Digital Media and Presidential Campaigning in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Study of the 2016 Election in Ghana

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Abstract

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The dissertation is a study of how presidential campaigns in new democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa use digital media to organize their teams and mobilize voters, with a focus on the 2016 presidential election in Ghana. Political campaigns aim to reach and convince the highest number of voters possible to vote for the campaigns' preferred candidates. To do this, they use different strategies and tools to communicate their ideas and promises to voters. The literature on African elections suggests that campaigns try to mobilize voters by developing clientelist relationships with them, and they mostly engage in valence campaigning because they do not have ideological policies to communicate. The literature on political campaigning in the US and Western Europe suggests that campaigns increasing aim to develop custom online platforms to organize their teams, raise funds, and mobilize voters.

The goal of the dissertation was to investigate how these scholarly assertions held up in the 2016 presidential election in Ghana. The study was centered on a four-month fieldwork in the country that included interviews with, and observations of, major political actors in the months before the November 2016 election. The study advances three major arguments. First, contrary to received wisdom, campaigns in Ghana relied on ideology for differentiating themselves from their opponents and for appealing to voters. An ideographic analysis of official party statements and transcripts of interviews with both the incumbent National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the main opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) campaign leaders and members shows that both parties used distinct ideological languages to mobilize voters.

Second, campaigns used digital media, specifically Whatsapp, for mostly internal organizing while depending on campaign members for voter mobilization. In addition, digital media use played a complementary rather than a central role in how campaigns mobilized voters. This approach, necessitated in part by low digital media penetration in the country, could be described as *relationship-based campaigning* in contrast to *technology-based campaigning* that is common in the West as documented in political communication literature. Finally, the dissertation demonstrates that Ghanaian campaigns did not compete primarily by trying to build clientelist relationships with voters. The campaigns, especially the NPP, did not have the capacity to build such relationships, and available voting data indicates that clientelism does not explain voting patterns in the last five presidential election cycles. The dissertation therefore calls for a more nuanced understanding of the interaction of digital media use and the context in which their used in new democracies

Table of Contents

Table of Contents i

List of Tables iii

List of Figure iii

List of Abbreviations iv

Acknowledgements v

Chapter 1: Introduction and Context 1

The 2016 Presidential Election in Ghana 8

Political Identity, Ideology, and Campaigning in Africa 12

Clientelism, Ethnicity, and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa 21

Digital Media and Political Campaigning 25

Methods 36

Main Arguments 42

Preview of Chapters 46

Chapter 2: Ideology-less Political Parties, Ideology Discourses, and Ideographs 48

Social Identity and Personal Identity 51

Social Identity and Collective Action 52

Social Identities in Ghanaian Politics 53

Social Identity and Political Ideology 61

Ghanaian Political Parties' Use of Political Ideology 67

Party Ideology and Political Identity 90

Conclusion 91

Chapter 3: Digital Media and Political Campaign Organizations 94

The Communication Ecosystem of Ghana 96

The Campaign Organizations 105

Organizing and Managing Political Campaigns with Digital Media 114

Surveillance, Control, and Resistance within Campaigns 126

Beyond Digital Media: Relationship-Based Campaigning 130

Interactions Between Uses of Traditional and Digital Media 136

Conclusion 140

Chapter 4: Digital Media, Presidential Campaigning, and Multiethnic Democracy 141

Democracy in Decline and the Arrival of Digital Media 141

Elections and Democratization in New Democracies 143

Ghanaian Campaigns from a Comparative Perspective 164

Political Campaigning and Clientelism in Ghana 150

Campaigning, Clientelism, and Chiefs as Middlemen 152

Digital Media and Voter Mobilization 166

Chapter 5: Conclusion 176

Findings and Implications 176

Limitations 182

Recommendations for Future Research 185

Appendices 188

Appendix I: Methods and Fieldwork 188

Appendix II: Research and Election Artifacts 194

References 198

List of Tables

Table 1: Breakdown of interviews conducted during fieldwork 40

Table 2: Reasons for Membership of NPP Campaign Leaders 73

Table 3: Reasons for Membership of NDC Campaign Leaders 85

Table 4: Population and Mobile Phone Subscription in Ghana, 2000-2016 98

Table 5: Population Growth and Internet Penetration in Ghana, 2000-2016 100

Table 6: Ghana's Broadcast Industry Overview: Total Numbers of Television and FM Stations During the Fourth Quarter of 2016 102

Table 7: Composition of the National Campaign Coordinating Committee 107

Table 8: Estimate of NPP Campaign Members 110

Table 9: NDC National Campaign Team 112

Table 10: Comparison of NPP and NDC Campaign Structures 113

Table 11: NDC and NPP Share of Votes by Region, 2000 - 2016 152

List of Figure

Figure 1: An illustration of how messages flow from national to local levels within the campaigns 120

List of Abbreviations

APSA	American Political Science Association
ASA	African Studies Association
CDD	Ghana Center for Democratic Development
CPP	Convention People's Party
EC	Ghana Electoral Commission
ICA	International Communication Association
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PNP	People's National Party
PP	Progress Party
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

The room was large but surprisingly empty of chairs or other basic furnishings we expect of a campaign office. A table and a couple of chairs sat at the extreme end of the room from the entrance. Rather than a campaign office, it more closely resembled a garage or a vacated business premises, clean and waiting for the next occupant. Though I had heard from journalists that the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) was cash strapped, this was Exhibit A. To the left of the room from the entrance, someone had arranged a few plastic chairs on top of one another. I later discovered that they used the chairs for large meetings and put them away afterward. The northern side of the room had a few wide and open windows, which provided much natural light for the room.

A man, whom I came to understand was an office assistant, sat at the lone table, listening to a radio tuned to one of the many FM stations in Accra. A few feet from him, two men stood, chatting and laughing. As I approached, the men stopped and looked toward me. “Good morning,” I said as I approached. “Good morning,” they responded with curiosity. Was I a new campaign team member? Was I a journalist? I could imagine several questions running through their minds. “My name is Matthew Adeiza,” I said with a smile, “and I am here to see Mr. RNLC.”[1] “I am Mr. RNLC,” one of the men said. “We are happy to have you here.” I had called a week earlier and arranged for him to introduce me to the team. We exchanged pleasantries and chatted about their team. More members trickled in, joining the chatter and gossip about various topics as they waited for the meeting to start.

[1] All names used in this dissertation in reporting discussions at meetings and interviews with campaign officials are pseudonyms, except where explicitly stated otherwise. One of the conditions for gaining access to meetings and interviews was the promise of anonymity to the participants. Please check later in the chapter and see the appendix for a description of the interviews and other methodological decisions.

They discussed the election and how the NDC,[2] their main opponent, was seemingly gaining the upper hand by distributing party-branded gifts to voters. Several members complained about lacking transportation money for campaign events. One noted they were starting the campaign more slowly in 2016 than they had in 2012. These conversations continued for the next 50 minutes. The meeting started at 10:51am. It was September 29, 2016, and my first meeting with an NPP campaign team in Accra.

The meeting began with a reading of the minutes of the previous meeting. Only 14 people attended. The members engaged in an argument about how best to frame the One Child, One Tablet campaign promise of the NDC. Some suggested framing it as a waste of resources because many parts of the country lack access to electricity that students need to use the devices. The discussion quickly moved to how President John Mahama gave chiefs luxury cars. Members agreed that it was permissible to buy cars for chiefs but that doing so close to a competitive election constituted a bribe to influence the chiefs and their constituents. Some expressed fears that chiefs would be used against them in their constituencies while others claimed that chiefs in their constituencies lacked any influence on voters.

As the discussions continued, a top leader in the region entered the meeting room and addressed the group. He emphasized the need to make people understand why voting based on "principles" was better than accepting gifts. The party, he added, needed to do a better job of reaching "downtrodden people." He explained that the campaign was cash strapped but promised to reimburse members for expenses once they raised funds. He said money was scarce because they had been in the opposition for eight years. He admonished them to work hard to prove the viability of the presidential candidate Nana Akufo-Addo to donors so they could support the

[2] The National Democratic Congress (NDC) was the second major party in Ghana and the incumbent during the 2016 election.

campaign. It was his first meeting with the team. After further pleasantries, he looked around and asked, "Where are the women?" Someone responded that they had gone to an event. As I discovered in the coming months, that was inaccurate. The group had few women, and only a couple attended meetings. Ghanaian politics remains a male-dominated affair.

Once the leader had left, RNLV[3] complained that some members were using the team WhatsApp platform (they call WhatsApp groups "platforms") for personal chats and jokes unconnected to the campaign. This complaint led to a heated debate about what was appropriate or not on the platform. Some argued that it was good to introduce jokes occasionally to make the platform fun, whereas others insisted that members should stick to the business of sharing campaign-related information and connecting with members. After a long debate, RNLC advised members to be careful about their activities on the platform because important campaign officials on the platform were *watching*. As he spoke, silence came over the room, and many members seemed to realize for the first time that their political careers could be jeopardized by inappropriate platform comments.

This first meeting hints at three conversations that underlie the intersection of the literature on African politics and political communication, respectively, that motivated this dissertation. These conversations concern how campaigns differentiate themselves from opponents, how they use technology to achieve their goals, and what types of relationships they develop with voters. These issues are vital to understand and theorize campaigns' use of digital media in Ghana. The first tells us about the frames parties use to set themselves apart; the second reveals tactical and strategic decisions about team organization and voter outreach; and the third addresses whether the relationships fostered during a campaign fit the clientelist mode of

[3] A member of a campaign team I observed on September 29, 2016.

electoral competition often associated with democracies in sub-Saharan Africa. Clientelism refers to personal relationships between elites and voters where elites funnel personal goods to voters who in turn consistently vote for the elites, irrespective of performance in office (Erdmann & Engel, 2007; Vicente & Wantchekon, 2009). By evaluating the two campaigns in relation to these conversations, I provide an exposition of campaigning with digital media in Ghana rooted in the context of the election that offers foundational information for future comparative and cross-national research. These conversations are worth visiting briefly.

First, scholars of African politics seek to answer how political parties and campaigns differentiate themselves from their opponents. Some scholars argue that they differentiate themselves by appealing to voters' communal traits, such as religion, ethnicity, and geographical region (Carbone, 2007; Cheeseman & Hinfelaar, 2010; Horowitz, 2017; Ishiyama & Quinn, 2006). Others argue that campaigns engage in "valence competition," that is, they highlight their candidates' integrity, prudence, qualification, and competence without offering distinctive policy alternatives (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013; Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Still others assert that campaigns rely on clientelism (personal relationships with voters that shield elites from accountability). A consensus exists, however, that ideology-based policies on a right–left ideological spectrum are almost nonexistent, leading some to suggest that ideology is unimportant in political competition (Cheeseman & Larmer, 2015; Elischer, 2012; van de Walle, 2009). I adopted the definition of ideology of Erikson & Tedin (2003, p. 64) as a "set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved" because it captures the flexibility of ideology and allows adaptation to the unique context of Ghana, where parties do not conform neatly with Western ideologies.

Without disputing the scholarly consensus, this paper draws on my study of the 2016 presidential election in Ghana to demonstrate that ideology plays the role of a *social identity* to shape how campaigns frame themselves and their opponents. Ideology as a social identity appeals to campaigns due to its ability to attract a broader range of Ghanaian voters and win elections compared to other social identities (e.g., religion and ethnicity). While scholars are correct that the NDC and the NPP in Ghana do not govern as left- or right-leaning parties like in most Western democracies, they miss the role that ideology plays in how political actors define themselves and their opponents in closely contested races such as the 2016 Ghana presidential election. Based on the work of McGee (1980), this research consists of an analysis of the ideographs of party mission statements and the responses of campaign leaders to interview questions before and after the presidential election. Ideographs are ordinary terms that people use to describe ideological beliefs and are "basic structural elements, the building blocks, of ideology" (McGee, 1980, p. 7). The analysis indicates that, across the two main political parties in the country, ideology was a salient characteristic of political identity. For example, in the anecdote above, the references to "voting based on principles" and reaching "downtrodden people" are ideological cues with real effects on how the NPP campaigned. The "principles" are the party's market-based ideology while the reference to making efforts to reach "downtrodden people" tacitly acknowledges that the party is known for rhetoric that many Ghanaians consider "elitist." However, their critique of the One Child, One Tablet policy of the NDC demonstrates they did not necessarily think government should not be involved, only that the conception and implementation were poor. This provisional support for government involvement confirms the critiques of scholars who argue that African campaigns rely on valence rather than ideological competition. While I agree with this perspective, Chapter 2 illustrates how ideology serves as a

social identity rather than a policy roadmap for Ghanaian campaigns, and ideology's value lies in giving campaigns and political leaders a frame for themselves that is not ethnic, regional, or religious. Therefore, this study provides a fuller picture of the range of social identities shaping political competition in the country.

Second, through this research, I engaged with and extended the work of political communication scholars who have sought to identify how political campaigns use digital media to achieve their campaign goals. This question is important because campaigns across the world are turning to digital media for campaigning, and the diversity of outcomes in terms of democratic norms and electoral success suggests that more research is needed to better understand how the use of digital media interacts with the electoral process. Due to a dearth of literature on digital media and political campaigning in Africa, I drew on scholarship from the US and Western Europe. Recent scholarship suggests that campaigns' digital media operations are resource intensive, with millions of dollars going into the development of custom websites or some type of custom platform to coordinate people, events, and information and to raise funds (Benkler, 2007; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Bimber, 2014; Howard, 2006; Kreiss, 2012, 2016; Plasser, 2000; Stromer-Galley, 2014). These platforms may be integrated with social media and allow campaigns to mine usage data to improve messaging and mobilization. The literature has coalesced around three theoretical themes: information management (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Foot & Schneider, 2006; Norris, 2003; Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009), campaigns as networks (Hersh, 2015; Karpf, 2012; Kreiss, 2012, 2016; Nielsen, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014), and campaigns' surveillance of voters and volunteers (Bimber, 2014; Howard, 2006; Karpf, 2012; Kreiss, 2012; Nielsen, 2012; Tufekci, 2014).

However, these theoretical discussions have not been applied to African campaigns, so I applied them to study two major presidential campaigns in Ghana. I borrowed the observation-heavy methodological orientation of scholars such as Hersh (2015) and Nielsen (2012) to study how Ghanaian campaigns have adopted and/or adapted digital media to achieve their campaign goals. I was interested in how the context of Ghana (a low-income, new democracy with low levels of digital media penetration and literacy) shaped the use of digital media and whether those uses significantly differed from Western campaigns documented in the literature. Digital media penetration refers to the percentage of the population with access to the Internet and communication devices such as computers and mobile phones. Digital media literacy refers to the proportion of the population that can meaningfully use digital devices and online platforms (see Hargittai, 2002; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Mossberger, Tolbert, & Hamilton, 2012; Park, 2014; Warf, 2013). The discussion in the anecdote about the correct use of WhatsApp points to the centrality of the chat service to the NPP campaign. The use of WhatsApp replicated offline hierarchical campaign structures and helped the campaigns communicate efficiently, securely, and cheaply. Chapter 3 contains a discussion of the ways campaigns used WhatsApp and other digital media platforms.

Third, after the explanation of how campaigns differentiate themselves and use digital media, this paper focuses on the types of relationships that the presidential campaigns studied in this research fostered with voters. The types of relationships that campaigns develop with voters have huge consequences for democracy because campaigns are usually the first direct contact that people have with a prospective government, and the norms that emerge from interactions could shape expectations of how democratic government should work. Scholarship on elections and democracy on the continent suggests that clientelism is the dominant mode of political

competition. This could take two forms—direct elite-voter relationships (e.g., giving money or gifts in exchange for votes) or through local brokers (e.g., chiefs). The extant scholarship on African politics suggests that such relationships are usually cultivated along ethnic, regional, or religious lines (Bates, 1974; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Vicente & Wantchekon, 2009).

I went to the field expecting to see these types of relationships being played out during campaigning, but what I found was more complicated and nuanced. Therefore, I investigated the types of relationships that the campaigns developed with voters and how they used digital media in the process. Through the observation of campaign meetings and public events as well as interviews with various actors in the country, I examined the extent to which clientelism was a major factor in the election and whether digital media enabled or undermined such relationships. The discussions in the anecdote about the power of chiefs and whether they were influential in the election hint at the conversation about clientelism in African elections. The NPP campaign team struggled with what to make of the role that chiefs would play in the election since chiefs lack constitutional power. While some dismissed concerns about the NDC distributing luxury cars and other gifts to chiefs, others were worried that chiefs would turn against them in their constituencies. The lack of agreement about the best strategy for countering the NDC's aggressive campaign to win chiefs' support underscores the lack of clarity about the power and role of chiefs in elections. Chapter 4 explores the role of chiefs as brokers as well as the direct ways that campaigns develop relationships with voters.

The 2016 Presidential Election in Ghana

The 2016 presidential election was a two-way contest between the candidates of the main political parties in the country—the NDC and the NPP. Though there were 25 registered parties in the country, the NDC and the NPP received over 98% of votes cast in the presidential

election.[4] Thus, this dissertation focuses exclusively on the two parties. The presidential candidate of the NPP was Mr. Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo, a veteran of Ghanaian politics with a strong reputation for prudence and incorruptibility. He previously contested and lost as the NPP's standard bearer in 2008 and 2012 (Arthur, 2016). The NDC candidate was President John Dramani Mahama, who was seeking a second term in office. He was a vice president from 2009 to 2012 and became president on July 24, 2012, after the death of President Atta Mills. Mahama contested and won the 2012 election on the NDC platform (Kelly & Bening, 2013). However, the NPP contested his victory at the Supreme Court of Ghana. Although Mahama won the court challenge, the process exposed some flaws in Ghana's electoral system, and the Supreme Court in its ruling directed the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) to fix them before the 2016 election (Electoral Commission of Ghana, n.d.; Gyampo, 2018).

In the lead up to the 2016 election, allegations of corruption, hiking of government project prices, and favoritism toward kinsmen beset the Mahama government. Under his leadership, the country failed to maintain its previously stellar economic performance and took an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan to fund its budget (Bob-Milliar & Paller, 2016; Dwamena & Jacobs, 2016). Part of Ghana's economic problems stemmed from an overdependence on produce and natural mineral exports, which are vulnerable to the global market's high price volatility (Ighobor, 2016). The IMF loan came with conditionalities, which were fodder for the NPP campaign, which argued that a leader only needs the IMF to manage his economy if he is incompetent (Mubarik, 2016a). The tough economic conditions in the country and frequent corruption allegations that trailed senior figures in the NDC allowed the NPP to frame the hardships that many Ghanaians faced as a matter of both incompetent economic

[4] The data come from the EC. http://www.ec.gov.gh/election-results/2016-presidential-results.html

management and corruption. They argued that the Mahama government was so incompetent and corrupt that it was unnecessarily causing economic pain for many Ghanaians.[5] A Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD) survey before the election suggested that this framing may have worked, as 75% of voters said they were concerned about corruption and would consider it in their votes, second only to the consideration of bad roads in terms of Ghanaians' voting decisions.[6]

The two parties started serious campaigning in August and relied on a combination of rallies, traditional media, social media, and house-to-house visits by campaign members. Each party launched its campaign with a huge rally and concluded it with a bigger one. The NDC began its campaign on August 14, 2016, in Cape Coast, Central region (Allotey, 2016a) and distributed its manifesto on September 13, 2016 (IMANI, 2016). The NPP, on the other hand, launched its manifesto on October 9, 2016, in Accra (Akufo-Addo, 2016), though it started campaigning months earlier. The three months preceding the election saw campaign events across all the regions of the country. I visited five of 10 regions—Accra, Central, Eastern, Northern, and North East regions—to observe campaign activities and to interview campaign leaders. The visits enabled me to have a better picture of the country and assess the experiences of campaign leaders across different regions. The election was peaceful and adjudged free and

[5] This point was frequently used in NPP campaign rallies and house-to-house canvassing I observed between September and December 2016.

[6] The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD) survey can be found here: http://citifmonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Ghana-2016-PES-Main-Issues-@-stake-in-2016-election_08aug_2016-FINAL.pdf

fair by local and international observers.[7] The NPP candidate Nana Akufo-Addo won with 53.72% of the vote, and the NDC had 44.53%.[8] Five small parties shared the remaining 1.75%.

The remaining sections of this chapter explore Ghana's campaign history, the literature on ideology in sub-Saharan Africa elections, and the literature on political communication related to digital media campaigning. The review also addresses aspects of the literature relevant to understanding Ghanaian campaigns. Ultimately, the existing Western-focused literature proved inadequate to gain an understanding of the Ghanaian case because the societies that most scholars have described are wealthier, have significantly higher technology penetration rates, have a longer experience of democratic practice, and are culturally more individualistic (Drori & Jang, 2003; Langmia, 2016; Norris, 2001). However, the literature served as a good starting point because it indicates how campaigns' use of technology has evolved over time, and it provided a way to engage in an ongoing global conversation about the relationship between technology and campaigning. This global connection is important given that campaigns around the world learn from one another (Plasser, 2000). The African political science literature contextualized the research with scholarly conversations around politics and elections, the nature of political competition, and historical explanations for trends on the continent (Berman, Eyoh, & Kymlicka, 2004; Bratton, 2008; Posner, 2005). Since this is a political communication project, I engaged with other streams of literature to the extent that they helped me understand and explain digital media use in the 2016 presidential election. The chapter concludes with the main arguments of the dissertation as well as a preview of the remaining chapters.

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[7] The African Union statement, for example, described the election as "credible." Report available here: https://au.int/en/pressreleases/31732/press-statement-african-union-election-observation-mission-ghana.
[8] The data come from the Electoral Commission of Ghana. http://www.ec.gov.gh/election-results/2016-presidential-results.html.

Political Identity, Ideology, and Campaigning in Africa

The question of how political parties and associated campaigns articulate and communicate what differentiates them from their opponents has long occupied political science and political communication scholars (Plasser & Plasser, 2002; Römmele, 2003; Sartori, 1976). African political parties, van de Walle (2003) argued, have "programmatic homogeneity," with a "low salience of ideology for the majority of these parties unmistakable" (p. 304). Those who take ideological positions suffer from a "striking lack of success" (p. 304). Most "election campaigns have been conducted almost entirely on the basis of personal and ethno-regional appeals for support" (p. 305). Van de Walle's assertions represent a consensus in the literature about the relevance of ideology in electoral competition in the new democracies on the continent. Scholars argue that political campaigns rely on voter traits (e.g., ethnicity and region), candidate traits (e.g., competence or personality), and/or clientelism to win elections (Cheeseman & Larmer, 2015; Faanu & Graham, 2017; Horowitz, 2017; Oelbaum, 2004). All political parties draw on cleavages for mobilization; however, while parties in the West draw on multiple cleavages, African parties are said to primarily draw on ethnic and regional cleavages that are difficult to expand over time to win elections (Elischer, 2013; Horowitz, 1985, 1993). Horowitz (1985) argued that an inability to expand one's electoral base often results in a permanent disadvantage for some groups, who may resort to violence to demand access to power.

African parties supposedly eschew ideology in policymaking for many reasons. Gyimah-Boadi (2007) contended that African parties have "weak bureaucratic and other organizational structures," lack a sizeable number of dues-paying members, and lack volunteers for campaign activities, adding that "most party activists and grassroots supporters expect upfront monetary payment, payment in kind, or future material reward in return for services rendered to the party"

(p. 25). Parties have "authoritarian legacies" that prioritize loyalty over internal democracy (p. 25). They are "dominated by personalities" and give little room for young people to participate in decision making. They exist as "vehicles for capturing the state" and do not engage in civic activities between elections (p. 25). In addition, they are mostly based in urban areas and are financially weak (see the edited volume by Basedau, Erdmann, & Mehler, 2007; Carbone, 2007; Erdmann, 2004).

Communal Traits

In some cases, the nature of the appeals a campaign makes to voters' communal traits (e.g., ethnicity, religion, or region) depends on whether a campaign is in the opposition or in government. Many parties were formed and dominated by elites from one or a few ethnic groups who became their base voters (Ishiyama & Quinn, 2006). In some cases, such as Nigeria and Kenya, the major ethnic groups live in different regions of the country, and elite-formed political parties from a region invariably gain massive regional support (Cheeseman & Larmer, 2015; Faanu & Graham, 2017; Osaghae, 1991; Ukiwo, 2003).

While most parties are technically not "ethnic parties," they disproportionately draw support from the ethnic groups of their founders (Bratton & van de Walle, 1994). In the case of Nigeria, religion implicates region and ethnicity—the north of the country is predominantly Muslim, whereas the south is predominantly Christian. Elischer (2013) documented how party appeals could be mono-ethnic in nature (a party that appeals to only one group), relate to an ethnic alliance (a party that appeals to a few ethnic groups), or constitute an ethnic catchall (a party that appeals to national unity). Nigeria, for example, often vacillates between ethnic-alliance and catchall parties that seek to mobilize their bases to win national elections with promises of fairness to coalitional ethnic groups (Ake, 1993, 2001; Joseph, 1987; Osaghae,

1991). Kenyan and Zambian political parties have ethnic-alliance parties that change in election cycles as elites defect from existing parties to form new parties and alliances to win national elections (Cheeseman & Larmer, 2015; Faanu & Graham, 2017). Elischer (2013) noted that the NPP in Ghana started as an ethnic-alliance party appealing to mostly Akans and a few other ethnic groups but has since become a catchall party. The transformation underscores the party's realization that it would be difficult to rely solely on a single group or a few groups to win national elections. This evolution suggests that Ghana is unique in a way that encouraged parties to move toward a national rather than an ethnic identity.

Competence and Personality

Most parties engage in "valence competition" (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007, p. 529) during campaigns, where "partisan rhetoric focuses on proving competence around the issue rather than on the rightness of a specific position regarding policy objectives" (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013, p. 1397). Valence issues are broadly desired policies. Examples include more jobs, higher wages, low inflation, lower crime, prudent use of state resources, and more wealth for everyone. However, they "do not differentiate parties," because everybody wants more of them (Kim, 2017, p. 21). Bleck and van de Walle (2013) argued that parties engage in valence messaging because of "overwhelming uncertainty" (p. 1396), including "uncertainty about institutional stability and/or reversal, uncertainty about constituents' preferences, and uncertainty about credible commitments" (p. 1398).

Bleck and van de Walle (2013) asserted that, because parties are not well institutionalized, individual politicians are less certain about which party they would join in the next election cycle and therefore prefer to campaign based on issues with little disagreement. If one has not taken a strong position on issues and changes parties, there would not be much

explanation to do. Because political parties do not know voters in their constituencies well and there is no clear ideological constituency to serve, it is safer to make appeals that most people relate to. Even when ethnicity could provide some clues about voter preferences, most candidates for national office cannot rely on a single ethnic group. Finally, since most countries fall in the low-income category and have limited resources, candidates are unlikely to fulfill specific promises, so it helps to be general about issues that most voters agree on.

Scholars have documented the use of valence appeals for voter mobilization in different countries across the continent. In Nigeria, opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari, after losing two consecutive elections, won the 2015 presidential election on the strength of his perceived integrity by promising to rid the country of corruption and create jobs for young people (Owen & Usman, 2015). His campaign highlighted his anticorruption record as a former military dictator and promised to stamp out corruption. It helped that then President Goodluck Jonathan's government was beset by corruption allegations (Lewis & Kew, 2015). Similar trends of valence appeals proved successful in Zambia and Ghana, among others (Cheeseman & Hinfelaar, 2010; Cheeseman & Larmer, 2015; Elischer, 2013; Fraser, 2017; Gyampo, Graham, & Yobo, 2017; Gyimah-Boadi, 1994).

Clientelism

The role of clientelism in African politics has been exhaustively explored by scholars who study democracy on the continent. It is described as the "proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?" (Stokes, 2011, p. 649). Clientelism is said to manifest itself as vote buying, promising public sector jobs to supporters, promising government contracts to supporters, or performing other actions that establish a quid pro quo relationship between a

campaign and voters (Bates, 1974; Beck, 2008; Bratton, 2008; Ferree & Long, 2016; Gyimah-Boadi, 2015; Lemarchand, 1972; Lindberg, 2010; van de Walle, 2003, 2009; Vicente & Wantchekon, 2009). I return to political clientelism in Chapter 4, which discusses the topic in more detail.

These scholarly observations miss the important role that ideology plays in some countries' political life. While scholars like Erdmann (2004) and Elischer (2013) have critiqued the use of Western typologies to measure African parties because the contexts differ, they also created new typologies that are only marginally different from those they critiqued. These scholars tried to distinguish between programmatic (those that make policy-based appeals) and non-programmatic parties (that rely on offering goods to voters and communities to win). These researchers relied on either conceptual redefinition or party manifesto analysis to arrive at new typologies.

While these efforts are important first steps to better understand African parties, they do not fully address whether or not African parties eschew ideology. An assumption that underlies much of the literature is that party manifestoes are not ideological and that parties do not govern in left or right manners; therefore, ideology plays no major role in political competition. This research complicates this assumption with a demonstration—through ideographic analysis—that ideology plays an important role in Ghanaian party politics. It serves as a social identity alongside ethnicity and region in shaping campaigns' political identities and discourses. To understand why this is the case, I first provide a brief overview of the history of political campaigning in Ghana, relating it to the extant literature reviewed.

A Brief Overview of Ghanaian Political Campaigning

Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence from Britain in 1957. As one of the most democratically stable countries in the region, its progress is the outcome of decades of political choices and compromises by various political groups and elites in the country (Gyimah-Boadi, 1994; Langer, 2009). In the lead-up to the 2016 election, while some outsiders were concerned about violence because of the close contest and heated partisan debates on radio and television, campaign leaders consistently asserted that there would be no violence.[9] That level of trust in the political process was possible in part because of the work of a mechanism like the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC). The IPAC was formed in March 1994 as a mechanism to resolve conflicts between parties and create compromise around electoral rules (Asante, 2013; Debrah, 2011). IPAC membership is open to all parties, donors, and the EC. In the weeks before the election, the IPAC met several times to sort out differences between various parties, thereby defusing tensions and ensuring a peaceful election.

The first major election in which Africans had universal suffrage in Ghana under colonial rule took place on February 8, 1951. Though a parliamentary election, the election laid a foundation for the first presidential election in 1960, three years after the country gained political independence. In the run-up to the 1951 election, a divide emerged between the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and its main challenger, the Convention People's Party (CPP) (Austin, 1964; Chazan, 1979). Middle-class Ghanaians formed and dominated the UGCC, most of them Akans. Some key players in the UGCC include prominent nationalists, such as J.B. Danquah and Kofi Busia, its first two leaders, both educated in the UK. They favored a gradual, moderate approach to the fight for independence and were willing to delay independence from

[9] These assertions were made in campaign meetings I attended and in interviews with campaign leaders.

Britain if the colonial government granted more freedom to Africans in the country (Morrison, 2004).

The UGCC's leaders invited a young and charismatic Kwame Nkrumah from the UK to join their party in 1946 because they felt that his charisma and education in the United States added value to their struggle for independence. Once he returned and became the party's general secretary, Nkrumah was dissatisfied with the gradual approach that the UGCC had embraced in pursuit of independence. Nkrumah would soon quit the UGCC to form the CPP, whose motto called for "Self-Government Now" (Biney, 2011; Chazan, 1982). However, the disagreement between the UGCC and the CPP was not just about the speed of independence. It was also ideological—how to organize the economy of an independent Ghana. Though Nkrumah seemed to prevail by taking Ghana to independence from Britain in 1957, becoming the first sub-Saharan African country to win independence, the ideological debate continues to shape contemporary Ghanaian politics.

The economic debate in post-independence Ghana centered on how best to make Ghana an exemplar for the continent. Nkrumah, like many of his contemporaries in newly independent African countries, favored state-led development. Ghanaians call it the "Nkrumahist tradition." The founders of the UGCC, on the other hand, favored a market-led approach to development. This group is often called the "Danquah-Busia tradition." Nkrumah's CPP won parliamentary elections in 1954 and 1956 and led Ghana to independence in 1957 (Morrison, 2004). He soon turned authoritarian, perhaps mistaking overwhelming support in the early elections as an endorsement of his vision of a so-called development state. By 1964, he held a referendum to endorse a one-party state. He was overthrown in a military coup in 1966 that exiled him until his death (Biney, 2011).

Many scholars who study Ghanaian politics identify the 1950s–1960s period as playing a defining role in how politicians in subsequent decades, including NDC and NPP leaders, frame themselves (Chazan, 1982; Oelbaum, 2002; Taylor, 2017). The failure of Nkrumah's experiment and subsequent military interventions only led to the entrenchment of these two ideological camps. After Nkrumah was overthrown, the 1969 election was won by Kofi Busia and the Progress Party (PP), an ideological progeny of the UGCC. The CPP was banned from participation. By 1972, the PP government was overthrown by the military, and in a return to civilian rule in 1979, an Nkrumahist party (the People's National Party, led by Hilla Limann) won the election. During this period, the Danquah-Busia group metamorphosed into the Popular Front Party (Chazan 1983; Morrison, 2004). By the end of 1981, Jerry J. Rawlings, a flight lieutenant, led another coup and took power. He ran the country as the head of a military junta until 1992 when the country returned to multiparty elections as part of a global wave of democratization that Huntington famously called the "Third Wave" of democratization (Huntington, 1993).

When Ghana returned to multiparty elections in 1992, political elites sorted themselves into two camps—the NDC, which now associates itself with the Nkrumahist tradition, and the NPP, an offshoot of the Danquah-Busia tradition. Elischer (2013) analyzed the manifestoes and campaign promises of both the NDC and the NPP and concluded that the NDC has evolved from a "personalistic party" built around the personality and popularity of President Rawlings in the 1990s to a "catchall party" (i.e., one that emphasizes national unity and tries to be inclusive of all ethnic groups). The NPP, meanwhile, has evolved from an "ethnic-alliance party" focused on mobilizing a few ethnic groups and representing their interests to a catchall party with some right-leaning programmatic policies. In other words, over time, the two parties have converged

into catchall parties to win national elections because it is difficult to win with support of one or a few ethnic groups. As Elischer (2013) noted about the risks of having an ethnic party in a multiethnic country like Ghana, heavily populated metropolitan areas like Accra may punish any party suspected of promoting ethnic politics.

Though the NDC claims to continue the Nkrumahist tradition and the NPP claims to continue the Danquah-Busia tradition, their actual policies are so similar as to be indistinguishable (Osei, 2013). It was common during my fieldwork for this research to hear journalists and scholars dismiss these traditions as "mere talk" not backed up by concrete policy formulations. Despite the NPP's claims of being a "market-oriented" party, its winning campaign message in the 2016 election reminded Ghanaians that it introduced the highly subsidized National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and promised to provide one factory per district and a dam per village in the country (Arthur, 2016). In other words, it promised to outdo the NDC, the supposed social democrats, by implementing government-managed economic programs. The NDC, on the other hand, touted its involvement in building infrastructure in the country and promised to do more if reelected. Thus, scholars and observers are correct about the lack of policy differentiation between parties. However, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, the parties' ideological positions still have strong political identity resonance for the campaign leaders who led the respective campaigns for their parties in 2016. By using the analytical concept of "ideograph" from McGee (1980), I demonstrate that Ghanaian political leaders from both the NDC and the NPP drew on party ideographs to define their political identities. This finding persists across different levels of leadership.

Clientelism, Ethnicity, and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa

Despite the difficulty that scholars face in "analyzing the progress of democratization across the continent" (Herbst, 2001, p. 358), scholars of sub-Saharan African politics largely agree that clientelism is a feature of elections in the region (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Cheeseman, 2008; Posner, 2005; Rothchild & Olorunsola, 1983). The enthusiasm that followed when many one-party and military regimes began holding multiparty elections in the early 1990s soon faded as a result of clientelist electoral processes characterized by "communal divisions, particularly of ethnicity and religion" (Berman, Eyoh, & Kymlicka, 2004, p. 1). To some, the nature of ethnic rivalry in much of Africa resulted from African societies' encounters with European market-oriented modernity rather than primordial attitudes carried to the 21st century (Berman et al., 2004). Berman et al. (2004, p. 3) argued that ethnic conflicts in Africa will not disappear with more modernity because they "represent critical aspects of the particular African experience of modernity itself," an experience rooted in colonialism and post-colonial neoliberal policies forced on newly independent African states.

