Dear WGAPE Readers,

Many thanks for taking the time to read our paper; we look forward to your comments and to seeing you in Abu Dhabi.

We had two questions that we wanted to ask readers to consider while going through the paper. Your responses to these will help us to revise the paper and prepare it for journal submission.

1. Currently, the paper seeks to answer three questions: *what* campaign strategies do parties use? *Where* do parties campaign? *Who* do parties target? We wanted to know whether readers felt that we were trying to answer too many questions and whether we should instead focus on only one or two of these questions? If you agree that we should limit the focus, which question/s do you think we should drop?

2. An important part of this paper is the assertion that canvassing is a programmatic method and that campaigning in Africa may be less clientelistic than the literature suggests. We use the word programmatic to distinguish canvassing from electoral clientelism. Based on our observations and available data, canvassing often involves a discussion of a party's past achievements and policies rather than the distribution of gifts or promise of future gifts. However, we have some concern that the word programmatic may have ideological connotations, and this is not necessarily what we mean. Does our programmatic/non-programmatic distinction seem like the most appropriate way to categorize house-to-house canvassing and distinguish it from gift-giving or what other categorization may readers prefer?

Many thanks in advance for your time and your advice.

Best regards,

Sarah and Eric

Political Party Campaign Strategies and Incumbency Advantages in an African Election[1]

Working Paper: Version 1.4

Sarah Brierley[*] and Eric Kramon[†]

[*]UCLA
[†]George Washington University

December 28, 2015

Abstract

How do political parties campaign in low-income democracies? We argue that incumbent and challenger parties adopt different campaign strategies for two reasons: the incumbent's ability to manipulate state resources for its electoral advantage before elections; and the incumbent's greater access to financial capital. These advantages allow it to fund resource intensive strategies and to pay non-ideologically committed party activists. Using rich survey data on campaign strategies during Ghana's 2012 elections, we show how these differences shape where parties campaign, which strategies they adopt, and which voters they target. We focus on two types of campaign strategies — door-to-door canvassing (programmatic) and gift giving (non-programmatic). We show that both parties engage in significant programmatic campaigning and that the incumbent engages in substantially more gift giving, a more resource-intensive activity. We also find that the incumbent adopts a more national campaign strategy, investing heavily in opposition strongholds and competitive areas, while the challenger party does the opposite. Our results also show that the types of voters parties target is conditioned by the local electoral context. Our results add nuance to our understanding of incumbency advantage in African elections, and contribute to debates about electoral clientelism and swing versus core voter targeting.

How do political parties campaign in low-income democracies? While multi-party elections are now firmly part of the electoral landscape in many developing countries, we know relatively little about political party campaign strategies in these environments. This is an important gap in the literature, as the methods that parties use to persuade and mobilize voters, as well as the strategies of voter targeting that they employ, are consequential for the overall quality of democratic elections.

Campaign strategies reflect three key decisions, each of which is relatively poorly understood in newer democracies. First, parties must decide the *types of strategies* that they will deploy. In this respect, the literature on elections in Africa has focused almost entirely on non-programmatic campaign strategies, including clientelism and vote buying (e.g. Bratton, 2008; Lindberg, 2003*a*, 2010; Wantchekon, 2003), violence and intimidation (e.g. Bratton, 2008; Collier and Vicente, 2012; Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski, 2014; Robinson and Torvik, 2009), and ethnic appeals (e.g. Carlson, 2015; Ferree, 2006; Conroy-Krutz, 2012; Koter, 2013; Posner, 2005). There is evidence, however, that parties also rely on more programmatic forms of campaigning, for example, by making populist appeals (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar, 2010; Resnick, 2012). Yet relatively little is known about how widespread programmatic strategies are during campaigns in Africa and about how much parties rely on them relative to non-programmatic ones.

Second, parties must decide *where* to allocate effort and resources during their campaign. While it is reasonable to assume that parties will invest more where the electoral payoffs are greater — an assumption consistent with campaign studies in the United States — we have little empirical data with which to test this assumption. Moreover, the evidence that does exist suggests that decisions about allocations are likely to be more complex and conditional on the type of campaign strategy under study (Horowitz, 2012).

Finally, parties must choose *who* to target. This question has received much attention in the existing literature, and researchers are divided on whether parties will target their "core" supporters (a *mobilization* strategy) or "swing" and opposition supporters (a *persuasive* strategy) (Corstange,

1

2010; Cox, 2010; Dixit and Londregan, 1996; Nichter, 2008; Stokes et al., 2013). The question of who parties target during campaigns remains largely unresolved.[1]

We address these questions by investigating political party campaign strategies during Ghana's presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2012. We theorize that the campaign strategies that parties adopt are based on their differential access to two important types of resources– financial capital and party activists. We assert that access to state resources give incumbent parties a relative financial advantage over opponents. First, the incumbent is able to manipulate state resources for its electoral advantage before elections. Second, during the campaign the incumbent can use extra campaign funds to target voters across a large number of regions of a country. More specifically, it enables the incumbent to campaign in areas where they are not already electorally dominant. In contrast, opposition parties, who are more reliant on party activists, are restricted to campaign in areas where they are already strong electorally and where, therefore, they have access to a dense network of loyal party activists.

Regarding modes of campaigning, we consider programmatic and non-programmatic methods. We define programmatic campaigning as a campaign method where the party discusses policy, past record and future plans. We distinguish these methods from non-programmatic campaign method which rely on the distribution of campaign gifts, voter harassment or intimidation. In low-income countries, where large segments of society do not have access to mass media, political parties must communicate with voters using personalized campaign methods. When meeting voters, parties have an opportunity to engage in programmatic campaigning. Both opposition and incumbent parties, we argue, will engage in programmatic forms of canvassing as a way to mobilize support. Given their more limited financial resources, however, challengers are restricted in their ability to use canvassing opportunities to distribute electoral gifts to voters. While both

---

[1]An exception is Bratton's (2008) study of vote buying and violence in Nigeria, which investigates which types of voters are targeted by vote buying and voter intimidation using survey data.

2

incumbent and opposition parties are likely to engage in programmatic canvassing, the incumbent are likely to supplement these methods with electoral clientelism.

Finally, we suggest that the types of voters parties target will depend on the local electoral environment. The incumbent may use resources before the election to shore up the votes of core supporters in areas where the party is dominant, and this will allow the party to focus on persuading swing and opposition voters in these areas. In contrast, in opposition strongholds incumbents will continue to use campaign resources to mobilize core supporters.

To test our theoretical predictions, we analyze unique data on programmatic and non-programmatic campaign strategies collected as part of a large-scale citizen survey conducted in the two days following Ghana's 2012 election. We focus on two campaign strategies: door-to-door canvassing (programmatic) and the distribution of campaign gifts (non-programmatic). We gather detailed information about the party preferences of each of our respondents, allowing us to classify them as supporters of the incumbent party National Democratic Congress (NDC), the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP), or as independents.[2] We also leverage variation in electoral competition across constituencies. Our sample includes citizens in constituencies that we classify as incumbent strongholds, opposition strongholds, and electorally competitive.[3] Our data thus allow us to determine how parties allocate their campaign resources across these constituency types, and how party targeting strategies vary across electoral contexts.

Our analysis produces four key results that are consistent with the incumbency advantages that we theorize. First, we find that both incumbent and opposition parties engage in widespread programmatic campaigning. About 30 percent of respondents report being visited by a party in their home. In contrast, only about 12 percent report parties distributing campaign gifts. We use evidence from Afrobarometer surveys to substantiate our claim that canvassing is indeed a mostly programmatic form of campaigning– in response to an open-ended question most respondents in

---

[2]Ghana has a stable two-party system and these two parties captured over 98 percent of votes during the election under study.

[3]We discuss the variables we use to classify voters and constituencies in detail in Section 3.

Ghana assert that party mobilizers visit them to discuss the party's position and election platform. We also note that our gift-giving estimate is comparable to the results of recent Afrobarometer surveys in the country.[4] An implication of these results is that electoral campaigns in Ghana are more programmatic than the literature on elections in Africa would suggest and do not rely solely on the distribution of campaign gifts.

Second, we find that the incumbent and challenger allocate resources differently across constituency types. The incumbent party canvasses more households in opposition strongholds and fewer households in areas where the party is already electorally dominant. The opposite is true for the challenger party, who canvass the most where the party is already electorally dominant and the least in incumbent strongholds. In addition, the incumbent party engages in substantially more electoral clientelism than the challenger in all constituency types. These patterns highlight two important incumbency advantages. First, because the incumbent can use state resources to shore up political support in its strongholds before the electoral period, it is able to spend more time campaigning in opposition areas. Second, with greater access to financial resources the incumbent is able to spend more on campaign gifts and buy the time of party mobilizers outside of areas where the party is traditionally strong.

Third, we show that the types of voters parties target is conditional on the local electoral context. In particular, both parties canvass independent voters and opposition supporters in their strongholds while they canvass their core supporters in opposition strongholds. Thus, parties emphasize *persuasion* in their strongholds and *mobilization* elsewhere. This finding may help to explain why scholars are yet to resolve the core-swing debate. Our results suggest that parties target different types of voters in different types of electoral districts.

Finally, we find evidence that incumbents and opposition parties often use gifts as a tool of *persuasion*, targeting independents and opposition supporters. Using gifts as a tool of persua-

---

[4]To limit survey response bias we did not ask respondents if they had personally received a gift, but whether they saw gifts being distributed in their community. We discuss the exact question wording in Section 3.

sion is particularly evident for the incumbent. Neither party appears to use gifts to mobilize their core supporters (turnout buying (Nichter, 2008)). These results have implications for the broader literature on electoral clientelism. We further elaborate on the implications of these results in the discussion section.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. First, we present our theoretical framework and discuss how differential access to campaign resources shape the campaign strategy of incumbent and opposition parties in low-income democracies. Second, we describe the setting of our study. Third, we outline our survey data and measures of party preferences and campaign contact. In the fourth section, we describe our estimation strategy. In section five, we present our results, which we discuss in section six. Finally, we conclude with a overview of our findings and avenues for future research.

1 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

In this section, we develop a theoretical framework to understand how parties decide on three key campaign choices: which type of campaign strategy to use, where to invest campaign resources, and which voters to target. Central to our framework is a distinction between incumbent and opposition parties. We also distinguish between types of campaign resources. The most important assets for parties are financial capital and access to party activists. We argue that incumbents and challengers are likely to adopt different strategies because of their differential access to these two types of resources.

1.1 Which Types of Strategies?

Which types of campaign strategies will parties deploy? To address this question, we distinguish between programmatic and non-programmatic campaign strategies. A campaign strategy is *programmatic* if it involves efforts by the party to explain, discuss, or otherwise engage with voters

5

on its past or proposed policies, plans, and programs. For example, if a party activist visits a household to explain their party's platform or to discuss the party's achievements in delivering local development, we characterize the strategy as programmatic. *Non-programmatic* strategies are those that involve persuasion, mobilization, or de-mobilization, but which are unrelated to policies or programs. Vote buying, gift giving, appeals to a common ethnic identity, or efforts to intimidate voters are all examples of non-programmatic strategies.

In this study, we focus on two electoral strategies: *door-to-door canvassing* (programmatic) and *electoral clientelism* (non-programmatic). In the data section, we provide data which shows that door-to-door canvassing is mostly a programmatic strategy in Ghana: most Ghanaians report that party activists are explain and discuss their party's plans, programs, and policies with voters when they visit them in their homes. We focus on electoral clientelism — the distribution of money and other private material goods to voters at election time — because it is the non-programmatic strategy that is most common to elections in Ghana (Lindberg, 2003*b*, 2010; Nugent, 2007) and the strategy that much of the current literature on African elections discusses.

While we discuss programmatic and non-programmatic strategies as if they are mutually exclusive, it is important to emphasize that the boundaries between these categories are often blurry in practice. Indeed most electoral strategies lie somewhere on a continuum between these two ideal types. For the purposes of this paper, it need not be the case that electoral clientelism is always non-programmatic or that door-to-door canvassing is perfectly programmatic. What is important is that electoral clientelism is generally less programmatic than is door-to-door canvassing.

