

**Understanding Discourse on the Galamseyer in Ghana: A Quantitative Content Frame
Analysis**

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Major Research Paper

Master of Arts (MA) in Globalization and International Development

School of Globalization and International Development (SIDGS)

University of Ottawa

Winter 2021

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	4
The Importance of the Research Question	7
Research Methods	8
Theoretical Framework	10
<i>Background & Context</i>	13
Legal Framework for the Mining Sector	16
Foreign Involvement in the Informal ASM Sector (Galamsey)	17
Ghana’s Customary Land Ownership System	19
The Relationship between Ghanaian Popular Media & Government	21
<i>Literature Review</i>	23
Large-Scale Mining vs. Small-Scale Mining	26
The Perception of Galamsey and the New Age of Extractivism	30
Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining and the Cycle of Poverty	33
Framing and Discourse Analysis on mining and land issues	39
The #StopGalamseyNow Campaign & the role of the Media	43
<i>Data Collection</i>	46
<i>Research Findings & Analysis</i>	50
Analysis - The Galamsey Operator as a “Threat to the Environment”	51
Analysis: Galamsey Operators - the Poverty Frame	54

Analysis - The Anti-Galamsey Social Media Campaigns	55
Analysis: The Broadening of Narratives around Galamsey.....	57
2016	58
2017 & 2018.....	58
<i>Discussion.....</i>	61
<i>Conclusion</i>	66
<i>Appendices</i>	76
Appendix A: Code Names.....	76
Appendix B: Summary of Coding.....	77

Introduction

When it comes to gold, Ghana's mining industry is dominated by two main gold mining sectors: its large-scale mining (LSM) sector, and its small-scale or artisanal small-scale mining sector (ASM). According to Gavin Hilson (2001), the Ghanaian small-scale mining industry is said to be over 2,000 years old. A preponderance of evidence would suggest that metals found in the hands of Arab traders in the 7th and 8th centuries AD, could be traced to certain parts of the country. Ghana's wealth of gold was largely responsible for the wealth of its ancient empires and cultures in the 15th and 16th centuries, hence its name, the "Gold Coast". In recent times, Ghana has become one of the largest producers of gold in sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana's role on the continent as one of Africa's largest producers of gold is buttressed by the contributions made from small-scale mining and galamsey operators.

It is estimated that one million small-scale miners, comprised mostly of miners informally operating without any formal permits, are responsible for up to 30% of Ghana's total gold output (Arkorful et. al, 2018). According to Aubynn (2009), since 1990, \$7 billion has been invested in the country's mining sector with its mines producing, on average, 1 million ounces of gold per year over the period, with 100 000 ounces of gold being produced by ASM parties. Within its ASM sector, exists the informal galamsey industry, mostly involving the participation of the poor and working class. Mantey et al. (2017) define "galamsey" as the practice of illegally mining and/or extracting gold found either below soil or water surface in Ghana. Moreover, Aubynn defines galamsey as the practice of "discretely gathering minerals found just below the soil surface and selling them in contravention to state laws" (Aubynn 2009). Aubynn's definition of galamsey also highlights the roots of the term, coined during colonial times by those who observed how gold was gathered and sold in the Gold Coast.

Historically, traditional gold mining in Ghana involved the washing or ‘panning’ for gold along the banks of streams and rivers and ocean shores (Yankson and Gough 2018). The Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining sector exists as a highly informalized industrial sector that existed with a lack of regulation. In recent times, the ASM sector has undergone the process of mechanization, whereby operators within the sector, have increased their usage of modernized equipment. For example, galamsey operators typically use basic tools such as pickaxes, shovels, and sluice boxes; but also, more mechanized machines such as water pumps, explosives, excavators, and bulldozers. (Arkorful et. al 2018, page 16). Despite this, the practice of galamsey remains an informal activity that is artisanal for many who participate in it as a means of survival. As Hilson articulates, ASM in developing countries is a largely poverty-driven activity involving the application of low-intermediate technology and requiring low investments and high employment (Hilson, 2002).

The other aspect of its two main gold mining sectors is the Large-Scale mining sector (LSM), inhabited by both domestic and foreign corporate entities. Ghana’s Large-Scale and Artisanal and Small-Scale mining sectors are inextricably linked, with both sectors immensely contributing to varying levels of economic growth that Ghana has achieved since the 1980s, after the Economic Recovery Plan was implemented (crafted by the ruling party at the time, the Provisional National Defence Council, the IMF, and the World Bank). As Aryee et al. (2003) state, the 1980s saw an increase in awareness of the fact that the continued marginalization of the small-scale gold mining sector was detrimental to the economy. Since then, total ASM gold production has increased from 2.2% in 1989 to 34% of national production in 2012 (Busumtwi-Sam & Hira, 2018) This ultimately resulted in the formalization of the Small-Scale mining sector through the enactment of the Small-Scale Mining Law, PNDC 218, enacted in 1989 (Aryee et al.

2003, page 132). Recently, the use of mechanized equipment by galamsey operators, and their foreign counterparts, has led to the pollution of water bodies that surround communities, affecting the lives of many locals. As a result, and as will be discussed later in this paper, galamsey operators have been the subject of widespread public criticism as the main contributors of substantial damage to the ecosystems that surround the mining sites.

The practice of galamsey has become an occupation that has attracted those in need of a source of income, especially for those who do not have access to formal employment. However, those who decide to participate in the practice, often operate without a mining license. Historically, many authors have written about how illegal small-scale miners in Ghana, or galamsey operators, have generally been portrayed in highly negative ways, as mass campaigns against the practice have proliferated over time (Arkorful et al. 2018, Abdulai 2017, Tschakert & Singha, 2014). Furthermore, in recent times, the country has also borne witness to the influx of foreign actors, aiming to profit from the abundance of natural resources located in the country.

More specifically, Chinese miners have become involved in both the LSM and ASM industry, with certain Chinese miners known to have established relations with galamsey operators. As Aidoo (2016) states in his piece, the Chinese have been providing resources for machinery and technical knowledge. Additionally, some of the Chinese leaders and elites are said to rent out excavators, tractors, and generators (Aidoo 2016, page 58). These joint ventures between Ghanaians and Chinese ultimately precipitated a crisis that peaked in 2013, a crisis with significant diplomatic implications. As discussed later in this piece, the involvement of Chinese natives and operatives in the unregulated artisanal mining sector known as galamsey, a sector that has long been a livelihood option for many of Ghana's poor and underprivileged, has had

negative socio-economic impacts, as well as, negative environmental impacts (Aidoo 2016, page 58). As to what extent the involvement of Chinese natives and operatives in illegal ASM has affected the framing of the galamsey operator in public discourse, that remains to be seen. However, this paper aims to possibly uncover the various factors that play in the construction of popular frames and stereotypes. Moreover, this has led to the development of friction between local small-scale miners, working in what is seen as an illegal and poorly regulated industry that has historically been seen as their own, and foreign miners that operate within it. In recent years, the scale of the involvement of Chinese citizens in Ghana's illegal ASM sector has grown to such a rate that it has attracted the attention of the country's major media. Crawford et al. (2015) state that by 2013, the presence of Chinese citizens in informal gold mining in Ghana led to "increasingly hostile" media coverage of 'illegal Chinese miners' and the instances of local conflict that occurred (Crawford et al. 2015, page 5). The main question that will be discussed in this paper is: What are the popular frames and stereotypes surrounding the caricature of the galamsey operator in Ghana, and how has this changed over time? Furthermore, an additional question that we may ask is: How do the representations, perpetuated by the media and government officials, affect how mining policies are shaped?

The Importance of the Research Question

A study analyzing the popular framing and stereotypes of galamsey operators is an important contribution to the literature on the Artisanal and Small-Scale mining sector in Ghana because it provides more insight into the positive and negative impacts of discourse on the political, economic, and social context. The aim is to understand the politics of the issue, as well as, the viewpoints and motivations of the different actors involved. Therefore, the main focus of this paper will be to examine the dominant discourses perpetuated by popular mainstream media

and how that has affected the agendas of the pertinent actors involved in the galamsey industry. Also, the relationship between the media and the government will be briefly described.

Furthermore, alongside the main research question, it is also important to note that through research, one can expect several secondary, or sub-questions, to arise. The sub-questions that I hope to address center around the politics of the illegal ASM industry and the dynamics involved in its operations, and the efficacy of the current policies that govern the industry. Attempting to seek answers to the main research question, will also involve investigating the complex elements of the informal industry, the politics and power dynamics that drive its informality, and the politics involved in its regulation. This is important because it necessitates the investigation of, for example, the relationship between galamsey operators and the customary land system, and the policy implications of the relationship on the possibility of the formalization of the sector. Moreover, another sub-question that was addressed focuses on policy development and more specifically, whether or not they do enough to ensure the formalization process for galamsey operators is swift and efficient. Do the current policies that govern the industry do enough to ensure that galamsey operators become formalized? The next section will provide a discussion on the selected research methods, as well as the theoretical framework that will serve as the basis of my analysis.

Research Methods

The main research method that will be utilized to build my research will be a qualitative content analysis interested in unpacking the different framings of galamsey operators in Ghana. This involves the analysis of media reports, newspaper articles, popular media, and literature that focus on the positive and negative representations of the Artisanal & Small-Scale miner who

practices galamsey. This will be done through the conducting of a framing analysis. This analysis will aim to determine the dominant frames, or ‘mega frames’ perpetuated by popular media, public officials, and social media. This will involve the analysis of articles produced by pro-government media, both pro, and anti-galamsey media, and specific campaigns, like for example, the #StopGalamsey campaign, that has been launched to influence public opinion on the issue.

The representations of the galamsey operator within the context of Ghanaian society, sees itself manifested in many facets, manufactured by members of civil society, the media, politicians, and the citizenry. Pertinent facets of society that play a role in the shaping of discourse on galamsey, namely media officials, radio personalities, politicians, those with access to online media channels, and others with access to the ‘traditional’ media (i.e TV, newspapers, and radio) play a significant role in the construction of frames and popular caricatures of galamsey operators. This paper will focus primarily on the framing and stereotypes of galamsey operators and they are communicated, developed, and perpetuated over time by members of the media and government officials. This analysis examined keywords found in headlines, editorial opinion articles, the transcripts of radio broadcasts, social media posts, and full feature articles. As will be discussed in the next section, the analysis will aim to identify key frames that provide insight into public perceptions of galamsey operators. To aid the research, words like “galamsey”, “illegal mining”, and “gold”, acted as keywords, helping to guide and draw conclusions from the analysis. In order to capture this, this paper aims to provide a news framing analysis, examining the various campaigns launched by the government, media outlets, and news agencies, that shape how the caricature of the galamsey operator, or “galamseyer”, is depicted within popular media. The next section will provide a brief outline of the selected theoretical framework that will be utilized, the concept of framing and news framing analysis.

Theoretical Framework

Jorg Matthes (2009) defines frame analysis as the “selection and salience of certain aspects of an issue by exploring images, stereotypes, metaphors, actors, and messages” (Matthes 2009, page 349). Within the context of media relations, the aim of framing analysis is to display how news frames are conceptualized in newspaper articles and other literature, seeking to provide critical insight into the framing of certain ideas and actors, and how these frames differ. Furthermore, Gitlin (2003) describes frames as the presentation of theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters. In Gitlin’s definition, he establishes a connection between the concept of framing and the manufacturing of public discourse through the work of the media when he states that frames: “enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely (and to) package the information for efficient relay to their audiences” (Gitlin 1980, page 7). It is this relationship between framing, news, and public discourse that is at the foundation of this paper. How the media acts to construct caricatures that ostensibly serve to inform their audiences, also work to shape their opinions. As Biney also highlights, the media possesses the power to promote lifelong learning among the citizenry while also empowering them to address their socio-economic grievances. Therefore, the media could serve as a powerful communication tool to educate and empower the citizenry to effect changes in their communities (Biney 2019, page 436).

Moreover, framing is also often viewed as a method of placing information in a unique context that in turn, acts to emphasize certain elements of an issue in order to influence the opinions of the audience. As Pan and Kosicki point out, the consequence of this is that the selected elements of emphasis become important in influencing individuals’ judgments and inference making (Pan & Kosicki 1993, page 57). Valkenburg et al. (1999) further stipulate that

research into media framing investigates the prevalence of specific frames in the news and how certain issues are framed. Furthermore, this research assumes that journals inadvertently frame or structure certain political events to make them more “accessible” to a large audience (Valkenburg et al. 1999, page 550). Valkenburg et al.’s study investigating the impact of news frames on the thoughts of readers found that frames can have a significant effect on the thoughts of readers by not only telling the public what issues to think about but also how to think about them.