The colonial state created ethnic identities and cleavages from pre-colonial kinship relations and political units. Market forces dominate the post-colonial state, and group identities have emerged as a primary source of security and support for individuals. The scholars argued that "ethnic politics has focused on defining the terms of access both to the traditional assets of land and labor and the material resources of modernity in both the state and the market" (Berman et al., 2004, p. 3). Berman et al. also asserted that the post-colonial state emerged from colonialism as the most important source of wealth and power, thus becoming the focus of struggles to acquire both. Citizens sought patrons through whom they could access state resources, which led to a crisis of trust in the state in the absence of strong state institutions to

regulate such competition. Weak state institutions encouraged personality politics linked to group identities because, if people cannot trust institutions to mediate competing interests, they were better off having someone in power to ensure a competitive advantage for co-ethnics. Other scholars have written extensively about political clientelism and its role in political life, which Chapter 4 covers by contextualizing and discussing the 2016 election in Ghana (Baldwin, 2013; Beck, 2008; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Kramon, 2017; Lemarchand, 1972; Pitcher, Moran, & Johnston, 2009; van de Walle, 2003, 2009; Vicente & Wantchekon, 2009).

Besides this historical perspective, scholars have also assessed how voters develop clientelist relationships with political elites during campaigns. Some have suggested that voters discount campaign promises from non-ethnics as unreliable (Posner, 2005), which would imply that campaigning is irrelevant. Others have argued that campaign messages could be effective, especially for voters who do not have a co-ethnic in a race (Horowitz, 2017). Horowitz analyzed a panel survey of voters in Kenya's 2013 election and found that, when a co-ethnic was running for office, voters' concerns about being well represented almost disappeared; voters without a co-ethnic in a race were unsure who to trust, thereby opening them to campaign messaging. His panel data revealed that, even with a co-ethnic in a race, as many as 4% of voters shifted their support to a non-co-ethnic. In a study of exit polls in Kenya, Long & Gibson (2015) found that all voters evaluated incumbents' performance in office, but co-ethnics were more likely to forgive an incumbent who performed poorly. These scholars share a common assumption that voters believe that ethnicity strongly predicts how a candidate would govern or share state resources; hence, voters use it to evaluate candidates.

The affinity for co-ethnics may be seen as clientelism, and scholars have asserted that local chiefs often play an important role in promoting and maintaining the relationships that

foster a mutual sense of affinity between political elites and co-ethnic voters (Bates, 1974; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Lemarchand, 1972). Kramon (2017, p. 11) summarized the differences between group-level and individual-level clientelism:

> Where groups are structured hierarchically with centralized leadership, the expectation is that politicians will pursue more wholesale electoral strategies, either working through group leaders or seeking to trade collective goods for blocs of votes. In the absence of such structure, politicians are more likely to target their efforts directly to voters themselves, which results in larger investments in electoral clientelism.

These efforts to target individual voters may be executed through "vote buying" (Bratton, 2008, p. 622) or long-term relationship building. Lindberg (2003, 2010) studied members of parliament (MPs) in Ghana and discovered that MPs devoted significant resources throughout the year to satisfy constituents' personal needs, ranging from paying rent to attending funerals. A more recent study by Ichino & Nathan (2013) revealed that voters' locations influenced their behavior—when in an ethnically diverse metropolitan city, voters were more likely to vote for candidates who were not co-ethnics. However, they were less likely to do so if they lived in an ethnically homogenous community.

In their assessment of the 2013 Kenyan election, Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis (2014) similarly concluded that voters were more likely to vote for co-ethnics in rural areas or in neighborhoods of a city with less ethnic diversity. Even when some Kenyans voted ethnically, it was usually out of fear that other people were voting ethnically rather than because they felt loyal to co-ethnic candidates (Bratton & Kimenyi, 2008). Whatever form they take, these relationships are transactional and aimed at keeping political elites in power, with some personal benefits going to voters or groups that support them. Chapter 4 evaluates the conceptualization of

the term "clientelism" and assesses the extent to which this phenomenon played a role in the 2016 presidential election in Ghana.

While other mechanisms such as candidate performance (Long & Gibson, 2015) and the amount of power concentrated at the center of power (Suberu, 2001) interact with voters' decisions about whom to support, I explore an additional dimension: the prevalence and use of digital media for political information in a country. At the beginning of the research, I expected political elites to change campaign techniques since more people have access to multiple sources of political information on social media by applying the findings in the existing literature to the 2016 election. For example, elites may realize that collective bargaining with groups or buying individual votes is not tenable if people across ethnic and regional boundaries interact online and share what elites promised them. Voters would be able to see the promises made to different communities and could make counter-demands to the candidates. Thus, as voters become more "sophisticated,"[10] it would in a candidate's interest to promise everyone the same goods to avoid competing demands for community and private goods.

Chapter 4 relates this research to the scholarly conversation about clientelism and elections and explores how the use of digital media interacts with the electoral processes outlined by scholars. While this research does not extend beyond the campaign period and thus cannot address political clientelism in Ghana more broadly, I did examine why clientelist relationships were difficult to establish and maintain during campaigns. The available technology did not provide sufficient capacity for mass surveillance, which would be needed to enforce clientelist

[10] This is a term that Ghanaian scholars and other observers use to describe voter behaviors, which they link to voters' use of social media for political information. This came up in conversations with OBSF (11/29/2016), OBSG (12/07/2016), OBSJ (12/13/2016), and OBSK (12/16/2016).

relationships, and elites' perception of an informed electorate could shape their behavior in the coming years.

Digital Media and Political Campaigning

Campaigns in the US are probably the most studied and have the greatest effect on global campaign practices (Kluver, Jankowski, Foot, & Schneider, 2007; Plasser & Plasser, 2002). For many around the world, campaigns in the US set the standards in innovative approaches to organizational practices and voter-mobilization strategies. Since little scholarly literature exists on political campaigning with digital media on the African continent, I therefore reviewed the literature on US campaigns as a starting point for understanding Ghanaian campaigns.

Campaigns' use of online platforms for election purposes has come a long way since the early 1990s. The Bill Clinton campaign website for the 1994 presidential election only contained static pages and web forms for supporters to download and send to campaign offices with donation checks (Stromer-Galley, 2014). During the 2000 presidential election, campaigns experimented with new features, such as online donations and segmenting voters for campaign email newsletters. Campaigns also recruited supporters to mobilize their personal networks, and digital media became "as crucial for internal organization as they were for external publicity" (Howard, 2006, p. 13). During this period, Republicans led innovation in online campaigning. By 2004, digital media campaigning had matured. Howard Dean's Democratic primary run was predominantly powered by small online donors and an army of citizen bloggers online who catapulted the candidate to an unlikely early lead in the race (Kreiss, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014).

Though Dean lost the primaries and John Kerry lost the 2004 presidential election, the lessons learned gave Democrats a digital media advantage in the next two presidential contests.

For example, when Dean became chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 2005, he engaged many people who built his technology-fueled campaign to give Democrats an edge in the coming years. Not only did they build a $6-million technology platform as a national voter database for Democrats, they negotiated with state Democratic leaders to share voter files in the national database (Kreiss, 2012). This infrastructure laid the foundation for Obama's successful run in 2008. Karpf (2012) described the motivation to experiment and introduce new technologies by the party out of power as the "outparty innovation incentives" (p. 148). The party in opposition, Karpf hypothesized, has more incentives to innovate with technology and encourage voter participation with the goal of recapturing power.

The 2008 Obama campaign was generally credited with solidifying the use of digital media for campaigning (Kreiss, 2012). The 2012 reelection campaign depended more heavily on data analytics than the one in 2008, and it engaged less authentically with supporters than the party had in 2008 (Bimber, 2014; Kreiss, 2012). Kreiss argued that the success of the 2008 Obama campaign depended, in part, on the superb organization and practices that it created and encouraged. Early on, the campaign prioritized digital media, hired top technical people, and gave them freedom to operate. They hired Blue State Digital, a company formed by Dean campaign alumni Jascha Franklin-Hodge, Clay Johnson, Joe Rospars, and Ben Self. They created MyBo, a campaign social networking site that cost about $2 million and played a crucial role in enabling Obama's supporters to organize over 75,000 events across the country (Kreiss, 2012). In the 2012 cycle, the Obama campaign reported spending $100 million on technology (Bimber, 2014). These figures underscore that, while it might be cheaper to use digital media for campaigning, it requires significant financial resources to set up and manage a robust digital operation.

The 2012 Obama presidential campaign relied heavily on data analytics and the use of complex voter models to raise funds, coordinate voter mobilization, buy advertising, and win the election (Bimber, 2014). Though Hersh (2015) asserted that the types of data that the Obama campaign utilized were less invasive than early scholarship and media reports suggested, the behavior of the campaign moved in the direction of maximizing votes through data. As Bimber (2014) noted, campaigns do not exist in their current form for civic engagement. They are organized to win elections, and their adoption of new technologies should be understood through that prism.

Scholars who study campaigns and digital media usually take one of two broad approaches—a focus on how new digital technologies influence campaign outcomes or how campaigns use digital media. Scholars with the former approach usually seek to answer the question of whether digital media create equalization or normalization effects in political contests (Margolis & Resnick, 2000), whereas those with the latter approach seek to understand how campaigns use digital media to inform, involve, connect, and mobilize voters (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Kreiss, 2012). In part, the cases that scholars select influence these two approaches. In cases where candidates are equally matched, as in most US presidential campaigns, it makes sense to study how campaigns use digital media rather than whether the tools equalize the contests. In cases where there is a dominant party and a few smaller but competitive parties, it makes sense to ask whether or not the use of digital media equalizes political contests. In the 2016 election in Ghana, the two candidates were equally matched, and whatever financial disadvantages the opposition NPP faced, they compensated with a presence in every part of the country.

In an early study on the topic, Margolis & Resnick (2000) argued that online platforms reproduce existing offline patterns of sociopolitical life. Their "normalization thesis" attracted many confirmatory studies in Europe, where it is common to have several unequal parties competing in one election and where smaller parties often have less resources. Studies of elections in Britain and the Netherlands (Graham, Jackson, & Broersma, 2014), Germany (Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014), and multiple European countries (Vergeer, Hermans, & Cunha, 2013) found no significant equalization effects of using digital media. Over time, the normalization thesis was "roundly supported" (Karpf, 2012, p. 8). Conversely, the Dean campaign in 2004 and the Obama campaign in 2008 provide examples of equalization effects (Bimber, 2014; Kreiss, 2012). The trend, however, is that most scholars no longer find it fruitful to only ask whether or not digital media help campaigns win elections. Most are interested in *how* campaigns use digital media, an approach I adopted for my study (Bimber, 2014; Kreiss, 2012; Nielsen, 2012).

Scholarship on how campaigns use digital media can be categorized into three theoretical themes. Some scholars have examined campaigns act as information managers, a traditional role identified with campaigns and political parties. Others have viewed campaigns as networks, with digital media as the organizing logic and mode of operation, and still others have considered campaigns as increasingly sophisticated surveillance machines that gather data on voters and depend on analytics for mobilization decisions.

Campaigns as Information Managers

Some scholars have studied changes in mass media technologies and how they shape campaigns' aggregation and dissemination of information. Research in this domain examines how campaigns present information on websites and the functions the information performs

(Foot & Schneider, 2006). These scholars identified four main functions that campaigns perform with information online: informing, involving, connecting, and mobilizing. Some scholars (e.g., Norris, 2003; Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009) have expressed concern that unequal access to information would have adverse effects on political participation and public participation in civic activities. Others have contended that the new information environment could possibly encourage further fragmentation of society because, in part, it allows campaigns to selectively target messages to voters (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Bimber, 2014; Mancini, 2013). What these studies share is an assumption that political information and how it is shared with voters can affect whether voters are well informed enough to make voting decisions and participate meaningfully in democracy. From this perspective, a central function of campaigns is to manage information—from creation to delivery to desired audiences. Furthermore, others have hypothesized that the new information environment created by digital media would tamper with the ability of campaigns to maintain strong hierarchical organizations. Bimber (2003) suggested that the ability of campaigns to reach mass audiences in the "golden age" of television gave them enormous power compared to political parties. He argued that, in the age of "information abundance" ushered in by cable television and the Internet, campaigns would become less powerful and would engage in "postbureaucratic politics" (p. 21).

Campaigns as Networks

Scholars who see campaigns as networks argue that campaigns not only use digital tools for organizing but that the organizations that use these tools operate according to a network logic—living, connected, and expanding organizations with the sum of the total being greater than the individual actors participating in the network (Castells, 1996, 2011). From a Castellian analytical perspective, though digital media help campaigns network individuals with similar

political interests, campaigns use their strategic position to create a network out of the disparate individuals and interest groups to form a powerful movement to elect a candidate who represents the constitutive networks. Campaigns may lose some control since networks may not be compatible with strict hierarchies, but they possess sufficient networked power to set agenda, define goals, and impose their will on participants in the network (Castells, 2011). Power, Castells argued, rests in an actor's position in relations to other actors in a network.

In their analysis of group political action enabled by digital media, Bennett & Segerberg, (2012) stated that activist campaigns are increasingly run as networked "connective action," rather than hierarchical collective action. This new mode of "digitally networked action," they asserted, relies on weak ties and participation centered on "personal action frames," that is, personally meaningful expressions about a social cause created by participants in a group action. Digital media serve as "organizing agents" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 760); even when formal organizations are involved, they coordinate the messaging but stay in the background.

Ethnographic studies of how campaigns use digital media for political mobilization describe elements of collective action and connective action, or, as Bennett and Segerberg (2012, p. 754) put it, "organizationally enabled connective action." Some examples of campaigns that have adopted this modus operandi include the Dean and Obama campaigns (Hersh, 2015; Karpf, 2012; Kreiss, 2012, 2016; Nielsen, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014). Campaigns still tightly control the infrastructure of participation, actively fundraise using that infrastructure, and maintain strong visibility and message control. The 2008 Obama campaign provided the MyBo platform to sign up millions of supporters who organized over 75,000 events in communities across the country to further the campaign's goals. The campaign also raised over $600 million dollars, with more than 60% of donations coming from over 3 million online donors, most of them

contributing less than $200 (Bimber, 2014; Kreiss, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014). At best, a campaign is a network of unequal relationships where the formal campaign organization dominates what the associating networks of individual voters and interest groups do in the name of the candidate. However, campaigns must yield some control to associating networks, and the dilemma that campaigns face is how much control to hold. The most prominent and successful example available is the Obama 2008 campaign, whose success, Kreiss (2012) argued, depended in part on its willingness to yield control to professionals to run its digital operations. The campaign hired Chris Hughes, co-founder of Facebook, among others and gave them the freedom to operate and innovate (Kreiss, 2012).

Campaigns as Surveillance Machines

A third theoretical debate focuses on campaigns' surveillance of supporters, volunteers, and voters. In an early work based on a study of American IT campaign professionals who worked with Democrat and Republican campaigns, Howard (2006) observed that new digital communication technologies empowered "political campaigns in the United States [to be] increasingly manipulative, as managers find new ways to distribute propaganda, mine data, mask political interests, and mislead people unfamiliar with computing technologies" (p. 3). Howard identified three campaign practices that could be detrimental to democracy even if they help candidates: mining and combining voter data from multiple sources, allocating campaign resources to neighborhoods based on the likelihood of garnering their support for a campaign (which he termed "political redlining"), and mobilizing target audiences through implanted representatives or viral content. What Howard found disturbing was that campaigns gained the ability to collect data on voters and target them while being able to create the illusion of

openness and engagement, a process that he argued would not have been possible in the age of traditional mass media.

Some other rich studies of campaigns in the last decade indicate the surveillance trend has worsened. From the Dean campaign (Kreiss, 2012) to the Obama campaigns (Bimber, 2014; Karpf, 2012; Kreiss, 2012; Nielsen, 2012), the picture that emerges is one of campaigns that increasingly use "people as the media" (Nielson, 2012, p. 11) to "construct and use citizens as objects they need to manage through controlled interactivity in order to reach their objective of winning the election" (Stromer-Galley, 2014, p. 177). Tufekci (2014) worried that advances in communication technologies have given rise to "computational politics" that enable campaigns to process vast amounts of data on voters to model and target them with individualized messages, leading to "a new environment of surveillance and social engineering." However, no consensus prevails as to when the use of analytics in campaigning becomes undemocratic. Howard (2006) was careful to allow that some campaigns that engage in voter surveillance could still positively engage voters.

Though some scholars describe the trend of analytics campaigning as "decidedly undemocratic" (Stromer-Galley, 2014, p. 2), others (e.g., Kreiss, 2012) have argued that the reality is complicated. Kreiss argued, for example, that, overall, "new media have not brought about a qualitatively new form of politics. . . . The use of new media in *campaigning* has seemingly not brought about fundamental changes in the levers of accountability, forms of political representation, quality of democratic conversation, or distribution of power in the American polity" (p. 26). However, he emphasized that supporters of campaigns are not deceived, especially in the Democratic campaigns he studied: "Supporters expect campaigns to do everything they can to win. . . . Supporters want opponents to be defeated and are often

willing to serve in that effort as best as they can" (p. 196). In a study of Democratic campaigns, Hersh (2016) found that their capacity for "social engineering" is much more limited than some scholars have claimed. He argued that public availability largely limits the useful data that campaigns have on voters, and where public data are limited, the use of commercial data proves insufficient.

Ripe for Disruption? Digital Media and Campaigning in New Democracies

The important works discussed in the preceding paragraphs illuminate various political practices that characterize campaigning in old democracies in Western Europe and the US, regions with strong institutions, a long experience of democratic practice, a high penetration of advanced communication technologies, and more wealth, comparatively. However, we know little about the use of digital media for campaigning in the Global South, especially sub-Saharan Africa. Most democracies in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America are relatively new, with varying degrees of institutional strength and democratic stability (Haynes, 2003; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Lijphart & Waisman, 1996). One could speculate that the use of digital media in these parts of the world is likely to differ significantly from that in old, rich democracies; even within these new democracies, significant disparities are likely to exist. My immediate interest in this dissertation is sub-Saharan Africa, where democratic experiments have experienced boom and bust cycles since the early 1990s when most countries started holding multiparty elections (Lindberg, 2006; Linz & Stepan, 1996). While there is global evidence of campaigns learning from successful ones across national boundaries, the context in sub-Saharan Africa likely influences campaign practices in Ghana.

First, despite progress in the last two decades, countries on the continent have lower levels of Internet penetration than Western countries. Voters there, compared to those in Europe

and North America, are likely to use only mobile phones to access the Internet, less likely to have full-featured smartphones, and more likely to live in countries where Internet data charges are high relative to income (Ling & Horst, 2011). For some voters, buying Internet data plans consumes a sizeable amount of their monthly income, which implies that participating in campaign activities online is costlier relative to income than for voters in the West. As a result, campaigns face the challenge of adoption if they develop the types of digital infrastructure common in American elections. If someone lacks access to digital media, it is difficult to see how they would participate in a robust campaign platform. Furthermore, because many voters do not use social media and other digital media technologies,[11] they leave far fewer trace data than voters in the West.

Second, related to the challenge of adoption, the level of poverty in the region is significantly higher than Western countries. As a result, most party supporters' ability to contribute to campaigns is limited, and, in some cases, they expect campaigns to bring gifts as "dividends of democracy" (Gyimah-Boadi, 2015; Levitsky & Way, 2015; Lindberg, 2003). Thus, the ability of candidates to raise significant sums of money to fund their campaigns is very limited.

Third, the level of technology literacy is much lower in these countries than in Western countries. While most countries in the region boast high literacy rates, most people lack the technology skills to use computers or smartphones beyond texting and making phone calls. In most countries, the population with technology skills skews younger and more urban (ITU, 2017; Sonaike, 2004). For the majority of potential voters who do not possess technology skills, a

[11] The average Internet penetration in the region is 30% and 34% in Ghana, according to a data aggregation website. https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm

sophisticated platform, such as the one the Obama campaign created, would not be useful (ITU, 2017; Sonaike, 2004).

Fourth, campaigns in Africa have far fewer resources to devote to digital media than Western campaigns. They make tough decisions about allocating scarce resources and may deprioritize a new medium for tried-and-tested methods of voter mobilization. The Obama campaign spent at least $2 million to create MyBo, and the estimate for the 2012 digital platform was $100 million, according to Jim Messina, the campaign manager (Bimber, 2014; Kreiss, 2012). As documented in Chapter 3, the opposition NPP campaign struggled to pay a stipend to team members to travel around for campaign events. It is difficult to see how they would have a million dollars to invest in a technology platform. Where campaigns face this challenge, they would likely opt for methods that promise the most rewards for the least financial investment. In Ghana in 2016, this meant using WhatsApp for internal team communication while depending on tested face-to-face canvassing for voter outreach.

Fifth, in many countries in the region, personal relationships of ethnic or clientelist nature still play some role in elections. One of the most important decisions that voters make in selecting parties and presidential candidates is how national resources should be allocated and who should be included or excluded from them. If political parties exist to aggregate, frame, and sometimes shape the opinions of voters on important issues (Gunther & Diamond, 2003), then in clientelist systems, the political parties that offer the most credible promise of connections to power and/or state resources are more likely to win. Chapter 4 contains a discussion of this phenomenon, as well as an examination of whether or not digital media use has impacts on campaign–voter relationships.

The information outlined above describes the context in which the two presidential campaigns for the 2016 election operated. Using Western-focused literature as a starting point, I contribute to the scholarly understanding of political campaigning with digital media. Campaigns in Ghana, similar to their counterparts in the West, harnessed digital media to manage information. They used WhatsApp platforms and mobile phone calls to share information about meetings and events, distribute talking points to members across the country, and ask and respond to questions about campaign matters. They also used WhatsApp to create a national network of platforms to coordinate over 150,000 members scattered across the country. In this respect, they achieved a network with a strict hierarchy that reflected their offline party structures. Finally, though they lacked a robust analytics capacity, they utilized human embeds to surreptitiously surveil members' participation in the WhatsApp groups. My contribution to the scholarly conversation is to highlight the unique contextual differentiators gleaned from an African election. It is also worth pointing out that, as a communication project, this research is concerned with communication processes and engages with the sociopolitical context to the extent that it ads in the understanding of those processes.

Methods

Political communication scholarship has a tradition of multimethod studies that aim not only to measure political actors' opinions, as well as to find correlations and relationships, but also to understand the contexts of actions. Some founding researchers in the field, such as Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948), used a mixed-methods approach. The trend changed in the 1970s as the field turned toward behaviorism, a tradition in psychology that privileges quantitative research (Karpf, Kreiss, Nielsen, & Powers, 2015). However, multimethod research, anchored in rich qualitative data, has recently gained ground in political communication

research, and it is common to read scholars call for more of it (Bimber, 2015; Howard, 2002; Karpf et al., 2015; Lieberman, 2005; Livingstone, 2003). This type of research appeals to political communication scholars because it offers the opportunity to combine the strengths of both while limiting their weaknesses despite differences in the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions. According to Howard (2002), one reason to use a mixed-methods approach is that **"**qualitative methods tend to be best for generating theory and quantitative methods tend to be best for testing theory" (p. 569). From this perspective, qualitative research identifies the categories that can be tested with large quantitative datasets. A reverse approach would test many cases and then zero in on one or a few cases to understand them in depth.

Among a new crop of scholars, some have stated, in a particularly clear manner, that multimethod research is necessary for studying political communication, and their work shaped my research. From an analysis of several political communication articles over a 12-year period, Karpf et al. (2015) stated, "We believe now is a particularly appropriate time to pursue more inductive, qualitative, and mixed-methods research akin to the pioneering efforts of Lazarsfeld and the Langs" (p. 1902). They admonished scholars to "move past our current impasse and give rise to new theories and research tools adapted to studying political communication at a time of rapid changes in media, political, and social structures" (p. 1902). In an earlier work, Karpf (2012, p. 655) argued that "there is outstanding potential for welding together computational social science with qualitative case analysis." Others have suggested that scholars should explore how senders/receivers interpret exchanged messages (Freelon, 2014) and combine digital trace data with interviews (Lazer et al., 2009).

I drew from these inspirations and from the fieldwork examples of Howard (2002), Karpf (2012), Kreiss (2012, 2016), Nielsen (2012), and Hersh (2015) while executing this research.

Howard called his approach "network ethnography," conducted by using a social-network analysis to identify the main actors and groups in the political network he studied. The network map he created guided the choice of whom to study and what artifacts to collect. Kreiss used interviews, ethnographic observations, and desk research on political professionals' online profiles to create a fascinating profile of IT professionals who had worked for Democratic campaigns since the early 2000s. Hersh was embedded in Democratic campaigns to study how volunteers and campaign staffers used campaign-developed digital platforms to coordinate get-out-the-vote (GOTV) operations. These works provide rich insider insights into how campaigns function. Hersh's research, for example, is also significant because he conducted it while the campaigns planned or executed strategies, giving him a real-time window into how campaigns actually work.

My research in Ghana started on September 1, 2016 and ended on December 21, 2016.[12] The presidential election was held on December 7, 2016, and the outcome was announced on December 9, 2016. I first went to Ghana in August 2014 on a pre-fieldwork trip to establish some relationships with both the then ruling NDC and the opposition NPP. The success of the trip convinced me that it was possible to do fieldwork during the 2016 campaign period. Below, I summarize my research during the fieldwork and how I analyzed the data.

Interviews

Interviews formed a core component of my research and provided insights into political actors' roles in campaigns and the election. I interviewed leaders and staffers of the two presidential campaigns over a period of four months. Most interviews were conducted in interviewees' offices, and a few were conducted at mutually agreed locations outside the offices.

[12] The description is a short summary of the four-month research period. Please see the attached appendix for a detailed description of the research process, challenges, and lessons learned.

With the IRB approval in hand, I convinced interviewees to allow recording. To address their fears of being exposed, I promised each interviewee I would upload the recording to the University of Washington servers and delete the files from my recorder and laptop. It meant I had to pay more for Internet data, but it gave both my interviewees and me some peace of mind that even if I were to lose my recorder or laptop, no interviews would be compromised.

The interviewees were selected through a network mapping of political actors, using publicly available information in news stories and party websites. Once I got to the field, I contacted the headquarters of each campaign, explained what I had come to do, and sought their permission to interview their members. Once permission was granted, it was up to each member to decide whether to talk or not. A few either declined or delayed, but most were willing to talk. The interviews ranged from two that lasted just over 10 minutes to a few that lasted over two hours. The average time for an interview was 35–45 minutes. Other people I interviewed included journalists, chiefs, scholars, and civil society leaders. These interviewees were non-partisan and provided insights about events and major political actors. The journalists had covered the two candidates for years, followed them across the country on campaign beats, and had an in-depth understanding of the internal politics of the political parties. Thus, they more intimately understood how party members behaved across the country than I did. The chiefs gave their perspectives on their interactions with campaigns. The scholars provided insights into their research, and understanding, of the political system. The civil society leaders spoke from their experience interacting with voters and advocating democratic reform. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of interviews with these different categories of interviewees. Their multiple perspectives created a more complete picture of the campaigns and sometimes provided

information to cross-check campaign leaders. At other times, they offered leads to pursue with campaign leaders in interviews.

The names used in the dissertation are pseudonyms organized in a simple format. For the NPP interviewees, national and regional interviewees were coded as RNL followed by a letter assigned according to the order the interviews were conducted. For example, RNLA means the interview was conducted before RNLB. Constituency or local interviewees were coded as LCL followed by a letter indicating the order in which the interviews were conducted. For the NDC interviewees, national and regional interviewees were coded as NDN followed by a letter indicating the order in which the interviews were conducted. Constituency and local interviewees were coded as NDC followed by a letter indicating the order in which the interviews were conducted. Non-partisan interviewees were coded as OBS followed by a letter indicating the order in which the interviews were conducted.

Table 1: Breakdown of interviews conducted during fieldwork

Category	**Description**	**Length of time**
Campaign	Members of the opposition NPP campaign. Interviewees cut across national, regional, constituency, and district levels.	18 hours
Campaign	Members of the incumbent NDC campaign. Interviewees cut across national, regional, constituency, and district levels.	6 hours
Observers	Interviewees were drawn from actors with close knowledge of the political process, including journalists, scholars, local chiefs and civil society leaders	7 hours, 9 minutes

Ethnographic Observations

Another core component of the research is direct observation of campaigns as they went about their daily activities. I did ethnographic observations in five regions: Greater Accra, Eastern, Central, Northern, and North East. Observations took two major forms, namely members-only meetings and public events. The NPP granted me access to the weekly meetings of a strategic team with no conditions attached. In some of these meetings, sensitive campaign issues, ranging from messaging to strategy, were discussed. Most of these meetings took place in designated campaign offices not open to the public, and the content of the discussions were not supposed to be known outside of the campaigns. While I could not make audio recording during meetings, I took copious handwritten notes. I understand that there would have been topics not discussed during those meetings precisely because I was there, and there were meetings called in addition to the regular ones that I did not attend. Thus, while I cannot and do not claim that the accounts in the following chapters represent a complete view of campaign operations, they contain details of campaigns' inner workings that are currently unavailable in the literature. Another type of observation involved observing public campaign events. Some of the events I observed included campaign rallies, house-to-house visits, morning street health exercises, specially organized health clinics by candidates, and official launches of various campaigns. These events were designed to increase campaigns' visibility and likeability.

Social Media Data

I also monitored Twitter use by the campaigns and downloaded data on Twitter users who interacted with a few influential campaign accounts to understand their public behavior on the platform in the lead-up to the election. Additionally, I examined, mostly through interviews, the use of WhatsApp by the campaigns. WhatsApp content is difficult to access directly because it is

mostly personal and private, unlike publicly available tweets. A few interviewees showed me their WhatsApp accounts and platforms to give me an idea of what they discussed on the platforms.

Data Analysis

There are multiple ways to analyze interviews and ethnographic fieldnotes, including inductive generation of themes and patterns from data (Angrosino, 2007; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). I analyzed the data thematically and triangulated fieldnotes with themes generated from interviews. The analysis involved tracing themes across different meetings and events to identify similarities, contrasts, significance, and/or consistency within and across the two campaigns I studied. While interviews form the core of the overall thematic analysis, fieldnotes provided validation and confidence in the themes. The fieldnotes also served as a fact-checking method during interviews as I could remind an interviewee what I had personally witnessed or heard from other leaders. This reference often helped interviewees open up and provide new information, confirm existing information, or provide context that I may not have known otherwise.

Main Arguments

I make three main related claims in this dissertation. First, contrary to the scholarly consensus that ideology plays a small role in African party politics, campaign leaders in Ghana defined their political identities in ideological terms rather than in ethnic, regional, or religious terms. I use an ideographic analysis of official party statements and interview responses of both NDC and NPP leaders to demonstrate that political ideology—rather than ethnicity, region, or religion—shaped how actors defined their political identities. The NDC leaders were overwhelmingly more likely to describe themselves as egalitarian and express strong preferences

for social democracy and social justice. Officially, the NDC describes itself as a social democratic party, and party documents state that it values "freedom, justice, and accountability." The party motto is, "unity, stability, and development." The NPP leaders, on the other hand, were more likely to describe themselves as capitalists and express strong preferences for a free market economy and entrepreneurship. The party motto is "development in freedom," and official party documents state that it hopes to promote a "property-owning democracy." During fieldwork, scholars and observers often dismissed these self-characterizations by the parties as "mere talk" with few policy implications. While I agree that party ideology does not seem to influence policy formulation (e.g., how the NPP campaigned on promises that have little semblance to its professed ideology), party ideology allows campaigns to differentiate themselves from their opponents without resorting to sensitive identities such as ethnicity and religion. I hypothesized that ideological differentiation contributes to the stability of Ghana's democracy because it allows politicians to strongly disagree without potentially implicating a whole ethnic or religious group.

Second, when campaigns have limited resources and operate where digital media penetration and skills are low, they prioritize local relationships and personal interactions with voters. They use digital media not so much as mobilization platforms but as facilitators of offline mobilization efforts. I call this model relationship-based campaigning as compared to the technology-based campaigning common in the US and Western Europe. In technology-based campaigning, a campaign creates an online hub that allows individuals to organize in their communities, donate money, or engage other voters on its behalf (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Kreiss, 2012, 2016; Nielsen, 2012). The campaign has access to the backend data about who is

registered and what they do on the platform. It also has access to voter data nationally and could direct individuals to take actions on its behalf by allowing them retrieve specific forms of data.

In a relationship-based model, a campaign uses publicly available digital platforms and relies heavily on local leaders who possess local knowledge about voters' party allegiances and have extended relationships of trust with voters. The campaign focuses on developing a national message and using a platform that permits it to communicate securely, cheaply, and efficiently with multiple local campaign leaders across the country. The goal is not to enable people to organize with autonomy on its behalf but to coordinate a network of trusted proxies who can draw on relationships in their communities to mobilize voters on its behalf. For example, campaigns in Ghana used WhatsApp as the preferred platform for this crucial job of coordinating multiple local leaders across the country in 2016. Through a hierarchical system that replicated the existing offline campaign structure, the campaigns used WhatsApp and, to some extent, mobile phone calls and text messages to organize local campaign teams. Communication functions performed through WhatsApp included coordinating meetings and campaign events; sharing pictures, videos and materials; receiving and giving feedback to local leaders; and collating the results of the elections. Scholars of African politics might argue that these "local relationships" were likely based on ethnic and religious memberships and thus were likely clientelist in nature. But, I complicate this argument in Chapter 4 and assert that clientelism was not the dominant logic of campaigning in the 2016 presidential election.

Third, the personal interactions that political elites had with voters complicate claims of clientelism in the literature because elites have neither the means nor the motivation to monitor and punish individual voters who do not vote for them. Local campaign teams struggled to reach every home during the campaign period. From my experience following both the NPP and NDC

teams on house-to-house canvassing, there did not seem to be the capacity, especially in the then opposition NPP, to induce enough voters with gifts in order to win the election. While campaign teams sometimes distributed a few campaign souvenirs to garner voters' goodwill, they had no realistic expectations that accepting a t-shirt from a campaign would constitute a vote promise. In fact, it was a constant joke in campaign meetings that the same voters go to rallies of different parties to get free souvenirs. Campaign leaders in both parties expressed a common feeling of uncertainty about people's voting intentions, as well as helplessness about the inability to discern what would make a voter support their candidate. Even when they gave souvenirs to voters during house-to-house canvassing, they knew that the same voters may have collected their opponents' souvenirs as well. Even if campaigns could distribute gifts to all voters, they could not tell who voted for whom since Ghana has a secret ballot system.

If we agree with some scholars that campaigns rely on local chiefs as brokers to reach people they would otherwise be unable to reach individually, then evidence from my fieldwork suggests that chiefs are increasingly incapable of playing the role of effective brokers. Chiefs are influential in most communities to the extent that constituents believe they work for the common good. While chiefs may still sway voters in some communities, my evidence suggests that most communities across the country do not follow that pattern. Instead, chiefs play the role of lobbyists for communities and conveyors of (constituents') popular opinion, and they are aware that their influence is linked to whether or not constituents feel that the chiefs represent their views and interests.

The use of digital media for campaigning in the 2016 presidential election in Ghana occurred in the unique context of Ghanaian sociopolitical and technological realities, and the overall effects seem limited to granting campaigns better capacity for secure, cheap, and efficient

communication, which reinforced existing relationships and power dynamics within campaigns, between campaigns, and between campaigns and voters. Campaigns were particularly innovative in using digital media to maintain their power while distributing responsibilities to subordinates throughout the country.

Preview of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the role that social identity expressed in ideological terms played in political differentiation and campaigning in Ghana. Though there are several social identities that Ghanaians share, including ethnic, regional, and religious identities, political ideology was a consequential social identity that shaped not just how political elites defined themselves but also how they defined their opponents. I dive into the various ideographs that campaigns used to differentiate themselves from their opponents and explores how that may have created an atmosphere of tolerance despite real differences.

