Emergent Confrontational Political Subculture: A Content Analysis of Media Coverage of Violence in the 2012 General Emergent Elections of Ghana
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About Ghana elections 2012 Project

The “Enabling Peaceful Transparent and Credible Elections in Ghana Using New Media Project” was implemented by the International Institute for ICT Journalism (Penplusbytes) with funding from STAR-Ghana.

This project sought to improve information and knowledge exchange on the Ghana 2012 elections among the media and civil society using ICTs towards the realization of a peaceful, transparent and credible Ghana 2012 election.

A key objective of the project was monitoring elections content in the media as an essential early warning system for the prevention of electoral violence and generating a rigorous, systematic and empirical research data for the evaluation of elections with emphasis on how the news media covers incidents of violence before, during and after the elections.

The outcomes of this project were achieved through the design and the implementation of an ICTs system made up of an elections online platform integrated with SMS, email discussion list, early warning feedback hub mashed-up web 2.0 tools such as twitter, facebook, podcasting, flickr and youtube combined with a face to face interventions. These various platforms connected citizens’ electoral concerns to security agencies and civil society actors leading to a reduction in election violence and irregularities.
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This study examines the framing theory in looking at news media coverage of election-related violence beginning from the voters’ registration till the end of the election year 2012. A content analysis of selected news media and the use of various frames suggest that the media primarily reported from a war journalism perspective. The media used three major frames: human interest frame, responsibility frame and diagnostic frame. While motives for the election violence were chiefly mixed-motivated, state-motivated conflict appeared the least. Overall, agents of the incumbent National Democratic Congress (NDC) party dominated as perpetrators of the election violence. The findings also show that the media published news stories with mostly negative tone rather than positive and neutral tones. Moreover, the media relied extensively on unofficial sources as the primary sources in publishing news. In addition, the findings reveal that political-party cadres or supporters were major perpetrators of election violence mainly in the form of harassment, show of strength and actual call to violence. The types of violence (harassment, show of strength and actual call to violence) imply a portrayal of an emerging confrontational political subculture.

Keywords:
Elections, conflict, framing, violence, media, coverage, Ghana
Introduction

A news report deals with a communicative act or event made up of complex units of linguistic, cultural, and social forms, meanings, and actions (Van Dijk, 1988). Through the use of language devices such as direct observation, interviews, quotations, descriptions, and numbers, news reports try to be precise and reflect the truth. However, the news stories are usually constructed (Tuchman, 1978). Thus, the powerful may use news media to influence public discourses in promoting their own agenda and protecting their interests (Krauss, 2005). The power brokers shape what the public should see, hear, and think by controlling particular narratives and emphasizing certain aspects of reality.

Invariably, decision making at different levels of the news production process influences news content. For example, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) note that the ideological and structural factors within and outside news organizations shape news construction. While personal ideologies of reporters and editors, journalistic models, and institutional policy determine the outcome of news production, at the same time political, ideological, and cultural forces in society influence the news-making process (Kester, 2010). Mediating social realities this way, the news media become sites of power struggles to the extent that the unreported is as important as the reported in navigating toward truth (Goldman & Rajagopal, 1991). Many scholars have indicated various ways the news media influence public opinion and perceptions (see e.g., Entman, 1993; Peng, 2008).

Such influences to the news content may reflect in the coverage of an election conflict, which is characterized by hostile interaction between opponents (Wilkenfeld, 2001). Victims of electoral violence could be people, places, things, or data. Fischer (2002) would consider election conflict or violence as any spontaneous or organized act by candidates, party executives, party supporters, election authorities, voters, or any
other actor that occurs during the electoral process, from the date of voter registration to the date of inauguration of a new government, that uses physical harm, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, threat, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, violent demonstrations, psychological manipulation, or other coercive tactics intended to exploit, disrupt, determine, hasten, delay, reverse, or otherwise influence the electoral process and its outcome. Although such political conflict issues are matters to be handled by the law enforcement processes, the public would often view the violence as presented in the news media.

The MacBride Commission noted that, in times of conflict, news usually emphasize military maneuvers and the voice of political leaders. Therefore, the commission suggested that “it should not be impossible to reconcile full and truthful reporting with a presentation that reminds readers of the possibility – indeed, the necessity – of peaceful solutions to violence” (1980, p. 177). Agreeing with this idea of peace journalism, Galtung (2006) argued that journalists should report on how conflicts originate, how conflicts might be solved to benefit the parties involved, to give voice to all parties, to focus on the undetectable effects of violence, such as emotional trauma, and report on the damage done to a culture of people.

To achieve such depth of news coverage of conflict, Fischer (2002) proposes reporting on five connected expressions of electoral conflict and violence: (a) Identity conflict that can occur during the registration process when some groups feel disenfranchised, and that they are outside of the political process, and potentially provoke conflict within the process; (b) campaign conflict that can occur as rivals seek to disrupt the opponents’ campaigns, intimidate voters and candidates, and use threats and violence to influence participation in the voting; (c) balloting conflict that can occur on Election Day when political rivalries are played out at the polling station in the form of violence and intimidation; (d) results conflict that can occur in disputes over election
results and the inability of judicial mechanisms to resolve these disputes in a timely, fair, and transparent manner, and (e) representation conflict that can occur when elections are organized as winners-take-all events where “losers” are left out of participation in governance.

This study investigates how some newspapers, radio and television networks, and online media covered violence in the 2012 elections in Ghana. The purpose of the study is to provide a picture of how the Ghanaian media portray elections violence in the domestic realm. Thus, the paper examines the Ghanaian media use of frames in their coverage of election violence through an analysis of news. The study would contribute to the limited number of studies that focus on the portrayals of power and ideological struggles for political supremacy.
Framing Theory

Framing theory forms the theoretical basis for this study. Although Erving Goffman and Gregory Bateson introduced framing into social science literature over one third of a century ago, it was only in the 1990s that the concept of framing was applied to communication on a systematic basis (Reese, 2001). Today, however, framing research has increased (Weaver, 2007), that the March 2007 issue of the Journal of Communication was dedicated to discussions of various perspectives on framing, agenda setting and priming.

