Vice-Presidential Candidates, Language Frames, and Functions Across Two Continental Divides: An Analysis of Acceptance Speeches

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Given calls for more inclusion of women in the political space and political studies, we analyze the nomination acceptance speeches of vice-presidential candidates, from two countries with different sociocultural and economic backgrounds (Ghana and the United States). Our analysis builds on two well-established theories for studying political discourses. The authors uncover in both speeches, four similar and salient language frames synonymous to women in the political space. We advance the argument that the similarities in the language frames employed by both candidates can be attributed to their quests to wrestle power from incumbent regimes and concern about being ostracized. Our findings on their frames indicate that, negligible of the context or position, the feminine language frames hold true in the speeches of women in politics. It also reinforces the wide applicability of the functional theory of political campaign discourse and supports the argument that women go negative in their political discourse contrary to societal expectations.

Keywords: women, nomination speech, vice-presidential candidates, framing, functional theory of political campaign discourse

Acceptance speeches are crucial political rituals that can be described as a pseudo campaign and an image-building strategy. This is because it affords nominees a great opportunity to create an impression in the minds of critical stakeholders in the political space, such as the electorates (Gyuró, 2015; Miller & Stiles, 1986). The critical nature of acceptance speeches is highlighted by official outdooring ceremonies in many countries, which herald the official public introduction. Previously, political communication scholars have mostly focused on studying the acceptance speeches of presidential candidates (e.g., Benoit, Blaney, & Pier, 2000); however, studies on the acceptance speeches of presidential running mates are rare, which creates a paucity in literature in this area of research. Running mates are critical political actors for three reasons: (1) They complement the qualities of a presidential candidate; (2) running mates can be the

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determining factor of presidential candidates' electoral fortunes; and (3) should a president be elected to office, they occupy the second highest political office in many jurisdictions (Bostdorff, 1991; Sanders, 2019).

In the buildup to the 2020 elections in Ghana and the United States, the leading opposition parties in both countries: The National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the Democratic Party of the United States made huge political statements of inclusion by nominating female running mates. The expectation was that both nominations would add some gravitas and boost their chances of wrestling power from incumbent regimes in the two countries. Both nominations were historic for two separate reasons. For the NDC, this was the first time the party had nominated a female running mate, whereas in the case of the Democratic Party, this was the first time the party had nominated a female running mate from two ethnic minorities (native Indian and Black American). Ghana and the United States are key players in global politics, as both countries enjoy enviable democracies. Whereas the United States is seen as an exemplary democracy in the world, Ghana has been described as the beacon of democracy in Africa (Sikanku, 2019). Since the United States is touted as the benchmark of democracy with a mature democracy spanning over 200 years, it has become the standard for comparative studies. Sikanku (2019) argues that the similarities that enhance the comparability of the two countries are: They have similar electoral calendars straddling every four years, and both countries have maintained strong bilateral relations since 1957. In addition, Ghana and the United States both practice the presidential system of governance where executive power is entrusted in the president. Culturally, three past U.S. presidents (Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama) have visited Ghana. In both countries, the president and the vice president run on the same electoral ticket, and the vice president has constitutionally defined roles such as breaking ties in Congress (for the United States) and heading the Economic Management Team (for Ghana). In 2019, a year marked as "The Year of Return" in Ghana, where the country encouraged people of African descent to visit the country, Speaker Nancy Pelosi led the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus to participate in a joint legislative session with their counterparts in Ghana and toured some historic slave sites ("Historic trip to Ghana," 2019). Lastly, both countries have two dominant political parties, and their political spaces are male dominated. Statistics from the Center for American Women and Politics indicate that the statistics of women in the United States stands at one vice president, 11 cabinet and cabinet-level position holders, three Supreme Court judges, 143 women in Congress, 94 statewide executives, and 2,290 state legislature (Current Numbers, n.d.). In Ghana, women hold 18 ministerial and deputy ministerial appointments, 40 parliamentary seats, five Supreme Court judges, and 38 women nominated to hold metropolitan, municipal, and district positions (Asante, 2021; Lartey 2021). This then provides enough justification to compare different political facets of these two countries on different continental divides.

The goal of this current study is to contribute to knowledge by analyzing how two female running mates in Ghana and the United States framed and presented their nomination acceptance speeches to contribute to literature in political communication. This current study examines the nomination acceptance speeches of Professor Jane Naana Agyemang, running mate for the NDC presidential candidate, John Dramani Mahama, as well as that of Vice President Kamala Harris, running mate for the 2020 Democratic Party candidate, President Joe Biden. The study has two facets: (a) To uncover the language frames they employed and (b) To ascertain the use of elements of the functional theory of political campaign discourse by both politicians. This study fills a clear gap by providing insights into what a critical political ritual such as the nomination acceptance speech looks like in a developing and a developed context. It also expands existing scholarship in framing studies, functional analysis, and female political communication.