The literature on African politics has largely, but not exclusively, focused on non-programmatic campaign strategies. Electoral clientelism has been documented and richly described in a number of African countries, including Benin (Banegas, 1998), Cameroon (Hansen, 2010), Ghana (Lindberg, 2003*b*, 2010), Nigeria (Bratton, 2008), and Uganda (Conroy-Krutz and Logan, 2012). Ethnic mobilization is also central to analyses of African elections (e.g. Ferree, 2006; Koter, 2013; Posner, 2005). Scholars have also investigated the causes and consequences of election-related violence

and voter intimidation (e.g. Collier and Vicente, 2010; Robinson and Torvik, 2009; Straus and Taylor, 2012). Collier and Vicente (2012) recognize that parties engage in a mix of these strategies, and model the decision to buy votes, engage in election-related violence, or manipulate the election through fraud. They show that campaign strategies vary across incumbents and challengers due to differences in access to resources, but restrict their analysis to non-programmatic campaign efforts.

There is evidence, however, that parties in some African contexts also engage in programmatic campaign strategies. For example, Resnick (2012) shows that parties are able to successfully win the votes of the urban poor in Zambia through populist appeals. The study also finds that opposition parties rely most heavily on such strategies. Cheeseman and Hinfelaar (2010) also find evidence of populist campaign strategies in Zambia, although they identify important sub-national variation. The opposition leader — running for president in 2008 — employed populist appeals in urban areas and ethno-regional appeals in his rural area of origin. In addition, there is growing evidence that voters in many African settings, including Ghana, do often condition their votes on programmatic issues (e.g. Harding, 2015; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008; Weghorst and Lindberg, 2013), which suggests the potential for programmatic campaigning to be effective. A growing literature thus suggests that programmatic electoral strategies may be more prevalent in Africa than the conventional wisdom suggests, that there are likely to be important differences between incumbent and opposition parties, and that parties are likely to invest in a different mix programmatic and non-programmatic strategies in different local contexts.

Our framework and empirical results contribute to this nascent literature. First, we expect that the difference between the incumbent and the challenger will be consequential. As Shefter (1977) recognized, the resources available to parties are central in shaping the extent to which they invest in patronage-oriented (non-programmatic) or more ideological (programmatic) linkage strategies with voters. In much of Africa, incumbents enjoy significant discretion over state resources (van de Walle, 2003). Challengers, in contrast, have limited access to public resources to

direct towards their campaigns. In Ghana, the division between the incumbent and challenger is made especially stark through the constitutional provision that allows the president to appoint the head of each local government. This provision ensures that both national and local level state institutions, traditional sources of party patronage, are in the hands of the incumbent party.[5] Access to state funds we expect, results in a comparative advantage for the incumbent with respect to the deployment of financial resources during the campaign (Collier and Vicente, 2012). As a result, we hypothesize that the incumbent will be more likely to invest in electoral clientelism than the challenger.

H1: *The incumbent will be more likely to invest in electoral clientelism than the challenger.*

While we recognize that non-programmatic campaigning is important in Ghana, we also build upon a growing body of research that suggests that the importance of programmatic strategies may be overlooked in the literature. In low-income countries, where many citizens live in rural communities and have limited access to mass media, face-to-face canvassing is an important way for politicians to connect with voters. Parties use house-to-house canvassing to discuss their past achievements and their plans for the future with citizens. In addition, in environments where opposition parties expect that the incumbent will use state resources to tilt the electoral environment in their favor, opposition parties must rely on less costly campaign methods. Thus, parties utilize large networks of party activists and loyalists who visit voters in their homes, hold village and community meetings, and engage with important civic organizations (youth groups, women's groups, agricultural associations, and so on). While this contact can involve electoral clientelism, it also often involves efforts to persuade and mobilize voters on the basis of policy plans and the work of the party in the local constituency.

H2: *The incumbent and challenger will engage in substantial face-to-face canvassing.*

---

[5]The head of local governments in Ghana is the District Chief Executive.

1.2 Where to Allocate Resources?

We now turn to the question of *where* parties should allocate resources. To address this question, we distinguish between three types of electoral districts. First, there are a party's *stronghold* areas. These are local contexts where the party has historically enjoyed high levels of electoral support. Second, there are *competitive* areas. Such constituencies are not dominated by a single party and are electorally competitive. Finally, there are *opposition strongholds* — areas where a party's main challenger enjoys strong support.

Resource allocation decisions are highly dependent on the electoral system. In the United States, for example, there is evidence that parties channel resources to large states with many electoral college votes and states where electoral competition is most intense. In Ghana, votes in the presidential race are aggregated nationally — all votes count equally — while candidates for parliament contest in single-member districts. Both parties thus have incentives to maximize their vote totals in all areas of the country and to increase the likelihood that they will win the most competitive parliamentary seats.

As above, we emphasize important differences between incumbents and challengers. Indeed, it is not only the case that the incumbent can use state resources during the campaign. The incumbent can also direct state resources to fulfill its political goals *before* the election campaign even begins. For example, there is evidence that president's in some African countries, including in Ghana (Briggs, 2012), often channel public goods and resources to their core support base (Franck and Rainer, 2012; Jablonski, 2014). This discretion confers two types of advantages. First, it allows the incumbent to solidify the support of its core through targeted redistribution. Second, it allows the incumbent to deter insurgencies from within the party (Cox, 2010); that is, to prevent elites from defecting from the party and running against it as independents. These advantages shape campaign strategies by freeing up the incumbent to campaign more intensely in competitive and opposition-stronghold areas of the country. The challenger, on the other hand, has to spend

9

more campaign resources mobilizing the base and, potentially, competing against challengers in their strongholds.

The incumbent's financial resource advantage is also relevant to how parties will allocate their campaign efforts across the country. With greater financial resources the incumbent can engage in more campaign activities than the challenger. The challenger is likely to face two important restrictions. First, with less money the challenger is more reliant on human resources — party loyalists who will work for the party will little or no up-front renumeration. Second, in concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections, such as in Ghana, the presidential challenger will be reliant on the campaign activities of the party's incumbent Members of Parliament (MPs). Thus, the campaign activities of the challenger are likely to be shaped by the geographic distribution of party activists and incumbent MPs. Both of these groups are present in greater numbers in the party's stronghold areas. In contrast, the incumbent will have the ability to pursue a national strategy and not be constrained by the placement of incumbent MPs and party activists.

This discussion produces the following hypotheses:

H3a: *The incumbent will allocate campaign resouroces more broadly across the country than the challenger.*

H3b: *The challenger will allocate most effort and campaign resources to its own strongholds.*

1.3 Which Voters to Target?

Finally, we address the question of *who* parties target. This question has received significant attention in the literature on distributive politics and clientelism. One prominent set of arguments claims that parties should target swing or weak partisan voters (Lindbeck and Weibull, 1987). Stokes (2005*a*), for example, argues that political machines will target swing voters with vote buying because they do not want to waste resources on loyal voters and can buy weakly opposed voters with smaller gifts compared to committed opponents. To ensure that swing voters come through

on their end of the vote-buying bargain, machines threaten to withhold access to resources in the future. Others argue that parties will be most likely to target their core supporters. Since parties often have a comparative advantage in mobilizing their core, Cox and McCubbins (1986) argue that parties will prefer to target them. Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez and Magaloni (2012) note that a party's core support group will erode if loyal supporters are not rewarded by the governing party with campaign gifts. They argue, therefore, that parties should be wary of neglecting their core and targeting swing voters. Similarly, Cox (2010) argues that if the core is not satisfied, the party may fracture, which again would destabilize the party's core support base.

We argue that parties are unlikely to adopt a universal core or swing voter targeting strategy. Instead we expect that their targeting strategies will depend on the local electoral environment. We again emphasize differences between the incumbent and the challenger. Since the incumbent can channel resources to its strongholds ahead of elections, they can be relatively confident that core supporters in their stronghold regions will be sufficiently mobilized. They can therefore expend more resources persuading swing and opposition voters in those areas.

H4a: *The incumbent will target swing and opposition supporters in its strongholds (persuasion).*

On the other hand, the challenger lacks the ability to target its strongholds prior to the electoral period and therefore must expend effort and resources during the campaign to shore up the support of and mobilize its core base of support. Thus, we expect the challenger to pay more attention to its core support base in its strongholds.

H4b: *The challenger will target core supporters in its strongholds (mobilization) .*

Outside of their strongholds, we expect that both parties will adopt a core voter strategy for several reasons. First, following the logic of Cox and McCubbins (1986), we expect that parties will prefer the relative certainty of mobilizing their supporters in competitive and opposition controlled areas. And second, the strength of partisan identification in opposition areas is likely to make persuasive strategies less appealing and effective.

11

H4c: *Both parties will adopt target core supporters in opposition areas (mobilization).*

2   Political Party Mobilization in Ghana

Ghana has held competitive presidential and parliamentary elections every four years since its return to democratic rule in December 1992. Along with a growing number of African countries, the country has witnessed two successful turnovers of power and is often cited as one of Africa's democratic success stories. Ghana has a stable two-party system represented by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The president is elected using a majoritarian run-off system in a single national constituency. The need for the president to secure an absolute majority incentivizes political parties to seek votes everywhere. Accordingly, both parties have a national character, and draw support from"all geographic constituencies, encapsulating different groups, socio-economic backgrounds and perspectives" (Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah, 2008, p.147). That said, each party has areas of historic electoral dominance that coincide with ethnic alliances (Fridy, 2007). While ex-President J. J. Rawlings popularly referred to the Volta region as the electoral "World Bank" of the NDC, the constituencies in the populous Ashanti region are stronghold areas for the NPP. Voters elect Members of Parliament (MPs) using plurality rule in 275 single-member constituencies. Democratic institutionalization is supported by a vibrant civil society (Arthur, 2010, p.211-212), an independent Electoral Commission (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009), and an increasingly active parliament (Brierley, 2012). Despite this progress, clientelism and patronage are pervasive at every level of government.

Electoral clientelism has flourished under democracy. Rising levels of political competition, in both the presidential and parliamentary races, is an important driver of this development. Keen competition in the presidential race saw John Evans Atta-Mills (NDC) beat the NPP's candidate by just 40,000 votes during the 2008 election. Similarly, the average margin of victory for

parliamentary candidates has halved over the last three elections.[6] Lindberg (2003a) argues that increased competition has led to an explosion in campaign spending. He estimates that parliamentary candidates spent around $40,000 on their campaigns in 2004, and this increased to $75,000 in 2008 (Lindberg, 2010).[7] The distribution of gifts during election campaigns is one form of electoral clientelism and is a significant component of campaign expenses. Gifts take the form of cash, food, electronics and inputs for farming.

While the distribution of gifts is an important campaign strategy in Ghana, the role of gifts should not be overstated. To win support political parties must spend significant time talking to voters face-to-face. Political party organization in Ghana reflects their need to have direct contact with voters. Both parties are organized hierarchically and have a pyramid-like structure, with a headquarters in the capital city supported by a network of regional, constituency and polling station offices. As Osei (2012) notes, "Party offices, decorated in the respective [party] colours, can be found along major roads even in small towns and villages"(p.138). Citizens can serve the party in official roles at the local, regional and national levels. During election campaigns parties recruit additional party mobilizers at every polling station or electoral ward.

As election day approaches, the mass party network comes to life. Regional offices dispatch resources to polling stations where party activists draw up local campaign plans. The most significant task of party activists is canvass voters in their homes. As the Afrobarometer data that we discuss in Section 3 suggests, activists often discuss the policies and plans of the party when they visit voters. During the election that we study, one of the policies under discussion was the challengers commitment to make senior high school (SHS) free.[8] NPP billboards where emblazoned with the slogan "Free SHS Now! Not in 20 years. Your vote can make it happen." The job

---

[6]Whereas parliamentary candidates typically won seats by a margin of around 30 percent in 2000 this figure was roughly 15 percent in 2008.

[7]To put these figures in perspective, the annual salary of an MP was approximately $24,000 (post-tax and deductions) in 2010 (Lindberg, 2010).

[8]Primary and junior high school (JHS) are already free in Ghana.

of party mobilizers is to convince voters that the party's policies will have a positive impact on their lives. Party mobilizers also remind voters of the party's track record.

Activists in Ghana join political parties because of the selective incentives that they offer (Bob-Milliar, 2012). These opportunities take the form of state employment, the payment of school fees and health care bills, and contributions to weddings and funerals. The incumbent party has a significant advantage in recruiting party activists during campaigns because of its ability to offer these incentives upfront. In subsequent sections, we explore the consequences of this advantage in terms of where parties conduct their campaign and the types of voters that they target.