Goffman (1974) first used the term “frame” to describe what people use to make sense of their outside world based upon expectations from their experiences. In addition, he mentioned that frames could help people “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” (p. 21). Scholars subsequently began to employ framing as the device to construct social reality (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978) and influence audiences’ perceptions of the world (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Iyengar, 1991; Scheufele, 1999). For example, Entman (1993; see also Chong & Druckman, 2010) referred to the media’s process of creating meaning as framing, in which they construct communicative texts by selectively prioritizing certain aspects of reality to advance a particular definition, interpretation, evaluation, or recommendation of an event, issue, or concept.

Put in another way, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) stated that framing is the central organizing idea of an interpretive corpus that gives meaning to an issue. Similarly, Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss and Ghanem defined a frame as a “central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (1991, p.11). Additionally, Entman (1993; see also Peng, 2008) noted that news organizations frame reality by making judgments on inclusion,
exclusion, illumination, and suppression. Although various researchers prioritize particular adaptations of framing theory, all the researchers consistently highlight judgment and selectivity in how media producers represent reality.

This explanation of framing theory suggests that the social construction of reality is predictably subjective. So, Kuypers (2006) observed that those who frame facts or events think that other people will perceive facts or events in their intended ways. As Gross (2006) asserted, “frames will, by highlighting certain aspects of an event or policy, guide audience members’ thoughts about the event or issue in predictable ways, to predictable conclusions” (p. 3). Thus, framing allows for variety of positions and does not give the whole picture of an event.

Tankard (2001) postulated three main theoretical constructs of framing research, namely, the media package, multidimensionality, and the list of frames. The theory of the media package focuses on linguistic markers such as keywords and common language (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The multidimensional theory of media frames deconstructs news stories into multiple structures, commonly categorized as edits, sources, visual imagery, syntax, script, theme, and rhetoric (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Alternately, Tankard’s list of 11 frames focuses on empirical precision that provides reliable coding measures (Reese, 2007).

Framing of news stories are suggested by particular devices such as headlines and kickers, subheads, photographs, photo captions, leads, pull quotes, selection of sources or affiliations, selection of quotes, nut graphs, and logos (Severin & Tankard, 2001). This way, “it is difficult to find a piece of journalism that offers no interpretation of the facts it contains; it is tempting to say that there could be no reporting without framing of the factual description, since the stories could not be written without suggesting a storyline” (Cooper, 2006, p. 105). As Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997) also put it, “frames act like plots or story lines, lending coherence to otherwise discrete pieces of information.”
Framing can have powerful influences on audiences as it affects their recognition and understanding of social problems and political issues (Entman, 1993). Accordingly, scholars have turned to framing theory as a tool with which to explain both news content and the potential effect of that content on the public, that is, the presentation and comprehension of news (Christensen, 2005; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Yang, 2003). As a media effect tool, framing theory is closely related to the agenda-setting functions of media. It is argued that the process of agenda setting has two stages: the first stage is framing and agenda setting as the second level. The media not only provide information for the people but also try to motivate the people to consider some events as the most important issues for the day, while, at times intentionally, keep other issues out of public attention. In doing this, the media may highlight certain issues that are relevant to their purposes and policies. While some scholars believe framing is similar to the second level of agenda-setting (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001), others
disagree (Maher, 2001; Reese, 2001). Weaver (2007) summarized the issue by pointing out that while there are “similarities and connections” between agenda-setting and framing, they are not identical (p.146).

News framing, then, refers to the way in which news media organize and present news to convey a specific story line. The media frame news by making certain aspects of an event or issue more salient than others, directing the audience to consider certain facts and ignore others, thereby affecting perceptions of the event or issue. Frames are manifest in news narratives by the use of specific words and phrases that reinforce certain ideas while other ideas are neglected. Framing from the media standpoint involves the salience of issues – not only inclusion and omission, but also emphasis on particular aspects of the reality described at the expense of others.
News Framing of Conflict

Frame analysis has been operationalized in a variety of ways (Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001; Miller, 1997; Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Tankard, 2001). Studying the manifest content, the analysis of Entman (1991) compared U.S. coverage of the downing of a Korean Air Lines jet by a Soviet fighter plane in 1983 to that of U.S. downing of an Iranian plane in 1988. He measured frames by examining the narrative structure of stories. He pointed out that frames can be detected by examining keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative. Also, Entman measured the overall material available on an event and how prominently it was displayed. He examined critical lexical choices made by journalists in the news stories. He finally concluded that by de-emphasizing agency and the victims, and by choice of graphics and adjectives, the case of the U.S. downing of the Iranian plane was framed as a technical problem while the Soviet downing of the Korean plane was framed as a morally outrageous event.

Moreover, Entman (1993) outlined four major functions of frames: They define problems, diagnose causes by identifying actors, attribute moral responsibility and suggest remedies. In a later study, he highlighted the role of culture in framing: “All four of these framing functions hold together in a kind of cultural logic, serving each other, with the connections cemented more by custom and convention than by the principles of valid reasoning or syllogistic logic” (2003, p.417). Thus, a frame can become more salient not just by repetition and placement, but also by associating it with “culturally familiar symbols” (1993, p. 53).

Jasperson and El-Kikhia (2003) compared the framing of the Afghan War in CNN and Al-Jazeera. Results showed that CNN used frames of consensus and focused on the strategy of technological precision. On the other hand, most of Al-Jazeera coverage framed the war in terms of
the human toll and the personal suffering of Afghans to the neglect of religio-ideological differences. Although Al-Jazeera was the only source of news providing an alternative viewpoint that was not present in the Persian Gulf War, Western media frames of that war contextualized the human interest of pictures and reports that were provided by Al-Jazeera.

From a visual perspective, photographs most often offered prompts for prevailing government versions of events and rarely contributed independent visual information. Griffin (2004), for example, analyzed the nature of the U.S. news-magazine coverage of the Afghan and Iraq Wars. Findings indicated that the photographs primarily established narrative themes within official discourse. But, in a comparative study, Fahmy (2007) examined the visual coverage of 9/11 and the Afghan War and found the Arabic-language newspaper Al-Hayat emphasized the feeling of guilt in covering the war in Afghanistan by showing visuals that humanized the victims. The coverage also de-emphasized 9/11 by showing visuals that focused less on the victims and more on material destruction and planes crashing into the buildings. On a similar level, the English language newspaper, The International Herald Tribune emphasized the emotion of guilt in 9/11 by showing visual messages that humanized the victims. It de-emphasized the bombing of Afghanistan by showing visual messages that focused less on the victims and more on aid, patriotism, arsenals and weaponry, thus framing the Afghan War story in a technical frame.

