of medicinal drugs in women's prisons revealed at the inquest of the late Josie O'Dwyer; notes that on the day of her death on 26th October at Bullwood Prison Ms O'Dwyer had taken Promazine 200mg, Dothiepin 150 mg nocte, Chloral Hydrate 3 gms nocte, Voltarol 50 mgs, Diazepam 10 mgs TDS, Phenytoin 200 mgs BD, Clonazepam 2 mgs nocte, Tegretol Retard 400 mgs mane/800 mgs nocte and Co-Codamol TDS; further notes that the toxicologist also found a probably lethal dose of 80mg/l of tricholethanol in her blood; and calls for an inquiry into the misuse of drugs in women's prisons as sedatives and pacifiers.

Prayers against Statutory Instruments were excluded from 'direction' coding because it was impossible to establish direction from the wording of the early day motions themselves.

The final stage of the coding process was to exclude from our analysis all ‘women’s’ early day motions signed by four or fewer MPs. While previous research excluded early day motions signed by less than ten MPs we felt that setting our cut off at five was a better measure (Finer et al 1961; Berrington 1973). This is because we are interested in seeing whether concerns, said to be marginal to the political agenda and unlikely, therefore, to garner mass support are being addressed through early day motions. Moreover, women MPs still number only 120 out of 659 MPs.

In the analysis of individual early day motions a further 24 early day motions were excluded from the analysis as they suffered from small cell counts.

The categories and subcategories of ‘women’s’ early day motions

Contraception and abortion

1. Anti-contraception
2. Anti-emergency contraception
3. Pro-abortion
4. Anti-abortion
5. Pro-contraception
6. Pro-emergency contraception

Health

7. Cancer
8. Breast cancer
9. Cervical cancer
10. Health
11. Infertility
12. Ovarian cancer

Violence

13. Violence against women
14. Domestic violence
15. Rape
16. Women’s safety
17. Sexual harassment
18. Tyson

Equal opportunities and rights

19. Equal opportunities
20. Equal rights
21. International women’s rights

Others

22. Congratulatory
23. House of Commons crèche
24. Lone parent
25. Ellen Macarthur
26. Midwives
27. Women’s concerns as mothers
28. Prison
29. VAT sanitary products
30. Widows
31. WW2

Illustrative examples of feminist ‘women’s’ early day motions:

EDM 828 97/98

That this House welcomes the majority vote decision of MCC members but is disappointed that this decision still excludes women from membership of the MCC; and calls on the Committee of the MCC to bring forward proposals for equality at all levels of the MCC as soon as possible and no later than 12 months from today.

EDM 80 98/99

That this House supports the action of Boots The Chemist in Glasgow in setting up a pilot project between themselves and Greater Glasgow NHS Trust to run a twice weekly ‘drop in’ birth control and sexual health clinic; notes the high rate of teenage and unwanted pregnancies in the UK; and calls for similar clinics to be established with easier access to counselling and advice, all forms of contraception including emergency contraception, and better sex education for all young people.

EDM 229A1 99/00

After ‘country’, insert ‘and in particular congratulates those who are brave enough to defy the dress code for women and to campaign for fairer laws concerning women’s health, education, civil rights and custody of children’.

EDM 373 00/01

That this House welcomes the publication of the report of the Equal Opportunities Commission’s employer led Equal Pay Taskforce; recognises that 30 years after the Equal Pay Act 1970 there remains a substantial pay gap between women and men, currently at 18 per cent; and calls upon Government, trade unions and employers to support the Equal Opportunities Commission’s ‘Valuing Women’ campaign to eliminate the gender pay gap.

Illustrative examples of anti-feminist ‘women’s’ early day motions:

EDM 1247A2 97/98

‘leave out from ‘effect’ to end and add ‘expresses, yet again, serious concern at the manner at which abortion virtually on demand is practised under the present law contrary to the promises of its sponsors; notes that two successive Gallup polls among gynaecologists have shown that about 72 per cent. stated that NHS hospitals in which they work or had worked practised abortion on demand thus creating ‘inequalities’ through doctors flouting the law; notes that complaints about inequalities in the NHS have been persistently used by private abortion clinics to justify the enormous numbers of abortions carried out by their doctors practising abortion on demand; recalls the motion passed by a recent BMA junior doctors conference condemning the harassment of junior doctors exercising the legal right not to be involved in abortion and asking for action to protect them; further notes that as the Social Services Select Committee reported in 1991

many young doctors have had their careers in gynaecology destroyed as a result of their objections to abortion – particularly on demand; and condemns the call for it to be mandatory for all doctors with a conscientious objection to abortion to register thus strengthening the legal framework for a witch-hunt against those opposed to abortion in principle as well as against those doctors who would accept some abortions, but acting responsibly, would object in other cases, such as where the operation could cause damage to the physical or mental health of their patients.’