3 Data and Measurement

In this section, we describe our survey data and our outcome and explanatory variables.

3.1 Post-Election Survey of Voters

To analyze party campaign strategies, we conducted a large-scale citizen survey during the two days that followed Ghana's 2012 general elections. Citizens from four of Ghana's ten regions — Ashanti, Central, Volta, and Western — were included in our sample.[9] The timing of the survey immediately after the election facilitates reliable reporting on the campaign activities of parties. We selected the study regions because of the variation they offer in their levels of electoral competition. As we discuss above, the Ashanti and Volta regions are not electorally competitive. In contrast, the Central and Western regions are home to some of Ghana's most competitive constituencies, with these districts containing many voters who are "up for grabs" in each election (Weghorst and Lindberg, 2013). We leverage this internal variation across constituencies to investigate party campaign strategies in different electoral environments. Figure 1 displays a map of the regions contained within this study.

---

[9]According to the last census, about half of Ghana's population lives in these regions.

To select respondents, we first drew a random sample of polling stations within the four regions.[10] Survey enumerators then found a central location near to the polling station and used a random-walk technique to select households.[11] To select respondents, enumerators created a list of all adults of voting age who resided in the household. They then selected one individual at random, alternating between males and females. We collected data from close to 6,000 individuals. The surveys were conducted in English, as well as Akan and Ewe, the two major local languages in the regions where we conducted the study.

3.2 Measuring programmatic and non-programmatic mobilization

To analyze rates of programmatic and non-programmatic campaigning, we asked respondents whether political party agents had visited their homes during the campaign and whether they saw parties distributing campaign gifts. To analyze variation in strategies between parities, we asked these questions separately for both the incumbent (NDC) and the challenger party (NPP). Distinguishing between types of parties makes our data unusually rich and builds upon prior survey research that only asks voters whether parties engaged in certain campaign methods without specifying which party. Using these data we construct four dependent variables.

Our first two outcomes measure programmatic campaign activities. We use responses to the following question: "Did any political party agents come to your place of residence to encourage you to vote for their party?" We ask this question for both the NDC and the NPP. The variable *Incumbent canvass* indicates that the respondent was canvassed by the NDC; that is, that a party agent from the NDC came to the respondent's place of residence to encourage them to vote for

---

[10]We sampled these polling stations for a concurrent project on election observers where the polling station was our unit of analysis. In total, just over 2,000 polling stations were in our original sample. Due to logistical challenges, we were unable to collect survey data from voters living close to each of these polling stations. In our survey sample, we have responses from citizens from 1571 polling stations, contained within 58 constituencies in our four regions.

[11]The Afrobarometer, Africa's lead public opinion organization, use the random walk technique, as do many other survey researchers on the continent. We provided enumerators with the same instructions that the Afrobarometer provides to it enumerators. Ideally, we would have selected respondents directly from the official voter registration list. As Ghana's Electoral Commission was unwilling to release this information to us prior to the elections, we sampled households.

the party. The variable *Challenger canvass* indicates whether the individual was canvassed by the NPP. Both of these outcomes are dummy variables that take the value of one if the party canvassed the respondent and zero otherwise.

To validate that these measures are in fact picking up programmatic campaign activities, we turn to data gathered by the Afrobarometer. The Afrobarometer survey conducted in Ghana in 2012 (round five) included the following open-ended question about political party agents in the country: "In your opinion, which three main activities would you say grassroots political party activists (or foot soldiers) primarily engage themselves in during election campaigns and elections?" The most frequent responses to this question were 1) "Explaining their party's plans, policies and programs during campaign," (22 percent) and 2) "Mobilizing people to support their party during elections," (12 percent). A much smaller proportion of people reference vote buying or gift giving and a very small proportion mention intimidation or violence (about 1 percent). Thus, when party agents canvass potential voters in Ghana, it seems that they largely focus on plans, policies, and programs rather than vote buying or intimidation.

Our second set of outcome variables focuses on non-programmatic activities. We use responses to the following question: "Did you witness any of these parties distributing items such as money, food, fertilizer, or cell phones to voters in your area during the election?" The variable *Incumbent Vote-buying* records whether the NDC distributed gifts in the respondents community. Our last outcome measure is *Challenger Vote-buying*. These two measures are both dummy variables that take the value of one when the respondent said that the party distributed gifts in their community, and zero otherwise. Although we seek to know which individuals received gifts from parties, we frame this question in terms of the distribution of gifts in the local area to guard against possible response bias. Indeed, previous research suggests that citizens are weary to admit to accepting campaign gifts and that direct questions may result in bias (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012).

Asking voters whether the observe gift giving in their area is a common way to avoid such response bias (e.g. Stokes, 2005*b*).[12]

Table 1 about here.

Table 1 displays the mean rates of canvassing and electoral clientelism for both parties. The descriptive statistics show high levels of programmatic mobilization. Both the incumbent and opposition canvass over 30 percent of respondents. Turning to electoral clientelism, the NDC distribute gifts to 13.4 percent of citizens, while the NPP distribute gifts to 8.1 percent of respondents. These results support our first and second hypotheses and provide initial evidence of an incumbency advantage. We discuss these results further in the next section.

3.3 Explanatory Variables

To analyze *who* parties target during campaigns we classify respondents based on their party preferences. To classify voters, we asked respondents to evaluate each party on three policy issues — the party's ability to deliver public services, to help the national economy, and to improve their personal economic situation. Respondents rated the parties on a four-point scale: *Poor* (0), *Fair* (1), *Good* (2),and *Excellent* (3). To produce a respondent's overall assessment of the incumbent (challenger), we sum up the responses to each of these three items. To determine degree of attachment to each party, we create a single scale by subtracting the total score each respondent gave to the challenger from the total score they gave the incumbent. Thus, respondents who believe that the incumbent (challenger) is excellent in all three areas and that the challenger (incumbent) is poor in all three areas receive a score of 9 (-9). Respondents who provide the same evaluation of each party receive a 0, which we interpret as indifference between the two major parties.

We classify a respondent as an *Incumbent supporter* if their party index score is between 4 and 9. We code a respondent as an *Challenger supporter* if they have a score between −4 and −9.

---

[12]We also asked respondents whether they personally received gifts. Because the survey was conducted in such close proximity to the election, respondents perceived this question as being highly sensitive. As a result, there were extremely high non-response rates on this item, which make it impossible to use in the analysis.

Finally, we label respondents as *Independent* when they have a score between -3 to $+3$. Figure 2 displays our classification process.

We note that we collect information on party preferences after the election and after campaigns have been conducted. We therefore make the assumption that voters' assessments on how well each party can manage the economy and deliver public services are relatively stable throughout the campaign period and that party mobilizers have prior knowledge of these preferences when they target voters.

Figure 2 about here.

While we focus on partisan identity as our main explanatory variable, previous research suggests that other characteristics of voters are likely to be important in explaining campaign contact. To estimate the independent effects of party identification, we, therefore, control for a range of other factors. The dummy variable *Female* distinguishes the gender of each respondent. We code women as one and men as zero. Research shows that when parties distribute campaign gifts they often target poorer voters, whose votes are relatively cheaper to buy (Bratton, 2008; Jensen and Justesen, 2014). We control for income using two proxies. The first is *Level of education*. To facilitate using exact matching (which we discuss below) we coarsen the education variable into four levels: Less than primary school (0), primary school completed (1), secondary school completed (2), university completed (3). Second, we create a *Poverty index* as a composite indicator of the approximate wealth of each respondent. To construct this variable we sum responses to a set of questions that asked citizens how often they go without: cash income; food; medicine and electricity. Higher scores on this index indicate relatively poorer citizens. Parties may also target younger voters in an attempt to generate future party support. We categorize respondents into seven *Age* categories: Under 20 years old (1), 20-30 year old (2), 30-40 years old (3), 40-50 years old (4), 50-60 years old (5), 60-70 years old (6), 70-100 years old (7). As it is unlikely that parties target voters of an exact age, we believe that coarsening this variable into these approximate age categories makes theoretical sense.

Research on election turnout in Africa shows that citizens who live in rural areas are more likely to turn out than citizens who reside in urban communities (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2010). This finding implies that parties attempt to generate support in rural communities where social networks are likely to be denser than in cities. We control for whether citizens are from a predominantly rural constituency using a measure of polling station density. Specifically, we divide the number of polling stations by the area of the constituency.[13] We define a constituency as rural when it has a lower than average polling station density.[14]

3.4 Classification of constituency types

Finally, to investigate how party campaign strategies differ across different types of electoral environments, we classify constituencies into three groups. We code a constituency as being an *Incumbent Stronghold* when the NDC parliamentary candidates received over 65 percent of votes in the constituency during the elections in 2008. All constituencies where the NDC candidate received less than 35 percent of the vote we code as a *Challenger Stronghold*.[15] *Competitive* constituencies are those where the NDC received between 35 and 65 percent of the vote. As these cut-points are somewhat arbitrary, in the Appendix (section A.2) we demonstrate that are results are robust to two alternative ways of coding constituency types.[16]

---

[13]Polling station density is similar to population density– the electoral commission aims to assign up to 600 voters to each polling station. We use polling station density as we can calculate this measure at the constituency level whereas we can only calculate population density at the district level. As districts often contain multiple constituencies polling station density is a more fine-grained measure.

[14]We use the median polling station density as our cutpoint. The median polling station density in our sample is 0.14 polling stations per square kilometer).

[15]Given the two-party system, this is roughly equivalent to the NPP receiving 65 percent or more of the vote.

[16]In our alternative categorizations, we use 25 percent and 75 percent NDC 2008 vote share as our cutpoints, and 45 percent and 55 percent, respectively.

4 Estimation strategy

We ask how the party preferences of voters influence the probability that they are contacted by parties during election campaigns. Theoretically, one way to measure the causal effect of party identification on campaign contact would be to randomly assign party preferences to voters at the beginning of the campaign period and collect data on who parties contact. However, such a method is not possible practically. Not only do voters develop party attachments over the long-run, but political parties and their agents also gain information on the party affiliation of citizens in their communities through interactions that pre-date the campaign. To estimate the effect of party identity on campaign contact, we use a matching strategy which we apply to our observational survey data. In the Appendix (section A.1), we show that our results our robust to the use of multivariate logistic regression.

Adopting the potential outcomes framework, each individual, i, is treated, $D_i \in 0,1$, with a party identity (Rubin, 1974). For example, an individual is classified as an *NDC Supporter* (1) or not (0). The potential outcomes, $Y_i(d)$ where $d = 0,1$, indicates whether the individual was contacted by a political party (1) or not (0). Our quantity of interest is the sample average treatment effect for the treated (ATT). The ATT is defined as:

$$\text{ATT (sample)} = \frac{1}{N_1} \sum_{D_i=1} (Y_i - Y_{j(i)}).$$

where Y_i is the outcome of a treated unit and $Y_{j(i)}$ is the outcome of a matched control unit. In our analysis, we match each treated unit to a control unit such that the pair have exactly the same values on all control covariates in the vector X_i.

To estimate the ATT we use coarsened exact matching.[17] The control covariates that we match units on are: gender, age, level of education, poverty and whether the respondent resides in a rural or urban constituency. To facilitate exact matching we coarsen the education and age covari-

---

[17]We use the "Match" function in the *Matching* package in R (Sekhon, 2008). We use one-to-one matching.

ates. The advantage of using a matching estimation strategy over regression modeling is that is that we can exploit the assumption of conditional independence while avoiding having to make modeling assumptions, such as linearity. Matching enables us to overcome concerns of common support to ensure that treated and control units are drawn from similar distributions. In this study, we analyze three treatment conditions — *Incumbent Supporter*, *Independent*, *Challenger Supporter*. Treated units that do not have an exact match are dropped during the estimation process. As we use matching with replacement, in most cases no treated cases are dropped.

Table 2 displays the balance across covariates between treated and control units before and after matching for one of the treatment variables — NDC supporter. Before matching NDC supporters tended to be slightly older, less educated and more likely to live in rural constituencies. After we match there is balance between the treated and control units. A similar result can be shown for our other two treatment variables — after matching there is balance between control and treated units.

Table 2 about here.