Professor Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang

Professor Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang's selection as running mate for the NDC's John Dramani Mahama for the 2020 Ghanaian election came as a surprise to members of the NDC as well as to analysts in the Ghanaian political space. Before Professor Opoku Agyemang's selection, she had served as the minister of education from 2013 to 2017 under the erstwhile government of the NDC led by H. E. John Mahama (opposition leader in 2020), an appointment that also brought hullabaloos among the public considering the role she played as debate moderator in the 2012 presidential debate, a role then perceived to be apolitical. Her appointment as minister of education seemingly metamorphosed her from a technocrat into a politician, based on the issues she dealt with in office, such as strikes by various educational unions in Ghana. Before making the transition to politics, she enjoyed an illustrious career in academia, where she served as professor in the English Department at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), a leading public university in Ghana. Her illustrious career saw her hold key executive and administrative positions like the head of the English Department, founding dean of School of Graduate Studies and Research, and, ultimately, the first female vice chancellor of UCC, a position she really excelled. Her historic appointment as the first female vice-presidential candidate of a major party in Ghana makes her a crucial source of academic inquiry considering how women are marginalized in the political space and how young Ghana's democracy is compared with other western democracies.

Vice President Kamala Harris

Vice President Kamala Harris, though not the first female running mate selected by a major party in the United States, also made history by being the first female from two ethnic minorities (Black and native Indian) to be selected by a major political party in the United States. Unlike Professor Opoku Agyemang, Vice President Harris was not a stranger to the political space before her selection by then vice president Joe Biden. She contested in the Democratic Party's presidential primaries leading to the 2020 election, where she later withdrew her candidature to endorse the eventual winner, President Joe Biden. Vice President Harris can be described as one of the most successful female politicians in the United States because she has held different positions from the district to the national levels by making a steady rise through the ranks. From humble beginnings, she began her illustrious career when she became the deputy district attorney from 1990 to 1998, earning a reputation for her rigid prosecution approach. She later became the district attorney in 2004 and subsequently won elections to become the attorney general of California, becoming the first woman to hold such a position from 2011 to 2017. In the 2016 election, she won a senate seat in California to become the second woman from an ethnic minority to hold that office. Ultimately, she was elected alongside Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden in the 2020 U.S. election. Both politicians (Jane and Kamala) have chalked significant achievements in their respective countries; a comparison of their acceptance speeches will be of theoretical relevance to political communication.

Related Studies on Language Styles Employed by Politicians

The concept of gender cannot be overlooked since we are looking at the discourses of women in the political space, which is considered a male-dominated sphere. Butler (1990) posits that words or languages are some of the ways in which gender manifests discursively. The study of the language styles of women

globally has become more critical considering calls for gender parity in politics. Language style for this current study implies how individuals connect and/or make meaning to their audiences or others (Pennebaker, 2011). The political space is considered a masculine-dominated sphere, which invariably influences the language styles employed by female politicians (Lawless, 2009). Scholars have identified factors that affect the language style employed by female politicians, which are societal expectations of women, the culture of the given political context, and their biology (e.g., Argamon, Koppel, Fine, & Shimoni, 2003). Going by the arguments, it would be interesting to see how speeches delivered by two female politicians in patriarchal societies, on different continents but on similar occasions, either reinforce or refute their positions. Gendered-language styles in the political space are not exclusive to male and female politicians; politicians usually decide which language styles to use depending on the situation (Mukhortov & Malyavina, 2019). A classic study on the gendered-language frame was conducted by Campbell (1989), who identified some key features of the feminine-language frame in speeches. According to the author, these features include: using personal stories and examples, relating with audience members as coequals and valuing their inclusion, identifying with the audience, and never being confrontational. The scholar further argues that women who do not employ these features in their political discourses face the danger of ostracization.

More recently, Blankenship and Robson (1995) amended Campbell's (1989) feminine-language frames by proposing a model that claims that the language of female politicians is characterized by five distinct themes, which are:

> Basing political judgments on concrete, lived experience; valuing inclusivity and the relational nature of being; conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to "get things done," and to empower others; approaching policy formation holistically; and, moving women's issues to the forefront of the public arena. (p. 353)

This current study will test the applicability of these language frames in the acceptance speeches of the two nominees to see if Blankenship and Robson's arguments hold true. On the other hand, scholars claim the masculine-communication style is more direct, straightforward, and less emotional (Mukhortov & Malyavina, 2019). Mukhortov and Malyavina (2019) argue that female politicians that employ the masculine-communication style may appear credible but are less appealing to the electorates.