EDM 172 98/99

That this House expresses its sadness and regret at the tragic death of 16 year old Caroline Bacon, who died after 11 months’ paralysis following a stroke; notes that her condition arose as a medical complication arising from her taking the contraceptive pill from the age of fourteen and a half years; further notes that inadequate medical checks were undertaken at the time she was prescribed that oral contraception; believes that powerful oral contraceptives should only be prescribed to patients after proper counselling, advice upon attendant risks, and following due medical investigation; extends its deep sympathy to Mr and Mrs Bacon on the death of their daughter; sympathises with their anger and frustration that such contraceptives had been prescribed for Caroline without their knowledge; believes that all parents have a right to be informed that contraceptives have been prescribed to their children aged under 16 years; and invites her Majesty’s Government urgently to review the law and the guidelines issued to medical practitioners in this area.

EDM 274 99/00

That this House notes that the morning-after pill works by preventing the embryo from successfully implanting in the lining of the womb, and therefore is not a contraceptive; further notes that medical and scientific opinion is that life begins at fertilization, and that the morning-after pill is therefore an abortifacient; notes with concern the health-risks associated with the morning-after pill, which include nausea, vomiting, thrombosis and ectopic pregnancy and that, if a woman in the early weeks of pregnancy takes a morning-after pill, her baby’s brain could be malformed and/or the child could develop abnormalities such as heart-defects; further notes the provisions of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, as cited by Dr John Keown of Queen’s College, Cambridge, in a letter to the Daily Telegraph of 30th November 1999 and elsewhere, protect nascent life before implantation; further notes that the World Medical Association’s 1948 Declaration of Geneva states ‘I will have the utmost respect for human life, from the time of conception; even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity’; further notes that, whether or not the morning-after pill interrupts pregnancy as defined by the law, it does interrupt pregnancy as defined by medical science, and that those who are not registered medical practitioners should consequently not be expected to take responsibility for providing such treatment; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Health to restrict the availability of the morning-after pill as a matter of urgency and not to widen access thereto.

EDM 92 00/01

That this House notes with profound concern the announcement by health ministers that they intend to make the abortifacient ‘morning after’ pill available over the counter, thus undermining still further respect for both human life and for the institution of marriage; observes with regret that the present Government also opposes attempts to amend the law to prevent euthanasia; deeply regrets also its lowering to 16 years of age at which buggery is permitted for both boys and girls, and that it remains committed to removing the ban on the promotion of homosexuality in schools; observes with sadness the continuing widespread promotion of contraceptives to teenagers; further regrets the Government’s active support for the creation and use of human clones for scientific research; denounces this systematic assault upon the dignity of human life, the institution of marriage, and the traditional moral ethos of our nation; and calls upon the Jewish, Christian, Muslim and other faith communities of the United Kingdom to speak now before all in which they believe is destroyed.

Illustrative examples of neutral ‘women’s’ early day motions:

EDM 1313 97/98

That this House congratulates the Government on its efforts to encourage women aged 65 and over to request breast cancer screening; notes that these efforts have resulted in about one per cent of women in that age group being screened each year, while 70 per cent of women aged 50 to 64, to whom individual invitations are sent, attend for screening; notes that the incidence of breast cancer increases with age; and calls on the government to remove the age limit of 64 so that older women will also receive individual invitations.

EDM 616 98/99

That this House congratulates Arsenal ladies’ team on once again winning the FA Women’s Cup and all back up staff and supporters for their success; and looks forward to greater coverage of women’s football by the media in the future.