While we use the language of potential outcomes in our presentation of our matching strategy, it is important to emphasize that we do not use the technique as a causal identification strategy. Much like regression techniques, matching can only control for the covariates that we can observe. Matching does not allow us to completely rule out the possibility of omitted variables bias, although we control for as many potential confounds as possible. The advantage of matching for our purposes is that it allows us to control for observables and to reduce the model dependency of our results.

5 Results

5.1 Where do parties allocate campaign resources?

We first present results that seek to answer two of our research questions: where do parties allocate their campaign resources and efforts? And, what campaign strategies do they use? Figure 3 displays the canvassing rates for both parties. The first plot (left) displays canvassing rates for the incumbent party. We find that the incumbent engages in the highest levels of canvassing in the stronghold areas of the challenger. They canvass 36 percent of citizens in challenger strongholds, roughly 33 percent in competitive constituencies and 23 percent in their stronghold areas. The second plot (right) displays canvassing rates for the challenger. The results show that the challenger canvass about 39 percent of citizens in their stronghold. In competitive constituencies, the party canvasses roughly 31 percent of the citizens. Finally, in incumbent strongholds they canvass only 17 percent of the population. These results corroborate our second hypothesis that both parties will engage in substantial face-to-face campaigning. The results also lend support to our third set of hypotheses, providing initial evidence that the incumbent dedicates more campaign resources to areas outside of its stronghold than the challenger.

Figure 3 about here.

Figure 4 displays rates of non-programmatic campaigning. The first plot (left) displays rates of electoral clientelism for the incumbent. In opposition strongholds, the incumbent party distributes gifts to 14 percent of respondents. In competitive constituencies, this figure is also 14 percent. Finally, in their strongholds the incumbent distributes gifts to 10 percent of citizens. The second plot (right) shows electoral clientelism rates for the challenger. In their strongholds and in competitive constituencies, the challenger distributes gifts to 9 percent of the population. In the incumbent party's stronghold about 7 percent of citizens receive gifts from the opposition.

There are three important takeaways from this set of results. First, across all types of districts, levels of non-programmatic campaigning are significantly lower than levels of programmatic

22

campaigning. Second, the incumbent distributes significantly more gifts to voters than the challenger. Third, the results suggest that the incumbent adopts a national campaign strategy while the challenger restricts its campaign to stronghold and competitive constituencies. The ability of the incumbent to campaign heavily in opposition areas represents a significant incumbency advantage which we discuss further in the next section.

Figure 4 about here.

5.2 Who do parties target within constituencies?

5.2.1 Party canvassing

Our second set of results investigates which voters parties target within each our three types of constituencies – incumbent strongholds, competitive constituencies, and challenger strongholds. Figure 5 displays the canvassing strategy of the incumbent. The first panel (left) shows levels of canvassing in their strongholds. In constituencies where the incumbent is dominant, the party is least likely to contact its core supporters. The point estimate for incumbent supporters is -0.06. Conversely, being an independent is associated with a 10 percentage point increase in the probability of a voter being canvassed. Finally, supporters of the opposition are the most likely to be canvassed, and the point estimate is 22 percent. The large confidence interval around this final result is because there are relatively few supporters of the challenger in constituencies where the incumbent is historically dominant.

The second panel (middle) displays incumbent canvassing rates in competitive constituencies. In contrast to opposition strongholds, in these constituencies, the incumbent target core and swing voters. On average, voters who support the challenger see a 8 percent decrease in the probability of being canvassed.

The final panel (right) displays the incumbents canvassing strategy in areas where the challenger is dominant. The main takeaway from this figure is that in opposition strongholds, the

23

incumbent targets its core supporters. The point estimate for incumbent supporters is 18 percent. Conversely, independents experience a roughly 6 percent decrease in the probability of the party canvassing them. Finally, being a supporter of the opposition is associated with a 4 percent decrease in the probability of a voter being targeted.

These results show that the types of voters that the incumbent canvasses is conditional on the local electoral context. The incumbent *mobilizes* core supporters in opposition strongholds, whereas it uses its resources to *persuade* independent and opposition voters constituencies where the party is electorally strong. These results provide evidence that parties do not target core or swing voters exclusively, but that they vary their targeting strategy across constituencies.

Figure 5 about here.

Figure 6 displays the canvassing strategy of the challenger. The first panel (left) considers which voters the challenger contacts in the incumbents stronghold. Under these conditions, the party target their core supporters; being an opposition supporter is associated with a 19 percent increase in the probability of being canvassed.

The second panel (middle) displays the results in competitive constituencies. Similarly to the incumbent, the challenger party do not appear to discriminate strongly between the types of voters that they canvass in competitive constituencies. The party, however, appears least likely to contact its core supporters. Finally, the third panel (right) displays the results in incumbent strongholds. Being an incumbent supporter is associated with a 3 percent increase in the probability of a voter being canvassed. Similarly, challenger supporters are 6 percent more likely to be canvassed. Being a swing voter is correlated with a 12 percent reduction in the probability of being canvassed by the opposition.

Overall, the results suggest that the challenger does not attempt to win the support of swing voters, but instead use their efforts to mobilize their core supporters. The challenger also tries to persuade opposition supporters, especially those who reside in their home constituencies. The challengers contact with incumbent supporters in their home region is likely also to be a response

24

to canvassing attempts by the incumbent. The strategy of the challenger in their stronghold is, in part, an attempt by the party to stop the incumbent from making electoral inroads in constituencies where they are historically dominant.

Figure 6 about here.

5.2.2 Electoral Clientelism

We next present the results for non-programmatic campaigning. Figure 7 displays the results for the incumbent. The first panel (left) shows the types of voters that the incumbent distributes gifts to in constituencies where they are dominant. Under these conditions, the incumbents supporters are the least likely to receive gifts. In contrast, the point estimates are 18 percent for challenger supporters, and 10 percent for independents.

The second panel (middle) shows the results in competitive constituencies. The pattern in this plot is similar to the previous one with the incumbent targeting opposition supporters with gifts. Incumbent supporters are 10 percent less likely to receive gifts than other types of voters. Being an opposition supporter is associated with a 6 percent increase in the likelihood of receiving a gift. There is no significant effect for independents.

Finally, in districts where the challenger is dominant (right) being an incumbent supporter is associated with a 10 percent decrease in the probability of receiving a gift. Independents are also 2 percent less likely to receive gifts compared to other types of voters. Being a supporter of the opposition is associated with a 6 percent increase in the probability of a respondent receiving a gift. In general, our findings suggest that the incumbent uses non-programatic campaigning to try to win over opposition and swing voters. We find little evidence that the incumbent uses gifts to mobilize its core supporters.

Figure 7 about here.

Last, we consider the types of voters that the challenger targets with gifts. Figure 8 displays these results. The first panel (left) shows who the party targets in the incumbent's stronghold. As

25

the figure shows, most of the point estimates are close to zero. Independents are the most likely to receive gifts and are 6 percent more likely to receive a gift than the other types of voters. Being an opposition supporter does not have any significant effect on the likelihood of receiving a gift.

The second panel (middle) displays the results in competitive constituencies. Being a supporter of the incumbent or challenger has no impact on the probability of receiving a gift. As in the left panel, independents are the most likely to receive gifts. The final panel (right) displays the results in the challengers stronghold. Incumbent supporters are 4 percent less likely to receive gifts. For both independents and challenger supporters, the point estimate is close to zero. Overall, these results suggest that the challenger does not use gifts to mobilize its core supporters, and, at least in some constituencies, prefers to use gifts to generate support from independents.

Figure 8 about here.

6 Discussion

In this section, we summarize and discuss our main results. We begin by discussing the results on how parties allocate effort and resources to different electoral strategies across constituency types. We then discuss the results on targeting strategies within constituencies.

Investment and Allocation Across Constituencies

First, our analysis produces an important descriptive finding: door-to-door canvassing is extremely widespread in Ghana. About 30 percent of our sample of Ghanaians reports that at least one of the two major political parties visited them at their home in an attempt to win their vote. A significant number of voters are targeted by both parties. Importantly, our data suggest that door-to-door canvassing is substantially more prevalent than electoral clientelism. Thus, while the literature on African politics has typically emphasized the importance of non-programmatic electoral campaign

26

strategies — ethnic mobilization, the distribution of clientelist goods, and so on — our results suggest that party mobilization in Ghana is quite programmatic.

Second, our analysis shows that the two major parties employ different strategies of resource allocation across electoral constituencies. Regarding door-to-door canvassing, the incumbent canvasses the most in the strongholds of its opposition, while it canvasses the least in its core support constituencies. The challenger, by contrast, is most active in its own strongholds and the least active in the stronghold of the incumbent. With respect to gift giving, we find that the incumbent party engages in more electoral clientelism than the challenger in all constituency types.

These results are likely driven by incumbency advantage. The gift-giving result highlights differences between parties in access to financial resources. In addition, because the incumbent can use state resources to shore up the support of voters in its stronghold areas — and to prevent elite defections from the party — prior to and perhaps even during the campaign, the incumbent is able to canvass most heavily in opposition and competitive constituencies. The challenger, on the other hand, lacks access to state resources and therefore must invest more energy mobilizing its core support base during the campaign. The opposition relies on human capital in the form of party activists to generate support. As the challenger relies on the work of party loyalists the party is restricted in where it can campaign. The opposition focuses on their own stronghold where there is a ready supply of party activists who are willing to canvass voters without significant upfront remuneration.

Thus, incumbency is important not only because the party-of-government is able to channel state resources to fulfill its electoral goals; it is also consequential because the incumbent is able to campaign more heavily in opposition and competitive districts. In short, the incumbent party uses its position in office to generate electoral support network outside of its stronghold constituencies, something that the challenger struggles to do.

Targeting Strategies Within Constituencies

Who do parties target during campaigns? Our results show that the answer to this question is conditioned by the *local electoral context*, the *resources* available to the party, and the *type* of strategy being employed. With respect to local context and party resources, we find that parties target different types of voters in different types of constituencies. For example, the incumbent party canvasses independent voters and opposition supporters in its strongholds, while it most heavily canvasses its core supporters in opposition strongholds. This suggests that the incumbent prioritizes *persuasion* in its strongholds and *mobilization* of its core supporters in opposition areas. The challenger follows a similar strategy, although it also targets its core supporters in its own strongholds and in incumbent-dominated areas. This pattern is consistent with the incumbency advantage discussed above, whereby the challenger invests more resources on its own supporters in order to shore up support from them and mobilize them to the polls.

More generally, an implication of the results is that party targeting strategies during campaigns depend heavily on local context and on the ability of parties to marshal state resources to build electoral support ahead of the campaign. Importantly, these results shed light on why researchers remain divided on the question whether parties engage in mobilization or persuasion during campaigns. Our results show that parties do not adopt a universal strategy, but engage in both depending on the local electoral context.

Finally, our findings speak to a broader debate in the literature on clientelism. Our results suggest that the allocation of gifts during the campaign — what we have called electoral clientelism — appears to be primarily a strategy of persuasion rather than mobilization. Electoral clientelism, at least for the incumbent, is more prevalent in the most electorally competitive areas. In addition, each party is most likely to target independent voters and supporters of the opposition with their gift-giving efforts. Thus, while we cannot speak to the precise mechanism through which electoral clientelism is persuasive — a subject of debate in the African politics literature — the parties do not appear to be turnout buying. Instead, door-to-door canvassing, which get-out-the-vote experiments

in the United States show can be quite effective in increasing turnout, appears to be the primary tool of mobilization.

7 Conclusion

In this study, we investigate party campaign strategies in Ghana. We use unique citizen survey data that asked Ghanaian citizens detailed questions on whether political parties contacted them during the country's 2012 election campaign, and by what method. One important nuance to our data is that we asked these questions with separate responses for the incumbent and the major opposition party. We also collect data on the party preferences of individual respondents. Finally, we sampled large numbers of citizens from a range of electoral environments — the strongholds of the incumbent, the stronghold of the challenger, as well as competitive constituencies. These data allow us to answer three important questions: What strategies do parties use during campaigns? In what type of districts do they invest their resources? And, who do they contact?

Our theory predicts important differences in campaign strategies between incumbent and opposition parties as a result of each parties access to two important campaign resources — financial capital and party activists. Our results display evidence of significant incumbency advantages. Overall, the incumbent party engages in more non-programmatic campaigning than the challenger. Incumbents also have the ability to conduct their campaign outside of their home regions and use their enhanced financial position to attempt to court voters who reside in opposition areas. Conversely, the opposition party focuses its campaign resources and efforts on districts where they are already electorally strong. Finally, regarding who parties target. We find evidence that the incumbent is more likely to try to persuade opponents than the challenger who are more likely to mobilize their core supporters.