Framing Theory

Framing theory can be described as an established theory for the study of message content in social sciences. Media, public relations, and political communication scholars have described framing as a process that involves conscious and unconscious construction of a perspective to encourage a specific way of interpretation by the intended target (such as audience, readers, and listeners; Fountaine, 2017; Kuypers, 2009). This means that the content of messages is framed to evoke a positive perception or image from an intended target. Hwang (2013) argues that contemporary political communication is gradually shifting the crucial function of framing to politicians based on the shift from traditional media dominance. Meaning, politicians have assumed the framing function previously dominated by journalists to advance their political goals through strategic communication. Frames can be analyzed through specific language construction by politicians evident in their choices of words, ideological positions, phrases, and terminologies (Chong &

Druckman, 2007). Hallahan (2011) argues that framing by sources is the most important to politicians because it gives them the opportunity to enhance their own images through strategic communication, such as through speeches.

Political communication scholars have employed the framing theory to analyze political rhetorical pieces such as speeches (Sikanku, Boadi, Aziz, & Osei Fordjour, 2019), social media posts (Fountaine, 2017), and other forms of political messaging, establishing it as a "gold standard" in political communication research. The framing theory presents researchers the opportunity to analyze the gendered language, metaphors, as well as the self-frames employed by politicians in their language (Fountaine, 2017; Kuypers, 2009), making it indispensable to our study. Despite the popular use of the framing theory, there is a paucity of studies that consider its parallel application across continents as well as a gendered perspective. In this current study, our goal is to extend the framing theory to give a gendered perspective to framing by politicians during a crucial political ritual by taking a comparative approach to provide better insights for future political communication research.

Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse

The functional theory of political campaign discourse is one of the theoretical frameworks we employed to anchor this current study. Propounded by William Benoit (1999) and his team of political scientists in the 1990s, the theory has gained global popularity as it has been employed to systematically analyze various forms of political discourses, such as speeches (Benoit et al., 2000), debates (Ajilore, 2015), political ads (Lee & Benoit, 2004), and others. The theory has been employed both qualitatively (Sikanku, 2019) and quantitatively (Benoit et al., 2000). The theory posits that political actors employ three strategies in their messages, which are: acclaims, attacks, and defenses; these are termed as functions to influence or persuade their audience or electorates (Benoit & Sheafer, 2006; Isotalus, 2011). In addition, functions are subcategorized into policy and character topics (Benoit, Stein, & Hansen, 2005). Sikanku (2019) employed the functional theory of political campaign discourse qualitatively to do a comparative analysis of transcripts of Elizbeth Warren's (U.S. Democratic Party presidential party primaries candidate) exploration announcement video and transcripts of John Mahama's (former president of Ghana and current opposition leader in Ghana, in the context of this study) video announcing his intent to contest in his party's presidential primaries. Results indicated a noticeable use of mostly acclaim and attack functions but included no defenses. Though it employs a comparative approach to apply the theory, it focuses on presidential candidates, which leaves unanswered questions about the nature of functions employed by vice-presidential candidates, an objective of this current study.

Going by a similar argumentative tandem from Hallahan's position about how politicians frame themselves to achieve intended political goals, the functional theory of political campaign discourse advances the argument that candidates try to enhance their images and electability by: (a) acclaiming, portraying themselves in a positive light; (b) attacking, portraying their opponents in a negative light of mudslinging them; and (c) defending, refuting their opponents' attacks (Benoit, 1999). Some key tenets of the functional theory of political campaign discourse suggests that acclaims are the most employed functions followed by attacks and defenses, in that order (Lee & Benoit, 2004). Scholars have attributed the varied use of these functions to reasons such as: Acclaims are the safest political functions because they pose no negative effects

to the candidate as they highlight a candidate's progressive orientation; attacks, though they can harm the image or reputation of an opponent, can have negative repercussions on candidates such as eroding the substance of a candidate's message as well as his or her positive image; and defenses are highly discouraged because they remind electorates of opponents' attacks, which can inform electorates who were not privy to the earlier attack (Borah, 2016). Though studies that advance the functions employed by politicians from a gendered perspective are rare, Niven and Zilber (2001) analyzed the websites of male and female members of Congress from June to September 1998. Their findings indicated that female members reported more of their personal accomplishments than male members, which can be interpreted as a form of acclaiming. The scholars attributed the noticeable use of acclaims by female members of Congress to the strategic employment of discourse to address misconceptions about their competence. This present study will assess whether their assertion holds true with the two vice-presidential candidates. Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin (2010) looked at the language messages on the websites of male and female candidates in the United States between 2002 and 2006 and observed that the female candidates were more negative than the men. Also, Evans, Cordova, and Sipole (2014), analyzed the tweets of candidates of the House of Representatives in the buildup to the 2012 elections. The scholars observed that female candidates used more attacks than their male counterparts. Findings from the two studies refute previous arguments by Lawless (2009), who argued that women were friendlier based on societal stereotypes. Though findings from Druckman and colleagues (2010), Evans and her team (2014), and Niven and Zilber (2001) highlight a gendered perspective of some elements of the functional theory, but their findings do not account for vice-presidential candidates. Hence, we will expand the scope of the theory by using it to analyze two female politicians from two different economic (developing and developed countries) and political contexts.