In another study, Gamson (1992) identified four news frames in his study of the Arab-Israeli conflict: Arab intransigence, feuding neighbors, Israeli expansionism, and strategic interests. Li, Lindsay, and Mogensen (2002) also analyzed initial U.S. television coverage of the 9/11 attacks through eight frames: crime, disaster, economy, environment, human interest, politics, religious, and safety.

Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005) built on the work of Li, Lindsay, and
Mogensen (2002), modifying the frames slightly for a study of the immediate Web news framing of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, analyzing it through six frames: military conflict, human interest, diagnostic, responsibility, media self-referential, and prognostic. Dimitrova and Strömbäck added a violence-of-war frame and anti-war-protest frame to that list in their cross-national analysis of Iraq war coverage. Lee and Maslog (2005) and Maslog, Lee, and Kim (2006) took a different approach, operationally defining the competing news frames of war journalism and peace journalism for use in their studies of cross-national conflict coverage.

Other framing studies examined the sources used in the coverage of the topic (Fahmy, 2005; Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss & Ghanem, 1991; Severin & Tankard, 2001). For example, Fahmy (2005) examined the news sources used to visually portray 9/11 and the Afghan War in English-and Arabic-language newspapers. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) asserted that “attributing statements is a key element of the objective ritual. It protects against accusations that they [journalists] have been manipulated” (p.113). Source selection is, thus, one of the framing devices because relying on specific sources means framing the news from those sources’ perspectives.

Some framing research employed the “agency” variable in order to determine the tone of the coverage toward the combatants of a conflict. The term agent was defined as a particular reference to an actor in the events, who is perceived to have done something negative, positive, or neutral and therefore is an agent of action (Wall, 1997). Daradanova (2002) used the agency concept to measure the construct of two newspapers’ framing of the 1999 Kosovo crisis.

In a survey of 2001 elections in 57 countries, Fischer (2002) identified four descriptive categories of conflict and violence revealing the motives, victims and perpetrators: (a) Voters in conflict with the State and claiming unfairness in the election process (voter-motivated); (b)
the State in conflict with voters who challenge the election results or the electoral hegemony of the State (State-motivated); (c) political rivals in conflict with each other for political gain (rival-motivated); or (d) a blending of these three categories. He found voter-motivated conflict occurring in about 14% of the cases, State-motivated conflict occurring in about 14% of the cases, and rival-motivated conflict occurring in about 72% of the cases.
War and Peace Journalism

Though much has been done in the way of empirical war journalism scholarship (e.g., Carruthers, 2000; Gamson, 1992; Hallin & Gitlin, 1994; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Wolfsfeld, 1997), most academic work on peace journalism is normative or theoretical in nature (e.g., Galtung, 1986; Hanitzsch, 2004; Lynch, 1998, 2001; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000; Tehranian, 2002).

Lee and Maslog (2005) and Maslog, Lee, and Kim (2006) largely based their operational definitions of war journalism and peace journalism frames on the work of the Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung. Galtung (1986) viewed war journalism and peace journalism as two competing frames in the coverage of conflict. Summarizing Galtung’s typology, Hanitzsch (2004) described war journalism as coverage with a strong zero-sum orientation (one side wins, the other side loses) and an emphasis on the visible effects of war, such as body counts and property damage. In addition, Lee, Maslog and Kim (2006) wrote: “Through a here and now perspective, war journalism stories confine a conflict to a closed space and time, with little exploration of the causes and long-term effects of the conflict” (p. 508). Galtung preferred peace journalism as an alternative to war journalism. Peace journalism urges a proactive coverage focus on unseen effects of war, the voices of common people, areas of agreement among many parties, and nonviolent compromise and creativity as resolution means (Lee & Maslog; Maslog, Lee, & Kim). Carpentier (2007) noted that advocates of peace journalism believe that absolute neutrality does not apply when weighed against universal values such as peace and democracy. Lee and Maslog (2005) noted that a peace journalist focuses on stories that highlight peace initiatives, underplay ethnic and religious differences, and promote conflict resolution. Likewise, Hackett (2006) commented: “If War Journalism presents conflict as a tug-of-war between two parties in which one side’s gain is the other’s loss, [peace journalism] invites journalists to reframe conflict as a cat’s cradle of relationships between various
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stakeholders” (p. 2).

McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) expanded on Galtung’s (1986) classification of war journalism and peace journalism. They proposed peace-journalism-based on practices for news coverage of war, including a focus on solutions, reporting on long-term effects, seeking opinions from and basing news reports on common people, reporting on all parties involved or affected, and the use of precise language. In a manual on international peace reporting, Maslog (1990) emphasized common ground between opposing parties, the avoidance of culturally offensive issues, and linguistic precision.

In their study of Asian newspapers’ coverage of four Asian conflicts, Lee and Maslog (2005) found out that 56% of the stories examined were framed as war journalism, and that peace journalism’s three most prevalent indicators were avoiding demonizing language (words such as “vicious” or “barbaric”), taking a nonpartisan approach and maintaining a multiparty orientation. The news stories with a war-journalism frame most often focused on the here and now (as opposed to being proactive and reporting on conflict before war breaks out); reported primarily from the elites’ points of view; and dichotomized between good and bad guys.

In another study, Lee, Maslog and Kim (2006) found that eight Asian newspapers predominantly chose war journalism frames when covering local conflicts but predominantly chose peace frames for the Iraq War coverage – a conflict in which the newspapers’ home countries had relatively little involvement. In addition, they found that stories with war frames tended to be shorter and locally produced, and because peace journalism frames showed up more strongly in relatively longer features/opinion pieces, they suggested peace journalism demands more words for exploration and analysis. In a related study of Asian newspapers’ coverage of the initial stages of the Iraq war, Maslog, Lee and Kim (2006) found that the majority of stories had a neutral or
peace journalism framing. But, they identified that material produced by Western news organizations, including The Associated Press and The New York Times showed more war journalism framing than locally produced copy.

