

When highbrow meets lowbrow: are educational differences visible
in the consumption of “Trash TV”?

How higher- and lower educated millennials legitimize their consumption of
reality TV, tabloid TV and talk shows.

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Master Thesis CC4050
Arts, Culture and Society

Date: 18-06-2021

Abstract and Keywords:

Higher- and lower educated millennials and their consumption of “Trash TV”.

ABSTRACT:

This qualitative research examines the different ways in which both higher- and lower educated people legitimize their consumption of the three categories of trash TV. These categories consist of reality TV, tabloid TV and talk shows. There is already research done when it comes to the different ways that people from a different educational level legitimize their consumption of lowbrow culture. But there is not much research done that combines the three categories of trash TV and the differences in the way people legitimize their consumption of these genres. It is thus interesting to do research on these three particular trash TV genres and to see if there are clear differences among the way higher- and lower educated people legitimize their consumption of it. Research shows that higher educated people usually are more omnivore than lower educated in their television consumption. This means that higher educated people both consume lowbrow television, such as reality TV and tabloid TV and also highbrow television such as the news and serious talk shows. The only difference in their consumption can be found in the way they legitimize this, where lowbrow television is usually legitimized in a more guilty pleasure or ironic kind of way. Lower educated people on the other hand are usually consumers of more popular, lowbrow, culture. It is considered that they can identify more with the popular subjects of these shows and are thus more serious viewers of these genres. This research wants to find out if there is also a difference visible between educational level among a specific age group, namely millennials between the age of 24-39. This group grew up with the emergence of trash TV so it can be assumed that they are familiar with this form of television. For this research fourteen interviews were conducted, seven with higher educated and seven with lower educated respondents. During these interviews, fragments were shown from the three different trash TV genres. Also, multiple questions were asked about their television consumption behavior, if they identify with the different genres and why they either watch this program or not. After analyzing the data, it became clear that there were some differences among the higher- and lower educated respondents. Especially when it comes to the consumption of reality TV and the serious talk show. As was expected, the higher educated respondents were more ironic consumers of the reality TV show and more serious watchers of the serious talk show. The lower educated respondents on the other hand were more often serious watchers of reality TV and tabloid TV than of the serious talk show.

KEYWORDS: Trash TV, Legitimization, Consumption, Millennials, Highbrow, Lowbrow, Education.

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Introduction:

The emergence of “Trash TV” started around the late 1980s and the early 1990s in America. This term consists of different overarching categories, namely reality television, tabloid television, talk shows and shock television (Keller, 1993). It can be defined as a subgenre in television that mainly focuses on confrontation and controversy, most of the time in a sensational manner (Keller, 1993). Programs that fit into this “trash” category are talk shows and reality shows such as “Dr. Phil”, “Oprah”, “Temptation Island” and “Teen Mom” (Rosenberg, 2017). These kinds of programs are usually all about sensationalism and provocation. They try to shock the viewers by asking controversial questions, having rude conversations, exploiting violence and nudity (Rosenberg, 2017).

Ever since the term trash TV was mentioned in the television industry it got a lot of attention and a lot of criticism (Keller, 1993). There are different groups that have different opinions when it comes to the consumption of trash TV. Interesting to see is that a lot of, especially higher educated, people criticize this form of TV and have moral opinions about them, but on the other hand millions of people watch these shows on a daily basis – even those who criticize them (Manga, 2003). It is a very popular television genre nowadays and more “trash” reality shows and talk shows are making their appearance on television but also on Netflix and other streaming services. Even though these shows usually portray violence, sex, sensationalism and are overall about provocations, a lot of people still watch trash TV. This contradiction, why people watch these programs that portray these “unconventional” subjects, makes it an interesting subject to do research on.

The focus in this research is on educational level because research shows that higher educated people usually consume trash culture in a different way than lower educated people (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014). This can create an invisible boundary between the higher- and lower classes in society, whereby the higher classes make a distinction between them and others (Alexander, 2011). The question this research thus wants to answer will be the following:

“What is the difference between the way higher educated and lower educated people between the age of 24-39 legitimize their consumption of different forms of “Trash TV”?”

On an academic level this research can contribute because it can give more information about how people, from different educational levels, legitimize their consumption of various forms of trash TV, namely reality TV, tabloid TV and talk shows. The societal relevance of this research on the other hand is more based on highlighting consumer behavior when it comes to different forms of trash TV. This research can expose if there is indeed a difference between higher and lower educated people

when it comes to the way a particular lowbrow television genre is used and appreciated. The use of this research is thus to figure out if education is really an important factor when it comes to the way people, in this case, consume trash TV.

The first section that will be discussed is a theoretical framework where differences in consumption behavior among higher- and lower educated people will be mentioned. The following chapter will focus on the methods that were used in order to answer the research question. This was done by doing qualitative research by conducting in total fourteen interviews with both seven higher- and seven lower educated respondents. These interviews were accompanied by showing two small fragments, per category, of the three different trash TV categories. In the results chapter the most important findings of the interviews are discussed. The final chapter of this research will be the conclusion and discussion part. Here the research question will be answered, the limitations are discussed and interesting topics for future research are mentioned.

Theory:

Cultural consumption based on cultural capital and distinction:

According to Bourdieu (1984) there is a structural affinity between social space, the symbolic space and the habitus of an individual. Here the social space is the class someone belongs to, the system of relationships between different social positions. The social space has to do with different forms of capital someone has, primarily cultural capital and economic capital. With cultural capital is meant the familiarity with the dominant culture in society, and among other things to really understand and use “educated” language (Sullivan, 2001). Here the structure of the social space is shaped by these forms of capital and the strength between them, this means that the more capital someone has, the higher they are in the sphere of the social space and belong to a higher class in society. The symbolic space on the other hand displays oppositions between individuals’ properties in terms of their cultural practices and their lifestyle (Jarness, 2014). According to Bourdieu (1984) the social space and the symbolic space are homologous. They are structured in similar ways. This means that your class in society corresponds to the lifestyle that you have. This can be called the habitus, the set of socially ingrained habits, skills and dispositions an individual has (Bourdieu, 1984). It is the way people see the social world around them. This habitus is usually shared to some extent by people who have similar backgrounds in terms of social class and education, because they go through somewhat similar experiences (Jarness, 2014).

As mentioned, Bourdieu states that there is a homology between social space and symbolic space, but he does not imply that people from the higher classes in society exclusively have a fixed preference for highbrow forms of culture (they do not necessarily only prefer going to classical concerts, ballet, the opera or they dislike everything lowbrow/popular such as television, popular music on the radio and commercialized mass culture – Alexander, 2011; Jarness, 2014). But he does imply that the system of the symbolic space and the system of the social space has a structural relationship. Here, it can be said that in general higher educated people belong to the higher classes in society where they usually consume highbrow culture (Alexander, 2011). This can be explained because consuming culture in general involves interiorizing and assimilating the symbolic elements that cultural goods incorporate. The higher the culture gets, the more complex these elements get (Suarez-Fernandez, Prieto-Rodriguez & Perez-Villadoniga, 2019). Popular culture is seen as more suitable to the interests, everyday experiences and pleasures of people who belong to the lower classes in society (Alexander, 2011; Glynn, 2000; Manga, 2003). This means that the symbolic value that is given to lowbrow/popular culture is seen as not as complex to understand as that of highbrow culture. So, this can mean that higher educated people are more likely to understand, to decode, the more complex symbolic meaning and elements of highbrow culture. They have the tools, the cultural capital, to decipher these codes and are more likely to appreciate highbrow culture, which can

explain the link between education and cultural consumption (Suarez-Fernandez, Prieto-Rodriguez & Perez-Villadoniga, 2019). And according to DiMaggio (1982) the reason why highbrow culture is seen as the superior form of culture in comparison to lowbrow culture, is because the arts are institutionalized by states and institutions of higher learning. So, highbrow culture is seen by the dominant classes in society as the legitimate form of culture (DiMaggio, 1982). Also, familiarity with this form of culture can be a predictor of success in school which can be the explanation why usually higher educated people have more knowledge about highbrow culture (DiMaggio, 2001). So, Bourdieu's theory predicts a distinction and in general univorous consumption pattern of the upper classes, whose taste is usually more highbrow (López-Sintas & Katz-Gerro, 2005).

There is still a distinction between the taste of different classes in society. According to Bourdieu (1984), the higher classes create class distinction by accepting the dominant (high) culture and rejecting the more popular culture. For the higher classes in society this way of legitimizing one culture over another, is a way to create an invisible boundary between themselves and lower classes (Alexander, 2011). This invisible boundary between classes is created by their cultural capital, which is *"the knowledge someone has about high art and culture, a high degree of sophistication and of know-how, and an appreciation of knowledge in general and of speaking knowledgeable"* (Bourdieu, 1984). This also means that educational level can have a big influence on people's taste, because having a higher educational level can mean having a higher cultural capital (Sullivan, 2001). This is supported by a research done by López-Sintas and Katz-Gerro (2014), where they found that as cultural consumers become more educated, having a higher educational level, they are more able to interpret and integrate different expressions of culture. They also observed that the increase in educational attainment led to more knowledge of culture, which leads to an increase in arts consumption. This can suggest and strengthen the notion that having a higher educational level can mean that people have a higher cultural capital, more knowledge about the highbrow culture in society.

But according to Peterson (1992, 1996), highbrow consumers have become more omnivorous consumers. This means that high status people are now also becoming interested in culture outside of the highbrow for quite some time now. They are developing a taste for a lot of different forms of culture, also for popular lowbrow culture. In this case it means that a higher status results from the ability to have a wider range of cultural consumption patterns, to have an easy familiarity with both the popular and the high culture. Here, not all forms of popular culture are consumed, which makes it crucial to know what sorts of popular culture to embrace, to still maintain a boundary between what is legitimate culture and what is not (Oakley & O'Brien, 2015). So, taste patterns were first restricted to class or region and are now blending and becoming more heterogenous. According to van Eijck and Knulst (2005) there are several reasons for this change, one

of them being the increasing social and geographic mobility rate of the twentieth century. The concomitant increase in tolerance and the prohibition of discrimination have pushed away the belief in the white elite highbrow culture. One more reason why the highbrow cultural consumer is getting more omnivorous, is because more knowledge of lowbrow/popular culture is helpful in taking part in the heterogeneous social networks of the globalized world. But people with a lower socio-economic background are still univore, they tend to consume just one or at best a few forms of culture, which are usually lowbrow (Peterson, 1992). Bryson (1996) on the other hand found in her research that higher status people are indeed more omnivores, but they still dislike those forms of culture that are preferred mostly by lower status people. They like more cultural forms in general, but still heavily dislike the cultural forms that are appreciated by lower class people (Bryson, 1996; Alexander, 2011). So, the higher classes exclude the culture that is favored by lower classes in order for them to create an invisible boundary of class. The idea of there being just one legitimate culture is no longer acceptable in contemporary society. Even within the higher classes of society, the consumption of only highbrow culture is a minority pursuit (Oakley & O'Brien, 2015). Newspapers devote as much time on discussing reality TV or other popular forms of culture as they do on reviewing for example a classical opera or an art exhibition. But, even within these popular forms of culture, distinction remains, where film has achieved the status of art and videogames are still left out of this realm. Here, popular culture is seen as something that can be left to the market, whereas highbrow culture needs to be protected from the ravages of time (Oakley & O'Brien, 2015). So, distinction is not so much visible between categories, highbrow and lowbrow, but these distinctions are now taking place within categories of culture. This means that some forms of popular culture can be appreciated by the higher classes in society, while others are still looked down upon and only appreciated by the lower classes in society. So, there are taste hierarchies within popular culture, which are used to make judgments about what sort of people like the 'wrong' sort of popular culture (Oakley & O'Brien, 2015). So, even though the higher classes are becoming more omnivores, they are still creating a distinction. But in the end, it is not clear whether omnivorousness is an indication of greater tolerance for more forms of culture, or that it is a way of distinction for the higher classes. The fact that omnivorousness is associated with a higher socioeconomic status leaves to suspicion that it is indeed a marker of distinction, even though there is limited evidence that this really is the case (Warde, 2015).