One could argue that Tankard (2001) takes this notion a little further when he articulates that studying media frames not only acts as the ‘central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context’ but also, the studying of media framing enables us to expose the hidden assumptions embedded within a news story which define the terms of the discourse without the audience realizing it is taking place (Tankard 2001, page 97). The news media can set a tone for an event or issue by the choice of frames that are constructed. As Tankard also suggests, utilizing framing as a theoretical framework provides us with the opportunity to examine media hegemony, and seek to determine why certain frames are much more dominant than others. This can be seen by the way in which the media covers the work of the government and the issues that they aim to stress.

In essence, framing provides the media with a way of shaping public opinion by framing events, issues, and arguments in a certain way. This is made possible by what Charles De Vreese (2005) defines as the process of frame-building and frame-setting. The process of frame-building refers to: “the factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames. Factors internal to journalism determine how journalists and news organizations frame issues” (De Vreese 2005,

page 52). This process necessitates the consistent interaction between journalists, political elites, and social movements. Frame-setting refers to: “the interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions” (De Vreese 2005, 53). According to De Vreese, the notion of frame-setting involves the framing of events, issues, and arguments in the media that can affect attitudes at the individual-level, and shape social level processes at the societal level. In summary, when it comes to the production and propagation of frames, the process of frame-building places the relationship between journalists and news organizations under scrutiny, focusing on how the frames manifest themselves in the news, while the process of frame-setting focuses on interactions between the media and its viewers and the various effects of the frames on their opinions on issues and events.

Lastly, De Vreese presents a typology of news frames that distinguish news frames based on their scope of analysis and distinctive characteristics. Frames that are only focused on specific topics or events are labelled “issue-specific frames”, whereas frames that often “transcend thematic limitations” and involve a broader approach to analyzing different topics, is defined as a generic frame (De Vreese, 2005, 54). Based on De Vreese’s typology of news frames, the analysis of this paper on the frames produced by the media and the government within the public discourse, is one that will concentrate on the dominant issue-specific frames associated with galamsey, frames that are perpetuated by popular media, public officials, and other pertinent actors.

Lastly, De Vreese presents two approaches to framing that are utilized to identify frames: inductive and deductive framing. Inductive, he states, refrains from analyzing news stories with defined news frames in mind, while deductive framing attempts to investigate frames that are

“defined and operationalized” prior to the investigation (De Vreese 2005,53). As will be discussed later, this paper will take a mixed approach to its framing analysis, utilizing elements of both inductive and deductive approaches to framing, by locating the most dominant frames utilized to define galamsey operators within public discourse and popular media. In addition, a mixed approach to my frame analysis was utilized to address the possibility that other frames could be detected. The next section provides a detailed review of existing literature in the field that focuses on the practice of galamsey and the dynamics involved in its regulation.

Background & Context

Hilson and Pardie (2003) present the notion that Ghana’s artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector is comprised of two groups of miners: registered operators, who constitute the ‘Official System’ and galamseyers, who constitute the ‘Unofficial System’ (Hilson & Pardie 2003, 249). The next section will seek to provide context on the practice of galamsey, the history of galamsey in Ghana, foreign involvement within the ASM sector, and explain how the Artisanal and Small-Scale mining sector has evolved from the moment the nation gained independence until the period in which my analysis takes place.

Additionally, the next section will also provide a thorough review of the key legislation, rules, and regulations that govern Ghana’s ASM sector, rendering the practice of galamsey an illegal act subject to criminal prosecution and deportation. An overview of Ghana’s customary land system and how vital the land ownership system is in buttressing the drivers of informality that lead citizens into the obscure and dangerous industry of galamsey, will also be given. Lastly, this section will also explore the relationship between the media and the Ghanaian government and the linkages that exist between the different forces that exist within the media

landscape. It is important to investigate this relationship to better understand how the media can play such an integral role in shaping public opinion, ensuring which frames remain dominant in public discourse, and sustaining pressure on Ghana's political realm. In turn, understanding the historical context of the formal and informal Artisanal and Small-Scale mining sector will aid to better situate the findings of my analysis within the broader context of the breadth of literature written on the subject.

As already stated in the introduction, the word, "galamsey" is a local term that is derived from the phrase "gather them and sell" and refers to the practice of informal artisanal and small-scale mining in Ghana. Galamseymen exist as miners who operate without a license, have no concessions of their own and operate without permission and regulation within mining sites owned by large-scale mining companies, or in areas where gold mining is prohibited (Aryee et al. 2003). In comparison, small-scale gold miners are those who have been granted licenses and as a result, are subjected to a range of conditions that determines the amount of land they can operate on. For example, under the Minerals and Mining Act of 2006, formalized artisanal miners could apply for a concession of 25 acres maximum (Crawford et al. 2015).

As we have seen in various contexts around sub-Saharan Africa, small-scale mining is highly beneficial to developing countries because it is not capital intensive. Hilson further demonstrates that small-scale mining brings several benefits to developing countries, mainly, as a source of employment and revenue. Small-scale mining operations remain highly economically feasible because investment costs per job are typically only 10 to 12% of the costs of large-scale mining operations (Hilson 2001). In Ghana, galamseymen represent the backbone of Ghana's subsistence rural economy. As Hilson & Banchirigah (2009) posit, the sector has become an

“unrivalled employment engine, providing hundreds of thousands of jobs to otherwise unemployed farmers, youths, and nomads” (Hilson & Banchirigah 2009, page 178). Many resource-rich rural areas have become the hub for many informal mining sites populated with citizens who have been driven into galamsey as a means of survival and as a means of establishing an economic livelihood. However, any positive opinions on galamsey operations are undermined by the flurry of criticism launched by many who view the practice as a “get rich quick” scheme, and a threat to ecosystems, water bodies, land, and the biodiversity throughout the country (Afriyie et al. 2016; Macquiken & Hilson 2016).

As Kpienbaareh et al. (2020) highlight in their article, galamsey in Ghana, or illegal ASM, has continued to exist throughout the nation’s history. The informal ASM industry has existed to the detriment of the Ghanaian economy, against the backdrop of a formal small-scale mining sector that has remained a consistent source of the nation’s economic growth, and laws and regulations drafted and enacted to regulate it. They argue that this is due to reasons that are both political, economic, and cultural (Kpienbaarah 2020, page 3). Though large-scale mining has become dominant in the gold mining sector, small-scale mining has continued to be an important economic activity especially in the rural regions of Ghana due to its rudimentary nature (Arkorful et al. 2018).

Gavin Hilson (2001) states that up until the 1980s, small-scale mining activities in Ghana remained largely unregulated and received little, if any, support from governmental bodies, something that changed when the Ghanaian government, under the guidance of the IMF, launched the Economic Recovery Plan in the mid-1980s to stimulate foreign investment (Hilson 2001, page 4). The aim of the programme, among other things, was to rehabilitate the country’s

economic and social infrastructure, encourage private sector investment, and divest state enterprises (Larbi et al. 2004). Before 1983, Ghana's economy had stagnated, gold mine production had continued to experience a rapid decline in production (Hilson 2002). The deteriorating nature of the industry dovetailed with the struggling state of the Ghanaian economy. Hilson states that the expanded role of the State government during this time resulted in increased expenditures financed by an increase in taxes. The absence of liberalized trade also discouraged foreign investment, leaving the nation in a state of economic crisis. However, after the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan, based upon policies that led to the privatization of state-owned operations, the 1980s saw an increase in the production of gold in Ghana, by 700% (Hilson 2002). Since the launch of the ERP, it is estimated that the country's mining sector has grown exponentially. Between the early '80s until the late '90s, approximately \$4billion USD was invested in Ghana's large-scale mining industry (Hilson & Potter 2003, 244).

Legal Framework for the Mining Sector

At the end of the 1980s, the Ghanaian government at the time also passed its most pertinent pieces of legislation for the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector, the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law, and the Mercury Law of 1989. Until the passing of the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law in 1989, small-scale mining in Ghana was formally illegal, although it was widely practiced (Crawford et al. 2015). The main provisions of the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law prohibited small-scale mining unless a licence has been granted by the appropriate authority, provided the necessary criteria for a formalization license, and provided requirements for appropriate mining practices, including due diligence to health, safety, and the environment (Hilson and Potter, 251). Moreover, the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law also established the Precious Minerals and Marketing Corporation (PMMC) tasked with the responsibility of dealing

with all issues related to mineral extraction. The Precious Minerals and Marketing Corporation Law (PNDCL 219) of 1989, also applies to all ASM operations and provides a market for authorized gold buyers. Since then, many legislative and legal instruments have been established to regulate the Small-Scale Mining sector. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the Minerals and Mining Act of 2006 (Act 703), which has been amended twice and exists as an update to the Minerals and Mining Law (Busumtwi-Sam & Hira, 2018).

Currently, the legislative framework for Ghana's mining sector consists of the Minerals and Mining Law of 2006, the Minerals and Mining Law of 1986, amended by the Minerals and Mining Act of 1994 (Act 475), provisions of the 1992 Constitution (Arkorful et al 2018). Within the Ghanaian government, the mining sector falls under the purview of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, and more specifically, the Minerals Commission, which were both established under the 1992 Constitution and the Minerals Commissions Act of 1993 (Busumtwi-Sam & Hira 2018, 15). The Environmental Protection Agency, which focuses on the environmental impacts of mining, also supports the Minerals Commission.

Foreign Involvement in the Informal ASM Sector (Galamsey)

Under Section 83a of the Minerals and Mining Act of 2006 (Act 703), “a license for SSM operation shall not be granted to a person unless that person is a citizen of Ghana and has attained the age of eighteen of years” (Crawford et al. 2015; Eshun & Okyere 2017). Key provisions like Section 83a, aim to act as a legal instrument to ensure that small-scale mining remains a practice that is inherently “Ghanaian”, and guarantee that the profits of the practice remain within the country. However, since the increase in gold prices throughout the mid-2000s, Ghana has witnessed the arrival of a substantial number of foreign miners working within the

galamsey sector. Though the nation has seen many foreign miners travel from places such as Russia, a large segment of the population of foreign-based miners are said to have arrived from China.

Moreover, it is the presence of Chinese miners on Ghanaian land that has received global attention. As a population of foreign miners, the illegal Chinese miners provided resources, in the form of higher-grade technology, as well as, technical knowledge, leading to the establishment of a series of joint ventures between Ghanaian galamseyers and their Chinese counterparts (Aidoo 2016). In 2013, it was estimated that approximately 50,000 Chinese citizens had immigrated to Ghana to participate in mining (Crawford et al. 2015). The Chinese would provide technology such as excavators, wash plants, and other equipment, while Ghanaians, whether it be galamseyers or chieftaincies, would provide access to land. Collaboration with the Chinese miners was seen as a very attractive and lucrative option for Ghanaian small-scale miners, both formal and informal, who saw the partnership, as a way to make more money over a shorter period of time with better extraction equipment (Crawford et al. 2015). According to Crawford et. al (2015), it was the death of a Chinese boy in October of 2012 in a police raid of galamseyers that would “draw international attention to the issue, with the Chinese Foreign Ministry demanding an investigation by the Government of Ghana” (Crawford et al. 2016, page 17).

Chinese-Ghanaian relations within both the formal and informal small-scale mining sectors involved both conflict and collaboration. Alongside the establishment of cordial business partnerships between Chinese miners and Ghanaians galamseyers, or local community members, there were also reports of violent acts committed by both actors. This would also have diplomatic

ramifications, affecting the relationship between both countries. In 2013, the Ghanaian Government, under the leadership of President John Mahama, began a nationwide crackdown on Chinese miners, including the deportation of 713 Chinese nationals, and the utilization of security forces to shut down galamsey operations (Aidoo 2016). The presence of Chinese miners in the galamsey industry became a popular issue that stood at the core of anti-Chinese sentiment in the country. From early 2012 onwards, reporting on the issue was mostly negative with the Chinese constantly being described as “illegal, indescribable migrants”, “deviants” and “aliens” with their involvement in the ASM sector labelled an “invasion” (Crawford et al. 2015). The response of the Mahama government was a result of the pressure placed on the government after clashes between locals and the Chinese galamsey operatives received global media attention (Aidoo 2016). This response was perceived as “short-lived and unresponsive”, when it came to the crackdown, but also, to dealing with some of the Ghanaian officers and institutions that were complicit in Chinese galamsey operations (Aidoo 2016).