Chapter 3 dives into the specific uses of digital tools during the election campaign. It reveals that both parties primarily used digital media to organize campaign team members rather than to mobilize voters. Campaigns used WhatsApp groups for internal organizational needs, including sending messages about meetings, coordinating door-to-door canvassing, and sharing talking points for representatives on broadcast media talk show panels. On the election day, WhatsApp also played a central role in how the NPP successfully collated the results of the election ahead of the EC.

Chapter 4 turns to the debate about clientelism and explores whether digital media use undermines it, as optimists anticipate, or strengthens it, as critics fear. Drawing on voting patterns and interviews, it investigates how political elites are neither motivated nor able to

effectively identify and punish individual voters who do not vote for them. Thus, while they may have exercised some punitive power over party members who wanted to advance within the party leadership, they felt insecure about general election voters. In terms of digital media use, the emerging patterns seem to solidify existing power relations, leaving some room for influence by local leaders and local relationships that are developed and nurtured outside digital media spaces. Chapter 5 summarizes the arguments in the preceding chapters and suggests some areas that researchers can explore to provide a fuller understanding of how political elites use digital media to run campaigns in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa more generally.

Chapter 2: Ideology-less Political Parties, Ideology Discourses, and Ideographs

Scholars of African politics often argue that political parties use social identities for political mobilization because they are not ideologically differentiated from their opponents (Elischer, 2012; Owusu, 1996). For example, in their otherwise insightful analysis of the 2016 election, Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis (2017) did not once mention the ideological positions of the parties or candidates; instead, they focused on considerations of political survival and access to resources. "Ghanaian politicians," they argued, "have come to a consensus on an extremely generous 'golden handshake' that protects the economic interests of losing presidential and parliamentary candidates" (p. 101). Similar analyses by other scholars such as Ayee (2017), Faanu & Graham (2017), and Gyampo, Graham, & Yobo (2017) offer explanations ranging from economic to ethnic to attitudinal reasons but overlook ideology as a factor in elections.

These arguments often rely on the assumption that candidates focus on "proving competence around the issue rather than on the rightness of a specific position regarding policy objectives" (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013, p. 1397). However, these scholars may miss an important factor that shapes political identity and electoral politics in Ghana, namely political ideology. Current debates about ideology in politics assume that political party ideology is fundamentally different from other social identities (e.g., ethnicity and religion). I argue in this chapter that a better way of understanding presidential electoral politics in Ghana is to examine some ideographs of political campaign leaders to understand how these actors define themselves and their place in the political process. An ideographic analysis of interviews and party documents indicates that political ideology plays a significant role in how Ghanaian presidential

campaigns frame themselves and their opponents. I analyze the NPP's ideographs of <development in freedom> and <property-owning democracy> and contrast them with the NDC's ideographs of <unity, stability, and development> and <freedom, justice, and accountability> to highlight ideological differences between the two.

Political ideology is less an objective belief that people across the globe share than a context-specific, culturally defined sets of ideographs that political actors use to define themselves and their place in society. Ideographs are useful as analytical tools because they are "structural elements, the building blocks of ideology . . . [that] signify and 'contain' a unique ideological commitment" (McGee, 1980, p. 7). I used ideographs to analyze the ideological commitments of the NDC and the NPP campaigns not to argue the link between ideology and policy formulations but to establish both the link between ideology and political identity and how ideographs, as building blocks, knit ideology and political identity together.

Even when ideological proclamations do not back relevant policy proposals, they can shape party members' social identities and influence their actions during campaigning. I hypothesize that ideology as a social identity in the conduct of politics lends itself to a more tolerant and a less violent approach to political contests than either ethnicity or religion because, while candidates could potentially switch parties or take ideologically ambiguous positions, it is more difficult to alter or obscure permanent identities such as politicized ethnicity or religion. Horowitz (1993) argued that ethnic-based politics is often violent in parts of Africa because of its perceived permanent advantage or disadvantage to some groups. For example, a candidate could moderate his or her policy stance to win more votes, but the same candidate would find it difficult to change ethnicity or religion to win an election. While only a few politicians change parties, it was not uncommon for siblings to belong to different parties, especially in the

metropolitan area of Accra. Many party members and voters who talked to me would point out that they had siblings or relatives who supported the rival party.

Social identity is a powerful basis for effective collective action because it serves as a source of trust on which political actors can pursue common goals. However, social identities are neither concrete nor static but are constantly negotiated and renegotiated ideas about who people are and what they stand for (Hogg & Reid, 2006). I adapted the concepts of social identity and personal identity from the social psychology literature to assess the cognitive and affective interpretations of personal and political identities by political actors involved in the 2016 election. Though scholars have often dismissed the identity-performing rhetoric of campaigns and individual politicians in Ghana as "mere talk," they overlooked how ideological talk shape how political actors view themselves, their opponents, and their role in the political process. Ideological frames serve a useful purpose for parties trying to differentiate themselves from their opponents without using potentially combustible social identities such as ethnicity and religion. The rhetoric that political actors employ is situated in the political history of the country and is socially constructed to be acceptable to the expectations of Ghanaians and external observers, such as international donors and other African countries who have come to respect the country and its political leaders as exemplars of democracy on the continent. As in societies around the world, political life in Ghana has a number of fault lines related to social identities (e.g., ethnicity, region, and religion) that political messaging could target, but Ghanaian campaigns seem to have made a decision to rely more heavily on ideological differentiation rather than any other social identity.

Social Identity and Personal Identity

Social psychology scholars differentiate between personal identity and social identity. Personal identity is expressed through different forms of self-representation, with the end goal being enhancement of an individuals' social, political, or economic status (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007). Social identity, on the other hand, concerns itself with how social actors "derive a part of their self-concept from the social groups and categories they belong to—their social identity, originally defined as 'the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership'" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 9). Social identity theorizes how "group terms" define aspects of one's identity. For example, I could study personal identity by looking at how individual political actors engaged in certain performative practices to enhance their standing and respect among group members. However, I am more interested in how social identity—party membership, citizenship, socioeconomic status, ideology, and so forth—shapes individual and group actions. I treat political identity in this dissertation as a form of social identity because it involves self-concept rooted in collective identity.

In particular, I draw on an aspect of social identity theory called self-categorization theory. It proposes that individuals reaffirm membership in a group through "a process of self-stereotyping whereby group members learn and seek to conform to the critical attributes that define their social category" (Klein et al., 2007, p. 34). In a presidential election, for example, campaigns differentiate themselves from their opponents by highlighting positive aspects of group attributes while emphasizing negative aspects of their opponents' attributes. The individuals involved in the campaigns become representatives of what their groups stand for, and group, not individual, attributes frame those involved in the campaign.

Social Identity and Collective Action

Social identity does not just shape how groups and members differentiate themselves from "others;" it also influences how collective action is organized. It is precisely "because social identity shapes collective action and thereby provides a source of social power for shaping the world that those who are interested in shaping society will be interested in defining identities" (Klein et al., 2007, p. 35). For example, a presidential campaign has to mobilize voters around a collective "us," which involves defining a "them" that "we" should not vote for. A mainstream argument in the political science literature on African democracies is that ethnic and religious identities play a salient role in how campaigns differentiate themselves and frame their opponents (Elischer, 2012; Lonsdale, 1994; Lynch, 2006). Even though most countries ban explicitly ethnic or religious political parties, both identities play a major role in how campaigns frame themselves and their opponents.

A central argument of this chapter is that, although Ghanaian campaigns can hardly be described as ideological on the basis of their policy proposals, their rhetorical emphasis on ideology as a differentiator is not just talk or illusory. It has serious consequences in shaping how the party faithful see their personal and political identities. In the months and weeks preceding the 2016 presidential election in Ghana, campaign leaders and candidates were eager to dismiss ethnicity and religion as bases of support. This does not mean that some Ghanaians did not talk about these identities as important in their decision-making processes when choosing which candidates to support, but campaign leaders went out of their way to distance themselves from such rhetoric. I hypothesized that this is partially responsible for the stability of Ghana's political system and explains much about the context of the 2016 election, the use of digital media, and messaging decisions.

Social Identities in Ghanaian Politics

Regional Membership

Ghana is divided into 10 administrative regions with ministers appointed by the president overseeing them. However, the importance of regions lies in the divide between the South and the North. The South comprises Greater Accra, the Central region, the Eastern region, the Western region, and parts of the Volta and the Brong-Ahafo regions. It has richer agricultural lands, higher levels of economic activities and wealth, and higher educational attainment (Adaawen & Owusu, 2013). The North, on the other hand, has arid land that only allows agricultural activities for a few months during the year and generally lower socioeconomic attainment. Ghanaian politics has been historically dominated by politicians from the South, rooted in British colonial-era policies that prioritized the education of the wealthier South over the North (Smock & Smock, 1975). Thus, when independence came around, there were relatively fewer Northerners in national politics. Unlike many countries where such economic disparities would lead to political tensions, "there has been no development of 'Northernness' as a basis for political cohesion" in Ghanaian politics (Brown, 1982, p. 42). This lack of identity formation is partially a product of rhetorical goodwill gestures by politicians from the South not to frame the North's problems as regional but as a Ghanaian problem that deserves national attention (Langer, 2009). The North has a history of voting overwhelmingly for the NDC since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1992. Jerry Rawlings, the military ruler from 1979 to 1992, founded the NDC. He contested and won a multiparty election in 1992, won reelection in 1996, and left power in 2000 after completing the two-term limit (Adedeji, 2001). However, why is the party so popular in the North even though regional identity plays a minimal role in political mobilization?

In the Northern region, I met NDND,[13] a leader in the NDC.[14] As we talked about why he decided to be a member of the NDC, he explained both his reasons for joining the party and why the party is so popular in the region. As a young person in the 1980s, he saw the level of poverty around him and the North's lack of access to the economic and political capital, Accra. NDND said guinea worm disease was rampant, and he estimated that anywhere between 40%–50% of people in the North suffered from it. Since unsafe drinking water causes the disease, other water-borne diseases (e.g., cholera) were common. Transportation posed an additional problem, as farmers had to depend on ferries to transport goods across the Volta River to Accra. NDND noted that, on many occasions, if the ferries failed to work as scheduled, farmers would have to stay by their goods for days before transporting them across the river. The Rawlings military regime led a campaign to eradicate guinea worms and provide safe drinking water to millions of people in the region. He constructed two bridges across the Volta, so transporting goods to Accra became easy and efficient.

These policies, NDND said, are why he will always be loyal to the "party of Rawlings," the NDC. It is worth noting that even the members of the NPP I spoke with in the North and North East regions mostly had similar good things to say about Rawlings. For the NDC, therefore, it is easy to campaign with a message of helping people because of Rawlings' paternalistic relationship with the people. Meanwhile, in the South, except in his home region of Volta, Rawlings and the NDC are less universally popular. Among the middle class in the South who bore the brunt of Rawlings's extrajudicial war on corruption in the 1980s, the NPP is considerably more popular (Fridy, 2007).

[13] Interview was conducted on November 29, 2016.

[14] See the appendix for an explanation of the decision to use interviews for this chapter.

Ethnicity

Ghana is a multiethnic country with nearly 100 different ethnic groups. Four ethnic groups—Asante, Mole-Dagbon, Ewe, and Ga-Dangme—constitute over 85% of the population (Taylor, 2017). The Asantes are concentrated in the Ashanti and Eastern regions, the Mole-Dagbon in the Northern region, the Ewe in the Volta, and the Ga-Dangme in the Greater Accra region. The Central and Western regions have huge Akan population (Asantes are a subset of Akans), whereas the remaining regions are populated by smaller ethnic groups (Taylor, 2017). The literature is inconclusive about the role that ethnicity plays in how voters select leaders and under what circumstances. For example, we know the NPP is popular among Asantes and that the NDC is popular among the Ewes, but, as one scholar asked me rhetorically during an interview in Accra, "if ethnicity is salient, why does the NPP lose national elections even though Asantes make up nearly 50% of the population?" (OBSI).[15] However, if the NPP consistently wins the Eastern and Ashanti regions populated by Asantes and the NDC consistently wins the Volta and Northern regions populated by Ewes and other minority groups, what might be at play? The consensus among scholars who study Ghanaian politics holds that ethnicity is not the most important identity that influences votes but that it may interact with regional identities and socioeconomic status to predict voting behaviors (Bado, 2017; Chazan, 1982; Cheeseman et al., 2017; Fridy, 2007; Gyimah-Boadi & Asante, 2006; Langer, 2009; Nugent, 1999; Oelbaum, 2004).

Members of the political class consider any insinuation that one uses ethnicity for political mobilization as a slur. Kwame Nkrumah, the first post-independence leader of the country, was famous for his rejection of ethnicity in politics and his emphasis on one Ghanaian

[15] Interview conducted on December 13, 2016.

identity (Oelbaum, 2004). For him and many other post-independence leaders across Africa, to engage in ethnic-based political mobilization, popularly called "tribalism," was viewed as a primordial attitude that had to be discouraged if the newly free Africans countries were to become economically developed. Whereas this modernist approach[16] to national development failed in several African countries, in Ghana, it moderated ethnic tensions. For example, some NPP leaders insinuated that their candidate in the 2012 presidential election, Nana Akufo-Addo, lost the election because of a widely circulated statement he made in Koforidua, Eastern region, his home region. He was quoted by media reports as encouraging voters to defend their votes because "all die be die" (Faanu & Graham, 2017, p. 145). That is, death is death irrespective of how one dies. The national audience interpreted this as encouraging his supporters to be willing to defend their votes with violence, presumably against outside ethnic groups, despite the fact that citizens are supposed to leave the defense of the ballot boxes to security forces. By asking them to defend their votes, he was setting up a claim that they might interpret as encouragement to attack opponents. It is no accident that, in the 2016 election, which Akufo-Addo won, he spent more time in regions outside of his co-ethnics to build trust and reassure people he was no "tribalist."

In the 2016 election, President John Mahama made what many considered an ethnically divisive comment. He had gone to campaign in Lawra in the Upper West region, where the NDC has historically been very strong. He was quoted by media reports as saying, "I feel sorry for Northerners who are calling for change," encouraging Northerners not to vote for the NPP and its presidential candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, because "they will utilize you and dump you" (Faanu & Graham, 2017, p. 145). Since the North is mainly composed of ethnic groups that usually vote

[16] Lonsdale (1994) described the assumption of early scholars that ethnicity was a primordial attitude that would disappear with more modernity as a "modernist" approach to the subject.

for the NDC, his comment was portrayed on morning shows and on social media as an explicitly ethnic appeal to voters in the North. He lost the election. While it is not clear that he lost because of the widely reported comment, it did not help him according to several voters whom I chatted with before the election.

Religion

Ghana is a predominantly Christian country; according to estimates, with over 70% of the population identifying as Christians, while Muslims form the second largest group. A small percentage of the population identifies traditional religion as their religious practice.[17] Religion seems to play a relatively unimportant role in national politics, and campaigns hardly ever publicly appeal to it. Throughout the period of fieldwork, there was no moment when it became an issue in the media, in a campaign meeting, or during a campaign event. Geography disperses religious adherents across the country. The South, with its early encounter with Europeans, is predominantly Christian, while the North is predominantly Muslim. However, sizeable communities of Christians reside in the North, and sizeable communities of Muslims exist in the South. Interestingly, religious beliefs seem to correlate with ethnic memberships (Takyi, Opoku-Agyeman, & Kutin-Mensah, 2010). For example, the Asante and other Akan groups in the South are predominantly Christian. The predominantly Hausa groups who live in communities commonly called *Zongo* in the South are Muslim, as are the Ga people who historically lived in the area surrounding Accra.

However, when it comes to voter behavior, not much research has been done on the influence of religion on voting decisions, perhaps because scholars do not consider it important enough to study. A study conducted by Takyi, Opoku-Agyeman, and Kutin-Mensah (2010)

[17] https://www.britannica.com/place/Ghana/Religion

found that Christians, especially Pentecostals and Protestants, are more likely to support the NPP, whereas Muslims are more likely to support the NDC. The data were derived from self-reported voter behavior in the 2004 election. As the researchers acknowledged, this could be due to the regional split of religious adherents. The northern regions that tend to vote more for the NDC have high Muslim populations, but the reverse is the case for the NPP, whose main support comes from the predominantly Christian South. However, the underlying factors for regional support for different parties have less to do with religion than historical memories of what each party stands for, as discussed above.

Urban–Rural Divide

One of the most enduring political divides in Africa is the divide between urban centers and rural areas. Scholars of African politics have argued that colonial policies in Africa resulted in a two-tier system that created ill feelings between urban and rural dwellers. In a seminal treatment of the topic, Mamdani (1996) argued that colonial rulers treated educated Africans who lived in urban areas as "citizens" while treating rural dwellers as "subjects." Whereas urban elites enjoyed some rights (even if below what European colonialists enjoyed), rural dwellers, though taxed through their local chiefs, enjoyed no such rights. Therefore, they developed resentment against urban elites who considered rural dwellers as backward and primitive (Bates, 1974).

Historically, urban dwellers were mostly those who acquired formal education and worked in schools, hospitals, or the colonial government. They could speak the language of the white colonists and read the works of various Western writers. By virtue of working in the colonial government, they enjoyed better amenities and could pressure colonial rulers for fixes to disruptions to the basic amenities that they enjoyed in the cities. The use of words such as

"enjoy" to describe the experience of African urban dwellers is relative to the African rural dwellers in the colonial territories. They remained subject to frequent second-tier citizen treatment by the colonial officers. In countries like Zambia and South Africa, most African urban dwellers were housed in slums outside the cities, from where they worked in mines or traveled to work in the cities (Parnell, 1993). In Ghana and Nigeria, however, most Africans in cities had their sections of town separate from where the colonial officers lived.

Urban dwellers in Africa were partially responsible for the resentment of people in rural areas. In some countries, they referred to rural dwellers as "bushmen" and regarded them as backward and primitive. A practice that is still common in several countries today also emerged. Urban dwellers would go to their villages to take young men and women as "house boys" or "house girls." These young people would work for the urban "masters," and their village families would receive goods and a little cash annually. They took care of their masters' children for little or no pay (Uwasomba, 2012). Though some families felt they needed the goods sent in exchange for their children's labor, they resented the unequal relationship.

Ghana was no different, and by the early 1940s when Kwame Nkrumah began to gain national visibility, real resentment boiled to the surface against coastal elites in Accra and other southern urban centers. Nkrumah exploited this to campaign and win elections in the 1950s and 1960s with a populist message that portrayed him as the champion of the common people (who mostly lived in rural areas) against arrogant elites (Biney, 2011). Though Nkrumah rejected ethnicity as a basis for political mobilization, most of the country's elites were Asantes who lived in the South. Nkrumah was from the Nzima ethnic group, which shares the same parent Akan ethnicity with the Asantes. In other words, he attacked his own people, but it resonated with aggrieved rural dwellers across the country.

The NDC, which traces its roots to the Nkrumah politics of the 1950s, is popular in rural areas, whereas urban areas of the country support the NPP (Fridy, 2007). In a study of the 1996 and 2000 election results, Oelbaum (2004) concluded that the urban–rural divide, as opposed to ethnic or regional affiliation, was the clearest explanation for voting patterns. The NDC lost in all major urban centers but won in rural areas, while the NPP won the urban vote but lost in rural areas. An interesting aspect of Ghanaian politics that surprised me when I started fieldwork was how ordinary Ghanaians, irrespective of education level or political persuasion, would casually say that the "NDC is the party of poor people" or that the "NPP is the party of elites." This markedly differs from Nigeria, for example, where most people would say that "politicians are all thieves" instead of using an ideological framing. Why is the "party of Rawlings" the party of poor people? The answer lies, in part, in how Ghanaian politicians redefined themselves in terms of the historical ideological camps of Nkrumahism and Danquah-Busiaism. This historical moment is discussed in Chapter 1, and the next section covers it briefly before turning to an examination of how these redefinitions were expressed in ideographs in the 2016 election in Ghana.

Jerry Rawlings—"The People's Dictator?"

When Rawlings took power in a military coup on December 31, 1981, he was only 34 years old. He soon began a populist agenda that created both passionate supporters and vehement enemies. He began a process of "house cleaning" that saw several military generals and important wealthy people tried in military tribunals and executed. According to some estimates, over 300 Ghanaians were "disappeared" during the first few years of the Rawlings regime. Despite the concerns of human rights advocates, Rawlings was determined to stamp out what he

considered corruption, but critics say that he violated human rights and undermined due process (Gyimah-Boadi & Rothchild, 1982; Gyimah-Boadi, 1994; Haynes, 1991).

However, that was only an aspect of the Rawlings project. At the same time, he engaged in a nationwide program of empowerment for rural Ghana, determined to prove himself as a friend of the poor (Adedeji, 2001). Though disdained by the educated elites in the cities, he was very popular in rural Ghana. He was also accessible, or at least appeared so, by visiting rural areas. When the time came for a transition to multiparty elections in 1992, Rawlings established the NDC both as a reflection of his populist agenda and later as a nod to the Nkrumahist tradition. For many poor Ghanaians across ethnic and regional lines, Rawlings remains a popular figure and the patriarch of the NDC. Their love for Rawlings seems to influence their overwhelming support for the NDC (Morrison, 2004) .

At the same time in the early 1990s, remnants of the Danquah-Busia tradition formed the NPP. Like their liberal democratic predecessors, they focused on both economic and political liberalism. During my fieldwork, NPP leaders were quick to emphasize how they fought the Rawlings regime to restore democracy to the country and how they, rather than the "authoritarian" NDC, were the true democrats. They saw themselves as essentially the "anti-Rawlings" when it comes to democratic norms.

Social Identity and Political Ideology

Political ideology is fundamentally a social marker, an identity that differentiates people with competing views of how to manage the economy and develop a society. It has been described as a "set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved" (Erikson & Tedin, 2015). The beliefs have to be "coherent" (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Jost and his colleagues provided a good survey of various conceptualizations of the term but

acknowledged it is a rather fluid concept with no single meaning. Common to most conceptualizations, however, is an agreement that it has to be "shared" by a group. The importance of political ideology, therefore, lies as much in the group experience of it as in the content of beliefs. One function of a political ideology to its adherents is "solidarity," creating a sense of being a part of a community of like-minded people (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). It shapes how members of an ideological in-group evaluate out-groups. From a political communication perspective, ideology shapes how political parties or candidates seeking political office differentiate themselves from their opponents. Thus, social identity is at the heart of political ideology rhetoric and instrumentation for power.

However, social identities are difficult to study because people have multiple identities, and it is often difficult to know which identity influences a particular action or pattern of actions. Yet, we can glean the influence of social identities on social actors from how they talk about themselves and other actors. As Gee (2014, p. 34) put it, "We build identities for others as a way to build ones for ourselves." Gee encouraged enquiries into social actors' rhetorical discourse as a window into social identities. He called attention to how social actors give or refuse others "social goods" (i.e., how they assign blame or praise, what they characterize as normal or abnormal, and how they frame morality, ethics, and status in society). Therefore, in this chapter, I explore how campaigns in Ghana frame problems and offer solutions as a window into understanding whether or not they are motivated by ideological beliefs or other social identities (e.g., ethnicity or religion). The solutions or policy formulations themselves matter less than how political actors discuss them.

To achieve this goal, I drew on the work of Michael Carvin McGee on ideographs, which he called the "basic structural elements, the building blocks, of ideology" (McGee, 1980, p. 7).

Concisely, to understand an ideology, one has to look no further than the common terms or ideographs that people use to describe it. McGee dismissed the neo-Marxist critique that ideologies are lies that the ruling class imposes on the working class through false consciousness, as well as the premise of symbolists' argument that ideology is a myth that people voluntarily buy into as a means to group membership. According to McGee, ideology is a "persuasive" political language expressed in ideographs, and he defined an ideograph as

> an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable . . . . Each member of the community is socialized, conditioned, to the vocabulary of ideographs as a prerequisite for "belonging" to the society (McGee, 1980, p. 15).

McGee's argument rests on a central assertion: Ideology is rhetorical. "Ideographs," Towner (2010) argued, "offer critics an 'analytical link' between rhetoric and ideology" (p. 301). In his study of Fidel Castro's delicate balancing rhetoric in post-revolution Cuba, Delgado (1999) asserted that the ideograph <revolutionary> offered Castro a rhetorical device to construct a vague and accommodating social space for both revolutionaries and yet-to-be-convinced revolutionaries. For example, while encouraging all artists to be <revolutionaries>, Castro allowed space for the "honest artist or writer" who might not have explicitly supported the revolution but also did nothing to undermine its values. In other words, one could be a <revolutionary> even if the individual stuck to an "honest" intellectual position that disagreed with but did not sabotage the revolution. In an earlier work, Delgado (1995) noted that

"ideographs function as forceful signifiers of political ideologies, interpellating and situating consumers of public discourses" (p. 447).

Sometimes, ideographs reveal ideological currents that cut across party lines even in a highly ideological political space like the US. For example, in the 1990s, both Democratic and Republican politicians used the ideograph <family values> to redefine a social problem caused by structural inequalities in society as a matter of individual failure, with the blame placed on supposedly irresponsible black men (Cloud, 1998). Of course, ideographs are not neutral. They could shape the policy options available to governments. For example, the use of contradictory ideographs in the US that describe the country as a <nation of immigrants> while demonizing <illegal immigrants> places limitations on policy options that readers (the public) consider in evaluating a complex issue like immigration (Smithberger, 2016).

Studying ideographs is useful for understanding ideology because they could reveal how an ideology evolves, especially in moments of political and social change. Since ideographs are "abstract and dynamic, they invite constant redefinition and controversy" (Kelly, 2014, p. 469). By studying the ideological underpinnings of ideographs at a particular moment in history or across geographical space, we could uncover how ideographs are "recommitted to structure adherence to a new set of meanings, and henceforth values, behaviors, and policies" (Kelly, 2014, p. 470). Take, for example, pro- and anti-war women movements' rhetorical use of the <motherhood> ideograph during World War I:

> Those who were against war cited this stance (motherhood) as a reason to keep their children out of it; those who supported war cited this as a reason to "support," "give care," and have pride in those who had already entered it. (Mastrangelo, 2017, p. 21)

Claiming to act out of the care of <motherhood>, the two opposing sides attempted to appropriate the same ideograph to further arguments about US participation in the war.

Take, as another example, two popular ideologies, "capitalism" and "democracy." One could travel between two countries with similar levels of democratic consolidation and economic development, say the US and Germany, and experience significantly different forms of democracy and capitalism. The ideographs associated with these ideologies in each country would tell us much about American and German "collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative" goal regarding political and economic systems. For example, the meaning of <freedom> in the German context is more likely to encompass absence of government surveillance (because of the experience with the Stasi during the Cold War), while <freedom> is more likely to encompass the ability to share one's opinion, no matter how objectionable, in the American context (perhaps because British colonial censorship encouraged the Framers to prioritize free speech). In the classical formulation of Isaiah Berlin, Germans seem to want more *negative freedom* while Americans want more *positive freedom* (Berlin, 1969).

Imagine our traveler friend visits Ghana and sits with Ghanaians for dinner. He could talk about how Americans and Germans value <freedom>. If Germans or an Americans were to be present at the dinner, they would automatically assume that they understand what <freedom> means. The ideograph gives them a common language to a shared ideological commitment to democracy. However, for us to understand the meaning of <freedom> in each country, we would have to listen for other ideographs used with <freedom> to make sense of the contextual meanings. McGee called the analysis of ideographs in relations to each other at a point in time "synchronic," whereas an analysis that explores the historical uses of an ideograph in a particular

context is “diachronic.” I decided to do a synchronic analysis in this chapter for two reasons. First, I lacked access to historical interviews or extensive comments of the two main political parties’ leaders. Second, I am more interested in how current leaders see and frame themselves because they make decisions that shape the present and future of the Ghanaian electoral process and democracy. While it would be interesting to see how ideological beliefs have evolved over time, it is important to understand how current leaders think about political identity. Therefore, I analyzed the terms used by political actors to describe their motivations for joining both parties, what they think each represents, and how their political identities relate to the parties.

When political actors in Ghana claim ideological commitments, the correct approach is not to dismiss them as “mere talk” because they do not align with specific left–right ideological policy prescriptions. They may sound “incoherent” to the social scientist who uses traditional Western ideological lenses to evaluate them. Moreover, they may not neatly reflect established ideologies in Western democracies, such as liberalism or conservatism. With McGee’s inspiration, the correct approach is to ask how such ideological claims manifest themselves in how political actors define themselves, how elections are contested, and whether or not such claims represent a distinct political ideology informed by local realities. Therefore, I took the ideological claims of the two main political parties at face value with a view to interpreting their claims as they see them, not as I think they should be, because ideology is a vague and hotly debated concept (Dijk, 1998; Jost et al., 2009). The exploration of ideology in this chapter is less about what it is or how clearly the parties define it and more about how their definitions of ideology shape approaches to campaigning and interactions with the political process, especially during the 2016 presidential election.

Ghanaian Political Parties' Use of Political Ideology

Political parties in Africa do not usually define themselves in ideological terms because most of them promote left-leaning policies (Elischer, 2012). As already discussed in Chapter 1, the two major political parties in Ghana differentiate themselves along historically situated ideological groups: The NDC claims to continue the "social democratic" Nkrumahist tradition, and the NPP claims to continue the "capitalist" Danquah-Busia tradition. However, despite the NPP's claims of being a "market-oriented" party, its winning campaign message in the 2016 election consisted of a combination of reminding Ghanaians that (1) they introduced the highly subsidized NHIS when they were last in power from 2001 to 2008 and (2) promising to provide one factory per district and a dam per village in the country. In other words, it promised to outdo the NDC, the supposed social democrats, by implementing social programs. The NDC, on the other hand, touted its achievement in building infrastructure in the country and promised to do more if reelected. Thus, scholars and observers are right about the lack of policy differentiation between the two parties.

The campaigns relied on "valence competition" in their policy proposals (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007, p. 529). This occurs when candidates run for office by focusing on issues "over which there is broad agreement—for instance, law and order, and national defense . . . , [and] partisan rhetoric focuses on proving competence around the issue, rather than on the rightness of a specific position regarding policy objectives" (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013, p. 1397). For example, the NPP ran in the 2016 election by accusing the NDC government of being corrupt while promising to manage the resources of the country efficiently to create jobs and alleviate poverty. The NPP rhetorically differentiated itself by promising to promote private sector involvement and create a conducive environment for businesses to thrive. What they would do to

accomplish this promise that is measurably different from the NDC is hard to tell. For many Ghanaians polled before the election, the contest was more about candidates' perceived competence and track record of public service.[18] In this regard, Ghana is like many African and young democracies around the world: Political parties and candidates lack clear ideological policy differentiation from their opponents, and electorates care more about the competence of candidates than political ideology. By policy differentiation, I mean different approaches to national policy. For example, a differentiated ideological approach to education might occur when one party wants to leave education to private providers while the other party favors government management. Thus, while both parties agree that the provision of education is important, they prefer different approaches to providing it. In Ghana, the differentiation is less clear between the two major parties. While some scholars have tended to evaluate ideology by focusing on party policies (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013), I approached ideology by evaluating it as a social identity that helps political party members situate themselves in relation to their opponents.

My claim in this chapter is that, even when there is no ideological differentiation in policy formulations, studying the ideographs of political campaigns can tell us much about them and the health of the political system. My hypothesis is that the use of ideological posturing for political differentiation, rather than more combustible social identities such as ethnicity and religion, may have helped to create a stable political system in Ghana. Campaigns and party members drew on ideographs associated with distinct ideological traditions to mobilize support during the 2016 presidential election rather than relying on ethnic or religious rhetoric. Ideographs are important because they tell us how a group wishes to be seen and have the

[18] There were a few polls conducted before the election by Afrobarometer, a non-partisan organization that has conducted public opinion polling in African countries for over 20 years.

potential to define group social behavior, unconsciously setting constraints on some social behaviors while normalizing others (McGee, 1980). For example, despite raucous on-air and online debates by campaign leaders and partisans, the lack of a major inter-party violence is evidence of social restraints. Ideographs seem to have largely social effects because they do not seem to manifest themselves in policy. They may restrain violence in part because they accommodate other forms of social relationships that bind Ghanaians together (e.g., family, ethnicity, and religion).

How the NPP Sees Itself

The NPP website lays out the "beliefs" of the party that form the core of its ideological thinking toward national policymaking. It is worth quoting it in full here:

> **We believe** in "Development in Freedom" of a "Property-owning Democracy." We believe in Freedom of the Individual, of Choice, of Speech and of Enterprise.
>
> **We believe** that national development starts with the individual, who has the right to choose, fully grow, and exploit his or her God-given talents.
>
> **We believe** that government has a duty:
>
> > To provide access to relevant education and training that will empower the individual's development.
> >
> > To make available affordable, quality healthcare to every citizen.
> >
> > To create and sustain an environment that offers opportunity to all.

To guarantee that rule of law and protection of rights that enable the individual to flourish.

We believe that property is the fruit of hard work and that owning property is a positive good.

That the individual must be encouraged to lawfully acquire and keep without hindrance, his or her property so acquired.

We believe that owning property-

1. Encourages one to do more and encourages others to also strive to achieve success.
2. Leads to a greater stability in our society. A property owner will not willfully destroy the property of another and thereby put their own at risk.

We believe that we are responsible for ourselves, but that in our development, we must raise our families, improve our community, and contribute to the creation of a wealthy country.

Finally, we believe that the people of Ghana, the government, and each and every one of us, must accept that there will always be those who are unable to provide for themselves, and for them we must provide a level of support, a safety net.[19]

[19] Quoted from http://www.newpatrioticparty.org/index.php/the-party/who-we-are/our-beliefs

At the crux of the mission statement are the two core values of the party—freedom and wealth—which are expressed in the ideographs <development in freedom> and <property-owning democracy>. The former relates to the freedom of the individual in a democratic Ghana regarding choice, speech, and enterprise, while the latter relates to the envisioned economic prosperity of the individual. The party suggests that, for the full realization of <development in freedom>, government must provide basic amenities including education and healthcare, ensure an equal-opportunity environment for everyone, and protect the rights of Ghanaians. To achieve a <property-owning democracy>, the party believes that government needs to prioritize the individual's ability to acquire and keep property. It argues that owning property is associated with responsible behavior and has a multiplying effect on national development. The next section assesses the extent to which the beliefs of campaign leaders align with their party's statement of belief.

Ideographs of NPP Leaders

The analysis draws on responses to two questions during interviews with campaign leaders in the NPP. I asked why they joined the party, as well as what they believed the party stands for. Specifically, I asked, "Why did you join the NPP?" Depending on the response, I asked follow-up questions, such as "What does the NPP mean to you besides your family being involved?" and "In what ways does the NPP encourage the private sector that the NDC doesn't?"[20] I inductively coded the interviews using Atlas.ti to uncover how they talked about themselves and their involvement with the party and the presidential campaign. The lists in Table

[20] The rationale for choosing to interview the leaders and how they were interviewed is discussed in detail in the appendix.

2 are a summary of the keywords used by interviewees to describe how they see their party as well as the reasons for joining and remaining in the party.

The leaders of the NPP campaign articulated some core ideological values that they associated with their party. They attempted to connect their life stories to the broader narrative of the party to demonstrate why they joined and remained in the party. There was, however, a small divide between leaders who held regional and national positions in the party and those in constituency-level or lower positions. While national leaders stressed the importance of democratic norms and social programs as ideals that the party actively pursues, constituency-level leaders focused more on the economic aspects of the party's ideology as reasons for their membership. This could be because, as one moves up the ladder of leadership in the party, one becomes more versed in the full range of the values that the party represents. It could also mean that higher-up leaders have become used to talking up values that they believe would make them look good to outsiders (e.g., a researcher, the media, or diplomats).

Personal/Cultural Stories. One of the most common reasons that people joined the NPP had to do with having family members in the party or being personally uncomfortable with military dictatorship and the NDC, a party founded and led by a former military dictator, Jerry Rawlings. For many interviewees, it was because their parents or uncles were in the party that first exposed them to the party and its ideals. Others became involved in college and registered as active members upon graduation. However, even interviewees who were attracted because of family connections stressed that their commitment to their party was borne out of its alignment with their personal values.