EDM 996 99/00

That this House notes the Report by Sir John Mortimer’s Advisory Group on the The Future of the Vacant Plinth in Trafalgar square; notes that a statue to commemorate the role women played in World War II was the second choice of the members of the general public; notes the conclusion of the report regarding use of the plinth for a rotating exhibition of modern sculpture; notes also the conclusion that the Advisory Group felt that there should be such a tribute, but that Trafalgar Square is not the best place for it; and that it should be in a park or a more open space where it could be more easily enjoyed; and requests the Government to provide such a statue to commemorate the role women played in World War II either in Trafalgar Square or elsewhere in a prominent position.

EDM 243 00/01

That this House is delighted to learn of Ellen MacArthur's current progress in her boat 'Kingfisher' in the Vendee Globe; pays tribute to her fantastic achievement as the youngest skipper in this single-handed around the world race; and sends its best wishes for what it hopes will be a stunning victory for a remarkable young woman.

Illustrative examples of violence early day motions:

EDM1149 99/00

That this House welcomes the greater attention being paid by the police to the problem of domestic violence following the representations in the 1980s to the Metropolitan Police by the late Jo Richardson MP, initially in the face of mockery; and calls upon the Home Secretary to establish a national coalition of relevant agencies to identify the extent of domestic violence, provide an updated assessment of the measures taken so far by each police force and develop amendments to the civil and criminal law, which will finally reflect the seriousness of domestic violence and its impact on the family.

EDM1381 97/98

That this House deplores the unacceptable level of violence towards the abuse of women and believes that a thorough review of civil and criminal law is needed to ensure that violent men are prevented from tracing their former partners and then assaulting and killing them; believes that this should include a strengthening of police powers and court sanctions when injunctions are broken, and that there should be a robust policy for arrest and prosecution under the criminal law, an end to the routine bailing of men for breach of the peace, and an end to the downgrading of charges through plea bargaining; supports the implementation of domestic violence awareness training for all those working within the justice system, including family law solicitors and the judiciary; recognises the need to restrict access by violent partners to information about the location of women through court proceedings and the provision of the Children Act 1989; and accepts that men who abuse women forego their right to access.

EDM101 97/98

That this House believes that there should be a change towards the law concerning rape and a better understanding of the needs of rape victims; urges the removal of the defendant's right to cross examine the victim; requests the restriction of multiple cross-examination of the victim in cases where there is more than one defendant; requests that ID parades be conducted behind mirror glass; urges more consistent sentencing and help for rape victims to re-enter society; urges charges to be brought against people who falsely claim to have been raped; requests that victims be represented in court by their own barrister; and urges that British people who have been raped by British people while overseas should be able to turn to the British legal system for justice.

An example of an early day motion coded as an ‘equal opportunity’ motion:

EDM 93 00/01

That this House considers that following the passage of the Local Government Act 2000, there should be a drive to make local government more inclusive; urges that more be done to encourage the involvement of more young people, women and those from different ethnic groups; and congratulates the National Association of Councillors on the recent launch of the 'Restoring the Balance' campaign which strives towards achieving greater community participation and more representative democracy in local government.

An example of an early day motion coded as an ‘equal rights’ motion:

EDM1582 1997/98

That this House welcomes the publication of the Government's draft Pensions Sharing on Divorce Bill designed to end women's pension inequality, but notes that inequality and discrimination remain in other areas of the United Kingdom pensions system, particularly discriminating against unmarried partners of members of statutory public service schemes such as those for the police, fire service, health workers and teachers, leading to unjust, unfair discriminatory practice which is out of touch with the best practice as highlighted by evidence from the NAPF, which also shows that increasing numbers of private sector occupational pension schemes are making changes, by denying common law and gay and lesbian partners of public service scheme members a survivor's pension, forcing many into financial hardship following their partner's death despite paying the same level of contributions as married scheme members; therefore believes the time is now right for a legal change to require all such schemes to pay partner's pensions regardless of marital status or sexual orientation; and calls on the Secretary of State to rectify this anomaly.

Table 1. Early day motions with pro-women significant sex differences (10%)

Session	EDM No.	Title	χ^2 p-values	Total Men Signed	Total Women Signed
97/98	EDM 1556	Childcare In The Palace Of Westminster	0.059	47	21
97/98	EDM 635	BBC Women's Hour	0.086	43	19
97/98	EDM 809	Parliamentary Childcare Provision	0.060	89	34
97/98	EDM 83	A Woman's Right To Choose	0.080	23	12
98/99	EDM 329	Breast Cancer	0.078	77	30
99/00	EDM 850	Vat On Continence Products	0.058	56	24
99/00	EDM 89	Vat On Sanitary Products	0.090	125	43
		<i>Total who could have signed</i>		<i>172</i>	<i>51</i>

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² Norris and Lovenduski 1989; Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Lovenduski 1997; Lovenduski and Norris 2003.