Ghana’s Customary Land Ownership System

Many authors have underscored the importance of Ghana’s customary land system and land tenure practices in the country, and how the system acts as a driver towards Artisanal and Small-Scale mining. The nature of the system has created a scenario where chiefs have continued influence over the land. It is said that more than 80% of land in Ghana is under the control of chieftaincies, which suggests that most mining operations occur on lands owned by chiefs (Abdulai 2017). By law, mineral deposits in lands are vested in the President on behalf of, and in trust for, the people of Ghana. However, the state only owns approximately 20 percent of Ghana’s total land surface (Aubynn 2009). There are two main types of land ownership, state land, and vested land. State lands are pieces of land that are compulsorily acquired by the

government through the invocation of appropriate legislation, and vested lands, are pieces of land that belong to customary actors, like for example, families, clans, chiefs, or stools (Abdulai 2017; Aubynn 2009; Larbi et al. 2004). Asumadu (2003) states that “under the existing land ownership system, traditional land-owning authorities (stool chiefs, clan heads, and skins) hold allodial (absolute ownership) title to land on behalf of their people. Thus, outright ownership of land is still a rare form of land tenure in Ghana” (Asumadu 2003).

Due to the multi-faceted nature of Ghana’s land ownership system, one could argue that two parallel systems of licensing, one that is formal, granted by the Ghanaian government to both large-scale companies and small-scale miners who have completed the formalization process, and an informal system whereby access to land and mining privileges are granted mainly by chiefs and other customary actors (Abdulai 2017; Nyame & Bolcher 2010). In turn, gold-bearing rocks, which also form the most predominant resource for artisanal miners in Ghana, exist primarily on lands that are under customary ownership (Nyame & Bolcher 2010; Abdulai 2017; Larbi et al. 2004). The bifurcated nature of the formalization system has not aided in the streamlining of a process that has a significant impact on reinforcing the drivers of informality that keep miners in galamsey. Under the informal system, access to land for mining is granted based on direct negotiations that transpired according to traditional customary practices. Due to the relative simplicity and informality of the customary system, galamseymers tend to pursue informal licensing instead of dealing with the government’s formalization system, as it is more popular within the galamsey industry and local communities (Nyame & Bolcher 2010). Currently, galamseymers have little incentive to abandon the customary system and engage in a licensing procedure that is seen to be tedious, long, and expensive as the government’s

licensing process involves the completion of several forms and final approval from governmental officials (Hilson 2001; Arkorful et. al 2018).

The Relationship between Ghanaian Popular Media & Government

To understand the significance of frames in shaping public opinion and discourse, as well as the effects that they have on policy development, it is also important to investigate the relationship between the Ghanaian media landscape and the Ghanaian government over time. The nation's transition from colonialism into independence and democratic rule has also seen the cultivation of the transformation of the relationship between various actors in the media and the government. The role of mainstream media has transitioned away from the country's liberation from colonialism and the state-owned media system, to an environment that is liberal in its operation (Achiaa Frimpong 2019). In order to best capture the role of both public and private media in relation to the government, one must first think about Louw's outline of the six types of media/journalist-politician relationships that help to explain the media's role in a democratic society (Louw 2010; Achiaa Frimpong 2019). In Ghana's case, Achiaa Frimpong describes the role of Ghanaian media to be one that is "has not been monolithic; rather, it has had a mix of media-politician relationships and has evolved following the different political administrations that Ghana has experienced" (Achiaa Frimpong 2019, page 14). Therefore, the role of the media in Ghana can be defined as partisan journalism, watchdog-ism, or fourth estate journalism, and as a lapdog, at various points in the nation's history. Partisan journalism refers to when the media supports a particular political party and works collaboratively with the party to help promote their cause and ideology (Achiaa Frimpong 2019; Louw 2010).

According to Louw, Fourth Estate journalism is the notion where “journalists are seen as insiders within the liberal political process – a part of the policy formulation process in so far as they serve the policy-making elites with information, ‘intelligence’, opinion and a platform for debate (Louw 2010, page 63). The notion of watchdog-ism vs. lapdog-ism is based on a dichotomy that is based on whether or not the media has an adversarial relationship with the government officials (watchdogism), or a collaborative relationship whereby journalists, not only collaborate with politicians but also refrain from criticizing them (Achiaa Frimpong 2019). The ratification of the 1992 constitution ushered in a new era of media independence and the proliferation of news media agencies in Ghana.

Under the Constitution, the media would exist as the fourth arm of government apart from the three arms of government with an equal right to free speech, media autonomy, and freedom. This would allow them to act as a check on the other arms of government to ensure that neither arm would abuse their power, allowing members of the media to hold them accountable. In turn, the 1992 Constitution describes the media’s role as the fourth estate recognizing the media’s watchdog role over the other arms of government. Currently, the media landscape in Ghana can be described as liberal and free, with the presence of many news media outlets and private broadcasting companies. The news media in Ghana has elements of both lapdogism and watchdogism, as members of media act out both roles, as actors have, in the past, appeared as both supportive and adversarial towards the government (Amoakohene, 2010). Although partisan politics have been one of the main stumbling blocks, impeding the ability of members of the media to carry out their role as the fourth estate in the past, Ghana is seen as a country with the most independent media in Africa, as a country devoted to media development and freedom (Shardow & Asare, 2016; Achiaa Frimpong, 2019).

In summary, the relationship between the media and the government in Ghana has evolved over time. Ghana's media environment has developed into a pluralistic and relatively free space rich in actors that can act to hold the government accountable, shape public opinion, and place pressure on the government to act on important issues facing the public. The existence of campaigns like the Media Coalition Against Galamsey and the #StopGalamseyNow, campaigns that emerged out of efforts spearheaded by members of the Ghanaian media, demonstrate this. In both of these campaigns, freelance journalists, and journalists who work for both public and private news media outlets, have attempted to exercise their right to free speech to press the government on the existence of galamseyers in the country. In addition, the existence of a vibrant and pluralistic media landscape further underscores the level of influence that news media outlets wield when it comes to defining which ideas, frames, and stereotypes are perpetuated within public discourse. Therefore, it could be argued that dominant frames and stereotypes, as they are reinforced and legitimized by news media outlets, can shape how policies are developed and how governments respond to issues facing their citizenry.

Literature Review

Overall, the expansion of both Ghana's large-scale & small-scale mining sectors has led to massive economic growth and the attraction of foreign investors to Ghanaian markets. In 2015, the CEO of the Minerals Commission, a government organization tasked with the regulation of the country's natural resources, stated that despite the decrease in production and even the price of gold, the mining sector contributed to \$4billion in GDP and that 70% of the revenue generated in the sector stayed in the country (GBN, 2015). Since the economic boom generated mostly by the mining sector, many have taken to mining sites to establish mining as a

form of formal employment. However, due to various reasons, many are pushed into the illegal practice of “galamsey”.

With close to one million participants, the small-scale mining industry in Ghana constitutes approximately 10% of the country’s total workforce (Arkorful et al. 2018). Furthermore, the benefits and drawbacks of galamsey have been discussed extensively within the discourse of Ghana’s major media outlets. Galamsey practitioners have been said to contribute to the development of communities in districts with economies that are heavily reliant on the small-scale mining industry. Yankson and Gough (2019), who examine the relationship between large-scale mining companies and the informal ASM sector by examining three gold mining towns in Ghana, assert that ASM has become critical for the economy of mining towns in Ghana when it comes to generating employment and sustaining the flow of goods and services, both domestically and internationally. However, the negative effects of galamsey, for example, environmental degradation, the harmful effects to the health of both the practitioners and residents of surrounding areas, as well as the safety concerns for the communities have dominated the discourse surrounding the discussions on the practice. Although the artisanal mining sector has grown to become one of the country’s most significant contributors to the country’s GDP, it has yet to be formalized by Ghana’s political institutions. However, it is worth noting that because of the informality and illegality of the practice, it is difficult to ascertain just how much galamsey operators contribute to the nation’s economy. As Hilson (2001) noted, no accurate figures on small-scale mining employment can be found for Ghana, though it is estimated that those directly involved in the extraction of gold and diamonds are in the hundreds of thousands, with a majority of them galamseyers (Hilson 2001, page 6).

The last couple of decades have also seen multiple iterations of the Ghanaian government actively working to crackdown on galamsey, or illegal ASM operators. As Eduful et al. (2020), the government has even gone as far as supporting large-scale mining companies in their efforts to carry out several military sweeps to clamp down on galamsey operators working in their mining sites (Eduful et al. 2020, page 2). This has also led to the government forming many anti-galamsey task forces in hopes of providing an effective response to the galamsey issue.

The government has also sought to combat the presence of galamsey operators by placing its support behind media campaigns such as the #StopGalamseyNow campaign. The #StopGalamseyNow campaign was launched in 2017 by Citi FM, an Accra-based radio station, to place pressure on the government to tackle the practice of illegal ASM in the country (citifmonline, 2017). The launching of this campaign would ultimately lead to the deployment of certain tactics by the government to suppress the actions of galamseyers. For example, in April 2017, the government issued a three-week moratorium on all forms of ASM, and subsequently, established Operation Vanguard, a national anti-galamsey taskforce made up of 400 military and police personnel, to patrol all illegal ASM sites in certain regions, and arrest any illegal ASM operators (Eduful et al. 2020, 2). Tschakert and Singha (2007) discuss the dominant discourse surrounding galamsey operators and how their dangerous use of mercury to extract gold, contributes to the anti-galamsey discourse that has become a mainstay in public discourse.

Authors like Tschakert & Singha, Eduful et. al, and Abdulai (2017), underscore the role of media campaigns in any public discussion on galamsey operators, as actors operating in the country's mining industry. Some of the campaigns, like the aforementioned #StopGalamseyNow campaign, have been quick to brand galamsey operators as “a ‘menace’ or

‘problem’, ‘challenge’, and ‘nuisance’, whose presence should be ‘flushed out’ with maximum force” (Eduful et al. 2020, 2). It is important to note that the purpose of this paper is to analyze the different frames and narratives perpetuated by the media, political figures, and the citizenry. What are the main caricatures or frames of the galamsey operator that are represented within the dominant public and political discourse? Are they seen as a criminal or lawbreaker? Or a threat to the environment? The next section is a literature review. The literature review is a collection of articles that have been assembled to provide an accurate snapshot of the galamsey industry in Ghana, provide insight into why individuals get into galamsey, and seek to describe the popular perceptions on galamsey in the country.

Large-Scale Mining vs. Small-Scale Mining

Gavin Hilson (2018) focuses on the dichotomy that has been created by many political actors and the mining industry between large-scale and small-scale mining in Sub-Saharan African countries and why governments tend to prioritize the large-scale mining industry, which is in most cases seen as the formal industry, at the expense of the Small-Scale mining industry. The argument made in the piece is that countries are often biased towards supporting large-scale mining over small-scale mining by how they develop policy frameworks and laws to better regulate the ASM sector. He concludes that the prioritization of large-scale mining has led to the attraction of many foreign actors and the creation of multiple resource extraction flows from which the local governments do not profit. Therefore, he questions the ability of large-scale mining sectors in sub-Saharan African countries to become what he defines as ‘growth poles’, sectors that could have a transformative effect on the economies of the countries by generating sustainable development (Hilson 2018, page 9).

Moreover, Hilson posits that a large-scale bias influences a government's approach to policy work for its artisanal and small-scale mining sector. According to *A Strategy for African Mining*, a report produced by the World Bank, the small-scale mining sector, populated by both skilled and unskilled workers, should not be afforded special treatment and there is no reason to create differential access to mineral rights for both sectors (Hilson 2018, 857). Hilson also adds that those governments in the Sub-Saharan African region that have pursued such an approach have developed regulatory instruments and policy frameworks that have stifled rather than facilitated the growth of formalized small-scale mining activity. In his article, he also presents a challenge to existing mining policy in the region by stating that governments must push for a policy framework that could help transform mining industries into pillars of economic growth; but also questions whether or not foreign actors possess an approach to mining operations in these industries that would be beneficial for local actors.