But there are a number of scholars that notice that there is a decline in the impact that class has on someone's identity. They state that identity is now more based on the lifestyle of an individual and not so much related to the class they belong to (van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004). There can be a few potential causes for the disappearance of taste related to class. Namely, the increasing exposure to mass media and the increasing fluidity, flexibility and virtuality of social networks. The

modern world that we live in creates a lot of changes in the traditional social structures that can be found, namely the highbrow and lowbrow taste structures. This causes individuals to become more diverse in their lifestyles and their taste (van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004). This does not mean that social background, the class someone belongs to, is becoming irrelevant but has influences through different channels. This means that cultural preferences are now less driven by scarcity, the lack of economic capital, but are more based on socialization (van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004).

General ways of culture consumption:

When it comes to cultural consumption, there are different modes or ways that people consume which can be connected to the social and symbolic class that they belong to. Bourdieu already mentioned in this theory (1984) that taste is developed in relation to the habitus of an individual. He found that there are two different ways of cultural/aesthetic consumption, namely the functional mode of consumption and *l'art pour l'art*, or art for art's sake, where form rather than substance is central to the aesthetic experience (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017). The functional mode was more visible in the working classes, the lower classes in society, stressing functional aspects of the cultural experience and not so much the formal aspects (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017). Art needs to be functional, it has to do something to the individuals, it has to bring them into another world as a form of escapism. In this functional mode, art is appreciated when it moves the individuals, when it relaxes them and helps them forget their daily worries (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017). The art for art's sake mode of consumption on the other hand is more visible among the higher classes in society. Here art is all about a unique, aesthetic experience for its spectators (Bourdieu, 1984). For a lot of members that belong to the lower classes of society, who lack a high cultural capital, highbrow art is usually a source of confusion and misunderstanding. This permits them to only understand works of art at a surface level, which typically results in the fact that individuals that belong to the lower classes of society prefer works of art that portray subjects that they find beautiful. These are works of art which they can recognize such as a portrait of an attractive person or a sunset (Rössel, 2011). The basis to really appreciate and enjoy highbrow art is sufficient aesthetic competence, which allows for a deeper decoding of art. People from the lower classes of society usually lack this capacity, because they do not have a high cultural capital and thus cannot decode these higher forms of art (Rössel, 2011).

These two different ways of consumption between the lower- and the higher classes in society are also shared and further elaborated on by research done by Jarness (2014). In his research he found four different modes of consumption, based on both cultural capital (the knowledge of highbrow culture), economic capital and educational level. The first mode of consumption is the intellectual mode, this can be compared with the art for art's sake mode of consumption mentioned

by Bourdieu. In the intellectual mode, the individuals appreciate cultural goods for their own sake, as an end to itself. This group is usually characterized as a homogenous group, that have a high volume of overall capital, mostly comprised of cultural capital. And according to Rössel (2011), those people with a high amount of cultural capital have a more critical appreciation for culture and deal with it from a more formal point of view. When watching for example a movie, this group focusses more on the style of the director, the performances of the actors and the cut (Rössel, 2011). This group comes from educated backgrounds, who usually have the highest educational qualifications and they typically belong to the middle- and higher classes in society. The luxurious mode of consumption on the other hand is characterized by the appreciation of expensive material goods. In this mode, people derive pleasure from buying exclusive goods and they do not enjoy cultural goods as ends to themselves, even though they generally attend the same highbrow cultural activities as the previous group. Their cultural consumption is more pragmatic. They consume culture in order to relax or to be entertained and cultural goods that are too heavy are usually avoided. Their attendance to highbrow culture is not necessarily motivated by their love of art but more as a social activity. This group typically consists of people that have a high volume of capital, that is mostly comprised of economic capital. Their educational level is equivalent to a Bachelor University (BA) level and they belong to the higher classes of society. These two modes of consumption are thus based on higher educated people that also belong to the higher classes in society. It shows that there is a group with a higher cultural capital that appreciates art for its form and a group with a higher economic capital, which appreciates art more as a way of relaxation, as a social happening.

But there are also two modes of cultural consumption, according to Jarness (2014), that can be found in moderately or lower educated people that belong to the lower- or middle classes in society. One of these modes is the educational mode of consumption, here people only want to consume culture that is useful. Otherwise, they find no point in consuming them. This mode of consumption is comparable with the functional mode stated by Bourdieu (1984) where culture needs to have a specific function. The individuals that have an educational way of consuming culture are typically less familiar with the canonized, highbrow culture but they have an urge to learn more and educate themselves. They show a remarkable degree of trust in people whom they perceive as experts and they seek guidance through newspapers, reviews and art critics. They are usually less familiar with the legitimate, highbrow culture, but they have a cultural goodwill and are very eager and enthusiastic towards these cultural forms. This group has educational qualifications that are equivalent to a BA degree or a bit lower, so they are still higher educated, but they are more heterogeneous in their capital profile. This means that there are differences of both cultural- and economic capital in this group, but in general this group is situated in the middle- and lower classes of society. The last mode of consumption that was found in this research is the practical mode, which

is characterized by the orientation to more practical activities, where consuming highbrow culture is seen as unnecessary and a waste of time and money. They feel that for example films, books and music should be entertaining and fun and the cultural goods that they do not have knowledge of, are rejected and seen as boring, strange and ridiculous. This group is more resentful towards the more highbrow art, which they do not understand. They feel that art needs to represent something real, it must be recognizable and practical for them. These consumers, with little cultural capital, focus on the substantive and material aspects of culture and not on the aesthetic experience of culture (Rössel, 2011). When watching for example a movie they focus more on the surface aspects such as the special effects and the action sequences. The individuals that belong to this group are homogeneous in their capital, with a low volume of both cultural capital and economic capital. They are also the lowest educated and the lowest earning category of the four modes of consumption.

In a different research done by Alderson, Junisbai and Heacock (2007), different styles of cultural consumption based on social status are examined. They wanted to determine how social status might be associated with one of these styles of consumption. Here they take a lot of characteristics into consideration, such as education, income level, age, gender and more. For this research, the focus will be on their outcome on educational level and style of consumption. In their research they found three distinct groups namely, the omnivores, the paucivores and the inactives. The first group, the omnivores, have a high probability to engage in all sorts of cultural activities from popular/lowbrow culture to the more highbrow culture. This group is considered to be the highest educated group from the three, this can be explained by the fact that higher educated people have a higher information processing capacity. So, they have the affinity for an intense and broad style of consumption, this means that they have the capacity to process and enjoy more styles, both from the higher- and lower cultural segments. Those people that belong to the higher classes in society and those that hold a graduate degree or higher are more likely to belong to the omnivore style than one of the other two styles. The second style of consumption, the paucivores, are characterized by their moderate level of cultural engagement. They neither have radical selective nor particular taste, but they do have a bias towards the more popular mass culture. The group that belongs to this style of cultural consumption is more likely to hold a BA degree (or lower) than the last group. This last group, the inactives, is the group with the lowest level of degree, or no degree at all. They have a low probability to engage in any of the cultural activities, including the more popular activities. Thus, in general these authors found that higher status individuals, who have a higher education in general, are more likely to be paucivores than inactives and are especially more likely to be omnivores than inactives. So, it can be concluded that overall, people with a higher education are most likely omnivores who consume all sorts of culture, the slightly less educated are most likely to have a

preference for the more popular culture and the lowest educated do not really consume culture at all.

In comparison to these different modes of consumption that are discussed above, there are more traditional modes that are also important to notice here. These views discuss the relationship between stratification and cultural consumption. Here social stratification is the division of groups of people into different social layers, where there is an inequality between those layers (Alderson, Junisbai & Heacock, 2007). The first one is the homology argument, here it is suggested that people from higher social classes tend to consume more higher/elite culture and people in the lower classes tend to consume more popular/mass culture. It is also suggested that those who belong to the higher classes actively reject the mass culture as unrefined and disgraceful (Alderson, Junisbai & Heacock, 2007; Chan, 2010). This is a way to look at consumption in comparison to class and educational level. But it got a radical alternative namely the individualization argument, to reject these traditional and perhaps old school findings. The individualization argument suggests the 'death' of social class which became a common claim in the late 20th century (Chan, 2010). Cultural consumption would have lost its stratification system due to the highly commercialized consumer society where everyone was free to develop their own identity (Alderson, Junisbai & Heacock, 2007). So, here educational level does not really influence the way people consume, this is due to the fact that people are being inundated with the changes in society. Due to commercialization, digitalization and social media, people are freer to create their own identity which is not so much based on their social class or educational levels. People are considered to break free from their habitus to create more individual freedom (Chan, 2010). The third and final traditional way of consumption is the omnivore-univore thesis, this is also the most recent social development. It was already mentioned in depth above what is meant with being an omnivore or univore. But in this traditional way of consumption, stratification is important but is not so straightforward as high-low, elite-mass culture. It is said that higher classes and higher educated now differ from the lower classes in both the intensity of their cultural consumption and in the broad range of their consumption (Alderson, Junisbai & Heacock, 2007). Here, there is no longer a specific social stratification between the elites of society and the masses. But there does remain a significant stratification between the different classes in society when it comes to their consumption, where the higher classes are considered to be more omnivore and the lower classes more univore consumers (Chan, 2010).

So, there are different ways of consumption based on educational level, which is usually linked with someone's class in society, cultural capital and economic capital. Where educational level is the biggest influencer of cultural consumption. To conclude, based on the above mentioned information it can be suggested that the general way of consumption of higher educated is more omnivorous, with more appreciation for the aesthetics of highbrow culture. In comparison to the

lower educated who feel that consumption should be either educational or functional, where they are more univore in their consumption and prefer consuming more lowbrow/popular culture (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007).

Different forms of “Trash TV” and why it is part of lowbrow culture:

In this research the focus will be on the specific television genre of “Trash TV”, which is part of the popular, lowbrow, culture. According to Glynn (2000) Trash TV is called this way because it is compared with the “normal” or higher culture in society. Here the normal is a cultural category that is seen as socially legitimate. When something does not belong to the normal culture it is seen as disruptive. So, trash culture is compared with the values and qualities of the dominant culture in society, so it is no surprise that trash TV is usually seen by the dominant classes as dangerous, overly sexual, and trash (Glynn, 2000). This means that trash TV can also be considered as being part of lowbrow television, mostly because it is seen as such by the higher classes in society. Within the lowbrow cultural activity of television watching, trash TV belongs to the lower segments.

The term trash TV first made its emergence in the television industry around the 1990s. The reason why it is qualified as trash, and not just as lower legitimate television, is because a high percentage of the content of these shows portray violence and crime. The viewers prefer recreations of violent happenings such as shootings, rapes and stabbings (Keller, 1993). Another reason why this genre is considered trash is because some shows blur the line between it being news and entertainment, here the viewers are being misled into thinking something is real news where they actually blur the lines between facts and fiction. This reason makes a show trashy because the shows purposely mislead their viewers into thinking something is real news where it actually is not based on facts. So, the most common topics that are discussed in trash TV shows are topics that are more sensational, bizarre, unbelievable, it must trigger some sort of emotion with the viewer (Keller, 1993; Manga, 2003). A lot of these shows are about sex, betrayal, violence, abuse, adultery and unhealthy relationships. But there are five general factors that distinguish “normal television” from trash TV. The first one is the high content of sex and violence, secondly the confusion between if something is considered news or if it is entertainment. Here a lot of trash TV shows imitate real newscast, where they suggest that their content is “real” news. The third factor is the language hype, this means that a lot of sensational language is used. Usually, during these programs, commentary is given either by the hosts or a narrator. They use sensational language to trigger the audience. The fourth factor is the fact that music is used to elicit emotional responses. Lastly, shows that are considered trash TV use a lot of theater by showing overdone re-creations of real stories (Keller, 1993). This causes the line of what is news and what is entertainment to not be blurred but to be diminished all together.

