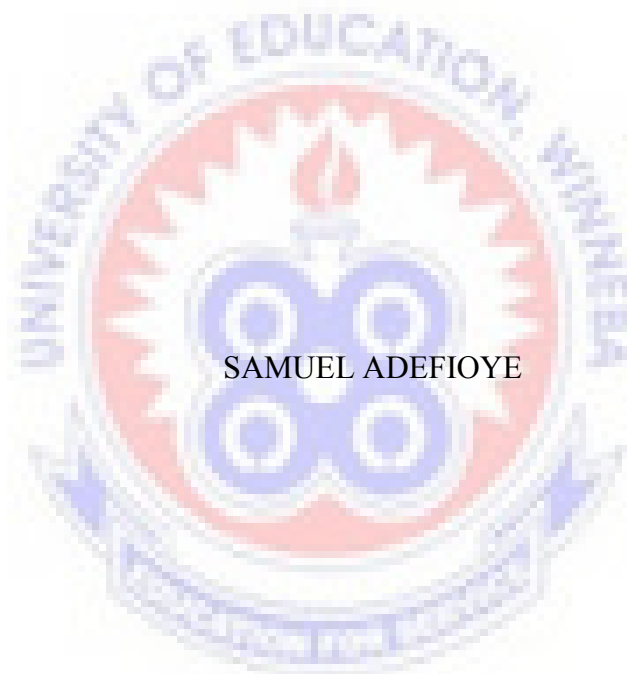


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

A CASE STUDY OF HOW STUDENTS PERCEIVE *TALKING POINT* AT

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



SAMUEL ADEFIOYE

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The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central sunburst design with four stylized human figures in blue and white, arranged in a circle. The text "UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA" is written around the perimeter of the emblem.

SAMUEL ADEFIOYE

A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA  
STUDIES, FACULTY OF LANGUAGES, SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF  
GRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA IN  
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES)  
DEGREE.

AUGUST, 2015

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Samuel Adefioye declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: Mr. Kwesi Aggrey

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: .....

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Almighty Wondrous Creator for bringing me this far. GOD IS GREAT!

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and to my family, especially Grandma Ceci, Dzifa, Edinam, Mawutor, BRJ, Nana Tiwa, Amos and Fafali.



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how students at the University of Education, Winneba perceive *Talking Point*, a talk show programme on Ghana Television (GTV). Factors that motivate students at University of Education, Winneba to watch *Talking Point*; students' perception of *Talking Point* host, guests, and topics; and how *Talking Point* affects the students were all investigated. Participants for the study were twenty-five students who had been selected using the purposive and snowball sampling procedures. Data was gathered through in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions and analysed using thematic analysis. The Perception theory and the Uses and Gratification theory provided a broad framework for the study. This study found that education and information are factors that motivate students at University of Education, Winneba to watch *Talking Point*. This finding is contrary to assertions in the literature that entertainment is the primary motive for which people watch talk shows. Although it was found that government exerts some level of influence on *Talking Point* programme, respondents generally considered panelists and host of the programme to be intelligent and objective. Finally, the study revealed that *Talking Point* has helped in shaping the thoughts, knowledge base and aspects of respondents' social life.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background of the Study

The television industry has seen a rapid growth and has become pervasive in everyday life. Television sets the agenda for people's concerns, it is the major source of information for facts which are new or unavailable from the immediate environment, and television dominates most people's leisure hours (Livingstone, 2004; Livingstone & Lunt 1994).

As a socialisation agent, the mass mediated images that appear on television, via the news, soap operas, situation comedies, dramas, talk shows, sporting events, and so forth, can have a tremendous influence on people. As a result, some states ban certain types of programming or only allow television shows that support specific agenda. Programmes that are produced and aired, consequently are oftentimes subject to political, religious, cultural, and social agendas in countries throughout the world (Orbe, 2008).

When television was inaugurated in Ghana in 1965, the then President of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, declared:

Ghana's Television will not cater for cheap entertainment, sensationalism and commercialism. Its paramount objective will be education in the broadest purest sense. It will supplement our educational programme and foster a lively interest in the world around us. Television must assist in the social transformation of Ghana. (cited in Ghartey-Tagoe 2010, pg. 78; Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998: pg.5).

As stated by the African Media Development Initiative (2007), the liberalisation and privatisation of the Ghanaian airwaves in 1995 turned television into one of the fastest growing mediums and led to a striking increase in information dissemination and checks on government.

Talk shows, for example, have become an indispensable part of the television landscape (Khan, 2012). Since its invention, the talk show format has been adopted in about every country and embraced by a vast majority of audiences. The aim of talk shows, according to Munson (1993), is to deliver useful information to viewers and entertain them at the same time. Talk shows are one of the most popular and influential forms of television programming. From an interactional perspective, they are a very intriguing phenomenon and they provide the avenue for critical socio-political issues to be discussed and analysed (Mittell, 2003).

Generally, talk shows feature people who have extensive experience in their areas of expertise discussing a topic or talking about their professional or personal lives as well as projects they wish to promote to the public. These talk programmes have remained over the years and have expanded to include shows that incorporate comments from viewers and listeners who want advice on a variety of subjects (Camporesi 2000).

In recent times, talk shows in Ghana have taken centre stage in TV programming and have become a preferred source of information, entertainment, and education, among others to audiences (Sarfo, 2011). Currently there are numerous talk show programmes on Ghanaian screens. TV Africa, for example, shows *Matters Arising*, *The Bare Facts* and *Mmaa Mbo* (<http://www.tvafrikaonline.com>). Ghana Television (GTV) produces *Talking Point* and *The Standpoint* (<http://www.gbcghana.com>). Tv3

also produces *Agenda*, *Hot Issues* and *Consumer Watch* (<http://tv3network.com>).

Metro TV airs *Good Evening Ghana*, *Morning Ride*, *Thank God It's Friday*

(<http://www.mymetrotv.tv>). Multitv shows *Pm Express*

(<http://www.multitvworld.com/newworld/>) and many more.

Despite the public's interest in television talk shows, some viewers have criticised the genre for not meeting standards. These critics have cited talk shows as the cause of a variety of societal ills, from loose sexual mores to inciting acts of violence. Some critiques also often relate to the tensions between populism and commercial interests as well as exclusion in the form of masculine hegemony.

Sunstein (1993), for example, asserts that because talk shows are reliant on advertising dollars, pluralist ideals are often forced to be sacrificed on the altar of the commercial agenda. This, he says, serves as a restriction to free speech by affecting what topics are discussed. Similarly, Howard and Rolt (2006) state that while talk show is meant to be egalitarian in nature, it is being exclusionary to women, minorities, and homosexuals.

Additionally, some talk shows are often characterised by abusive language (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2011 as cited in Osabutey, 2011). The immediate past Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), Professor Kwame Karikari, on the 7th of September, 2014, on GTV's *Talking Point* also inured that talk shows are a recipe for chaos.

Notwithstanding, mass media researchers especially in Ghana have paid little attention to the genre. This study would therefore help establish audiences' perception of a television talk show in Ghana.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

*Talking Point*, Ghana's most prestigious television talk show (Cato Institute & Imani Ghana, 2008), is the longest running talk show programme on television in Ghana (GBC at 60, 1995 cited in Amoquando, 2013). The programme (*Talking Point*) aims at educating and informing its viewers on current affairs including socio-economic issues on growth and development in Ghana. *Talking Point* also aims at fostering a lively interest in international affairs (GBC at 60, 1995 cited in Amoquando, 2013). *Talking Point* programme and many of its hosts have been nominated for various awards; including the Democracy and Governance Award (Media and Broadcasting Awards, 2013) and the Television Current Affairs Show Host of the Year Award (Radio and Television Personality Award, 2013; 2011).

However, literature available on how audiences perceive *Talking Point* is scanty (Amoquando, 2013; Agyemang, 2007) and tends to focus on the host. Factors that motivate the viewers to watch and the effect the programme has on them (the viewers) also remain under researched. Moreover, quantitative survey approach was adopted for all the studies which focused on *Talking Point* (Amoquando, 2013; Agyemang, 2007).

This study, therefore, takes a different approach by examining the perception students of University of Education, Winneba have not only about the host but also the guests and the issues discussed on *Talking Point*. The study would, in addition, find out how the programme affects the students. It would employ a qualitative approach with the Perception and Uses and Gratification theories.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. investigate factors that motivate students at University of Education, Winneba to watch *Talking Point*;
2. find out students' perception of *Talking Point*; and
3. find out how *Talking Point* affects the students

### 1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- RQ1. What are the factors that motivate students (at University of Education, Winneba) to watch *Talking Point*?
- RQ2. How do students perceive *Talking Point*?
- RQ3. How does *Talking Point* affect the students?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study would provide feedback to producers and managers of television programmes (especially talk shows) on whether their broadcast contents are making the desired impacts on the viewers. This would enable them improve their programming by designing contents to suit the viewers' needs and featuring panelists who appeal to the audience.



It would further add to the existing literature on media discourse and talk show genre in particular by providing data and information from a different environment, culture and context. This is significant because different societies, periods and cultures tend to assign different views and values to different and/or same phenomena (Afful, 2011; Bhatia, 2004). Finally, findings of the study would largely inform media delivery and usage in Ghana and elsewhere in the world.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

The study would be based on television talk shows (*Talking Point* in particular) and not radio talk shows or any other television programme. Due to the nature of the research, which demands that the respondents are viewers of *Talking Point* who have more than average knowledge and full comprehension of the issues discussed on the programme, the research targeted educated respondents only; namely students from the Winneba campus of the University of Education, Winneba. These students watched *Talking Point* regularly.

### **1.7 Operational Definition of Concepts**

**Talk show:** A television programming genre in which one person (or group of people) discusses a topic put forth by a host sometimes with comments and questions from the audience incorporated into the programme.

**Student:** Any person enrolled in the University of Education, Winneba (Winneba campus) and who watches *Talking Point* regularly; at least twice a month in 2014.

**Perception:** The students' knowledge of *Talking Point* and how they regard the programme.

**Current Affairs:** The cultural, political, and social events of importance and interest at the present time.

**Issue:** An important topic or problem for debate or discussion; a matter of public concern that people are thinking and talking about.

**Panel:** A group of people gathered in a television studio to discuss a specific topic or issue.

**Average knowledge:** Usual or ordinary understanding of a subject.

**Objectivity:** A lack of bias, judgment, or prejudice; not influenced by emotions.

**Preparedness:** Readiness to meet a situation and carry out a planned sequence of actions.

**Personality:** Behavioural, temperamental, emotional and mental attributes that form an individual's distinctive character.

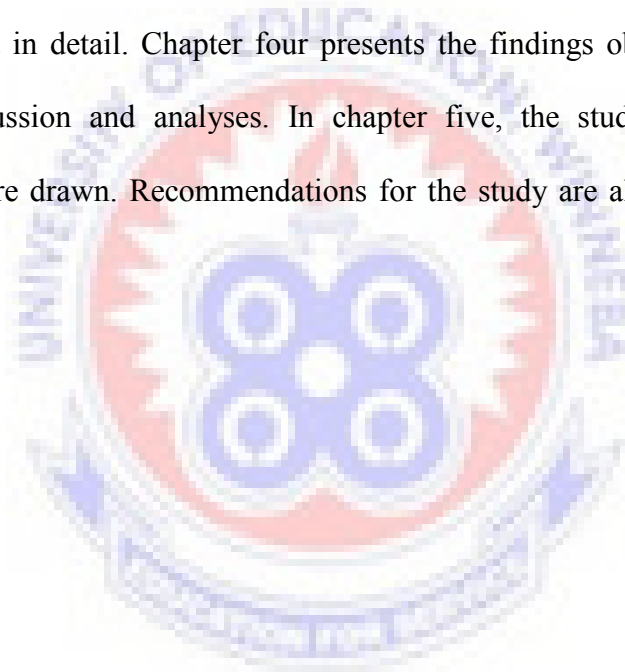
**Intelligence:** One's capacity for logic, understanding, communication, memory, planning, creativity and problem solving.