Yankson & Gough (2018) further contribute to the discussion started by Hilson about the interactions between LSM and ASM sectors in Ghana. They make an important contribution to the literature by exploring the relationship between actors engaged in the formal mining sector, those involved in large-scale mining, and the informal Artisanal and Small-Scale mining operations. Yankson & Gough utilize an informalization framework to analyze the relationship, conducting research that acted as part of a major study exploring the connection between mining and urbanisation in Angola, Ghana, and Tanzania. Yankson and Gough highlight the main issues that exist between ASM and Large-Scale Mining companies, more specifically, the conflicts that arise from the marginalization and criminalization of Ghanaian ASM that stems from their lack of unfettered access to mineralized land.

Through the exploration of the interface of large-scale mining and Artisanal & Small-Scale mining operations, they conclude that ASM has become critical for the economy of mining towns in Ghana when it comes to the generation of employment and the business that is generated as a result of their operations. Moreover, both authors demonstrate in their paper that ASM has become critical for the local economies in the mining towns in Ghana, both as a source of employment and as an expenditure for operators facilitating the sale of goods and services. However, without formal recognition, galamsey operators will continue to encounter major obstacles (Yankson & Gough 2019, page 126).

In terms of strategies to tackle the issue of formalization, both authors emphasize the need for a flexible and innovative formalization strategy, as well as the need for the pertinent actors to have a clear understanding of the structure and operation of ASM. They argue that this could possibly be done if policymakers draw from the Global Production Network, as an organizing framework. According to Yankson and Gough, drawing from the GPN could “provide valuable insights into the sector’s organization, the role played by different individuals who populate it, and the nature of the relationship between these individuals” (Yankson & Gough 2019, 127). Kpienbaarah et al. (2020) state that while some actors argue for the formalization of galamsey, like those mentioned so far in this piece, others disagree with the assertion, arguing that because galamsey is mostly unregistered and unregulated, poorly monitored by regulatory agents, allowing the industry to operate freely could lead to severe environmental consequences such as water pollution, land degradation and loss of agricultural lands (Kpienbaareh et al. 2020, page 1). For example, the study done by Boateng et al. (2014) focuses on the effects of galamsey on the cocoa sector, which is also known to be a vital industry to the country’s economy.

As a part of this effort to understand the intricacies of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining industry in Ghana, it is imperative that one must also understand the issue of land tenure and its socio-economic impacts. One could argue that customary land tenure practices play a significant role in the perpetuation of artisanal and small-scale mining activity in Ghana. The issues surrounding customary land tenure and the practice of galamsey are intertwined, as customary or communal landowners, who own lands that mostly act as the predominant source of gold rocks, facilitate their dealings with galamsey practitioners and large-scale miners.

Nyame & Bolcher (2016) also focus on the relationships between Artisanal & Small-Scale miners, Large-Scale miners, and local communities. As we have learned, the issue of land tenure and its practices, and how it influences artisanal and small-scale mining, is very complex and challenging, but it is also one that has not been closely analyzed by scholars. In general, Artisanal and Small-Scale miners often tend to access lands in rural areas of a country because of their lack of access to lands that have already been claimed by LSM companies, but also, because as Nyame and Bolcher continue to illustrate, landowners in mineral-rich areas, have been more willing to lease out portions of land for tenure to artisanal and small-scale miners due to the decrease in the agricultural value of many pieces of land (Nyame & Bolcher 2010, page 49). Furthermore, due to the customary system of land ownership in many parts of the country, and the lack of state-owned lands, galamsey operators typically gain access to land through negotiations with traditional customary figureheads. As a result, it is important to investigate how the complexities that exist within Ghana's customary land system affect how the highly informalized galamsey industry operates and help to re-produce popular frames associated with galamseyers.

The main argument presented in the work written by Nyame & Blocher is that to generate effective land-based economic growth in both the mineral and agricultural sectors, better integration of customary and traditional land tenure norms, practices, and laws into the land tenure reforms generated on the national level must occur (Nyame & Blocher 2010, 51). Policies and programs that have already been implemented that aim to better monitor ASM operations and formalize illegal mining (for example, re-locating ASM operators from land contested between large-scale and small-scale miners to plots of land designated for galamsey operations), may only succeed if land tenure reforms are incorporated into policy development.

The Perception of Galamsey and the New Age of Extractivism

McQuilken (2016) and Hilson (2016) continue the discussion by recognizing that the Artisanal and Small-Scale mining sector has grown significantly enough to contribute to the wealth creation for many, the increase of employment levels, and has become one of the nation's most important livelihood activities. Therefore, they also conclude that the formalization of the sector represents a significant opportunity to create the type of development that would lead to widespread economic growth on a national scale. Furthermore, it is important to note that a gap in Ghana's ASM sector has emerged due to the informal nature of the industry. The notion that anyone could participate has led to a majority of miners operating without a license. Due to the proliferation of miners, the ASM sector has caused several environmental issues in Ghana like the pollution of water systems that occurs due to mercury contamination, as well as the production of health concerns for galamsey practitioners operating in such hazardous conditions.

As a result, similar to authors like Tschakert & Singha and Abdulai (2017), McQuilken and Hilson (2016) note the fact that galamsey practitioners have been the subject of widespread

criticism and abuse within the context of media discourse due to the social and environmental problems that the country currently faces. Therefore, not only are galamsey practitioners placed in a difficult situation that can cause serious health concerns by participating in the mining of gold, but they have also been antagonized within the broader context of society. Moreover, the authors argue that despite past efforts made to formalize and support the ASM sector, the policy framework for Ghana's mining sector has largely prioritized the development of large-scale activities. Therefore, to help the ASM sector realize its development potential, the ASM must be formalized and an inclusive policy framework must be crafted. Hilson and Macquiken present three ways forward that they hope would serve as a basis for a dialogue that would begin the process towards the formalization of the ASM sector in Ghana. These solutions focus on issues around the lack of access to land for ASM, the lack of reliable sources of finance to aid, for example, galamsey operators in their formalization, and the need to streamline the licensing system (Hilson and Macquiken 2016, page 7).

Jasper Ayelazuno (2014) notes that we are living in a new age of "extractivism" whereby the international community is witnessing the increase in investment in the mining sector in Africa as a key strategy in stimulating economic growth and development on the continent. However, as we are witnessing this, he states that "new Extractivism spawns horrific injustices and violence against peasants and artisanal and small-scale miners, a segment of the citizenry whose wellbeing development is supposed to promote (Ayelazuno 2014, page 292). Furthermore, he asserts that the Ghanaian government needs to rethink its policies on mining especially when it comes to the supporting of the artisanal and small-scale miners and stop generating policies aimed at attracting foreign multi-national corporations to their miners.

Furthermore, Ghana's government must recognize the development potential that the ASM sector presents.

Like Hilson and MacQuiken, Ayelazuno argues that the government of Ghana needs to rethink its policies on mining especially those that support the dispossession of peasants and artisanal and small-scale miners, and those that encourage the perpetuation of bias towards large-scale transnational mining companies (TNMCs), who through their continuous exploitation of Africa's natural resources, have created 'uneven and combined' dynamics of global development through the "primitive accumulation of extractivism" in African countries (Ayelazuno 2014, page 293). A policy framework must be developed that protects the powerless segments of citizens from the environmental and social injustices that plague Ghanaian communities. Furthermore, he argues that "the dispossessions in local mining communities and the social and economic effects on ASM are not worth the dismal prospects for capitalist development in the country" (Ayelazuno 2014, 301). Therefore, the interests of the people living in those communities should be prioritized over the profit-making interests of transnational mining companies by taking certain policy measures such as the cutting down of the generous incentives given to TNMCs that do not result in substantial contributions to the country's GDP (Ayelazuno 2014, 301).

On the ground, Kingsley Arkorful (2015), Baah Acheamfour (2015), Dinah Aryeetey (2015), and Sheila Frempong Osei Owusu (2015) assert that galamsey practitioners also seemed to be involved in the development agenda of communities by supporting the implementation of certain programs, and the development of institutions like schools. They ultimately conclude that based on their research, they believe that the abolition of galamsey would cause large-scale

environmental damage to most communities whose livelihoods depend on the mining sector. Both articles mentioned, the article written by both Hilson and Macquiken, and the article written by Arkorful, Acheamfour, Aryeetey, and Osei Owusu, stress the importance for the Ghanaian government to develop a policy framework that reflects the realities on the ground and understand the barriers to ASM's formalization.

Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining and the Cycle of Poverty

Gavin Hilson (2006) & Sandra Pardie (2006) present the possible relationship between Ghana's Artisanal and Small-Scale mining sector and development, while also discussing the struggle of Ghanaian policymakers to formalize their Artisanal and Small-Scale mining sector and the practice of galamsey. Furthermore, they establish possible links to both rural and urban poverty in Ghana. Among other pertinent factors, the criminalization of the practice has affected how practitioners operate and also discourages them from obtaining a license that would formalize their businesses. Under Ghanaian law, the main legal and legislative instruments that govern the formal mining sector are the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the Minerals and Mining Act, an updated iteration of the 1986 Minerals and Mining Law, and the Minerals Commission Act of 1993, as well as, the Precious Minerals and Marketing Corporation Law of 1989 that applies to ASM operations. Moreover, these legislative instruments are further buttressed by the Minerals and Mining Policy enacted in 2016 to provide the overarching policy framework for mining in Ghana. As Busumtwi-Sam & Hira (2018) discuss in their article, The Minerals and Mining Policy of Ghana "sets out to consolidate various policies and programs on mining and guide governments' management of the mining sector with the principal objective of ensuring the country's sustainable development" (Busumtwi-Sam & Hira 2018, page 13).

Under the Minerals and Mining Act of 2006, formal small-scale mining is defined as “mining by any method not involving substantial expenditure” and requires operators to procure a license to mine up to 10 hectares of land for a duration of three to five years (Busumtwi-Sam & Hira 2018, 16). Therefore, those who operate without first registering for a small-scale mining permit, are seen as illegal miners, or galamseyers. However, it is also important to note that authors such as Teschner (2012), Hilson and Osei (2017), Afriyie et. al. (2016) highlight the complex and cumbersome nature of the formalization process itself and how that is one of the major barriers of galamsey operators to obtaining licenses. More specifically, as Teschner illustrates, the process of formally registering a mine has been reported to be “cumbersome and highly inefficient” which strongly discourages miners from registering, as they see the fees required to pay for registration to be unreasonable, and the paperwork excessive (Teschner 2012, page 309). Teschner argues that the current formalization system for small-scale gold miners has been undermined to the point where the small-scale mining laws that govern the industry, fail to address the realities of the sector on the ground. The laws that were initially drafted to formalize the sector and provide galamsey operators with access to gold markets, have become incapable of effectively carrying out their purpose due to “continued enforcement of the laws and rising gold prices” (Teschner 2012, 313).

Hilson and Pardie (2016) present the caricature of the galamsey operator as an individual who is “trapped in the cycle of poverty” essentially reinforcing the notion that participation in ASM is a poverty-driven activity, while also highlighting the artisanal roots of the practice. This is a characterization that, according to both authors, is also caused by the rapid influx of large-scale mining companies and the concurrent legalization of small-scale mining leading to the landlessness and homelessness of locals who, in turn, take up the informal practice (Hilson and

Pardie 2006, page 107). In Ghana's case, this cycle of poverty is exacerbated by the use of mercury by ASM in the region, as they are exposed to predatory gold buyers, debt peonage, and to a toxic chemical that causes them to purchase expensive medicine to deal with their subsequent mercury-related illnesses. They argue that in Ghana, increased dependence upon mercury as an "amalgamation agent" poses an even greater problem as a driver of informality and poverty in the ASM sector. The reliance of members of the ASM sector, both legal and illegal, upon mercury, has brought with it a host of health problems caused by overexposure. The arguments presented by the authors like Hilson and Pardie help to highlight the popular frame that has been reinforced and perpetuated in the dominant discourse of galamsey operators that links the practice to poverty and informality. As will be discussed later in this paper, the poverty frame associated with galamsey stresses the need to understand why individuals participate in the practice of galamsey, and the social and economic factors that are seemingly ignored in the construction of other frames.