Though Zelizer, Park, and Gudelunas (2002) did not undertake an empirical study of peace journalism per se, their extensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of bias in coverage of the Intifada in the Middle East in 2000-01 in The New York Times and two other mainstream publications revealed significant insight into journalism practices and peace journalism studies. Two of the three dominant frames the researchers found across all three publications included reporting the conflict as a zero-sum game between the Israelis and Palestinians, and presenting the conflict as a moral battle between good and evil, clear characteristics of war journalism as described by Lee, Maslog, and Kim’s protocol (2006). Further, the Zelizer, Park and Gudelunas’ study revealed a prevalence of elite sources over common people, a tendency to focus on the visible effects of war, like body counts, and an overall pro-Israel bias in The New York Times’ coverage of the Intifada, which, again, are all evocative of the traits Lee, Maslog, and Kim used to characterize war reporting in their empirical analyses.

This study uses framing as a theoretical foundation to analyze the news content of the selected newspapers, radio and television networks, and websites. The research looks for evidence of framing conflict and violence in the Ghanaian elections 2012 in several devices. As suggested by the previous studies (e.g. Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Wall, 1997) this study examines the prominence of the election violence by examining the frequency and placement of these stories. Framing devices suggested by Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss and Ghanem (1991) and Severin and Tankard (2001) such as the selection of sources are also analyzed. Other devices such as peace and war frames and tones were used by other scholars (e.g., Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005; Galtung, 1986; Lee, Maslog, & Kim, 2006; Zelizer, Park, & Gudelunas,
2002). Beyond this, Wall's (1997) concept of agency is used to assess those identified as causing or solving the problems of violence and conflicts in the Ghana's 2012 elections year.

To investigate violent language in the political discourse and incidents of conflict in the election process, this study asks the following research questions:

**RQ1a:** What is the relative proportion of the types of violent language used in the political discourse of the 2012 elections?

**RQ1b:** Who are the dominant agents of violent language in the political discourse of the elections?

**RQ1c:** Does the news media coverage show any difference among the major agents of the election violence and their political-party affiliation?

**RQ1d:** In which period of the election process was violent language most common?

**RQ2:** How prominent is election violence coverage in the news media?

**RQ3:** What kind of tone is dominant in the news media coverage of election violence?

**RQ4:** What is the relative dependence on comments from different sources in the news media coverage of election violence?

**RQ5:** What kind of motivated-conflict dominated the news media coverage of election violence?

**RQ6:** What are the most prevalent traits in terms of frequency of war and peace journalism in the coverage of election violence?
Method

The present study is quantitative. It employed content analysis as an instrument, and framing, as a theoretical framework, in looking at the framing of election violence in Ghana’s 2012 general elections. This research used stories reported in the selected print newspapers, radio and television networks, news websites, and stakeholders’ websites because it wanted to cover different sources of news, representing a cross-section of outlets for the elections news. The choice of the media depended on a number of reasons. For example, the Public Agenda was selected due to its human angle to election stories. In addition, the Daily Graphic was chosen because it is the largest newspaper and was also considered as the national newspaper of record in Ghana. It is also the oldest newspaper of Ghana. However, other news media outlets were included because of frequent political news and election analysis in their coverage. Still the selection has to balance inclusion of both opposition and pro-government news media.

Data Collection

Taking into consideration the five intervals in an election chronology and recognizing that conflict or violence in elections is not the result of an electoral process but the breakdown of an electoral process (Fischer, 2002), this study assessed media coverage of the 2012 elections from March 2012 when voter registration occurred up to the end of December, which was three weeks after the elections. News stories on election-related violence in the selected print newspapers, radio and television networks, news websites, and stakeholders’ websites, beginning from the opening of voter registration in March through the Election Day to the end of December 2012, were selected for the study. To get an overall picture of the election violence by framing in the selected media, this period is chosen to reflect the
general election process, not just the heated campaign season and the usual after-shock effect of election outcomes. The news stories were collected from the Penplusbytes media monitoring database. News published on front pages, for example, are generally considered the most important issues of the day and those news stories tend to draw readers’ attention more than those in other pages of the newspaper.

**Unit of Analysis and Coding**

In this study, the units of analysis are the individual news stories published in the selected media. A news story usually gives a full context and offers readers more in-depth information on the issue in focus. Two experienced colleagues examined the operational definitions and the coding sheet to evaluate their reliability for implementation. News stories were coded for their language type, prominence, source, tone, agent, and motives all of which are related to the research questions.

**Language Type**

The political discourse manifests in the type of expressions that to the ordinary citizen are offensive, in bad taste, and are likely to incite violence or produce conflict. Such expressions involve such language as: (a) Threats consist of remarks that are purported to put an individual or group in danger or at risk, arouse fear or panic, terrify or suggest any form of intimidation of an opponent. (b) Harassment focuses on physical mechanisms that are either actual or intended to frustrate, irritate, persecute, and pursue the opponent. (c) Show of strength deals with a demonstration of capability to harness power and resources to coerce, punish or control opponents’ activity. (d) Actual call for confrontation or violence concerns remarks that urge people to react with force against opponents, including confrontations, fighting,
physical harm, or destruction. (e) Inflammation of passions deals with remarks that are provocative and likely to incite passions and angry responses from persons of one party or group against a target group or opponent. (f) Verbal abuse/insults are comments that ridicule or denigrate the performance, person or character of an opponent such as invectives, name-calling, and innuendoes. (g) Divisive comments entail prejudicial and stereotypical remarks that have the propensity to cause tribal/ethnic tensions or conflict. (h) Unsubstantiated allegations focus on claims that are unreliable, insufficient and irrelevant because they are not supported with facts or evidence but are intended to discredit an opponent in order to score a political point. (i) “Other” contains all forms of remarks that do not fall under the categories mentioned.

