

'Regression Analysis?'

The Reporting of Women during the 2010 UK General Election'

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During the opening stages of the 2010 campaign the *Daily Telegraph* asked “Are we ready for First Lady politics?” following widespread speculation that the major leaders’ spouses would play an unprecedentedly prominent role during the election. This was arguably a surprising development given the significant gains made by women politicians if measured in terms of both their formal as well as media representation during the previous two decades.

2010 was, however, a highly presidential campaign in which the three major party leaders dominated the campaign courtesy of their three live debating encounters. Partly as a consequence of this the rival leaders’ spouses were afforded considerable exposure and this arguably came at the expense of actual women candidates of both front and backbench status.

This presentation explores this development using evidence collated from extensive media content analysis both of 2010 and some of the elections that preceded it.