Dominant Discourse on Galamsey as a Threat to the Environment in Mainstream Media

When seeking to analyze the politics of galamsey within the confines of Ghana's mainstream politics, it is vital to assess the narratives that shape dominant discourse. Tschakert and Singha (2007) argue that the dominant discourse on the illegal gold mining industry in Ghana has led to the marginalization and criminalization of the practice. Moreover, by focusing on the socio-political implications of the dominant anti-galamsey discourse, their paper also seeks to demonstrate the effects of anti-galamsey discourse on the shaping of environmental injustice in the Artisanal and & Small-Scale sector. Tschakert & Singha argue that, due to the criminalization of the practice of galamsey, Ghanaian galamsey operators are officially excluded

from governmental programs that grant access to safer technologies that prevent contact with mercury. This ultimately leads to the perpetuation of mercury pollution amongst galamsey operators, and the consolidation and reinforcement of their identity that is centered around mercury pollution within the practice of galamsey.

Within the national context, the dominant environmental discourse when it comes to mercury contamination invokes the growing numbers of galamsey operators, or galamseyers, who use mercury to extract gold, ultimately endangering themselves, as well as the health of those who live in neighbouring communities. Moreover, Tschakert and Singha note that in the dominant discourse, galamseyers, or are perceived as environmental criminals to justify the forceful removal of illegal miners from concession land. Galamsey operators are blamed for water pollution and their lack of accountability for environmental degradation (Tschakert & Singha 2007, page 1307). According to them, the way forward for the Ghanaian government must be through the construction of a discourse on galamsey that is inclusive and accepting of the fact that galamsey operators are not criminals but individuals that have chosen a viable livelihood option in a sector that requires collaboration and the care of the government.

Authors like Tschakert & Singha and Armah et al. (2013), bring attention to the dangerous effects of ASM, in both its formal and informal forms, on the environment and public health in surrounding communities. The study conducted by Armah et al. examines 50 Ghanaian communities where ASM is widespread, through in-depth interviews of framers, community members, foreigners, traditional leaders, alongside others. They found that the environmental degradation that is often associated with galamsey, or ASM, is exacerbated by the marginalization of the sector by the government. The marginalization of the ASM sector stems

from the apparent belief by the Ghanaian government that large-scale mining should be prioritized over ASM, that the informality of the ASM is understood as a ‘foregone conclusion that makes its formalization politically challenging (Armah et al. 2013, page 100-101). While studying the discourse and politics of the galamsey industry in Ghana, they argue that it is important to attempt to analyze the economic impacts of the industry on the broader national economy.

As Afriyie et al. (2016) discuss in their article, over time, small-scale mining has become an integral part of the mineral-rich economy, acting as a backbone for Ghana, as well as the other low-income countries that surround it. Furthermore, their paper attempts to understand the drivers of galamsey and investigate the perception of the practice as “illegal” within the discourse of the nation. In their study, they conducted qualitative interviews with 193 galamsey operators in 5 communities in Western Ghana, with 77% of the inhabitants in their study being engaged in galamsey as the main source of livelihood (Afriyie et al. 2016, page 495). The study underscores the livelihood elements of any discussion on the issue of galamsey and the social factors that drive its informality, possibly presenting a frame that focuses on the livelihood of galamseyers. Afriyie et. al. posit that citizens faced with poverty, landlessness and limited employment opportunities take to small-scale gold mining as an alternative source of employment in order to escape their grievances (Afriyie et al. 2016, 5010). Moreover, in their analysis, they found that certain participants argued that the government’s approach to the galamsey issue was partly responsible for some of the damaging effects of galamsey on the environment and human health by not providing social support when it comes to skill development in within the industry (Afriyie et al. 2016, 503).

Most of the galamsey operators that were interviewed in Afriyie et al. (2016) rebuffed the dominant view that galamsey operators do more damage to the environment than formally regulated LSM operations. They argued that the reason why galamsey activities were often perceived as more harmful to the environment was because their activities are scrutinized more heavily by the media and the public, unlike LSM companies who restrict access to their operations thereby concealing the damage their operations wage against the environment (Afriyie et al. 2016, 498). These claims presented by the galamsey operators were corroborated by the observations made by the authors in their comparative analysis of galamsey and LSM sites. The notion that galamsey operators may or may not be the major contributors to the pollution of water bodies and the environmental damage around the country, is placed into contention by authors like Aryee et al. (2003) who argue that due to the clandestine and unregulated nature of their operations are responsible for the most significant share of environmental damagers in their sector (Aryee et al. 2003, page 134-35). This contention acts as the site by which the content analysis of this paper takes place.

Furthermore, they argue that poverty, lack of agricultural land, and limited employment opportunities are some of the many reasons why galamsey miners end up in the industry. Similar to this paper, they conduct their analysis by utilizing a discourse analysis approach to discuss and challenge the narratives perpetuated by the country's institutions that regulate small-scale mining and disseminate myths that continue to demonize and vilify galamsey practitioners. In order to provide an accurate analysis of the popular narratives that play a role in the development of stereotypes associated with galamsey, it is important to analyze the intricacies of the industry, the power dynamics at play, and the politics involved in its regulation.

Lastly, Afriyie et al. provide legislative and policy recommendations on possible strategies that the Ghanaian government could utilize when it comes to the question of how the government will steer away its citizens from working and participating in the galamsey industry. The suggested policy recommendations offered by Afriyie et al. stem from their main argument that unless better employment and livelihood opportunities are created in other sectors of the Ghanaian economy, and more effective social protection policies are put in place to address the vulnerabilities of the poor, local communities are almost certain to continue to engage in galamsey (Afriyie et al. 2016, 506). For example, they advocate for an increase in government-initiated participatory dialogue with customary leaders, landowners, local communities, and galamsey operators and the use of local social networks and customary authority structures to formalize galamsey operations and ultimately use them to mitigate the negative effects associated with galamsey operations. They posit that the main goal of these actors should be to address the socio-economic conditions which drive impoverished individuals and communities towards participating in galamsey (Afriyie et al. 2016, 506).

Framing and Discourse Analysis on mining and land issues

Exploring how framing, and the production of images, stereotypes, and narratives in certain contexts, shape how certain political and civil actors contribute to dominant discursive structures at both the national and transnational level, is imperative to any discussion on the dominant discourse on galamsey in Ghana. Louisa Prause's article (2018) explores how the national discursive context shapes the outcome of the framing strategies of civil actors in conflicts over large-scale land transformations in Senegal. Senegal, like Ghana, is home to many artisanal and small-scale miners who practice mining as both a primary and additional livelihood activity, and like Ghana, the Senegalese government has recently attempted to regulate the sector

and ultimately failed to do so due to poor regulation and implementation. She argues that analyzing political and discursive contexts is essential to explain the outcomes of framing strategies. This is especially true when it comes to conflicts over land and mining and is mostly seen in case studies from Latin America and Asia, with Africa so far receiving very limited attention.

Furthermore, Prause does this by utilizing two key concepts, framing and discursive opportunity structures. According to Prause, the Discursive opportunity structure approach, she states, argues that a “movement’s frame and the political and discursive environment in which they are expressed work in combination to produce a movement’s desired political outcome” (Prause 2018, page 392). This approach is a tool that can be utilized to analyze how the discursive context can shape the outcome of a framing strategy. In addition, discursive opportunity structures comprised of widespread beliefs and core values in a broader population, and within institutions, laws, and policies. Prause’s article provides insight into how both national and transnational discursive structures are inherently linked and how members of civil society can channel elements of transnational discourse into their own efforts. She posits that it is essential for protest actors to link their framing strategies to national discourses, often shaped by transnational discourses, to receive national and international attention and convince national policymakers to stop large-scale land transformations (Prause 2018, 393). Also, she argues that is equally important for protest actors to link their demands to the values and norms espoused by international civil society actors to gain their support and the support of international media. Discursive opportunity structures are created by both state institutions and transnational political discourse on the topic. The case studies presented by Prause on the conflicts around the Senhuile agri-business project in Senegal and the Sabodala gold mine illustrate how the manufacturing

and subsequent deployment of framing strategies are different depending on the sector, and how this largely contributes to their effectiveness within the national political context.

The Conceptualization of the Citizen-Miner and its role in the dominant discourse

Colonial Extractions: Race and Canadian Mining in Contemporary Africa, written by Paula Butler (2018), investigates Canadian mining activities in several African countries and the discourses that operate to legitimize their work and their place within the context of African societies. Furthermore, *Colonial Extractions* is a piece that analyzes how these discourses influence how Canadian miners view their work and how this shapes the relations between them, and other actors involved in mining industries of various African countries, as well as, the broader relations established at the global level. It is a book that seeks to challenge the notion of Canada as ‘helpers’ and ‘rescuers’ of African nations that are etched deep into the country’s national identity. She does this by conducting a series of interviews with Canadian mining professionals to uncover what kinds of stories or narratives that they have produced that focus on their presence in African states. In addition, she also relies on data from a series of different sources that include the Government of Canada the policy statements and speeches drafted by mining associations (Butler 2015, page 16). Butler utilizes the various sources of data at her disposal to determine patterns of discourse that are steeped in colonization and exploitation.

In Chapter 7, she focuses on the concept of the “citizen-miner” providing an analysis of the racial elements of the relationship between the Canadian mining company, the artisanal or “citizen-miners”, and local community members who come into contact with them. This book is important to the discussion on informal ASM in Africa because it examines the dynamic between Canadian mining professionals and African citizen-miners, and how Canadians perceive their

work, their motivations, and the African citizen-miner. As Butler states, defining African miners attempts to naturalize a hierarchical relationship between African and Western miners, while also further perpetuating stereotypes about citizens of an entire country that is seen as inferior within the global North-South imaginary. For example, she discusses the use of the word “primitive” to describe the technology utilized by artisanal, or African citizen miners, by the World Bank in its official discourse. She argues it was “generally indictive of the pejorative tone” utilized by the institution helping to naturalize a hierarchical relationship between African and Western miners (Butler 2015, 213). It is the use of terms like ‘primitive’ that lead to the construction of stereotypes that ultimately reinforce perceptions of African citizen-miners, or African ASM, as inferior. Moreover, through her analysis of the Canadian mining sector, as it operates in African states, she shows that “such manifestations and technologies of racialization remain centrally constitutive of the mesmerizing logic, operations, and effects of contemporary capitalist-imperialist power.” (Butler 2015, 8).

Moreover, creating these terms and stereotypes focused on African miners also shapes how popular national narratives are developed. For example, Butler discusses how producing a particular narrative about small-scale and artisanal miners within the context of an African country “blocks other narratives – such as one about the leading role of independent citizen-miners in national economic development” (Butler 2015, 217). Furthermore, this also shapes the formation of policies that determine who gets to live a healthy and secure life within the context of the nation and shapes the structuring of power relations in the neoliberal global economy.

The #StopGalamseyNow Campaign & the role of the Media

In 2017, the #StopGalamseyNow campaign, a campaign that was a culmination of efforts by members of the public to condemn galamsey, rose to prominence to place pressure on the government of Ghana to tackle the illegal practice. The hashtag would be utilized by non-profit groups, churches, and social organizations who mobilized around the fight to end galamsey activities. As Agobzo & Spassov (2018) note the media subsequently joined the cause by providing stories, photos, and videos on the damage caused by galamsey. A litany of media companies also banded together to place additional on the government to act (Agobzo & Spassov 2018, page 613). Moreover, a petition, which included signatures from key ministerial figures, was also presented to parliament. The #StopGalamsey campaign, in concert with extensive lobbying, helped to further embed notions of galamsey as inherently bad, and galvanize the Ghanaian citizenry to embrace the campaign and partake in calls to hold the Government accountable.

As Hilson (2017) states in his article titled *Shootings and burning excavators: Some rapid reflections on the Government of Ghana's handling of the informal Galamsey mining 'menace'*, the Government of Ghana must evaluate its current approach to legalizing ASM and develop a new approach to the galamsey issue. Hilson's article critically examines the actions taken by the Government of Ghana to eliminate illegal small-scale and artisanal mining and the practice of Galamsey. He postulates that the government's military and the police response to combat the illegal activity which has often been described as 'a menace', in the form of Operation Vanguard, will ultimately fail to eliminate illegal mining. At a time where many around the continent are debating on how to boost the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining sector and harness the potential of the sector to improve rural livelihoods, the government seems to be

doing the opposite. He states that using force to combat illegal mining is both inexplicable and unlawful as the armed forces and police often “take the law into their own hands, and their raids of communities always result in human rights abuses and the deaths of innocent people” and as a result, a police and military response will never work, nor has it ever worked (Hilson 2017, 114). Instead, according to Hilson, the focus must be on combatting the drivers of informality. Furthermore, he argues that the environmental issues surrounding galamsey need to be addressed in conjunction with efforts to understand the rapid growth of the galamsey sector. The #StopGalamsey campaign has had a significant effect on public perception of galamsey and how the galamsey operator has been framed, as the main cause of environmental degradation and the mass pollution of water bodies.