**Agent**

To assess how the opponents of the election conflict are presented in the news coverage, the tone of the reporting is analyzed employing Wall’s (1997) concept of agency. The term agent is defined as a particular reference to an actor in the events who is perceived to have done something negative, positive, or neutral and therefore is an agent of action. The particular agents chosen for coding are the opponents of the conflict (e.g., presidential candidates or running mates of parties, national or regional or constituency party executives), or supporters of parties, which could be individuals, groups, organizations or actions that represent the parties or report to represent them. Agents are coded as positive, negative or neutral based on the qualities and attributes assigned to them. Each news story has only one agent. Although some studies coded the identified agents appearing in only the headline (i.e., Wall, 1997), the headline and at least the first three paragraphs of a story may have to be read in order to identify the agent. When the agent is not clear in the headline, the lead, and the first three paragraphs of the news story, the agent is coded as “no agent”.
Affiliation

Agents are also coded for their political relation to a party. They are grouped as belonging to the NDC as the incumbent party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) as the dominant opposition party, and “Other” representing opposition parties beside NPP. When the affiliation is not clear in the news story, the affiliation is coded as “none”.

Timing

Considering elections as a process, Fischer (2002) identified five types of conflict that occur as varied but connected expressions: identity conflict, campaign conflict, balloting conflict, results conflict, and representation conflict. This study assesses media coverage of conflict and violence in the process as follows: (a) before campaign launch, which concerns expressions of electoral conflict and violence from the opening of registration till the campaign launch; (b) during the campaign period, which focuses on violent expressions related to the elections from campaign launch (of a major party, i.e., of the NPP on August 25, 2012) until the day before elections (December 6, 2012); (c) on Elections Day as on December 7, 2012, and (d) after Elections Day, which deals with all violent expressions regarding the elections till the end of December 2012.

Frequency

Frequency deals with the number of mentions of various language types. It consists also of the number of occurrences of such incidents as violent clashes and physical confrontations recorded in the selected print newspapers, radio and television networks, news websites, and stakeholders’ websites. While a “mention” concerns every reference to a remark or idea as representing the recording unit in the news story,
an “occurrence” refers to a single event as reported in each story. If the incident is mentioned several times in the same story it is coded as one.

**Prominence**

Prominence here refers to the relative emphasis on election conflict or violence in the media. Such emphasis entails the placement of the conflict stories and visuals as highlights of the selected media’s perspective of the event. The placement coding was based on three categories: (a) lead story, which is considered to be the most important news item, (b) top news story, which is the next most important story, (c) other homepage story, which is least important. With regard to the visuals the media may have a slant that amplifies the government perspective, the opposition perspective, or take a nonpartisan perspective.

**Attributed Sources**

A source is important in any news article because the source is used to get the information about any event and to make the news appear authentic to the audience. In any news story, the primary sources are usually cited at the very beginning of a news story. This study examines the primary sources of news about the violence from two perspectives: (a) The official sources are appointed officers who work with the government. (b) The non-official sources are all sources other than government officials. To measure the types of sources, which would be used to report any election related uncivil discourse, conflict or violence with regard to Ghana’s 2012 elections; quoted and paraphrased statements attributed to news sources would be coded. The non-official sources are coded based on five categories: (a) opposition party sources, (b) reporters sources, (c) civil society organization sources, (e) public sources, and (f) International sources -- which are the sources
of any country other than Ghana. If a source is quoted or paraphrased more than once, it is coded as one source.

**Tone**

This study uses the element of tones in determining the direction of the frames. Generally, a tone tells readers how the reporter presented a story -- whether the story is reported in a positive, a neutral or a negative manner. In this study, a “positive” report means that the news report is favorable or complimentary toward the subjects of the story; a “negative” report means that the news report puts the subjects of the story in a bad light; a “neutral” report means that the news story is neither clearly complimentary nor against the subjects.

**Motives**

This study adopted the four descriptive categories of conflict and violence that emerged in Fischer’s study (2002, pp. 4, 17), suggesting a variety of motives. (a) Voter-motivated conflict focuses on voters in conflict with the State and claiming unfairness in the election process. (b) State-motivated conflict deals with the State in conflict with voters who challenge the election results or the electoral hegemony of the State. (c) Rival-motivated conflict concerns political rivals in conflict with each other for political gain. (d) Mixed motivation for a conflict is a blending of these three categories.

**Report Frames**

Report frames deal with such incidents as violent clashes, and physical confrontations and destructions; otherwise, they are discounted from the study. The frames consist of war frames and peace frames. The study adopts the definitions of war story frames as used by Dimitrova
Emergent Confrontational Political Subculture: A content analysis of Media Coverage of Violence in the 2012 General Elections of Ghana.

and Strömbäck (2005): (a) The military conflict frame focuses on the conflict or military action, troops, and equipment. (b) The human interest frame focuses on the human participants in the event, the suffering of involved parties, the civilians, the issue of displacement and people. (c) The responsibility frame focuses on the party/person responsible for the conflict. (d) The diagnostic frame focuses on the broader discussion or what caused (reasons) the event. (e) The prognostic frame focuses on broader discussion of the possible consequences of the event such as involvement of external powers. The emphasis will be on possible outcomes of events. (f) The violence of war frame focuses on the destruction caused by the conflict, including statements about the aftermath of any military operation and casualty totals.

Peace story frames are adaptations of categories used in previous studies (e.g., Carpentier, 2005; Galtung, 1986; Lee, Maslog, & Kim, 2006; MacGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). Therefore, the categories for identifying peace frames consisted of: (a) Problem-solving frame focuses on seeking opinions as a broader discussion for ending the conflict. (b) Consequence frame focuses on reporting possible long-term effects of the event. (c) Concord frame focuses on solutions, peace initiatives and promotion of conflict resolution. (d) Linguistic frame focuses on precise use of language that avoids demonizing a party to the conflict. (e) Orientation frame focuses on reporting on the parties involved in the conflict in a multiparty or non-partisan manner. (f) Sensitivity frame focuses on avoidance of culturally offensive issues and underplaying ethnic and religious differences.

**Inter-Coder Reliability**

As a pilot coding, four undergraduate students were trained to independently code 10 election violence stories. The data reflected an inter-coder reliability of 96 percent, based on Holstí’s formula.
examine the research questions in this study, Chi-square analysis was used to test the data as appropriate. The alpha level was set at .05.