The most common categories of trash TV are reality TV shows, talk shows about everyday

subjects and tabloid TV (news magazine shows). This does not mean that all reality TV shows, talk shows or tabloid TV shows are considered to be trash TV. Some address serious topics, but those shows that aim at emotional, not intellectual responses and exploit fear are seen as trash TV (Branston, 1993). The trash factor of these different forms of trash TV increases with the already mentioned characteristics. Namely, high content of the details of sex and violence, confusion between news and entertainment, language hype, music designed to elicit emotional response and recreations (Keller, 1993). So, the more a reality show, talk show or tabloid TV show focusses on these characteristics, the trashier it gets.

The first category that is part of trash TV is reality TV, here the majority of content is about depicting common people who engage in uncommon (such as wilderness survival shows) and common (dating shows, home decorating) activities (Rose & Wood, 2005). These shows give their viewers the opportunity to compare and contrast their own lives with those people on reality shows. So, these shows are about real people in real situations, while they are engaging in situations that happen in their lives, either purposely set up or spontaneous (Stevenson, 2019; Kavka, 2012; Deery, 2015). It must involve people being themselves, in a not scripted situation, and not actors who are playing a role (Stevenson, 2019).

Talk shows are the second category that also belongs to the genre of trash TV. Here, not the more serious talk shows about news items are meant, but more the kind of talk shows that focus on issues to evoke a certain emotional reaction, with topics that must excite and anger the audience (Keller, 1993). Within the genre of talk shows there is a distinction being made between the more serious talk shows and the trashier ones. Daytime talk shows are seen as the trashier kinds, where they employ a middle-class, public-service model of talk. Here they emphasize discussion, information and advice with a more lowbrow convention of emphasizing drama and spectacle by showing sensational content (Grindstaff, 2008). These kind of talk shows are disdained by the cultural critics, higher classes, because they rather invite ordinary people over experts. These guests usually behave in such a way that is seen as vulgar, not thinking clearly (Grindstaff, 2008).

Tabloid TV is a reference to sensational gossip magazines, it is the televised descendant of the known tabloid magazines (Keller, 1993; Glynn, 2000). The subject matters that are discussed in tabloid TV are more sensational, sometimes skeptical and they have interests between the public and private life. The tone of these shows is more populist, and they deny that there are differences between fiction and documentary, between news and entertainment (Glynn, 2000; Grindstaff, 2008). These kinds of shows are known for violating the more dominant institutional standards for the production of what they say is the "truth". They thrive on the scandalous and abnormal happenings. In comparison to official news, they lack objectivism and a critical and emotional distance from the subjects that they mention. A lot of tabloid TV shows are known for their use of unserious discourses

for more serious items, or the fact that entertainment and news are too close together (Keller 1993; Branston, 1993).

Types of consumption patterns to legitimize the consumption of lowbrow culture:

The term lowbrow is a way to create a class distinction, a difference between the lower classes and higher classes in society (Glynn, 2000). Thus, a social distinction is made when lowbrow is rejected and seen as inferior to higher culture. In the research done by Manga (2003), she found that lowbrow culture, and in general trash culture, is usually associated with lower classes in society. The dominant class usually respond to this sort of trash culture in a disgusted, devaluing manner. They see it as dangerous, as something that needs to be eliminated from the mainstream in society. So, there is a dominant culture that is valued and is seen as legitimate in comparison to trash culture (Manga, 2003). But, as mentioned earlier, higher educated people are becoming more omnivorous in their consumption of culture. They are now also consuming lowbrow/popular culture. But there are differences in the way higher educated people consume this kind of culture in comparison with lower educated people.

A study by Peters, van Eijck and Michael (2017), focusses on how people with different educational levels legitimize their consumption of karaoke, which can be seen as part of lowbrow culture. They found that people with a high cultural capital were mostly ironic consumers, while people with a low cultural capital were serious consumers. This ironic way of consuming gives the higher cultural class the possibility to both show cultural openness as well as cultural superiority. When they became too serious about karaoke, they used irony to draw clear class boundaries. For them it is acceptable and also fun to perform within karaoke, as long as it is not done in a serious way. The higher cultural capital respondents still wanted to have a class distinction between them and those with a lower cultural capital.

A whole different approach to look upon lowbrow/popular culture, is the research done by Simon (1999). According to him, the difference between trash culture and high culture only shows that the way of storytelling adapts to the changes in economics, the social world and also political conditions. He gives an example of the movie Rambo, which for him is a diminished and inarticulate version of the story of Achilles, as both stories reflect on the decline of Western civilization. But because the audiences change due to changes in society, the storyteller needs to make the story more accessible for the audiences. The most prominent bias when it comes to trash culture and high culture is that the first is just escapist entertainment and the latter gives us real knowledge (Simon, 1999). But for Simon (1999), this means that people miss the opportunity to really see the similarities between trash culture and high culture. For him, there are a lot of similarities between trash culture and highbrow culture.

But the most interesting part of this research is the fact that its author is a University professor of literature, who lets his students find the similarities between trash culture and high culture. As mentioned before, he did this with the movie Rambo and The Iliad. Interesting to see is that out of the two, his students pointed out The Iliad as the better of the two even though they prefer spending time on watching Rambo over reading The Iliad. Why they make this distinction and why they see the higher culture as the better one can be explained by Pierre Bourdieu and his Cultural Capital. According to Bourdieu (1984), *“all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc.), and preferences in literature, painting and music, are closely linked to educational level”*. This is interesting because even though the University students preferred watching Rambo, they still made a distinction between quality in which they saw The Iliad as high culture and thus better. This means that the students appreciated both trash culture and high culture but could make a value distinction between the both of them. Here, it is interesting to see that although they prefer watching Rambo over reading The Iliad, they still rank The Iliad higher than Rambo. This means that they legitimize their consumption of what they see as lower culture in a different way than higher culture.

In all these above mentioned researches, the people with a high cultural capital, higher educational level, try to explain their consumption of lowbrow culture by creating an invisible boundary between them and others in some sort of way. They make a value distinction between what is considered to be good and bad, high and low culture. Here, they try to justify their consumption of trash culture by either taking an elevated position or consuming it ironically. But in both ways the higher classes, with a high cultural capital, make a distinction between them and the lower classes. Even when they seem to like consuming trash culture, they still want to justify it in such a way that this distinction is visible.

Television viewing audiences' preferences based on educational level:

As mentioned earlier, watching television is considered as something that belongs to the lower segments of culture. But there are different genres within watching television, that are preferred by different audience members and which have a connection with their educational level. Even within the lowbrow culture of watching television, there could be made a specific legitimacy scale of what is considered more lowbrow, middlebrow and highbrow television, even though it is still part of the general lowbrow cultural consumption (Bennett, 2006). Here lowbrow television is seen as game shows, soap operas, reality TV and chat shows/tabloid shows. Under middlebrow television approximately falls comedies, sport, detectives, quizzes and cooking shows. Highbrow television consists of more factual genres such as news, current affairs, documentaries and drama (Bennett, 2006). These preferences for certain highbrow or lowbrow television programs are said to

be linked to the educational levels of the audiences. Where the higher educated are considered to be more omnivorous in their consumption than the lower educated (Konig, Rebers & Westerik, 2009).

In the 21st century people are spending a lot of time watching television, far more than participating in cultural activities (Konig, Rebers & Westerik, 2009). So, it is interesting to investigate if people with a higher educational level have a different preference in the consumption of (lowbrow) television than their lower educated counterparts. In the research done by Bennett (2006), he found that people with a University education are more likely to watch more serious programs such as news, current affairs and documentary programs, which are part of the higher segments of television. He also found that the interest in the lower segments of television declined with each ascending level of education, meaning that the higher educated the respondents were the less interested they are in watching the lower segments of television. This shows that there is a distinction made between higher- and lower educated people and their preferences, where higher educated people prefer watching highbrow genres. The lower educated people prefer watching the more lowbrow genres. They did not find proof to reinforce the omnivore argument, but they did find a clear distinction between the television genre preferences of lower- and higher educated people.

McCoy and Scarborough (2014) focus on the differences of how people legitimize their consumption of trash television, in this case watching “bad or trashy television”. Focusing on reality shows, such as “Jersey Shore” and “Desperate Housewives”. In this research, they are interested why people consume this kind of television even though they describe them as aesthetically inferior and sometimes even morally objectionable. The difference with this research is that the focus is on the consumption of higher educated people and the way they legitimize their consumption of lowbrow culture, which they consider as “bad”. They found that there are different types of consumption patterns, here the higher educated people each had a different way of legitimizing their consumption. They either consume traditionally, ironically, with a camp sensibility or as a guilty pleasure. In all these consumption types, higher educated people consume bad television in such a way that they retain a symbolic boundary between what is considered “good” and “bad” television. The “*traditional*” way of consuming is when someone rejects trash television overall, they abstain watching these television shows by showing avoidance or by not engaging in it. This group also tends to be very judgmental and disapproving of these television shows that they consider as “bad”. They are judgmental and feel that this kind of television is inferior and enjoying them is a sign of a bad taste. They almost feel some sort of anger against these shows.

The second viewing style, “*ironic*” consumption, focusses on “the contradiction of consuming and condemning by appreciating a show as a source of mockery and ridicule” (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014). Ironic consumption then occurs when someone uses, or consumes, culture that carries one meaning while attempting to signal an opposite meaning (Warren & Mohr, 2019). Consumers

sometimes enjoy TV shows which they describe as being of a poor production, having a ridiculous script or a general lack of substance, such as “Jersey Shore” (Warren & Mohr, 2019). They consume trash TV while also feeling superior to it and enjoy how bad this television is, so they create a distinction between themselves and this form of lowbrow culture. This group seems to enjoy and embrace the badness of the shows that they are watching. While they give these shows the label “trashy”, stupid, horrible and also describe the characters in these shows with the same labels, they still have a positive viewing experience while watching. Watching it gives them the opportunity to make fun and mock both the show and the characters on these shows, who they do not identify with in the slightest. They watch from a normative distance, and they look down on both the show and its characters because they are incongruent with their own identity and beliefs (Warren & Mohr, 2019). Here, they see themselves as just the viewers of bad television and are in their mind not even part of the intended target audience of these shows. These viewers usually have a lot of commentary on these shows while watching them, so for them they prefer watching it as a social event. So, bad television is preferred to watch with others and part of the enjoyment that they receive comes from talking about the show while it is occurring.

Contrasting to this way of consuming is “*camp sensibility*”, herein the viewer admires how bad this television is. There are four features that are considered to be part of camp sensibility, namely the irony that it consists of, its aestheticism, theatricality and humor (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). People with this camp sensibility way of consuming do not look down on bad TV, but they appreciate it as bad, over the top and ridiculous as it is. The camp viewer admires the vision and the passion of the producers. They do not look down on the production, but they appreciate it for its “badness”. They understand that the show is considered to be bad, but by using the framework of camp sensibility, they lift the show upward. They know that the show is exaggerated and an extreme artifice, but just for these characteristics it is appreciated (Kates, 1997). So, instead of the ironic consumption as ridiculing the program, this form of consumption can be characterized as ironic consumption as admiration for how bad and unnatural it is. The consumers do know that these television shows are not well-made, but they nevertheless appreciate them by using a different framework of evaluation, and by admiring the producers’ failed attempt to realize their vision. They celebrate the failure of the producers, while they can still allow themselves to identify with the creators of the television show. They do not feel apart or above the cultural object, but they do empathize with and commemorate the failed outcome of the cultural production. In a sense, the television show as a cultural product is so bad that it becomes good.