The relationship between popular mainstream media and the Government of Ghana has been a unique relationship throughout Ghana’s history. As Achiaa Frimpong states, the media in Ghana has either functioned as a lapdog, providing support for the government, or as a watchdog, as an entity that acts to provide surveillance and demand for accountability on behalf of the citizens. Achiaa Frimpong (2019) investigates the relationship between the two institutions examining the events about the rise of galamsey and studying the media’s response. Furthermore, she examines the role of the news media in Ghana through the utilization of the Media Coalition Against Galamsey’s anti-galamsey campaign, the significance of the campaign in the fight against galamsey, and how the Ghanaian media, in its role as the Fourth Estate, holds the government accountable. By analyzing the relationship between the media and government, and between journalist and politician, she demonstrates how both actors produce conceptualizations of the galamsey operators that depict them as a danger to the environment and the local communities that they inhabit. In her work, Achiaa Frimpong investigates the role of

the media as a fourth estate, as guaranteed under the Constitution of 1992. Under the 1992 Constitution, the media essentially acts as the “fourth arm of government” with the special right to constitute checks and balances over the other arms of government to ensure they do not abuse their powers (Achiaa Frimpong 2019, page 17).

Achiaa Frimpong’s article allows us to more intensively investigate the role of the media in the anti-galamsey campaign, and the role of the media as a tool to both amplify the voices of government officials and its citizens, and shape public and political discourse on the matter, in the future. The study of the role of the media on the gamamsey issue is vital to any analysis of the dominant discourse that shapes how the gamamsey operator is characterized. As Achiaa Frimpong states in her dissertation, the role of the media in Ghana is not monolithic but a mix of media-politician relationships that have evolved. Historically, the relationship between the media and the Ghanaian government has been tumultuous. For the last couple of decades, a period that is defined as the fourth republic, Achiaa Frimpong highlights that the press acted as a voice in providing alternative views in the absence of an opposition in parliament (Achiaa Frimpong 2019, 15). This was also evidenced by the varying degrees of freedom enjoyed by the press during this time as the press continued to struggle to hold the government accountable without certain legal instruments like for example, the right to information on government policies and activities to allow expose unethical conduct within both the executive and legislative branches of government (Achiaa Frimpong 2019, 17). The dissertation provides an excellent analysis of the relationship between mass media communications and politics, how this affects how governments in power develop their political agenda, and also, how this cultivates or diminishes public trust in both institutions.

The media possesses the ability to empower, enlighten, and inform its citizens by addressing the social, political, and economic issues plaguing the country. By doing so, media narratives help to cultivate social movements and ultimately shape how popular opinion is formed, ballots are cast, and approval ratings fluctuate. This can also have a significant effect on communities and the challenges that they face. As issues such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, and infrastructure have significant impacts on the livelihoods of many, how the media chooses to develop and promulgates media narratives on said issues can influence popular opinion and drive support for or against government officials. In Ghana's case, Biney (2019) posits that the education of the citizenry by the media has strengthened activism within social circles, also acting as a catalyst in galvanizing and mobilizing the citizenry to rise against the operations and activities of galamsey operators. The environmental damage caused by both galamsey operators and large-scale mining operations has created an environment that is hosting the war between the Government of Ghana, via operations such as "Operation Vanguard", the media, and the galamsey operators themselves.

Data Collection

The search for articles consisted of entering keywords into the Google search engine, to identify articles released by Ghanaian news publications. The key words utilized to collect the sample were: "galamsey" "illegal mining" "gold". These keywords were developed at the preliminary stages of the formulation of my research. Searching with the Google search engine allowed me to access articles found on the websites of independent news media outlets. The websites included were: ghanaweb.com, citifmonline.com, energyghana.com, pulse.com.gh, allafrica.com, graphic.com.gh, graphicbusinessonline.com, Allghananews.com,

thechronicle.com.gh, Modernghana.com, Newsghana.gh, Africanews.com, Mesti.gov.gh (Government of Ghana's Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology & Innovation website), Peacefmonline.com, Presidency.gov.gh, Kasapafmonline.com, today.gh.com, Adomonline.com, and the Twitter page for the Media Coalition Against Galamsey.

In all, 65 articles were identified from the search utilizing the keywords stated above. However, due to time constraints, the final analytical sample is comprised of 30 articles that were written between March 2016 to March 2018, with 10 articles selected from each year. First of all, the sample was cleaned to remove any scholarly articles that did not represent mass media reporting. Secondly, articles were separated based on relevance to the topic and to ensure coverage of a range of media houses. Furthermore, deciding to expand the date range to 2016, allowed for the analysis to potentially demonstrate how, the lead-up to an election, as well as a change in government, could have also affected the possible shift in rhetoric and public discourse that is more predicated around the environmental threat frame associated with galamsey operators. In addition, this time in Ghana was crucial in precipitating the emergence of the social media campaigns, like #StopGalamseyNow and Media Coalition Against Galamsey, and the fostering of the struggle against the issue. The adjustment of the date range also enabled this study to examine the wide array of news coverage on Galamsey in Ghana between the moment when calls for a government-sanctioned crackdown against galamsey operators occurred, and when the Media Coalition Against Galamsey rose to prominence, a year later, and the reaction of all pertinent actors to the subsequent ban on small-scale mining. This was done to determine if coverage of the industry and rhetoric of government officials on the issue has changed. Furthermore, the 65 articles were written by Ghanaian authors and released by Ghanaian public news publications. A spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel was also created to better organize and

structure the collection of data and measure the frequency of the articles seen in articles. The spreadsheet lists: the name of articles, the year they were written, and codes.

In order to significantly reduce the number of articles found in the search, when utilizing the Google search engine, an attempt was made to conduct an advanced search by utilizing features of the engine that would present pertinent articles, for example, adjusting “Relevance”, “date range, “only English pages”. In addition to utilizing Google’s search engine, I also searched for articles written by Ghana-based news agencies whose websites are mentioned above.

At the preliminary stages of the analysis, a major concern was the date range. Being able to determine the date range would help to ensure an accurate evaluation of the popular frames and stereotypes that shape the current attitudes on galamsey operators in the public and political discourse. Setting a date range that is broad enough and close enough to current events, would essentially determine how the production of certain frames can shape the outcome of the illegal ASM sector in Ghana as pertains to its political future. More specifically, my search aimed to ensure that there is more to my analysis than any discussion on the environmental threat frame of the galamsey operator. In order to do so, my date range was developed to examine public and political discourse the year before, and after the execution of Operation Vanguard in 2017. Consequently, a relatively broad date range was set to ensure that the search provided a wide range of articles and enabled me to create a holistic representation of the public and political discourse on the issue of galamsey in Ghana.

Additionally, specific codes were developed both before the conducting of the analysis, as well as, during the analysis in order to analyze the sample. Unlike other similar research

studies done in the past on this subject (Kpienbaarah et al. 2020), by including codes like “employment” and “poverty”, as a part of the mixed approach to coding involving elements of both deductive and inductive approaches, the results of the analysis do not merely focus on the environmental impacts of galamsey, that are at the core of all literature on the subject, reinforcing the legitimacy of the environment frame. In turn, the aim is that the research would not provide a narrow picture shaped by a search that only focused on the crime, crackdown, and punishment aspects of the galamsey issue.

The adoption of a mixed inductive/deductive approach to coding means that certain codes were determined based on my expectations that stem from the scholarly literature presented in the literature review portion of this paper, while others were determined based on the recurring themes that emerged in the analysis. The codes that were developed as part of the deductive elements of my approach to coding included: menace, destruction (of environment and of equipment by law enforcement), survival, pollution, environment, criminal, deforestation, employment, and poverty. Throughout my analysis, several codes were also added. The codes included were employment, development, fight, water, and livelihood. Using coding, we can see a multitude of patterns emerging. Utilizing the codes mentioned allowed for the analysis to be effective in enabling me to identify common ‘frames’ that are embedded within the broader dominant public discourse.

Even though the methodology utilized for this study was apt and effective in producing the desired results, it also had some limitations. Firstly, since this was a desk-study, my research does not include extensive background information on the relationships between Ghanaian media, politicians, and other pertinent stakeholders, which could only be obtained through

fieldwork. The constraints that come with writing a Major Research Paper only allowed for the study to provide surface-level commentary on the history of the relationship between the media and government officials. Also, the use of the terms “galamsey”, “gold mining”, and more specifically, “illegal mining” could have cultivated search parameters that focused on the crackdown and criminal prosecution of galamsey operators. Maybe deciding to include certain terms that may focus on other aspects of the galamsey industry such as “poverty” or “livelihood” potentially could have altered my search results by finding articles that may focus on the socio-economic factors. Parameters of my search could have placed less of an emphasis on the media’s support for the crackdown and the threat that galamseyers pose to the environment and more of an emphasis on the reasons why citizens practice galamsey. Therefore, access to certain articles could have been limited. Moreover, if it were not for the constraints that affected the search parameters and date range, a larger sample size could have also been assembled.

The next section will provide the findings of my analysis. It will seek to answer the main research question of this paper by addressing which frames are most dominant within the Ghanaian media landscape, as well as public and political discourse. Furthermore, it will investigate the messaging that has been presented by all pertinent actors on the galamsey issue.

Research Findings & Analysis

The results of my frame analysis identified the presence of two dominant or mega frames. One frame is based on the caricature of the galamsey operator as a threat to their environment and the surrounding ecosystems, and another is rooted in the socioeconomic determinants that lead individuals into participating in galamsey. The second mega frame underscores the fact that many individuals participate in galamsey to break out of the “cycle of poverty” as defined by

Hilson and Pardie (2006). This frame not only focuses on the socio-economic factors involved in the fostering of galamsey as a livelihood option but also in discourse that is rooted in the potential of galamsey to become a source of economic growth at the local level. These overarching frames emerged consistently throughout the years 2016, 2017, and 2018. A major question that emerged before the results of the analysis had been finalized was, whether or not there had been a shift in public and political discourse utilizing the frame of galamsey operators as threats to the environment, and the immediate need of the governments, at every level, to crackdown on galamsey operators who are polluting water bodies. Would there be any indication of a slight shift in rhetoric, away from the environment frame, towards any narrative that focuses on other aspects of the galamsey operator? As subsequent sub-sections will discuss, from 2016 to 2018, a subtle and incremental shift in the dynamics between the two overarching frames play out within public discourse.

Analysis - The Galamsey Operator as a “Threat to the Environment”

The results of my search further highlighted the relationship between galamseyers, the environment, and the police and military response, but also moved towards a broader discussion that involves other frames and stereotypes that I had theorized would be more prevalent. Much of the news coverage focused on the environmental aspects of the issue. Out of the 30 articles that were analyzed, the code “environment” was flagged in 20 of them. The code “pollution” appeared in 17 articles, and the code “water” appeared in 15 articles. The results indicate that whenever the galamsey issue is discussed by journalists, public or private officials, it is mainly the environmental factors associated with water pollution that are the subject of discourse. Many articles were found that reported various accidents and tragedies that led to casualties, and the mass arrests of galamsey operators working in various regions around the country. For example,

headlines such as “Four perish in galamsey accident” and “31 Arrested for engaging in ‘galamsey’ in Ashanti” were found throughout the search. One could argue that the proliferation of news articles on accidents that occur on illegal ASM sites emphasizes the dangerous nature of the practice of galamsey, stressing the need for the government and other political officials to solve the problem. The search results emphasized the fact that a large volume of news coverage that focuses on the threat to the environment posed by galamsey operators working on had been written between the years of 2016 and 2018, as well as the criminalization of the activity. Therefore, the results suggest the dominance of the environment frame of the galamsey operator in the media. Additionally, the code “destruction” was flagged in 21 of 30 articles, and in 12 of the articles where the code “environment” was also found.