Method

This study takes the qualitative approach where we employed textual analysis to study the nomination acceptance speeches of two female running mates from Ghana and the United States, respectively. The comparative approach was justified based on the similar electoral calendar in both countries and the peculiar approach employed by the two main opposition parties before the 2020 elections to select female running mates. Dimitrova and Stromback (2005) argue that "comparative studies more than single-nation studies have the potential to provide an antidote to naïve universalism, to enhance the understanding of one's own country by placing its familiar characteristics against those of other systems" (p. 400). This means that comparative approaches to research provide rich insights that are of epistemological and ontological relevance to scholarship.

Data and Procedure of Analysis

In this study, we purposely copied the full transcripts of the nomination acceptance speeches delivered by the two candidates in their respective countries. Nomination acceptance speeches are of interest because of their importance in politics. We conducted a theory-informed textual analysis to answer two research questions. First, we did the frame analysis to uncover features of the feminine-language frames identified by Blankenship and Robson's (1995); to recap:

Basing political judgments on concrete, lived experience; valuing inclusivity and the relational nature of being; conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to "get things done," and to empower others; approaching policy formation holistically; and, moving women's issues to the forefront of the public arena. (p. 353)

Textual analysis as a methodological approach gives researchers a better understanding by aiding them to analyze texts, identify themes, and make meaning of these texts; and texts can be polysemic in nature, evoking multiple meanings based on the sociocultural context (Fiske, 1987). Similarly, Fairclough (2003) argues that texts are embedded in speech and writing and are vehicles for the performance of social events. In the context of this study, textual analysis is crucial because it would help us understand how the two politicians are constructing reality from their perspectives to the broader societal perspective. Esser and D'Angelo (2006) claim that framing analysis presents researchers with a tool to uncover latent underpinning meanings of text. Frame analysis serves as a great way to assess how politicians frame themselves and provides the researcher, reader, or audience a great spectacle to analyze speeches and text (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007). We employed the frame analysis to uncover the feminine themes in both speeches and looked at the implications of those themes. Finally, we analyzed the text through the lenses of the functional theory of political campaign discourse to assess the functions in both speeches and their implications. A theme can be a central idea embedded in a phrase or sentence (Benoit, 1999). This current study ultimately answered two questions, which are:

RQ1:   *What were the salient language frames employed by the two politicians in their nomination acceptance speeches?*

RQ2:   *What were the salience of functions: acclaims, attacks, and defenses in the nomination acceptance speeches of the two politicians?*

Results and Discussion

After a systematic textual analysis of Professor Opoku Agyemang and Vice President Harris's nomination acceptance speeches through the lenses of the framing theory to uncover the frames of the feminine-language style, as argued by Blankenship and Robson (1995), to understand the language of women in the political space, we observed four female-language frames, which are: basing political judgments on concrete, lived experience; valuing inclusivity and the relational nature of being; conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to "'get things done and to empower others'; and moving women's issues to the forefront of the public arena" (p. 353). Our analyses are as follows.

Basing Political Judgments on Concrete, Lived Experience

According to Blankenship and Robson (1995), basing political judgments on concrete, lived experiences is synonymous to the feminine-language frame, which is common among women in positions of power. The scholars argue that women in the political space share personalized stories in their speeches, debates, and other political discourses to make their cases compelling. In our analysis, we observed this as a common frame in both Professor Opoku Agyemang and Vice President Harris's speeches, giving

Blankenship and Robson's (1995) argument more credence. In Professor Opoku Agyemang's speech, she shares personalized stories about her lack of familiarity about the role she has been nominated for in her childhood as a girl from humble beginnings; the influential role her parents played in her upbringing, which ultimately propelled her to become the first female vice chancellor of a leading Ghanaian University; and her numerous encounters with individuals across the countries whose situations remind her of her humble beginnings and others whose stories serve as a source of inspiration for her. Similarly, Vice President Harris's speech comports with the feature of sharing personalized stories as she shared her childhood memories of when her parents split and the crucial role her mother played in her upbringing, her professional exploits as an attorney and an advocate for children and victims of sexual crimes, and her wish that her mother had lived to see her nomination acceptance speech. The approaches taken by both women can be described as conforming to the feminine-language frame as argued by Blankenship and Robson (1995), which they claim has the tendency to evoke positive emotions from readers or listeners. This communicative style can be described as credibility-building because in sharing their personalized stories and they allude to their professional exploits, which we believe is a way of establishing credibility—which is not surprising because politics is considered a male-dominated space. So, the women who aspire to be in positions of power or find themselves there must establish credibility through their communication style, as is argued by some scholars (e.g., Mukhortov & Malyavina, 2019). Finally, their use of personalized stories may be described as a populist communicative strategy because stories of their humble beginnings highlight how connected they are with ordinary people, which can serve as a source of inspiration for young girls who read, watch, or listen to their speeches. The evidence of basing political judgments on concrete, lived experiences as observed in our analysis are evinced in the extracts from both speeches below:

> Growing up as a little girl, I didn't dream of standing in this position; not that I knew it even existed. However, what I knew and believed then was that if I studied and focused enough, that if my actions benefited others before they benefited me; there was nothing impossible to achieve in our great country. I still believe in these values, that others matter, too. (Ghana News Agency [GNA], 2020, para. 37)

A similar extract reads:

> My parents believed that good, quality education and hard work would open for me a world of possibilities. My parents' conviction made me believe in my own ability to pursue any goal, and in the rewards of grit and determination. Becoming the first female Vice Chancellor of a Ghanaian university was—for me—the most tangible testament to this fact. (GNA, 2020, para. 35)

Another frame reads:

> When I was five, my parents split and my mother raised us mostly on her own. Like so many mothers, she worked around the clock to make it work—packing lunches before we woke up—and paying bills after we went to bed. Helping us with homework at the kitchen table—and shuttling us to church for choir practice. She made it look easy, though I know it never was. (NBC News, 2020, p. 2)

A final example reads: "I've fought for children and survivors of sexual assault. I've fought against transnational gangs. I took on the biggest banks and helped take down one of the biggest for-profit colleges. I know a predator when I see one" (NBC News, p. 2).

Valuing Inclusivity and the Relational Nature of Being

We also observed the salient frame of valuing inclusivity and the relational nature of being in the speeches of both women. According to Blankenship and Robson (1995), women in politics employ this feminine-language frame, which is evidenced in language that highlights their commitments to inclusivity and connection to others. In Professor Opoku Agyemang's speech, she first calls for ethnic and religious tolerance among Ghanaians, assures Muslims in Ghana about President John Mahama's commitment to their religious freedom, and finally calls for a gender- as well as an age-neutral approach to nation-building. Her use of this language frame can be described as a silent rebuttal to accusations leveled against her political party by the ruling party before her nomination, for not fielding Muslim candidates for three successive elections, and highlights her open-mindedness for people with differences. Vice President Harris takes a similar approach in her speech as she highlights racial inclusivity as the route to a bright future for America, the importance of all Americans to join the fight for the collective interest of others, and the crucial nature of collectively working to win the 2020 elections for the Democrats. In Vice President Harris's case, this can be described as a subtle criticism of the Republican Party considering the racial tensions that existed in the United States before her appointment (such as the Black Lives Matter protests). Blankenship and Robson (1995) argue that this communicative style portrays politicians as open to diverse perspectives. Going by this argument, the approach taken by both women can enhance their public images in the political space, which can reduce the power distance between them and the electorates, ultimately enhancing their likeability. This extract highlights the arguments we advance in our analysis: "What makes Ghana so special is that—despite our various ethnic groups, religions, and diverse backgrounds—we all come together as one people under one flag, inspired by the sacrifices of our ancestors to create a great country" (GNA, 2020, para. 93).

Another extract that exemplifies this frame reads:

> I wish to assure our Muslim brothers and sisters that as our leader, John Dramani Mahama
> has consistently done in the past, going forward, there will be none of the unwarranted
> discrimination directed at you, and indeed no Ghanaian will feel alienated due to religion
> or ethnicity. Come, men, women, our youth, our children—together, let us build the Ghana
> we can have which must belong to us all, and which must pay special, working, and
> workable attention to the vulnerable. (GNA, 2020, para. 109)

A similar example of this frame reads: "We must elect a president who will bring something different, something better, and do the important work. A president who will bring all of us together—Black, White, Latino, Asian, Indigenous—to achieve the future we collectively want" (NBC News, 2020, p. 3).

The last extract reads:

> In this election, we have a chance to change the course of history. We're all in this fight. You, me, and Joe—together. What an awesome responsibility. What an awesome privilege. So, let's fight with conviction. Let's fight with hope. Let's fight with confidence in ourselves and a commitment to each other. To the America we know is possible. The America we love. (NBC News, 2020, p. 6)

Conceptualizing the Power of Public Office as a Capacity to "Get Things Done" and to Empower Others