**Smart:** Showing mental alertness and calculation and resourcefulness.

**Efficacy:** The ability to produce a desired or intended result.

## **1.8 Organisation of the Study**

The study is organised into five main chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. It contains the background of the study; the statement of the problem that necessitated the study; the objectives of the study; the research questions; the significance of the study; the scope of the study; and the operational definition of words. Chapter two gives an account of the related literature and the two theories that guided the study. Chapter three is a detailed description of the methodology employed in the study. Here, the sampling technique and the data analysis methods have all been outlined and explained in detail. Chapter four presents the findings obtained from the study and the discussion and analyses. In chapter five, the study is summarized and conclusions are drawn. Recommendations for the study are also captured under this chapter.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

This Chapter reviews existing related literature on television talk show including *Talking Point*. It provides an overview of the television talk show genre and reviews related literature on reasons for watching television talk show. The chapter also looks at the perception audiences have about television talk show and how television talk show affects the audience. The literature review further highlights the theories that underpin the study.

#### 2.1 Definition of Talk Show

Ilie (2006) defines talk show as a highly confrontational discursive genre, a widely influential media phenomenon, as well as a politically and morally controversial form of entertainment. According to her, the very notion of talk show raises issues concerning the boundaries between talk (prototypically dialogical) and show (prototypically monological), between public and private, between collective and personal experience, between interpersonal and mass communication, between information and entertainment, between discrete and overlapping identities ('me,' 'you,' 'us,' 'them'). Ilie (2006) further indicates that there are three main reasons why it is a very challenging task to define talk shows: they represent rapidly changing hybrid media phenomena, they display intertextuality through overlaps with other mediatized forms of talk, and they endlessly reconstruct themselves by violating and transgressing their own discursive conventions. The talk show displays a hybrid broadcast discourse in which patterns of communicative and social behaviour can be

associated with more than one discourse type, through overlaps with other mediatized forms of talk, such as interviews, debates, sitcoms, game shows, and quiz shows. Earlier, Ilie (2001, p.210) considers talk show as a “host-controlled, participant-shaped and audience-evaluated speech event”.

Munson (1993) is of the view that the term ‘talk show’ combines two different, often contradictory, rhetorical paradigms by associating interpersonal conversation (belonging to the pre-modern oral tradition) with the mass-mediated spectacle (emerging in modernity).

Although the definitions by Munson (1993) and Ilie (2001) may apply to most television genres based on interaction, Ilie’s (2001) definition focuses on the most distinctive feature of talk shows, namely the importance of all the participants (host, panelists, audience) and their respective roles. Again, both scholars (Ilie and Munson) suggest that talk shows are a multi faceted discipline. Therefore defining talk shows as a form of entertainment (Ilie, 2006) would be narrowing the definition.

## **2.2. History and Development of Television Talk show**

According to Gamson (1998), informal talk formed the basis for today’s talk shows, but the largest factor in their formation was “organized, participatory public leisure” (p. 32). According to him, rambunctious gatherings of less privileged and uneducated individuals with their more cultured contemporaries serve as a model for the modern day talk show. Gamson (1998) notes that, during the *Restoration*, for example, theatre going became a social-status event as theatre’s emphasis shifted to social manners and satire. In the 19th century, after the Industrial Revolution produced a larger middle

class, audiences demanded entertainment, rather than the previous focus on being “displayed” at the theatre (p. 11). As the population increased, audiences also grew. With a massive audience, “catering to a mass taste led to a decline in the quality of theatrical offerings” (Gamson, 1998 p.11). During this time, a larger working-class audience compelled the more civilized upper class audience to abandon the theatre (Brockett, 1996 cited in Gamson, 1998) and pursue other interests. Philosophy and the arts emerged as the central topics for discussion among the intellectuals who frequented the English coffeehouses in the 17th century. Literary organisations and fraternal associations formed for the sole purpose of encouraging the members to collectively delve into lofty academic subjects. As Gamson (1998) explains, these gatherings were an opportunity for the formal exchange of ideas, which became the model for the earliest talk shows, such as Donahue.

Gamson’s assertion that ancient theatre and circus sideshows, among others have had a significant influence on the birth and history of the talk show is further supported by Goffman (1981) and Bruun, (1999). Goffman posits that the foundation of the talk show lies in the development and evolution of drama. Bruun also believes that the talk show is like the performance of a theatrical improvisation. Scott (1996), reports that television talk shows emerged out of the success of radio talk shows. The early generation of television shows migrated from radio to television in the late 1940s. Scott further states that although such shows were not exactly talk shows, they are considered the beginnings of television talk shows because they featured short interviews with celebrities in addition to variety shows.

Scott’s (1996) claim that television talk shows came forth from radio talk shows is in line with Timberg (2002) who argues that the founding television talk show hosts were the successful radio hosts, whose reputation as successful radio star hosts

attracted advertisers, raised funds and paved the way for their new television shows. He (Timberg, 2002) notes that these founding talk show hosts include Edward R. Murrow and Arthur Godfrey from CBS, Dave Garroway, Arlene Francis, Steve Allen and Jack Paar from NBC, and Mike Wallace from DuMont. Again, Gamson (1998) observes that talk shows, like circus sideshows, target poor, uneducated people. The freak show, for example, and the talk show, both elevate the odd, peculiar and bizarre to the status of entertainment. According to him, newspapers also contributed to the prevalence of sensational topics on talk shows. In the 1830's, *Penny* newspapers arrived and portrayed sensational information as news. *The New York Sun* and *The New York Herald* shunned political news and focused on "crime and sex" (Postman, 1985, p. 66 cited in Gamson 1998). *The Telegraph* followed suit, prompting a discourse in "the language of headlines—sensational, fragmented, impersonal" (Postman, 1985, p. 70 cited in Gamson 1998). Suddenly, trivial information for entertainment was popular.

Timberg (2002) indicates that even though television penetration in the United States boomed expanding from one percent to 53 percent during the period 1948 to 1953, and reaching 90 percent towards the end of the 1950s, the founders of television talk shows all went off the air by 1962 due to lack of independence and tensions with corporate directors who were submissive to advertising and government pressure. For example, Jack Paar walked out of *The Tonight Show* after network supervisors censored a "harmless" joke from his show without prior notice. Edward R. Murrow also walked out of CBS because his investigative reports were considered problematic by network executives.

Network executives exercised strict control of the talk shows content for fear of upsetting advertisers and sponsors. Video tape provided network directors with more

power and control over live programming as they can run recorded shows on videotape as live. Although the networks had the biggest market share of talk shows, some nationally syndicated talk shows managed to emerge and survive besides the networks during that period. Sunstein (1993) reasserts Timberg's account by stating that because talk shows are reliant on advertising dollars, pluralist ideals are often forced to be sacrificed at the altar of the commercial agenda, thereby restricting free speech by affecting what topics are discussed.

The 1990s saw the appearance of new formats of talk shows as a result of the cable expansion such as reality programmes and infotainment. Many talk show products appeared such as sports talk, comedy, news talk, and specialized talk shows covering topics such as health, homes, cooking and religion. In the early 1990s, most talk shows were produced by cable or syndication. Talk shows expanded vigorously and producers had to develop new ways to keep the old shows fresh.

### **2.2.1 History of Talk show in Ghana**

The oldest talk show programme on Ghana television was *Comment* which began in the 1960s and later metamorphosed into *Talking Point* (GBC at 60, 1995 cited in Amoquando, 2013). With the liberalization of the Ghanaian airwaves several television and radio stations have been set up and this has culminated in the talk programmes becoming an essential medium for audience in Ghana to contribute to the democratic and governing process (AMDI, 2007).



Joy Fm was one of the premier private commercial Fm radio stations which commenced broadcasting on 5th April, 1995. Amongst the numerous news and current affairs programmes broadcast by Joy Fm, one talk show, *The Front Page*, assumed the topmost position. This was confirmed in a survey conducted in 1997 by the Incentive Marketing Limited. The main goal of the survey with a sample of 2000 was to discover the most listened to Fm radio station, in addition to the favourite talk programme of listeners out of five programmes then running. Findings of the study demonstrated that, *The Front Page* was the favourite talk programme of Fm radio listeners, attracting 39.2 percent of the total audience. *Platform* on Radio Gold came second with a 19.3 percent share of the total audience, *Godwin on the Beat* on Radio GAR placed third with 17.7 percent, *Talk Shop* (Vibe Fm) came fourth with 15.8 percent and *The Sunshine Edition* (Sunshine Fm, now known as Choice Fm), coming fifth with 8.1 percent of the talk show audience (Yirilabuo, 2002).

### **2.2.2 History of *Talking Point***

*Talking Point* is one of the longest-running programmes on Ghana Television (GTV). It began in the sixties as *Comment*. It is one of the most interesting discussion programmes on television which draws a wide audience both in Ghana and beyond (GBC at 60, 1995 cited in Amoquando, 2013). *Talking Point* is telecast on Sundays at 7:30pm. The programme aims at educating and informing the general public and members of government on relevant news and current affairs. Apart from following up on government programmes that highlight issues of concern to the electorates, *Talking Point* takes a look at benchmark events in the country and globally. The issues discussed range from politics, economy, business, fuel and energy, conflicts and crises to entertainment and sports. The host interviews a panel of guests, usually

consisting of high profile personalities, seasoned journalists, politicians, civil servants, opinion leaders, social commentators, top public servants, academics and experts. *Talking Point* has been hosted by numerous seasoned journalists (Amoquando, 2013).

### **2.3 Types of Talk show**

Timberg (2002) divides the talk show genre into three main subgenres: late-night, daytime, and morning talk shows. This is supported by Ilie (2001), who also distinguishes three major subcategories of talk shows on American television. Ilie notes that talk shows are categorised according to the time they are on the air. Like Timberg, Ilie states that there are early morning talk shows, for example, the Ricki Lake show, daytime talk shows, e.g. the Oprah Winfrey show and the Geraldo Rivera show, and the late night talk shows, for example, Late night with David Letterman show.

In Timberg's opinion, late-night entertainment talk show involves a celebrity host talking with a single primary guest with secondary guests close by. This form of talk shows is rooted in friendly, informal and humorous chats between the host and his guests. Ilie (2001) affirms that late night talk shows are entertaining and have a relaxed atmosphere. The idea behind the show is to make the viewer feel comfortable and unwind him or her after the long day. Again, Timberg posits that the second subgenre, the day-time talk show format is based on the interaction between the studio audience and guests. Audience members comment or address questions to celebrity or expert guests, creating an interactive type of programme. Viewers of daytime talk shows are mostly non-working women staying at home. Finally, to him, the morning

show adheres to a magazine format presenting a mixture of news and entertainment (Timberg, 2002).

There are, however, also other classifications of talk shows. For example, Munson (1993:7) claims that the genre of talk show has become 'messy'; there are many hybridised variations of talk shows. But Carbaugh (1988), in his work on North American patterns of communication, classifies talk shows into personality-centered talk shows and issue-centered talk shows. The personality centered talk show interviews a popular figure in order to give the viewers some information about the guest and his or her work. Issue-centered talk shows, as the name suggests, are focused on social issues and proceed through audience discussion and comments.

It is obvious that scholars are divided over the classification of talk shows. This could be as a result of the difficulty in defining the genre. For example, if Ilie (2006) defines talk show largely as entertainment, then all the three main subgenres of talk show: late-night, daytime, and morning talk shows (Timberg, 2002) and Carbaugh's (1988) personality-centered talk show and issue-centered talk show classifications would all be seen as forms of entertainment. It would be of interest, therefore, to find out which of these classifications fits *Talking Point*.

#### **2.4 Features of Talk show**

Robinson (1982) indicates that, as a source of 'infotainment', talk shows are popular, cheap, and have become a commonplace part of most television channels. This assertion is further corroborated by Bruun. As Bruun puts it, "talk shows are cheap to

produce and popular among viewers, and the ability of this genre to attract viewers is no new phenomenon either” (Bruun, 1999, p.243).

Ilie (2006) identifies some key features of talk shows. These are as follows:

1. As audience-oriented mediatized events, talk shows target simultaneously a multiple audience of interlocutors, the on-looking studio audience, and overhearing audience of TV-viewers.
2. Both experts and lay people are often present as show guests. Much of the programme’s focus has to do with the interchange between them.
3. The show host, usually a media personality, is monitoring most of the discussion by stimulating, guiding, and facilitating the participants’ roles and contributions to the programme (for information exchange, confrontation, and entertainment).
4. Each episode of the programme focuses on a particular topic of social, political, or personal concern. Confrontation and conflicting opinions are usually guaranteed by the selection of topics and of participants.
5. Personal experience and common sense have considerable status and increasingly appear as forms of knowledge that are opposed to expertise and to dominant discourses (of power, race, gender, etc.).
6. The discursive strategies of talk shows are: interview, narrative, debate, game, confession, testimony.
7. These programmes are usually inexpensive to produce, particularly because they are not part of prime-time broadcasting.