Based on the assembled sample, 2016 seemed to be a year where the media took a more pedagogical approach to the reporting on Galamsey, with many articles attempting to inform the public on the galamsey issue, and the dangers of the practice. For example, in an article titled *Citi FM's Ending illegal mining: real fight or a hoax?*, an article that is structured as an open letter from Citi FM to the new government at the time, the author provides an introduction into the world of galamsey. The author addresses the myriad of social, economic, and environmental problems that the new, government at the time, was facing. The author calls for a solution to the “Chinese invasion of the galamsey sector”, the saving of Ghana’s river bodies from the illegal mining of gold, the adoption of a new approach to combating Galamsey, and the reforming of the Minerals Commission to better address galamsey. This article serves as an example of the type of articles and coverage emanating from the media as part of an effort to place pressure on the old government, who many argued had failed in their attempts to successfully solve the galamsey issue, and the new government to develop a new approach to addressing it.

Another example of this could be found in an article titled *Illegal mining activities, a great challenge to the minerals commission – PRO* which covers a speech made by the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the Minerals Commission, a commission tasked with the responsibility to bringing the galamsey issue under control. In the speech, the PRO indicated that the fight against galamsey had been unsuccessful because the issue was politicized, with “important personalities funding the perpetrators”. Furthermore, the article argues that the government’s effort to deal with the issue stems from a lack of enforcement of the Minerals and Mining Act of 2006, Act 703, the governing legislation for Ghana’s minerals and mining sector. The selection of articles written in 2016, as part of the sample analyzed for this paper, would suggest that articles like *Reporting on Ghana’s Sector - what Matters and Effects of Illegal Mining* serve as examples. However, one does have to also think about whether or not the election period played a significant role in diverting the focus of the media away from the galamsey issue, although it was a topic of debate between the two Presidential candidates.

The sample developed for this study also highlights major patterns with regards to which media outlets reinforce the dominant frames perpetuated within political and public discourse. The results of my analysis found that articles written by journalists employed by media houses such as Graphic Online, MyJoyOnline, and Ghanaweb, primarily tended to focus on the Environment frame as the main theme. The articles released by these media companies discussed issues such as the illegality of galamsey, the crimes committed by galamsey operators, and the fight against the “menace”. The analysis suggests that the framings were communicated or visible equally across the media houses in the sample: it doesn’t appear that particular media houses were promoting particular frames. However, the results of my analysis demonstrate how

the anti-galamsey media campaigns, whose social media pages will be discussed in the next subsection, were formed over time.

Analysis: Galamsey Operators - the Poverty Frame

Few of the articles that were found in 2016 focus on the poverty frame, and the galamsey operator as a unit of analysis. As a result, it was difficult to find many articles that focus on, what can be described as, the social determinants of galamsey: the reasons as to why citizens get involved in the practice of galamsey. In the articles written in 2016, out of the codes “employment”, “livelihood”, “poverty”, “development”, and “survival”, only “development” and “livelihood” were flagged in the text, twice and once, respectively. However, in the years 2017 and 2018, many articles discussed the practice of galamsey and its common association with employment and the practice as a source of employment for those living in poverty. The codes “employment” and “poverty” were found in articles written during those years. The results of my analysis suggest that, from 2016 to 2018, Ghanaian media outlets began to gradually shift from providing extensive coverage on the negative environmental impacts of illegal ASM, towards more discussions on the socio-economic factors that lead individuals towards participation in the industry.

Moreover, more proposals on the possible development of strategies that could potentially aid in the fostering of galamsey as a formal channel of economic development also began to emerge between 2017 and 2018. Many of the articles that were analyzed throughout this study, mainly those that have been written in 2018, utilized the word ‘livelihood’ when discussing Galamsey operations. These articles tend to argue for an approach that is less focused on the crackdown on the practice by security forces, and more focused on providing alternative

livelihoods for Galamsey miners. It is in this discussion about how to establish alternative livelihoods for galamseyers, that the frame of Galamsey operators as, individuals who require a more formal and stable livelihood, emerges. It is possible that the lifting of the ban on small-scale mining operations for mining companies that have been vetted by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Illegal Mining in 2018 affected the shifting of rhetoric by certain political officials and members of the media towards a poverty-based frame. However, the messaging has remained consistent throughout the past three years on the need to address the galamsey “menace” and win the “fight”. Out of the thirty articles that were included in the sample, in sixteen of the articles, “fight” was mentioned. The code “menace” appeared in thirteen of the articles. It is important to note that most of the rhetoric depicting the galamsey as a “menace” and a “fight” was found mostly in articles written in 2017 and 2018.

Analysis - The Anti-Galamsey Social Media Campaigns

The #StopGalamsey Facebook page continues to remain active in 2020, as of August 12th, 2020. It is a page created by Graphic Online, a Ghanaian state-owned daily news agency. On the #StopGalamsey Facebook page the campaign describes itself as a movement created to galvanize Ghanaian citizens to save Ghana from “the threat of extinction from illegal mining activities”. A close examination of the page since its creation in March 2017 reveals that the page continues to remain a tool utilized to rally support for the anti-Galamsey campaign. Like many of the articles included in the analytical sample, the Stop Galamsey movement describes the galamsey issue as a fight, or war, that needs to be won.

Moreover, the page has also been used as a bulletin board for the posting of any news stories related to the crackdown on galamsey operators, as well as any updates on Operation

Vanguard activities. Any news about the arrests made by the police of galamseyers is posted on the Facebook page, alongside, any calls made by the movement to arrest any government officials that continue to allow for galamsey operators to work in their constituencies. In addition, a thorough investigation of the page also found many posts that attempted to hold government officials and institutions accountable for their failure to deal with the issue, also calling for those complicit in the perpetuation of the practice, to be prosecuted and given maximum punishment. News stories, photos, and videos attempt to illustrate the picture of environmental destruction, greed, chaos, and mass pollution, that the galamsey issue is often associated with.

Additionally, it has become a platform for Ghanaian citizens to voice their opinions on the issue. The rhetoric utilized on this platform would suggest that it has attempted to influence the public and political discourse on the issue by further perpetuating the image of the galamsey operator as an ever-present threat to the environment, and the survival of all Ghanaians, regardless of nationality. The constant advocacy of a response to the galamsey issue that is rooted in criminal justice, suggests that both the Media Coalition Against Galamsey Twitter page and the Stop Galamsey Facebook pages have been utilized as tools to reinforce popular notions and discourse on galamsey operators, in concert with the news stories written by journalists employed by Ghanaian news agencies. Media Coalition Against Galamsey utilized the #StopGalamsey hashtag to generate public opinion against the practice of galamsey. They also supplemented this by providing updates on Operation Vanguard and links to the #StopGalamsey website which has more information on the campaign. The page has been dormant since 2018 suggesting that the movement migrated from Twitter to Facebook. Both social media pages are utilized as instruments to propagate anti-galamsey rhetoric and educate the public on the

environmental ills of galamsey. As a result, both pages do not provide balanced coverage on the galamsey industry. However, unlike the role of Ghanaian media, their purpose is not to provide balanced and impartial coverage.

Analysis: The Broadening of Narratives around Galamsey

It is also important to note that, throughout the years, the government's stance on the galamsey issue has remained focused on fighting back against the "menace" that is the main cause of the pollution of water bodies and the erosion of ecosystems all of the country. Whether it be institutions representing the private sector like the Ghana Chamber of Mines, or President Nana Akufo-Addo himself, the message on the environmental dimensions of the galamsey issue has remained consistent from 2016 to 2018. Ghana's water bodies, forests, and land must be protected from the caricature of the galamsey operator who is a danger to them. In a speech given in 2018, during his Ghanaian Independence Day Address, President Akufo-Addo outlined his administration's vision of a Ghana Beyond Aid. As a part of the government's vision of a Ghana beyond aid, the government of Ghana made a promise to future generations of Ghanaians to provide a healthy environment for them to inherit (Presidency.gov.gh, 2018). He argued that to achieve this, the environment and water bodies of the country must be protected from illegal miners who bring devastation to their land and pollution to their water bodies. It is also important to clarify the criminal elements of the environment framework that facilitate the reinforcement of the popular frame and stereotypes that underpin it. Moreover, in many ways, the results of my analysis display that, in Ghana's case, the criminalization narrative, the narrative that focuses on the arrests of galamseyers and the military and police crackdown on the activity, and the narrative depicting the galamsey operator as a menace to the environment, converge underneath the umbrella of the environmental frame. Both narratives consistently work

to reinforce the popular environmental frame of the galamsey operator. However, while there is an alignment between policy and media on this issue, it is not clear as to who is leading who.

2016

As already stated, the articles written in 2016 seem to suggest that, in comparison with 2017 and 2018, 2016 was the year where the media took a more pedagogical approach to the reporting on Galamsey. The selection of articles written in 2016 for this paper, would suggest that articles like *Reporting on Ghana's Sector - what Matters and Effects of Illegal Mining* serve as examples. Many of the articles written in 2016 focused primarily on the environmental impacts of galamsey, the pollution & destruction waged by galamseyers against the Ghanaian forests, water bodies, and land. In 6 of the 10 articles selected for analysis, the “environment” frame was flagged, and in 8 of 10 of the articles, the word “pollution” was flagged. Moreover, the codes “destruction” (6 out of 10), and “fight” (5 of 10), were found in a majority of the articles included. As mentioned above, the results of my analysis may indicate that 2016 was the year where the media attempted to place pressure on both the outgoing and incoming governments.

2017 & 2018

The research conducted in this analysis would suggest that, unlike in other years, 2017 was a year where members of the media and political officials began to ramp up the anti-galamsey rhetoric against Galamsey operators as they were believed to be the leading cause of mass environmental destruction and water pollution. One could argue that the anti-galamsey rhetoric of 2017 was buttressed by the government’s decision to impose a ban on small-scale mining in April of 2017. However, a couple of the articles that were selected for this analysis,

would suggest that the poverty frame also began to emerge in 2017. Out of the 8 occasions that the code “survival” was flagged, it was found in 7 of the 10 articles that were written in 2017 in varying contexts. In the article titled, *Galamsey menace: Causes, effects, solutions*, the author investigates the factors that lead individuals to partake in galamsey, stating that: “Thoughts of survival compel these men and women to consider galamsey as a lucrative venture that is worth exploiting.” (GhanaWeb, 2017). In comparison, in a speech delivered in December of 2017, President Akufo-Addo articulated the importance of saying: “no to galamsey for our own common survival and the survival of those yet to come” (GhanaWeb, 2017).

For example, one of the articles analyzed focuses on what the dangers of galamsey mean for the survival of the nation and the future of Ghana. The author argues that Galamsey should be seen as an act of greediness, with the current generation becoming “greedily ubiquitous with money and willing to do anything whether good or bad, sustainable or non-sustainable just to satisfy our current wants or needs; leaving nothing for the future generations” (Modernghana, 2017). This article presents the poverty frame for galamsey operators, stating that the practice is driven by poverty, and is a result of the “gaps in the system and institutional failures” (Modernghana, 2017), and then critiques the main reason as to why individuals get involved in the practice of galamsey, to the detriment of the environment. The articles that contained the codes “employment” (5 articles) and “livelihood” (5 articles), often included discussions around the need for the government to craft a national livelihoods strategy to address the plights of galamsey operators as subjects in a cycle of poverty. For example, in the article titled *Provocative Conscience and Stop chasing and shooting galamsey miners – Mahama*, an article directly quoting a speech given by Presidential candidate John Mahama, Mahama argues that the solution to the Galamsey issue must be multi-pronged, involving education with economic

empowerment of Galamsey operators to alleviate poverty in these communities. In the article, we also see the author propose that the government enact a national policy to utilize a percentage of the total proceeds generated in illegal ASM to be allocated towards national developmental projects. Furthermore, the author also emphasizes the need for the government to act urgently on the issue to provide a better future for the children of Ghana.

Another example of this could be found in an article written in 2018, titled *Rethink lifting galamsey ban*. In the article, the authors argue that, in recent times, the military-style approach that the government has taken, has proven to be ineffective with many of the challenges that it aimed to address, persisting (Graphic Online, 2018). Therefore, the authors argue that the government must ensure that “appropriate long-term regulatory and administrative interventions” are in place before ASM is legalized. Also, they call for the acceleration in the process of establishing alternative livelihoods for galamseyers.