Table 1.
Types of Violent Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>NDC n(%)</th>
<th>NPP n(%)</th>
<th>Other n(%)</th>
<th>None n(%)</th>
<th>Total N(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>19 (15.6)</td>
<td>10 (8.2)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>7 (5.7)</td>
<td>37 (30.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show of strength</td>
<td>19 (15.6)</td>
<td>9 (7.4)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>11 (9.0)</td>
<td>42 (34.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual call to violence</td>
<td>11 (9.0)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>20 (16.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflaming passions</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse/insults</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisive comments</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61 (50.0)</td>
<td>30 (24.6)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>26 (21.3)</td>
<td>122 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Overall, a total of 122 stories were content analyzed. But, the first research question was four-tiered and dealt with the types, agents, political party affiliation and the timing of the election violence. RQ1a: What is the relative proportion of the types of violent language used in the political discourse of the 2012 elections?

Of the 122 articles analyzed, 42 (34.4%) indicated that the show of strength dominated the political discourse. Harassment followed and it accounted for 37 (30.3%) of the occurrences, and actual call to violence was 20 (16.4%). The other types of violent language were not significant in the reports, namely, “threats” were 6 (4.9%), both “inflaming passions” and “verbal abuse” had 5 (4.1%), and “other”
unspecified forms of violence were 4 (3.3%). Divisive comments appeared three times (2.5%) as the least occurring events (see Table 1). There was a significant difference in the proportion of types of violent language that was used in the election coverage, since the Pearson Chi-Square value \( x^2 (v, \alpha) = (7, 0.05) = 14.07 \) is greater than \( [x^2]_{\text{cal}} = 4.6958 \).

**RQ1b:** Who are the dominant agents of violent language in the political discourse of the elections?

**Table 2**

*Agents of Violent Language*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>President cand/mate n (%)</th>
<th>National party exec n (%)</th>
<th>President cand/mate n (%)</th>
<th>Consti. party exec n (%)</th>
<th>Party supporter n (%)</th>
<th>No agent n (%)</th>
<th>Total N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>8 (6.6)</td>
<td>18 (14.8)</td>
<td>7 (5.7)</td>
<td>37 (30.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show of strength</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>19 (15.6)</td>
<td>11 (9.0)</td>
<td>42 (34.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual call to violence</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>20 (16.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflaming passions</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse/insults</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisive comments</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>4 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 (5.7)</td>
<td>12 (9.8)</td>
<td>11 (9.0)</td>
<td>18 (14.8)</td>
<td>48 (39.3)</td>
<td>26 (21.3)</td>
<td>122 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total violent incidents indicate that party supporters represented the major agents of violence 48 times (39.3%). While the identity of 26 (21.3%) were nonparty agents, constituency party executives 18 (14.8%), the data showed national party executives with 12 (9.8%), and regional party executives 11 (9.0%) respectively showed quite similar level of agency. The presidential candidates and their running mates accounted for 7 (5.7%) and were scarcely involved as agents of election violence (see Table 2).

RQ1c: Does the news media coverage show any difference among the major agents of the election violence and their political-party affiliation?

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>NDC n(%)</th>
<th>NPP n(%)</th>
<th>Other n(%)</th>
<th>None n(%)</th>
<th>Total N(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential cand./running mate</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>7 (5.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party executive (national)</td>
<td>10 (8.2)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>12 (9.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party executive (regional)</td>
<td>9 (7.4)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>11 (9.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party executive (constituency)</td>
<td>9 (7.4)</td>
<td>7 (5.7)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>18 (14.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party supporter</td>
<td>28 (23.0)</td>
<td>17 (13.9)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>48 (39.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No agent</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>21 (17.2)</td>
<td>26 (21.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61 (50.0)</td>
<td>30 (24.6)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>26 (21.3)</td>
<td>122 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 3, the NDC party was overall identified as the dominant agent of election violence with 61 (50.0%) of the occurrences. However, the NPP party accounted for 30 (24.6%) representing about half of the NDC party count. Another 26 (21.3%) acted as undefined political-affiliation agents, while other political parties scantily recorded 5 (4.1%). There was a significant difference between the NDC and the NPP party agents’ contribution to the election violence since the Pearson Chi-Square value $\chi^2_{\text{cal}}=9.9705$ was found less than $\chi^2(v,\alpha)=(5,0.05)=11.07$

**RQ1d:** In which period of the election process was violent language most common?

Data in Table 4 indicate that about half of the election violence occurred before the start of vigorous campaigning, and such incidents significantly involved the show of strength 42 (34.4%), harassment 37 (30.3%), and actual call to violence 20 (16.4%). Events of election violence during the campaigning period were 30 (25%), which signified half of what happened before the campaign. Though in a lesser measure, the violent events during the campaign concentrated on similar violence types as those before the campaign. So also, the 26 (21.3%) violent events recorded after the election mainly involved the show of strength, harassment and the actual call to violence. The $\chi^2_{\text{cal}}=12.7212$ was found less than $\chi^2(v,\alpha)=(7,0.05)=14.07$. Hence, there was a significant difference in the election violence between before and after the election.
Table 4

Timing of Violent Language Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Before campaign n (%)</th>
<th>During campaign n (%)</th>
<th>Election day n (%)</th>
<th>After election n (%)</th>
<th>Total N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>21 (17.2)</td>
<td>8 (6.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>7 (5.7)</td>
<td>37 (30.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show of strength</td>
<td>19 (15.6)</td>
<td>9 (7.4)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>11 (9.0)</td>
<td>42 (34.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual call to violence</td>
<td>10 (8.2)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>4 (3.2)</td>
<td>20 (16.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflaming passions</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse/insults</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisive comments</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61 (50.0)</td>
<td>30 (24.6)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>26 (21.3)</td>
<td>122 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ2: How prominent is election violence coverage in the news media?

Figure 1. Prominence as the selected news media’s perspectives of election-related violence as reflected in their placement and emphasis of those violent events.
Out of the 122 stories that focused on election violence, 62 (50.8%) came from the print newspapers, 23 (18.9%) were from websites, 21 (17.2%) stories were from television, and 16 (13.1%) were from radio outlets. While 49 (40.2%) representing about a third of the news stories examined were homepage stories, 40 (32.8%) of the stories were listed in the “lead story” category. With a lesser extent, 21 (17.2%) of the news stories appeared in the “top” story category (see Figure 1). Moreover, the news media heavily offered 40.2% of the visuals to the opposition parties’ perspective. But, the visuals gave a slight difference between independent visual information (30.3%) and the government version of events (29.5%).

RQ3: What kind of tone is dominant in reporters’ coverage of elections violence?