While our theory highlights that the differences between the incumbent and challenger are critical, a limitation of our approach is that we only focus on a single election. This makes it

difficult for us to rule out that the differences in party strategies that we document are actually due to incumbency advantages, rather than other differences between the NDC and NPP in Ghana. Our logic builds on prior work that observes the difficulty opposition parties face in trying to expand their electoral support network beyond their home region (Randall and Svåsand, 2002). The structure of many party systems in Africa, with a single party dominating politics, also displays the relative strength of incumbents (van de Walle, 2003; Lindberg, 2007). We acknowledge, however, that a more conclusive analysis of incumbency advantage would be achieved by tracking the strategies of the same political parties over time as they alternate between being incumbents and challengers. At present, we are unaware of data from Ghana or elsewhere in Africa that would permit such an analysis, but we hope to engage in this work in the future.

Our focus on one election raises concerns about the generalizability of the results. One concern is that Ghanaian parties are among the most well organized in Africa. Much of the organizational strength of Ghana's two major parties derives from the fact that the party system has been stable since the return to democracy in 1992. This stability has allowed both parties to build their organizational structure over the country's last six elections. The same is not true in other African democracies — such as Kenya and Benin — where opposition parties change between elections. Party system fluidity is likely to limit the pool of loyal party mobilizers. One implication is that less established opposition parties may be forced engage in more vote-buying and less canvassing than Ghana's major opposition party. Younger parties also may find it hard to develop and communicate party platforms hindering their ability to engage in programmatic mobilization. Interesting avenues for future research could include a comparison of the campaign strategies of incumbents and challenger across countries that have stable versus fluid party systems.

The fact that both of Ghana's major political parties have held executive office may be another important and relatively unique factor. Executive experience makes Ghana's current opposition party unlike many other opposition parties in Africa, most of which have never held office. During the party's eight years in office, the NPP is likely to have gained financial and organi-

zational strength. Although now in opposition the party struggles to compete with the resources of the incumbent, voters continue to see the party as a credible alternative. Opposition parties who have not held office have limited resources, and this may result in a geographically restricted campaign. Fruitful avenues of future research would be to compare the campaign strategies of opposition parties who have and have not held office.

Despite these limitations and the need for more research to more firmly establish the generalizability of our findings, our rich data on campaign strategies in Ghana has allowed us to make three key contributions. First, we document widespread programmatic campaigning in an African democracy. This finding complements recent research which suggests that African voters often evaluate parties for their performance in office as opposed to ethnic alliances or because of clientelistic exchanges.

Second, the results highlight the importance of incumbency in shaping the conduct of elections in low-income democracies. Without access to public campaign finance, opposition parties struggle to find the organizational and financial resources to develop a national campaign strategy. Given the relative strength of Ghana's opposition party, this finding implies that incumbency advantages are likely to be even more severe in many other countries where opposition parties are fragmented, young or and has never been in office.

Finally, we shed light on why empirical researchers have been unable to reach a firm conclusion on whether parties are more like to engage in the mobilization of their core supporters or persuasion of swing voters and their opponents. Our analysis shows that parties engage in both tactics and that their targeting strategy is dependent on both the party's status as an incumbent or challenger and the local electoral environment. Future research should continue to examine how local context and party resources combine to condition the campaign strategies used by political parties in new democracies.

References

Arthur, Peter. 2010. "Democratic consolidation in Ghana: the role and contribution of the media, civil society and state institutions." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 48(2):203–226.

Banegas, Richard. 1998. "Marchandisation du vote, citoyennete et consolidation democratique au Benin." *Politique Africaine* 69(1):75–88.

Bob-Milliar, George M. 2012. "Political party activism in Ghana: factors influencing the decision of the politically active to join a political party." *Democratization* 19(4):668–689.

Bratton, Michael. 2008. "Vote Buying and Violence in Nigerian Election Campaigns." *Electoral Studies* 27(4):621–32.

Brierley, Sarah. 2012. "Party unity and presidential dominance: parliamentary development in the fourth republic of Ghana." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30(3):419–439.

Briggs, Ryan C. 2012. "Electrifying the base? Aid and incumbent advantage in Ghana." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 50(04):603–24.

Carlson, Elizabeth. 2015. "Ethnic Voting and Accountability in Africa: A Choice Experiment in Uganda." *World Politics* FirstView Article:1–33.

Cheeseman, Nic and Marja Hinfelaar. 2010. "Parties, platforms, and political mobilization: The Zambian Presidential election of 2008." *African Affairs* 109(434):51–76.

Collier, Paul and Pedro C Vicente. 2010. "Votes and Violence: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria." Unpublished paper.

Collier, Paul and Pedro C. Vicente. 2012. "Violence, Bribery, and Fraud: The Political Economy of Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Public Choice* 153(1–2):117–47.

Conroy-Krutz, Jeffrey. 2012. "Information and Ethnic Politics in Africa." *British Journal of Political Science* 43(345-73).

Conroy-Krutz, Jeffrey and Carolyn Logan. 2012. "Museveni and the 2011 Ugandan Election: Did the Money Matter?" *Journal of Modern African Studies* 50(4):625–655.

Corstange, Daniel. 2010. "Vote Buying under Competition and Monopsony: Evidence from a List Experiment in Lebanon." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Cox, G. 2010. Swing votes, core votes, and distributive politics. In *Political Representation*, ed. Stokes S. C. Wood E. J. & Kirshner A. S. Shapiro, I. Cambridge University Press pp. 342–358.

Cox, Gary W and Mathew D McCubbins. 1986. "Electoral politics as a redistributive game." *Journal of Politics* 48(2):370–389.

Diaz-Cayeros, Alberto, Federico Estévez and Beatriz Magaloni. 2012. *Strategies of vote buying: Social transfers, democracy and welfare in Mexico*. Unpublished manuscript.

Dixit, Avinash and John Londregan. 1996. "The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics." *Journal of Politics* 58(4):1132–55.

Ferree, Karen. 2006. "Explaining South Africa's Racial Census." *Journal of Politics* 68(4):803–815.

Franck, Rafael and Ilia Rainer. 2012. "Does the Leader's Ethnicity Matter? Ethnic Favoritism, Education and Health in Sub-Saharan Africa." *American Political Science Review* 106(2):294–325.

Fridy, Kevin. 2007. "The Elephant, Umbrella, and Quarrelling Cocks: Disaggregating Partisanship in Ghana's Fourth Republic." *African Affairs* 106(423):281–305.

Gonzalez-Ocantos, Ezequiel, Chad Kiewiet De Jonge, Carlos Meléndez, Javier Osorio and David W Nickerson. 2012. "Vote buying and social desirability bias: Experimental evidence from Nicaragua." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1):202–217.

Gyimah-Boadi, E and E Debrah. 2008. Political Parties and Party Politics. In *Ghana: Governance in the Forth Republic*, ed. Baffour Agyeman-Duah. CDD-Ghana Digibooks Publishing.

Gyimah-Boadi, Emmanuel. 2009. "Another step forward for Ghana." *Journal of Democracy* 20(2):138–152.

Hafner-Burton, Emilie M, Susan D Hyde and Ryan S Jablonski. 2014. "When Do Governments Resort to Election Violence?" *British Journal of Political Science* 44(01):149–179.

Hansen, Ketil Fred. 2010. "Inside Electoral Democracy: Gift-Giving and Flaunting in Political Campaigning in Cameroon." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 45(4):432–44.

Harding, Robin. 2015. "Attribution and Accountability: Voting for Roads in Ghana." *World Politics* FirstView Article.

Horowitz, Jeremy. 2012. Campaigns and Ethnic Polarization in Kenya PhD thesis University of California at San Diego.

Jablonski, Ryan S. 2014. "How aid targets votes: the impact of electoral incentives on foreign aid distribution." *World Politics* 66(02):293–330.

Jensen, Peter Sandholt and Mogens K Justesen. 2014. "Poverty and vote buying: Survey-based evidence from Africa." *Electoral Studies* 33:220–232.

Koter, Dominika. 2013. "King Makers: Local Leaders and Ethnic Politics in Africa." *World Politics* 65(2):187–232.

Kuenzi, Michelle and Gina MS Lambright. 2010. "Who votes in Africa? An examination of electoral participation in 10 African countries." *Party Politics* .

Lindbeck, Assar and Jörgen Weibull. 1987. "Balanced Budget Redistribution and the Outcome of Political Competition." *Public Choice* 52:273–97.

Lindberg, Staffan I. 2003*a*. ""It's Our Time to Chop": Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?" *Democratization* 10(2):121–140.

Lindberg, Staffan I. 2003*b*. "'It's Our Time to" Chop"': Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?" *Democratization* 10(2):121–140.

Lindberg, Staffan I. 2007. "Institutionalization of party systems? Stability and fluidity among legislative parties in Africa's democracies." *Government and Opposition* 42(2):215–241.

Lindberg, Staffan I. 2010. "What accountability pressures do MPs in Africa face and how do they respond? Evidence from Ghana." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48(1):117–142.

Lindberg, Staffan I. and Minion K.C Morrison. 2008. "Are African voters really ethnic or clientelistic? Survey evidence from Ghana." *Political Science Quarterly* 123(1):95–122.

Nichter, Simeon. 2008. "Vote Buying or Turnout Buying? Machine Politics and the Secret Ballot." *American Political Science Review* 102(1):19–31.

Nugent, Paul. 2007. Banknotes and Symbolic Capital: Ghana's Elections Under the Fourth Republic. In *Votes, Money and Violence: Political parties and elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. G. Basedua M., Erdmann and A. Mehler. Elanders Gotab AB.

Osei, Anja. 2012. *Party-voter linkage in Africa: Ghana and Senegal in comparative perspective*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Posner, Daniel N. 2005. *Institutions and ethnic politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

Randall, Vicky and Lars Svåsand. 2002. "Political parties and democratic consolidation in Africa." *Democratization* 9(3):30–52.

Resnick, Danielle. 2012. "Opposition Parties and the Urban Poor in African Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 45(11):1351–1378.

Robinson, James A. and Ragnar Torvik. 2009. The Real Swing Voter's Curse. NBER Working Paper No. 14799, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Rubin, Donald B. 1974. "Estimating Causal Effects of Treatments in Randomized and Nonrandomized Studies." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 66(5):688–701.

Sekhon, Jasjeet S. 2008. "Multivariate and propensity score matching software with automated balance optimization: the matching package for R." *Journal of Statistical Software* .

Shefter, Martin. 1977. "Party and Patronage: Germany, England, and Italy." *Politics and Society* 7(4):403–51.

Stokes, Susan C. 2005*a*. "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina." *The American Political Science Review* 99(3):315–325.

Stokes, Susan C. 2005*b*. "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina." *American Political Science Review* 99(3):315–25.

Stokes, Susan C, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno and Valeria Brusco. 2013. *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: the puzzle of distributive politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Straus, Scott and Charlie Taylor. 2012. Democratization and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2008. In *Voting in Fear*, ed. Dorina A. Bekoe. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace.

van de Walle, Nicolas. 2003. "Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa's emerging party systems." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41(2):297–321.

Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55(3):399–422.

Weghorst, Keith R. and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2013. "What Drives the Swing Voter in Africa?" *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3):717–43.

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable	*Incumbent Cavass*	*Challenger Cavass*	*Incumbent Vote-buying*	*Challenger Vote-buying*
Mean	0.318	0.309	0.134	0.081
S.D.	0.466	0.462	0.341	0.273
N	5478	5801	5507	5752

Notes: This table presents summary statistics for our four dependent variables. The table displays the mean, standard deviation, and total number of observations.

Table 2: Balance pre- and post- matching

	Mean Treated	Mean Control	P-Value
Pre-Matching			
Age	1.23	1.08	0.01
Education Level	1.09	1.15	0.13
Female	0.47	0.48	0.58
Income Index	3.89	3.90	0.89
Urban	0.51	0.44	0.00
Post-Matching			
Age	1.11	1.11	1.00
Education	1.04	1.04	1.00
Female	0.49	0.49	1.00
Income Index	3.87	3.87	1.00
Urban	0.50	0.50	1.00

Notes: This table demonstrates balance between our control and treatment units post-matching. In this example, the treatment variable is *NDC supporter*. The upper panel shows balance pre- matching, the lower panel displays balance post- matching.