8. Most programmes are either broadcast live or recorded in real time with little editing.

Ilie explains that to capture the distinctive features of talk show, it is essential to explore the sociocultural environment and the contextual factors that generated it and that continue to shape it. She identifies the contextual factors as the television show format, setting, time frame, and goal; the show hosts personal profile, agenda, and general orientation; the participants' backgrounds, goals, and their relations.

These completely unique features set talk show apart from other television programmes in terms of the scenographic arrangement of the studio, the moderator, the panelists, and the topic, among others. One would, therefore like to find out whether these features apply to all talk shows and to *Talking Point* in particular.

### **2.5 Reasons for watching Television Talk Show**

Zainal and Moniruzzaman (2015) conducted a study to measure the level of political awareness created by talk shows. Samples were selected among students of the University of Dhaka. The study found, among other things, that forty-three percent (43%) of students watch TV talk shows for various reasons. Forty percent (40%) of students watch talk shows to entertain themselves. A little over thirteen percent (13.3%) of students watch talk shows to know the ongoing condition of the country and only four percent (4%) students to pass their leisure time.

Similarly, a survey carried out by Mattheiss, Weinmann, Loeb, Rauhe, Bartsch, Roth, Spenkuch, & Vorderer (2012) sought to identify and explain the motivations viewers have for watching political talk shows on German TV. Results showed that some

participants had a strong interest in gaining political information by following such shows, while others simply watch them for entertainment purposes.

Kim and Kocsis (2010) also examined the historical importance of late-night talk show genre in the development of American television culture and why people watch for what purposes. Based on para-social interaction theory and uses and gratification theory, the researchers identified four major reasons: entertainment, education, habitual media use and emotional attachment.

In a research to investigate the effect of television on the Nigerian secondary school student, Omojuwa, Timothy, and Obiekezic, (2009) reasoned that general audience programmes like talk shows are not deliberately designed for instruction but for entertainment.

Qin (2008), in a study on how college students use and obtain gratifications from two TV news programme genres (regular network news and late-night comedy talk shows), found that the subjects watch late night comedy talk shows mainly to be entertained, but also to satisfy their information needs. The finding suggests that learning, a secondary use and gratification sought from exposure to comedy talk show, happens in the process of being entertained.

Through a survey of television viewers, Mittell (2003) explored how audience members make sense of the talk show genre. He gathered his subjects from students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Findings revealed that pleasures of “entertainment” are more central to audience practice in their engagement with talk shows.

Various reasons for which people watch television talk shows have been identified in the studies cited above. However, these studies were conducted in different environments other than Ghana. The present study, therefore, sought among other things to explore reasons for which consumers of *Talking Point*, a television talk show in Ghana, watch the programme.

## **2.6 General Perception of Television Talk Show**

### **2.6.1 The TV Studio**

Bruun (1999) asserts that in the talk show, the TV studio is the space of the programme where the unity of time and place are observed in the same way as in classical drama. If the unity is broken, it is only momentary. Bruun further states that the role of the TV medium in the talk show is to be both the event in itself and to be the place of the event at one and the same time. Consequently, the talk show becomes different from other TV genres, even at this stage. In this genre TV is not a reporting medium, in which the medium primarily tells of a reality outside the medium itself. Neither does it have the role of a transmitting medium in which the medium is a visitor and, in principle, is not responsible for that which is shown. Transmissions of national sporting events and concerts are examples of TV in this role. According to Bruun, the planning of a talk show in terms of time and space has the character of a “now and here”. In other words, the aim is first of all to give viewers an experience of simultaneity between the time of the programme and its transmission. Secondly, the aim is to create an experience of mergence of space between the programme and the viewers, in such a way that the viewers feel as if they are participants in the programme as opposed to spectators. Bruun emphasizes that the scenographic

arrangement of the studio is an important element in creating the experience of being a participant. As well as this the studio audience is able to function as a mental bridge between the place of the programme and the place of the viewers. The talk show is “now and here”, whereas the time and space of TV reporting is “there and then”, and the live transmission is “now and there” (Bruun, 1999).

### **2.6.2 The Host**

Ahmed (2010) suggests that the job of a talk show host or hostess is to conduct the discussion between the participants in a way to facilitate the audience to reach a conclusion. He or she should not accentuate what he or she thinks is the right opinion to support.

Amoquando (2013) conducted a study into Senior High School teachers’ perception of *Talking Point* and *Good Evening Ghana* with emphasis on the hosts’ level of objectivity in the manner they question their guests. Using the survey method, the findings obtained indicate that the hosts of *Good Evening Ghana* and *Talking Point* are objective. Both hosts are considered good journalists.

Agyemang (2007) also conducted a research on the public’s perception of *Talking Point*. She employed the survey method, with a sample size of 100 respondents from the South Odorkor locality in Accra. Her finding, among others, demonstrate that the presenters of *Talking Point* meet the expectations of the respondents as they (the respondents) believe the presenters pose most of the questions on their behalf.



Similarly, Yirilabuo (2002) studied the public's perception of *Kwaku-One-On-One*, a television talk show in Ghana. She sought to find out the general impressions students have about the host, Kwaku Sakyi-Addo; whether he was objective in his manner of posing questions to his guests and whether the questions were relevant, intelligent and probing. After administering her questionnaire to 120 students from the University of Ghana, her findings illustrate that the questions the host asked were relevant, intelligent as well as probing. The students also rated the host as a good journalist. The findings further revealed that *Kwaku-One-On-One* is a highly watched programme among students.

Madni, Shahzad and Abdullah (2012), also employed survey research method to explore viewers' perception of current affair talk show programmes on private television channels. By using stratified sampling, they divided Sargodha city into two major categories: A (Blocks) & B (Colonies). Again, the stratified sampling procedure was used to specify the demographic characteristics of respondents, which included: Gender (Male, Female), Age (Up to 30 years & More than 30 years), and Marital Status (Married, Unmarried). Through Systematic sampling, five (5) Blocks out of thirty-six (36) and five (5) colonies out of twenty-eight (28) were selected. The comparative analysis of the hosts of the selected Current Affair talk show programmes showed that overall respondents were more satisfied with the presentational style of Hamid Mir and the topics he selects.

Hassan (2009) opines that a common trend can be easily observed that people tend to remember channels by relating them with the hosts of talk show programmes. Hassan

explains that anchors of talk show programmes gather and reshape information and then present them as reality.

According to Bruun (1999), the studio host is the central dramaturgic element who functions as an intermediary between the programme and the viewers. For this reason, unlike the staging of an anchor person in a news broadcast, the talk show attaches great importance to the television personality of the host, as this is an essential part of the content of the talk show. On the other hand the anchor person in a news broadcast is, to a much greater extent, an institutional representative, partly for the TV station, and partly for the phenomenon “news”.

One of the reasons the talk show attaches great importance to the television personality of the host is that the host is the one who is in charge of topic choice. However, many studies that focused on the host of television talk show (including the few conducted in Ghana) have largely employed the same methodological approach resulting in similar findings. It would be of interest then to find out, using a different methodological approach, what viewers make of the host of *Talking Point*, a television talk show in Ghana.

### **2.6.3 The Guest**

According to Rahman and Marjan (2013), guests play a significant role in talk shows since their role can make a talk show tedious or cheerful. In a research carried out to demonstrate that Taiwanese political call-in talk shows, beyond getting good ratings and bringing in profits for the networks, provide politicians and viewers alike an

opportunity to participate, Chu (2011) found among other things that guests can be divided into two categories: “A-list” guests and subject matter experts.

“A-list” guests are guests who may not be well-versed in every topic that is chosen for the programme but are well aware of sociopolitical issues and have the linguistic ability to engage in a meaningful discourse. Subject matter experts, on the other hand, offer valuable expertise and necessary ideological stance towards the episode. These experts might be invited to the show to explain the specifics of an issue, but once the topic is no longer considered a relevant discourse, the guests may never return to the show. New experts might also be brought in as “fresh faces” to lend a new voice to the discourse. The expert might infuse the discussion with new ideas and lead the discourse in a new direction (Chu, 2011).

Rahman and Marjan (2013), Bruun (1999) and Boominathan (2012) affirm Chu’s proposition as they are of the view that the studio host has a variety of guests, depending on the nature of the programme. Rahman and Marjan (2013), for example, posit that talk shows have selective guests for setting agenda (or for political ideology). Occasionally, it is assumed that producers of talk shows select weak guests from the opponent political ideology and select strong and vocal guests from their (producer’s) own political ideology. As a result, guests from opposite political ideology are routed by the opponent, which is how a talk show can try to set its own agenda. In line with this, Priest & Dominick (1994) assert that disclosures by guests on talk shows are seen as one-sided (cited in Cress & Rappert, 1996).

Habermas (cited in Lunt & Stenner, 2005) postulated that media gave a false impression of engagement in a public sphere while managing rights of access and speech in a manner that was inimical to open public discussion. Through an analysis of the Jerry Springer Show, Lunt and Stenner (2005) argue that many of Habermas's concerns are still highly relevant to the talk show genre. Their findings revealed that throughout their turns, guests quarrel, use strong language, shout at and get angry at each other. Yet, at the same time, they act in a predictable way by entering in order and on cue, answering the host's questions, and deploying their arguments in a manner that is consistent with their roles in the debate.

It is evident from the discussion that, by virtue of their expertise, talk show guests are seen to be prominent people whose ideas and contributions are crucial for a successful discussion. Otherwise, talk show guests can make or mar the programme. This study would therefore find out what students at the University of Education, Winneba make of the guests who appear on *Talking Point*, a talk show on Ghana's national television.

#### **2.6.4 The Interview**

As stated by Bruun (1999), the interview is an important method of creating the content in the talk show. It is also the way in which a great portion of the content of the genre is presented, and consequently the focus is on people and conversation between people. This is what is on offer to the viewers. Bruun explains that because of this focus on people and conversation, the talk show differs from the TV-quiz show and the TV game show in which the emphasis is on a game governed by a set of rules.

Analysing the talk show *Wogan*, Tolson (1991:181) notices that talk show interview is characterised by hot exchanges. The interview conventions of the show become a pretext for the development of clever and complex forms of verbal improvisations in which both parties participate more or less equally.

Kress and Fowler (1979:63) also point out that in interviews, participants are differentiated by their individual purposes, their difference in status, their roles, so the mode of conversation exhibits an asymmetry which (asymmetry) is also reflected in language. The host has the power as an interviewer. He or she controls the interview: he or she starts it, he or she has the right to ask questions, and he or she has the privilege to terminate it. Through the choices of questions, he or she selects the topics and can even introduce such structurally designed questions that no new information can be introduced. But if the interviewee fails to answer questions, it is the worst thing that the interviewee can commit. By not being able to answer questions, the interviewee puts himself or herself in an awkward position whereby he or she is seen by others as not being competent to answer questions. In that case, the interviewee may lose his or her face. Kress and Fowler (1979) further emphasise that in interviews the interviewee only has the right to ask questions on very rare occasions and only in situations where he or she is given explicit permission to do so.

Danileiko (2005) conducted a research to examine the questions in an American comedy talk show, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*. Using conversation analysis, she sought to find out what kinds of questions there are in the talk show. She found that the show's interviews consist of certain episodes and each episode has a different topic. When a topic changes, the interview moves to the next episode.

In their study on television talk shows, Livingstone, Wober and Lunt (1994) found that viewers fairly strongly believed that the genre provides a fair and valuable debate. Generally, viewers were neutral about whether to judge the debate as chaotic and biased, with older viewers being more critical. Some viewers, especially older ones, were concerned that the genre invades individuals' privacy.

Talk show interview could be compared to a stimulant with the host being in charge of setting it into motion and regulating it. Thus whether a talk show would be chaotic or harmonised, is dependent on the host. This however does not mean talk show interview is not governed by rules (as suggested by Bruun, 1999). The rules surrounding the interview may be implied rather than expressly stated. Talk show interview, therefore, is subject to certain communicative norms that exist in social, informal, face-to-face forms of interaction between people, especially, who do not know each other very well. The host must, therefore take caution not to inflame passions that would affect the interaction in the programme or even put the programme in a negative limelight.

## **2.7 Television Talk Show Topics**

Livingstone and Lunt (1994) note that research on how viewers perceive programme topics revealed that generally, controversial topics were considered best. Topics that were considered relevant and emotionally involving were rated as interesting.