The final way of consuming “bad” television by higher educated, as mentioned by McCoy and Scarborough (2014) is in a “*guilty pleasure*” way. Here the viewer feels a tension between consuming and condemning. They know that what they consume, and the fact that they like

consuming it, has a negative connotation which makes them feel uncomfortable. They try to explain their consumption by apologizing for watching trash TV, by saying that it is just mindless and harmless fun that they cannot resist watching. They are usually ashamed of their television watching habits, therefore they feel guilty and bad, but they also feel like they cannot stop watching. The viewers are conscious of the fact that they are watching something that they really have a negative opinion about, this makes them feel uncomfortable and causes them to struggle with their disconnect between what they watch and their normative evaluation standards. This existence of having a guilty pleasure shows that the aesthetic experience of people can sometimes be conflicted, by enjoying something but simultaneously feeling bad about enjoying it (Goffin & Cova, 2019). These conflicts that people feel about enjoying something that is seen as bad television, shows that people view their enjoyment of culture/television as subject to certain norms. In this case the comparison of bad and good enjoyment, or highbrow and lowbrow culture, are also linked to cultural class and education. These norms tell people what is considered wrong to enjoy or that something should not be enjoyed at all, so when enjoyment is conflicting with these norms people can have this sense of viewing it as a guilty pleasure (Goffin & Cova, 2019). This type of viewing lowbrow culture is in line with the traditional viewing style, because the viewer is offended by what they are watching even though they still watch it. But unlike the traditional viewing style, their severe disapproval of bad television does not prevent them from viewing. Especially those viewers that are highly educated and have a higher cultural capital cannot understand why they watch bad television, when they feel that they have a sophisticated taste and usually consume highbrow culture. This group upholds a symbolic boundary, they legitimize their consumption of bad television, especially reality television, by saying that it is beyond their ability to stop watching. Interesting to notice is that members of this group also justify their consumption by saying that it is mindless amusement. Something that can be consumed lightheartedly after a long day of work, or that it can be consumed meaninglessly and does not require any mental energy. So, they legitimize their consumption by calling it “empty” and “pointless” entertainment, which is part of the pleasure they get by consuming it. This group allows itself to view these kinds of television programs because the rest of their days are filled with activities and occupations that are mentally engaging. Usually, this group also legitimates their consumption by only watching a small portion of bad television which is offset by the consumption of highbrow culture. These people who watch intellectually stimulating television such as documentaries, often allow themselves to watch trash television as some sort of reward. This makes it acceptable for them to watch bad television once in a while, because they feel that they usually consume a high amount of highbrow culture. One of the reasons why people feel bad after consuming bad television is because it has no aesthetic value or because it is aesthetically bad (Goffin & Cova, 2019). But another reason they feel bad can be because this enjoyment violates non-

aesthetic norms, such as prudential, social or moral norms. For example, shows that display a lot of violence, objectify women, celebrate shallow lifestyles or portray a lot of sex (Goffin & Cova, 2019).

In a different research done by Konig, Rebels and Westerik (2009), they also found that educational level and preference in television watching have a correlation. Here the lowest educated people (elementary school or less) are more likely to prefer watching the lower genres within television, such as watching talk shows about everyday problems. This group usually avoids documentaries, current affairs programs, political programs, news programs and movies. The somewhat higher (lower secondary school/secondary vocational school), but still lower educated, respondents watch soap operas, daily serials, quiz/game shows and health/medical related programs. The higher educated people (college degree or University degree) are more inclined to avoid watching the programs that the previous groups prefer. This group prefers watching political and cultural programs, so the more serious programs. They found that people with a low education are more prone to avoid programs that are relatively more complex, such as political programs or documentaries. Higher educated people are in turn more prone to avoid programs that are relatively low in complexity, such as health and medical programs and music programs. But, interesting to notice is that, in their research, they did not find results that can reinforce the omnivourness argument. Educational level was not related to the number of genres that a person watches, this means that the higher educated people did not consume more genres than the lower educated people, which can be expected in the omnivore and univore argument. All groups show some sort of omnivourness, or univourness, where a lot of programs are popular among all. So, the differences are not in quantity but in the quality of programs that they watch. The higher educated watch more complex television genres than the lower educated, meaning that there is a clear distinction between the television preferences within different educational levels. The elites, who have a higher educational level, higher occupational level and cultural capital, still have a more snob taste as opposed to the slob taste of people with a lower status, lower education and less cultural capital.

The earlier mentioned researches all have something in common, namely the fact that higher- and lower educated people legitimize their television consumption in a different way. In the study by Noordzij, van Eijck and Berkens (2016) this difference is also visible. In their research they found that people who belong to the higher classes usually distance themselves from reality television. They took an elevated position in relation to reality television fragments they saw. They did not identify with the shows and the characters that were displayed. The lower classes on the other hand were more practical in the way they interpreted reality TV. They identified more with the people in the shown fragments than the higher classes, who only wanted to distance themselves as the more elevated class.

Audiences of the different categories of “Trash TV”:

Reality TV is usually considered to be a cheap form of trash TV, aimed at entertaining the masses. But also, a form of dumbing down the television genre by programming shows that have no specific social value (Kavka, 2012). By the critics, the upper/middle class taste makers, the audience of this genre is stereotypically seen as those who are dumbing down themselves, assuming they are lower in intelligence, lacking in taste, are unthinking voyeurs and in danger of mistaking reality TV for “reality” (Hight, 2001; Wayne, 2015). So, the traditional viewers are considered to be those who are lower in intelligence, belonging to the lower classes of society. This does not mean that they are the only audiences, but according to Wayne (2015) they consume this type of television in a different way than higher educated, high class viewers. The higher classes legitimize their consumption of reality TV in a more guilty pleasure kind of way. This is in line with the research done by Deery (2015), where the higher/middle classes in society also legitimize their consumption by saying it is a guilty pleasure. They find these shows appalling but cannot look away, it is something that is addictive. For this higher class, watching reality TV gives them a form of imaginative access to a lifestyle that they are usually unfamiliar with. Sometimes they even receive enjoyment from the suffering of others, this malicious pleasure might be a prime mover for many of the viewers (Albertini, 2013). Another research that is done by Skeggs, Thumim and Wood (2008), focusses on the differences between middle-class and working-class viewers of reality TV, and how they legitimize their consumption. Here, the middle-class participants were able to provide a useful, more educational reason for watching reality TV, while also still being able to notice the flaws that come with these kinds of programs. Most of them watch these shows with irony, they are aware that they are engaging in something that has no value for them, but they still watch it. The working-class, did not feel the need to legitimize their consumption of reality TV. They were more immediate and self-evident in the reasons why they watch these programs. This is an interesting finding because it shows that the higher classes feel a need to neutralize and distance themselves from these shows, while the lower classes do not feel this need.

When it comes to talk shows, a research done by Mittell (2003) found that higher educated people can enjoy certain talk shows for its entertainment value. They find it degrading, but they also find it fun to watch and pleasurable to make fun of the guests of these shows. These higher educated people also stated that an educated individual can safely watch these talk shows while not being affected by it, but lower educated people could take these programs too serious. The higher educated respondents also mentioned that they see the trashier forms of talk shows as a way of providing entertainment through camp pleasure, as a form of detached amusement, rather than something that offers them a deeper emotional, mental or political engagement. The assumed audience for the trashier talk shows, which are all about sensational topics, were uneducated and

belonging to the lower classes. The “higher” forms of talk shows, where the topics and conversations are more about relevant issues, were considered to be classier and less motivated by spectacle. The assumed audience for this type of talk show was seen as more sophisticated, middle class, college educated people. Talk shows that had more high-profile guests and discussed more serious issues such as the news, journalism, current events and politics were considered to be watched by more intellectual people. These audiences are considered higher educated, well-informed and coming from higher classes in society. This shows that the entertainment talk shows, with more sensational topics, depicting ‘ordinary’ people, are considered to be watched by lower educated people. While the more educational, serious talk shows, are considered to be watched by higher educated people. So, there is also a clear distinction being made within the genre of talk shows, where some of these shows are seen as classy and some as trashy.

Tabloid TV is considered to be usually preferred by the lower classes in society, because it generally serves as a way to circulate popular knowledge. Especially those groups that belong to the higher classes in society have many complaints about these kinds of shows. They prefer more serious, legitimate news which has historically been produced according to the tastes and knowledge of the more privileged classes in society (Glynn, 2000). Because of the more popular content that these shows portray, the audience usually belongs to the lower classes in society who take these shows more serious.

Research question and expectations:

Based on the mentioned theory, higher- and lower educated people usually differ in what kind of culture they consume and how they legitimize their consumption. This is also the case when they consume different forms of trash culture, or trash TV. Higher educated people are more omnivorous in their culture consumption, they usually consume highbrow culture and lowbrow culture. Lower educated people on the other hand are considered to be more univore in their consumption. They usually only consume lowbrow culture. But, when it comes to the consumption of lowbrow culture (and trash culture/trash TV), higher educated people legitimize their consumption in a different way than lower educated people do. Higher educated consumers usually legitimize their consumption in an ironic or guilty pleasure kind of way in order to maintain an invisible boundary between them and others. Lower educated consumers on the other hand usually take their consumption of trash culture more serious than the higher educated consumers.

So, there is a noticeable difference stated about the way people with different educational levels legitimize their consumption of trash culture. This is also the case when it comes to the three main genres of trash TV, namely reality TV, tabloid TV and talk shows. Here, different researchers found that people with a higher education are also consumers of this kind of culture, but usually

legitimize their consumption of it in a different way than lower educated people. It is interesting to find out if this difference is also visible in a particular sample of a generation, in this case millennials who belong to the generation that grew up around the emergence of the internet and social media, but also when trash TV became very popular around the 1990s of last decade. The focus in this research in particular is to find out if there is a difference between higher- and lower educated people around the age of 24-39 in the way they legitimize their consumption of different forms of trash TV. It is interesting to find out if the educational level of someone has an influence when growing up in a world that is penetrated by trash culture and trash TV. This leads to the following research question: *“What is the difference between the way higher educated and lower educated people between the age of 24-39 legitimize their consumption of different forms of “Trash TV”?”*

When looking at the above-mentioned theory, the expectation for this research will be that the higher educated respondents will likely legitimize their consumption of trash TV either in an ironic way or guilty pleasure kind of way. Here, the higher educated respondents will not feel any identification with the different forms of trash TV and the characters and subjects that are displayed. It could even be the case that higher educated watchers receive enjoyment, and legitimize this enjoyment, by saying that they like the suffering of others as a form of malicious pleasure. Overall, it can be expected that these respondents do not take the different forms of trash TV seriously. Perhaps they will only respond positively when fragments of “higher” forms of talk shows are shown, and where more serious subjects are discussed. Higher educated people can more relate to this, so it is expected that they take these kinds of programs more serious than the trashier reality TV shows and tabloid TV shows. It could also be the case that the higher educated respondents are not watchers of this kind of television at all, that they dismiss it at once. The lower educated respondents will likely take the trash TV genres more serious, and they will identify more with the content of the different shows. It could also be the case that the lower educated respondents do not feel the need to legitimize their consumption of these programs, because they feel more connected with the characters and subjects. When it comes to tabloid TV, it is expected that some of the lower educated respondents see these kinds of programs as the bringers of “real” news. The traditional watchers of reality TV are considered to be those with a lower educational level, so it can be expected that lower educated respondents are more frequent watchers than the higher educated respondents. It can also be expected that the trashier kinds of talk shows are usually more appreciated by the lower educated respondents, in comparison to the more serious talk shows. Thus, assuming the theory, it is to be expected that the invisible boundary that higher educated people want to maintain between them and others, will also be visible within this research.

Research design:

The research question: *“What is the difference between the way higher educated and lower educated people between the age of 24-39 legitimize their consumption of different forms of “Trash TV”?”* will be answered by conducting a qualitative research, with the use of interviews and video elicitation. This qualitative research will be approached by using already existing literature. This is thus in a sense a deductive way of doing research, meaning that already existing theories about the legitimization of consumption are tested (Bryman, 2012). But there also will be enough space to find and analyze new information and data. This will be done by adding more knowledge about this topic and especially about the different forms of trash TV and how people legitimize their consumption of this. There is not much literature and research done on this particular topic, meaning that this research will not fully be a deductive way of doing research. Focusing on differences in relation to various forms of trash TV will give a broader understanding whether preferences and justifications of watching these programs differ between educational levels.