Figure 1: Map of Study Regions
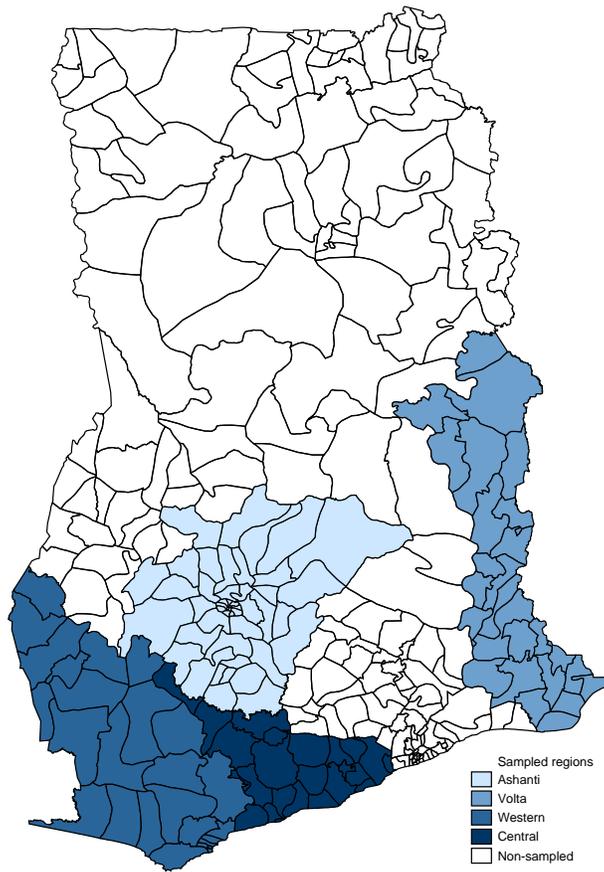
Figure 2: Categorization of respondants
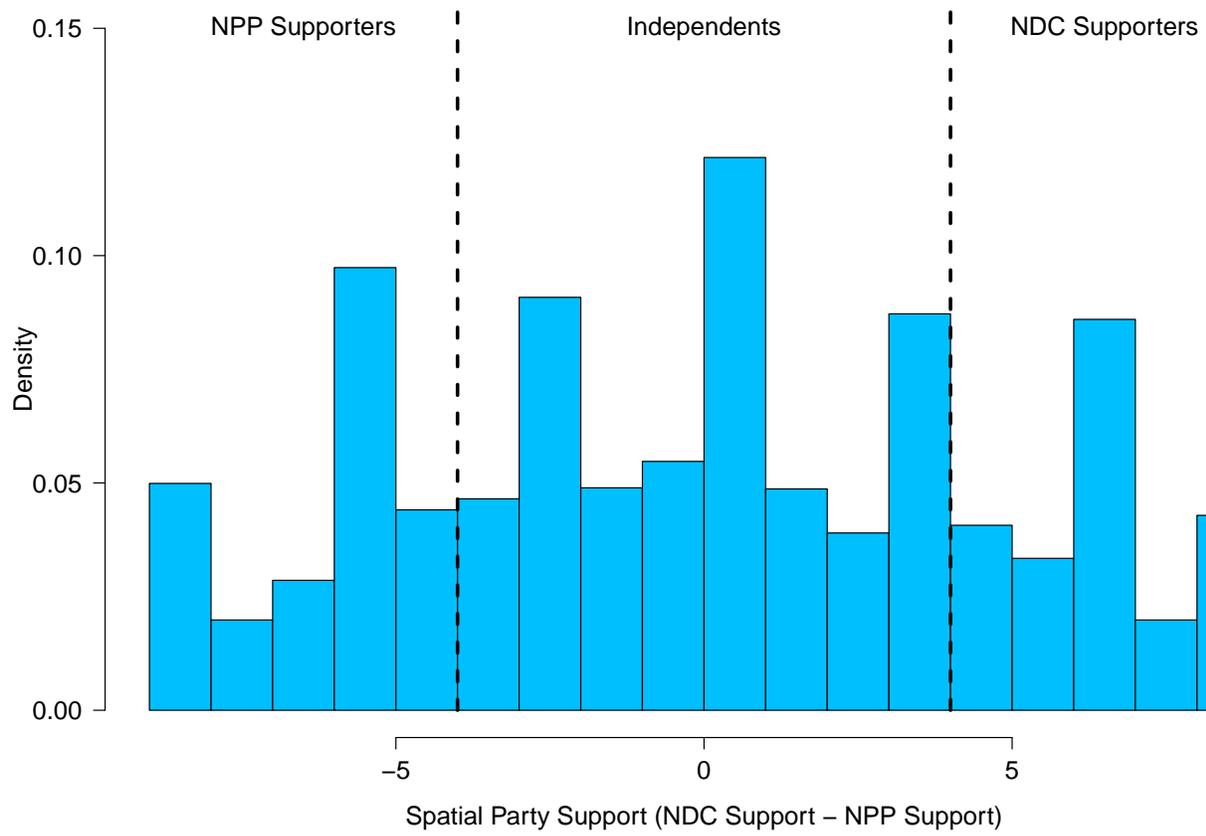
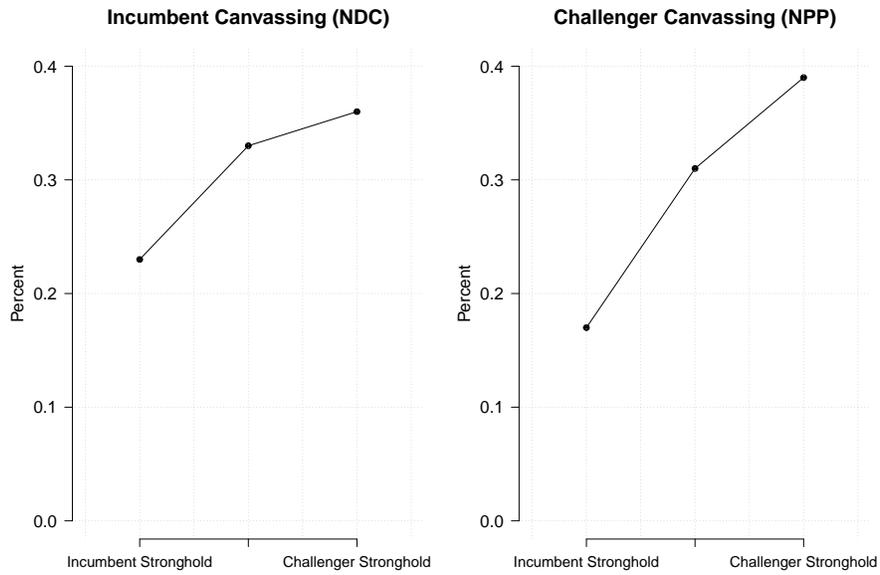Figure 3: Political party canvassing by constituency type

Incumbent Canvassing (NDC)

Challenger Canvassing (NPP)

Figure 4: Political party electoral clientelism by constituency type

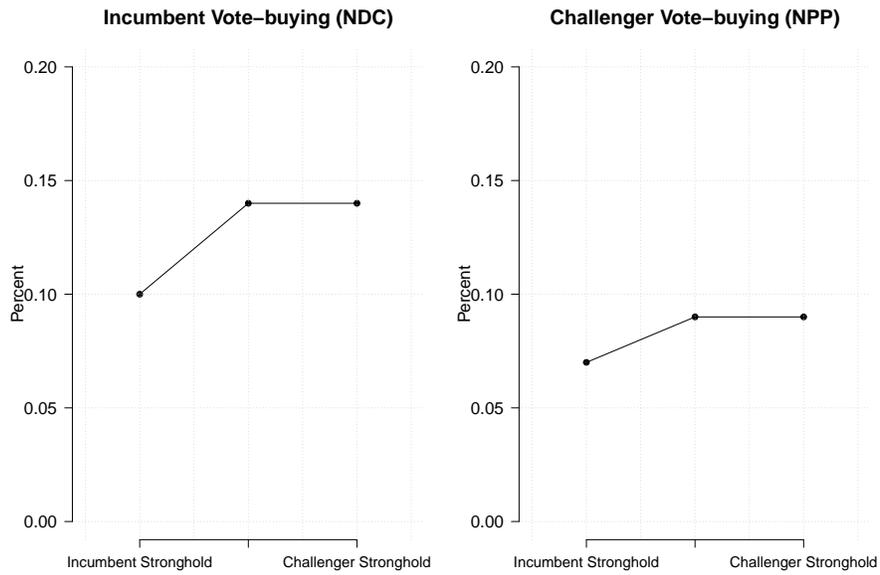**Incumbent Vote−buying (NDC)**

Challenger Vote−buying (NPP)
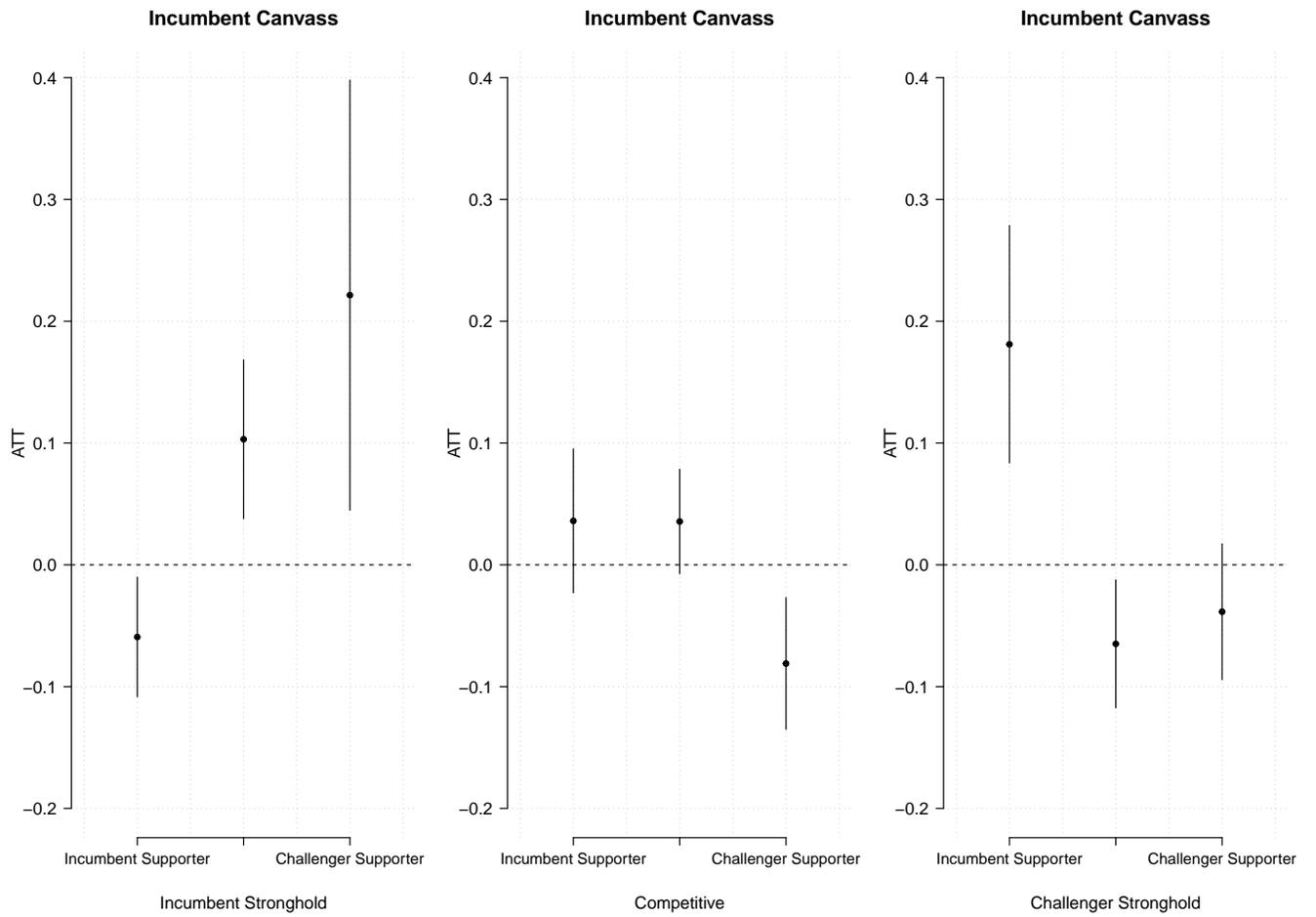
Figure 5: Incumbent canvassing by voter type