According to Carbaugh (1988) personality-centered talk shows usually deal with topics that are more personal and less controversial, and the issue-type talk shows present more social and controversial issues. Tiittula and Nuolijärvi (2000) cited in

Danileiko (2005) note that in personality-centered talk shows the topics are determined according to the guest.

Ilie (2001) is of the view that the topics discussed in daytime talk shows are very challenging, problematic and controversial. They deal mostly with concerns about current issues in the public and private sphere, such as social and professional conflicts, marginalisation, feminism etc. (Ilie, 2001). For example, The Phil Donahue Show aired topics that sparked audiences to voice their opinions or inquire more about the issue at hand (Mincer & Mincer, 1982) while The Ricki Lake Show focused on personal relationships (Gamson, 1998).

It is obvious from the foregoing literature that talk show topics are those that spark debate, are intriguing, result oriented and are geared towards getting people think critically to arrive at solutions. Topics discussed on *Talking Point* must therefore be studied to confirm or reject existing literature.

### **2.7.1 Feminine Issues**

Ayim (2011) carried out a study to find out why few women take part in television talk shows which border on politics. She was of the view that women constitute a huge chunk of viewers of political talk shows, yet neither are their issues discussed nor are they featured as panelists. After examining *Talking Point* on Ghana Television and *Good Evening Ghana* on Metro Television and the views of women in politics and media, it was concluded that the greatest hindrance to women's participation in political talk shows is what is referred to as the 'politics of insult'.

According to Carpignano, Anderson, Aronowitz, and Difazio (1990: 51–2) the topics of talk shows are often ‘women’s issues;’ they are frequently scheduled for housewives in the daytime; they are concerned with gossip and story-telling. Carpignano et al. (1990: 51–2) maintain that talk show topics can be understood to draw on the way in which feminism has ‘redefined the relationship between the public and the private’, transforming the political towards a reliance on “the circulation of discursive practices [rather] than on formal political agendas. In this sense, the talk show can be seen as a terrain of struggle of discursive practices.”

Similarly, Masciarotte (1991: 90) affirms that the talk show, and the critical commentary which surrounds it, is gendered: ‘talk shows afford women the political gesture of overcoming their alienation through talking about their particular experience as women in society.’ For example, *Dinah’s Place* targeted women, strayed from religious and political topics and mainly featured “talk, music, home improvement, and cooking tips” and advice “on how to stay attractive, young, and beautiful” (Timberg, 2002, p. 105).

### **2.7.2 Trashy Issues/ Entertainment**

Penz (1996) contends that talk shows are speech events whose main goal is to entertain. According to him, the guests are invited to talk shows because they can make a specific contribution to the overall topic and therefore to entertain the viewers. Grindstaff (2002) wrote, “whereas talk shows used to tackle serious issues in a more



or less dignified manner, now they were more raucous and theatrical, with ‘sleazy’ topics and younger, less-educated guests” (pp. 7-8).

Daytime talk show format has entertainment as its central function (Franke, 2011; Timberg, 2002). Timberg further emphasises that the daytime talk show format is rooted in friendly, informal and humorous chats between the host and his guests (Timberg, 2002). Ilie (2001) also states that late night talk shows are entertaining and have a relaxed atmosphere. She explains that the idea behind the show is to make the viewer feel comfortable and unwind him or her after the long day. It is worth noting that whereas Franke and Timberg believe that daytime talk shows are entertaining, Ilie thinks late night talk shows rather are entertaining. *Talking Point* falls into the late night talk show category, because it is aired at night (Ilie, 2001). However, due to how “messy” the talk show genre has become (Munson, 1993:7), one would like to find out if the same opinion about late night talk shows would hold for *Talking Point*.

### **2.7.3 Socio-political Issues**

According to Alam (2007) cited in Madni, Shahzad, and Abdullah (2011). Current Affair Talk Show programmes mostly focus on political and social issues and also on conflicts. Alam posits that some media persons argue in defence of Current Affair Talk Show programmes that political issues and the prevailing conflicts have been intense and because of that all journalists pay more attention to and cover issues that border on politics and conflict (Alam, 2007 cited in Madni, Shahzad, & Abdullah (2011).

El-Khalili (2011) conducted a study into the agenda-setting impact of Egyptian nightly television talk shows on attitudes towards civic engagement among the Egyptian elite. The research linked agenda-setting theory to civic engagement. Through setting the salience of news and creating sociopolitical awareness, agenda-setting establishes the first step in civic engagement, creating an informed citizenry.

In order to measure the media agenda, a content analysis was conducted on the three most popular Egyptian nightly television talk shows, *Masr Ennharda (Egypt Today)*, *Al Ashera Masa'an (10 PM)*, and *90 Deqeeqa (90 Minutes)*. A survey was also conducted among a sample of the Egyptian elite (356 participants) to examine the public agenda and the relationships between exposure to talk shows, agenda-setting, and civic engagement. Participants cited talk shows as their main source of information. Respondents' perceptions of the November 2010 parliamentary elections also corresponded with talk shows' framing of the elections. The first outcome of the agenda-setting impact on both levels is sociopolitical awareness, which represents the first and most basic level of civic engagement.

Kwak (2004) employed a quantitative survey with 1600 respondents of African-American and Latino origins to look at television talk show viewing and political engagement. Findings of this study demonstrate that talk shows matter for young people's political engagement. They use television talk shows for political information. Thus, television talk shows were found to relate to political efficacy, political trust, and vote likelihood.

Ahmed (2010) used both quantitative and qualitative approaches in finding out the influence of Talk Shows in creating political efficacy among educated youth. He

selected 120 samples from among students in Punjab University in Lahore. It was concluded that there was strong influence of talk shows on the individual's political efficacy. Ahmed's choice to study the phenomenon using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches makes the closeness of his results with those of Kwak (2004) and El-Khalili (2011) all the more remarkable.

## **2.8 Impact of Talk Show on Viewers**

Boominathan (2012) investigated the impact of Tamil Reality talk shows on the society. Tamil Television talk shows such as "Neeya Naana" (Telecast on Vijay TV) and "Kaarasaram" (Telecast on Podhigai TV) were taken as examples. Using Content Analysis and Survey methodologies, the results of the study showed that reality talk shows have reached the audience in such a way that they feel the topics discussed in the show are related to them. Thus it was concluded that reality talk shows have gained a huge importance in the making of the society.

In his study, Ahmed (2010) used both quantitative and qualitative approaches in finding out the influence of Talk Shows in creating political efficacy among educated youth. He selected 120 samples from among students in Punjab University in Lahore. It was concluded that there was strong influence of Talk Shows on the individual's political efficacy.

Again, because programmes such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show* often depict families and individuals in crisis and in need of "collective" support, Glynn, Huges, Reineke, Hardy, and Shanahan (2007) hypothesised that heavier viewers of such programmes

would be more supportive of activist and interventionist government policies in support of families. Their results confirmed the hypothesis, and also showed that conservatives who were heavy talk show viewers were especially more likely to support such policies than they “otherwise” would be.

Castronovo (2007) also carried out a research to understand what effect watching late night comedy has on young adults’ perceptions of political figures, and to see who has a greater effect on young adults’ perceptions, either famous comedians also known as “elites,” or young adults’ peers. Thirty seven students (26 females, 11 males) were randomly assigned to either a late night or news condition and to hear either a positive or negative frame. The results of this study were consistent with the hypothesis that participants would rate the President significantly lower on characteristics relating to job performance after watching the late night stimuli versus after watching the news stimuli. Finally, consistent with results of previous research, the results of the research indicate that participants who self reported watching more late night comedy were less influenced by its content when evaluating the President.

Davis and Mares (1998) investigated the effects of talk-show viewing on adolescents social reality beliefs. A survey was administered to 282 high school students to evaluate the following three popular hypotheses about the effects of viewing talk shows: (a) viewers overestimate the frequency of deviant behaviors, (b) viewers become de-sensitized to the suffering of others, and (c) viewers trivialize the importance of social issues. The results provided support for the first hypothesis but

not the second. Contrary to the third hypothesis, talk show viewing was positively related, among some age groups, to perceived importance of social issues.

The review has shown that a survey approach was adopted for nearly all the studies which focused on television talk show. Creswell (1998) argues that researchers who employ this approach often study large samples and aim to generalize their findings. The survey approach is, however, inappropriate when there is the need to investigate a phenomenon in depth. Thus, the approach fails to explore the complex interactions existing in societies and between individuals in those contexts. Consequently, Muijs (2004) postulates that to get under the skin of a phenomenon, there is the need to go for ethnographic methods, in-depth case studies and other qualitative techniques. Therefore, this study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to find out how students perceive *Talking Point* at the University of Education, Winneba.

## **2.9 Theoretical Framework**

This section deals with theories that guide the study. Eisenhart (1991) describes theoretical framework as a “structure that guides a researcher by relying on a formal theory constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relation” (p.18). Theoretical frameworks invoke a host of values and beliefs, which are not unique to a researcher, but shared in a common paradigm with other scholars. The researcher found the Perception Theory and the Uses and Gratification Theory relevant and appropriate for the study.

### **2.9.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The Uses and Gratification theory is concerned with how audiences actively pick a specific medium to satisfy their needs and gratification (Baran & Davis, 2012; McQuail, 2010). The theory concerns the relationship between the medium and the audience (Herzog 1944; Katz 1959; Klapper, 1963; Lin 1999; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004). Originally, it examined the purpose that the media use serves for individuals (Rubin, 2002). This is a micro level approach, focusing explicitly on an individual level of analysis. Uses and gratifications allow variance for individual differences and examine needs and motivations of viewers and listeners when determining the outcome of their media use. This perspective evolved as a reaction to a mechanistic view of media effects. It asked: how does the media influence people (Rubin, 2002)? New questions were being asked such as: how do people use the media? Why do people use the media?

The Uses and Gratification theory has four basic assumptions (McQuail, 2000). First, the audience is active in their decisions of media content, and content is selected for a purpose, whether it is to satisfy a goal, motivation, or need. Instead of passive recipients of mediated messages, individuals are empowered when it comes to their relationship with the media. Second, individuals are conscious of their needs and goals, and they base their media viewing preferences on the satisfaction of these needs. The uses and gratification theory also assumes that individuals are aware of their motivations, and they can report them to a researcher. Individuals are thought to base their media related needs in terms of their motivations (McQuail, 2000). These motivations are thought to arise from individual circumstances as well as social circumstances. The third assumption is that these motivations drive individual media choices more than any other aesthetic or cultural influence. It stresses the importance

of the individual, as egocentric in nature. The individual motivations are also acknowledged as being important when examining media decisions. The last assumption is that psychological determinants of media use can be measured. The uses and gratification theory assumes that individuals are conscious of their motivations, and that they can be observed and measured.

As television talk shows are dramatically increasing and have become quite popular among viewers, Uses and Gratification provides the theoretical framework for understanding the specific reasons for which audiences patronise the genre. Considering that Uses and Gratification can be flexible in researching specific motivations and features of social activities of audience, it is applied to this study to find out what kind of needs and gratification audiences are seeking and obtaining (Baran & Davis, 2012; Charney & Greenberg, 2002). Knowing how audiences use talk shows not only helps researchers understand this market, but it also means that media managers can think more about what their users want (Charney & Greenberg, 2002).

It is obvious from the literature reviewed under uses and gratification theory that the second assumption of the theory (uses and gratification) which suggests that individuals can report their motivations to a researcher appears to be similar to the last assumption which also indicates that psychological determinants of media use can be measured. If the motivations of the individual can be reported to a researcher, then these motivations can as well be measured. The last assumption, therefore appears to be superfluous. However, in spite of this seeming limitation, Uses and Gratification is still one of the most influential theories in the field of communication research.

### **Criticisms of the Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Uses and Gratifications theory has been criticized for being too individualistic. According to some theorists (Finn, 1997; Carey & Kreiling, 1974; Cazeneuve, 1974), the approach does not account for broader cultural and societal influences on individuals. They have claimed that since Uses and Gratifications research is mainly “functional” in its orientation, it tends to ignore the “dysfunctions of media in society and culture” (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p.65). In essence, Uses and Gratifications research, like other empirical studies, plays a conservative role in society by maintaining the status quo. It tends to view media in mainly positive ways and as capable of meeting audience needs. Little attention, according to media hegemony advocates, is paid to the negative cultural effects that media may have on society (Ibid, 2001).