According to Blankenship and Robson (1995), this feminine-language frame encapsulates discourses that advance the use of power to effect changes in the lives of others. Again, both politicians' speeches conform to this frame as they employ similar approaches. In Professor Opoku Agyemang's speech, she espouses her vision to empower voiceless and marginalized individuals in Ghana, such as children, the youth, the aged, and people with disabilities, and highlights her resolve to promote hospitality, respect, and tolerance. Her use of this language frame can be described as conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to get things done and empowering others because it indicates her resolve to use her mandate as vice president, if elected, to empower the vulnerable in society. This portrays her as an advocate for the vulnerable in society by bringing to bear her good heart, which is synonymous to a mother's love for her children. We believe this also comports to the frame of valuing inclusivity and the relational nature of being, as argued earlier, because it highlights her commitment to including marginalized individuals in society. Blankenship and Robson (1995) claim this is a promise of ambition and a sign of accomplishment. Vice President Harris, on the other hand, articulates President Biden's resolve to unite America by reducing the racial divide and his resolve to restore decency in America. Again, this can be described as conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to get things done and empower others because it highlights Joe Biden, and the Democrats resolve to reduce the racial polarization pervading in the United States and the rumpuses associated with the protests caused by the police brutalities. This portrays the Democratic candidate and party as an aspirational government because it indicates their resolve to dealing with a challenge permeating the American society. This can also be described as valuing inclusivity as her speech champions racial equality. In our estimation, the salience of this frame in the speeches of both politicians enhances their political image, which invariably can improve their likeability among electorates. The following extracts buttress the arguments in our analysis: "It will be my mission to ensure that the voices and concerns of our children, our youth and our aged, and our persons with disabilities are reflected in critical decisions" (GNA, 2020, para. 21); and "We must bring back the proverbial Ghanaian hospitality that seems locked down if not quarantined. We must ease restrictions on the Ghana we know that respects, tolerates, liberates" (GNA, 2020, para. 136).

Another example reads:

> For George Floyd. For Breonna Taylor. For the lives of too many others to name. For our children. For all of us. We've gotta do the work to fulfill that promise of equal justice under law. Because, none of us are free . . . until all of us are free . . . . (NBC News, 2020, p. 3)

Another example reads: "Joe and I believe that we can build that beloved community, one that is strong and decent, just and kind. One in which we all can see ourselves" (NBC News, 2020, p. 4).

Moving Women's Issues to the Forefront of the Public Arena

Blankenship and Robson (1995) identify this as common to the feminine-language frame that they claim is necessitated by two features, which are:

> Women have lived a lifetime with the reality of being locked out of political institutions and processes; and they have been born into and lived in the skin of a woman; that is, women's issues are not abstract; they are lived issues. It is this very shared need and shared lived experience that pushes women to try to bring women's issues to the fore. (pp. 362–363)

The scholars argue that these features give politicians the motivation to prioritize issues of women in the political space. Professor Opoku Agyemang's speech highlights this frame as she cites the historic nature of her nomination as a huge step in Ghana's democracy and reiterates the positive repercussions of her nomination to women in generations to come in Ghana as well as the critical role women can play in partnering men and the youth to achieve peace in Ghana. Her speech reinforces the reasons why Blankenship and Robson have identified as being the motivation for this frame, which is to counter the two features given earlier. The speech can be described as empowering women because it serves as a motivation for women who watch or read her nomination acceptance speech to believe that they can accomplish any political feat so long as they work toward it, and it highlights the crucial role women can play in promoting peace in Ghana. Though Professor Opoku Agyemang was already a role model for women in Ghana after her exploits in academia and appointment as the minister of education, we believe her employment of this frame cements her status as a role model in the political space. This can also be described as valuing inclusivity as it indicates her openness to promote a marginalized group in the political space. Vice President Harris's speech also bears this frame as she celebrates the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, which empowered women to vote and decries how black women are still prohibited from voting, and it recognizes the important role of women to the U.S. democracy. Her approach is like Professor Opoku Agyemang's, as they both prioritize women's issues, which can empower women in the political space; however, unlike Professor Opoku Agyemang, she uses other examples. Vice President Harris's reference to Black women being prohibited from voting can also be described as valuing inclusivity, as it illuminates her concern for this phenomenon and resolve to deal with it, which can be described as conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to "get things done and to empower others" (Blankenship & Robson, 1995, p. 353). So, her speech empowers both Black people and women, which are two marginalized groups in the United States. This can also enhance her image and likeability by the electorates because she is giving a voice to the voiceless. Both women in similar but different ways improve their social capital with their visible use of the feminine-language frames in their nomination speeches. The evident use of frames comporting to the feminine-language frame in their speeches is attributable to their resolve to unseat incumbent regimes, which made improving their likeability more paramount despite the dividends of the masculine-language style. We believe this might not be the case in the nomination acceptance speeches of women contesting in elections where they are the main candidates. The following are extracts from both speeches that supported

our analysis: "We are all aware that this is the first time in our history that a major party has nominated a woman on its ticket to become vice president" (GNA, 2020, para. 6).