Table 2: Reasons for Membership of NPP Campaign Leaders

National/Regional Leaders	Constituency/Local Leaders
Cultural/personal stories	**Personal stories**
Communal culture	Family was involved
Humble background	Help country
Family was involved	
Normative ideological commitment	**Normative ideological commitment**
Capitalist	Property owning democracy
Property-owning democracy	Capitalist
Free market economy	No pure capitalist or socialist
Prosperity	No government in business
No government in business	
No pure capitalist or socialist	
Practical expectations of government role	**Practical expectations of government role**
Empower private sector	Empower private sector
Government provides infrastructure	Government provides infrastructure
Provide enabling environment	Employment opportunities
Develop the human	Support entrepreneurs
Support entrepreneurs	Support businesses
Quality leadership	
Commitment to democratic norms	
Freedom of speech	**Commitment to democratic norms**
Freedom of the press	Development in freedom
Rule of law	
Support democracy	
Development in freedom	
Social commitment to society	
Safety net for all	
Care for the poor	
Opportunity for everyone	

RNLD[21] joined the party when he turned 18 while in college. He joined the college branch of the party, the Tertiary Students Confederacy of the NPP (TESCON). He was active in TESCON until he graduated and went to graduate school. Once he completed graduate school,

[21] Interview conducted on October 14, 2016.

he became an active member of the party. The party noticed his education credentials and offered him an unelected national position. For RNLC,[22] political consciousness started from home. His parents had told him stories about their participation in the precursor parties to the NPP. He claimed that,

> in 1992 when both parties were formed and as a capitalist, myself, I believe in *capitalism* and *free market economy,* in the *freedom of speech, democracy*, that kind of thing. I realized that is what my party stands for, that is the New Patriotic Party, NPP. So, it was not difficult for me to join the NPP in 1992 when it was formed, at the local level. (emphasis added)

Even though he got exposed to the party at home, he stressed how the party ideology reflected his vision of Ghana. The personal values he enumerated fit well with the party's two core ideographs of <development in freedom> (freedom of speech, democracy) and <property-owning democracy> (free market economy, capitalism). At the time of the election in 2016, he had risen to an influential regional leadership position in the party and the presidential campaign.

RNLA[23] was a founding member of the party and held an important position in the campaign at the regional level. He said that he became interested in politics while in college because of his hatred of the military regime. So, when the ban on political parties was lifted in 1991, he joined other members of the Danquah-Busia Group to form the NPP. He has held several positions within the party, including some at the national level. He claimed that the NPP appealed to him because it was "the only viable alternative" to the NDC formed by Rawlings to contest the 1992 election. For him, political freedom was a major reason for joining the NPP.

[22] Interview conducted on October 7, 2016.
[23] Interview conducted on September 15, 2016.

These stories tell us how political actors in the NPP justify how they became party members and why their personal preferences align with the party. Their personal narratives fit with either one or both of the NPP's main ideographs and indicate that party members rationalize their membership by engaging in cognitive and affective justifications.

Normative Ideological Commitment. This category of responses describes how party members understand the normative core of the political ideology they claim to espouse. It captures what they think the NPP stands for and what it stands against. Interviewees identified five core values with the party: "capitalism (or capitalist)," "free market democracy," "prosperity," "no government in business," and "no pure capitalist or socialist." Scholars who study Ghana have often dismissed these claims. A political science scholar who studies Ghanaian campaigns at one of Ghana's most prestigious universities made the following comment:

> Even though the two parties, especially the NPP, have not been able to articulate their ideologies clearly . . . , they don't even know which of the ideologies they tend to profess alright; they kind of articulate very conflicting ideologies. They call themselves *property-owning democracy*. *You and I know that there is no ideology like that.* Ideologies that we know mean liberalism, conservatism, but I know that they are conservatives. (emphasis added) (OBSI).[24]

This scholar's argument captures a popular critique of the NPP and, to some extent, the NDC. What does it mean to be a property-owning democracy? Are there democracies that deny citizens the right to own property? How does the NPP promote property ownership by Ghanaians compared to the other parties? One possible

[24] Interview conducted on December 13, 2016.

explanation is that the NPP is dominated by Asantes, who have a culture that values wealth accumulation as a social marker (LaTorre, 1978; Oelbaum, 2004). In terms of how the NPP uniquely promotes a "property-owning democracy," it is difficult to tell. Therefore, it is possible that the central ideological expression of the NPP is the "Asantesized" version of the conservative orthodoxy, but what does it mean to campaign leaders?

The NPP leaders described themselves as "capitalist"; given the assertion that "it is not the business of the government to do business" (RNLE),[25] this self-description seems to suggest that the leaders believe that private individuals should be at the forefront of organizing business. RNLB[26] provided the rationale as he understood it:

> Every time the government is involved in business, the people don't take that business seriously . . . . In our dialect, we say *aban adwuma y3 nfa nsi tiriso na y3d esi konso*, meaning you don't carry government job on your head but rather put it on your shoulder.

By this, RNLB meant that people do not prioritize government jobs as they would a personal business. In other words, they believed that it is difficult to convince people to take government business seriously, so the private sector is better positioned to drive employment creation.

Another phrase popular with most interviewees is that there is "no pure capitalist or socialist" system, especially in a low-income country. Party leaders

[25] Interview conducted on October 10, 2016.
[26] Interview conducted on September 25, 2016.

believed that their campaign had to take a middle-way position on economic issues to have a chance of winning. Though the interviewees belonged to a self-proclaimed "capitalist" party with party leaders quick to identify themselves as "capitalists," they still argued that a middle way is necessary given the level of economic development in the country. RNLM[27] summarized the arguments made by several campaign leaders when pressed on the inconsistencies of their claims with their actual policies.

> So, you might, some might, say there are some inconsistencies there, but of course, you know one thing, there is nothing like absolute capitalism, and there is nothing like absolute socialism. There is almost always a middle way somewhere that depends upon the social factors and then the community . . . . If you look at, I mean, our history, before we come in, we are communal people, ok? So, naturally we should try to get some of those communal aspect[s] in our capitalist fronts.

Consistently, across different levels of party leadership—especially at the regional and national levels—they argued they were not inconsistent; rather, they were realistic by advocating a middle-way position. From an analysis of party manifestoes, Elischer (2013) found that the NPP gradually increased its left-leaning policies between the first election in 1992 and 2000 when the party captured power. The level of development in the country requires government to be involved in building basic infrastructure to ensure that people can do business. As the party mission statement put it, "we must provide a level of support, a safety net." However, they insisted that

[27] Interview conducted on December 19, 2016.

government should leave "business" to private individuals. So, what is "business?" Business seems to imply activities that involve hiring people to produce or sell things. Several campaign leaders claimed to own businesses even when they were unemployed and seemed interested in getting a good job once their party won the election and Ghana would supposedly have good jobs again. The choice of entrepreneurial language to describe what they do is not accidental but chosen to emphasize ideological affinity with their party.

The realities that campaign leaders described are enshrined in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. It declares that all Ghanaians have a "right to equal educational opportunities and facilities" and that elementary school is "free, compulsory, and available to all."[28] To fulfill its constitutional role as a government would require any party voted into power to provide free basic education to Ghanaian citizens. So, while the NPP advocates a free market economy where entrepreneurs compete with ideas and the best ideas win out, its leaders recognize the need for government intervention in providing some basic infrastructural necessities. As one national campaign leader put it,

> I think that the NPP had that in mind. That in as much as we are opening up business to the economy and making it business friendly, creating an ecosystem for businesses to thrive, we still have to take care of those who really matter in society, who are less privileged in society, to ensure that we are not leaving anyone behind but pulling

[28] The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Section 25(1)

> everyone together as we develop and move forward. It's a really straight forward no-brainer to be able to do that. (RNLM)[29]

For this member of the NPP, the common-sense approach is a middle way between free market capitalism and socialism. Campaign leaders shared this sentiment across different levels. In fact, one of the programs they were most proud of, and eager to discuss, was the NHIS introduced by former (NPP) President John Kufuor's government in 2003, which aims to provide highly subsidized healthcare to all Ghanaians, irrespective of income level.

Practical Expectations of Government Role. Now that we have analyzed the normative ideological commitment of the campaign leaders, a natural question would be what normative prescriptions mean in practical terms. The terms that campaign leaders used to describe their expectations of how government should be involved in managing the economy included "empower private sector," "provide infrastructure," "provide enabling environment," "support entrepreneurs," and "provide quality leadership." These seem to fit with the second core ideograph of the party, <property-owning democracy>. The party leaders perceive their party as functioning to empower people to generate wealth and own property.

The first ideograph is also called forth in describing the responsibilities of government. RNLE[30] was a leader in a region and actively involved in the campaign, with significant responsibilities. He believed in "the principles and ideology of the

[29] Interview conducted on December 19, 2016.
[30] Interview conducted on October 20, 2016.

party . . . , in development in freedom." He explained further what that meant for his understanding of how the party should govern when in power.

> You see, it is the business of the government to provide the necessary social interventions and infrastructure needs, but it is the business of individuals to grow businesses. Government must provide the enabling environment for people to take advantage of, in a very competitive and free atmosphere.[31]

RNLE explained further that by "social interventions" he meant free or highly subsidized healthcare, free high school education, and a host of other prescriptions associated with a social democratic government. Yet, he argued, it is in the service of providing an enabling environment*,* which exists in relations to the government role of empowering the private sector. But, how does the government empower the private sector?

Perhaps that would involve providing basic infrastructure and supporting entrepreneurs; one frequently mentioned desired support is cheap loans to start and grow businesses. Support could also take the form of reduced bureaucratic hurdles around registering businesses and potentially lower taxes. The notion of "quality leadership" is also open to several interpretations, which campaign leaders did not clarify. However, given the campaign's emphasis on the corruption of their main opponent, the NDC, we could infer that quality leadership includes good stewardship of state resources.

Commitment to Democratic Norms. The NPP national campaign leaders also went out of their way to portray themselves as vanguards of democracy in the country. They claimed to have

fought for the return of the country to multiparty elections in 1992 and to have continued to lead the way in introducing policies that helped consolidate the country's democracy. These policies included the introduction of transparent ballot boxes, and changes to the electoral system after the 2012 presidential election recommended by the Supreme Court of Ghana because the NPP contested the election results in court. One could counterargue that the NDC set the pace for current democratic reforms by peacefully handing over power to the NPP in 2000 when the latter won the election. The NPP reciprocated in 2008 and took back power in 2016. However, to hear it from NPP campaign leaders, they are solely responsible for fighting for, and entrenching, democracy in Ghana. This claim must have been in mind when then President John Mahama preempted the NPP after the close of voting in the 2016 election by stating, "We are a party that respects the rule of law . . . . I want to assure the nation that we will accept the outcome of the elections, positive or negative" (Graphic.com.gh, 2016). President Mahama emphasized the ideograph <rule of law> and his party's role in promoting it. The NPP presidential candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, had declared victory, and there were rumors President Mahama would not concede defeat. By evoking <rule of law> at that crucial moment of electoral uncertainty, he reinforced his party's commitment to democracy and undercut the NPP's claim to being protectors of democracy in the country.

A common ideograph among campaign leaders in the NPP is <development in freedom>, which is also the official party motto. The interpretation of this motto goes beyond economic freedom, implied by the word "development." It ties in political freedoms like freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and more generally, <rule of law>. Take, for example, the following statement by RNLC:

> NDC is a socialist party, and now they are branding themselves as a social democratic party. They do not believe in what we believe in . . . . You know, democracy, rule of law, they do not believe in it. They were forced to, so they are falling in line, so that is why their communicators were called propaganda secretaries. As late as four months ago, they were called propaganda secretaries.

RNLC's comment combines historical analysis with current commentary. From a historical perspective, the idea of the NPP forcing the NDC implies that their founding father Jerry Rawlings would not have allowed multiparty democracy without the efforts of the NPP founders. When he provided an example of the NDC calling communication secretaries "propaganda secretaries*,"* he implied that the NDC remains unfamiliar with how democracy works—that democracy is built on engaging people with truth rather than deceiving them with fantasies or propaganda. During campaign meetings, it was a recurring internal joke and a warning to team members that, unlike the NDC, they were not doing propaganda but communication. The NPP, the internal argument goes, is a party that deeply understands and upholds the tenets of democratic government.

How the NDC Sees Itself

Like the NPP, the NDC has a declarative statement about what it is and what it stands for:

> WE, the members of the NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS (NDC),
>
> BELIEVING in THE DESTINY of Ghanaians to build a society that realizes truly human values based on the full mobilization of the talents and energies of our people and the sustainable development of the resources with which nature has generously endowed us;
>
> CONSCIOUS that this great edifice must be erected on the specified platform of our country's history and its current location in the world's economy; RECOGNIZING that

> the requisite re-alignment of national economic and social institutions of private and public character to meet national development needs is only possible given committed, capable and accountable political leadership; DETERMINED to provide a framework of voluntary political associations within which Ghanaians from all walks of life and from different traditions can surmount their differences and contribute democratically to the shaping of this new society; RESOLVED to *uphold the Constitution* of the Republic of Ghana approved by the national referendum held on the 28th April 1992; and *COMMITTED to freedom, justice, and accountability*; The Party is a *Social Democratic Party* that believes in the *equality and the egalitarian treatment of all persons* with respect to their social, cultural, educational, political, religious, and economic relations in a Multi-party environment. The Founding Father of the party is Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings upon whose vision and leadership the Party was established.[32]

The mission statement revolves around its vision of the country anchored on two core values—unity and social justice—expressed in the ideographs <freedom, justice, and accountability> and <unity, stability, and development>, the official party motto. It claims to base these commitments on the history of the country and its "national development needs," which require collective efforts that guarantee the dignity of every Ghanaian. Also, the party explicitly acknowledges the important role that former President Rawlings played in shaping its vision of Ghana. Compared to the NPP statement, it does not include any references to wealth creation or market-driven solutions to Ghana's problems but places more emphasis on the country as a collective than the NPP statement of belief.

[32] NDC website, available at https://ndc.org.gh/index.php/the-party/our-party

The Ideographs of NDC Campaign Leaders

I derived the ideographs of the NDC campaign leaders from a similar process as that used to derive those of the NPP campaign leaders. The ideographs not only come from the official party statement but also from interviews conducted with party leaders, mostly in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election. I categorized the responses into national/regional leaders and constituency/local leaders. The purpose of treating the two groups differently is to identify potential differences between local and national leaders and to determine whether or not there is consistency across different levels of leadership. The responses of the party leaders are classified into three main categories: personal stories of why they joined and remained in the party, their normative understanding of the party's ideology, and their practical expectations of how an NDC government ought to govern. Table 3 lists the reasons offered by the NDC members interviewed. As noted earlier, ideographs help political actors rationalize their decisions, and they undergird the idealized version of themselves and their values as members of a political party.

Personal/Cultural Stories. Most NDC leaders had stories of how the policies and charisma of the party's founder, former President Rawlings, influenced their membership in the party. In the telling of these members, Rawlings saved a decaying, elitist political system that neglected poor people, and he made government responsive to ordinary Ghanaians. To some, Rawlings symbolizes empowerment and egalitarianism.

Table 3: Reasons for Membership of NDC Campaign Leaders

National/Regional Leaders	Constituency/Local Leaders
Personal/cultural stories	**Personal stories**
Student activist	Jerry Rawlings
Family involvement	Benefits from NDC policies
Humble background	Humble background
Jerry Rawlings	
	Normative ideological commitment
Normative ideological commitment	Egalitarian
Party ideology	Social democracy
Egalitarian	Respects everyone
Social democracy	Socialist-oriented
Equity	
Social justice	
Equal participation opportunity	**Practical expectations of government role**
	Government builds infrastructure
Practical expectations of government role	Uplift "downgraded"
Help (the) less privileged	Pulls everybody together
	Helps less privileged
	Takes care of downtrodden
	Helps vulnerable

NDNC, for example, is a regional leader who has held several positions within the party since joining in the late 1990s.[33] He said that the Rawlings military regime built the school he attended, and it "drew [him] closer to the NDC" when it was formed. Rawlings, he argued, stabilized an otherwise chaotic system.

> Rawlings has always been my mentor. You know, I believe that, at the time he came into the scene, there was chaos in the system, you understand. He managed to stabilize the system; that is why the NDC motto is "Unity, Stability, and Development."

The ideograph of <unity, stability, and development> contrasts directly with the NPP's <development in freedom> because it offers an alternative vision of development rooted in

[33] Interview conducted on October 11, 2016.

national unity and stability, whereas the NPP's ideograph offers development rooted in individual choice. Where the NPP offers a <property-owning democracy> that allows the individual to accumulate wealth, the NDC offers a <freedom, justice, and accountability> democracy that ensures that social justice prevails. These are highly contrasting views of how to organize Ghanaian society. However, like all ideographs, they are vague and open to multiple interpretations. When seen this way, the parties offer fundamentally differentiated visions of Ghana.

NDCC[34] was a senior leader and major decisionmaker in one of the constituencies. He became a fan of Rawlings when he was imprisoned for planning a coup in 1979, two years before taking power as a military ruler. He was impressed by how Rawlings defied the military rulers who neglected ordinary Ghanaians. He said that, after the arrest of Rawlings and other junior officers, Rawlings took responsibility for the coup, pleading for the freedom of the other participants. Though unsuccessful, Rawlings's perceived selflessness during the trial made him popular among young people like NDCC, who would go on to participate in the youth wing of the military government when Rawlings executed a successful coup two years later.

Campaign leaders narrated different stories of how Rawlings's charisma, disdain for elites, and respect for "ordinary Ghanaians" drew them to the party. Some became activists in support of the military regime while in college, and many came from "humble backgrounds." The claim to a "humble background," instead of saying a "poor family," connotes not only a lack of wealth but a difference in attitude. The unstated assumption is that rich and middle-class families are from "proud backgrounds" that engender disdain for those less fortunate. It is noteworthy some NPP leaders also emphasized their "humble backgrounds" in discussing how

[34] Interview conducted on November 11, 2016.

the party provides opportunities for its members. Perhaps it is a way of highlighting that their party is not as elitist as opponents say.

Normative Ideological Commitment. The normative ideological commitment of campaign leaders includes what they think their party stands for and what type of ideals it should pursue. While these commitments are not necessarily indicative of what the party actually does, they tell us what these important actors within the party think the party ought to be known for. A common claim among campaign leaders is that their party is egalitarian; that is, it treats everyone as equal compared to the "elitist" NPP. A constituency leader in the campaign captured the sentiments of several interviewees by contrasting their party with the NPP:

> [We] do not underestimate anyone. The NDC said, our leaders particularly, "if you come to the grassroots . . . , you will feel proud that you belong to a political party [that] does not like insult, does not like feeling like they are better than anybody, and that makes the party attractive for everybody. (NDCB)[35]

Or, as NDNC put it, "the ideology itself is egalitarian, socialist oriented, and it was meant to take care of the downtrodden in society." To be egalitarian here suggests respect for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds and the deliberate pursuit of policies to uplift the "downtrodden." In other words, the party sees itself not only as a party that respects the poor in society but also as the party that uses policies to improve their conditions.

Campaign leaders also described their party as espousing a social democratic ideology. This rhetoric manifests itself in other claims by party leaders by using terms like *egalitarianism*, *equity, social justice, and equal participation opportunity.* A social democracy necessarily prioritizes policies that promote egalitarianism, and social justice is at the core of its DNA.

[35] Interview conducted on November 8, 2016.

Taken together, these terms tell the story of a coherent party identity that members have internalized. Its target audience is the section of the population supposedly overlooked by "elites." NDNB,[36] a member of the national leadership, explained how his personal story of rising to the top of the party illustrates the party's egalitarian ideals.

> When you look at my background, knowing very well that my father is not an influential person in the country and [that] my mother is equally not influential; basically, they are both illiterates and have not attended class one or two. Because of our background and our party, the way it allows for equal participation irrespective of the person's tribe or stand in the society, the only thing our party says is that you have to go through competition and prove to the people that you are really competent, and the people will vote for you.

The party, NDNB went on to explain, has those who form the "intellectual wing" and those who cannot read. However, everyone is treated equally, irrespective of their socioeconomic class. To NDCB, the party's social democratic party ideology means that it treats everyone equally. He argues, the "The NDC believes in social democracy . . . . We do not see anybody high [high status] or undermine people. We do not see this person as intelligent and the other as this or that . . . . [We] do not underestimate anyone." These sentiments were shared by almost all the leaders at all levels interviewed who stressed that, unlike the NPP, the party treats everyone equally and that anyone who works hard enough can rise to any position within the party. Thus, the party's view of itself as egalitarian includes both the ways it offers opportunities to everyone and the ways it rhetorically respects them.

[36] Interview conducted on October 6, 2016.

Practical Expectations of Government Role. This aspect revealed the greatest divergence between national leaders and constituency/local leaders. While national leaders spoke in high-level language about helping the poor, local leaders were more specific about what the party should be doing in practical terms to live up to its ideology. They expected the government to provide basic infrastructure in communities, help the less privileged, unite people, and protect the vulnerable. In other words, these local leaders were clear that, for the party to fulfill its mission to ensure <freedom, justice, and accountability> and <unity, stability, and development>, Ghanaians needed to be cared for, irrespective of socioeconomic status.

According to NDCD,[37] an influential leader in one of the constituencies, "We share things together; we do not think only for ourselves, and we think about our neighbors, friends, the vulnerable within the society." NDCA,[38] who coordinated his constituency campaign team, explained what motivated him to remain in the party:

> Politics is supposed to help and bring people up, and if God has given me what to eat, where to sleep, and what car to drive, I think my objective is to help the less privileged and bring them up. Some call it politics, and I call it grassroots elevation.

However, national leaders of the campaign seemed overwhelmed by the practical demands of party ideology rather than extolling its virtues. NDNA[39] captured this succinctly in the following statement:

> The demand on any political party and politician is high . . . . As soon as you become a political office holder, everybody assumes you are rich, so you sit here, and people will

[37] Interview conducted on November 18, 2016.
[38] Interview conducted on November 7, 2016.
[39] Interview conducted on October 4, 2016.

> come in to say "pay my hospital bill," "my daughter is getting married," "my wife has delivered," "I am going to the hospital." Everything, they come to you.

He explained that the dilemma the party faced was that failure to attend to people's demands could create spiraling stories about a party indifferent to the needs of those it claims to prioritize. Thus, while the party promotes its image of empowering the "downtrodden," it feels overwhelmed by demands for empowerment in the daily lives of its constituents. Overall, the party's use of ideographs suggests a view of organizing society that significantly and consistently contrasted with that of the NPP, thus helping to shape the political identity of its members.

Party Ideology and Political Identity

The foregoing analysis of political party ideographs suggests that parties and their members in Ghana have consistent and differentiated political identities anchored on political ideologies. The political identities of party members seem to be significantly influenced by their memberships in the parties. Whether consciously or not, party members told their life stories to align with their party's ideology. As McGee (1980) argued, ideographs constrain and enable users. The ideographs of the parties shaped the party members' perception of their political identities and offered them rhetorical devices to describe their values and policy preferences.

For example, across all levels of leadership, the NPP leaders' personal narratives and ideographs were consistent with those of their party. They described themselves as entrepreneurial, capitalist, and wealth driven. In other words, party members described their identities in the image of the party, with all the opportunities and constraints it offers. Meanwhile, the NDC members described themselves as vanguards of social justice,

egalitarianism, and, equity. These are significant differences in worldviews and the frames that the parties draw to present their policies to voters even when the policies are similar.

The most popular campaign messages of the 2016 NPP presidential campaign according to a nationwide survey, were "One Village One Dam," "One District One Factory," and "Free Senior High School" (SHS).[40] While some may question whether these policies are capitalist, since they imply government involvement in economic activities, their framing further evidences how campaign messaging aligned with political ideology. By promising dams and factories, which could impact wealth and job creation, the NPP held true to its ideological identity. The provision of free SHS could reduce the burden on people and free them to create economic value instead of worrying about educating their children. Elementary school was already free.

The NDC, meanwhile, campaigned on the promise of continuing the achievements of President Mahama in his first term. Its manifesto outlined several infrastructural and social programs anchored on "putting people first," "expanding infrastructure," a "strong and resilient economy," and "transparent and accountable governance." Their two most commonly used slogans in campaign artifacts were "Changing Lives" and "Transforming Ghana." These fit the ideographs of the party that emphasize social justice and a community-centered development approach.

Conclusion

I restate my agreement with scholars of African politics who argue that political parties are not differentiated in policy formulations or implementation. However, by looking beyond policies to social identity, Ghanaian campaigns show a remarkable and consistent differentiation

[40] A scholar who conducted a nationally representative survey in the lead-up to the election made the assertion. Interview conducted on December 13, 2016.

from their opponents. The NPP claims to be a "capitalist" party with a strong preference for <development in freedom> and a <property-owning democracy>. Its core values are wealth and freedom, apparent in both the ideographs and keywords that party leaders use: freedom of speech, rule of law, entrepreneurship, and government support for businesses. The NDC, on the other hand, claims to be a "social democratic" party with a strong preference for <unity, stability, and development> and <freedom, justice, and accountability>. Its core values are unity and social justice, apparent in both its ideographs and keywords: egalitarianism, equity, respect for everyone, and taking care of the less privileged. Interestingly, the NPP's most popular messages for winning the presidential election sound more like social democratic creeds than free market dogma. Meanwhile, there is nothing uniquely social democratic about building critical infrastructure as the NDC campaign suggests. Governments around the world, including the most powerful capitalist country, the US, participate in building the critical infrastructure that their economies depend on. The generally left-leaning nature of government policy in Ghana is a function of the reality of governing in a low-income country where government plays an outsized role in the job market as well as the provision of basic amenities (Manning, 2005). If the market forces of demand and supply determine prices of essential services, a huge section of the country would be left behind. Political parties know that proposing policies that exclude such a huge proportion of voters would be political suicide.

My argument in this chapter is not that parties are faithful to their campaign messages or even that their policy formulations fit their avowed ideological beliefs. Rather, the political rhetoric of party members is consistent with party ideologies and indicates that it may shape how political actors define themselves and their place in society. Furthermore, there is inherent value in political actors using the language of ideology to frame themselves and their opponents. I

hypothesized, based on the observation of conversations in strategy campaign meetings, that Ghana's democracy owes its relative stability, in part, to political leaders' use of ideological rhetoric rather than sensitive social identities (e.g., ethnicity and religion) for political differentiation and mobilization. Ideological rhetoric allows campaigns the flexibility to moderate positions and frame themselves and their opponents in a way that social identities such as ethnicity and religion would exclude. One could argue that extreme ideological differentiation could also lead to violence, as history readily attests. My argument is that a competition of ideas may be more conducive to peace and stability in a new democracy like Ghana than ethnic-based competition. This is especially true when the rule of law is observed and when all parties have a realistic chance of ascending to power. All these conditions were true in Ghana as of the 2016 election.

Chapter 3: Digital Media and Political Campaign Organizations

One of the most expensive aspects of running a campaign is coordinating people and ensuring that planned activities are carried out effectively and in a timely manner (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Presidential campaigns also need to ensure that they receive information about new developments in different parts of the country and that they can respond quickly. In a country with underdeveloped communication and transportation infrastructure, this would be a daunting endeavor, putting a poorly funded opposition at a significant disadvantage. In the 2016 presidential election in Ghana, an underfunded opposition campaign took on a better-funded incumbent and won, relying largely on publicly available digital tools like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and mobile phones to perform the traditional functions of a campaign. However, my goal in this chapter is not to argue that digital media were responsible for the victory. Instead, I explore how both the incumbent NDC and the opposition NPP campaigns used digital media to organize their teams, as well as how the strategies and tactics they employed differ from well-funded campaigns in the US and Western Europe documented in the literature on political communication. I seek to answer a basic but important question: How did campaigns in Ghana in 2016 use digital media for campaign-related goals?

I argue, drawing from field observations and interviews with campaign leaders, that a major impact of the use of digital media was a significant increase in the security and speed of communication, as well as a reduction in the cost of organizing campaigns, with the opposition campaign benefitting more since it had fewer resources. Additionally, digital media exacerbated the power imbalance within campaigns by empowering party leaders to monitor the activities of

lower-level members more than was possible in the past. Rather than reduce hierarchy within campaign organizations, as some scholars expected (Bimber, 2003), digital media intensified it. These tools increased the capacity of party leaders to delegate responsibilities without losing control of the party structure. This is not a novel finding. Studies of campaigns in the US and Europe indicate a similar pattern, where campaigns develop digital infrastructure to monitor and nudge volunteers to execute specific activities on their behalf without giving them opportunities to influence the official campaign platform (Kreiss, 2012; Stromer-Galley, 2014).

What is novel about Ghana in 2016 is that campaigns in the country lacked the financial means to develop the types of robust technology platforms that well-funded Western campaigns have. Therefore, they used publicly available tools that provided very limited analytic capability or room for customization. Campaign leaders could only realistically surveil the active participation of campaign members who were mostly party members with political ambitions. This group of political actors are motivated by a need to pay their "dues" and gain visibility and recognition with the party. Thus, they were motivated to demonstrate commitment to their parties, and party leaders only had to passively watch for engagement signals, such as posting useful information or commenting on others' posts on the campaigns' digital platforms. This type of surveillance is easy to do via platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, or Twitter because targets actively produce the signals; it is in the interest of lower-level members to prove themselves. This is a significantly different relationship compared to Western campaigns that deal with volunteers or general voters who likely have no reason or motivation to prove themselves to campaign leaders.

However, local leaders exercised some independence and influence offline at the constituency level through their knowledge of local languages, possession of voter data

unavailable to higher-ups in the campaigns, and relationships with voters in their communities that would be difficult to replicate without them. Thus, while the national party structure used a digital mechanism to control messages and maintain the party hierarchy, they were motivated to at least respect local leaders because of their local knowledge and relationships.

The model that emerges from this relationship of surveillance and respect is what I call relationship-based campaigning. In this model, campaign leaders exercise oversight over local leaders but are motivated to defer to them about local campaign strategies because they have relationships of trust with their communities that the national party could not easily replicate. Local leaders, meanwhile, are motivated to work for candidates of their parties because the ability to improve their visibility and attract promotion within the party depends on being seen as selfless and loyal to it. Norms such as respect, seniority, and loyalty bind various levels of campaign hierarchy. Technology platforms, therefore, become sites for the negotiation of potentially complicated and overlapping relationships.

In the following sections, I provide an overview of the communication environment of Ghana to help the reader understand how it may shape and constrain the actions of political actors. Then, I describe the campaign structures of the two main parties I studied to establish the logistical context of organizing a national campaign in the country. Finally, I discuss the use of digital media during the election.

The Communication Ecosystem of Ghana

Ghana's communication system has undergone a significant transformation in the last 20 years that made the use of digital media for political campaigning in the 2016 presidential election possible. Table 4 shows the trend of population growth and changes in mobile phone subscriptions in Ghana from 2000 to 2016. At the beginning of the 21st century, the country had

a mobile phone penetration rate of less than 1%. In the first decade of the new century, the penetration rate jumped to 71%; by the 2016 election, the penetration rate was well over 100% (because some people subscribe to multiple providers).[41] This remarkable growth mirrors experiences in other sub-Saharan African countries. The main factor behind this trend is the deregulation of the telecommunications industry, which happened across the continent at about the same time. When the government allowed private sector participation in the industry, the ensuing competition led to significant investment, lower prices, and rapid penetration of telecommunication services (e.g., mobile phones and the Internet) (Frempong & Atubra, 2001). Deregulation came with problems such as an acute digital divide resulting from the prioritization of urban areas (where people have more money to spend), low quality of service, and low levels of technical skills in the population. One of the most pronounced divides in the country is between urban and rural areas. Even though more Ghanaians overall have access to mobile phones, most phone users in rural areas are more likely to use phones that cannot access Internet services.

Unlike most mediums that require literacy to use, even illiterate people are able to make phone calls that allow them to maintain economic and personal relationships (Sey, 2011a, 2011b). Sey argued that mobile phones play an important role in Ghana's informal economy where "demands of an uncertain economic environment, high transaction costs, and the building of relationships of trust are paramount" (Sey, 2011a, p. 385). However, she could well have made the same argument about the role that trust plays in politics and how being able to stay in touch via mobile phone helps a team collaborate over distance.

[41] Data available from the Ghana National Communications Authority. https://www.nca.org.gh/industry-data-2/market-share-statistics-2/voice-2/

Table 4: Population and Mobile Phone Subscription in Ghana, 2000–2016

Year	Population	Population Growth	Mobile Phone Subscriptions	Subscription Growth	Mobile Penetration Rate
2000	18,938,762	-	90,000	-	0.04%
2005	21,542,009	13.7%	2,990,000	3,222.22%	13.8%
2010	24,512,104	13.8%	17,436,949	483.17	71.1%
2015	27,582,821	12.5%	35,008,387	100.77%	127%
2016	28,206,728	2.3%	38,305,078	9.42%	135.8%

Sources: Population data from the World Bank[42] and mobile subscription data from the Ghana National Communications Authority.[43]

For example, several campaign members indicated that friendship and social networking were some of the reasons for joining the NPP campaign. In a survey[44] I administered to all the members of an NPP campaign team I observed, 92% said that making friends was a reason for participating. During meetings I attended, the members spent several minutes before and after the meetings chatting about their personal lives and the messages they had exchanged via WhatsApp, emphasizing the extent to which they had come to see each other as friends. In short chats after the survey, several people indicated that WhatsApp allowed them to maintain and strengthen friendships with the people they met at campaign meetings. As Sey (2011b)

[42]https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?contextual=default&end=2016&locations=GH&start=2000&view=chart

[43] https://nca.org.gh/

[44] I administered the survey during one of the meetings of the team in Accra. One of the options in response to the question, "How do you feel about the following in regard to your participation in this campaign?" was "An opportunity to make new friends and network"; 54% selected "strongly agree," while 38% chose "agree," with the rest not responding to the survey.

documented, mobile phones provide an important means of maintaining relationships in the country.

However, it is worth noting that not all Ghanaians have access to a mobile phone even though the penetration rate is above 100%. There are entire communities in rural parts of the country that do not have access to telecommunication services. Many remote Northern communities are mostly reachable by radio messages or in-person canvassing. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) rates Ghana as having one of the most expensive call rates in the world relative to per capita income.[45] For example, some people who live on less than $2 per day may spend nearly half of their monthly income on phone calls. To get around having to pay so much for calls, many people have phones with double SIM card capacity, which allows them to make relatively cheaper in-network calls or text messages. Thus, people in urban areas who subscribe to multiple phone providers disproportionately affect the penetration rate. As we will see later, this became relevant to campaigns as they made decisions about using social media platforms or not. Unlike campaigns in richer countries, Ghanaian campaigns must factor these local realities into their decisions about how they deploy digital media for campaign purposes.

Internet Use

At the time of the election in 2016, an estimated 34% of Ghanaians had access to the Internet, up from less than 1% in 2000, as shown in Table 5.[46] The mobile data subscription rate accounted for nearly 70% of all subscriptions. Again, like mobile phone voice subscriptions, this was more about educated and wealthier urban dwellers having multiple data subscriptions to

[45] The ITU compares the cost of making a phone call for a minute and the average income of people in the country. By that standard, Ghanaians spend more of their monthly income on phone calls than people in most countries. The data are available of the ITU website: www.Itu.int.

[46] https://nca.org.gh/

mitigate inconsistencies in the quality of service and to take advantage of data promotions run by different telecommunications companies. This growth has enabled many people to use social media, with Facebook leading the way with an estimated 2.9 million users in 2016.[47] When it came to chat services, WhatsApp dominated, with nearly 90% of online communication in the country estimated to pass through it (Ahiabenu, 2018). WhatsApp's high level of use encouraged campaigns to use it as the primary means of communicating and organizing.