The reason why a qualitative research is the best choice for this particular research is the fact that there is a focus on understanding how people interpret certain things, their point of view and the meaning of their actions, it is about words not numbers (Bryman, 2012; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Especially when it comes to trying to find out how people legitimize their consumption of watching different forms of trash TV, it is important to try to understand how people think and what words they use. Thus, the best way to do this is, is by conducting qualitative research because it produces more in-depth information in order to understand various dimensions of the topic that is being analyzed (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). The reason for not conducting quantitative research is because, by doing for example a survey, there is no room to respond to the answers of the respondents. By pre-structuring answer possibilities, it could be that the respondents are limited in giving answers about their television viewing habits. Giving pre-set relevant answers, respondents do not have the space to open up about their meaning making process, how they legitimize their consumption, and how they engage with different forms of trash TV. Or the respondents might not have the right knowledge to understand the questions in the survey, which creates a greater risk of missing data (Bryman, 2012).

A general limitation of doing qualitative research, especially in this particular research, could be that there are some biases in making certain choices and decisions. For example, when analyzing the interviews, the analyzing decisions are based on the bias of the researcher. When coding something, the researcher decides what is interesting for this research, where others might think differently. So, this bias needs to be taken into consideration in the data analysis and it is important to be aware of it. Another general limitation of doing qualitative research, and in particular conducting interviews, is that it is time consuming. In order to achieve a theoretical

saturation, a lot of data needs to be collected and doing a lot of interviews takes a lot of time (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017).

To operationalize the concepts that were discussed in the theory section, semi-structured, in-depth, interviews were conducted. This way of interviewing gives the opportunity to have a direct and personal conversation with each respondent. It also encourages the respondents to speak freely about a topic and explore some questions in greater depth (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). When engaging in an in-depth, face-to-face interview, the interviewees can give more information and the interview can be conducted in a more comfortable atmosphere where the respondents feel free to talk more openly (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). During the interviews, the following important themes were addressed: what kind of culture people consume (cultural capital), if they consume different trash TV shows, how they consume these shows (ironic, serious, camp sensitivity or guilty pleasure), why they consume these shows, how they legitimize their consumption (what kind of words do they use) and what their value qualification is for different trash TV fragments. In the first section of the interviews more general questions were asked to find out what kind of culture the respondents consume. Whether they consume more highbrow or lowbrow culture or if they are more omnivorous in their consumption. This will be measured by asking them to choose three activities (out of a list with both highbrow and lowbrow activities) that they prefer doing. After asking these questions, more specific questions will be asked about their consumption of reality shows, tabloid shows and talk shows. This is done in the second part of the interview, where two short fragments of each genre of trash TV are shown. The first fragments are from the Dutch version of the reality show named *Temptation Island*. The second fragments that were shown are from the Dutch tabloid TV program, *RTL-Boulevard*. The last two fragments were from the Dutch talk show named *Jinek*. The respondents were asked if they are familiar with this program, if they watch it and how often they watch it. Furthermore, to find out how and why people consume trash TV shows, questions were asked about what kind of emotions are evoked while watching, how they feel while and after watching and why they watch them. It was asked if the respondents watch these programs alone or with people, in order to figure out if watching these shows is more a social or personal event. Questions were also asked about who the respondents thought the audience of these shows would be.

So, in the second part of the interviews the video elicitation method was used. This method makes use of visual material, in this case by showing short two-minute fragments of different trash TV programs. By showing these fragments and asking questions about them, it can reveal more information about how people think about trash TV, how they value it and how they feel about it (Johnson & Weller, 2002). It can also help to refresh the interviewees' memory of what trash TV really is. That is to say, if they are not that familiar with the term, showing these fragments can help

them to create a certain opinion. It also gives the interviewee some space to express their subjective opinion about the fragments, describe what they see and to express certain emotions that they feel (Johnson & Weller, 2002). It evokes the interviewee and helps to provide more, and different, information than by merely asking questions. In this case, both *Temptation Island* (Reality TV) and *RTL-Boulevard* (Tabloid TV) are considered to be trashier than *Jinek*. *Jinek* is a talk show in The Netherlands that discusses more serious subjects such as the news, politics and important happenings. It is thus a more serious talk show than a daily talk show, which is usually more about entertaining its viewers. The choice for this particular talk show was to see if indeed the more serious talk shows are considered to be more valuable for the higher educated than the other, trashier, two shows. It was also interesting to see if the respondents perhaps see the audience of this show, *Jinek*, as being higher educated than the other two programs.

After showing these fragments, it was important to ask the interviewees what they think about the fragments, how they value them, if they think they are either good or bad and make an ordering based on quality. This forces people to think about why they make certain quality distinctions between the fragments. It is important to let them explain how they came to the ordering that they made. Questions about what fragments they thought were most informative or entertaining and the reason why, also gave more insight about the respondents' mode of consumption. If they either are more aesthetic, 'art for art's sake' viewers (highbrow), or if they are more functional viewers (lowbrow). Here, the focus was on what kind of words people use when describing these fragments and their arguments. If they did watch one of these shows it was interesting to ask why they gave this particular value qualification to this particular show. This was especially interesting in the case when an interviewee had seen a show but still qualified it as bad TV. This then tells something about how someone justifies watching a program that they perceive as being bad, but still watch it and perhaps receive some kind of pleasure out of it. Here, information on the justification of the interviewee's consumption of trash TV came forward. If they watched trash TV in an ironic, serious, camp sensibility, guilty pleasure or traditional kind of way. But it could also be the case that the results show that new forms of consumption behavior are found, which perhaps suggests different forms of legitimization than those mentioned in the literature.

Ultimately fourteen interviews, that lasted 1-1.5 hours were conducted. Before starting the interview, the interviewees were asked whether they consented to the recording of the interview and using the data for this research. This is necessary because the respondents needed to be informed and given spoken consent to use their information (Qu & Dumay, 2011). It was also asked from every respondent if they either wanted to use their own name or rather a pseudonym. It was important to give them the right to keep their privacy and give them the confidentiality that the data was only used for this particular research (Qu & Dumay, 2011). All of the respondents gave consent

to use their real names when using quotes of the interviews in the result section of this research. In the end, sixteen hours of interview material was collected from seven respondents who have a higher education and seven with a lower education. In this case, higher educated interviewees are those who have a University degree or Higher Vocational degree (in Dutch WO/HBO). The lower educated interviewees are those who have a Secondary Vocational degree or lower (in Dutch MBO). The youngest interviewee was 24 years old, while the oldest was 38 years old, but in general, the age of the respondents was around 30 years old. The interviews were face-to-face and semi-structured, by using an interview guide (see appendix A.) with predefined open questions which belong to different theoretically relevant categories. By conducting a semi-structured interview, there is enough room to both ask the questions that need to be asked and to leave room to ask different questions which emerged during the interviews (Bryman, 2012; Qu & Dumay, 2011). It gives enough flexibility to respond to the interviewees when something interesting is addressed. But it also gives enough structure to address important themes by asking certain pre-defined questions. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, because it gave the respondents the opportunity to talk in their native language without them being limited by speaking in a foreign language. Due to the current Covid-19 situation and the restrictions of the government, ten out of the fourteen interviews were done virtually. This was done by using the program Zoom, where there was still a possibility to use a webcam to see the facial expressions of the respondents. This was necessary because it gave more information on how their first reaction was when seeing the fragments, if they were laughing or had other facial expressions. Zoom also gave the opportunity to share the screen in order to show the fragments in the right order. Starting with the trashiest fragments of the reality show *Temptation Island*, following the less trashy tabloid TV show *RTL-Boulevard* and finishing with the more serious talk show *Jinek*. The other four interviews were indeed done face-to-face in real life, with the right precautions such as taking enough distance.

So, the sample group for this research consisted of both higher- and lower educated people around the age of 24-39. The particular age group for this research are people who belong to the millennial generation. This is an interesting group because millennials belong to the generation that grew up with the internet, media and also when trash TV emerged (Botterill, Bredin & Dun, 2015). So, it is interesting to find out if there is a difference between higher- and lower educated millennials in the way they legitimize their consumption of trash TV, even though they both grew up with the emergence of it. In order to find this particular sample, the generic purposive sampling technique was applied. This was the best method because of the specific characteristics that the interviewees need to have, namely their age, their specific educational level and their prior exposure to trash TV. The reason of choosing people who had a prior exposure to trash TV is because it can give richer information. This can prevent that in the end there will not be enough data provided to answer the

research question. But having a group that had prior exposure to trash TV is also a limitation because people who really dislike trash TV and never watch it are not part of this research. This can mean that the respondents of this research already have a different opinion about trash TV than those who never watch it. Gender was also taken into consideration, because it could be that men and women legitimize their consumption differently. Thus, the amount of female and male respondents in both groups (higher/lower educated) was approximately equal. In both groups the ratio of female and male was four females and three male respondents. In the results no significant differences were found among male or female respondents within their particular educational group. Other characteristics such as economic factors (income) and ethnicity are not explicitly important for this study but are taken into consideration in the results (for a full list of the respondents see Appendix B.). Within the purposive sampling technique, deliberate choices of the participants are made due to the specific characteristics and qualities they possess (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). This sampling method is better for this research, because for example in theoretical sampling the process of data collection is controlled (Bryman, 2012). The researcher collects, analyzes and codes his data and then decides what data to collect next (Bryman, 2012). In this research, only the initial interviews were conducted, the sample is fixed and a priori on the criteria that are important for this research. The respondents for this research were found by asking people the researcher already knew personally and by the suggestions of others. The found respondents were thus a combination of acquaintances of the researcher and strangers.

The data analysis was done after the conducted interviews were transcribed word by word. These interviews were then analyzed using the literature that is already mentioned. The data that is collected was analyzed by using a selective coding method, whereby specific choices are made in the coding process (Bryman, 2012). The selective coding method can give direction to the analysis, by creating important categories based on the words that were used during the interviews. In order to make the coding process clearer, ATLAS.ti was used. This is a qualitative data analysis software which can provide tools to make the coding and categorizing of the collected data easier (Hwang, 2008). The first stage of coding was the initial coding whereby everything that seemed important was coded. After this stage, a more focused way of coding was used, namely the axial coding phase. Here, categories emerged out of the most common codes that were found in the initial coding phase (Bryman, 2012). Eventually, the relationship and connection between these categories were explored and enough categories emerged in order to make important conclusions. This means that the collected data from the fourteen interviews with video elicitation were successful enough to create data in order to answer the research question (Bryman, 2012). Eventually, five different categories emerged from the collected data which were then being made visible in the result section by using quotes. These results, that emerged during the data analysis, are further discussed in the result

chapter of this research. Here, the findings of this particular research are placed next to the already mentioned theory about this topic. As discussed earlier, the aim of this research was to find out if the results of this research are either in line with the already existing theory, or that there are new perceptions found on this subject.

Results:

Introduction of the categories:

The purpose of this research was to find out what the differences are between the way higher- and lower educated people, between the age of 24-39, legitimize their consumption of different forms of trash TV. As mentioned before, for this research qualitative research in the form of conducting fourteen interviews with video elicitation was carried out. After the transcripts were made, the coding process was executed. Out of this process, five categories emerged to give a clear answer to the research question. These five categories will now be discussed in this chapter and will be supported by the data that was found in this research and the already existing theory.

The first category that will be elaborated on is “Ways of TV consumption based on educational level”, this category discusses the different modes of consumption, in connection to educational level, that were found among the respondents. The second category is “Educational level and Trash TV preferences”, here the connection that the respondents made between educational level and preferences in TV genres are discussed. The final three categories discuss the different ways in which lower- and higher educated respondents legitimize their consumption of either reality TV, tabloid TV or a serious talk show.