³ For a full account of the procedures for tabling and signing EDMs see Blackburn and Kennon (2003).

⁴ Evaluating the impact of any individual 'women's' early day motion is not addressed in this article. See Childs and Withey (2004) for a discussion of the impact of the three Early Day Motions (EDMs 683 97/98, 380 98/99 and 89 99/00) calling for the abolition of VAT on sanitary products that were tabled in the 1997 Parliament.

⁵ See Berrington 1973; Finer et al 1961; Franklin and Tappin 1977; Berrington and Hague 1998; Nason 2001; Heppell 2002; Norton 2001.

⁶ 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).

⁷ Squires 1996; Mackay 2001; Swers 2002; Duerst-Lahti 2001; Dodson 2001; Reingold 2000.

⁸ See Swers (2002) for analysis of 'co-sponsorship' in the US, a comparable activity to the signing of early day motions (Swers 2002, pp. 57-58) and compare with Dodson's analysis of party and roll call votes (Dodson 2001, p. 7; Dodson 1998, pp. 147-148)

⁹ As a cross check for the Parliamet data, the total number of signatures on each early day motion contained in our data file was then compared with the information held on the 'Early Day Motion' website (<http://edm.ais.co.uk/>). There were a few discrepancies between the Parliamet and the Early Day Motion website, 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

¹⁰ Here we take 'in government' to include those who were Parliamentary Private Secretaries (PPSs) (Cowley and Childs 2003).

¹¹ For a full discussion of the coding process see Appendix 1 available electronically on the Political Studies website.

¹² '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, 148).

¹³ Whilst this difference does appear to be large it is not significant owing to the large standard deviation figures; standard deviation for men = 467.2; standard deviation for women = 394.6.

¹⁴ The total number of 'women's' early day motions signed is divided by the total number of all early day motions signed.

¹⁵ For analytical purposes this variable was condensed into four categories.

¹⁶ Over the entire Parliament, 80.4% of women did not sign any anti-feminist early day motion compared with 69.8% of men. Of those women that did sign anti-feminist early day motions, 13.7% (seven women) signed only one anti-feminist early day motion over the whole Parliament, one woman signed two (2%) and two women signed five (3.9%). This compares with 30.2% of men who signed one or more anti-feminist early day motions. For five of these women the anti-feminist early day motion they signed (EDM 172 98/99) 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.

¹⁷ The clustering of the violence early day motions reflects feminist conceptions of the continuum of male violence. The category of women's health includes: infertility and cancer (which is itself subdivided into breast cancer, ovarian cancer and cervical cancer). In this instance cancer only refers to 'women's' cancers and excludes general cancers such as lung or bowel cancer.

¹⁸ However, as one of our anonymous reviewers noted, a crèche would primarily benefit other women working in parliament, not just MPs.

¹⁹ For example, EDM 93 00/01, an 'equal opportunities' motion which refers to participation in local government, was signed by 30.2% of Labour men and 31.4% of Labour women. EDM 1582 97/98, an 'equal rights' motion which addresses sex inequalities in pension provisions, was signed by 39.0% of Labour men and 54.9% of Labour women. See the electronic appendix for the full texts of these motions.

²⁰ See the electronic appendix for examples of early day motions in this category.

²¹ Few Labour MPs of either sex signed the sexual harassment early day motions.

²² EDM 901 (99/00) was included even though it made no reference to 'women' or 'rape' because all early day motions dealing with Tyson were coded as 'women's' since this was an issue around which women's groups mobilized and which received media coverage in these terms. No woman signed this early day motion.

²³ See Table 1 in the electronic appendix for 'women's' early day motions with pro-women sex differences at the 10 percent level.

²⁴ The Home Start early day motion talks of providing 'practical help' to families with young children.

²⁵ This early day motion dealt with equal opportunities in the armed forces.

²⁶ This early day motion 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'.