Table 5: Population Growth and Internet Penetration in Ghana, 2000–2016

Year	Population	Population Growth	Internet Users	Subscription Growth	Internet Penetration Rate
2000	18,938,762	-	28,408	-	0.15%
2005	21,542,009	13.7%	394,218	3,222.22%	1.83%
2010	24,512,104	13.8%	1,911,944	483.17	7.80%
2015	27,582,821	12.5%	8,674,797	100.77%	31.45%
2016	28,206,728	2.3%	9,779,272	9.42%	34.67%

Sources: Calculations based on estimates data from the International Telecommunications Union[48]; the population data are from the World Bank.[49] The total mobile data subscriptions at the end of 2016 amounted to 19,746, 554.[50]

Broadcast Industry

Broadcast media have the highest penetration among Ghanaians. At the time of the 2016 election, there were over 350 radio stations and 51 television stations in the country according to

[47] http://www.itnewsafrica.com/2016/09/top-10-african-countries-with-the-most-facebook-users/
[48] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/publications/mis2017.aspx
[49] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?end=2016&locations=GH&start=2000&view=chart
[50] Data from the Ghana National Communications Authority. This implies that many people have multiple subscriptions. https://nca.org.gh/

data from the country's communication regulatory body, as shown in Table 6.[51] Though I could not find credible data on how many people listen to FM radio stations or watch television stations every day, industry leaders and campaign leaders asserted that broadcast media reach more people than online media, WhatsApp, or newspapers. As one national leader in the opposition NPP put it, comparing radio to other media, "I will say the radio is the most effective [medium] because it's all over. We go to the farms, we see them holding their small radios" (RNLM).[52] In remote villages that lack phone signals and where the literacy rates might be too low for newspapers to thrive, local radio stations in local languages are a powerful means of reaching a mass audience. Urban areas like Accra, Kumasi, Sunyani, Ho, and Tamale have dozens of radio stations competing for listeners' attention. Ghana has a competitive broadcast media space, dating to the mid-1990s when President Jerry Rawlings deregulated the industry as a response to the pressures from private sector players who argued that the 1992 Constitution guaranteed private participation in the industry (Boateng, 2009).

From 1999 until 2016, Freedom House[53] rated the Ghanaian press as "free," the highest possible rating for a country. However, due to a series of political events that involved the Supreme Court of Ghana sending some journalists to jail for contempt of court who were then pardoned by the president, Ghana was downgraded to "partly free" in 2016 and 2017.[54] According to the Reporters Without Borders (RWB) ranking, Ghana has a better press freedom rating than the UK and the US.[55] The point here is not so much about which ranking system is better as it is to emphasize that people could freely engage in heated political debates on the

[51] https://nca.org.gh/
[52] Interview conducted on December 19, 2016.
[53] https://freedomhouse.org/reports
[54] http://www.mfwa.org/ghana-supreme-court-convicts-radio-presenter-panellists-and-owners/
[55] https://rsf.org/en/ranking

radio, television, and online without fearing attacks by agents of the state, and "journalists are rarely arrested or imprisoned."[56] When I asked a journalist who covers politics for one of the most popular FM stations in Accra if he had any fears for his safety, he responded, "No, nobody will attack you in this country for doing your job" (OBSJ).[57] Except, he said, supporters of some candidates would sometimes call to insult journalists they believed to be unfair to their candidates.

Table 6: Ghana's Broadcast Industry Overview: Total Numbers of Television and FM Stations During the Fourth Quarter of 2016

Region	Number of FM Stations in Operation	TV stations in operation
Ashanti	46	-
Brong Ahafo	52	-
Central	29	-
Eastern	35	-
Greater Accra	47	-
Northern	30	-
Upper East	12	-
Upper West	11	-
Volta	36	-
Western	56	-
Total	**354**	**51**

Source: The Ghana National Communications Authority.[58] The NCA only reported national figures for TV stations as at the time of the election.

[56] https://rsf.org/en/ghana

[57] Interview conducted on December 13, 2016.

[58] https://nca.org.gh/

The RWB report indicated that many media outlets are owned by businessmen linked to the government (and the opposition), constraining their "independence." The root of this trend dates to the colonial era when various competing nationalist groups established newspapers to further their interests. The *Ashanti Pioneer* was associated with the UGCC, the ideological precursor of the NPP, while *The Accra Evening News* was established by Kwame Nkrumah to promote ideals of the CPP, the ideological precursor of the NDC (Ahmad, Pride, & Corsy, 2016; Biney, 2011). While the *Evening News* promoted Nkrumah's radical posture by demanding immediate independence from Britain, the *Pioneer* resisted, taking a gradualist position in line with the UGCC (Biney, 2011). In the lead-up to the 2016 election, some of the most popular newspapers were partisan: *The Daily Guide* was owned by a senior member of the NPP, and the *Ghanaian Lens* was owned by members of the NDC. Business people aligned with both parties owned several radio and television stations. The government-funded newspaper *The Daily Graphic* was considered by journalists and leaders in both parties to be neutral compared to party-aligned media. Thus, while journalists in Ghana are rarely jailed or harmed by the government, the partisan affiliations of several media outlets threaten their independence. Overall, Ghana's media environment allowed people the freedom to express themselves through on-air and online platforms in sometimes raucous debates without expecting government harassment.

The political environment lent itself to raucous exchanges between supporters of both presidential candidates, and more than a few insults were exchanged on radio and television stations aligned with either the NDC or the NPP. There was a particular problem with a type of radio phone-in callers who are locally called "serial callers" (Tettey, 2017). These callers would phone in to multiple radio stations each day to vent about issues and candidates they disliked or

to praise those they liked. Some of them could be extreme in their positions, and as Tettey (2017) argued, there is a real possibility that the practice could devalue the quality of public debates and lead to the "intensification of conflict and . . . political fragmentation" (p. 687). While some of these actors were self-directed, some worked for political campaigns in the lead-up to the elections and shared campaign talking points on air. During my fieldwork, I spoke to some serial callers who acknowledged coordinating calls with campaigns. For example, one aligned with the NPP described the calculations that went into his choice of stations to engage with:

> I won't take my issue to Radio Gold. I won't take my issue to Unity FM. No, they will cut it into pieces. They also won't come to Omar FM, so we have certain outlets that we feel more comfortable with (RNLB).[59]

In some cases, he noted, he got himself invited to radio stations to argue with opponents. These heated debates and insults are behaviors that campaign leaders were careful to avoid explicitly identifying with. They worried that endorsing such behaviors could tarnish their image and turn off some voters who were complaining about the state of political discourse. While they wanted to participate in every public space for voters' attention, they were also concerned about public perception.

Print Media

Ghana has a long and proud history of fearless journalism in print media. One of the earliest publications in colonial British West Africa, *The African Morning Post,* was published from Accra by pro-independence nationalists from across West Africa (Ahmad et al., 2016; Biney, 2011; Israel, 1992). It published articles critical of British colonial rule and inspired several young people who would lead independence struggles in their home countries, including

[59] Interview conducted on September 25, 2016.

its editor-in-chief Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) (Biney, 2011). By 1948, after splitting from the UGCC, Nkrumah founded the CPP and established *The Accra Evening News*, which would serve as his mouthpiece to promote his "Self-Government Now" demand. Even the gradualist *Pioneer,* founded in 1939, initially refused to promote Britain's World War II propaganda until 1941 despite Britain's control of the country (Israel, 1992). More recently, journalists such as Anas Aremeyaw Anas have regularly exposed corruption and wrongdoing (BBC, 2018b; Mark, 2015). Like their counterparts in broadcast, newspaper journalists were involved in covering the election and informing the educated audience they served. Despite the partisan slant of many outlets, they were an important source of news. Radio and television stations reviewed newspapers every morning, which sometimes set the agenda for their news bulletins for the rest of the day.

Overall, while broadcast media remained the most popular form of mass communication, WhatsApp was the most popular medium for interpersonal and group communication. Though Ghanaians enjoyed freedom of speech comparable to most democracies around the world, the influence of media owners in the coverage of news concerned both political actors and international observers. In this scenario, the concern was less about government control or suppression and more about the decisions and practices of private individuals and political elites who could use mainstream and/or digital media to turn people against one another.

The Campaign Organizations

The NPP and the NDC had similar campaign structures, with a national office, a regional branch in each region, constituency offices, a district coordinator, and a voting area office. Below, I discuss the campaign structure of each political party and the main political actors who played important roles in shaping the campaigns. The estimates used in the discussion were

derived from interviews with national leaders and the party constitution of the NPP but relied only on the constitution of the NDC because no one from the NDC was willing or able to discuss campaign team numbers in interviews.[60]

NPP Campaign Organization Structure

The NPP campaign organization followed the lines of the existing administrative structure of the country. The campaign had a National Campaign Coordinating Committee (NCCC), regional campaign teams, constituency campaign teams, a district coordinator, and polling station teams.

The National Campaign Coordinating Committee, or NCCC. The presidential candidate of the NPP, Nana Akufo-Addo, announced the members of the 2016 campaign committee on October 19, 2015, a full year before the election, giving the team enough time to plan for the election.[61]

The list is presented in Table 7. A unique aspect of Ghanaian elections is that primaries are conducted very early, giving candidates the necessary time to gain national visibility and organize campaign teams. For example, Akufo-Addo won the NPP presidential primary on October 18, 2014, at a National Congress of the party held across the 275 constituencies in the country.[62] He campaigned against Mr. Alan Kyeremanten and Mr. Francis Addai Nimo, who polled a combined 5.65% out of the 144,000 votes cast in the primary.

[60] The interview with RNLF was particularly helpful for understanding the NPP campaign, as he had the numbers to support what others had talked about in general terms. Interview conducted on November 8, 2016.
[61] http://nanaakufoaddo.org/index.php/382-npp-2016-campaign-structure
[62] https://www.todaygh.com/npp-congress-nana-addo-wins-117413-votes/

Mr. Akufo-Addo had two full years to plan for the election, and he constituted his campaign team a year before the election. For most campaigns in Africa and elsewhere in the world, the window for election campaigning is much shorter.

Table 7: Composition of the National Campaign Coordinating Committee

Position	Occupant
Acting National Chairman	Mr. Freddie Blay
Minority Leader in Parliament	Mr. Osei Kyei Mensah Bonsu
10 Regional Chairmen	(Names were not released within the list)
Core NCCC Leaders	
Chair	Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo
Vice Chair	Mr. Mahamudu Bawumia
Campaign Manager	Mr. Peter MacManu
Strategist	Mr. Dan Botwe
Policy Advisor	Mr. Boakye Agyarko
Director Finance/Fundraising	Mr. Ken Ofori Atta, assisted by Mr. Kwabena Amankwaa-Yeboah (National Treasurer)
Research Director	Mr. Victor Newman
Communication Director	Mr. Nana Akomea
Spokespersons	Mr. Mustapha Hamid, Mr. Yaw Buabeng Asamoah, and Ms. Olivia Quartey
National Organizer/Secretary General	Mr. John Boadu
National Nasara Coordinator	Mr. Kamal-Deen Abdulai
National Youth Organizer	Mr. Sammy Awuku
National Women Organizer	Ms. Afisa Otiko Djaba
Technology Director	Mr. Joe Anokye
Director of Elections	Mr. Martin Adjei Mensah-Korsah
Dir of Campaign Admin/Logistics	Mr. Edward Boateng
Special Appointments	
Taskforce for Special Operations	Mr. Stephen Ntim, Mr. Gyiele Nurah and Mr. Stephen Yakubu
Campaign Aides to the Presidential Candidate	Mr. Musah Iddrisu Superior, Mr. Pius Hadzide, Mr. Charles Nii Teiko Tagoe, Mr. Justice Mr. Newton Offei, Ms. Fatimatu Abubakar, Ms. Clara Napaga Tia Sulemana
Chair, Campaign Advisory Committee	Former President (Mr.) John Agyekum Kufuor

Source: Official announcement: http://nanaakufoaddo.org/index.php/382-npp-2016-campaign-structure.

The 71-year-old Akufo-Addo comes from a prominent political family in Ghana and had contested and lost the presidential election on two previous occasions in 2008 and 2012 (Arthur, 2016). Some campaign leaders noted that 2016 would likely have been his last attempt at the presidency if he had lost. Thus, the campaign members were even more motivated than usual to put in the effort to elect a man that many, across all leadership levels, said held the solution to the problems of the country. The NCCC consisted mostly of core NPP leaders and a few external experts brought in to help.

In compiling the list of leaders, I made a deliberate decision to use the gendered titles, "Mr." and "Ms." to signify how predominantly male the team was. A few members of the team had other titles, such as "Dr.," but such titles would not readily indicate the gender of the person they describe. The unequal representation of women in Ghanaian politics has been a focus of scholarly attention. Odame (2010) attributed the very low rates of women participation in local and national political offices to low education, low income, and a lack of confidence. Others observed similar trends and recommended affirmative action to improve female participation (Adams, Scherpereel, & Jacob, 2016; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). The lack of women in the campaigns affected my research by restricting the female interviewees available to the few women in the campaign who were often given multiple assignments that made it difficult for them to find to talk to me. Thus, while the interviews represent a predominantly male view of the campaign, it reflects the campaign itself and its digital media practices.

Regional Campaign Committees. Each of Ghana's 10 administrative regions had a campaign team solely responsible for coordinating activities within the region and between the regions and the NCCC. The chairperson of the party for each region automatically served as the head of the regional campaign team. In the Greater Accra region where the national headquarters is located,

a former parliamentarian and leader of the party in the region, Mr. Ishmael Ashitey, headed the campaign. Other members of the regional campaign team included the entire regional party executive team; NPP MPs in the region or regional parliamentary candidates (where there is no NPP incumbent); and constituency chairpersons, secretaries, and organizers. The NCCC advised the regional campaign committees to coopt 10–30 members of the party in addition to the core regional executive committee. Party leaders used the term "coopt" to mean "recruit."

Constituency Campaign Committees. The constituency campaign committees comprised the constituency party executive members and the parliamentary candidate, with some "coopted" members of the party. The parliamentary candidate (PC) and the constituency chairperson co-chaired the constituency campaign committees. In reality, the PC was in charge of the constituency campaign committee because it serves as the coordinating body for his or her campaign. On occasions when I followed campaigns on door-to-door canvassing trips, the parliamentary candidates talked to voters about their candidacy and that of the presidential candidate. The PC was also significantly responsible for funding the campaign, though some funding came from the NCCC.

Zonal Campaign Committees. The zonal campaign committees consisted of no more than five members: a coordinator, an NPP assembly member (if there is an NPP district assembly member in the zone), and three coopted NPP members. They bridged the constituency and various polling stations, which they were responsible for coordinating.

Polling Station Campaign Committees. The polling station campaign committees comprised all the five NPP executive committee members in a constituency, as well as up to 20 coopted party members from the polling station. For every polling station, there were potentially 25 campaign members to campaign door to door. A national campaign leader explained that the

emphasis emerged from their understanding that local people know how to speak to their neighbors and draw on the trust they share to convince them to vote for NPP candidates.

The estimates in Table 9 were derived from interviews with national leaders of the party and the party constitution where the number of executives at each level is stated. The number of target recruits was derived from an interview in Accra with a national member of the campaign with direct involvement in managing campaign activities.[63] The organizational structure of the campaign implies that there were over 150,000 people actively involved in campaigning at all levels during the 2016 election for the NPP. It is easy to miss the enormity of the logistical challenges that this presents without looking at the numbers. The regions had 16 executive members and a target of 10–20 recruits, but I used the lower limit of 10 recruits, bringing the total to 26 members per region.

Table 8: Estimate of NPP Campaign Members[64]

Level	Members per level	Multiplier	Total
National	20	1	20
Regional	26	10	260
Constituency	20	275	5,500
Zonal (district)	3	216	648
Polling station	5	28,921	144,605
Total			**151,033**

[63] RNLF, interview conducted on November 8, 2016.

[64] Data calculated from the estimates given by party leaders, based on official instructions for recruiting campaign members.

The constituencies had 16 executive members, who were not regional campaign members, with instructions to recruit as many as they wanted, and I estimated they could only recruit an additional four members, bringing their total to 20 per constituency. The zones were instructed to recruit five members, but in my estimation, they could only achieve three. The polling stations were instructed to recruit up to 20, in addition to five executive members, but I assume they could not recruit anyone. These very conservative estimates suggest that there were over 150,000 campaign members across the country. A breakdown of the estimate is presented in Table 8.

NDC Campaign Structure

The NDC had an organizational structure similar to that of the NPP with minor differences, such as how they named each level in the organization. The campaign had officers at the same administrative divisions around the country as the NPP, but they refused to disclose targets for recruitment or actual numbers. According to the NDC's constitution,[65] the party organizational structure is as follows: national, regional, district, constituency, ward, and branch.

The national campaign[66] team had 15 members, in addition to the party chair and national organizer. The team officially "launched" on August 14, 2016 and began campaign activities after that. The national team coordinated the activities of the 10 regional teams. They were responsible for most campaign message creation and dissemination. Being the party in power gave them access to state resources for campaigning in a way that other parties lacked (Gyampo, Graham, & Yobo, 2017; Gyimah-Boadi & Prempeh, 2012). For example, on several occasions when I attended their events, they used government agencies' buses to transport members to

[65] A copy is available here: http://www.codeoghana.org/assets/downloadables/ndc_constitution_webver.pdf
[66] http://ndc.org.gh/index.php/elections/election-2016/national-campaign-team

rallies. Most national team meetings were held at the official presidential palace in Accra, the Flagstaff House.

Like the NPP campaign, the NDC campaign was male dominated, as shown in Table 9. However, proportionally, there were more women in the NDC campaign than in the NPP's campaign. This could have resulted from the NDC's deliberate policy of inclusion, as senior campaign members argued. However, it is worth noting that the positions that women held were more outward-facing roles (e.g., spokespersons), which could be a deliberate public-relations effort to make the campaign come across as more representative of the country. Men exclusively occupied almost all core decision-making positions. While the campaign might have created the illusion of diversity, it was still a largely male affair.

Table 9: NDC National Campaign Team

Position	Occupant
Party Chair	Mr. Kofi Portuphy
National Organizer	Mr. Kofi Adams
Campaign Chair	Mr. Johnson Asiedu Nketsiah
Campaign Coordinator	Mr. Kofi Adams
Deputy Campaign Coordinator	Mr. Samuel Adu Yeboah
Campaign Spokesperson	Ms. Joyce Mogtari Bawah
Deputy Campaign Spokesperson	Ms. Felix Kwakye Ofosu
Deputy Campaign Spokesperson	Ms. Sylvia Osei
Member	Mr. Samuel Ofosu Ampofo
Member	Mr. Dan Abodakpi
Member	Mr. Kofi Totobi Quakyi
Member	Mr. Theophilus Tetteh Chai
Member	Ms. Faustina Nelson
Member	Ms. Sherry Ayittey
Member	Mr. Huudu Yahaya
Member	Mr. Shamsu Kwakwa
Member	Mr. Daniel Ohene Agyakum

Source: Official announcement: http://ndc.org.gh/index.php/elections/election-2016/national-campaign-team.

Similar to the NPP's campaign, the organization of the other levels of the campaign reflected the administrative structure of the country. The regional team was responsible for coordinating the activities of constituencies in each region. In the Greater Accra region, for example, the regional team was based at the former national headquarters of the party and also had some meetings at the residence of the regional minister in the North Ridge area of Accra. The NDC had different names for different levels, while the NPP used the official names of the EC. For example, instead of "Electoral Area," the NDC called their team the "Ward," and the "Polling Station," was called the "Unit," as shown in Table 10.

However, unlike the NPP campaign leaders, who were willing to discuss details of their campaign team numbers, the NDC campaign team generally refused to provide details about their teams' sizes. They discussed how they worked together, and I observed some teams campaigning. The two campaigns were fundamentally structurally similar, and they seemed to imitate each other's campaign practices, including dependence on WhatsApp as a preferred platform for team communication. I highlight these organizational similarities to emphasize that they were similar enough not to be compared to each other but to examples in other countries, especially Western nations that have been more extensively studied.

Table 10: Comparison of NPP and NDC Campaign Structures

NPP Structure	**NDC Structure**
National	National
Region	Region
	District
Constituency	Constituency
Electoral Area/Region	Ward
Polling Station	Unit

Organizing and Managing Political Campaigns with Digital Media

The enormity of the logistical challenges facing the campaigns as they coordinated teams across the country potentially required huge financial resources to execute. They had to ensure that messages from the national team in Accra reached the local levels securely and quickly. National leaders also needed information on events around the country in a timely manner to be able to respond to questions from journalists or to modify campaign messages where necessary. More critically, they had to complete these tasks in a country where the transportation infrastructure remains relatively weak; there were only four functional airports in the whole country at the time of the 2016 election: Kotoka International Airport (Accra), Kumasi Airport, Takoradi Airport, and Tamale Airport. The only ways to access the rest of the country from Accra were by road or water.[67]

The Flow of Information

The flow of information for both parties reflected a top-down structure where information flows from the national office to the lowest level at the polling station. The national campaigns were responsible for planning broad campaign policies and messaging, which the lower levels customized according to local needs. For example, in the NPP, the national secretariat would not send any messages to the constituencies directly. They would send the messages to regional leaders who would then forward them, with comments, to constituency leaders. The national leaders had three main concerns in transmitting messages to lower level leaders: efficiency, speed, and security. As with campaigns anywhere in the world, the presidential campaign in Ghana was, in part, a battle of information management.

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[67] This World Bank report gives a snapshot of the country's infrastructure: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRICA/Resources/Ghana_country_report_2011.01.pdf

Until about two months before the election, the opposition NPP campaign was in serious financial difficulties, with limited funding to pay members for expenses such as campaign trips, and the leaders were expected to use personal funds with the hope of reimbursement once fundraising picked up. At a meeting on September 29, 2016, a campaign leader encouraged members to work hard to demonstrate to potential donors that they could win. He claimed that once the "big men" (wealthy party supporters) believed that the NPP would win, they would begin to write checks. In other words, while the party could not pay for expenses that the members incurred at that point, the campaign had to work even harder to demonstrate its viability to potential donors. One reason for this situation is that political office in Ghana gives the party in power disproportionate access to state resources, often at the expense of the opposition (Gyampo, 2018; Gyimah-Boadi & Prempeh, 2012). Chapter 4 contains a detailed discussion of this as well as an examination of clientelism in Ghana. Thus, WhatsApp especially appealed to the opposition because it was cheap to use compared to in-person meetings or even phone calls.

Though the campaigns used different platforms for internal communication and organizing, the most popular was WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a free messaging app available on most app stores. It uses the Internet data in a mobile phone to exchange messages between two users who have the app on their phones. It was created in 2009 and acquired by Facebook in 2014. As at the time of the election in 2016, WhatsApp had introduced end-to-end encryption, so messages sent between two people could not be read by a third party who did not have access to either the sender's or receiver's device (Rowan, 2018). It is cheaper to use than text messaging because it uses Internet data at a fraction of the cost of sending text messages. Because of the creators' intent to make WhatsApp a global product, they developed it to use minimal data for

transmitting messages, including text, video, and audio (Ahiabenu, 2018; Church & de Oliveira, 2013).

In observing and interviewing leaders of both parties, it became clear that they preferred WhatsApp for internal communication in part out of necessity: It was cheaper. As one constituency leader in the NPP put it, "WhatsApp has helped a lot. It is making things faster and costless for us. I must acknowledge the person who brought WhatsApp. They have really helped a lot" (RNLB).[68] WhatsApp was cheap to use because, from the campaigns' perspective, it was already widely in use, so the app required no financial outlays to start running it. In addition, the campaign did not have to train staffers to use it. Most people were already expert daily users who needed no coaching. Additionally, by working with a platform that people already relied on for daily communication, the campaigns could count on people to use their personal Internet data for communication without reimbursement for every use. This arrangement was especially helpful to the opposition campaign, which had few financial resources available to carry out the election campaign. According to one NPP national leader, it is "convenient, secured, fast, [and] cheap, but it's got limited coverage as against phone" (RNLF).[69] By this, he meant that, even in many rural areas that have access to mobile phone signals, Internet services were not available. Compared to meetings where the team had to worry about transportation costs and allowances, WhatsApp messages had no overhead costs.

The second major concern of several campaign leaders was security. They particularly liked WhatsApp because it offered the assurance of end-to-end encryption. Even some campaign leaders with limited knowledge of how encryption works said they had heard that any messages

[68] Interview conducted on September 25, 2016.
[69] Interview conducted on November 8, 2016.

sent on WhatsApp would remain between them and the receiver. As RNLB[70] put it, "Unless the people on the platform or the person himself has leaked the information, otherwise, I know it is secured." When asked how he knew about the app's security, he explained his experience as follows:

> When you are downloading [WhatsApp], there are some agreements, and then they will tell you that your information on this platform is secured. It doesn't go to the third party and blablabla. And if you agree, you click and then download, so I am presuming and then agreeing that my information on WhatsApp is secured unless the person on WhatsApp you are talking to has leaked it.

Another core member of the NPP regional team with limited knowledge of the technology emphasized the security appeal of WhatsApp even though he did not fully understand it, "These days, WhatsApp, I hear they say when you send it; nobody can pick it up at the background. I don't know how true that is" (RNLE).[71] Though he said he remained careful about what he posted, it at least gave him some confidence in the technology.

WhatsApp also offered efficient, near-instant communication capability. For a campaign with branches across the country, it was vital to communicate in a timely manner. Though it is important for communication to be secure, it is more pressing to reach team members in a timely manner. At the time of the election, several apps (e.g., Viber, iMessage, Telegram, WhatsApp, etc.) allowed speedy communication. For most of them, the main obstacle was the level of adoption in the country. Telegram and iMessage had end-to-end encryption, but the adoption rate was low compared to WhatsApp. Most members of the campaign teams I interacted with used

[70] Interview conducted on September 25, 2016.
[71] Interview conducted on October 20, 2016.

Android phones. Viber was probably the second most popular app in the country, but it lacked end-to-end encryption.

In Ghana, an estimated 90% of all online communication in the country is conducted via WhatsApp (Ahiabenu, 2018), an indication of how important it is to every aspect life in the country. Both the NPP and the NDC campaigns relied heavily on it for internal communication. WhatsApp meets all the basic needs of campaigns in terms of security, speed, and cost. As one NPP constituency leader put it, "It is fast, cost effective, and . . . everybody is able to express their views on the platform irrespective of geographical location and time" (LCLA).[72]

Networked Campaigning

Both the NDC and the NPP campaigns used WhatsApp groups, which they called "platforms." The campaigns had several dozen platforms for the various teams working at different levels. For example, there was a platform for all national campaign team members in the NPP, a platform for chairpersons of the campaigns in all the regions and a few other regional executives, another for regional communication teams and the national communication director, another for organizers, and another for other divisions within each party's campaign. Each regional campaign team replicated the same organizational platforms, and each constituency did the same. A few members of the national campaign team embedded in the regional platforms, though they hardly participated in conversations on the platforms. For example, the national organizer was in the platform for regional organizers, and the national communication director was in the platform for regional "communicators."

[72] Interview conducted on November 14, 2016.

A national leader in the NPP campaign, RNLF, explained that when national campaign leaders wanted to send a message to every constituency in the country, they would send it first to relevant regional platforms. The regional leader could add some commentary or clarifications and send it to the relevant constituency platforms. The constituency leader could also add clarifications to make it relevant to the constituency and send to zonal and polling stations. A senior member of the NDC campaign who played a central role in their efforts explained what he did:

> If I am sending a message to a region, and I will go and send the message to that platform and say this is for your region, and they will see it. They also have the same platform [more accurately, similar platform] for the constituencies; then, they will pick it and then send it to others (NDNA).[73]

At each level, some leaders from the upper level were members of the lower-level platforms but did not participate in their discussions. If leaders in a constituency wished to send a message to the national secretariat, they followed a similar but upward hierarchical process to ensure that the message was delivered to the relevant person at the national secretariat. The process is illustrated in Figure 1. Thus, while WhatsApp technically provides a flat platform for communication, the campaigns used it to strengthen their hierarchical organizational structure.

Content of WhatsApp Messages

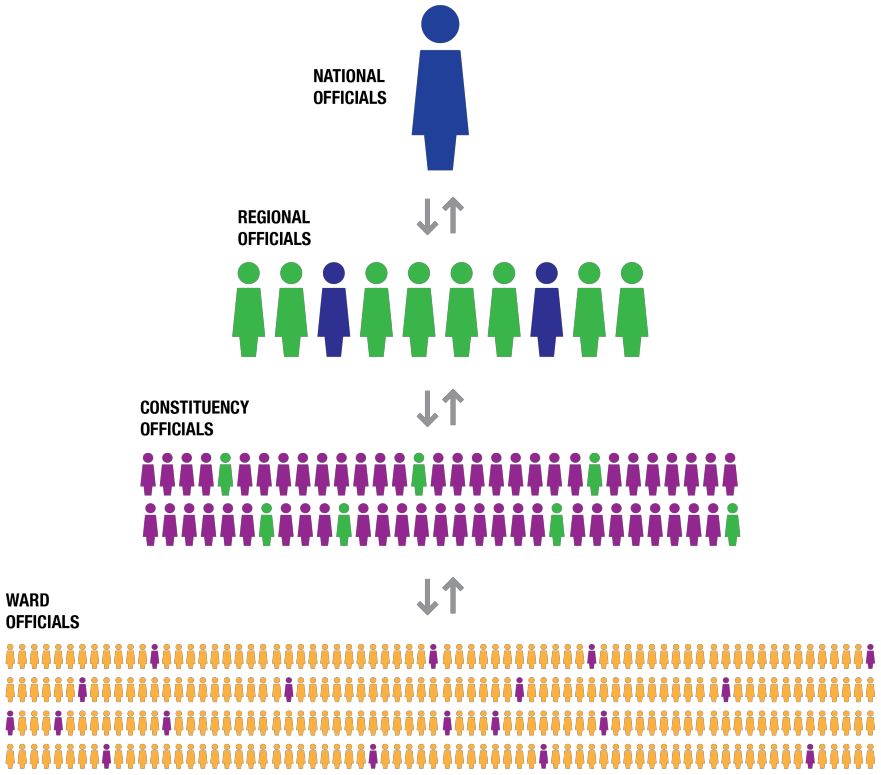
WhatsApp was a core means of daily communication for almost every campaign member I interviewed or observed during the campaign period. It was also a personal form of media. The same app they used for campaign-related communication also contained personal messages exchanged with family and friends. Thus, they were reluctant to allow a researcher access to it.

[73] Interview conducted on October 4, 2016.

What I know about the content of WhatsApp messages emerged from interviews and a few interviewees who showed me their phones and allowed me to view various groups they had joined.

Meeting Schedules. A huge proportion of WhatsApp messages I observed were about campaign meetings held or planned. Many meetings were called within 48 hours or sometimes in as short as a couple of hours. In many cases, a campaign leader would post details such as time, location, and who should attend on the group platform. When a meeting was urgent, they would sometimes call a few members to alert them to check their platform.

Figure 1: An illustration of how messages flow from national to local levels within the campaigns



The cost of such short calls is low because there is no need for explanations, as everyone can check details once they know an important message was posted on the platform. Sometimes, the leader would only need to call whoever had not indicated seeing the message to ensure that they had actually seen it. From a cost and efficiency perspective, WhatsApp ensures that messages are easily sent to the right persons at almost no monetary cost to the sender.

Videos/Pictures of Events. Another common use of WhatsApp during the campaign period consisted of sharing of videos and pictures from events. After events, members would sometimes share pictures and videos directly with team members or post a few on team platforms. A senior member of the social media team explained that they would usually take some of these videos and pictures, repurpose them with campaign messages, and share them again, sometimes on other campaign online accounts (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) (RNLN).[74] Cross-platform sharing of these types of content enabled messages to spread as widely as possible at no extra costs.

Campaign Materials. Besides the sharing of audiovisuals and pictures, branded campaign materials ranging from letters to posters were shared on the platforms. In the early days of the campaign when funding was limited, WhatsApp kept the campaign going by facilitating the spread of campaign materials among members (RNLN). RNLN described the social media team as part of the "heroes" who won the election. For example, he noted, they would create a campaign poster and share it on WhatsApp platforms. People would take, print, and distribute it offline with their own money. In other words, WhatsApp empowered the campaign to go "viral" offline. When we think of content virality, we often think of content being shared thousands of times on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. However, in the case of Ghana, where a significant number of people did not have access to the Internet or social media at the

[74] Interview conducted on December 28, 2016.

time of the campaign in 2016, the ability to make content go viral offline is important. It increased the visibility of the presidential candidate; as a result, some voters were unaware of the party's financial constraints.

Feedback and Clarifications. Another core type of content on WhatsApp was related to receiving feedback on messages and clarifying questions for lower-level leaders. Usually, on the platforms I observed, leaders would post a message on a platform instructing, say, regional leaders to prepare for a visitation by the presidential candidate. The same message could also be forwarded to constituencies and even polling stations in the town or city where it was scheduled. If there were confusions about specific details, anyone in the information flow could ask questions, and a team member was usually able to respond with timely clarifications. That nimbleness reduced the number of questions that national leaders had to answer or the need to wait for the initial sender at the national secretariat to respond. Except one constituency leader who reported raucous debates on their constituency platform,[75] every other member I interviewed noted that participation on their platforms was orderly and helped teams work together and encouraged peer participation in solving common problems for the campaigns. Benkler (2007) argued that peer contributions to commonly available platforms may be motivated by both internal factors (e.g., the satisfaction contributors derive from it) and external factors (e.g., prestige and financial rewards). In the case of campaign members, prestige was an important factor for participation. As discussed in Chapter 4, participating in a campaign could increase a member's reputation and visibility within their parties.

Collating Election Results. A major challenge that both the NPP and NDC campaigns faced in the run-up to the December 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections was how to collate the

[75] This leader worked with one of the campaigns in the outskirts of Accra. The interview was conducted on December 2, 2016.

results of the elections before the EC could do so. In the aftermath of the 2012 presidential election, the NPP contested the result of the election in court. The ensuing legal battle revealed problems in how the EC transmitted election results, which made them susceptible to possible manipulation. When electoral officers announced official results at polling stations in the 2012, they did not have a legal obligation to give copies of the results to party agents assigned to polling stations. The NPP asserted that many of the results were changed between polling stations and the constituency collation centers in favor of the NDC. They argued that, even when results got to collation centers, the lack of extra copies for parties to crosscheck official tallies made it easy for the party agents of the NDC to manipulate results by having the returning officer, for example, enter 72 for their party instead of 27. However, this narrative was more a motivation strategy for their agents than an accurate representation of the events of previous elections. Both discussions in the party meetings I attended[76] and the data available from the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)[77] indicate that the level of malpractice was not significant enough to have changed the outcome of the 2012 elections.

The NPP and the NDC campaigns assigned at least two party agents to each polling station across the country to monitor voting and send results to the parties' constituency collation teams. For the NPP, the effort involved a clever but simple technological setup to report and collate election results across the country. A team was created at each constituency headquarters to receive election results and enter them into a national database. The database was a brainchild of a former NASA engineer, Joseph Anokye, who returned from the US to lead the technology

[76] Most of these meetings were held in Accra at an NPP campaign office with senior campaign leaders in advance. They willingly gave me permission to attend the meetings with the understanding that I would not identify anyone or their specific views during such meetings.

[77] CODEO does a parallel vote tabulation, and the results of the 2008 and 2012 tabulations are here: http://www.codeoghana.org/pvt-results-2008-2012.php

team of the NPP campaign. The team developed a simple piece of software that could collate results from different polling stations and visualize the data in real time. Though the technology team would not discuss what the software was based on, I sat with a constituency collation center and saw the software at work as the election results streamed in. It appeared to be a Google Sheets plugin that provided a simple interface for entering data and another interface for outputting visualizations. It showed how many votes in a constituency have been reported, how many were estimated to be outstanding, and the NPP and NDC shares of votes for both presidential and parliamentary elections. The genius of the program was that it required little training to use. Anyone who could read and knew how to use Microsoft Excel could easily use the collation software. Its simplicity made its deployment across the country easy even in constituencies with a low level of technology skills: As long as they could find a couple of people with Microsoft Excel skills, they could run a collation operation.