Again, the assumption that the audience is active has been critiqued. The criticism is that researchers cannot assume that people are active in their media experiences, especially television. There are some people who simply 'veg out' in front of the television, without rationalising their motivations for media use and what needs the media use is satisfying.

Also, uses and gratifications has been criticised for a lack of clear central constructs. There is no fundamental measure that is consistent across researchers to measure motivations, uses, or gratifications. Each researcher seems to conceptualize and measure these components differently (Finn, 1997). Despite these criticisms, uses and gratifications provides a useful perspective because it allows us to account for individual differences in effects based on media motives.



### **2.9.2 The Perception Theory**

Perception is the process of making sense out of experience (Burgoon and Ruffner: 1978, p.104). It can also be described as how the individual makes sense out of his or her world (Corner & Hawthorn, 1980). Perception is the psychological or mental process of organising sensations into meaningful patterns (Coon, 1995).

The Perception Theory, espoused by professors Leon Festinger, Maxwell McCombs, and Lee Becker, observes that people often interpret facts to suit their existing biases. In other words, perception is a form of bias because we interpret information in a way that is congruent with our existing values and beliefs. People hear what they want to hear and what they expect to hear. People tend to "see things" based on their particular frame of reference. Thus the same information may carry different meaning for different people, particularly people with differing political, religious, cultural, ethnic, national or other substantial differences (Cantril, 2002).

McCombs and Becker (1976) reported that audiences of mass communication respond favourably or otherwise to a message depending on the measure of interest they have for a message. They contend that people tend to evade programmes or ideas that are probable to increase dissonance and so they tend to select reading materials and watch TV programmes that are in harmony with their existing beliefs and which do not threaten their established beliefs. Severin and Tankard (2001) hypothesise that people's perception of things, issues or events tend to be swayed by their own wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors. They assert that response to a particular message, for example, is likely to stimulate diverse reactions in different people because of their varying backgrounds or past experiences. Folarin (2006) states

that these complex variables (such as psychological disposition, past experiences, cultural expectations and social relationships) in conjunction with language constraints and the “limited experience factor” result in the selective perception process, which takes place in a ‘stop-gate’ fashion with selective exposure, selective attention and selective retention (p.85). In other words, you have to be exposed to a message before you can attend to it, you have to pay attention before you can perceive the message, you have to perceive it before you can retain it or for later recall.

### **Selective Exposure**

Selective exposure, according to Baran and Davis (2010) is people’s tendency to expose themselves to or attend to media messages they feel are in accord with their already-held attitudes and interests and the parallel tendency to avoid those that might create dissonance. Folarin (2006) explains that it is only natural that people seek out information that caters for their own interests, confirms their beliefs, and boosts their own ego, while avoiding those that are contrary to their own predispositions and attack their self-image. This information determines which papers they subscribe to or read at all, which television stations they tune to, and which programmes they watch on those channels.

### **Selective Attention**

Cantril (2002) asserts that selective attention is the tendency for individuals to pay attention to those parts of a message that are in consonance with strongly held attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours, and the tendency to avoid those parts of a message that go against strongly held attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours. We are exposed to too

many mass media messages or information daily from both the prints and electronic media, but our choice on which message or information to receive, is known as selective attention. Selective attention, therefore is as a result of already held interest or attitude. In order to avoid confusion, the human brain has to select which information to pay attention to at any given time because the eye processes information much faster than the brain can interpret (Folarin, 2006).

### **Selective Perception**

No two individuals share same meaning for the same message. According to Cantril (2002) Selective perception plays an important role in communication of any sort. Selective perception means that different people can react to the same message in very different ways. No communicator can assume that a message will have the intended meaning for all receivers, or even that it will have the same meaning for all receivers. Okunna (1999) also explains that people selectively perceive media content the way they want to see it. Each individual reserves the right to determine what meaning particular information will make on him or her. Most times our previous experience and current disposition (needs, interests, moods etc) determine what meaning we make out of a mass media message.

### **Selective Retention**

Selective retention is rooted in the capacity of members of mass media audience to retain or discard mass media messages or information. Okenwa (2002) explains that no individual possesses the capacity to retain all the stimuli from the media; that will amount to so much. The choice open to the individual will be to select those stimuli

that reinforce his ego or those that are not at variance with his or her purpose for living (Okenwa, 2002). Folarin, therefore indicates that none of us can retain for later recall all the messages we receive. Moreover, some messages are forgotten more quickly than others. We more accurately remember messages that are favourable to our self-image than messages that are unfavourable. The saliency of the message (relevance to our needs), the method of transmission and the interests and beliefs of the receiver are also known to affect retention rate (Folarin, 2006).

### **Criticisms of the Perception Theory**

This theory has been criticised for ignoring potential influence by factors, such as political, social and economic, other than a person's emotional state. It has also been condemned for the difficulty it presents in measuring long-term effect and for overlooking the importance of cognitive processes. It is also criticised for being unsuitable for information and education media because it narrows the scope of knowledge that the audience acquire. Finally it fails to consider the possibility that when a negative stimulus is overcome, enjoyment is provided (Bryant & Davies, 2006).

Selective exposure, attention, perception and retention work together in rather complex ways, not in isolation, and they contribute to the cultivation of the attitudes of acceptance, avoidance, rejection and denial; and they render it unlikely for any person to be a passive, helpless receiver of media messages. The perception theory, therefore suggests that viewers of *Talking Point*, in accordance with their own wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors, will have different perceptions about the genre.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods of data collection and analyses used for the study. It includes such areas as research design, population, sampling, sample size, data collection, and the data analysis procedures.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

The approach to this study is qualitative. Qualitative research, according to Hancock (2002), is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data. Creswell (2009) also observed that qualitative data consists of open-ended information that the researcher gathers through interviews with participants. The goal of this research is to obtain insights into *Talking Point* (television talk show) viewing in order to increase understanding of the phenomena. This requires subjective data collected from individuals who are information-rich; thus the choice of this approach.

#### 3.2 Research Design

A case study research design was employed in this study. Case studies are a design of inquiry in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a programme, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals and collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

According to Hancock and Algozzine (2006), through case studies, researchers hope to gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved. Case study offers a richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods.

The design was therefore chosen for this study because of its advantages in revealing in detail the unique perceptions and concerns of individual participants in a real-world situation, thus to understand *Talking Point* based on the perspectives of students of the University of Education, Winneba, in great depth, which would have been lost in other designs.

### **3.3 Population**

In this study, the population was made up of students of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW–Winneba campus). As stated by Kwak (2004), the most active consumers of television talk shows are the educated youth. This population—UEW–Winneba Campus— was therefore chosen because the students are educated and most of them are youth. Again, the population was given preference because of the nature of the research which focused on an English-mediated talk show. Finally, proximity to the researcher was what informed the choice of University of Education, Winneba (UEW–Winneba campus). In a research where first-hand information about a social process is required, the researcher must try to reduce distance between themselves and the case (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

### 3.4 Sampling Technique

According to Kusi (2012), sampling is the process of selecting a sample or a subgroup for a study. Sampling has to do with representation of individuals and subcategories making up the population group (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993). A random sampling strategy would be inappropriate for the exploration of the central phenomenon of this study because the purpose here is not to generate a representative sample and then generalise the results, but rather to learn from people who are 'information rich' and can best help to understand the specific interest of this research. For the purpose of this research, therefore, respondents were selected using the purposive and snowball sampling procedures.

Creswell (2013) defines purposive sampling as the selection of sites or participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. Purposive sampling is suitable for qualitative studies where the researcher is interested in informants who because of their experience of the phenomenon under investigation have the best knowledge concerning the research topic. In the opinion of Bernard (2002), purposive sampling is a nonrandom technique where the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience. Creswell (2013) points out that when using purposeful sampling, decisions need to be made about who or what is sampled, what form the sampling should take, and how many people or sites need to be sampled. Per the goal of the research, purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants who were known to meet the criteria of the study and who could talk from personal experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Consequently, regular students of the University of Education, Winneba (Winneba campus) who have had experiences watching *Talking Point* at least twice in a month

in 2014 were purposively sampled. However, as the number of subjects needed to generate reliable results from the study was insufficient, the snowball sampling technique was employed in order to trace additional participants.

Creswell (2005:206) asserts that the snowball strategy is a form of purposeful sampling in qualitative research that “typically proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks participants to recommend other individuals to study”. Snowball yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Vogt, 1999). You choose a snowball sample when you do not know the members of your target population. Since respondents who were information-rich were most preferred for the study, and all the members of the target population were not readily known, individuals fitting the criteria of the study were contacted to participate and recommend other individuals who were also suitable for the study. The recommended individuals then also contacted others they knew that were appropriate for the study. This continued until the required number for the study was arrived at.

### **3.5 Sample size**

Creswell (2013, 1998) states that as a very general rule of thumb, qualitative samples for a single study involving individual interviews usually lie at under fifty (50). Similarly, Adler and Adler (2012) advise a sample size of between 12 and 60, and



Ragin (2012) (cited in Baker & Edwards, 2012) between 20 and 50. In accordance with this, a sample size of twenty-five (25) was drawn from the population.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Data for this research was collected through in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe an interview as a detailed conversation about a participant's thoughts and feelings about a particular subject. Qualitative interviews are designed to help participants tell stories about events they have experienced, and they result in personal, detailed descriptions that cannot be easily obtained by other methods of inquiry (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Also, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) posit that interviews are particularly well suited to understanding the social actor's experience and perspective. Semi-structured interviews allow not only for assessing the participants' opinions, statements and convictions, they also help to elicit narratives about their personal experiences. Results obtained through semi-structured interviews can be compared among each other since all participants are required to express their views about the same general themes (Nohl 2009). This data collection instrument was thus selected to help participants tell stories about their experiences with *Talking Point*, resulting in personal, detailed descriptions that could not have been easily obtained by other methods of inquiry. In all, the semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with seven participants.

Focus Group Interview is a “carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain opinions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Krueger and Casey, 2000, p. 5). A focus group interview is a group interview of

approximately six to twelve people who share similar characteristics or common interests. A facilitator guides the group based on a predetermined set of topics. The facilitator creates an environment that encourages participants to share their perceptions and points of view. As stated by Hebbeler and Gerlach-Downie (2002), focus groups can be used to gain clarity on the way people experience a programme. Surveys assume that people know how they feel. But sometimes they do not. Sometimes it takes listening to the opinions of others in a small and safe group setting before people form thoughts and opinions. Focus groups are well suited for those situations. Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and deep insight. They allow individuals to describe their feelings and experiences (DeVellis, 2003). Regarding the number of focus group discussions for a particular research, Krueger (1994) proposes that the least may be three (3) and the extreme, twelve (12). For the purpose of this study, therefore, three focus group discussions with six participants each were conducted.

### **3.7 Techniques for Data Analysis**

Analysing data in a qualitative study, according to Frankel and Wallen (2003) essentially involves analysing and synthesising the information the researcher obtains from various sources into a coherent description of what he or she has observed or otherwise discovered. During this phase, the researcher must make “sense” out of what was just uncovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes (Creswell, 2009).

There are many ways to analyse informants' talk about their experiences, and thematic analysis which was adopted for this study, is one such ways. Below are the individual steps the researcher followed to conduct a thematic analysis for the data gathered:

- i. The first step was the transcription of interviews. This is where all relevant parts of the recorded interview data were transcribed from an audio to a text format.
- ii. The second step involved reading through the data. In order to get a general sense of the overall meaning of the data, all transcribed interviews were read through. This provided the cornerstones for the identification of relevant codes and themes.
- iii. Generation of codes and themes constituted the third step. At this stage, the materials were organized into segments of text (Rossman & Rallis in Creswell 2009). These segments were then labeled with terms that describe the data on different levels of abstraction. Categories at the highest level of abstraction, called themes, were deduced from the central phenomenon and the research questions.
- iv. The fourth and final step in analysing the data gathered was ‘interpreting the meaning of the themes’. According to Creswell (2009:189), “qualitative research is interpretative research”. At this stage, therefore, the meanings of the coded data were interpreted and the findings were compared “with information gleaned from the literature or theories” (Creswell, 2009:189).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data and discusses the findings thereof. It highlights the demographic characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, etc) of the respondents; and also why they watch *Talking Point*. The chapter also analyses how students perceive *Talking Point*, and how *Talking Point* affects them, among others. In all, the analyses have been grouped under four main headings:

1. Analysis and Discussion of Demographic Data of the Respondents
2. Analysis and Discussion of Reasons for which Respondents watch *Talking Point* programme.
3. Analysis and Discussion of Respondents' Perception of *Talking Point*.
4. Analysis and Discussion of how the *Talking Point* programme affects the respondents.