Ways of TV consumption based on educational level:

The ways of consumption that were found among the respondents will be first discussed, these findings and the way they are interpreted are inspired by the existing theory. When it comes to the respondents, the functional, educational, entertainment (luxurious) and practical mode of consumption came forward the most. The functional mode of consumption came forward when a lot of the lower educated respondents noticed that they watch TV to escape their own reality. For them, watching TV needs to have a specific function, it has to bring them into another world as a form of escapism. The following two quotes are an illustration in which this mode of consumption is visible:

“And it is purely a way to forget about the nonsense of the current situation, which makes it very pleasant to watch.” (Julien, intermediate vocational training)¹

“Yes, and you forget about your own life, because you are busy with someone else’s life.” (Aurelia, intermediate vocational training)²

These quotes illustrate that the functional mode of consumption, which is mostly connected with a lower educational level, was also visible in the interviews with the lower educated respondents. But this functional mode of consumption can be compared to the luxurious mode of consumption that is associated with higher educated people. This way of luxurious consuming is distinguished by the fact that the television consumers watch television in order for them to be entertained or relaxed. So, they have a more pragmatic way of consuming, meaning that they consume television in a more practical manner with a specific result (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017; Rössel, 2011). Interesting to see is that this luxurious mode of consumption and the functional mode of consumption has many similarities, the only difference is the educational level associated with it. But they both prefer consuming television with a specific function or result, it has to be practical and entertaining. The following quotes are examples in which the similarities between the two modes of consuming are clearly illustrated:

“Yes, especially programs where I can relax [...] just purely to relax.” (Remedios, Bachelor University Degree)³

¹ “En het is ook puur even om de onzin van de huidige situatie te vergeten is het heel prettig om dat dan te kijken ja.” (Julien, MBO)

² “Ja en je denkt even niet aan de eigen leven, want je bent in andermans leven bezig als het ware.” (Aurelia, MBO)

³ “Ja ook voornamelijk uhm, dus echt programma’s waarbij ik kan ontspannen [...] gewoon puur ontspanning.” (Remedios, Bachelor diploma)

“Yes, it is entertainment and relaxing, I just find it nice at the end of the day, after a working day to watch a movie.” (Cesar, Master University Degree)⁴

“Uhm, it is especially entertainment, but it is also part of a morning routine [...] but just entertainment.” (Joshua, Bachelor University Degree)⁵

These quotes are a good example in which this more luxurious/entertainment mode of consumption comes forward. All the higher educated respondents that mentioned that they preferred being entertained, where also the respondents that did not choose one of the highbrow activities from the list that was given to them. These respondents preferred one of the more lowbrow activities such as going to the cinema, gaming, watching television, visiting a pop music concert or going to a musical. So, it can perhaps be concluded that these respondents did not have a high cultural capital, even though they are higher educated, which explains why they prefer watching television that is entertainment rather than an art for art’s sake mode of consumption. So, the only difference between these two modes of consumption is the educational level that is associated with it. The respondents both have a lower cultural capital and both like their consumption to have a specific function or purpose.

But the educational mode of consuming television was also something that came forward in the interviews with a lot of the respondents. They found no point in consuming other forms of television, only those who have an educational function. Here culture needs to have a specific function for the respondents. The following quotes are an illustration in which the educational mode of consuming television is made visible among the lower educated respondents:

“I always find it nice to learn new things, it does not really matter what, and I find it very nice when people can talk passionately about things [...] yes it needs to be interesting, I do not like to waste my time.” (Babet, high school diploma)⁶

“I get entertained when I see a good conversation on TV, where there is some depth [...] I would still say that I would rather watch something about current affairs, yes so I think it is

⁴ “Ja, dat is uhm, vermaak en ontspanning ik vind het gewoon lekker om aan het eind van een dag, na een werkdag rustig aan een filmpje te kijken.” (Cesar, Master diploma)

⁵ “Uhm het is vooral, naja entertainment, maar het is ook een onderdeel van soort van een ochtendroutine [...] dus dat gewoon entertainment.” (Joshua, Bachelor diploma)

⁶ Ik vind het altijd leuk om dingen te leren en het maakt eigenlijk niet eens uit waarin, uhm, en ik vind het heel leuk wanneer mensen gepassioneerd ergens over kunnen vertellen [...] ja het moet mij wel interesseren en ik hou er niet van om mijn tijd gewoon te verdoen” (Babet, middelbare school diploma)

also to stay informed. That is important for yourself and it can give you a lot of joy.” (Julien, intermediate vocational training)⁷

These quotes clearly show that people with a lower education can also consume television in an educational way, this is not primarily reserved for the higher educated respondents. But this way of consumption also came forward in the interviews with the higher educated respondents:

“Not every program has to teach me something, but sometimes it is good to watch a program to get more educated. For you to know what is going on around you, that you can talk about it with others, not being blind on what is going on around you [...] it teaches you something, it is sometimes good to learn new things.” (Madiha, higher vocational education)⁸

What is interesting is that those three lower educated respondents that said that they prefer being educated when consuming television, also presumably had the highest cultural capital from their group. These three respondents preferred highbrow activities over lowbrow activities. During the interviews a list of activities, with a mix of both highbrow and lowbrow activities, was presented to the respondents. The respondents were asked which three of the activities they preferred doing. The three lower educated respondents which also were the ones that have a more educational mode of consumption, all picked some highbrow activities over the lowbrow activities. It can perhaps be said that those three respondents that prefer to be educated when consuming television have a higher cultural capital even though they are not highly educated themselves. This shows that cultural capital, and an appreciation for knowledge and acquiring knowledge does not necessarily has to do with someone’s educational level but more with their interests or intellectual level, which is not always in line with someone’s educational level. The following quotes are an illustration in which the highbrow preferences of the three mentioned, lower educated, respondents come forward:

“Usually, art house movies [...] going to the museum.” (Julien, intermediate vocational training)⁹

“Reading literature and poetry.” (Heily, intermediate vocational training)¹⁰

⁷ “Ja maar ik vind ook, ik hou wel entertainment uit een goed gesprek zien op tv. Waar wel diepgang in zit om het zo te zeggen [...] dan zou ik nog steeds zeggen dan kijk ik iets liever iets actueels, ja dus ik denk dat het ook is om geïnformeerd willen blijven. Dat dat sowieso belangrijk is voor jezelf en dat je daar veel plezier uit kan halen.” (Julien, MBO)

⁸ “Nee niet elk programma moet mij wat leren maar soms is het ook wel goed om dit soort programma’s te kijken zodat je wat leert. Dat je begrijpt wat er aan de hand is om je heen en dat je zelf er ook over kan praten met anderen, niet dat je blind bent van wat er om je heen gebeurt [...] je leert er ook wat van, soms is het goed om eens wat nieuws te leren.” (Madiha, HBO)

⁹ “Meestal art house films [...] naar het museum gaan.” (Julien, MBO)

¹⁰ “Literatuur lezen en poëzie lezen.” (Heily, MBO)

“Going to the museum, visiting a classical concert and reading literature.” (Babet, high school diploma)¹¹

The practical mode of consumption only came forward among the lower educated respondents. Here, consuming television for them was purely about being entertained. For them it is also important that television needs to represent something real, it needs to be recognizable for them. This mode of consumption came forward in a few lower educated respondents, especially those with the lowest assumed cultural capital. So, those respondents who prefer lowbrow culture and television over highbrow culture. The rejection of more serious forms of television becomes clear in the following quotes:

“You know what it is, the news brings so much negativity on which I do not want to focus. I would rather watch more easy things where I do not have to focus on the negativity that is happening in the world. So, no it is not that I watch the daily news.” (Aurelia, intermediate vocational training)¹²

“[...] and I do not really follow the news because it is full of negativity and I just do not like that.” (Sher, intermediate vocational training)¹³

“I think it is too businesslike, too much about the news and I do not like that. It is like watching a political party debating.” (Janka, high school diploma)¹⁴

The intellectual way of consumption did not come forward in either the lower educated respondents or the higher educated respondents. None of the respondents focused on purely wanting to watch television in an art for art's sake kind of way. Also, none of the respondents mentioned that they watch television in a more formal way, focusing on the aesthetics of television shows, for example the style of director, the performances of the actors or the director's cut (Rössel, 2011). This can perhaps be explained by the fact that most of the higher educated respondents did not really have a high cultural capital, they usually preferred doing lowbrow activities over highbrow activities. The intellectual mode of consumption is usually linked to higher educated people who also

¹¹ “Naar het museum gaan, klassiek concert bezoeken en literatuur lezen.” (Babet, middelbare school diploma).

¹² “[...] en het nieuws eigenlijk volg ik dat niet omdat het een vol negativiteit is en ja ik heb daar gewoon geen zin in.” (Sher, MBO)

¹³ “Weet je wat het is, het nieuws heeft ook zoveel negativiteit dat ik mij daar ook niet per se op wil focussen. Dus ja dan kijk ik liever dingen dat ik weg kan kijken, gewoon gemakkelijk kan kijken dan dat ik mij moet focussen op de negativiteit wat nu gebeurt in de wereld. Dus nee, ik heb niet per se dat ik denk van voor RTL nieuws ga ik zitten.” (Aurelia, MBO)

¹⁴ “Ik vind het uhm, het is eigenlijk een beetje te zakelijk, te nieuwerig eigenlijk en daar hou ik niet van. Weet je wel, het is net alsof ik naar een politieke partij zit te kijken die aan het debatteren zijn zeg maar.” (Janka, middelbare school diploma).

have a higher cultural capital. But perhaps the modes that are mentioned in the literature are not that pronounced as they appear, this can explain the absence of this mode.

The data shows that between the lower educated respondents there are different modes of consumption found, this can be primarily linked to their cultural capital. Because, the two lowest educated respondents, those who have a high school diploma, differ immensely in their mode of consumption. One of them who prefers doing highbrow activities, so presumably has a higher cultural capital, enjoys being educated and likes more serious subjects. The other respondent, with a high school diploma, prefers doing lowbrow activities, so presumably has a lower cultural capital. She is also more critical and rejecting towards more serious subjects on television. It can be said that cultural interests have a bigger influence on someone's mode of consumption in television than their educational level. So, there are a lot of similarities between the data found in this research and the existing theory. The different modes that were found during the interviews with the lower educated respondents are in line with the modes stated in the literature, namely the functional, the educational and the practical mode. When it comes to for example the educational mode of consumption, the literature mentioned that this group is usually less familiar with highbrow culture, has overall less cultural capital but they do have the urge to educate themselves (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017; Rössel, 2011). This finding is in line with the above-mentioned data. But this group is usually associated with people who are still higher educated with a bachelor's degree or lower. Which is not the case in the findings of this research because the lower educated respondents were also part of this mode of consumption. So, it can be stated that lower educated people are also able to have an educational mode of consumption. The practical mode of consumption on the other hand was very much in line with the theory, here people usually reject serious forms of television or highbrow culture, because they have no knowledge about it (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017; Rössel, 2011). This is the group with the lowest cultural capital, which was also visible in the lowbrow preferences of the respondents in this particular research.