An example of this frame also reads:

> But importantly, it is a new focal point for girls and women; you have respected women; the women of Ghana will not forget; the youth will remember; generations to come will commit your decision to memory and make it a reference point; we will partner with our men and youth, as we have always done, and work hard to achieve peace in our land, because that is the best way to respond to this high recognition. (GNA, 2020, para. 9)

Similarly:

> This week marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment. And we celebrate the women who fought for that right. Yet so many of the Black women who helped secure that victory were still prohibited from voting, long after its ratification. But they were undeterred. (NBC News, 2020, p. 1)

Our final example reads:

> Without fanfare or recognition, they organized, testified, rallied, marched, and fought— not just for their vote, but for a seat at the table. These women and the generations that followed worked to make democracy and opportunity real in the lives of all of us who followed. They paved the way for the trailblazing leadership of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. (NBC News, 2020, p. 1)

Functions of Political Campaign Discourse

Acclaims

Acclaims were an observable function in the speeches of both politicians. This is not surprising considering the safe nature of acclaims and how it does not negatively impact a candidate (Borah, 2016). While acclaiming during her speech, Professor Opoku Agyemang touted her qualities such as her teamworking abilities, her mentorship relationship with the youth based on her experience in academia, and her resolve toward equality in nation-building that she claims is like John Mahama's position on equality. Her acclaims portray her political persona as someone who values inclusivity (inclusivity of the youth and her presidential candidate) because she highlights it as one of her personal qualities, which can also be described as a feminine language frame. Also, her emphasis on her mentorship relationship with the youth presents her to the reader or listener of the speech as someone who can work with the youth and can be described as a tactical appeal to the youth, which can improve her likeability among youthful groups that are crucial to Ghanaian elections. Again, this falls under the feminine-language frame of basing political judgments on concrete, lived experience. In Vice President Harris's speech, she takes a broader perspective to acclaim by touting her exploits as an attorney, Joe Biden's achievements in the legislature, as well as the

achievements of the Democratic Party in key areas of governance such as health care. Vice President Harris's approach does not only make a case for their political ticket but highlights the collective benefits of electing the Democratic Party, which can be described as having a three-way image-enhancement advantage. Even in acclaims, both politicians take the feminine-language frame route, which is highly insightful because they hail from different political contexts. The extracts below anchor our analysis for the acclaim function:

1. "I assure the leadership and rank and file of the party that I come to this position with the mindset of a team player" (GNA, 2020, para. 7).

2. "I have taught and mentored thousands of youth from all walks of life over the course of my career" (GNA, 2020, para. 56).

A similar extract reads:

> This is the leader who wrote the Violence Against Women Act—and enacted the Assault Weapons Ban. Who, as vice president, implemented The Recovery Act, which brought our country back from The Great Recession. He championed The Affordable Care Act, protecting millions of Americans with preexisting conditions. (NBC News, 2020, p. 4)

Our final example reads: "And we've shown that, when we vote, we expand access to health care, expand access to the ballot box, and ensure that more working families can make a decent living" (NBC News, 2020, p. 5).

Attacks

Unlike acclaims, the attack function presents candidates with a double bind discursive approach where it can be beneficial as well as detrimental to both opponents of a candidate as well as candidates themselves (Brazeal & Benoit, 2001). The two politicians employed the use of attacks in their speeches in different ways. Professor Opoku Agyemang chastises the ruling government for their use of violence in the voter's registration exercise held in 2020 and its selective justice in prosecuting offenders. Her attacks came on the back of arrests made against some pastors who flouted COVID-19 protocols, which some believe members of the government were spared for similar offences. Her attacks do not only smear the government but portray her as ready for the Ghanaian political space that has been touted as being rough and hostile, considering how sections of the Ghanaian public felt she was not ready to endure such political hostilities. In addition, it highlights her keen interest in political events as well as her resolve for equality, which can be described as reminiscent of the feminine-language frame of conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to "'get things done' and to empower others" (Blankenship & Robson, 1995, p. 353), in this case, seek equality for others. Professor Opoku Agyemang's attacks, on the other hand, can erode her respectable image birthed from her academic credentials. Vice President Harris, on the other hand, attacks President Donald Trump directly by attributing his leadership style to the economic hardships in America and his unacceptable response toward the plights of Americans. Vice President Harris's approach, just like Professor Opoku Agyemang, highlights her resolve for equality; however, her focus is economic equality, which is

synonymous to the position of the Democratic Party and comports to the feminine language frame of conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to "get things done" as well as valuing inclusivity because she espouses her concern for the plights of others in the United States negligible of their ethnopolitical backgrounds. Though this can improve her likeability among the voiceless, it can affect her appeal to electorates who dislike smearing as argued by some scholars about the effects of attacks (Benoit, 1999). The evidence of attacks in both speeches reinforce arguments about women in politics employing attacks in their discourses as highlighted by scholars such as Dolan (2010). Below are excerpts that anchor our argument:

> As if this is not bad enough, the level of violence, brute force, blood-letting and sheer breakdown of law and order in an otherwise straightforward act of registering to vote is unbefitting of this nation that was until recently, a fulcrum of democracy in our region. (GNA, 2020, para. 82)

Another example reads: "The answer is simple: when there appears to be selective justice; when some offenders are not even placed on the hook but are hailed and promoted for being nasty and violent, the logical outcome is what we see" (GNA, 2020, para. 84).