#### 4.1.0 Analysis and Discussion of Demographic Data of the Respondents

The main analysis under this section focuses on important background information about the respondents. Demographic variables that were given consideration were Gender, Age, Occupation, Religion, and Ethnicity.

#### 4.1.1 Gender of Respondents

Table 1 below shows the number of respondents by gender. It also includes the weighted percent of respondents in each of the (male and female) categories.

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	14	56
Female	11	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Out of the twenty-five (25) respondents, fourteen (14) were males and eleven (11) were females, representing 56% and 44% respectively. In a State of The University Address (2013), Prof. Akwasi Asabere-Ameyaw, Vice-Chancellor of University of Education, Winneba, stated that the percentages of male and female enrollment were 57% and 43% respectively.

Ghana's 2010 census data also shows that females were less likely to have attended school than males (71.7% as against 81.7%). The higher ratio of males to females may be due to several factors, including the attitude some Ghanaians have towards female education. According to Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah (2013), among the factors causing the high rate of gender-disparity are "Socio-cultural considerations, gendered social practices within households, financial difficulties associated with women education, lack of role models for girls in schools, and hostile school environment, which has been documented as sexual harassments from male students,

inadequate institutional facilities, and so on. Socioeconomically, poor parents tend to sacrifice their girls' education in favor of males when they have to make the financial decision to send only one child to school. Culturally, in most rural areas when family budget is tight, there is the entrenched perception of parents sacrificing their daughters' education and request of them to participate in economic activities to supplement household income. Girls are more likely than males to support their family either by engaging in selling goods and services or babysitting their younger siblings especially in the rural areas" (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013:5). These developments may have accounted for the relatively low number of females in the university. It is worth noting, however, that the 44% female respondent exceeds the average enrolment for the university which stands at 43%.

#### 4.1.2 Age of Respondents

Table 2 below shows the age range of respondents with the corresponding number and percentage of respondents in each grouping.

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18-23	3	12
24-29	7	28
30-35	11	44
36 and above	4	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Statistics from Table 2 above shows that out of the twenty-five (25) respondents, three (3) were between the ages of 18 and 23 (representing 12%), seven (7) were between 24 and 29 years old (representing 28%), eleven (11) of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 35 (representing 44%), and four (4) was recorded for those aged 36 and above (representing 16%). In Ghana, the educational system is such that by the time a person completes secondary level education (which is the stage before university), that person is between the ages of 15 and 17. This is because one has to spend a total of between 12 and 13 years at the basic and secondary school levels before one can gain admission into a university. Also, because the University of Education, Winneba is responsible for teacher education, many of the students are trained teachers. This means that such students spent 3 years at the college of education (Teacher Training College) and some years teaching before entering into the university. This may explain why most of the respondents fell within the age brackets of 24-29 and 30-33 while a small number of respondents were between 18 and 23.

#### 4.1.3 Occupation of Respondents

Table 3 below summarises the occupational status of respondents.

**Table 3: Occupational Status of Respondents**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Teaching	15	60
Others	6	24
None	4	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Data was collected on the occupational status of the respondents and grouped under 'Teaching', 'Others', and 'None' as shown in Table 3 above. Respondents who fell under 'teaching' were professional teachers who had been teaching at some level of education (mostly basic or secondary) and had gained admission into the university to further their education. Respondents who were grouped under 'others' were students of the University of Education, Winneba who, prior to entering the university had been engaged in some gainful employment. There were also the 'none' category of respondents. These were students (mostly from Senior High Schools across the country) who had been unemployed before and during their studentship. From the data collected, the total number of respondents who were teachers was fifteen (representing 60%). Respondents who were employed in "other" occupations (aside from teaching) were six (representing 24%). Finally, respondents who had no occupation were four in number (representing 16%). University of Education, Winneba is dedicated to teacher education. The university trains professional teachers for all levels of education (UEW 19th Congregation, 2014). This is what accounted for the high number of respondents who were teachers.

#### **4.1.4 Religious Affiliation of Respondents**

Analysis of religious backgrounds of the respondents was very relevant to this study because people's perception of things, issues, or events has the tendency to be swayed by their religious beliefs (Severin & Tankard, 2001). Thus, one interprets information in a way that is congruent with one's existing values and beliefs. Table 4 below shows the religious breakdown of respondents.



**Table 4: Religious Background of Respondents**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Christianity	19	76
Islam	3	12
Traditional	1	4
Others	2	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in Table 4 above, respondents who profess Christianity were nineteen in number (representing 76%). Respondents who follow the doctrines of Islam were three (representing 12%). Only one respondent (representing 4%) was a Traditional believer and two (representing 8%) belonged to religions other than Traditional religion, Islam, and Christianity.

#### **4.1.5 Ethnic Background of Respondents**

Ethnicity is a factor that could have an influence on people's perception of issues or things (Severin & Tankard, 2001; McCombs & Becker, 1976). Table 5 below shows the distribution by ethnicity for the respondents.

**Table 5: Respondents' Ethnic Groups**

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Akan	9	36
Ewe	7	28
Farefari	2	8
Gonja	1	4
Guan	2	8
Wala	1	4
Ga-Dangme	1	4
Konkonba	1	4
Dagaaba	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

From the data collected, the twenty-five (25) respondents belong to different ethnic groups across the country. As shown in Table 4 above, nine (9) out of the total number of respondents were of the Akan ethnic group. This figure represents 36%. Seven (7) of the respondents (representing 28%) were Ewes while two (representing 8%) each identified themselves as Guans and Farefaris. The Dagaaba, Ga-Dangme, Gonja, Konkomba, and Wala ethnic groups all had one respondent (representing 4%) each.

#### **4.2.0 Analysis and Discussion of Reasons for which Respondents watch *Talking Point***

##### **RQ1. What are the factors that motivate students at University of Education, Winneba to watch *Talking Point*?**

The first research question sought to identify and examine the factors that motivate students at University of Education, Winneba to watch *Talking Point*. After conducting semi-structured interviews with seven (7) respondents and three (3) focus group discussions (of six participants each), themes that emerged were Education, Information, and Entertainment.

##### **4.2.1 Education**

According to Abdul Hayi Moomen, the host of *Talking Point*, the programme aims at educating and informing the general public and members of government on relevant news and current affairs. Generally, respondents indicated that they watch *Talking Point* for educational purposes. They explained that *Talking Point* afforded one the opportunity to learn new things thereby contributing to one's stock of knowledge. As one of the respondents noted; "sometimes, very important issues are discussed on *Talking Point*, so I watch so that I can get educated." Another respondent said;

I watch *Talking Point* because I want to learn... I want to become a politician in future so I want to learn from the way people argue. I want to be well versed with political, cultural and socio-economic issues of the country so that I can be confident when arguing.

Others, in their view, explained that they watched *Talking Point* to enable them learn new vocabulary and good expression as used by both panelists and the host. It is

therefore indicative that people watch *Talking Point* because they desire education of some sort and this they believe they can acquire by watching the programme. The finding is in consonance with those of Qin (2008) and Kim and Kocsis (2010) which findings identified education as one of the reasons for which people watch talk shows.

#### **4.2.2 Information/News**

This segment of the study was meant to find out whether or not the respondents watch *Talking Point* in order to be informed about recent and important events. It is worth noting that all the respondents, with regards to this question, answered in the affirmative. They noted that *Talking Point* was an important source of information and news across the globe. One of the participants in the focus group discussion said, “there are some things you may not know or hear, but when panelists discuss them, it will inform you and keep you abreast of the times.” Respondents also claimed that they were motivated to watch *Talking Point* because the programme provided them the opportunity to get details and in-depth explanation on issues which normally were only highlighted in the news items. This emphasises the point that the audience watch *Talking Point* to find out what is happening around them and to satisfy their curiosity. This finding reinforces the finding by Amoquando (2013) that *Talking Point* and *Good Evening Ghana* are considered a reliable source of information. To this effect, it can be stated that the audience is active in their decisions on media content, and content is selected for a purpose, whether it is to satisfy a goal, motivation, or need (McQuail, 2000). This is in consonance with the Uses and Gratification theory.

### 4.2.3 Entertainment

From the interviews and the focus group discussions, it emerged that entertainment was not a factor that influenced respondents to watch *Talking Point*. Almost all of them stated categorically that entertainment was not a reason for which they watched *Talking Point*. As one of them pointed out; “*Talking Point* is a programme where serious issues are discussed with all seriousness. Therefore, I would rather watch *Obra* for entertainment but not *Talking Point*.” This finding is in contrast with the assertion by Mittel (2003) that pleasures of “entertainment” are more central to audience practice in their engagement with talk shows. The finding further contradicts Cress and Rapert (1996) whose study showed that the three primary viewing motives of talk shows were entertainment, to pass time, and relaxation. The finding also refutes Ilie’s (2001) assertion that Late Night Talk shows are entertaining. Though a late night talk show, *Talking Point* is not regarded as an entertainment-oriented talk show.

It is worth mentioning that majority of respondents of this study were above 25 (range from 27 to 35) years of age and were gainfully employed. They therefore needed information in order to help them make the best possible decisions to improve their lives. Consequently, they turned to *Talking Point* as they considered it as one of the most important sources of information and education rather than entertainment. This may account for why entertainment was not a factor that affected respondents’ decision to watch *Talking Point*.

The finding is also significant in the sense that when television was inaugurated in Ghana in 1965, the goal was to utilise the facility to promote education and foster the interest of Ghanaians in international affairs (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998). Following from this, it can be said that *Talking Point*, a programme on Ghana Television (GTV), has lived up to the expectations of the Ghanaian public.

#### **4.3.0 Analysis and Discussion of Respondents' Perception of *Talking Point* programme.**

##### **RQ 2: How do students perceive *Talking Point*?**

This research question probed the perception of the audience about *Talking Point*. Here, the impressions of the audience regarding the host of *Talking Point*, the guests who appear on *Talking Point*, and the issues discussed on *Talking Point* were explored. The data was further organized and sectionalized into: students' perception of the host of *Talking Point*, students' perception of the guests featured on *Talking Point*, and students' perception of the issues discussed.

##### **4.3.1 Perception about the Topics/Issues Discussed on *Talking Point***

This was largely to find out how the students perceived the issues discussed on *Talking Point*. In response, a good number of respondents pointed out that the programme discussed major current events or issues of national and international importance. They added that the issues were diverse but revolved around political, social, economic, and cultural subjects. As one of the respondents remarked; “the

topics vary. They talk about a lot of things especially what is important at a given time or current trends. So the issues can be political or social.”

To a large portion of the focus group participants, the programme was helpful, and of strategic importance as it tackled social issues holistically and efficiently. This finding corroborates Ilie’s (2001) finding which suggests that the topics of talk shows “deal mostly with concerns about current issues in the public and private spheres, such as social and professional conflicts, marginalisation, among others” (Ilie, 2001:216).

Again the finding fits into Carbaugh’s (1988) issue-centered classification of talk shows. Carbaugh contends that talk shows can be classified into personality-centered talk shows and issue-centered talk shows. According to him (Carbaugh) the personality centered talk show interviews a popular figure in order to give the viewers some information about the guest and his or her work. Issue-centered talk shows, as the name suggests, are focused on serious social or political issues. On the basis of the finding therefore, one can assume that *Talking Point* falls into the category of issue-centered talk shows and can be regarded as a serious educative programme.

### **Favourite Topics**

The major themes identified, with regards to the topics that interested interviewees and participants of the focus group discussions most, were politics, security, and health and sanitation.

### **Political Topics/Issues**

On politics, a considerable number of respondents intimated that political discussions on *Talking Point* held attention and interest because substantive policy issues were debated and panelists expressed their opinions assertively on the issues. One of the respondents said, “when the issue/topic under discussion is political, the programme is so interesting that you wish it does not end. May be because of their political differences, the panelists attach some passion to the discussion.”

With regard to *Talking Point* host change, it is worth mentioning that there are a host of reasons for which the moderators of a television show like *Talking Point* could be changed. Rebranding the programme or reassigning the moderator to a more challenging task could necessitate a change of the moderator of a particular television show. The change could even be a response to audience’s criticism of the moderator. However, although the view expressed by respondents in respect of changing of *Talking Point* moderators may appear to be unsatisfactory, it provides a strong case to explore the ideologies underlining the selection of *Talking Point* host.