The collation team at the constituency I observed, which campaign leaders said reflected the setup nationwide, had a couple of young men entering results and two young women receiving results from polling stations via WhatsApp. All of them seemed to be under 25 years old, which suggests that the most important considerations for the roles were technology skills and trustworthiness. As early as 6:20 p.m., the results had started to come in. When a result was declared at a polling station, the NPP campaign agents at the station would take a picture of the result sheet signed by all party agents and send it to the WhatsApp number monitored by the two women. When a result came in, one of the women would read it out. One of the men would repeat it, and the second man with the computer would then enter it into the collation program. The two men changed places when one got tired and wanted to rest. If the writing on a result sheet was unclear, they got together and looked at it to decide what the numbers were. On a few

occasions, agents at some polling stations did not know where to send results but had the number of someone at the center. The second woman, who was not directly monitoring the WhatsApp number for results, received the calls and gave the WhatsApp number to the agents, who would then forward the results.

The centrality of WhatsApp to the NPP collation process is difficult to overemphasize. WhatsApp provided a secure means to forward pictures of official election results to the collation centers. It would have been much more expensive to transmit picture results via text messages, charged at MMS rates, and it would still require the Internet to transmit. WhatsApp provided an optimized system with comparatively less data use and got the job done. Text messages would be insecure and potentially susceptible to third-party interception. With WhatsApp, there was no need to worry about security, as it provided end-to-end encryption. Furthermore, much back and forth between collation officers at the Center and party agents at polling stations facilitated quick decision making. While some of these decisions where handled via phone calls, a great deal involved sending instructions via WhatsApp throughout the voting period even before collation started.

The Limits of WhatsApp

Though WhatsApp allowed easy and effective communication within political campaigns, there were drawbacks. The most significant drawback of WhatsApp is that campaigns had limited access to data about who used the platforms or how they used them. As of the time of the campaign, WhatsApp only provided minimal analytic data or control. A group administrator had little control over how users participated in a group once they had joined. Administrators could add users, remove users, or block them, but they could not control how users interacted with each other or how they used the content posted on the platforms. This had

consequences for campaigns, as they constantly worried that a bad-faith actor on any of their platforms could share campaign information with opponents. In one of the NPP meetings[78] I attended, members spent nearly 30 minutes debating how best to keep content shared on their platforms safe from infiltrators. Compared to presidential campaigns in the US that develop advanced digital platforms that can track how their platforms are used, campaigns in Ghana did not have that capacity. Maybe in the future, if platforms like WhatsApp introduce business accounts with the potential for more analytics and control for group administrators, it would help campaigns in Ghana and similar societies to have peace of mind about their campaign data.

Surveillance, Control, and Resistance within Campaigns

Campaigns in Ghana had no in-depth analytic data on who used their WhatsApp platforms, but they devised new ways of monitoring the activities of users through direct human monitoring (although campaign leaders denied that the purpose of embedding leaders within platforms was for monitoring). Direct monitoring in this context occurs when the observation of the actions of social actors is unmediated by analytic software. In the case of Ghana, campaigns embedded leaders in the immediate lower-level platforms with the goal of observing the actions of users, giving feedback when necessary but watching for acts of disruption or noncompliance with campaigns rules. For example, national leaders embedded within regional platforms, regional leaders embedded within constituency platforms, and constituency leaders embedded within district or polling station platforms if they had dedicated platforms. Although the official reason for embedding leaders in platforms was to make information flow faster and better, it

[78] Meeting held on October 20, 2016 in Accra.

potentially had a chilling effect on how members used the platforms and also served as a means of monitoring individual members' contributions to campaign efforts.

The first time I heard about this was during a campaign meeting on September 29, 2016, in Accra, as described at the beginning of the dissertation. The debate about whether it was proper to post jokes on the campaign platform ended with an admonition from a senior leader in attendance who asserted that, if members were interested in moving up the party ladder, posting irrelevant content could jeopardize their prospects. He mentioned a couple of national leaders on the platform, stressing that "they are watching us." He explained that, while there was nothing wrong with sharing jokes, members did not want to come across as being "unserious." Silence fell on the room. No one asked further questions because the message was clear. If they wanted to advance in the party, they needed to be seen as reliable and focused, not as a nuisance to campaign efforts. From their discussions, it became clear that being serious was less about avoiding jokes as it was about not being perceived as a joker. It was about strategically prioritizing how one presents one's image to those with the power to promote or demote. Though the campaign did not officially announce or confirm that it was monitoring members' activities, some members interpreted the presence of higher-ups in their platforms as evidence of such practices.

Some national campaign leaders[79] of both parties explained that they encouraged higher-up leaders to join lower-level platforms so they could answer questions or send feedback to the national committee. However, from the few platforms I reviewed and interviews with campaign leaders of both parties, leaders embedded in lower-level platforms almost never actively

[79] This observation emerged from interviews conducted in the campaign offices of both the NPP and the NDC with members of the National campaign committees of both parties. Regional and constituency leaders also confirmed their experience of the monitoring of others and the awareness that higher-ups were monitoring them.

participated in discussions. They lurked quietly in the background, so most participants in a platform most likely did not even realize it. They hardly ever actually answered any questions on the platforms, and leaders across both parties responded to questions about this form of passive participation with variations of "it is not my job to post there." In effect, where there is no analytic capability, the lurking "watcher" becomes a human analytics tool, observing actions and quietly judging them. As one national leader in the NDC, who showed me his membership in over 500 platforms and over 100,000 unread message notifications, put it, "I do not comment. I only read, and if there is something, I send you a private message or call you" (NDNB).[80] This particular leader played a central role in the campaign and, as a result, joined unofficial platforms supportive of the NDC candidate, President John Mahama. His goal, he explained, was to understand what was going on even outside the official campaign platforms. He had multiple mobile phones, always charged, to see what was going on. In most groups, he had trusted people who would draw his attention to specific discussions and members when necessary.

One weakness of this practice by both parties is that the "lurker" can only see what members post but not how many times they visit the platforms or share content from the platforms, which are forms of participation in a campaign. At the same time, for members who were aware that they were being watched—like those in the meeting described earlier—one could imagine that they may engage in performative actions that reflect good campaign membership while ignoring other actions that could be useful to the campaigns but would remain invisible to the passive lurker. Indeed, a regional campaign member explained that he was careful about sharing information on the platforms he joined because he knew people were watching. For example, when he found information about the campaign or candidates, he would

[80] Interview conducted on October 6, 2016.

rather ask a leader to share it than do so himself. He insisted, "I don't. Unless it is an information that I want to verify because all the messages come from up. Those below, we are not allowed to" (RNLG).[81]

To be a good campaign member is to post or respond to posts on the platforms in a "serious" manner and engage in activities to create a perception of both respecting the party hierarchy and not being a distraction. In situations where there is near-universal commitment to winning an election, as was the case of the NPP, this would not be a problem. In a situation where there is less commitment, one could imagine members trying to game this system by continuing to act like good campaign members while avoiding potentially beneficial activities invisible to leaders.

Additionally, the ability of the lurker to be effective was significantly constrained by how many platforms he or she joined and monitored. This was even more acute in cases where the lurker had to engage in active deliberations on their own platforms. For example, the NDC leader, who had 125,284 unread notifications from the platforms he had joined, could not possibly effectively monitor everyone on the platforms or respond in a timely manner. I asked how he could possibly know what was going on in the platforms if there were so many notifications he could not read them all. He noted that there were a few trusted regional and constituency leaders who would directly contact him if he needed to respond to a situation or if someone was being disruptive. However, he said pensively, he was losing sleep because he had to constantly check WhatsApp for updates around the country. It was a normal part of campaigning, he assured me with a smile. Though WhatsApp made it easier for him to monitor events around the country, it increased his stress level and decreased his effectiveness as a

[81] Interview conducted on November 16, 2016.

campaign leader. Yet, with no alternative means of managing information and people, WhatsApp offered him and his national team members the capacity to receive more feedback from around the country than previously possible.

Beyond Digital Media: Relationship-Based Campaigning

Though campaigns mostly used WhatsApp to organize their teams, both campaigns were quick to declare that "social media" were not their favorite means of mobilizing voters. In both parties, there was emphasis on retail campaigning. An NPP regional leader who played a central role in the campaign explained, "We communicate with the voters one on one. We call it the 'retail campaign.' It is like you are selling something in bits and pieces to people" (RNLA).[82] He said that, based on evaluations of campaign strategies used during previous elections, the party decided that holding big rallies or using radio stations (the most pervasive medium in the country) did not have the same level of effectiveness as having one-on-one contact with voters. Another NPP constituency campaign leader responsible for organizing the campaign team in his constituency called it "call door-to-door, house-to-house" campaigning (RNLB). He explained that he and his team aimed to visit every voter in their constituency. Their efforts focused on using voter registration data to identify and contact swing voters. He described how they trained their mobilization team to embark on door-to-door canvassing:

> We tell them what they will go and say. When you go to house, what should you do. We also do research. Where is our stronghold? Where is our weak point? Who belongs to NDC? Who belongs to NPP? We should be able to identify houses within the polling station so the polling station members

[82] Interview conducted on September 15, 2016.

> should be able to know at least 60% of the individuals living around. Who is around this area? And who is an NDC or an NPP [member]? Because you live with them, so you should be able to identify them. You know them. You eat with them. So, if somebody is an NDC [member], if he comes here, I should be able to identify that he is an NDC [member]. The next house is an NDC [house]. This house is an NPP [house]. The next two houses are NPP [houses]. Even in this house, three are NDC [members]; one is NPP [member]. I should be able to tell you so that when I am turning up with my message, I know who to spend more time with. But if you are an NPP [member], I will not spend too much time with you because definitely you will vote for me. But if you are an NDC [member] and a very staunch NDC [member], I don't need to spend my time with you. But the intermediate, whom we call floating voters, I should be able to identify them and then send my message to them and preach the gospel according to NPP, according to Nana Akufo-Addo (RNLB).

However, NPP leaders were not the only ones focused on reaching voters at homes through face-to-face contacts. An NDC constituency leader responsible for coordinating activities his constituency described a similar process of visiting voters at homes and how they decided which houses to visit.

> Because we are in the area, if you know every house, you know this is an NPP house and this is an NDC house. [If] they are mixed and the moment you enter you know one or two people there, and they can tell you this door is NPP door and the other, NDC door. So, do not go there, or this person is a

> die hard, you understand . . . if you are going house to house . . . . I need to have three or two executives from that area to follow me, and those executives know those who are NPP [members] and those who are not NPP [members], and even if you go to talk to the NPP people, . . . the person can tell you "for me, whatever you say, I belong to the NPP, and nothing will change my mind so you carry on." NPP man can go to NDC [members], and they will tell you the same thing (NDCB).[83]

A few things are worth unpacking from what both campaigns claimed. First, they both claimed to segment voters in three broad categories and only focus primarily on one: swing voters. They assumed that party members would vote, whether prompted or not, and that strong supporters of their opponents were a lost cause. This differs from campaigns in the West, which generally aim to turn out the base and draw enough independents to win elections. Unlike those in the West, Ghanaian campaigns assume prior motivation of supporters to vote, so they do not spend much time and resources on them. Campaigns only pay attention to known party members or supporters closer to election day when they would need them to bring swing voters to the polling station. Swing voters are judged as likely to be persuadable because they are uncommitted.

Though campaigns assume that their supporters are motivated to vote, they also assume that they want party-branded souvenirs, such as t-shirts and caps, to express pride in the candidates they have supported. As I travelled across the country, several NPP leaders complained about not having enough party paraphernalia to distribute to their supporters. At the same time, I saw the distribution of souvenirs at NDC rallies, and hardly any of the leaders

[83] Interview conducted on November 8, 2016.

interviewed complained about not having enough. As the party in power, the NDC had more resources than their opponents. While some scholars consider these "gifts" as vote buying, the campaign leaders considered them as more of a cultural practice of courtesy than an attempt to influence already-decided voters. Party paraphernalia should be distinguished from more substantive gifts (e.g., food, money, etc.) (Tornyi, 2016) that some parties have been accused of using to influence chiefs and voters.

As I followed campaigns on house-to-house visitations, the purpose gradually became clear. On a particular instance in the Odododiodio area of Accra, the NPP campaign team I was following met a woman who was ambivalent about the party's candidate for parliament. The team spent several minutes answering her questions, and when she eventually came around and declared her support for the candidate, she was given a party t-shirt, and everyone clapped when she wore it. Someone on the team commented that she should wear it everywhere so that their opponents know that she was no longer available for them. Several examples of this happened with both parties as they went canvassing: Party souvenirs seemed to indicate which party an individual supported, but they did not necessarily mean that the person had been bribed to vote for a candidate. It was more an expression of support than an inducement to support. Campaigns knew and discussed how to handle reports that voters were accepting t-shirts from different parties, which would made it difficult to know who they supported.

Second, rather than using a national database to coordinate mobilization efforts, campaigns relied on the local knowledge of party members and supporters to identify whom to mobilize. In the constituencies I observed in different regions, constituency leaders kept voter registers in exercise books that guided their house-to-house canvassing. The register contained names, party affiliations (mostly party members who had reported having registered to vote),

house addresses, and passport photographs. They then relied on these party members to identify swing voters in their houses or neighborhoods. As Hersh (2016) asserted, identifying the right voters to mobilize is an uphill task even for the much-vaunted Obama campaign. Hersh noted that, where voter data were not publicly available, campaign field workers had a frustrating experience using commercial data to identify the right voters to contact to get out the vote. For a campaign in a developing country with limited resources, low-technology skills among campaign workers, and relatively low digital media penetration, doing a GOTV campaign through a national database would be a nightmare. However, by depending on the existing relationships of their members at the local level, campaigns solved their mobilization problem. I call this relationship-based campaigning.

In contrast with technology-based campaigning, relationship-based campaigning emphasizes organizing founded on relationships that campaign members have in their local communities. Moreover, relationship-based campaigning centers on local people and their knowledge of communities. In relationship-based mobilizing, technology plays a minimum role in deciding which voters campaign members visit and how they interact with them. Technology-based campaigning, on the other hand, depends on technology platforms to direct campaign volunteers and staffers to mobilize voters on behalf of a candidate. In this model, the campaign provides a custom platform where supporters can sign up and possibly go through a short process of vetting; then, the campaign receives access to voter data and addresses to visit. This model, common for most major presidential candidates in the US, requires a significant investment in a technology platform and access to accurate voter data (Hersh, 2016).

However, relationship-based campaigning is likely to be adopted by candidates with neither the resources nor the access to the data necessary for such a technology-dependent

approach. The campaigns in Ghana exemplified this model. Since they were poorly resourced relative to Western campaigns, they relied on campaign members to use their knowledge of people in their communities to know whom to contact. Though the teams I observed had a manual list of party members registered to vote, which guided their GOTV drives, for the most part, visits to specific communities were led by party members in the community. Relationship-based campaigning depends on social relationships within communities rather than a centralized, data-rich organizing platform managed from a national office.

This approach has two implications. First, it empowers local campaign leaders since they have significant control over how campaigns in their localities run. They are responsible for adapting campaign messages to the realities of their communities, as well as for ensuring that they fit the cultures and aspirations of their constituents. Second, campaigns have to decentralize the responsibilities of voter mobilization. Local leaders are responsible for sending feedback to the national campaign about their progress, and there are no centralized data for the national campaign to analyze aside from the feedback they receive. Local leaders could undermine a candidate they do not wholeheartedly support or aggressively promote those they like. Consequently, campaigns must ensure that key local leaders are well funded and kept happy.

Though local leaders are powerful by virtue of the information and community relations they maintain, they are bound to national leadership by norms of respect and trust. The capacity of local leaders to exercise their power against their party candidates is constrained by their loyalty to their party. This loyalty stems from the desire of local leaders to move up the leadership ladder of their party and the power of national leaders to confer favors on loyal local leaders. In other words, while local leaders enjoy some power, they remain loyal to their party candidates because their own political future depends on it.

Relationship-based campaigning, as practiced by Ghanaian campaigns, appears effective, especially given the few resources available to the team. An NPP MP explained that he sometimes liked to follow his constituency campaign team on house-to-house visits because it helped him connect with voters.

> People like to see their candidate. For me, the most cost-effective way to campaign is to go round yourself. It is a lot of work, but the impact is low budget, high impact . . . . People like to relate. People like to say, "I have met the MP." People like to say, "I know the MP." People like to say, "I took a selfie with the MP." That is everything. (NDCB)[84]

Even though he used other channels such as Facebook and Twitter to mobilize voters, he said that no other medium has the same personal touch as being physically present to interact with voters. Yet, when he went on such canvassing trips, local party leaders who knew the households on an almost personal level would usually guide him. Thus, when resources are a major consideration for a candidate, a relationship-based model of campaigning is an attractive prospect.

Interactions Between Uses of Traditional and Digital Media

The use of digital media for internal organization within campaigns impacts the interactions of campaigns with traditional media. If campaigns are essentially communication events, as some scholars have argued (Jones, 2014, p. 116), then the goal of campaigns is not just to organize a team of supporters but to convince voters to support their candidate. Campaigns achieve this goal by using every available communication medium to reach as many segments of voters as possible. While campaigns in Ghana preferred personal one-on-one interactions with

[84] Interview conducted on November 17, 2016.

voters, they engaged with new digital media and traditional media, especially FM radio stations across the country. One of the core responsibilities of the regional and national communication teams was to engage with traditional media on behalf of campaigns. Both the NPP and the NDC had communication teams, though the NDC, until recently, called its team a "propaganda team." The NPP team emphasized to me in interviews how the use of "propaganda" by the NDC indicated what the NDC valued in communication with voters—winning votes even if it involved lying to voters. In practice, both campaigns at least embellished the truth in their media appearances. The campaigns used digital media to influence traditional media in two main ways: sharing speaking notes and organizing trending topics on Twitter.

Sharing Speaking Notes

The work of the communication team in the NPP campaign was time intensive. Among campaign members, they were supposed to be the most informed about the campaign promises and policies since journalists could possibly contact them at any time to respond to breaking news. They were expected to phone into programs concerning the campaign if they presented an opportunity to "preach the gospel according to the NPP, according to Nana Akufo-Addo," as one constituency leader in Accra put it. Some fit into what Ghanaians call "serial callers" (Tettey, 2017). As noted above, serial callers phone into radio or TV programs almost on a daily basis to antagonize opponents or defend candidates. As a feature of the Ghanaian political media sphere, some journalists I interviewed described them as exasperating and a constant nuisance to reasonable discussions on air.

For the NPP, coordinating how regional and national leaders, especially the communication team members (generally called "communicators"), interacted with the media was vital for good press. The leaders said they regularly discussed how to manage engagement

with the media either by phoning in or by offering to go on a program as a guest. The national leaders would create short talking points or "speaking notes" most mornings and send them to regional communication leaders, who then shared them with regional communicators. The speaking notes guided communicators as to the issues they should raise during phone-in or in-studio radio appearances. They functioned for both defensive and offensive purposes. On the one hand, they guided communicators in responding to attacks from NDC communicators. On the other hand, they served as a guide about lines of attack against the NDC candidate, President John Mahama. While some broad strategies were discussed in meetings, the execution of day-to-day strategies of engaging the media were coordinated mainly on the campaign WhatsApp platforms.

Organizing Trending Topics on Twitter

Campaign members were not just concerned about direct engagement with traditional media; they also engaged in proxy battles with the NDC campaign to dominate discussions on Twitter. A leading member of the social media team[85] explained that they realized early that Twitter was a poor tool for reaching voters because most people on it were there for entertainment, not politics. Regardless, they decided not to abandon it because of the possibility of missing out on some voters, and researchers have found a similar line of reasoning among European politicians (Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014). The primary goal of social media use in these cases was less for any belief that they would win a significant number of new voters on a particular platform but more related to a desire not to lose a yet undetermined number of voters.

[85] RNLM, interview conducted on December 19, 2016.

An NPP social media team leader[86] explained that they devised a strategy of spending resources strategically to influence conversations on Twitter, relying heavily on pushing their messages out and trending them through coordinated efforts. He said they would coordinate with those he called "influencers"—popular users with the capacity to magnify online messages—to start tweeting about selected topics and hashtags at the same time. This trends desired topics, and thus unsuspecting Twitter users would also become involved and keep it trending, sometimes for hours. Though he claimed that the NDC paid an advertising company to use bots to trend favorable topics, I could not find evidence for it. The NDC team would not discuss their social media strategies, but they trended several topics in the weeks before the election. My observation of trending topics on Twitter before the election indicates the use of similar tactics, with popular users tweeting for both campaigns.

Scholars have found that Twitter could be "used as a tool by politicians and the public to communicate an agenda that, in turn, shapes the media agenda" (Conway, Kenski, & Wang, 2015, p. 374). Thus, when campaigns trend topics, as campaigns in Ghana did, they could have some influence on the mainstream media coverage of issues they care about. Trending topics could give campaigns more visibility among potential voters and form "ad hoc publics" around campaigns (Bruns & Burgess, 2011) and their framing of opponents. Since campaign leaders described investment in social media as minimal compared to other forms of outreach, the ability to achieve either communication or framing (or both) would be a disproportionate positive outcome for campaigns. However, most of these efforts took the form of broadcasting messages rather than engaging voters. Campaigns worked to use social media to achieve and broadcast strategic goals, but they barely interacted with the users they were trying to influence.

[86] RNLM, interview conducted on December 19, 2016.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with how campaigns in Ghana used digital media to organize teams in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election. Digital media reduced the cost of campaigning and increased the speed and security of communication. Rather than reducing hierarchy within the campaigns, they empowered national leaders with a means to organize and maintain the party hierarchy. Unlike Western campaigns, in Ghanaian campaigns, campaign data and tactics remained predominantly localized, giving local leaders a unique place in campaign activities. The tension between the exercise of local and national power, the campaigns' monitoring of activities via WhatsApp, and the consequential offline local relationships characterize the complexities of using digital media in a context where social relationships matter more than technology. On the one hand, technology empowers campaign leaders to watch the actions of lower-level members and potentially know how much they have contributed to campaign efforts. On the other, the possession of local knowledge and relationships by lower-level members allows them significant capacity for actions offline beyond digital capture.

This situation creates a strong motivation for national leaders and local leaders to strive for a symbiotic relationship because they need each other, and technology seems incapable of playing a deciding role in the relationship. The same technology that simplifies an organization's work of campaigning proves handicapped in arbitrating the reward system of the organization.

A scholar of African studies might argue at this point that what I observed is evidence of clientelist relationships between national elites and local power brokers, empowered by digital media. While possible, this situation is not necessarily so. In the next chapter, I take up arguments about clientelism and delineate how the complex relationships that political elites develop with voters may not necessarily be clientelist.

Chapter 4: Digital Media, Presidential Campaigning, and Multiethnic Democracy

Democracy in Decline and the Arrival of Digital Media

In this chapter, I turn to the broader debate around clientelism in African elections and ask the following question: To what extent did clientelism shape the relationships between political elites and voters in the 2016 presidential election in Ghana? Clientelism refers to political relationships between political elites and voters where personal relationships determine voting behavior rather than meritocratic evaluation of candidates for office (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). The literature suggests that chiefs and local leaders in sub-Saharan Africa mediate these relationships to ensure that politicians continue to receive the unquestioning support of the chiefs' constituents, irrespective of the politicians' objective performance in office. In an ideal clientelist case, political elites can identify and punish voters who deviate from an agreed pact. This chapter is concerned with properly conceptualizing clientelism, exploring whether it played a role in the 2016 election, and identifying the role that the use of digital media played in the types of relationships that elites developed with voters.

Politicians in Ghana have complex relationships with ethnic and partisan groups that cannot be accurately described as clientelist. As result of insufficient information about voters' choices and Ghana's secret ballot system, elites did not have the capacity or a strong motivation to identify and punish erring voters during the 2016 campaign period. For most voters, who were either party members without political ambitions or who did not associate with any political party, the ability of politicians to punish them for violating a clientelist pact was negligible. Additionally, campaign leaders felt insecure and unable to predict voter behaviors, so they tried

different tactics to convince voters without any guarantee that specific voters or groups of voters would support them at the ballot box. Though in some cases campaigns believed that party members would not vote for an opponent, they worried that disaffected supporters would stay at home and deny them the numbers needed to win. In some cases, voters could vote "skirt and blouse"—a Ghanaian term for a voter voting for different parties in presidential and parliamentary elections held on the same day—if they were unhappy with a candidate. Also, given the pattern of voting in presidential elections in the past five election cycles, it is difficult to support a claim that Ghanaians vote primarily for clientelist or ethnic reasons.

Furthermore, the use of digital media may have slightly empowered voters by making it easier for them to read or see what candidates were promising different constituencies. This broader perspective could influence voters' decision making as well as candidates' approaches to campaigning. Campaigns would lose credibility if they made unrealistic promises. In the age of social media, voters in one constituency can see the promises made to other constituencies. A campaign's credibility depends, in large part, on voters believing that its promises can be realistically fulfilled. In this scenario, a campaign may perform better by a national message that can be customized to local issues. This conclusion assumes that campaigns do not have the capacity and data to segment and target voters. If they can and do not care about polarization, they could potentially still promise different targeted goods to different segments of voters, as campaigns did in the 2016 presidential election in the US.[87] For example, the winning candidate in the 2016 election in Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, promised all districts and all villages in the country the same things—factories and dams, respectively. Perhaps if a candidate assumes that voters would vote against him or her for promising other communities better goods, it would

[87] This *Wired* article describe how US voters were segmented and targeted with different messages: https://www.wired.com/story/russian-facebook-ads-targeted-us-voters-before-2016-election/.

make sense to make universalistic promises that apply to everyone irrespective of where they live. Crucially, but not covered in this study, once elected, a candidate who makes universalistic promises could selectively implement those promises to favor one group over others. This possibility could moderate how voters evaluate such promises (Taylor, 2017). For example, an Akan voter from the Ashanti region (an NPP stronghold) might evaluate Akufo-Addo's promises and conclude that they, as co-ethnics, would be favored in the implementation of those promises over others. An Ewe voter in the Volta region (an NDC stronghold) might evaluate the same promises and conclude that they were empty promises meant to win an election.

Though scholarly discussions of clientelism on the continent often claim that chiefs play an important role in negotiating and maintaining clientelist relationships between political elites and constituents, I argue that chiefs increasingly play a vague role in how people vote, and a chief's role usually involves less of agenda setting or behavior shaping and more commonly focuses on reflecting the sentiments and wishes of his or her people. The use of digital media may have two important effects in this process: Chiefs may become more careful not to draw constituents' wrath by bucking popular opinion or cozying up to a candidate in a way perceivable as corrupt; such a perception could attract online backlash and ridicule. Additionally, the loudest voices on social media could play an outsized role in shaping what chiefs and political elites consider popular opinion and thus what they promote in interacting with campaigns. This scenario is more likely for chiefs in urban areas who are exposed to regular debates on social media.

Elections and Democratization in New Democracies

Elections are considered as an important way of renewing a democracy and ensuring the participation of citizens in how they are governed (Lindberg, 2009). Ideally, elections force

political elites to convince voters to support them in order to attain or retain power. They have to present ideas to voters with the hope that they would be more convincing than their opponents. The interactions with voters during campaigning afford elites a unique opportunity to understand voters' problems. Once elected, they (ideally) spend the period between elections to fulfill their promises to voters, aware that failures could lead to rejection at the next opportunity at the ballot box. For voters, elections (ideally) present an opportunity to decide if an elected official or party is worthy of more years in power or not (Fiorina, 1981; Popkin, 1994; Przeworski, Stokes, & Manin, 1999). Additionally, elections also constitute a learning opportunity for voters. As they interact with political campaigns and candidates, they learn not just about the actors but also about the political system. Moreover, they are exposed to debates about constitutional, political, economic, and social issues. They become better informed, and some may become engaged citizens. For the occupants of the "highest office in the land," the "Office of Citizen," elections serve to educate and empower them (Lupia, McCubbins, & Popkin, 2000; Popkin, 1994).[88]

The usefulness of an election for strengthening democracy depends on whether it offers genuine, credible, and competitive choices for voters to make informed decisions about who should lead them. If incumbent leaders or aspiring leaders can rely on political clientelism—personal relationships with, or promises of personal benefits to, voters—to gain access to power, the usefulness of elections may diminish over time. According to some scholars, in many transitional democracies in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, clientelist

[88] This phrasing likely comes from former US Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. See https://www.npr.org/2017/11/11/563409708/even-former-presidents-have-to-go-to-jury-duty. President Obama used a variation of it when he said, "The most important title is not 'president' or 'prime minister'; the most important title is 'citizen.'" See https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/09/23/most-important-title-citizen-president-obama-importance-civil-society.

campaigning poses a threat to democratic stability (Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, & Nichter, 2014; Keefer, 2007; Nichter, 2008; Robinson & Verdier, 2013; Samuels, 2002; van de Walle, 2007). Though these scholars generally agree that clientelism is bad for a well-functioning democracy, there is hardly any consensus about what the term means and what sets of interactions between political elites and voters constitute political clientelism. In order to assess the role, if any, that political clientelism played in the 2016 election, the next section presents a definition of the term and examines how it has been used by scholars.

Conceptualizing Clientelism

Political clientelism, van de Walle (2007, p. 50) argued, "exists in all polities." Scholars have documented aspects of it in the US (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987; Jacobson, 2015), Europe (Klein, 2016), and especially in new democracies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Nichter & Peress, 2017; Wantchekon, 2003). It has been referred to and applied using a variety of terms, including "neopatrimonialism," "personal rule," "patronage," "clientelism," "prebendalism," "pork goods," "particularistic goods," "ethnicity," or even "political tribalism," among others. These terms often characterize a "transactional relationship" between a political patron and his or her clientele constituents (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). A patron could be a political candidate, an elected official, a political party leader, or some other political elite with enough resources and motivation to engage in transactional relationships with voters. For this reason, I use the terms "patron," "politician," "political candidate," and "political elite" interchangeably. To arrive at a proper conceptualization of the term, let us first define what it is not and clarify how some terms used to describe it may not fully capture it in the context of African elections.

Neopatrimonialism is widely used interchangeably with clientelism and political corruption in the African studies literature. It serves as a "deus ex machina" concept applied to explain poverty and low levels of economic development (Erdmann & Engel, 2007; Oelbaum, 2002; Pitcher, Moran, & Johnston, 2009). However, neopatrimonialism does not seem to capture the types of relationships that scholars have attempted to describe. Etymologically, it is "a creative mix of two Weberian types of domination: a traditional subtype, patrimonial domination, and legal-rational bureaucratic domination" (Erdmann & Engel, 2007, p. 99). Erdmann and Engel argued that operationalizing the term should take into account two co-existing modes of domination embedded within the concept: patrimonial domination based on "personal relations" and a more legal-rational domination based on "impersonal" bureaucracy. They argued that, while the former is detrimental to democracy, the latter conduces to it.

This understanding of neopatrimonialism, Pitcher et al. (2009) argued, is a "misreading" of Weber's concept of patrimonialism. The original Weberian meaning, they contended, describes a mutually dependent form of domination where political elites exercise power responsibly to earn acceptance from constituents. Their legitimacy, and therefore survival, depends on being acceptable to constituents: "The relationship of domination retains its legitimacy only insofar as both sides recognize their responsibilities to each other" (p. 140). Patrimonialism, therefore, is not inherently detrimental to democracy, just as legal-rational bureaucracy does not necessarily guarantee a democracy. Thus, while neopatrimonialism connotes the idea that both patrimonialism and legal-rational bureaucracy exist side by side, it is incorrect to assume that one is more conducive to democracy than the other. Operationally, it is difficult to empirically test neopatrimonialism because,

> we need not only to be able to clearly delineate neopatrimonial rule and legal-bureaucratic rule, but we must also be able to delineate neopatrimonial and patrimonial rule. Moreover, we must be able to determine if a regime is neopatrimonial or corporatist. And, finally, we must be able to distinguish between different (sub-)types of neopatrimonial rule (Pitcher et al., 2009, p. 109).

Thus, to study neopatrimonialism involves a systematic study of both patrimonialism and the legal-rational bureaucracy of the state, which is beyond the scope of this study. This study is concerned with how political elites interact with voters during a campaign period preceding a presidential election, and neopatrimonialism is relevant to the extent that it explains elite behavior.

Political patronage is used interchangeably with clientelism, but it is slightly different. Some scholars consider it a feature of neopatrimonialism (Bratton & Walle, 1997; Erdmann & Engel, 2007) or even a feature of clientelism (van de Walle, 2007). Van de Walle (2007) described patronage as a "form" of clientelism where "state resources [are used] to provide jobs and services for political clienteles" to buy electoral support (p. 51). However, the distinction by Erdmann & Engel (2007) has particular use for the purpose of analytical clarity. They described patronage as involving an exchange of "favors" or "brokerage of specific services and resources for political support, often in the form of votes" (p. 106) between a political candidate and a group of voters. Clientelism, on the other hand, describes the same practices, but it is between a candidate and individual voters. This distinction is important because, while descriptions of democracies in Europe and North America hardly use the term "clientelism," they often apply the term "patronage." Patronage, by its nature, often requires brokers who stand between the group they represent and the patrons who need support. In the African context, scholars often use

patronage synonymously with "ethnicity" or "tribalism," though some scholars use "clientelism" interchangeably with "patronage." For example, if an ethnic group overwhelmingly supports a candidate who has promised material goods (e.g., cash) or intangible goods (e.g., power, access, or influence), this exchange could qualify as both tribalism and patronage. Assuming that the candidate goes around town distributing money or other goods to people to buy electoral support, that would be clientelism. Making such a distinction allows me to discuss observed behaviors that apply to countries beyond Africa without necessarily overstretching the meaning of the concepts. Both concepts are examined concurrently throughout this chapter.

Patronage and clientelism closely relate to the terms "pork," "club," or "particularistic" goods. Each term refers to the practice where candidates provide electoral groups targeted favors with the hope of winning their votes. What differentiates these goods from more universalistic goods is that they usually exclude anyone who is not geographically or sociodemographically a member of the target group. The goods could be targeted clientelistically if the policymaker creates enough ambiguity for selective implementation to favor specific individuals and groups, or they could be targeted programmatically if everyone in the target group has an equal chance of benefitting irrespective of their support (or lack thereof) for the candidate (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). The former is more common in new democracies, while the latter is more common in old democracies. For the purpose of this study, I am unable to trace the implementation of campaign promises, so I cannot speak to whether promises are implemented in a clientelist manner.

A final type of campaigning involves reliance on personal reputation for electoral success. That is, a politician's reputation for community or constituency service trumps party ideology or even national party performance. This is sometimes called a "personal vote," and it

often works alongside the provision of pork goods. For example, Golden (2003) observed that legislators in Italy deliberately designed inefficiencies into the legal-rational bureaucracy of the state to have opportunities for "constituency service" and to win elections even if their parties fail nationally. A study of 17 countries in Western and Eastern Europe revealed that, where candidates developed personal relationships with constituencies, they were more likely to change parties when their parties lost elections. Over time, party ideology comes to mean less if candidates know that their reputation is enough to win—even at the expense of faithfulness to party ideology (Emanuele & Marino, 2016). In many African countries where most major parties lack a clear party ideology, it is common for politicians to rely on their reputation for prudence or service to their constituencies to win elections (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013). When candidates lose party primaries, they sometimes change parties in order to win general elections. This potential for switches puts more pressure on political parties to build consensus and minimize internal competition, where possible, to prevent defections by popular local politicians who lose party primaries (Ichino & Nathan, 2017).

From the foregoing, it is clear that politicians attempt to establish direct relationships and exchanges with constituents in many ways with the hope of winning elections and maintaining power. In practice, clientelism encompasses many modes of exchanges. The same politician vying for a national office, say president, could combine gifts for individual voters with pork goods to the whole community to further convince them of the candidate's seriousness. Clientelist relationships, Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007) argued, require two conditions to be successful: "a cognitive condition—knowledge of the other side's motivations and payoffs from alternative courses of action" and "a motivational condition—voluntary, spontaneous compliance of constituencies with clientelist inducements"—to "ensure the viability of clientelism" (p. 8).

Where these two conditions are absent, politicians have to be able to monitor and punish defectors. The analysis by Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007), which drew heavily from parties in Latin America with strong political machines, does not readily apply to African political parties that are generally weak and concentrated in major cities (van de Walle, 2007). Even political candidates in Ghana with relatively strong political parties do not possess the capacity to monitor which individual voters support a particular candidate.