Another example of an attacks reads:

> Donald Trump's failure of leadership has cost lives and livelihoods. If you're a parent struggling with your child's remote learning, or you're a teacher struggling on the other side of that screen, you know that what we're doing right now isn't working. (NBC News, 2020, p. 3)

Lastly: "Right now, we have a president who turns our tragedies into political weapons" (NBC News, 2020, p. 4).

Defenses

The defense function is the least-employed function according to scholars from the functional theory of political campaign discourse tradition (Benoit & Sheafer, 2006). Whereas there was no salience of defenses in Vice President Harris's speech, which supports the argument advanced by Benoit and colleagues. (2000) that not all functions are present in a politician's message; Professor Opoku Agyemang employed it in one instance where she describes former President John Mahama as someone who acknowledges his mistakes and uses that to navigate the learning curve. This can be described as a defense based on her acknowledgement of the president's admission to his mistakes, which was one of the key attacks levelled against President Mahama after his election as flagbearer of the NDC by the ruling NPP. Defending her presidential candidate in this instance can be described as an image repair strategy because it seeks to mitigate the effects caused by the former president's inactions in Ghana.). Her rare use of the defense function comports to arguments advanced by previous scholars that defenses are the least employed functions (Benoit, 1999). Below is the extract that informed our analysis on her use of the defense function in Professor Opoku Agyemang's speech:

1. "In John Mahama you find a person who is thoughtful, visionary, makes no claim to perfection, and admits to mistakes or missteps and valuable lessons learnt" (GNA, 2020, para. 67).

Conclusion

This current study builds on two well-established political communication theories (framing theory and the functional theory of political campaign discourse) to systematically analyze the nomination acceptance speeches of two vice-presidential candidates, Professor Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang and Senator Kamala Harris, across two continental divides (Ghana and the United States). After we conducted a theory-driven textual analysis, we observed that, despite their different political and economic contexts, both candidates employed four feminine-language frames in Blankenship and Robson's (1995) feminine language themes, which are:

Basing political judgments on concrete, lived experience; valuing inclusivity and the relational nature of being; conceptualizing the power of public office as a capacity to "get things done," and to empower others; and, moving women's issues to the forefront of the public arena. (p. 353)

The frames in Professor Opoku Agyeman's speech serve as a source of inspiration for young girls from humble beginnings; call for age, gender, and religious equality; and indicates her resolve to advocate for the vulnerable in society. On the other hand, the frames in Vice President Harris's speech reiterate her competence for the role, calls for racial equality and decency in America, and advocates for gender parity, particularly in the political space. We attribute their use of feminine-language frames to their resolve to unseat incumbent regimes in their respective countries and their concern about being ostracized. We argue that their use of such frames enhances their likeability as well as reduces the power distances between them and their electorates. Our findings on their frames indicate that, negligible of the context or position, the feminine-language frames hold true in the speeches of women in politics.

On their use of the functions of political campaign discourse, we observed using acclaims and attacks by both politicians; however, Professor Opoku Agyemang employed a defense. We argue that their noticeable use of acclaims enhances their credibility in the political space and portrays them as politicians who value diverse perspectives, which is synonymous with the feminine language frame. Their use of attacks, despite its benefits, has drawbacks to their political capital and reinforces arguments that women go negative in their political discourse, contrary to societal expectations. Finally, we argue that Professor Opoku Agyemang's use of the defense function can be described as an image repair strategy to mitigate the effect of her presidential candidate's weaknesses while he was president of Ghana and was necessitated by attacks from their political opponents. This current study contributes to knowledge by expanding the applicability of the two theories to two distinct cultures and the feminine-language frames that still hold true among female vice-presidential candidates. Findings of this study reinforce the possibility of comparative political communication research and provides insights that, despite the economic and sociocultural nuances between Ghana and the United States, the two opposition candidates employed similar communicative approaches, which is interesting. Future studies could expand the scope by looking at the acceptance of female vice-presidential candidates in contexts such as Asia and South America or focus on female

candidates' use of the masculine-language frames. Also, the acceptance speeches of female candidates who are the main candidates might yield different outcomes. Since this study was conducted inductively, future researchers can employ a deductive approach.

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