Figure 6: Challenger canvassing by voter type
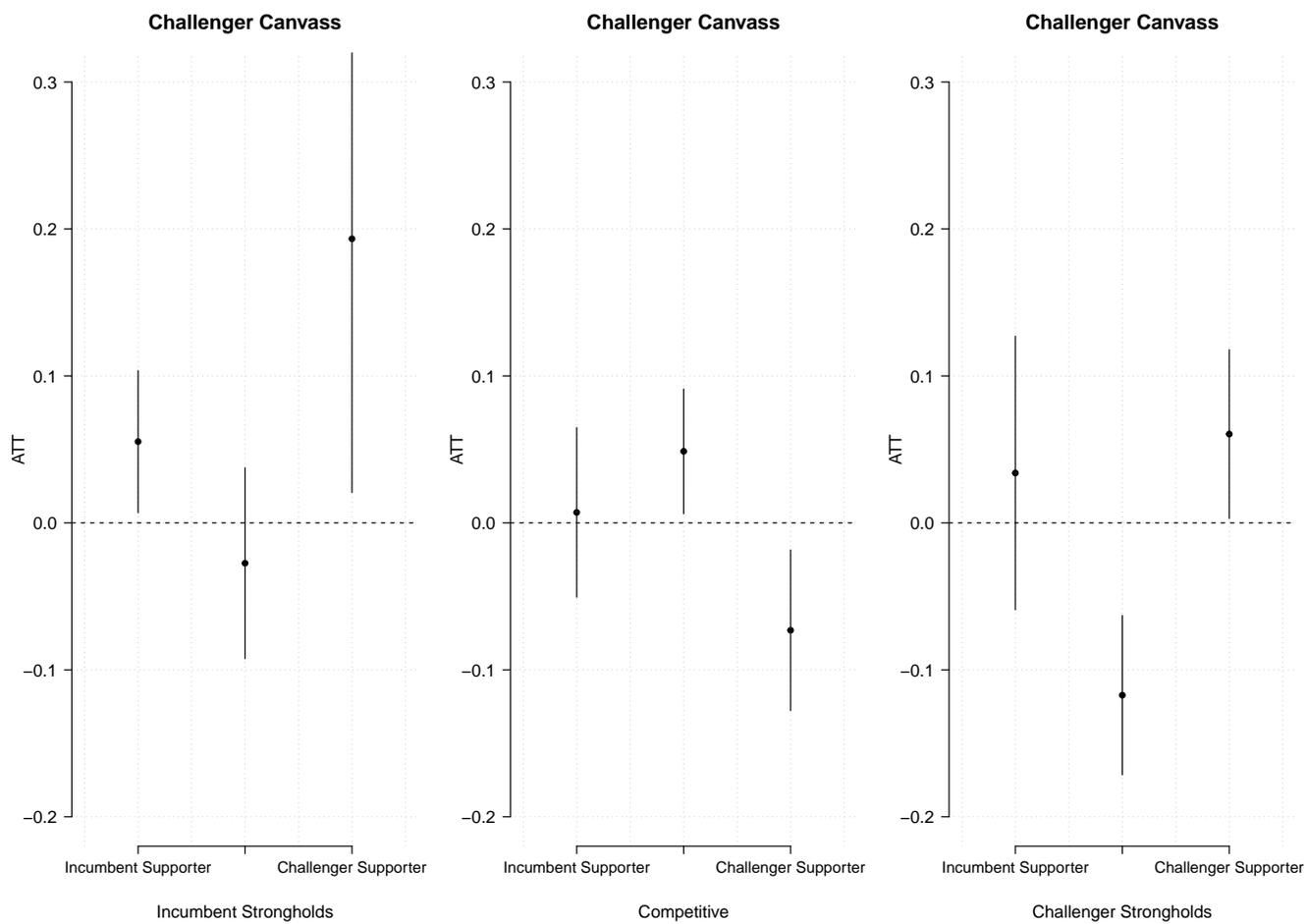
Figure 7: Incumbent vote-buying by voter type
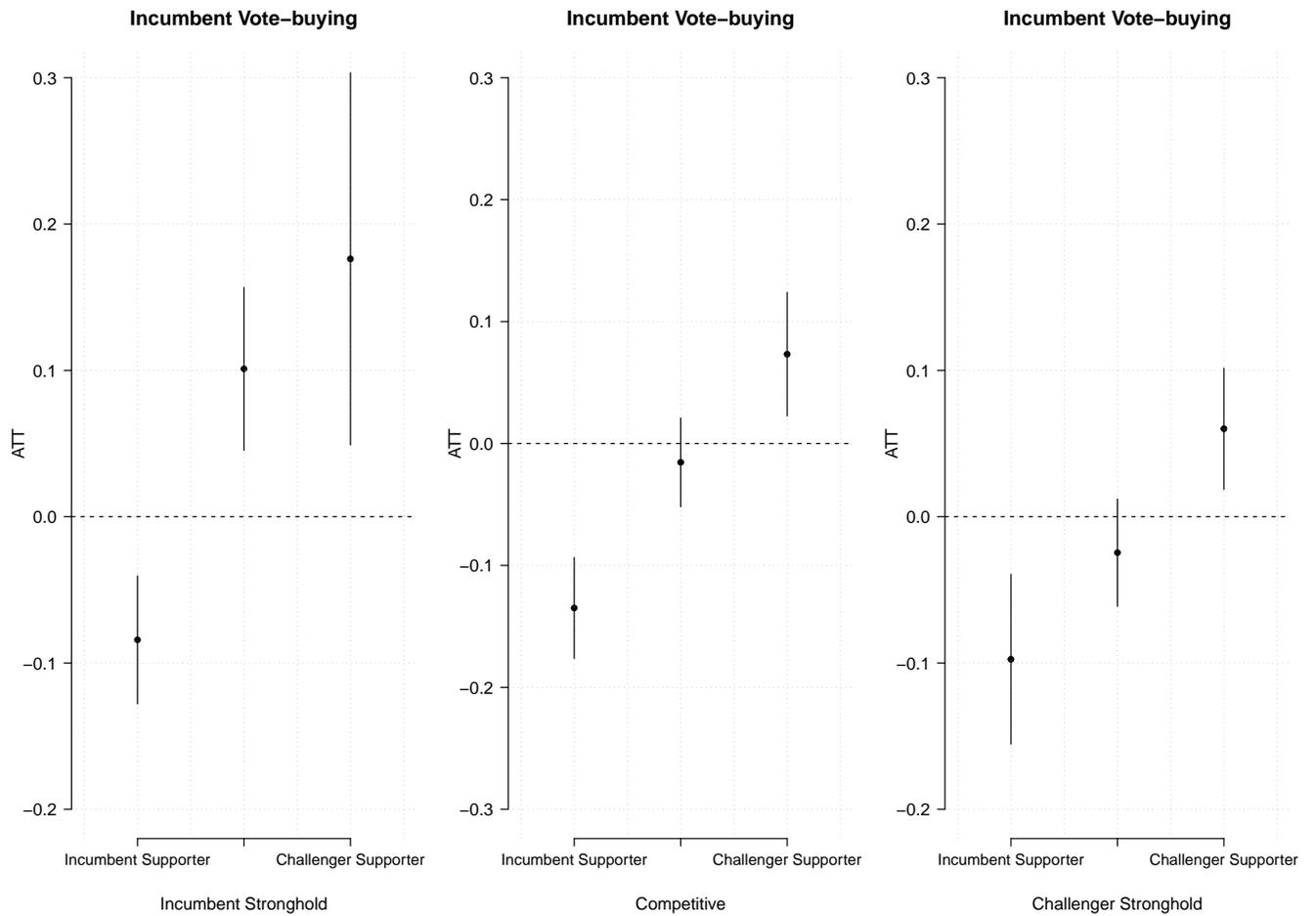
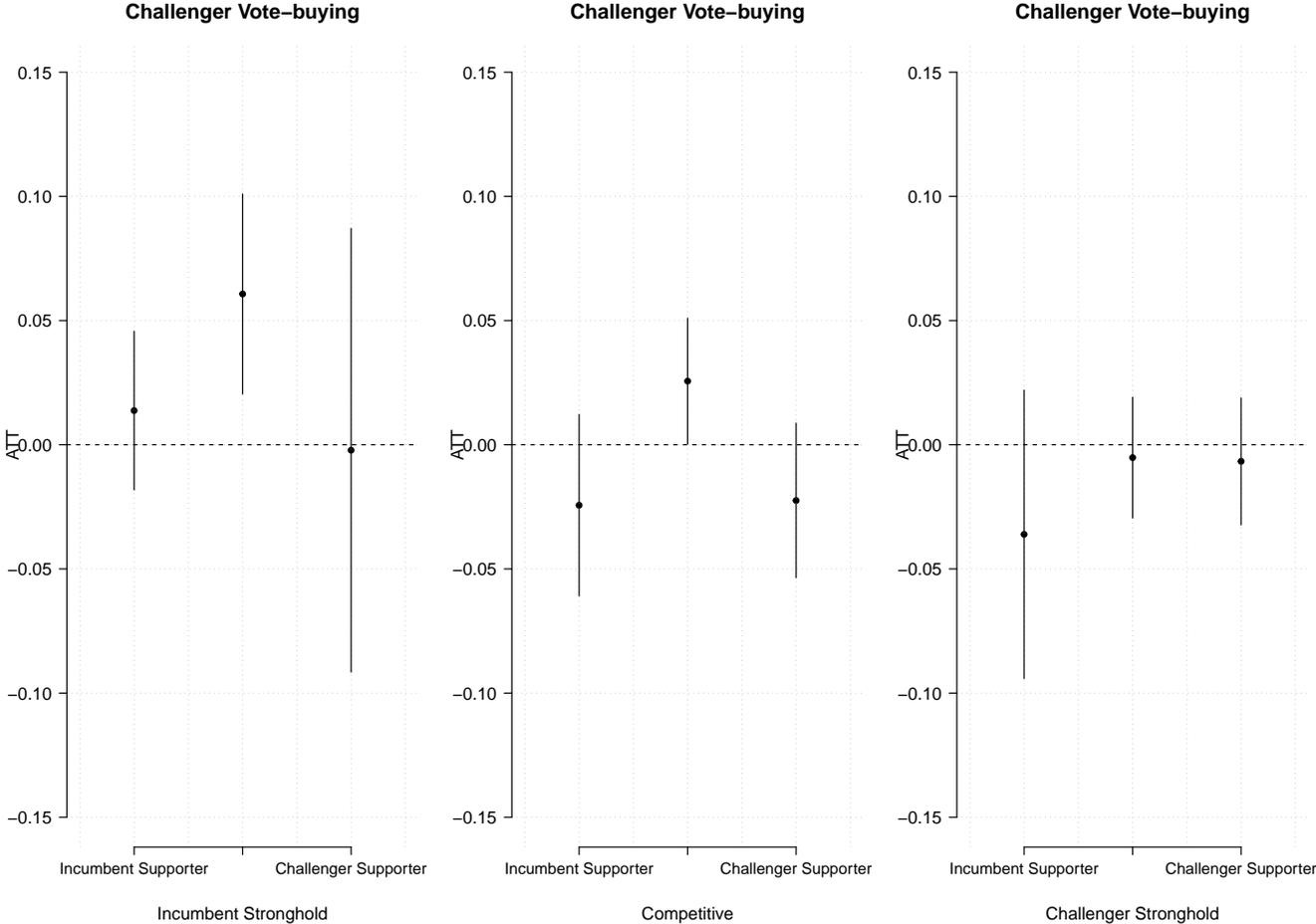Figure 8: Challenger vote-buying by voter type

| Challenger Vote–buying | Challenger Vote–buying | Challenger Vote–buying |

Online Appendix

A   Robustness Tests

A.1   Robustness Test 1: Logistic Regression Analyses of Within-Constituency Targeting

In this section, we show that our main results on within-constituency targeting are robust to the use of multivariate logistic regression rather than matching.