Where individual monitoring is too expensive, politicians may construct clientelist bargains with groups (e.g., ethnic or religious groups) because they are easier to monitor than individuals. For example, if a politician consistently receives most votes from a clientele group, he or she does not need to know who within the group voted for him or her. The clientelist bargain between a group and a patron may reach a "self-enforcing equilibrium" where mutual trust and reinforcing an "ongoing network of social relations" ensure that the bargain needs little monitoring (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007, p. 18). Participants in a clientelist relationship unwilling to describe it as such might engage in "preference falsification" to justify voting or bestowing benefits (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007, p. 18). The natural question, then, is whether any of these forms of clientelism apply to Ghana during campaigns.

Political Campaigning and Clientelism in Ghana

As already discussed, scholars of African politics often use the term "clientelism" interchangeably with "tribalism" or "ethnicity." Thus, much of the extant literature assumes that clientelist relationships between elites and voters are often constructed along ethnic lines, in part because ethnic identities provide a bond of trust developed as a shield in the face of colonial oppression and post-colonial, winner-takes-all free market economies (Bates, 1974; B. Berman et al., 2004; Berman, 1998; Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Members of the Akan ethnic group, who make

up nearly half of the population, dominated politics in pre-independence Ghana. Many of the leaders of the nationalist movement who won independence for the country, as well as most national leaders in the first two decades of the post-independence era, were Akans. It was not until Hilla Limann won the presidential election in 1979 that a non-Akan led the national government.

When Jerry Rawlings took power in a military coup in 1981, he significantly shifted the center of political power and redefined the role of the Ewes, another major ethnic group, in Ghanaian national politics. As an Ewe politician put it in an interview, before Rawlings,

> when you [went] anywhere and they found out you were a Voltarian [someone from Volta region, a predominantly Ewe region], you were downgraded, and it came to a time that people were afraid to speak the local language in Accra and elsewhere. When president Rawlings came [to power], all that changed (NDCA).[89]

In other words, Rawlings elevated the role of the Ewes in national politics and created an alternative center of power. Scholarly works on the subject have addressed the various ways in which ethnicity remains a factor, but not a determinant one, in Ghanaian national politics. Revisiting this body of work is beyond the scope of this chapter (Bado, 2017; Chazan, 1982; Elischer, 2013; Langer, 2008; Lentz, 2000; Nugent, 2001; Oelbaum, 2004; Osei & Malang, 2016; Smock & Smock, 1975; Taylor, 2017). My goal is to build on them by discussing the 2016 elections and the role that the use of digital media played in shaping elite–voter relationships.

[89] Interview conducted on November 7, 2016.

Campaigning, Clientelism, and Chiefs as Middlemen

When scholars talk about clientelism in the African context, they often imply that politicians make deals with voters either directly or through local chiefs (Bates, 1974; Berman, 1998). In Ghana, however, the 2016 election and voting patterns in the past five election cycles demonstrated that voters rely on a complex menu of issues in deciding whom to vote for. The NPP lost the 2012 election by losing regions with significant Akan populations, such as the Western, Central, and Brong Ahafo regions. In 2016, all three swung to the NPP in addition to the metropolitan Greater Accra region. Since at least 2000, a winning candidate for the Ghanaian presidency has always won at least two of these four swing regions. Table 11 illustrates how each party has had to win the swing regions in order to win national elections even if it could win a base region easily. While the support bases remain relatively stable for both parties—Ashanti and Eastern regions for the NPP, and Volta, Northern, North East and North West regions for the NDC—votes of the swing regions continue to determine national elections.

Table 11: NDC and NPP Share of Votes by Region, 2000–2016

Region	Party	Mean Vote	2016	2012	2008	2004	2000	Years Won
National Winner			NPP	NDC	NDC	NPP	NPP	
Ashanti	NDC	24.4	23	28	26	22	23	0
	NPP	**74.4**	**76**	**71**	**73**	**77**	**75**	5
Brong Ahafo	NDC	47.2	45	**52**	48	46	45	1
	NPP	**51**	**54**	47	**51**	**52**	**51**	4
Greater Accra	NDC	48	47	**52**	**52**	47	42	2
	NPP	**50**	**52**	47	46	**52**	**53**	3
Central	NDC	45.8	43	**52**	**51**	39	44	2
	NPP	**50.8**	**53**	46	46	**59**	**50**	3
Eastern	NDC	40.4	37	42	41	39	43	0
	NPP	**57.6**	**62**	**57**	**57**	**59**	**53**	5
Northern	NDC	**56**	**56**	**58**	**57**	**58**	**51**	5
	NPP	36.8	42	39	38	35	30	0
Upper East	NDC	**56.8**	**59**	**66**	**56**	**53**	**50**	5

	NPP	29.8	34	29	35	32	19	0
Upper West	NDC	**59.4**	**58**	**66**	**54**	**57**	**62**	5
	NPP	30.4	37	29	38	32	16	0
Volta	NDC	**84**	**81**	**86**	**83**	**84**	**86**	5
	NPP	13.4	17	13	15	14	8	0
Western	NDC	46.2	46	**54**	46	40	45	1
	NPP	**50.8**	**52**	44	**50**	**58**	**50**	4

Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana[90]

For example, winning presidential candidates have won both the Greater Accra and Central regions in all races since 2000. If one were to assume that vote-buying won the swing regions, it would make sense that the party in power after eight years would have more resources to buy more votes. However, the swing regions voted out both the NPP and the NDC after they had been in power and had enough gifts to distribute (Gyimah-Boadi & Prempeh, 2012). At the same time, if people voted consistently along ethnic lines, the NPP would always win, but that has not been the case. Thus, even a common-sense look at the regions of the country would indicate that at least the swing regions could not have voted primarily due to clientelist considerations.

Besides direct elite–voter relationships, local chiefs are often portrayed as powerful brokers in shaping local politics (Baldwin, 2015). In the following sections, I discuss the role that traditional chiefs played in Ghana, as well as other avenues of campaign–voter interactions where clientelist relationships might be developed and maintained.

Chiefs as Gatekeepers

Chiefs play an important role in the life of Ghanaians (Boafo-Arthur, 2001). They serve as cultural gatekeepers, and people generally respect them.[91] Many communities consider the

[90] http://www.ec.gov.gh/

[91] OBSG, interview conducted on December 12, 2016.

chief as the father or mother of his or her people, a nonpartisan figure who represents the interests of everyone. For most major political events (e.g., rallies) that I attended, campaign leaders would usually first visit the local chief to pay their "respects." As a scholar put it, people would be offended if they felt that a campaign or its candidate had disrespected their chief.[92] The meeting between a campaign and a chief is usually scripted and open to ordinary Ghanaians. A campaign would send an advance team to inform the chief of its arrival, and he or she would prepare and wait for them. Since "in African parlance, 'you do not go to a chief's house with an empty hand,'. . . the moment you're entering into a palace, you need to go with something. A Schnapps, an envelope [of cash], a cow, a goat, a sheep, or something" (RNLB).[93] In some cases, the campaigns take pictures of visits and post them on social media to virtue-signal respect to the community. In most cases, the chief enumerates the needs of his or her community, and the visiting campaign leader would promise to help as much as possible if elected. The campaign team then proceeds to the rally venue.

In interviews, Ghanaian politicians, political science scholars, journalists, chiefs, and civil society leaders were almost unanimous in explaining that chiefs have neither the power nor the capacity to influence how people vote. In the Northern region, where chiefs are culturally more respected probably more than the rest of the country, a senior civil society leader asserted that chiefs "are influential because they are the custodians of our culture . . . [but] there is no chief that can sway people's thinking. People are now sophisticated. In the past, yes" (OBSF).[94] He argued that chiefs may secretly support a party or a candidate, but they would not necessarily make it known publicly. The main reason for chiefs not publicly identifying with a candidate can

[92] OBSG, interview conducted on December 12, 2016.
[93] RNLB, interview conducted on September 25, 2016.
[94] Interview conducted on November 29, 2016.

be found in the Ghanaian Constitution, which forbids them from participating in "active politics" (Ghana Constitution, 1992).[95] Like the civil society leader, many politicians on both sides argued that people are now "sophisticated" and that it would be difficult for a chief to tell them how to vote, unlike in the past. The dominant views of members in meetings support this assertion. But, what does sophistication entail? A political science professor at the University of Ghana explained it as follows:

> That is, voters realize that politicians use money gotten from the state in some form for campaigns and so do not necessarily feel obligated to vote for a candidate even if they accept gifts from them. In Brong Ahafo region for example, people collected the gifts [from the NDC] and still voted for the NPP. This does not suggest that the NPP does not give gifts but rather that they did not have the money to buy gifts. They also gave voters gifts in 2008 but still lost. (OBSG)[96]

This belief, widely shared among politicians and observers alike in Ghana, explains the high level of uncertainty among political actors about the real benefits of entering a pact with chiefs for votes or giving gifts to voters. If chiefs cannot guarantee the support of their constituents, why would a candidate enter into a pact with them? Though campaigns want to avoid any

[95] The Section 276 of the Constitution forbids chiefs from participating in active politics but also allows that they be appointed for "public office for which he is otherwise qualified." This is the main motivation for some chiefs to want to participate in politics—to receive appointments to boards of public agencies and enterprises. So, it is common for some chiefs to align themselves with candidates, but they would not publicly acknowledge it.

[96] OBSG, interview conducted on December 12, 2016. He gave the example of chiefs in Sunya, Brong Ahafo region, who collected money from President Mahama and publicly expressed support for him. President Mahama lost in the region, and as the interviewee put it, the chiefs have to "walk with their shame [for supporting a losing candidate]."

appearance of hostility toward an important chief, they only have to show public respect and not necessarily engage in any special pacts for votes.

Sometimes, these acts of respect can go too far. For example, President Mahama bought and distributed luxury cars to chiefs in the months leading up to the election. The NPP, with much fewer resources to distribute gifts, relied on small symbolic gifts and promises of a factory and a dam that would benefit chiefs and their people. While some chiefs publicly endorsed President Mahama for a second terms in violation of constitutional restrictions (Ghanaweb, 2016b; Tornyi, 2016), others publicly endorsed the NPP candidate Nana Akufo-Addo (Allotey, 2016b; Ansah, 2016; Asare, 2016; Larnyoh, 2016; Nyabor, 2016). As noted earlier, fear of losing future elections discourages whoever is in government from punishing chiefs who violate the law by publicly endorsing a candidate during an election.

In several of these cases, the candidates that the chiefs endorsed lost the election in their constituencies. For example, even though several Volta region chiefs "endorsed" Akufo-Addo, he lost the election in the region, with over 80% of voters supporting President Mahama. A counterargument could be made that, by endorsing the opposition, the chiefs expressed dissatisfaction with the Mahama administration and signaled to constituents that it was okay to vote for the opposition or just not vote for the incumbent. Indeed, the low turnout of voters in the Volta region contributed to the victory of Akufo-Addo at the national level.[97] Though several Voltarians could not bring themselves to vote for the NPP, they stayed at home out of disappointment with the Mahama administration and its inability or perceived refusal to invest in

[97] An NPP leader, RNLK, interviewed on December 16, 2016, described how they knew they had won the election when reports from the Volta region indicated that the turnout was much lower than previous years.

regional development.[98] Perhaps this indicates that chiefs do have some influencing power, but it can be better understood in the context of popular discontent with the NDC in the Volta region.

One of the first places Akufo-Addo visited after winning the presidential election was the Volta region, where he promised to prove to the people, through fair allocation of government projects, that they should support the NPP in future elections (Mubarik, 2016b). This was a tacit acknowledgement that his victory was due, in part, to Volta voters who stayed home. It indicated an awareness that, although he lost the election in the region in 2016, he would return there in 2020 for votes. So, he seemed to have concluded that trying to win over the region was strategically better in the long run than isolating them for voting overwhelmingly for the NDC.

Traditional Chiefs and the Popular Will

Another popular view among observers of Ghanaian politics is that chiefs are not so much agenda setters for their people as they are conveyors of the popular sentiments of their constituents. A scholar who studies traditional institutions in the country likened Ghanaian voters to singers in an orchestra:

> In 2008, people in the Ashanti region did not go to vote, while the other regions voted [against the NPP candidate]. In 2016, people in the Volta region did not go to vote, while the other regions voted [against the NDC]. So, at the end of the day, we all sing from the same hymn book . . . [and] in the process of singing, some may play tenor, some may play bass, but it's the same song that we are all singing. The whole country wanted a change, just like in 2008 (OBSG).[99]

[98] Several NPP and NDC leaders held this view. In an interview with an NDC leader a few days after the election, the interviewee was emphatic that low turnout in the Volta region was a major reason that they lost the presidential election. Interview conducted on December 14, 2016, in Accra.

[99] Interview with a scholar at the University of Ghana who had studied the subject extensively.

If we agree with this perspective, as many nonpartisan interviewees did, we could argue that the role of chiefs involves reflecting what they believe a majority of their constituents would be happy with. If voters independently decide whether to vote for a party or not, a chief's role in that process is to inform candidates who come seeking votes about the sentiments of the people. Using the same opera metaphor, we could ask who the opera conductor is. The important point here is that the opera occurs not within one ethnic group or constituency but between different constituencies. We could reason that the ultimate conductor is the economic condition of voters. When a group of chiefs in Volta region decided to endorse the NPP candidate, they did so in economic rhetoric:

> Under President Kufuor's tenure [a former NPP president of Ghana], I can say with all certainty that all was well with Ghana. There was money in the land and in the pockets of people. However, under President Mahama, men are crying, women are crying, the youth and old are all crying. There's a saying that you visit two markets before one can tell which is the best. We have, indeed, visited two markets over the last 16 years, and we know which is best (Allotey, 2016b).

The chiefs seemed to suggest that their decision to endorse the NPP candidate was a reaction to the economic conditions and the will of their "crying" people. The metaphor of visiting two markets seems to communicate that what was driving the people was economic welfare because people go to a market for economic reasons.

Take another example of a chat I had with my driver to the airport in Tamale, Northern region, which mirrored several similar chats with voters in the region about

their voting decision-making process.[100] He complained that things had become tough recently and doubted whether he would vote for the NDC as he had done in four previous elections. I asked how he would decide whom to vote for. He paused for a long time and then said, "I will decide based on how much is in my pocket on election day." I pressed him on what he meant, and he clarified that it had nothing to do with what a politician might share (which he said he would readily collect) but how much earned income he had by then.

Though chiefs who violate the constitutional requirement of neutrality hardly receive sanction, they could lose legitimacy and credibility by going against popular opinion. Chiefs lack political power to punish constituents, and their authority derives largely from communal respect. When they lose the respect of constituents, they could lose their prestige in the eyes of the politicians they hope to court, and they knew that full well.

Chiefs as "Lobbyists"

Another way to interpret the role of chiefs in Ghanaian politics is to consider them as lobbyists for their constituents. An NDC leader in Accra explained that the primary request from most chiefs when campaigns visited was to ask for collective goods for their people. "Most chiefs ask for things that will benefit their people in terms of development. When you come, they tell you we need toilet, (good) road, etc., and that is what most chiefs do" (NDCA).[101] He explained that, when the constituents of a chief overwhelmingly vote for an NDC candidate, the chief would later call the party leaders

[100] The chat took place on December 2, 2016, on the way from the hotel to the airport for a flight back to Accra. This was just days before the election.
[101] Interview conducted on November 7, 2016.

in the area to demand fulfillment of the promises made before the election. An NPP national campaign leader confirmed this account of campaigns' interactions with voters and chiefs: "The chiefs tell him [the candidate], 'Our roads are bad; do something'" (RNLD).[102]

At least when it came to the public interactions of campaigns with chiefs, the chiefs served as advocates for their communities. In some respect, a chief who can attract projects to his or her community is likely to gain more respect and trust. Such respect could empower him or her to influence voters because they know that their chief has their interests at heart. In other words, as people become more "sophisticated," the authority of the chief is increasingly defined by the perception of how reliable and effective they are as community advocates. The mediatory role of chiefs is not unique to Ghana. Baldwin (2018) argued that local chiefs in Zambia have more legitimacy than elected MPs to mobilize constituencies to contribute monetarily to community projects. Since the state is usually incapable of providing all the necessary amenities to communities, local chiefs mobilize their people to contribute monetarily to projects while lobbying the government to complement their efforts. In all cases, chiefs primarily advocate for local public goods even if they enjoy personal benefits from the process.

Ghanaian Chiefs and Political Campaigning

The chief's role as a mediator and a lobbyist could encourage particularistic distribution of public goods. That is, it may encourage campaigns to target public goods toward specific communities rather than the entire country. However, this type of action is not necessarily clientelist. I agree with Nathan (2016a) that particularistic goods do

[102] Interview conducted on October 14, 2016.

not necessarily have to be targeted clientelistically but could be distributed programmatically. The difference is significant. Like, say soy farmers in Iowa or coal miners in West Virginia, communities in Ghana may make collective demands on candidates during an election campaign through their chiefs. In either case, government policies targeted toward a group usually benefit every member, and individual members could not be excluded (Ichino & Nathan, 2013; Nathan, 2016b). Most of the goods that Ghanaian communities seek (e.g., good roads and potable water) are, by their nature, available to every member of the community. While it is easy to identify who supports which party (Ghanaians are open about party affiliations), it is difficult to identify who votes for a particular candidate because the country operates a secret ballot system. Thus, campaigns do not have an effective system for identifying and punishing non-conformists.

A major event before the election in the Volta region underscores how chiefs may be involved in politics and attract community goods for their constituents. Reflecting the people's disappointment, chiefs in the region seemed to distance themselves from the NDC while receiving the NPP candidate. The president of the Volta Regional House of Chiefs, Togbe Afede XIV, told the NPP candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, that the

> Volta region is not like a loyal housewife whose husband will come home only when he's hungry. That is why I'm very glad that we have so many paramount chiefs here across the region who have come to welcome Nana Akufo-Addo and his entourage (Anim, 2016).

For the NDC, it was an ominous sign of things to come. A close aid of President Mahama responded by asserting that they would "work to deepen [their] husband and wife relationship"

(Ohene, 2016). Rather than engaging in the customary practice of wishing all candidates good luck and encouraging them to execute developmental projects in the region, Togbe Afede was signaling that the NDC could no longer expect the unquestioning support of the region. I argue that it is likely that the chief's decision was less an agenda-setting act and more a reflection of the region's disappointment with the NDC government. The chief seemed to be alluding to the fact that support for the NDC had plummeted, and his words reflected rather than guided the attitudes of people in the region.

The metaphor of marriage used to describe the relationship between the NDC and the Volta region, along with the looming divorce, hints at the possibility of a clientelist relationship. The region has been a solidly NDC-leaning area in the Fourth Republic in part because its founder and former president Jerry Rawlings is from there. In the Rawlings years, a retired officer in the security services noted that Voltarians occupied many important positions in the military and his government.[103] When President John Atta Mills of the NDC took over in 2009 after eight years of the NPP's tenure in government, he also appointed several Volta sons and daughters from the NDC to important government positions. However, when Mills suddenly died and President Mahama became president, he allegedly removed many of those Voltarians and replaced them with Northerners (he is from the North). Some observers I interviewed during the fieldwork confirmed the officer's story. The "purge" may have led to a loss of jobs and opportunities for some Voltarians, but the bigger impact was a sense that the party they supported was punishing members of their community.

Additionally, interviewees (including a senior NDC leader) explained that the Mahama government embarked on the militarization of the Ghana-Togo border, where market women

[103] Interview conducted on December 12, 2016.

from the Volta region would normally smuggle China-made goods to avoid paying import taxes.[104] For many of the women, the NDC government they had wholeheartedly supported was destroying their livelihoods. Finally, many in the region felt that the NDC government was neglecting them and locating development projects in other regions, including the Ashanti region, which normally votes overwhelming for the NPP. The sense of neglect and being taken for granted as the "World Bank" of the NDC, as well as the general difficult economic situation in the country in the lead-up to the election, strengthened the NPP's campaign to keep many Volta voters at home.

Perhaps some of these considerations that motivated the region to cool on the NDC in 2016 are clientelist and some are economic. However, on the whole, it is difficult to prove that most Ghanaian voters make their decisions primarily based on clientelist reasons or even that candidates can win elections on the basis of clientelist deals. When voters feel ignored, they are able and often willing to vote out an underperforming government. Furthermore, local chiefs who could act as intermediaries between communities and political elites increasingly know that it is in their best interest is to reflect rather than manipulate the wishes of their constituents. Some chiefs who have built credibility with constituencies over time may still possess significant swaying in power because constituents trust them to act in the common good. However, for most chiefs, since they lack political power to compel constituents to vote for a candidate, the amount of influence they have depends on their alignment with public opinion in their constituencies.

[104] NDNF, interview conducted on December 14, 2016

Ghanaian Campaigns from a Comparative Perspective

Ghanaian campaigns are both unique and similar to those in countries across sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. Blumler, Kavanagh, & Nossiter (1996) noted that campaigns across the world increasingly learn across national boundaries, with American political campaigning tactics being the most widely copied. As a result, modern campaigns are likely to combine elements of contextual realities with global tactical trends. The campaigns in Ghana were no different, and there was evidence that they learned both from each other and from campaign trends elsewhere. To assess Ghanaian campaigns in relation to other countries, I explored how presidential campaigns in young democracies compare to Ghana and how sociopolitical conditions in other young democracies relate to Ghana.

Common Features of Modern Campaigns

Modern presidential campaigns are complex endeavors involving organizing people, information, and activities at a scale previously unimaginable. First, because of this complexity, campaigns seek help from experts outside of their countries to advise them in their operations (Gorton, 2016; Plasser, 2000; Plasser & Plasser, 2002). In Ghana, campaigns engaged foreign consultants[105] to advise their teams and help them design their messages and strategy. The NPP contracted a Nigerian political consultancy, State Craft, Inc., to advise it on media strategy. A consultant from State Craft embedded with the NPP social media team for over two months in the lead-up to the election and participated in advising the campaign on social media strategy. A few others joined the lone consultant from State Craft in the final of week of campaigning. They also sought endorsements from celebrities, including a Nigerian movie star, Hank Anuku, who

[105] Information about the involvement of Nigerians was derived from interviews with party leaders and media reports, as well as some discussions I was privy to in campaign meetings.

attended the NPP National Youth Rally in Moree, Central region, on November 13, 2016, to speak in support of the presidential candidate Nana Akufo-Addo.[106]

The NDC, meanwhile, engaged a Nigerian consultant, Ohimai Amaize, to help with its social media strategy. Amaize is the CEO of Olivier Pope, Inc., an image-management company based in Nigeria. The campaign worked with other Nigerians, including Dele Momodu, a Nigerian businessman who promoted President Mahama in his *Ovation* magazine, and Nkem Owoh, a popular Nigerian comedian who performed short skits in the Ghanaian capital Accra to spotlight President Mahama's achievements (Peace FM, 2016; Zurek, 2016). Some Ghanaians did not find it funny that a Nigerian celebrity would campaign for a candidate in their presidential election, and one described it as "degrading" to the country that Nigerians were telling Ghanaians how to vote (Ekowa, 2016). This sentiment came from the broader friendly rivalry between Ghana and Nigeria, where the latter dominates the entertainment space of the former.

As in Ghana, recent elections in several democracies in Africa and elsewhere in Asia and Latin America involved foreign consultants, mostly Americans. In the 2015 Nigerian presidential election, several American consultants were involved on both sides of the election. Former Obama campaign manager David Axelrod's AKPD Message and Media, and Howard Dean campaign manager Joe Trippi's The Potomac Square Group advised different candidates (Temple-West, 2015). The opposition candidate Adama Barrow unseated former Gambian dictator Yaya Jammeh in 2016 with help of Vanguard Africa, a US-based, Africa-focused political consultancy (Marh & Gaffey, 2017). Jammeh had been in power for 22 years. Political consultants have been involved in elections in Kenya (BBC, 2018a; Houreld, 2017; Miller,

[106] I was at the rally in Moree and heard Mr. Anuku speak to the youth across Ghana who had gathered to restate their support for Akufo-Addo.

2017), Gabon, South Africa, Zambia (Ghoshal, 2018), India (Punit, 2018), and Venezuela (Economist, 2015), among others. American political consultants also routinely work on other Western elections. Cross-border consultancy helps campaign strategies and tactics proliferate, though Boas (2016) argued that, in Latin America, campaigns were more likely to copy successful ones within their countries than those from outside.

Second, campaigns increasingly depend on digital media for campaigning. From Facebook and WhatsApp to Twitter and custom platforms, campaigns deploy digital media both for the internal organization of their teams and external mobilization of voters. The amount of resources that campaigns are willing to devote to digital tools still pales in comparison to other mediums, though the trend is moving in an upward direction (Jungherr, 2016; Manacorda & Tesei, 2016; Nulty, Theocharis, Popa, Parnet, & Benoit, 2016; Ravi & Priya, 2015). As I argued in Chapter 3, campaigns in Ghana used WhatsApp to organize their teams to enhance communication efficiency and security.

Third, modern campaigns are likely to strategize on a "ground game" for GOTV initiatives. In Ghana, the execution of GOTV drives depended on effective communication through WhatsApp, as documented in Chapter 3. Campaigns in the US, Europe, and elsewhere engage in GOTV activities as well (Nielsen, 2012; Plasser, 2009; Plasser & Plasser, 2002).

Digital Media and Voter Mobilization

In Chapter 3, I discussed how campaigns used digital media to organize their teams internally. As digital media have become more widely used in Ghana, campaigns have also made efforts to deploy them to mobilize voters, and these technologies have played a role in how political elites and chiefs came to think about their relationships with their constituents. Most use of digital media for voter mobilization happened on social media, the subset of digital media that

emphasize interpersonal and group interactions, such as Facebook and Twitter, among others. It is useful to explore the ways in which campaigns mobilized voters on social media to better understand the types of relationships they may have tried to foster with voters in addition to offline efforts. The opposition NPP campaign engaged in three main activities: pushing messages on Facebook and Twitter, strategically convincing sympathetic individuals to spread messages on social media, and fundraising on their website. The incumbent NDC engaged in only two of the three activities—pushing messages and getting supporters to spread their messages. These strategies by both campaigns reflect practices that have become common with campaigns across the world in the last decade (Bimber, 2014; Graham, Jackson, & Broersma, 2014; Jungherr, 2016; Koc-Michalska, Gibson, & Vedel, 2014; Metag & Marcinkowski, 2012). At the national level, campaigns saw social media not as a particularly suitable tool for winning votes but as another battlefront that they could not cede to opponents; they feared that conceding the space could have some unknown negative consequences. However, some campaign leaders in urban areas have argued that social media played an important complementary role in their mobilization efforts.

Pushing Messages Online

The social media group within the communication team of the NPP campaign had about 10 volunteer members (but refused to confirm the exact number) who were responsible for "strategy, content creation and monitoring, evaluation and response" (RNLL).[107] The team operated from an NPP-aligned institute in the Labone area of Accra. They brought consultants from State Craft, a Nigerian political consultancy, to help with strategy and content creation. According to RNLL, a core member of the social media team, the consultants stayed with the

[107] Interview conducted on December 17, 2016.

team for months leading up to the election and helped them create content that gained traction on social media.

Most of the messages they posted on Facebook included pictures and videos of campaign events, campaign posters encouraging people to vote or describing how to vote, and short interviews with supporters about why they supported the candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo. Two of the most popular NPP campaign pages were the official candidate page with 1.3 million followers (https://www.facebook.com/nakufoaddo/) and a campaign page with over 80,000 followers (https://www.facebook.com/akufoaddo2016/). On Twitter, the campaign depended on the official candidate handle @nakufoaddo with just over 133,000 followers, Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia's candidate @MBawumia with over 68,000 followers, and the NPP official account @npp_gh with about 9,000 followers.[108] There were other accounts like @npployalladies, @ColoursGhana, and @IAmForNana, and others that posted messages frequently before the election. The difference between their use of Twitter and Facebook is that most content on Twitter consisted of retweets (sharing someone else's tweets), whereas the content on Facebook was originally created by team.

Though the NDC would not make anyone involved available for an interview, some of the ways it used social media were public. The NDC performed similar functions with its social media accounts. The main account on Facebook was the official candidate account with over 1.1 million followers (https://www.facebook.com/JDMahama/), GreenBook Ghana with over 100,000 followers (https://www.facebook.com/MahamaLegacy/), and I Choose JM with just over 10,000 followers (https://www.facebook.com/I-Choose-JM-1318452654848371/). These accounts had similar branding, shared similar content, and helped push the candidate's message

[108] All social media user-base data cited in this section were correct at the time of the election.

about his performance in office and how to vote to reelect him. There were also Twitter accounts that helped amplify the candidate's message, such as the candidate official handle @JDMahama with just over 294,000 followers, as well as others, including @greenbook_ghana, @OfficialNDCGh, @TransformingGh, and @GhanaAtWorkGH. What is common to both campaigns is that they mostly broadcast messages without engaging with their followers.

Pushing Messages through Proxies Online

A second way of using social media includes engaging bloggers and other influencers to help spread campaign messages, especially by encouraging sympathetic individuals to spread their messages through networks on WhatsApp, Facebook, or Twitter. According to RNLL and RNLM, they specifically engaged "influencers" on Twitter and coordinated with them to get favorable hashtags to trend as a way of dominating the conversation about the election. The NDC seems to have followed the same pattern of campaigning. In the last few weeks before the election, it was common to see both parties begin to trend topics on Twitter within hours of each other. Chapter 3 contains a detailed discussion of how this works.

Social Media and Elite–Voter Relationships

Empirically, it is difficult to evaluate how much of a role social media played in the 2016 election for both parties because I could not independently track whom they reached or how their followers received the messages. However, it was clear from public statements and interviews that social media played a minimal role in campaign–voter interactions. The NPP National Youth Organizer Sammy Awuku chastised young people in the party a few month before the election to "stop the campaign on social media platforms such as WhatsApp and let's get to the ground to campaign to help win the floating voters, which will enable us to secure the first-round electoral

victory that we are craving for" (Taylor, 2016).[109] Most of the national campaign leaders of the NPP and the NDC whom I interviewed portrayed social media as inconsequential platforms for voter mobilization that they invested few resources in. RNLF, a national official in the NPP, for example, noted they allocated relatively few resources to social media because they believed that "retail campaigning"—house-to-house canvassing—was the most effective and preferred campaign method.[110] However, he stated that they chose to be active on social media because they did not want to miss any potential voters. This reasoning is a variation of Pascal's Wager, in which there is no certainty of reward, but effort is motivated by the fear of missing out on a yet-to-be-determined reward (Hájek, 2018).

Additionally, campaign leaders who worked among urban constituencies or were directly aware of the social media team's work tended to exaggerate the penetration of social media in the country and claimed that they had large effects. For example, an NDC leader in Accra claimed that their social media efforts aimed at reaching young voters "as they all are dependent on the social media, and it is the only way to get your message out" (NDNB).[111] An NPP leader in Accra expressed a similar sentiment when asked if he used social media:

> Yes. I am on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, almost all. Or, maybe I have a manager who manages the accounts for me . . . . A lot of the students (in Accra) are on social media so the best way to connect with them is to be there as well. For me, I think it is second to shaking hands. (LCLB)[112]

[109] Ghanaian politicians also use the term "floating voters" to describe "swing voters."
[110] Interview conducted on November 08, 2018.
[111] Interview conducted on October 6, 2018.
[112] Interview conducted on November 17, 2016

A member of the NPP social media team described social media as "revolutionary" (RNLN).[113] RNLN claimed that social media allowed them to keep the enthusiasm alive among young people by engaging them with campaign-related content. This, he said, was especially helpful during the early weeks of campaigning when the campaign was cash strapped.

Available survey data from Afrobarometer indicate that about 71% of Ghanaians have never accessed news from the Internet as of 2017, a slight decrease from the 82% who said so in 2011.[114] Only about 10% reported using the Internet to access news every day. In addition, 69% of Ghanaians have never accessed news through social media compared to the 78% who said so in 2014. On average, 13% of Ghanaians said that they used social media for news every day. Thus, social media and the Internet still play a relatively minor role in how Ghanaians access news compared to traditional media. For example, according to the survey, 73% watch television, and 89% listen to the radio. Of these, 41% reported watching television news every day, and 55% said that they listened to radio news every day. While it is possible that many young people in the cities such as Accra have access to social media and use them, most young people outside of the cities do not have access to social media. Data on social media use are scarce, but a survey by We Are Social indicates that there were 5.6 million social media users in the country as of 2018, representing a 19% penetration and a 22% increase since January 2017,[115] which implies that there were about 4.3 million active social media users at the end of 2016, representing a 15% penetration. While this is a sizeable number, it is worth noting that most users were young and concentrated in a few urban areas. Also, given the size of

[113] Interview conducted on December 28, 2016.
[114] Afrobarometer has arguably the best opinion survey data on the continent. The data can be accessed from their site: http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/analyse-online.
[115] The report is available here: https://www.slideshare.net/wearesocial/digital-in-2018-in-western-africa-part-2-east-86865566.

followership of both campaigns on Facebook and Twitter, it seems likely that an even smaller percentage of voters were interested in the election or received information about it online.

I hypothesized that campaign leaders who lived in urban constituencies or were exposed to debates on social media about the campaigns were more likely to exaggerate how many people used social media or the role they played in the election because of cultivation processes (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). Cultivation theory claims that people exposed to media (especially television) messages over an extended period may begin to think that the messages they see reflect the real world. Since social media possess a visceral appeal similar to that of television, which the initial cultivation theory research was based on, similar cognitive processes might occur in campaign leaders who believed that young voters "depend on social media." Both Internet and social media penetration levels in 2016 were much lower than that of broadcast media, as discussed in Chapter 3, and a national campaign could not afford to rely on a medium that reaches only a sliver of voters concentrated in urban areas.

Discussions of how Ghanaians have become "sophisticated" inevitably link to their use of, or access to messages on, social media. Take a civil servant in the Northern region, for example, who argued that "people are now sophisticated" (OBSF).[116] Or, we could consider the professor who studied democracy at one of the major universities in Accra who noted that John Mahama distributed many branded materials to voters before the election, including pens, spoons, plates, and clothing, among other items. However, he assured me, "the Ghanaian voter is becoming increasingly sophisticated" (OBSG). That is, voters realize that politicians use money from the state in some form for campaigns, so they do not necessarily feel obligated to vote for a candidate even if they accept gifts from them.