The respondents’ interest in political issues could be as a result of the country’s vibrant democratic politics (Gyimah-Boadi & Prempeh, 2012; Carbone, 2012; Whitfield, 2011; Amoako, 2008). According to Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh (2012), Ghana has an active legislature with the key presence of a strong and credible political opposition; an independent judiciary; a growing free and vibrant media providing ample coverage of public affairs and fierce debate on political issues; as well as a relatively assertive civil society. Thus, a participant of the focus group discussion noted;



I like political topics most because I want to become a politician in future. Even if I don't become a politician at all, I'll be a social activist— somebody who will always remain objective and help fight for the less-privileged in society.

Additionally, since nearly all the respondents were youth, one can suggest that their unwavering interest in political issues/topics could be due to the assertion that the youth are active agents in the political process (Gyampo, 2012). According to Gyampo, Scholars (such as Knebel, 1937; Miller, 1936; and Rivta, 1975) are unanimous on the vibrant and active nature of the youth in the political processes.

This finding, however, is in consonance with Alam's (2007) claim that Current Affair Talk Show programmes mostly focus on political and social issues and also on conflicts. Alam posits that some media practitioners argue in defence of the Current Affair Talk Show programmes that political issues and the prevailing conflicts have been intense because of that all journalists pay more attention to and cover issues that border on politics and conflict (Alam, 2007 cited in Madni et, al. 2011).

### **Health and Sanitation Issues/Topics**

A good number of interviewees and participants of the focus group discussions expressed their interest in issues on health and sanitation. They were of the opinion that health and sanitation was one of the main issues confronting Ghana and Africa as a whole. According to them (the respondents), the management of floods, solid waste, and related diseases had been an albatross around the neck of Ghanaians. As one respondent put it;

Ghana still grapples with the collection of solid waste. Heaps of solid waste are common sights especially near market centres and low income areas. This poses grave risks to human life and the environment as well. I think these issues are of more concern to majority of Ghanaians including me. This is why I prefer topics on health and sanitation most.

According to a desk study carried out by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP, 2012), poor sanitation costs Ghana 420 million cedis each year, equivalent to US\$290 million. This sum is the equivalent of US\$12 per person in Ghana per year or 1.6% of the national GDP. In view of the serious sanitation challenges, the government of Ghana established the National Sanitation Day in October 2014. These could be reasons for which this group of respondents preferred topics on health and sanitation most.

### **Security Issues/Topics**

Another important finding identified by a section of the respondents with regard to the topics that interest them most was security. In the opinion of Wolfers (1962, p.149) cited in Mesjasz (2004) and Møller (2001), "Security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked" (Wolfers, (1962, p.149) cited in Mesjasz, 2004; and Møller, 2001). This section of the respondents was of the view that security was necessary for a stable democracy. They claimed that discussions on state security and its implications would help address current security issues in Ghana and by extension, Africa. One respondent observed;

Ethnic conflict has hindered national unity and socio-economic growth in Africa. So when *Talking Point* discusses topics on conflict and dispute resolution, one becomes informed in such a way as to be able to help or advise people involved in the conflict towards agreement/resolution.

What is notable though is that a greater number of the respondents who cited topics on security as what interests them most identified themselves as belonging to ethnic groups within northern Ghana. Mbowura (2014) notes, “the region (northern Ghana) has been enmeshed in inter-ethnic conflicts over the past three decades marked by phenomenal increases in mayhem and the destruction of lives and property” (Mbowura, 2014: 108). Given this assertion, the respondents probably think discussions on reconciliation and prevention of conflicts, for example, could raise hopes of possible solutions to conflicts, and eventually help deliver peace in their regions and the country as a whole. This result affirms claims by Alam (2007) cited in Madni et, al. (2011) that Current Affair Talk Show programmes mostly focus on conflicts, among others.

### **Political Influence**

This part of the study was meant to find out from the respondents if they considered *Talking Point* to be free from political influence. Consequently, respondents were asked specifically whether they trusted *Talking Point* to be free of political influence. A significant number of them were disparaging of *Talking Point* and said government exerted a certain level of influence on the programme. This group of respondents believed that Ghana Television (which airs *Talking Point*) was pro-government and thus acted as a mouthpiece for the political views of the government in power. They further adduced various reasons to prove their claim. As put by one respondent,

“*Talking Point* is not devoid of political interference but the level of this interference is minimal.” A participant of the focus group discussion also remarked;

I see political influence because sometimes you would see that the host’s talks bear political influence. Also they keep changing the hosts especially when there is a change in government. Sometimes too, certain important topics are not discussed for fear it might make government unpopular.

It is worth noting that majority of the respondents who considered *Talking Point* to be influenced by government were from the Akan speaking regions of Ghana whereas majority of those who regarded the programme to be free from political influence belonged to the Ewe, Farefari, Wale, Dagomba, and other ethnic groups. A study by Fridy (2006) suggests that members of the Akan ethnolinguistic group form a major support base for the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) and tend to be unsympathetic towards the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC). In similar manner, the NDC (which constitutes the ruling government) enjoys high levels of support from Ewes and people from the Northern regions (Upper West, Upper East, and Northern) of Ghana. This could be the possible reason for which the respondents expressed differing views about the freeness of *Talking Point*.

The differences in the views expressed by respondents reinforces the Perception theory, which posits that the same information or thing may carry different meaning for different people, particularly people with differing political, religious, cultural, ethnic, national or other substantial differences.

## **Gender**

A large portion of focus group participants and interviewees felt *Talking Point* was not gendered. Although they did not reject the idea that some sessions of *Talking Point* were targeted at women, the discussants' experience of the programme was that it was balanced and allowed for both male and female identification. This view was defended mainly on the grounds that the panelists and the issues discussed on the programme were balanced in terms of gender. A participant intimated, "*Talking Point* topics cut across different spheres of life so it would be wrong for anyone to suggest that the programme leans towards one particular gender." Also, a female respondent indicated;

The programme does not only discuss women issues but as and when it becomes important, they do. So I would say they discuss issues pertaining to both males and females, even though hardly do I see issues concerning males being discussed. Similarly, scarcely do I see a female host.

This view of respondents, therefore, departs from those expressed in earlier works by Ayim (2011) and Timberg (2002). In the view of Ayim, for example, neither are the issues of women discussed on television talk shows nor do women feature as panelists.

### **4.3.2 Perception about the Host**

The host is a central part of any talk show programme. He/she functions as intermediary between the programme and the viewers. The persona of the host is as important to the show as the guests' (Bruun, 1999). Oftentimes the host is the reason

why people follow the program in the first place (Danileiko, 2005). The credibility of the host, therefore, and how the audience perceives him/her play a significant role in the success of the programme. As suggested by Ahmed (2010), the job of a talk show host or hostess is to conduct the discussion in a way to help the audience reach a meaningful conclusion/understanding. The host or hostess should not accentuate what he or she thinks is the right opinion to support. The research question, thus, sought to determine the views of the students about the host of *Talking Point* and how this informs their decision to watch the programme. The data gathered was grouped into the following:

- Personality of the Host
- Intelligence level of the Host
- Objectivity of the Host

#### **Personality of the Host**

This section of the study solicited views of respondents about the behavioural, temperamental, emotional, and mental attributes of the host that make him appear appealing or otherwise to the audience. A general feeling in the focus groups was that the host of *Talking Point* had a unique personality and was always at his best. This, they said, made the programme thrilling and captivating. The discussants also acknowledged that the host had a genuine interest in talking to people, learning about them, and controlling and directing the conversation meaningfully. One respondent stated; “Moomen actively listens to what the panelist is saying without focusing on what he (Moomen) wants to say next.”

This finding supports one of Ilie's (2006) key features of talk shows which states that the talk show host monitors most of the discussion by stimulating, guiding, and facilitating the participants' roles and contributions to the programme.

### **Intelligence Level of the Host**

This part of the study was meant to find out from the respondents if they thought the host of *Talking Point* was knowledgeable in the areas of his operation. It was actually to determine if the host conducted in-depth research into the issues/topics discussed on the *Talking Point* programme. Most respondents acknowledged that the host was intelligent and smart. They further explained that he (the host) understood his responsibilities and prepared for them. Some of the respondents made references to a few of the host's line of questioning to indicate his preparedness. When asked whether they thought the host did his research well or not, a focus group discussant stated;

Ooh the host is very good! He asks questions in a very logical manner and makes sure he gets the best out of the guests. When a guest tries to divert the discussion, he quickly brings him/her back on track.

Another section of the respondents identified the language use of the host as an indicator of his intelligence. According to these respondents, the host of *Talking Point* chose his words very carefully so that he could precisely express his ideas. The respondents thought that the host's concern for the precision of language showed that he (the host of *Talking Point*) understood what kind of language resonated well not only with the guests but also the audience.

### **Objectivity of the Host**

The import of this section of the study was to find out from the respondents if the host of *Talking Point* exhibited a great deal of objectivity in the hosting and moderation of the programme —whether or not the host showed bias of any kind. Almost all the respondents admitted that the host of *Talking Point* exhibited a high sense of balance in his manner of questioning and moderation at large. They added that he (the host) posed questions which expressed contrary or diametrically opposed perspectives thereby compelling the panelists to validate, clarify and defend their positions. This finding supports those of Amoquando (2013) which indicates that the hosts of *Talking Point* and *Good Evening Ghana* are objective; and Yirilabuo (2002) in which the host of *Kwaku-One-on-One* was reported by respondents as being objective.

A few of the respondents thought otherwise though. They were of the view that the host was sometimes more critical of some group of individuals. Also he did not allow the panelists to delve into certain areas considered to be sensitive governmental issues.

#### **4.3.3 Perception about *Talking Point* Panel**

According to Rahman and Marjan (2013), guests play a significant role in talk shows since their (the guests') role can make a talk show tedious or cheerful. During the discussion, respondents were asked to comment on the guests who appeared on *Talking Point*. Their responses bordered on the guests' preparedness and objectivity.



### **Preparedness of the Panelists**

This was to find out whether panelists of *Talking Point* prepared well enough before appearing on the programme and whether they (the panelists) met the expectations of the audience (respondents). A great number of the respondents pointed out that majority of the guests demonstrated a high sense of intelligence and in-depth knowledge in the discourse. They added that the individuals hosted were quality brains and experienced professionals who possessed the requisite knowledge on the issue under discussion. In addition, respondents noted that, the panelists, apart from feeling confident and comfortable each time they appeared on the programme, made use of vivid illustrations to drive home their points. Again, in the opinion of majority of both interviewees and focus group participants, panelists of *Talking Point* often tried as much as possible to make the programme conversational by listening to their fellow panelists and bridging key points. One respondent stated, “the panelists listen to the host’s question and also to each other so that they can build on what each person was saying.”

This view however did not receive widespread acceptance among all participants of the study. Responses of a small number of participants showed that some of the panelists of *Talking Point* occasionally goofed. According to the respondents, such guests were not considerate of their fellow panelists. Instead, they dominated the discussion by hogging the airtime. An interviewee noted that most of *Talking Point*’s panelists did not show enough enthusiasm when they appeared on the programme. A participant of the focus group discussion also believed that on a few occasions, guests tended to be repetitive and bias. As she put it;

Some of them are simply not good! Sometimes it's irritating to hear a panelist repeat what has already been said. What annoys the most is when they run away from the truth, perhaps because it is not in line with their political beliefs.

On the whole, majority of the interviewees and the focus group discussants admitted that most of the guests who appear on *Talking Point* distinguished themselves by putting out their best. This finding supports earlier ones by Rahman and Marjan (2013), Boominathan (2012), Chu (2011), and Bruun (1999) which (findings) suggest that the talk show programme is associated with guests with varying attitudes and expertise.

Chu (2011), for example, asserts that talk show guests can be put into two categories. The first category, according to him, is made up of those who are well aware of sociopolitical issues and have the linguistic ability to engage in a meaningful discourse. The second are referred to as Subject Matter experts. Chu explains that these experts might be invited to the show to explain the specifics of an issue, but once the topic is no longer considered a relevant discourse, the guests may never return to the show (Chu, 2011).