But an interesting finding to mention is that the higher educated respondents were more omnivore in their ways of consumption, meaning that they did not have one specific mode that can be linked to them. In comparison to the lower educated, who usually had one specific mode of consumption. But the higher educated respondents mentioned that they like being entertained when watching television, but they also like being educated. This shows that they can change their mode of consumption based on their mood and situation, showing that they are more omnivore and flexible than their lower educated counterparts. Because for the lower educated respondents consuming television is either functional or educational. Some of the higher educated also mentioned that when being in the mode of entertainment, they want their television shows to be as low of a quality as possible but when they want to be educated, they prefer more serious topics:

“It depends on the mood you are in, if you do not feel like watching entertainment then you just go watch something more serious.” (Madiha, higher vocational education)¹⁵

“Yes, and because it does not have any added value for me, something as a serious talk show is more in depth, I like the subjects that they discuss. Being educated is the added value and with entertainment it is more about zero depth.” (Johnny, higher vocational education)¹⁶

“Uhm, mainly relaxing, but sometimes, it sounds a bit cliché, but sometimes I watch documentaries about lawyers to be more inspired. To get more enthusiastic myself about my job, so I think those are the main reasons why I watch TV.” (Tessa, Master University Degree)¹⁷

Out of these findings it is clearly visible that among the lower- and higher educated respondents there are some differences but also some similarities. The main difference is that the lower educated respondents are more univore in their mode of consumption, meaning that they have one primary mode of television consumption. The higher educated respondents on the other hand were more flexible and omnivore in their modes of consumption, this means that they are more able to switch in between different modes. This is in line with the theory which shows that overall, higher educated people are more omnivore in their consumption behavior than lower educated people (Peterson, 1992, 1996).

¹⁵ “Het ligt eraan wat voor mood je hebt als je geen zin hebt in entertainment en gewoon iets wil kijken wat serieuzer is”. (Madiha, HBO)

¹⁶ “Ja en omdat het voor mij gewoon totaal geen toegevoegde waarde heeft, kijk zoiets als een praatprogramma dan hou ik van de diepte dat het ingaat, de onderwerpen wat ze bespreken daar hou ik van. Dat is dan de toegevoegde waarde en entertainment dat is niveau nul.” (Johnny, HBO)

¹⁷ “Uhm, voornamelijk ontspanning, maar soms ook klinkt heel cliché maar soms als ik een advocaten documentaire kijk doe ik het meer uit inspiratie. Zodat ik zelf weer enthousiast word over mijn werk, dus ik denk dat dat de meest voornaamste redenen zijn waarom ik TV kijk.” (Tessa, Master diploma)

Educational level and trash TV preferences:

During the interviews it became clear that a lot of the respondents connected educational level to a preferred TV genre. As mentioned before, the categories of trash television that were discussed are reality TV, tabloid TV and a talk show. In this case the choice was made to use a serious talk show which is not considered to be part of trash TV, it was used as a way to control if indeed more serious shows are associated with a higher education. In this research, two fragments of specific programs were shown to the respondents. For the category of reality TV, fragments of the Dutch version of Temptation Island were shown. The tabloid TV fragments that were shown were from the Dutch TV show RTL-Boulevard. Lastly, the serious talk show fragments consisted of the Dutch talk show Jinek. In the categorization of specifically trash television, both reality TV and tabloid TV are considered to be part of the lower segment of television. Serious talk shows about the news and current affairs on the other hand, are part of the more highbrow television and not so much part of trash TV (Bennett, 2006). When it comes to the more serious talk show almost every respondent both from a higher- or lower educational level, had similar opinions about the target audience for this show. Almost every respondent thought that the more serious talk show Jinek would be more preferred by a higher educated audience. Because, according to the respondents, higher educated people prefer more serious topics about current affairs and the news. The following quotes illustrate clearly that the respondents think educational level and watching a serious talk show have a link:

“Yes, maybe someone who did University thinks this is interesting because they think more informative talk shows are interesting.” (Janka, high school diploma)¹⁸

“I would think primarily the higher educated people and the people with an office job.” (Babet, high school diploma)¹⁹

“I think higher educated people. People who are more serious, further in their lives, who think these kinds of subjects are interesting.” (Cesar, Master University Degree)²⁰

“I think in general people with a higher educational level, that they watch Jinek. If you look at the subjects that they discuss, I think that some people might not understand what it is about.” (Tessa, Master University Degree)²¹

¹⁸ “Ja misschien iemand die de universiteit heeft gedaan vindt dit interessanter omdat ze informatieve talk shows interessant vinden.” (Janka, middelbare school diploma)

¹⁹ “Ik zou denken dat het voornamelijk de iets hoger opgeleide mensen zijn en de mensen met een uhm kantoorbaan.” (Babet, middelbare school diploma)

²⁰ “Hoger opgeleide mensen, denk ik wel. Toch wel wat mensen die wat serieuzer, wat verder in het leven zijn uhm, die dit soort onderwerpen interessant vinden.” (Cesar, Master diploma)

²¹ “Ik denk wel over het algemeen mensen met een wat hoger opleidingsniveau, dat zij naar Jinek kijken. Als je soms kijkt naar de onderwerpen die besproken worden dan denk ik dat het voor sommige mensen, dat het niet voor iedereen even begrijpelijk is waar het precies over gaat.” (Tessa, Master diploma)

It is clear that for the more serious, highbrow categories of television, there is a unanimous opinion that the audience is usually higher educated. Interestingly, for the less serious programs, such as the tabloid TV show and the reality TV show, there are different opinions when it comes to the intended target audience. Most of the higher educated respondents associated the lowbrow TV categories with a lower educated audience, while most of the lower educated respondents usually did not make this connection and mentioned that both the tabloid TV program and the reality TV program can be suitable for every educational level. Preferences for these types of trash TV programs were, according to the lower educated people, more based on someone's interests rather than their educational level. Even when the higher educated respondents mentioned that either reality TV or tabloid TV can be suitable for every educational level, they legitimized this by mentioning that this was the case because it is easy to watch. These programs are not serious, do not have any depth and so are suitable for every educational level. This means that more serious television is not suitable for everyone, only the easier shows where you do not have to think that much can be for every educational level.

"I can image that it is just entertainment where you do not have to think, so it can be entertainment for everyone." (Joshua, Bachelor University Degree)²²

"Well, I think that it is accessible to everyone who can see this as a form of entertainment [...] and look at it from a distance." (Remedios, Bachelor University Degree)²³

So, it is interesting to see that the higher educated people, most of the time, make a clear distinction between who the intended audiences are for the different trash TV programs. This distinction is based on educational level, meaning that they create an invisible boundary between genres of television and its intended target audience. This distinction is also visible in the following quotes, where higher educated people connect a lower educational level with a preference for lowbrow television shows (reality TV and tabloid TV):

"Well, that is a difficult question, but going off on my instinct I would say that people from a lower educational level are more suitable as an audience (reality TV)." (Cesar, Master University Degree)²⁴

²² "Dus ik kan mij voorstellen dat het gewoon verstand op nul entertainment is en in dat opzicht is het volgens mij wel voor iedereen, kan het entertainment zijn." (Joshua, Bachelor diploma)

²³ "Nou ik denk dat het voor iedereen wel toegankelijk is als jij dit kan bekijken als een soort van vermaak [...] en er een beetje met een afstand naar kan kijken." (Remedios, Bachelor diploma)

²⁴ "Nou dat is een wat lastigere vraag want ik zou op eigen instinct zou ik zeggen dat mensen van een wat lager opleidingsniveau uhm, meer passend zijn binnen deze doelgroep." (Cesar, Master diploma)

“Yes, for example, someone who is higher educated would not think this (tabloid TV) is profound. No, they are a bit like Johnny and Anita (stereotypical Dutch saying about the lower classes in society).” (Remedios, Bachelor University Degree)²⁵

“I do not necessarily think if you are higher educated, I do not think a doctor would watch this (tabloid TV) after a day of work. I hope not anyway.” (Madiha, higher vocational degree)²⁶

As mentioned before, the lower educated respondents usually did not make this clear distinction that the more lowbrow television genres are more suitable for lower educated people. The lower educated respondents mostly stated that both for the reality TV genre and tabloid TV genre the audience could be anyone, here they did not connect a specific educational level to the genre:

“I do not think that (educational level) is the case, I just think that everyone finds it interesting who is interested in that world (tabloid TV). And that does not really have to do with your educational level or with your class in society.” (Julien, intermediate vocational training)²⁷

“I do not think that it has to do with education or whatever (reality TV), it is just about sensation and it is just for 10 weeks.” (Sher, intermediate vocational training)²⁸

“No, I think that the concept is made to attract as large of a public as possible, and I think that is the reason why they keep it shallow and neutral with a lot of drama.” (Babet, high school diploma)²⁹

Instead, some of the lower educated respondents connected interests rather than educational level to the intended audience for the specific trash television genres. But not only the lower educated respondents did this, also some higher educated respondents thought that interest was the most important reason why someone would like a certain television genre. They mentioned

²⁵ “Ja bijvoorbeeld, voor iemand die hoog opgeleid is en die denkt nou dit is allemaal niet diepgaand ofzo. Nee dan wel een beetje Johnny en Anita achtig.” (Remedios, Bachelor diploma)

²⁶ “Ik denk niet per se als je super hoog opgeleid bent, ik zou denk ik niet een arts dit zien kijken na een dagje werken. Ik hoop het niet in ieder geval.” (Madiha, HBO)

²⁷ “Dat denk ik dus ook weer niet, ja nee ik denk gewoon dat iedereen het interessant vindt die ook maar een beetje interesse heeft in dat hele wereldje. En dat heeft niet echt met opleidingsniveau te maken of met ja, met klasse in de maatschappij.” (Julien, MBO)

²⁸ “Ik denk niet dat het te maken heeft met opleiding of wat dan ook, het heeft te maken met sensatie en het is ook maar 10 weken.” (Sher, MBO)

²⁹ “Nee ik denk dat het concept er juist op is gemaakt om zoveel mogelijk mensen erin te trekken en een zo breed mogelijk publiek te hebben en ik denk dat dat ook de reden is dat ze het uhm, oppervlakkig houden en ja bijna neutraal maar wel met flink veel drama erin.” (Babet, middelbare school diploma)

that preferences are based on someone's interest rather than educational level. This particular finding is in line with the way Chan (2010) looked at consumption and preferences. He did not compare class and educational level to consumption preferences, but instead looked at the individualization argument. According to this theory, cultural consumption lost its stratification system due to the commercialized consumer society where everyone is able to develop their own identity (Alderson, Junisbai & Heacock, 2007). This means that educational level does not primarily influence consumption behavior and preferences, because people are freer to choose their own interests and identity. It is considered, in this individualization argument, that people are breaking free from their habitus to create their own individual freedom (Chan, 2010). This argument also came forward in some of the respondents, both higher- and lower educated, by mentioning that preferences are based on individual interests. The following quotes are a good illustration where this argument comes forward:

"I think that everyone can watch this, I do not think that matters (education). It just has to be your interest (tabloid TV)." (Sher, intermediate vocational training)³⁰

"I think this is accessible to everyone who finds it interesting (serious talk show)." (Johnny, higher vocational degree)³¹

"But more on people who just like gossip TV [...] I only think interest (and not educational level)." (Tessa, Master University Degree)³²

In conclusion, there are similarities found in this research with the existing literature that mentioned that the preferences for highbrow or lowbrow television programs can be linked to educational level. The literature mentioned that higher educated people are usually seen as the audience for highbrow television (serious talk shows) and lower educated as the audience for lowbrow television such as reality TV and tabloid TV (Konig, Rebers & Westerik, 2009). The same findings can be found in this research. Here, the target audiences that the respondents linked to the highbrow and lowbrow television genres are broadly in line with the existing theory.

³⁰ "Ik denk dat iedereen hier wel naar kan kijken eigenlijk, ja ik denk dat het echt niet uitmaakt. Het moet je gewoon liggen denk ik." (Sher, MBO)

³¹ "Ik denk dat dit wel toegankelijk is voor iedereen die een beetje interesse heeft." (Johnny, HBO)

³² "Maar meer op mensen die gewoon een beetje van roddel tv houden [...] ik denk alleen interesse." (Tessa, Master diploma)

Legitimization of watching Reality TV:

For this category it was important to look at the way higher- and lower educated respondents legitimize their consumption of reality TV and if differences between them occur. To look at their legitimization, it was important to see if the respondents identify with the genre or the people in the show and how they consume the show (guilty pleasure, camp sensibility, ironic consumers, traditional consumers, serious consumers or differently).