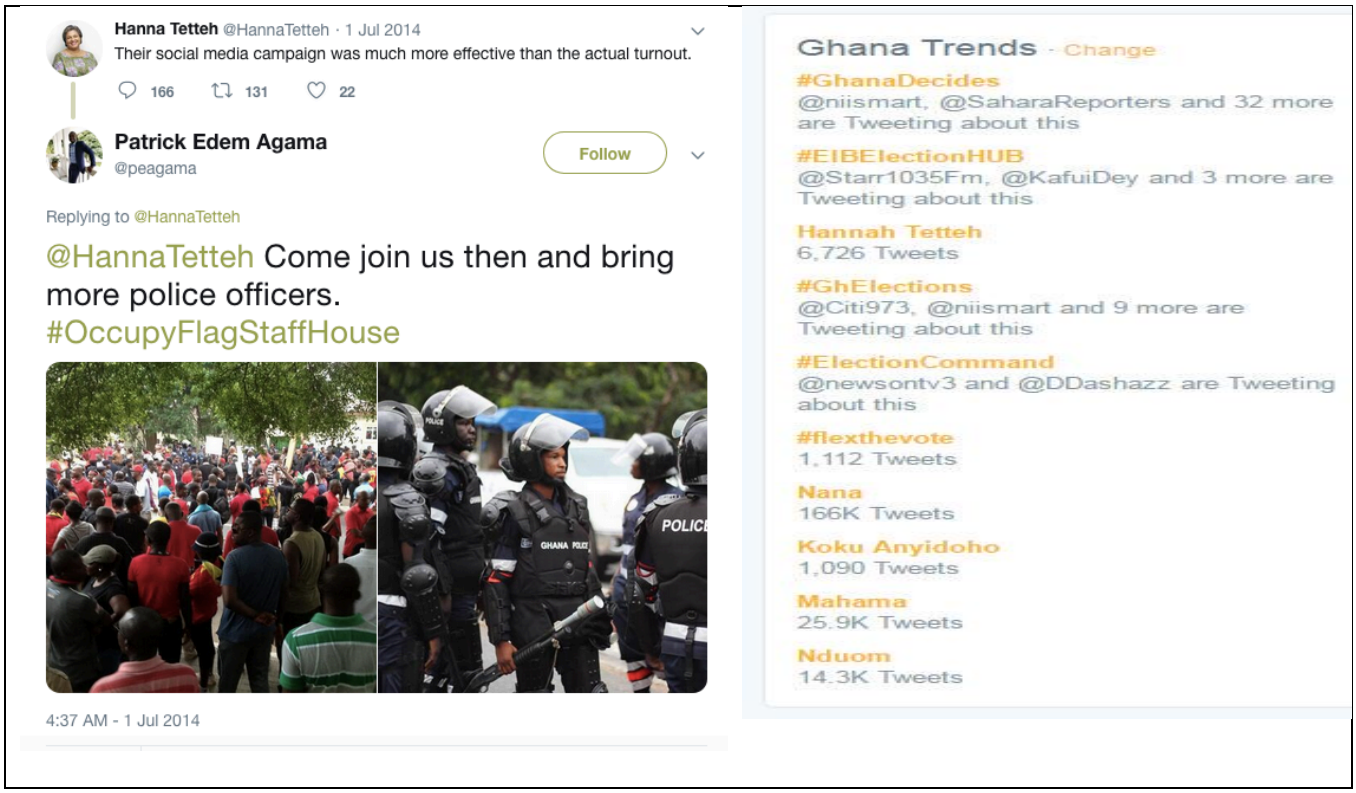
[116] Interview conducted on November 29, 2016.

On the one hand, if elites believe that social media users represent an important segment of voters, it could encourage good governance and more responsiveness to popular discontent on the platforms. Since all parties want to win the youth vote, it would be unwise to disregard young people's views and complaints on social media. Thus, the perception is significant since it could affect political elites' behavior. Take the case of Hannah Teteh, an NDC MP representing the Awutu Senya West constituency until 2016, for example. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the NDC government, she mocked protesters who organized #OccupyFlagstaff in 2014 for not attracting enough protesters. #OccupyFlagstaff was a protest movement against the deteriorating electricity supply.

As election results began to trickle in on December 8, 2016, it became clear that she had lost her seat to the NPP's George Andah (Africa Research Bulletin, 2017). Twitter users, who had obviously not forgotten her comments from two years earlier, celebrated her loss and made her name trend for several hours.[117]

Hannah Tetteh Mocking Protesters	**Hannah Tetteh Trending After the Election**

[117] A screenshot of trends on election day with her name is here: https://twitter.com/AlfaAfrican/status/806890255496384513



This is not to suggest that her comments contributed to her loss of the election, but ridiculing leaders perceived to be hostile to young people's demands could have a chilling effect on the willingness of political leaders or chiefs to antagonize social media users. On the other hand, a few loud voices could influence what elites think most constituents want. This could have the effect of potentially skewing policies in favor of urban dwellers at the expense of rural parts of the country.

Fundraising Online

The NPP campaign, unlike the NDC's, also used its online platforms to collect donations, underlying the fact that it was cash strapped and needed every avenue available to raise funds.[118] The campaign hosted the donation platform on its website and promoted it on campaign social

[118] See the appendix for a screenshot of the donation appeal.

media accounts, on posters in campaign offices, and during campaign events (e.g., rallies). The donation page allowed supporters to donate using a debit card, PayPal, or mobile money on the MTN, Airtel, and Tigo networks. Since there was no requirement for Ghanaian candidates to publicly declare how much they raised and from whom, the fundraising numbers were not publicly declared. Interviewees generally declined to discuss specifics about campaign finance.

These patterns of use—broadcasting messages, engaging influencers, and fundraising online—align with global trends in campaigning and indicate that Ghanaian campaigns did not only learn from each other but also from practices that have become common elsewhere (Karlsen, 2010; Plasser & Plasser, 2002; Stromer-Galley, 2014). While it is conceivable that campaigns and local chiefs could construct clientelist relationships with voters using social media, the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that current use patterns do not uniquely support clientelist relations. On the whole, campaigns seemed to engage in mass messaging that did not lend itself to building specific and clientelist relationships with voters or groups of voters. Campaigns broadcast their messages to everyone on social media with the hope that they would not lose out on some voters who mostly use social media platforms. For national campaign decision makers in the 2016 election in Ghana, social media still occupied a minor role in terms of how they thought about interactions with voters, and they invested significantly fewer financial and human resources in them.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Findings and Implications

At the beginning of this dissertation, I highlighted three conversations that guided the initial design of the study. They guided the exploration of three interrelated aspects of political campaigning with digital media in Ghana, a small, relatively young democracy that has low digital media penetration. I was interested in how ideological beliefs, digital media use, and elite–voter relationships shaped how campaigns organized their teams and mobilized voters in the lead-up to the 2016 election in the country. My findings and their implications complicate the extant literature and provide new insights into how campaigns in countries similar to Ghana use digital media.

First, this paper complicates the commonly held belief among political science scholars who study Africa that political parties and candidates do not subscribe to political ideologies. Contrary to the received wisdom about the role of ideology in party politics, campaigns and their members in Ghana differentiated themselves from opponents with ideological discourses. Through an ideographic analysis of party mission statements and interview responses of campaign leaders of both the NDC and the NPP, I found that political identity was shaped by ideology, and the finding was consistent across all levels of leadership in both parties. NPP campaign leaders framed themselves as “capitalists” and expressed preferences in government with the ideographs <development in freedom> and <property-owning democracy>. They were far more likely to describe their party as championing a “free market economy,” and they thought the government’s job was to “empower [the] private sector,” “provide infrastructure,” or “provide [an] enabling environment [for businesses].” By contrast, NDC leaders were more likely to frame themselves as “social democrats” and expressed their preferences in government

with the ideographs <unity, stability, and development> and <freedom, justice, and accountability>. The leaders were more likely to describe the party with values like "egalitarian," "social justice," and "respect everyone." They expressed the belief that their party works to "uplift [the] downtrodden," "pull everyone together," "help the less privileged," and "help [the] vulnerable." The only major overlap between the parties is that they both expected government to provide "infrastructure." The extant scholarship suggests that campaigns engage in "valence" framing aimed more at proving competence at solving problems rather than taking ideological positions (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013, p. 1397). This research demonstrates that, beyond valence competition, Ghanaian campaigns also engage in ideological differentiation. It also indicates that campaigns draw on ideographs to express ideological differentiation from their opponents in order to win elections. Important political actors believe that ideological differentiation is an effective strategy for winning elections, and they use these ideographs to appeal to different segments of the Ghanaian electorate in order to win votes.

I hypothesized that this clear ideological separation between the two parties may be partly responsible for democratic stability in the country. Though the policy proposals of both parties were hardly distinguishable, the rhetoric of ideology gave campaign leaders a way to differentiate themselves to voters without resorting to more sensitive identities (e.g., ethnicity and religion). Unlike both ethnicity and religion, which are relatively static (Horowitz, 1993), campaign leaders could moderate ideological positioning to win different constituencies in an election without being accused of "selling out" or "rejecting who they are." While I followed campaign members on house-to-house canvasing trips, they did indeed try to customize their messages for different types of voters. For example, if they met an unemployed person, they would talk about jobs and how they planned to create them; if they met a business owner, they

would describe how their plans would benefit such a voter. Historically, the two political ideological camps emerged from the competition between the Danquah-Busia tradition (represented by the NPP) the Nkrumahist tradition (represented by the NDC). We may ask why parties would adopt ideological positioning if they do not mean to implement ideological policies. The answer is that the use of rhetorical differentiation means something in terms of voter appeal and expectations. We could test this hypothesis in future elections by identifying (potentially) rural constituencies where some levels of ethnic rhetoric may be present and studying the types of competitive actions that campaign members engage in. Or, a researcher could expose voters to different types of messaging and then ask them to choose between different courses of action they would take to ensure an advantage for their preferred candidate. Thus, we could prove that, rather than being "mere talk," ideological positioning serves different constituencies in the country who share distinct social identities beyond ethnicity and religion.

Second, I have argued that, when campaigns lack financial resources or technical skills necessary for custom technology platforms, they creatively adapt existing publicly available platforms for their campaign goals. Campaigns use digital media because they consider the benefits to far outweigh the financial investment required. They are relatively cheap, fast, and secure to use. Thus, even in a context where digital media use is still relatively low, Ghanaian campaigns saw the value in using them. The trend of campaign adoption suggests that the use of digital media is likely to continue to be an essential part of campaign toolkits for winning elections that scholars need to investigate and theorize. The extant literature on political communication suggests that campaigns for the past two decades have created custom online platforms to organize people, mobilize voters, manage information, and raise funds (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Kreiss, 2012, 2016; Stromer-Galley, 2014). These new technologies allow

campaigns to network operations across the country and encourage participation from supporters. Campaigns are also increasingly adopting a "data-driven" approach that gives supporters and general voters little power or influence (Bimber, 2014; Gibson & McAllister, 2015).

In Ghana, the NDC and the NPP campaigns used WhatsApp as the preferred platform to organize their members with. Facebook groups and other social platforms were used for organizing, but they played a negligible role overall. Unlike Western presidential campaigns that provide custom platforms that allow supporters to mobilize voters on their behalf, Ghanaian campaigns mostly used WhatsApp to coordinate members internally while relying on face-to-face canvassing to mobilize voters. At the time of the election, WhatsApp allowed only 256 users per group, so members had to be divided into hierarchical groups connected by embedded leaders for an efficient flow of information between national and local leaders. The structure of organizing with digital media replicated the hierarchical offline structure of the campaigns that used them. Some content communicated via WhatsApp included pictures and videos of campaign events, notifications of times and locations of meetings, campaign-related questions and answers, and the collation of election results. Though WhatsApp limited campaigns' access to usage data, embedding leaders in groups at all levels served as a form of "human analytics" surveillance and encouraged some members to self-censor to avoid jeopardizing their political future. However, because local leaders possessed voter data and maintained trusting relationships with voters, they were able to exert some influence that moderated the reach of national leaders. These ongoing negotiations of power and influence shaped campaigns and their successes or failures in communities across the country.

Throughout this paper, the type of practice that emerged from organizing with digital media in Ghana is referred to as relationship-based campaigning. This form of organizing, unlike

Western technology-based campaigning (Howard, 2006; Karpf, 2012; Kreiss, 2012; Tufekci, 2014) restricts access to campaign platforms to vetted campaign members, and relationships of trust and friendships between members—rather than the technology being used—are central to organizational efforts. It is, in part, a result of campaigns' lack of financial and technical resources, the low level of digital media literacy and penetration in rural constituencies, as well as a consensus among campaign leaders of both parties that interacting with voters in person is the most effective strategy for winning votes. Thus, this dissertation extends the literature on political communication by showing how campaigns in non-Western contexts use digital media for organizing to win elections. As scholars work to build theories of digital media and campaigning, this study provides a fuller picture of how campaigns in different contexts use digital media.

Third, I have rejected a vague conceptualization of the term "clientelism" and asserted that it does not primarily drive political campaigning in Ghana. The discussions around clientelism matter because they address the nature and health of democratic governments. This often has implications not only for scholarly debate but also for local and international policymaking regarding the best way to support these democracies. Thus, it is important to clearly define the related terms as well as to apply them correctly to observed behavior. Scholars of African politics would dismiss the relationships described in the preceding paragraphs as foundational to the clientelism they associate with elections on the continent. However, I offer a different perspective. The members who participated in the campaigns were active party members who may have had a reciprocal, potentially clientelist, relationships with national party elites. Many of the campaign members were interested in pursuing leadership positions in the party and the country in the future, and they saw participation in the campaigns as a way of

paying their "dues." They represented less than 1% of the population of the country. During my fieldwork, I did not find evidence to suggest that the same types of clientelist relationships extended to the broader electorate. In other words, even if digital media may strengthen potentially clientelist relationships between national campaign elites and local campaign members, that effect does not extend to general voters.

As expected from the extant literature, campaigns relied heavily on "valence" framing about who could do a better job at governing the country (Adams & Agomor, 2015). However, contrary to what the literature suggests about African elections (Bates, 1974; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Horowitz, 1985; Posner, 2005), campaigns in Ghana generally refrained from an ethnic or religious framing for themselves or opponents. As argued in Chapter 2, campaigns may have acted in this way due to the ideological frames that they used in differentiating themselves. Though the base regions—the Eastern and Ashanti regions for the NPP; and the Volta, Northern, North East, and North West regions for the NDC (with lower turnout)—voted predictably. The swing regions of Greater Accra, Central, Western, and Brong Ahafo swung the election to the winning candidate as they had done in previous elections. Thus, the election, as in previous cycles, was won by the campaign that could convince the largest number of swing voters to support their candidate.

If chiefs play an important mediatory role in establishing and maintaining clientelist relationships between national elites and voters, as the extant literature suggests (Beck, 2008; Kramon, 2017; Lindberg, 2010; van de Walle, 2009), it is possible that digital media may undermine clientelism in some circumstances. For example, clientelist pacts between chiefs and national elites would be more effective if people were unaware of government projects in other constituencies. Increasingly, as people in urban areas access social media and follow campaign

promises and projects across the country, it will become increasingly more difficult to convince voters to settle for less. Thus, the level of information available could undercut the ability of politicians to make different promises to different constituencies and not be discovered. Despite insufficient evidence, it is instructive that the NPP's winning campaign message in 2016 promised the same things to all communities across the country—one dam per village and a factory per district.

Chiefs in Ghana increasingly play the role of communicating the popular views of their people and lobbying candidates on behalf of their constituents. Seen this way, the relationship is not so different from anywhere else—a trusted local leader reminds office seekers about local problems and gets commitments from all visiting candidates to solve them if elected. Ultimately, chiefs have no coercive power to get people to vote, and their authority derives from how much they are respected by their constituents, who presumably believe they are working for the common good. Could these relationships sometimes be clientelist? Of course they could. Are they mostly clientelist? This does not seem to be the case. As social media penetration increases, it is likely that chiefs and campaigns may be more inclined to believe young constituents who make their voices heard on social media, and they may pay more attention to social media debates as indicators of public opinion, potentially empowering a few loud voices to shape policy priorities.

Limitations

Before discussing the limitations of the study, it is useful to recap the goal of the dissertation. The goal of the study was not to discover how the use of a technology had a specific effect on the outcome of the election but to understand how the two major campaigns, similar in strengths and organizing strategies, adopted and adapted digital media more broadly. As Boas

(2016) argued based on his study of three Latin American countries, campaigns learn and imitate organizing strategies from each other. This proved true in Ghana. The two major campaigns had identical organizational structures and depended on the same technology (WhatsApp), and their leaders emphasized preference for house-to-house canvassing over social media and mainstream media. The two campaigns were well established across the country, with each having similar levels of membership and voter bases (Cheeseman et al., 2017; Gyimah-Boadi & Prempeh, 2012).

The dissertation is a product of four months of fieldwork in Ghana that involved attending private campaign meetings and public events (e.g., rallies), as well as interviewing campaign leaders at the national, regional, and local levels. Some of these interviews were conducted in regions far from the capital, Accra, in order to gain as complete a picture of the political process as possible. In all, I visited five out of the 10 regions in Ghana—Accra, and the Central, Eastern, Northern, and North East regions. I also interviewed local chiefs, journalists assigned by their organizations to cover the candidates, civil society leaders, electoral commission officials, and leading scholars on elections and chieftaincy in the country. I had informal chats with ordinary Ghanaians ranging from taxi drivers to civil servants to students. Parts of the research also relied on news reports to collaborate or challenge data generated from interviews and, in some cases, to do follow-up interviews for clarification. I monitored social media discussions and reviewed a few WhatsApp chats of some campaign leaders. Thus, the final product is a synthesis of these various data sources, triangulated to tell the story of the 2016 presidential election in Ghana.

Despite these efforts, there are some limitations of the research that are worth mentioning here. First, besides political campaigns, several groups in the country were using digital media in

various forms to achieve their goals during my fieldwork in Ghana. The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO),[119] for example, had volunteers in randomly selected constituencies across the country, and they employed mobile phones and WhatsApp to coordinate their activities. At least since 2008, they have conducted parallel collation of sample constituencies to test the credibility of elections, and digital tools are key to their efforts. Their tallies often correctly project the outcome of elections. Other groups, such as Penplusbyes[120] and the Social Media Tracking Center (SMTC),[121] harnessed a combination of social media and mobile phones to advocate a peaceful and transparent election. While there is no way to quantify the effect that these groups had on the electoral process, their advocacy work likely helped the country hold a credible election that all sides could accept. These efforts were important and deserve better understanding but were not the focus of my study. So, the account in this dissertation does not capture the full range of the ways that various actors use digital media to participate in the electoral process.

Second, I did not have access to all campaign meetings. While I was able to attend some regular members-only meetings where sensitive issues and strategies were discussed, I did not attend some meetings held at different locations in Accra and across the country. This places some limitations on the completeness of what is covered in the dissertation in terms of its completeness. Yet, by observing campaign activities and talking to multiple political actors and cross-checking them, I remain confident that this work paints an accurate, if incomplete, picture of the 2016 presidential election in Ghana.

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[119] The CODEO website describes the coalition's work and can be found here: http://www.codeoghana.org/.
[120] Penplusbytes page is here: http://penplusbytes.org/.
[121] The SMTC page can be found here: http://africanelections.org/ghsmtc/.

Third, the work represents disproportionately male voices about political campaigning in Ghana. This is problematic for many reasons, principally because it leaves out the experiences of about half the population of the country. However, this was not intentional. The political scene in Ghana is dominated by men, and most of the campaign leaders of both political candidates were men, although the NDC had slightly more female campaign leaders. This reality meant that the few women in the campaigns were often busy with multiple assignments, so it was difficult to schedule interviews with them. The underrepresentation of women in Ghanaian politics is a systemic problem that a researcher cannot fix. I could only try to interview a few women because it was clear that my work would be much richer if it were possible to interview more of them.

Fourth, the work combines methods and inspirations from multiple disciplines. On the one hand, it is a strength because it allowed me to look at campaigning from different perspectives. However, it is also problematic because it does not necessarily fit into any single disciplinary expectation. This is not a fully political science, African politics, or political communication work. Rather, it takes bits and pieces from various scholarly traditions to make sense of an understudied phenomenon. My hope is that the outcome justifies the eclectic approach to conducting this research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The focus of the dissertation has been a single election, but the issues it touches can be better understood in the broader context of political relations in the country beyond the election. The findings in Chapter 2, for example, would benefit from knowing what conditions encourage political actors to embrace ideology as a social identity instead of ethnicity, region, or religion. Given experience in old democracies in the US and Western Europe, where political polarization has made governance difficult and politics “tribal” (Beinart, 2018; Dougherty, 2014; Economist,

2018), it would be interesting to explore what level of ideological differentiation causes politics to devolve into tribalism. Scholars could examine whether the conditions necessary for stable, ideology-based party politics are historical, economic, cultural, or political, as well as whether there are optimal conditions that encourage political leaders to transition from ethnic or religious differentiation to ideological differentiation and vice versa.

Second, it would benefit scholarly knowledge to explore how ideological differentiation interacts with the nature of electoral politics in new democracies. Future research could test my hypothesis, for example, that Ghana's political stability is due in part to the strength of ideology as a social identity among its political elites. To test this, research could isolate and test variables that interact with ideology to create stability in a polity. Scholars could study how partisans who use ideology as a differentiator process information and competition differently, as well as how this approach encourages them to become more tolerant. The same study could apply to how partisans who use religion, ethnicity, or race process the same information and situations differently.

Third, future research should also pay more attention to how digital media become an integral part of ongoing mechanisms of political organizing and mobilization. For example, if WhatsApp develops enterprise tools that give campaigns greater control of groups and access to more analytical data, how would that change the behaviors of campaigns in Ghana? Who gains or loses power in that process, and what counterbalancing tactics do actors develop?

Finally, future research should examine the relationship between clientelism and digital media. As discussed in Chapter 4, it is likely that, as elites become aware that their actions can be captured and shared widely, they would become less eager to engage in clientelist relationships. Furthermore, as voters become more aware of elites' activities, they would become

more emboldened to challenge elites. It is also possible that elites would devise strategies to polarize voters so that even knowledge of what is going on would be inadequate to hold elites accountable. Researchers should explore how digital media interact with the relationships between political elites and voters, especially as they relate to the role of intermediaries, such as local chiefs. For example, it would be helpful to know how constituents' digital media use affects how chiefs make decisions about their relationships with government officials in off-election years. Future research could explore what conditions lead to any of these outcomes and how the process works. Researchers could also examine the role that urbanization and high youth populations play since these are two important features of Ghana. Do such outcomes play out differently in countries similar to Ghana where ethnic groups peacefully co-exist compared to countries with histories of ethnic violence, such as Kenya and Nigeria? Understanding these differences better could benefit not only new democracies but also old ones in the West as they become more racially and ethnically diverse.

Appendices

Appendix I: Methods and Fieldwork

Imagine this: You want to do fieldwork on a high-stakes election in a country where you do not know anyone. You are very aware that, once you get to the field, you will have to make the best of every opportunity for data collection, talk to the right people, and gain access to private meetings that will give you a deep understanding of the campaigns you wish to study. Since not much has been written about campaigning and the inner workings of the campaigns you wish to study, you are unsure what to expect. To complicate things, you plan to study two competing campaign teams concurrently, which means gaining access to both and being able to attend important meetings with both. These were some of the challenges I faced when I started fieldwork in Ghana in early September 2016 to study campaigning ahead of the December 2016 presidential election.

Planning the Research

I began preparing for the study by extensively reading the literature on African politics and political communication. This review helped me identify key themes about elections in both bodies of literature. It was clear from the African politics literature that themes such as ethnicity, clientelism, and (a lack of) ideology were being discussed about elections on the continent. It was also clear that Ghana was considered a stable democracy that has continued to improve despite its initial challenges in the early 1990s when it started holding multiparty elections. Doing research in Ghana meant that I did not have to worry about political violence. The country already had a history of free and fair elections. A few party leaders from both parties had told me during a two-week pre-dissertation visit that they would be using digital media in a meaningful

way for the first time in 2016 because they expected enough Ghanaians to have access to digital media to justify investing in online campaigning.

The political communication literature has themes such as information management, the networking of campaign teams, and the surveillance of voters. I was not sure how the literature on political campaigns—based largely on Western elections—would fit with the uniqueness of an election in an Africa country. Therefore, I made a few decisions. First, drawing on the examples of Howard (2002) and Kreiss (2012), I did extensive desk research to gather the names and positions of the leaders of both the NDC and the NPP from party websites and newspaper stories to create a network map of the two campaigns. The usefulness of this approach is that I could identify the leaders to interview before going to the field. As I would discover during the fieldwork period, the ability to demonstrate that I had done my homework before meeting the campaigns enhanced their cooperation. It soon became clear that the names of campaign leaders were drawn from the party leaders. So, if I could interview them, their views would represent the campaigns and their parties. This is especially important since I wanted to analyze the ideographs of these leaders to evaluate the ideological disposition of both parties. If the people I interviewed represented both the campaigns and their parties at all levels, it would increase my confidence that their views represented the campaigns, parties, and their leaders. The ideographic analysis of the interviews with the party leaders is discussed in Chapter 2.

Besides campaign leaders, I also decided to interview journalists, scholars, civil society leaders, and chiefs. I identified the journalists once I had become acquainted with the media space in Ghana. I interviewed journalists who followed the two candidates around the country and could speak to their experiences in places I could not visit. These journalists filled in some gaps in the stories the campaign leaders told and, in some cases, gave me leads to pursue with the

interviewees. The scholars provided insights about their research and a better understanding of the political system, the actors, and some underlying issues that shaped the election. The local chiefs offered their perspectives and insights into how chiefs interact with campaigns on behalf of their communities. The civil society leaders discussed their advocacy work to improve governance in the country and spoke to the debates about governance, corruption, and political parties in the country. The civil society leaders interviewed were from non-governmental organizations, democracy institutes, and governance-focused research institutes. Taken together, these interviewees provided another layer of information to triangulate with the data sources.

Second, I made a decision to use snowball sampling to identify interviewees, which involves relying on interviewees to identify those they believe would be able to answer questions about the campaign. Snowball sampling is ideal for when the researcher does not have sufficient information about the subjects and therefore cannot independently identify and sample them (Noy, 2008). Though the initial network map helped me identify the first interviewees, it was insufficient for the range of topics and views that I wanted to explore in the field research. In some cases, during fieldwork, an interviewee would mention the name of someone who was responsible for a particular part of campaigning. I would ask more about the person and get their contact information if the interviewee was willing to share it. This process allowed me to talk to people who played critical roles within the campaigns but were unknown to outsiders because their positions were not publicized. It also ensured that I had access to multiple sources of information to crosscheck against each other. I also did a survey to evaluate the motivations and expectations of campaign members in the team I studied. The survey was distributed to every member present at a meeting in late November, and everyone completed it. A relevant data point from the survey is mentioned earlier in this dissertation.

Gaining and Maintaining Access

Again, imagine this: I just arrived at the national headquarters of a political party. At the reception desk, I was asked whom I wanted to see, and I explained that I wanted to get permission to observe and interview campaign leaders. I was then directed to meet an administrator to discuss getting a pass. The first question the administrator asked was, "Are you a spy?" We ended up joking about what type of spy he thought I was, and after I provided my school identification, he approved my request to study the NPP campaign. What became clear as the fieldwork continued was that no one could remember a previous occasion when a researcher had been granted permission to have that much access to study their party's campaigns. The permission placed no restrictions on which teams or locations I could observe or whom I could interview, provided that I protected their anonymity and confidentiality. This freed me to approach a few teams and ask to observe them. In the end, I observed three teams: an Accra-based strategic team coordinating regional and national efforts, as well as three constituency teams that were wholly responsible for coordinating campaigns (presidential and parliamentary) in their constituencies. I chose to study three constituencies in order to cover a range of campaign behaviors under different circumstances. The NPP always won in one of the constituencies, but it had lost the three previous elections in another, and the third was a swing constituency that both parties had a realistic chance of winning. The constituency teams included all the constituency campaign leaders.

Gaining access to the NDC was trickier. For almost a month, I would go to the office and be told that the person I should speak with was not there. Since I refused to quit, they requested a letter from my university, which I provided, and after a couple more weeks, they granted me permission to observe and interview their members. Even after getting an interview, it was

difficult to get access to a national or regional team for observation as the NPP had allowed me to do. Besides a couple of meetings I accidentally walked into and was allowed to observe from a distance, they were generally evasive. However, NDC teams in the same three constituencies selected for the observation of the NPP teams gave me access, and I followed them on house-to-house canvassing trips as well as to some members-only events.

To gain access to each campaign, I made it clear that I was also observing their opponents and outlined some of the steps I had taken to protect their data. I explained the steps I would take as follows: I would protect the anonymity and confidentiality of interviewees, and I would upload interview recordings to the University of Washington servers and delete them from both the recording device and my laptop; therefore, if either were to get lost, they could rest assured that none of our discussions would fall into the wrong hands. We also agreed that there would be no voice recordings of discussions in meetings or private events but that I could take as much handwritten notes as possible. Moreover, to maintain my neutrality in the contest, I refused to offer any advice to either campaign or answer any questions about my observations regarding how well they were doing.

Analyzing the Data

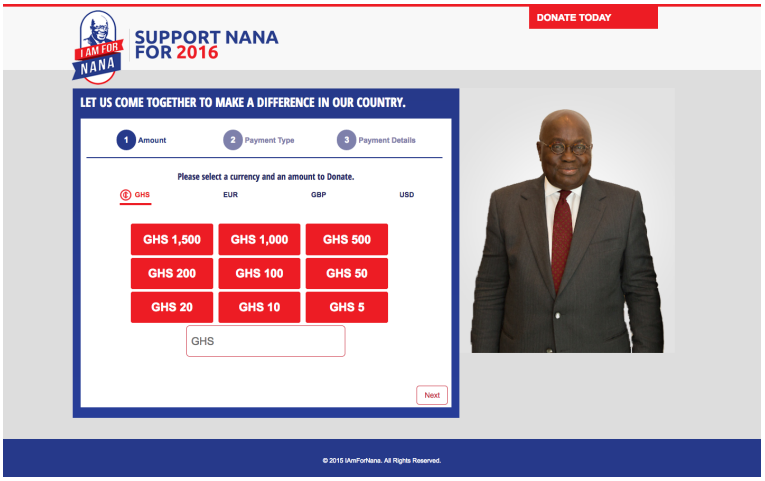
The first step toward data analysis was to organize the recordings into three distinct groups: NDC interviews, NPP interviews, and "observer" interviews ("Observer" is a general term I used for nonpartisan interviewees like journalists, chiefs, and civil society leaders.). I uploaded the transcribed audio files to Atlas.ti. The analysis was done by manually reading through the transcripts and coding for keywords and themes. A second level of coding regrouped the initial coding into the broader themes that shaped the outline of the dissertation. It is worth noting that Chapter 2, for example, emerged as a standalone chapter because I identified

significant differences between the rhetoric of the two campaigns during the data analysis. Taking this inductive approach limited the imposition of an external structure or biased assumptions on the data (Allen, 2017; Keyton, 2014; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Ragin, 2014).

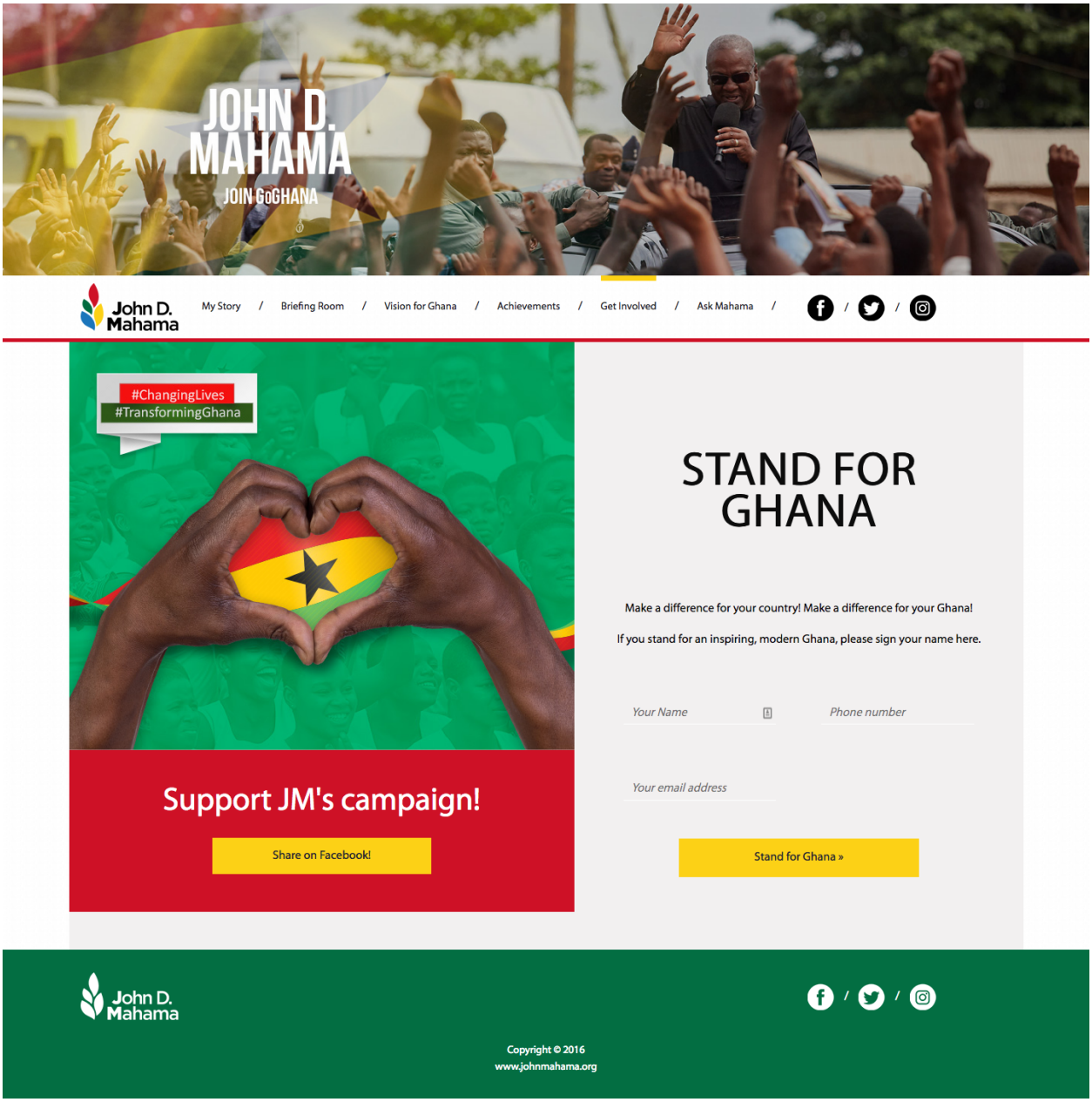
In addition to the interviews, I also analyzed data collected from other sources, such as party and campaign documents, field notes from meetings and campaign events, and news articles, among others. The goal of using these other sources was to triangulate and sometimes supplement the interviews.

Appendix II: Research and Election Artifacts

Below is the campaign website of then opposition candidate Nana Akufo-Addo, and the donation landing page if a user clicks the donation popup.



Campaign Website of Incumbent John Mahama



Study Guides

These are rough guides that were adapted to different situations/people but they give you an idea of what I was interested in.

Interview Questions (Campaign Leaders)

a. Demographic information – tell me about yourself, like who you are and what you did before this campaign? What part of the country are you from? What is your ethnic group?
a. How long have you been involved in politics and how have you participated?
b. What is your role in this campaign? What do you do most days in your role?
c. Media interest – how important is media coverage to your campaign organization? Where/how do you follow news about the election?
d. Media preference – where would you be happiest to see your campaign covered? Why? What has been your most recent success with this medium/media? What challenges do you face in getting access to this medium/media?
e. If they use online: Please tell me how you use Facebook/Twitter in your campaign? (possible follow up about internal and external communication practices)
f. Why is Twitter/Facebook/etc that you just mentioned important to your campaign? Do you see bloggers as having equal weight of influence as journalists? What role do mobile phones play in your campaign?
g. If they don't use online: Why are these online platforms (mention them) not attractive/important to you? Why do you think some candidates are very interested in reaching voters online? Would you use them if you have the resources? Time?
h. Inter-district politics: many people believe that you reach out to politicians from other districts and make deals to ensure your party's success at the polls, could you describe how this works?
i. How important is this process to your overall campaign strategy?
j. Show campaign materials/interviews they have done and ask for explanation of what their real campaign message is?

k. Is there any question you expected me to ask that I have not? Is there anything you want to tell me?

Interview Questions (Citizen Observers)

2. Demographic information about the interviewee
    a. Please tell me about yourself and what you do
    b. What part of the country are you from? What is your ethnic group?
    c. Does your job involve working with government agencies?
3. Interviewee's views about the major issues in the elections
    a. What is your view of corruption in the country?
    b. What do you think is responsible for electricity problems that Ghana has experienced recently?
    c. What do you think of Ghana's political parties?
4. Interviewee's views about the candidates for election
    a. How would you describe the performance of President John Mahama?
    b. What do you think of the opposition candidate Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo?
    c. Do you think people trust the two candidates?
5. Interviewee's views about specific issues campaigns have talked to me about that I want him/her to confirm
    a. Some people say that…, what do you know about it?
    b. I have heard that…, what exactly is happening?
    c. From your understanding of…, how would you explain some people's belief that…
6. What about the election he/she thinks I should know
    a. What do you think is the most important issue I should pay more attention to?
    b. What question were you expecting me to ask that I did not?
    c. Is there anything you think most people are not aware of that could determine the outcome of the election?

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