Table A.1: Within-Constituency Targeting: NDC Canvassing

	Dependent variable:			
	Canvassed by NDC			
	All Constituencies	NDC Strongholds	Competitive	NPP Strongholds
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
NDC Supporter	0.004	0.11	−0.10	1.49***
	(0.10)	(0.24)	(0.13)	(0.27)
NPP Supporter	0.02	0.92**	−0.23*	0.19
	(0.09)	(0.44)	(0.12)	(0.15)
Age	−0.04	0.03	−0.06	0.05
	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Education	0.15***	−0.20	0.17***	0.31***
	(0.05)	(0.14)	(0.06)	(0.09)
Female	0.05	−0.29	0.02	0.24*
	(0.08)	(0.24)	(0.10)	(0.14)
Income	0.04**	0.08	0.06***	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Population Density	−0.20***	0.44*	−0.33***	0.12
	(0.08)	(0.24)	(0.10)	(0.17)
Intercept	−0.94***	−1.57***	−0.87***	−1.35***
	(0.13)	(0.45)	(0.17)	(0.26)
Observations	3,110	453	1,777	880

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Logistic regression models. Independents are the omitted reference category.

Table A.2: Within-Constituency Targeting: NPP Canvassing

	Dependent variable:			
	Canvassed by NPP			
	All Constituencies	NDC Strongholds	Competitive	NPP Strongholds
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
NDC Supporter	−0.02	0.57**	−0.10	0.70***
	(0.10)	(0.26)	(0.13)	(0.24)
NPP Supporter	0.20**	1.04**	−0.16	0.38***
	(0.09)	(0.45)	(0.12)	(0.14)
Age	−0.01	0.04	−0.01	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Education	0.17***	−0.14	0.21***	0.24***
	(0.04)	(0.14)	(0.06)	(0.08)
Female	−0.01	−0.31	−0.05	0.13
	(0.08)	(0.24)	(0.10)	(0.14)
Income	0.03	0.12*	0.05**	0.002
	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Population Density	−0.43***	0.37	−0.55***	−0.06
	(0.08)	(0.24)	(0.10)	(0.17)
Intercept	−0.85***	−2.10***	−0.83***	−0.94***
	(0.13)	(0.47)	(0.17)	(0.24)
Observations	3,218	458	1,846	914

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Logistic regression models. Independents are the omitted reference category.

Table A.3: Within-Constituency Targeting: NDC Gift Giving

	Dependent variable:			
	NDC Gift Giving			
	All Constituencies	NDC Strongholds	Competitive	NPP Strongholds
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
NDC Supporter	−0.69***	−0.33	−1.03***	−1.27**
	(0.16)	(0.30)	(0.24)	(0.62)
NPP Supporter	0.32***	0.52	0.37**	0.46**
	(0.11)	(0.53)	(0.15)	(0.21)
Age	−0.07	−0.06	−0.18***	0.14
	(0.05)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.09)
Education	0.16***	−0.28	0.09	0.58***
	(0.06)	(0.17)	(0.08)	(0.13)
Female	0.04	−0.27	−0.08	0.37*
	(0.10)	(0.29)	(0.14)	(0.21)
Income	0.04*	0.08	−0.05	0.22***
	(0.02)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Population Density	0.17*	−0.69**	0.23*	0.55**
	(0.10)	(0.28)	(0.14)	(0.25)
Intercept	−2.16***	−1.18**	−1.54***	−4.19***
	(0.18)	(0.54)	(0.22)	(0.41)
Observations	3,119	453	1,781	885

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Logistic regression models. Independents are the omitted reference category.

Table A.4: Within-Constituency Targeting: NPP Gift Giving

	Dependent variable:			
	NDC Gift Giving			
	All Constituencies	NDC Strongholds	Competitive	NPP Strongholds
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
NDC Supporter	−0.05	−0.18	−0.05	−0.70
	(0.16)	(0.33)	(0.22)	(0.64)
NPP Supporter	−0.36**	−0.08	−0.36*	0.08
	(0.16)	(0.67)	(0.21)	(0.31)
Age	−0.15***	−0.08	−0.27***	−0.06
	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.08)	(0.13)
Education	0.02	−0.16	0.14	−0.21
	(0.08)	(0.19)	(0.10)	(0.18)
Female	−0.24*	−0.05	−0.37**	−0.28
	(0.13)	(0.32)	(0.17)	(0.30)
Income	−0.03	0.16**	−0.09**	0.14**
	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Population Density	0.25*	−0.47	−0.16	2.11***
	(0.13)	(0.31)	(0.17)	(0.32)
Intercept	−2.11***	−2.19***	−1.60***	−3.74***
	(0.22)	(0.61)	(0.26)	(0.55)
Observations	3,206	458	1,835	913

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Logistic regression models. Independents are the omitted reference category.

A.2 Robustness Test 2: Matching Varying Constituency Type Cutpoints

A.2.1 Constituency Types (25-75 percent cutpoints)

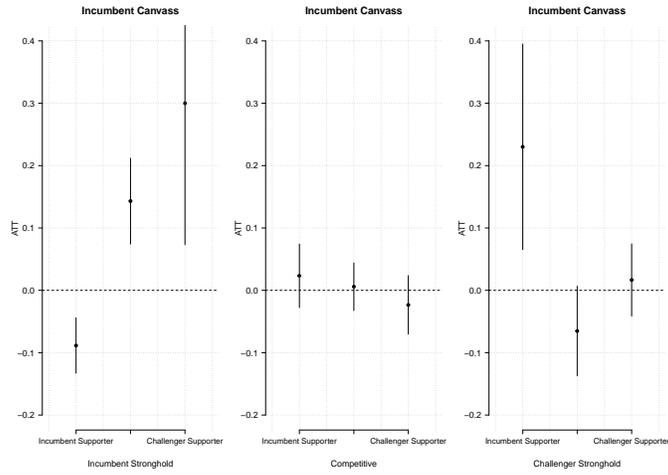Figure A.1: Incumbent canvassing by voter type

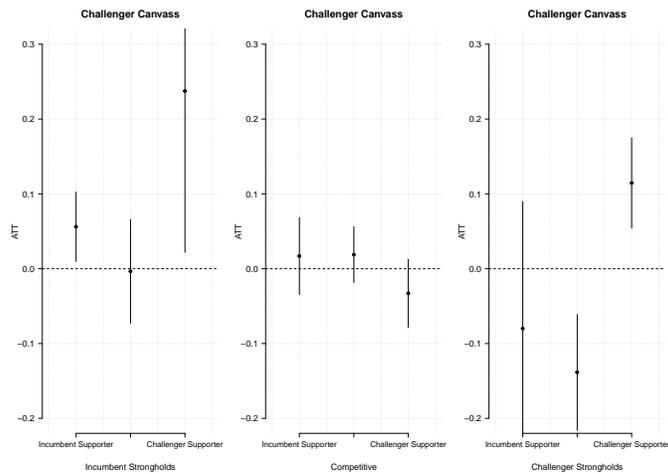Figure A.2: Challenger canvassing by voter type

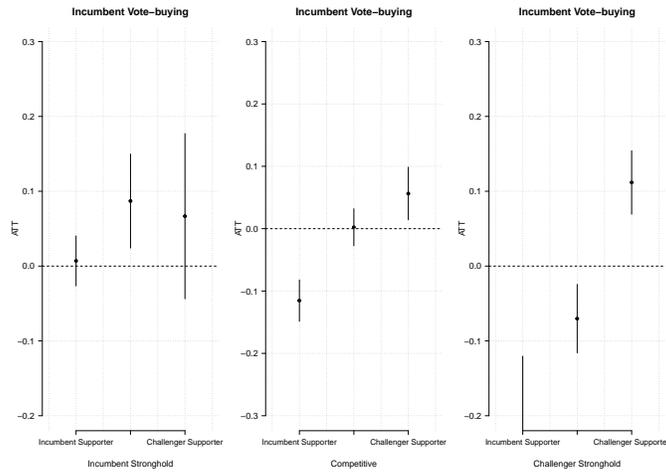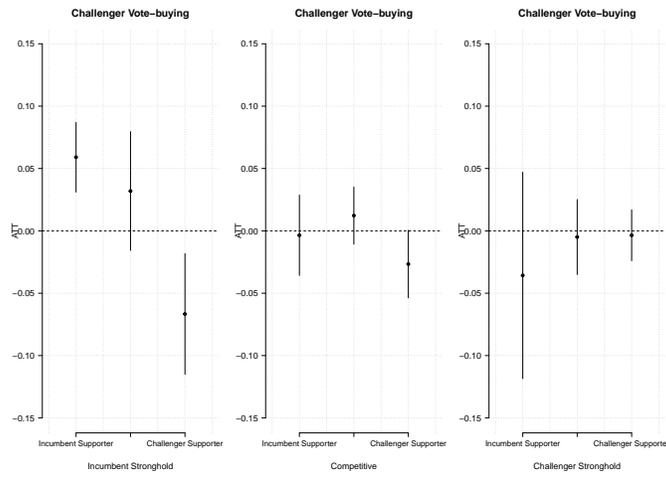Figure A.3: Incumbent vote-buying by voter type

Figure A.4: Challenger vote-buying by voter type

A.2.2 Constituency Types (45-55 percent cutpoints)
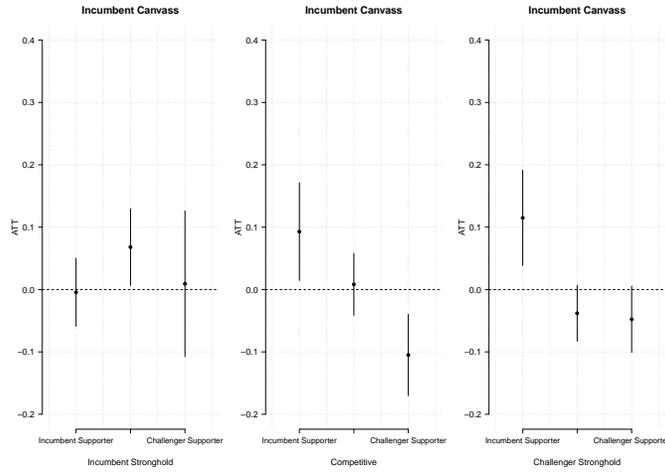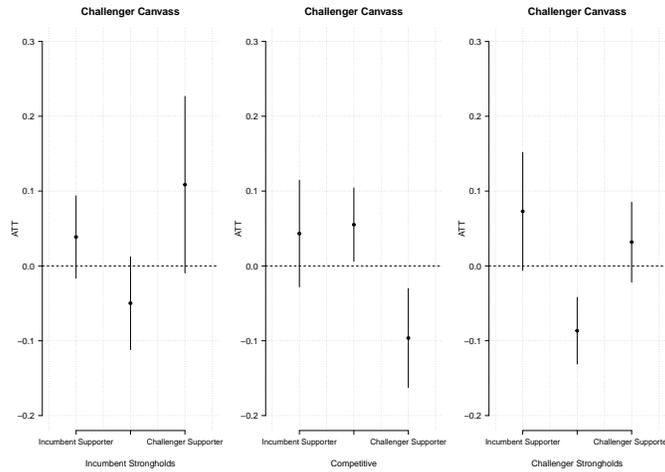
Figure A.5: Incumbent canvassing by voter type

Figure A.6: Challenger canvassing by voter type
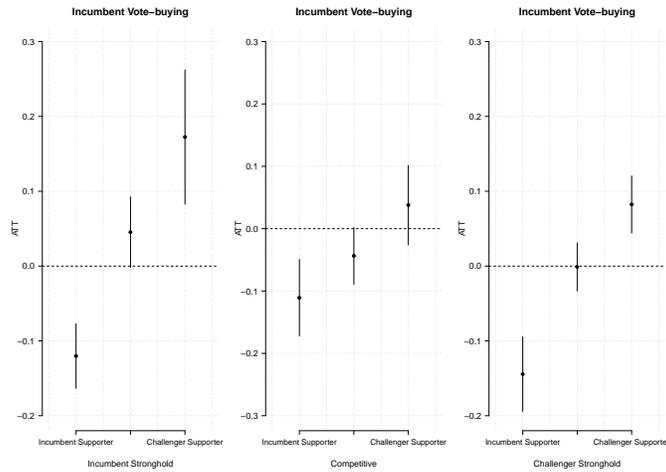
Figure A.7: Incumbent vote-buying by voter type

Figure A.8: Challenger vote-buying by voter type