Figure 2. Tone as the news media determine direction of frames in covering election-related violence on political parties.
To test for the dominant tone of coverage, a chi-square test was conducted. The results show (see Figure 2) that news outlets generally reported news stories with predominantly negative tone 106 (86.9%) than positive 4 (3.3%) and neutral 12 (9.8%) tones. Out of the 106 (86.9%) negative tone of stories, the incumbent NDC received 56 (45.9%) and the largest opposition NPP party had 25 (20.5%). Overall, the NDC had twice the number of stories on election violence than 30 (24.6%) portrayed of the NPP. Accordingly, the difference between the two major parties in terms of negative tone is significant. The Pearson Chi-Square value $X^2 (v, \alpha) = (6, 0.05) = 12.58$ and $X^2_{cal} = 8.8897$. Therefore, the difference between the two parties in terms of negative tone is statistically significant. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that more stories have negative tones than positive and neutral tones.

**RQ4:** What is the relative dependence on comments from different sources in the news media coverage of election violence?

**Table 5**

*Media’s source attribution of election violence stories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Official n (%)</th>
<th>Opposition n (%)</th>
<th>Reporters n (%)</th>
<th>CSO n (%)</th>
<th>Public n (%)</th>
<th>Internatl n (%)</th>
<th>Total N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print News.</td>
<td>17 (13.9)</td>
<td>21 (17.2)</td>
<td>24 (19.7)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>62 (50.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>15 (12.3)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>16 (13.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>15 (12.3)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>21 (17.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>19 (15.6)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>23 (18.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23 (18.9)</strong></td>
<td><strong>22 (18.0)</strong></td>
<td><strong>73 (59.8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0 (0.0)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (3.3)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0 (0.0)</strong></td>
<td><strong>122 (100.0)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of attributed sources, four out of the six coding categories were identified in the 122 stories. Civil Society Organization (CSO) sources and international sources did not apply in the analyzed stories. In the news stories, 99 (81.1%) of the stories were unofficial sources (i.e., opposition party sources, reporters, and public sources) and 23 (18.9%) were official sources. Reporters were used in 73 (59.8%) of the news stories.

Next, both the government and opposition sources had similar proportion of dependence in attribution. Official sources were used in 18.9% of the news stories and opposition sources were used in 18.0% of the news stories as the primary sources. Insignificantly, stories having the public (ordinary citizen) as source were 4 (3.3%). However, the media used nearly four times more unofficial sources than official sources. Whereas the newspapers relied quite evenly on both official and unofficial sources, other news media outlets relied relatively much on reporters. Only television depended on the public (see Table 5). The Pearson Chi-Square value of \( X^2 (v, \alpha) = (3, 0.05) = 7.81 \), which is less than \([ X^2 ]_{cal} = 37.9954\), indicates that the media relied significantly on reporters as their primary sources.

**RQ5:** What kind of motivated-conflict dominated the media coverage of elections violence?

The data from the media coverage (see Table 6) indicate that mixed-motivated conflict (34.4%) was comparatively the most frequent motive for election violence. Rivalry-motivated conflict (30.3%) and voter-motivated conflict (27.1%) followed the mixed-motivated conflict. But, state-motivated conflict (8.2%) appeared as the smallest category. A one-way chi-square limited to the three most common categories confirms that they occurred with different frequencies. \([ X^2 (v, \alpha) = (14, 0.05) = 23.68 \text{ and } [ X^2 ]_{cal} = 6.5738\]
Emergent Confrontational Political Subculture: A content analysis of Media Coverage of Violence in the 2012 General Elections of Ghana.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Voter-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>State-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>Rival-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>Mixed-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>Total N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>15 (12.3)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>10 (8.2)</td>
<td>10 (8.2)</td>
<td>37 (30.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show of strength</td>
<td>8 (6.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>15 (12.3)</td>
<td>18 (14.8)</td>
<td>42 (34.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual call to violence</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>9 (7.4)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
<td>20 (16.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflaming passions</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse/insults</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisive comments</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (27.1)</td>
<td>10 (8.2)</td>
<td>37 (30.3)</td>
<td>42 (34.4)</td>
<td>122 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ6: What are the most prevalent traits in terms of frequency of war and peace journalism in the coverage of election violence?

This research question investigated for the prominent frames used by the media outlets in their coverage of election violence in the 2012 general elections. A frequency analysis shows (see Table 7) that the media used three war frames most frequently: human interest frame, responsibility frame and diagnostic frame. Overall, the media mostly published news with the human interest frame (36.10%). The responsibility frame was second in prominence with 22.1% and the diagnostic frame followed with 20.5%. A Chi-Square test was also conducted and it showed that the media published the election violence from the human interest frame more than any other frame. The Pearson Chi-Square value is \( X^2(v, \alpha) = 11.07 \) and \( X^2_{cal} = 24.6857 \) signifying a statistically non-significant difference. However, peace frames were 11 (9.0%) altogether. A chi-square analysis indicated that the differences in the types of peace framing were not statistically significant.
### Table 7
Frequency of frames in the coverage of election violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Voter-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>State-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>Rival-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>Mixed-motivated n (%)</th>
<th>Total N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>2 (1.6)</td>
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<td>Human interest</td>
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<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>16 (13.1)</td>
<td>12 (9.8)</td>
<td>44 (36.1)</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>6 (4.9)</td>
<td>8 (6.6)</td>
<td>27 (22.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
<td>9 (7.4)</td>
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<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
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<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>5 (4.1)</td>
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<td>Peace frame</td>
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<td>Problem-solving</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Concord</td>
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<td>Orientation</td>
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<td>4 (3.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
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<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>1 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33 (27.1)</td>
<td>10 (8.2)</td>
<td>37 (30.3)</td>
<td>42 (34.4)</td>
<td>122 (100.0)</td>
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Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the framing theory in looking at the news media coverage of violence related to the 2012 general elections of Ghana. First, the study looked for the nature of the violence, the agents, their political affiliation and the timing within the election cycle. Results indicate that show of strength, harassment, and actual call to violence by mainly party supporters of the incumbent NDC party and the largest opposition NPP party characterized the 2012 general elections. The findings also indicate that half of the election violence occurred before the formal launching of election campaigns. Violent incidents during campaigning and after the elections were roughly the same.