Using this classification, we can assume that *Talking Point* guests fall into the category of those who are well aware of sociopolitical issues and have the linguistic ability to engage in a meaningful discourse. At the same time, the guests can be regarded as 'Subject Matter' experts because as and when their expertise is relevant to the topic, they are invited to the show to explain the specifics of the issue.

### **Objectivity of the Panelists**

The objective of this segment of the study was to find out whether the panelists tackled issues objectively. A good number of the respondents were of the view that *Talking Point* panel objectively analysed and commented on the issues that were being discussed. A general consensus among participants of the focus group discussion was that unlike the panel members of other talk show programmes in Ghana, *Talking Point* panel members did not place spin on facts. The respondents opined that discussants on *Talking Point*, in an attempt to maintain their credibility, tried as much as possible to do objective review. They thoroughly evaluated issues in a balanced and neutral manner. This, according to respondents, provided assurance to the public that GBC (owner of GTV which produces *Talking Point*) was impartial and fair.

However, a handful of responses gathered from a section of the respondents disconfirmed claims that panelists who featured on *Talking Point* were objective. This group believed that when the discussion became controversial, guests were sometimes put in the middle of intense debate on issues that elicited starkly opposing views. They added that panel members used the discussion to give credence to their entrenched positions. This group of respondents also submitted that it was impossible for any panelist to be totally objective. As a result, the respondents suggested that there was a serious need to bring objectivity and transparency to bear on the panel selection process.

#### **4.4.0 Analysis and Discussion of how the *Talking Point* programme affects the respondents.**

##### **RQ3. How does *Talking Point* affect the students?**

This section of the study aimed at assessing the effect of *Talking Point* on the respondents. The study sought to find out the extent to which the programme affected the intellectual and social domains of the respondents. All participants of the study acknowledged the crucial role *Talking Point* played in their lives. They agreed that *Talking Point* affected their lives positively. Two broad themes emerged from the data gathered. These are Intellectual development and Character Reformation.

##### **4.4.1 Intellectual Development**

Participants of the study noted that *Talking Point* contributed a great deal to their knowledge base by affording them the opportunity to learn new things and be abreast with time. The respondents contended that the programme (*Talking Point*) educated them to make better political, health and safety choices.

In their response to a question that sought to find out how their knowledge and opinions on issues changed after watching (sessions of) *Talking Point*, for example, respondents cited some particular topics and explained how discussions of these topics impacted their intellectual ability. The respondents' ability to recall the topics showed that they had gone through the selective perception process. These are selective exposure, selective attention and selective retention (Folarin, 2006). According to Folarin, one has to be exposed to a message before one can attend to it, one has to pay attention before one can perceive the message, and one has to perceive

the message before one can retain it or for later recall (Folarin, 2006). This, therefore, supports the Perception theory.

Respondents also indicated that the programme motivated them to learn and increase their awareness of public issues. An interviewee was of the view that the dominance of informative and educative topics on *Talking Point* had made her politically informed and had also deepened her understanding of democracy. As intimated by a focus group discussant; “*Talking Point* is an excellent format for discussing topics that viewers might not otherwise be exposed to. The programme, therefore, has made some of us the best informed and quite likely the least- entertained people on campus.”

This finding, however, contrasts Young’s (2004) finding that the effects of talk show on viewers are minimal. However, the finding reinforces similar findings by Ahmed (2014), Baumgartner and Morris (2006), and Kwak et al. (2004) which (findings) indicate that there is strong influence of talk shows on the individual’s political efficacy and intelligence.

#### **4.4.2 Character Reformation**

Participants cited social change and other long-term social benefits to justify the huge impact *Talking Point* had made on them. They noted that while political discussions on talk shows could often descend into partisan attacks, *Talking Point*, representing a more responsible mindset, debated issues in an enlightened and informative manner. This, the respondents believed did not only provide them with cultural experiences which could help broaden their perspectives, but also increased their tolerance and

appreciation for different lifestyles and opinions. This finding supports that of Clarke and Kitzinger (2004) which (finding) suggests that talk shows preach tolerance. Thus respondents considered this (benefit) a positive consequence of watching *Talking Point*. As one of them put it, “watching *Talking Point* can prevent the individual from engaging in a fight or argument which can disrupt a personal relationship.” The finding also lends credence to Davis and Mares’s (1998) finding that talk show viewing has a positive effect on the audience.

Again, participants argued that watching *Talking Point* gave them confidence which in turn increased their self-esteem and feelings of adequacy, acceptance and belonging. As one of them noted;

Having been watching *Talking Point* for some time now, I feel I have what it takes to influence public opinion on issues. This is because I have learnt a lot from the panelists presented on the programme. You know, these are not ordinary people but opinion leaders and role models.

#### **4.5.0 Summary**

Results from the study were presented in this chapter. Generally, themes were developed and interpreted and the findings were compared with information gleaned from the literature and theories that guided the study. Simple tables were used, however, to present demographic findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This final chapter summarises the findings of the study. It also provides the limitations of the study, and implications for future study. Finally, it draws conclusions from the study and offers recommendations.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that education and information are factors that motivate students at University of Education, Winneba to watch *Talking Point*. However, unlike findings by other scholars (Franke, 2011; Grindstaff, 2002; Penz, 1996) this finding does not reveal entertainment as a factor that influences students' viewership. The finding, therefore, lends credence to the uses and gratifications theory which argues that audience members are able to identify specific media content that will satisfy specific needs, and that their media choices are goal-directed and function-oriented (Baran & Davis, 2012; McQuail, 2010).

The study also revealed that *Talking Point* discusses major current events or issues of national and international importance. These issues revolve around political, social, economic, and cultural subjects. Although *Talking Point* discusses variety of topics, some of the respondents thought that the nature of the overall content and discussions were very much aligned with the agenda of government to counter any perceived opposition agenda.

With regard to the moderator of the show, respondents found him a unique personality who tried to be on the side of the audience and allowed guests to take centre stage during the discussion. Most respondents acknowledged that the host, apart from being intelligent and smart, exhibited excellent communication and presentation skills. In the opinion of respondents, the host conducted the show in a logical manner because of his immense research and interviewing skills. The respondents almost invariably admitted that the host of *Talking Point* exhibited a high sense of balance in his manner of questioning and moderation at large. Only few of the respondents, however, were of the view that discussions on *Talking Point* were heavily controlled and regulated by the host and were skewed towards the ideology of the state. These respondents regarded this as a conscious effort aimed mainly at projecting the good image of government. The varying opinions expressed here lend support to the perception theory which postulates that response to a particular message, for example, is likely to stimulate diverse reactions in different people because of their varying backgrounds or past experiences (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

The study also found that majority of the respondents held the view that panelists of *Talking Point* were knowledgeable and experienced professionals who even under pressure remained calm and confident. Additionally, respondents noted that panelists of *Talking Point* objectively analysed and commented on the issues under discussion. Again, a few of the respondents disagreed on the suggestion that sometimes guests who featured on *Talking Point* did not live up to expectation.



Additionally, the study revealed that *Talking Point* plays a crucial role in the lives of viewers. Respondents admitted that *Talking Point* has helped in shaping their thoughts, knowledge base and aspects of their social life.

## **5.2 Limitation of the Study**

The study focused on viewers of *Talking Point* who are regular students of the Winneba campus of University of Education, Winneba. Owing to the researcher's limited resources and time constraint, it was impossible to go beyond this study area.

Furthermore, the scarcity of literature on television talk shows in Ghana posed a challenge to the researcher as it became difficult to find valuable reference materials for the research. Also, it was quite difficult putting the students together for the focus group discussions. This was as a result of the differences in their schedules and academic time tables as these students offered different programmes. The researcher would have wished to conduct four (4) focus group discussions but could only conduct three (3). In spite of the above limitations, the study has critical implications for future studies, audience studies and for the talk show genre.

## **5.3 Future Study**

Since this research focused only on *Talking Point*, a further research could explore the way *Talking Point* is perceived in comparison to other television talk shows in Ghana. Future research can also interrogate the criteria for selecting the host, panelists, and the topics for discussion.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to investigate factors that motivate students at University of Education, Winneba to watch *Talking Point*; find out the students' perception of the programme; and find out how *Talking Point* affects the students. It was found that viewers of *Talking Point* are motivated to watch *Talking Point* by the needs to acquire education and to be well-informed about current national and international affairs. This finding, consequently, contradicts those of Mittel (2003), Ilie (2001), and Cress et al. (1996); all of which suggest that entertainment is the primary viewing motive of talk shows.

Respondents conceived the show as being gender balanced but not free from political interference. They saw both host and panelists of *Talking Point* to be intelligent, unbiased, and well-prepared when billed on the show. Findings further indicate viewers prefer to watch discussions on politics, security, and health and sanitation on *Talking Point*.

Finally, contrary to criticisms that talk shows are the cause of a variety of societal ills, *Talking Point* is considered to have had a positive impact on the respondents who are students at the University of Education, Winneba. According to the respondents, the programme has helped them to become knowledgeable in different spheres of life owing to the inherent educational value. They (the respondents) admitted that *Talking Point* has equipped them with intellectual and social skills.

Following from the above, it can be concluded that *Talking Point* has proven to have relevance in the process of educating and informing the public. The programme is effective in promoting intellectual development and character reformation. The quest for divergent and dissenting views is more grounded and institutionalised in talk shows (Clarke & Kitzinger, 2004) and *Talking Point* is not an exception.

Theoretically, the study validates the Uses and Gratification theory (McQuail, 2000) and the Perception theory (Severin & Tankard, 2001). This is because as some respondents identified information as a factor that influences them to watch *Talking Point*, others reported being motivated to watch the programme by the need for education on major socio-political issues. This reinforces the Uses and Gratifications theory which states that individuals are conscious of their needs and goals, and they situate their media viewing preferences on the satisfaction of these needs (McQuail, 2000). Again, although majority of the respondents reported that the host and panelists who appear on *Talking Point* are objective, some held a contrary opinion. This also confirms the Perception theory which assumes that the same information may carry different meaning for different people, particularly people with differing political, religious, cultural, ethnic, national or other substantial differences (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

### **5.5 Recommendation**

It is apparent that people take keen interest in watching *Talking Point* and would want to get involved as active audience who are able to express their views on the topic being discussed. However, the programme focuses only on the verbal exchanges

between the host and the guests in the studio. Public involvement or audience participation in the discussion is non-existent. It is therefore recommended that producers of *Talking Point* find a way to getting the audience involved in the discussion. Viewers should be offered the opportunity to respond to or express their opinions on the issues under discussion.

Although, *Talking Point* discusses different subjects including women's issues, respondents observed that majority of the guests who appear on the programme are men. Producers of *Talking Point* should therefore feature women on the show in order to whip up the interest of women folk in *Talking Point*.



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## APPENDIX

### QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

#### A. Background Questions

- Please, kindly introduce yourself/ yourselves
- What is your age?
- Occupation
- What is your religion?
- To which ethnic group do you belong?

#### B. Reasons for watching *Talking Point*

1. Please tell me why you watch *Talking Point*
2. What kind of feelings do you have when you watch *Talking Point*?
3. Does *Talking Point* provide you with entertainment? How?
4. Do you think *Talking Point* is educational? Why?
5. Do you think *Talking Point* is a source of news/information? Why?
6. How is *Talking Point* different from other talk show programmes?

#### C. Students' Perception of *Talking Point*

7. What topics are usually discussed on *Talking Point*?
8. Do you think *Talking Point* topics are gendered or lean towards males/females?
9. Which topics interest you most? Why?
10. Do you think *Talking Point* is free from political influences? Why?
11. What can you say about the host of *Talking Point*?

12. Do you think the host does his research well on the issues he discusses?
13. How effectively does the host lead the interview?
14. Do you sometimes disagree with the host's conclusion/opinion?
15. What is your opinion of the panelists who appear on *Talking Point*?
16. Would you say the process of selecting them is impartial and fair?
17. Are the guests able to tackle the issues to your satisfaction?
18. Do you think *Talking Point* is good for society? Why?
19. Would you like to see any different topics being discussed on *Talking Point*?

**D. How *Talking Point* affects Students**

20. Do you think you have benefitted in anyway by watching *Talking Point*?  
How?
21. Recall a segment of *Talking Point* that aired in 2014. Describe the segment. How did your knowledge and opinions on the subject matter change after watching the segment?
22. Do the issues contain any part of your life philosophy? Please tell me about them.
23. What types of values and ideals do you think are expressed in the issues that you noticed? Do you feel these reflect your own?
24. Is there anything else you would like to add?