In summary, the environmental threat frame of the galamsey operator remains an ever-present part of both political and public discourse on the galamsey issue, remaining at the heart of the anti-galamsey rhetoric launched by the media and government alike. However, in recent years, the poverty frame has begun to emerge in the media’s coverage on galamsey. Many of the articles included in my analysis that were written in 2018, included the code “livelihood”. Moreover, most of the analyzed articles that included the codes “development” and “employment” were written in 2017. The results of the quantitative content analysis, evaluating a sample of news articles, speeches, and government press releases looking at the period between 2016 and 2018, may demonstrate the emergence of a new frame within news media, away from the environmental threat frame towards other possible frames that may focus on other aspects of

the practice. The presence of the notion of the galamseyers as a ‘menace’ to the environment was consistent throughout, while discussions on alternative approaches to the galamsey, emerged in 2017 and 2018. Whether or not this represents a shift in thinking about the government’s approach to the galamsey industry, a response to the negative outcomes of Operation Vanguard, or a maturing of the debate on the issue, is unclear.

Discussion

Based upon the findings of this study, two frames have been ever-present within public and political discourse, however, one has stood at the center of any discussion on the issue. The frame of the galamsey operator as a threat to the environment has dominated public and political discourse. Many of the articles analyzed examined the issue of galamsey purely through an environmental lens. Mass pollution, the damage to water bodies, and the destruction of forests and ecosystems said to be caused by the work of galamsey operators, remained popular subjects discussed in many of the articles analyzed. As a result, during the years of 2016 to 2018, the literature analyzed suggests that any discussions on the poverty frame, or the socioeconomic factors of galamsey (i.e., unemployment and landlessness), the drivers of informality, and potential alternative livelihood strategies, remained in the background of public and political discourse focused on the issue. Nevertheless, the poverty frame became more prevalent in 2018, as discussions on alternative approaches to the galamsey issue emerged.

Moreover, this also provides insight into the Government’s stance on the Galamsey issue from 2016 to 2018, and how their rhetoric further reinforces the frame of the Galamsey operator as a “menace” that must be tackled before they cause mass environmental destruction (Tschakert & Singha 2007). The sample included media coverage of speeches delivered by President Nana

Akufo-Addo. For example, in 2016, during his election campaign, he reiterated his commitment to banishing the practice of galamsey, and in 2018, in his Ghanaian Independence Day address, President Akufo-Addo outlined his government's Ghana Beyond Aid vision, briefly describing his vision of a Ghana prepared for future generations of children with a healthy environment for them to inherit. To achieve this, he argued that the environment and water bodies of the country must be protected from illegal miners who bring devastation to their land (presidency.gov.gh, 2018). This demonstrates that within policy and public discourse, the anti-galamsey rhetoric perpetuated by the government and the media continuously portrays galamsey operators as a "threat", "menace", and "criminals" who need to be prosecuted, and a "fight" that must be won (Tschakert & Singha 2007).

Furthermore, it is anti-galamsey rhetoric that reiterates calls that the environment must be protected from galamsey operators who are seen as a threat to the country's survival, and the need to protect the country from the invasion of foreign miners. This is also seen in the calls made by the Media Coalition Against Galamsey and the #StopGalamseyNow campaigns, which include media platforms like Graphic Online, Citi FM, and the Ghana Journalists Association, for a six-month ban of all ASM operations and the eventual eradication of galamsey. Ghanaian media platforms could be used to sway public opinion and educate and mobilize the citizenry to speak out against the proliferation of galamsey activities in their communities. This is an effort that he argues, has been waged by members of the media, in partnership with the government of Ghana, to "address the water pollution and environmental degradation due to 'galamsey' activities" (Biney 2019, page 449).

The findings of my study reflect the extensive literature reviewed earlier, namely, the body of scholarship that focuses on the frame of the galamsey operator as the main threat to the environment. Afriyie et al. (2016) provide a discourse analysis in an attempt to better understand both the drivers of galamsey and its illegality perpetuated by regulatory institutions and challenge the assertion that galamsey does more damage to the environment and human health than formally regulated LSM operations, contrary to public opinion. They argue that galamsey operators are often *perceived* as bigger threats to the environment because of the scrutiny of the media and the public; unlike LSM companies which are not submitted to as much scrutiny (Afriyie et al. 2016; Tschakert & Singha 2007). The overly negative framing of galamsey operators by the media and government has also influenced how the state has formulated its policies on the issue, leading to the military and police-led responses to the presence of galamsey operators in local communities (Arkorful et al. 2018). As the environment frame remains the dominant frame in public and policy discourse, the state's response to the issue, at both the national and local level, remains a criminal justice one omitting the important roles that poverty, unemployment, and landlessness play in buttressing the sector (Afriyie et al. 2019; Armah et al., 2013; Achiaa Frimpong, 2019; Arkorful et al., 2018). As a result, the poverty frame, which encompasses these factors, remains at the periphery of many policy discussions on the issue.

Moreover, the bias that we see displayed within public and political discourse towards the environment frame (rather than the poverty frame), has played a significant role in the fostering of the main problems associated with Ghana's ASM industry. In the past, certain authors have written extensively about the flawed nature of the country's formalization system and bureaucracy and how that has contributed to a process that has become overly complex and cumbersome enough to discourage galamseyers to become formalized (Tschakert and Singha,

2007; Hilson, 2017; Hilson and Potter, 2003; Hilson and Osei, 2017). In particular, Hilson (2017) highlights the fact that for Ghanaian galamsey operators to obtain a license and become formalized, they must first pay exorbitant fees while also navigating the bureaucracy (Hilson, 2017). Hilson's argument further emphasizes the turn of the media towards approaches to the galamsey issue that are pro-poor. The galamsey operator is excluded from governmental programs that may aid in their economic mobility, and from education that may prevent them from partaking in environmental destruction through the use of harmful chemicals such as mercury (Tschakert & Singha, 2007, 1317). In essence, further reinforcing and re-producing notions of the galamsey operator as a threat to the environment, aids to confine local galamsey operators to the cycle of poverty that many of them are trapped in.

In recent times, the governments at both the national and local levels have failed to craft a balanced policy framework that addresses the social, economic, and environmental problems of the galamsey. (Armah et al. 2013). Additionally, to address the root drivers of informality that lead many individuals into galamsey, the Ghanaian government should develop economic policies that aim to protect those left in poverty. As Ayelazuno (2014) posits in his piece, the government of Ghana needs to rethink its policies on mining, especially those that hurt the livelihood options of galamseyers, aiming to protect them in the process (Ayelazuno, 2014, page 301). Government actions against galamsey, such as suspending all ASM activities in an attempt to protect the environment, or utilizing force to eliminate the activity, have ultimately failed to adequately address the root causes of galamsey. This is illustrated by the results of my frame analysis which found that the environment frame of the galamsey operator remained relevant in public and political discourse even after Operation Vanguard and the implementation of the ban of all small-scale mining.

The demands of media campaigns such as the #StopGalamseyNow and the Media Coalition Against Galamsey, and the media coverage on the environmental impacts of galamsey, led to the building of public support for the government's criminal justice-based response to the issue through mass arrests and crackdown, further legitimizing the government's response. However, as Hilson (2017) contends, the belief that continuous military intervention is the key to eliminating illegal ASM activity in the country, further entrenches informal ASM activity (Hilson 2017, page 115). The galamsey industry must be understood as a highly complex industry that is difficult to regulate due to its informality. As such, the practice must be understood outside of its effects on the environment, and as many authors suggest (Hilson (2017), Afriyie et al. (2016), Hilson & Osei (2017), and Hilson & Pardie (2006), an effective solution to the galamsey issue must address the drivers of informality that trap many galamseyers in a cycle of poverty that coerces them into continuing the practice, aiding in the industry's expansion.

This paper has attempted to provide a balanced evaluation of Ghana's public and political discourse on the galamseyer, or galamsey operator, and the frames, caricatures, and stereotypes that are often associated with them. The results of my analysis suggest that a segment of the Ghanaian media has begun to shift away from anti-galamsey rhetoric focused on the criminalization of the practice, and towards a more inclusive perspective on galamsey focused on livelihoods and local development. However, as the literature also indicates, the environment frame of the galamsey operator continues to dominate public discourse. Despite this, in 2017, the government also committed to aiding the ASM sector. They committed to the improvement of the formalization process, the training of 100,000 small-scale miners, and the providing of galamseyers with mineralized land through the launching of the five-year Multilateral Mining

Integrated Mining Project (MMIP) (Hilson, 2017; Yankson & Gough, 2019; Kpienbaarah et al., 2020). This may indicate that the Government is starting to move in the right direction on this issue.

Conclusion

This research paper aimed to provide an analysis identifying the dominant discourses around ASM shaped by the Government of Ghana, the media, and the citizenry. This study also provided an overview of existing literature on the ASM industry in Ghana. Furthermore, it has also sought to present the role of the media within Ghana's system of checks and balances and briefly examined the history of the relationship between Ghanaian media and the Ghanaian government. Based on a quantitative content analysis, the main purpose of this paper was to examine the different framings of galamsey operators, explore how they are developed, and determine which framings are represented within popular media. This was done through the thorough analysis of articles, speeches, and social media posts written by Ghanaian news organizations, journalists, politicians, and academics, from 2016 to 2018. Moreover, despite the abundance of literature on this subject, one must also acknowledge the limitations of a desk study. Further research conducted on the ground could better answer the research questions posed in this study. In addition, future research may add to this analysis with more interview-based media analysis, as well as a deeper analysis of the relationship between Ghanaian media and mining policy development.

In this study, two main points arose. One, that the frame of the galamsey operator as a threat to the environment became the most dominant frame perpetuated and reinforced by a media landscape that aimed to place pressure on the government to eliminate the threat of

galamsey from the lands and rivers of the nation. This leads to the identification of certain parallels between media framing and government policies such as the criminalization of the galamseyers, the launching of Operation Vanguard to crackdown on all illegal ASM, and a ban of all small-scale mining operations. However, it is difficult to assume that one directly influenced the other. Through the perpetuation of the notion of the galamsey operator as the main threat to the environment, the Ghanaian government and the media have entrenched the drivers of informality that lead citizens towards the practice. In turn, the drivers of informality have largely been neglected within debates on the issue within both the public and political forums.

The second main point is that from 2016 to 2018, a stereotype began to emerge of the galamsey operator as a citizen of a local community-driven into a cycle of poverty in search of establishing a livelihood in an informalized sector. Alternative approaches to the galamsey issue – instead of only criminalization - have become the topic of discussion within Ghana’s media landscape. This would also suggest that alternative approaches and solutions to the galamsey issue that focus on the livelihood options of galamseyers, may potentially become a part of public and political discourse in the future. However, the Ghanaian government, under President Akufo-Addo, has continued to frame the galamseyer as a menace to the environment in a sector that needs to be sanitized to achieve a future where Ghanaian children have a healthy environment to live in.

The practice of galamsey remains a highly informalized activity that provides quick access to employment and income in an unregulated industry. This paper has displayed how the government’s laws and institutions work proactively to address the issue, but also, how they

participate in the reproduction of the dominant frames and stereotypes that reinforce the informality of the practice. By better understanding the dominant frames and stereotypes of the galamsey operator in Ghana, and how the media utilize them to influence public and policy discourse, this paper has added to a multitude of literature that addresses informal ASM in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Furthermore, in this paper, we have seen how anti-galamsey campaigns such as the Media Coalition Against Galamsey and #StopGalamseyNow have attempted to re-shape public opinion and influence decisions made within the political realm. While this study cannot draw conclusions regarding the extent of such public pressure on policy development (e.g., Operation Vanguard and the Multi-lateral Mining Integrated Mining Project) the study does suggest that media framing is important to our understanding of policy-making.

As the literature reviewed for this study would suggest, Ghana's ASM industry exists as a complex and highly informalized system. This study is a contribution to the body of literature focused on our general understanding of Ghana's informal artisanal and small-scale gold mining industry and the galamsey operator. Additionally, it provides insight into the interplay between the framing of ASM and the politics that govern its operation. The findings of my analysis would suggest that the media will continue to play a pivotal role in producing, perpetuating, and reinforcing dominant frames and notions on the galamsey issue that will significantly affect how the government will address the issue in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Code Names

<i>List of Code Names</i>	<i># of Times Recorded</i>
<i>Environment</i>	21
<i>Fight</i>	16
<i>Menace</i>	13
<i>Survival</i>	8
<i>Deforestation</i>	3
<i>Poverty</i>	3
<i>Destruction</i>	22
<i>Employment</i>	5
<i>Pollution</i>	18
<i>Water</i>	14
<i>Livelihood</i>	6