Second, the study investigated the prominence that the media attached to election violence. The findings show that print newspapers were outstanding in assigning election violence as lead stories, and along with websites as other homepage stories. Beside the placement, visuals favored the opposition perspective more than the nonpartisan perspective and that of the incumbent government.

Third, tones of news in the selected media were examined. The results indicate that the tone of the election-violence coverage was massively negative.

Fourth, the study also looked at the sources of news in the selected Ghanaian media outlets. The findings reveal that the media depended more on unofficial sources, which mainly comprised journalists (reporters) sources. Comparatively, the results also suggest that both official sources and opposition sources received equivalent number of source attributions.
Fifth, the findings show that the major motive for the election violence was mixed-motivated conflicts. However, this could have been influenced more by a mix of voter-motivated and rival-motivated conflicts than state-motivated conflicts.

Sixth, the results suggest that the media used mostly war frames in covering election violence. The media focused on human interest, responsibility and diagnostic frames.

In this study, journalists operated as a dominant source of the news reports contrary to other findings (e.g., Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Zelizer, Park & Gudelunas, 2002) which found that journalists reported most news on conflict depending by and large on the official sources. This study, however, shows that the journalists used predominantly unofficial sources. By using unofficial sources, the media published many news stories on human interest issues. News media cover events to draw audience’s attention to certain phenomena and to shape public opinion and perception (Entman, 1993; Kester, 2010; Peng, 2008; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Van Dijk, 1998). Accordingly, framing news reports are one of the ways in which the media try to put certain attributes in the events and thus intentionally characterize those events to influence public opinion and perception in line with the objectives of the media. Hence, the news media represented the unofficial voice particularly of the opposition parties and the public and focused more on human interest issues, perpetrators of the violence and discussion of the reasons for the conflict. In doing so, the news media published most news with a negative tone.

While the use of sources may indicate framing news from the sources' perspective, placement of stories and visuals do likewise. For example, Griffin (2004) suggests visuals often favored the prevailing government’s perspective. However, in this study, visuals favored the opposition parties’ perspective.
Theoretically, the results supported earlier findings of Lee, Maslog and Kim (2006) that the news media used predominantly war journalism frame. In addition, the news media focused more on the human interest frame, responsibility frame and diagnostic frame. Generally, it is expected that the media would focus more on violence and human interest in violence coverage than on any other aspect in news reporting. The news media paid more attention to the human interest, responsibility and diagnostic frames with reason. For example, as locally based news media, proximity might have contributed to the attention they gave to election violence and considered the direct implications of such incidents as a national issue. Similarly, the reports also focused on a broader discussion of the perpetrators of violence, human suffering and implications of election violence on the national cohesion and stability.

More important, the results indicate a growing confrontational political subculture. It is striking that party supporters of the incumbent NDC party and the largest opposition NPP party manifested more show of strength, harassment, and actual call to violence in the 2012 elections than other aspects of violence. What seemed at the beginning of the election period to center on verbal abuse shifted to these aspects because there was an implicit national consensus that deplored insults. Thus, from the onset, the public voice discouraged such uncivil rhetoric in the party politics. However, the objections that opposed the emergent political atmosphere of insults did not continue to counter such serious threat to democracy as show of strength, harassment and actual call to violence. Whereas insults may degrade the political discourse, the latter aspects of violence (show of strength, harassment and actual call to violence) can injure democracy. For toleration is a key feature ensuring stability in a democracy, but confrontation threatens it (Bollinger, 1986; Schauer, 1982).

The political tension and causes of election-related violence in a developing country like Ghana are generated by the stakes, incentives,
perceptions of “stolen elections,” and expectations related to election outcomes, and the strong effects of electoral system choice on these factors (Sisk, 2008). Similarly, the agency dimension of election violence cannot be overlooked because agents of electoral violence are often political-party supporters (cadres). Thus, the findings on the causes, perpetrators, and types of electoral violence can inform planning of programs to manage electoral processes that produce legitimate and accepted outcomes, as well as eliminate the election-related violence.

Moreover, it is important to insulate the electoral management body (e.g., the electoral commission). A strong electoral system cannot be easily circumvented by such foul means as cheating, show of strength, and intimidation of voters. Therefore, by introducing balance in the composition of the electoral management body and the electoral system generally would obviate incentives for inciting violence at various stages of the electoral cycle. This strong electoral system should be at both national and local levels so that incumbency would not be a powerful force to use violence to prevail when other methods of mobilization fail.

Unaffiliated civil society organizations (CSOs) that sponsor programs in such areas as strategies to create professionalism, infuse internationally recognized standards into the electoral administration and monitoring throughout the electoral cycle are essential to ensuring free and fair outcomes and in mitigating the tensions that arise from widespread perceptions of “stolen elections.” For example, the STAR-Ghana as a CSO contributed immensely in this direction to the 2012 elections in Ghana. Such efforts should continue along with organizing political parties to develop pre-election peace pledges or no-violence pacts, including violence assessment, tracking and monitoring methods such as parallel vote tabulations (Marco, 2007) to reassure the public that official election results are legitimately determined.

This study had limitations. Chief among them is a need for news index that tracks the news media and their local coverage of communities.
This could have generated a larger number of election violence reports than what was gathered from the selected news media outlets. Another limitation of this study is its focus on the quantitative approach to what is covered by the news media – leaving largely unaddressed the qualitative aspects of the reports. Therefore, a future study may combine the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the coverage.

This study contributes to studies that focus on portrayals of power and ideological struggles for political supremacy. The study gives some understanding of how the news media coverage points to an emerging election dynamics in Ghana that needs citizens’ attention for more peaceful elections in the future.
References


Dresden, Germany.


Emergent Confrontational Political Subculture: A content analysis of Media Coverage of Violence in the 2012 General Elections of Ghana.


About Ghana elections 2012 Project

The “Enabling Peaceful Transparent and Credible Elections in Ghana Using New Media Project” was implemented by the International Institute for ICT Journalism (Penplusbytes) with funding from STAR-Ghana.

This project sought to improve information and knowledge exchange on the Ghana 2012 elections among the media and civil society using ICTs towards the realization of a peaceful, transparent and credible Ghana 2012 election.

A key objective of the project was monitoring elections content in the media to identify and promote content for the promotion of