When it comes to the identification, none of the higher educated respondents could identify with this particular reality TV show, either the content or the contestants. Within the group of lower educated respondents there was a difference. Some of them did identify with Temptation Island and some did not. Interestingly, in comparison to the higher educated respondents, most of the lower educated respondents really focused on the contestants and the content of Temptation Island. Some of them for example discussed specific couples, the relationship test aspect or specific happenings and had an opinion about them, either negative or positive. But they also mentioned that they could identify with, or saw some recognition, in the contestants. This was not the case with the higher educated respondents, who just focused purely on the entertainment and malicious pleasure that they got from watching this program. While watching the fragments, a lot of the higher educated respondents started to laugh. Or they made facial expressions, such as frowning, that can suggest that they were judgmental towards the fragments. The following quotes are a good illustration in which the differences in identification with the reality TV show, between higher- and lower educated respondents, comes forward.

“I can recognize, I can recognize people that I know for example, how I know someone else that is how I recognize those guys.” (Austenilde, intermediate vocational training)³³

“The subject just suits me more [...] it is much more recognizable, I think that is the reason I like it as much.” (Sher, intermediate vocational training)³⁴

“Temptation, I would never be able to identify with it because I would never do such a thing myself (about contestants).” (Madiha, higher vocational degree)³⁵

So, it is clear that there is a difference when it comes to identification with a reality TV show and educational level, some of the lower educated respondents did identify with the show and none of the higher educated respondents did. This finding suggests that higher educated people want to

³³ “Ik kan wel herkennen, maar hoe ik iemand anders die ik ken bijvoorbeeld herken, hoe ik iemand anders ken zo herken ik die jongens bijvoorbeeld wel.” (Austenilde, MBO)

³⁴ “Ja het onderwerp ligt mij gewoon meer [...] het is veel herkenbaarder, ik denk dat het daarom ook wat leuker is.” (Sher, MBO)

³⁵ “Temptation, maar ook daarin zou ik mij nooit kunnen terugvinden want ik zou zelf nooit zoiets doen.” (Madiha, HBO)

take an elevated position in relation to reality TV. Even though they still watch it, they do not want people to think that they identify in any way with the content or contestants of the show. They take this elevated position by mentioning that they only watch these shows purely to be entertained, and that they cannot recognize with the contestants. Also, by making fun of the contestants and laughing at the fragments when watching it. It shows that higher educated people feel the need to neutralize and distance themselves from these shows, while lower educated people mostly do not feel the need to do this. When looking at the literature, similar findings are visible that states that especially lower educated people can usually identify more with both the content and the displayed characters in reality TV. This group sometimes sees flaws in the reality TV programs that they watch, but they also see some important educational aspects of them (Deery, 2015). Higher educated people on the other hand do not have any identification with the content or characters that are displayed whatsoever. The enjoyment that they receive from watching trash reality TV is purely based on being entertained (Deery, 2015). For higher educated consumers watching reality TV gives them an imaginative access to a lifestyle that they are not familiar with, usually those lifestyles that belong to the lower classes of society. They receive enjoyment by watching the suffering of others, as a form of malicious pleasure (Albertini, 2013).

When it comes to the way the respondents consume this particular reality TV show, similar patterns of legitimization are visible among the different educational levels. Among the lower educated respondents there was variety in the way they legitimize their consumption, some of these respondents did not feel the need to even legitimize why they like this show. Out of the seven respondents in this group, two of them can be seen as more serious watchers of this particular reality show. They mentioned that they think that Temptation Island is a really good way to test your relationship, that it has some meaning. It teaches you something about life and it makes you appreciate the relationship that you have:

“A wise lesson, what I said earlier having a relationship is not easy. But I also think that the most important signal for me, is that it makes you appreciate what you have.” (Heily, intermediate vocational training)³⁶

Three of the respondents did not watch this show at all, but mostly because they could not identify with the topics or the contestants on the show. They did not reject the show overall because they did see why some people might like it. Two of the lower educated respondents legitimized their

³⁶ “Een wijze les [...] wat ik net ook al aangaf een relatie hebben is niet makkelijk. Maar ook denk ik het allerbelangrijkste signaal naar mij toe dan laat ik het zo zeggen, koester wat je hebt.” (Heily, MBO)

consumption of reality TV in a different way. They know that what they consume is from a low quality but they still like watching it. One of these two lower educated respondents prefers highbrow activities, while the other one prefers lowbrow activities. So, it can be said that their general cultural preferences, or their cultural capital, does not influence the way they legitimize their consumption of this particular show. They legitimize their consumption by saying it is stupid TV, a guilty pleasure, cringy TV, something light to watch after a long working day, nice to watch stupid people do stupid things and something that gives you a bad feeling, but you cannot stop watching it. This legitimization is more in line with the guilty pleasure kind of consumption, which is usually used by higher educated people when watching lowbrow television. So, this type of legitimization is also something that lower educated people can use while consuming lowbrow culture. This means that lower educated people are not purely serious watchers of lowbrow television, there are also differences between people within a lower educational group:

“I just find it funny that they are acting stupid, it is just fun to watch something light where I do not necessarily have to pay attention.” (Aurelia, intermediate vocational training)³⁷

“The fragments that you have shown are just nice cringe TV [...] yes, it is a bit of a guilty pleasure to watch people say stupid things [...] I would never want to come across as a person like that.” (Julien, intermediate vocational training)³⁸

The higher educated respondents on the other hand were more in line with each other, where all of the respondents legitimized their consumption of reality TV in a more ironic kind of way. Guilty pleasure consumption did not really come forward because none of the respondents mentioned that they feel ashamed when watching this reality TV show or that it makes them uncomfortable. The ironic way of consumption among the higher educated respondents of this research was visible because they labeled *Temptation Island* as following: a form of malicious pleasure, something with no deep meaning, a waste of time, pure entertainment and nothing serious, making fun of people with others (social activity), watching simple people do simple things and a feeling of superiority. The following quotes are a great example in which this ironic way of legitimizing their consumption comes forward:

³⁷ “Dat vind ik gewoon grappig, ja dat ze zich gewoon een beetje dom opstellen [...] en dan is het soms lekkerder om gewoon iets luchtigs te kijken waar je niet per se hoeft op te letten.” (Aurelia, MBO)

³⁸ “Die stukjes die jij hebt laten zien dat is gewoon heerlijke cringe tv [...] ja het is een beetje een guilty pleasure denk ik om toch te kijken naar mensen die hele idiote dingen zeggen [...] zo zou ik nooit in het echt over willen komen als persoon.” (Julien, MBO)

“Yes, cringy entertainment [...] all the stupid, ridiculous things people do. You get a sort of superiority feeling, like haha at least that is not how I am.” (Joshua, Bachelor University Degree)³⁹

“I think that everyone who likes a bit of malicious pleasure and awkward situations can watch this.” (Cesar, Master University Degree)⁴⁰

“Yes, the entertainment level is high, it really is a malicious pleasure [...] so I always find it nice to watch this.” (Roxanne, Master University Degree)⁴¹

The literature mentioned that with ironic consumption, higher educated people legitimize their consumption of lowbrow television by appreciating the show as a source of mockery and ridicule (McCoy & Scarborough, 2014). This group usually enjoys the badness of the show and labels it as trashy, stupid, horrible which gives them the opportunity to make fun of the show and mock it. This group also likes the more malicious pleasure that they get from watching reality TV. They usually have a lot of negative commentary on these shows and enjoy watching it with others to talk about the show while it occurs (Warren & Mohr, 2019). The existing literature and the findings of this research are therefore largely in line with each other.

So, it is obvious that among the higher educated respondents there is one clear way of legitimizing their consumption of trash reality TV, namely in an ironic kind of way. Among the lower educated respondents there are differences in the legitimization of their consumption. Some are more serious watchers and can identify more with the show and contestants and some are also more ironic/guilty pleasure in their consumption. But it is very clear that the higher educated respondents take a more elevated position in relation to this reality TV program than the lower educated respondents. By doing this, the invisible boundary that higher educated usually create between them and others is being maintained and also visible in this research.

³⁹ “Ja cringy entertainment [...] alle belachelijke, domme dingen wat mensen doen. Je krijgt een soort superioriteit gevoel van haha zo ben ik in ieder geval niet.” (Joshua, Bachelor diploma)

⁴⁰ “Ik denk dat iedereen die wel een beetje van leedvermaak en ongemakkelijke situaties houdt dit kijkt.” (Cesar, Master diploma)

⁴¹ “Ja het entertainment gehalte is hoog het is echt leedvermaak [...] dus ik vind het altijd wel leuk om te kijken.” (Roxanne, Master diploma)

Legitimization of watching Tabloid TV:

This category focusses on how, the higher- and lower educated respondents legitimize their consumption of tabloid TV (in this research RTL-Boulevard) and if they can identify with the subjects/people on the show. In the case of this research, the higher educated respondents had similar opinions about RTL-Boulevard and were very homogeneous in their opinion of this show, the lower educated respondents had differing opinions, which made them a more heterogeneous group. When it comes to the identification with the show or the subjects, there was not a clear difference between the lower- and the higher educated respondents. The only clear difference is that two lower educated respondents could really identify with this program, with the subjects and situations. The other five respondents in this group could not identify with this show, because they had a negative opinion about it. Another respondent mentioned that the lifestyle of celebrities is something that she could never identify with because it does not match with her own lifestyle. In the higher educated respondents' group, identification was only visible when this show discusses more serious subjects, about crime or legitimate news items. But overall, almost every respondent, either higher- or lower educated, could not identify with this tabloid TV show:

“No, I would not even treat my worst enemy like that, no I really do not like it. I think gossiping is really sad.” (Madiha, higher vocational degree)⁴²

“Definitely not [...] it is far from reality. It is all fake.” (Heily, intermediate vocational training)⁴³

“They also sometimes have a more in-depth conversation, so in terms of that I sometimes can recognize myself [...] yes, some conversations they have are interesting and those could be conversations that I could have with someone.” (Roxanne, Master University Degree)⁴⁴

So, the findings of this research are partly in line with the existing literature on identification with tabloid TV. As mentioned before, tabloid TV is usually more preferred by the lower classes in society, who generally are also lower educated, because these shows are a way to circulate popular knowledge, which is generally more preferred by the lower educated groups in society (Glynn, 2000; Grindstaff, 2008). These kinds of shows are situated in between news and entertainment, because they are not critical and more subjective than the official news. A lot of these tabloid TV shows are known for bringing serious news items in an unserious way or bringing news and entertainment too

⁴² “Nee ik zou zelf niet eens zo met mijn vijand omgaan, nee ik hou er echt niet van. Roddelen, ik vind het een triest gedoe.” (Madiha, HBO)

⁴³ “Totaal niet [...] maar het is verre van werkelijk, laat ik het zo zeggen. Het is zo fake echt allemaal.” (Heily, MBO)

⁴⁴ “Die ook weleens een wat diepgaander gesprek hebben uhm, dus qua dat ja herken ik mijzelf soms wel [...] ja, sommige gesprekken die ze hebben zijn wel interessant en dat zouden wel gesprekken kunnen zijn die ik bijvoorbeeld zou voeren ofzo.” (Roxanne, Master diploma)

close together. For this reason, the higher classes in society are not favorable to these kinds of shows, they prefer more serious and legitimate news (Glynn, 2000). They are more prone to avoid programs that are low in their complexity, such as tabloid TV shows (RTL-Boulevard). Usually, the audience for these kinds of shows are people who belong to the lower classes in society, they are more serious watchers and can identify more to the subjects on these shows. In this research, only a few lower educated respondents were serious watchers while none of the higher educated respondents were.

When it comes to the legitimization of watching tabloid TV and how the different educational levels consume this kind of television, it was clear that there were some real differences among the respondents. Starting with the higher educated respondents, almost every one of them said that they never watch this program or only watch small fragments when zapping. These parts consist of the more serious items of this show, about crime and lawsuits or about real news topics. But, according to them, the gossip parts are not interesting at all, it is not newsworthy and not entertainment. It is a show that falls in between being entertainment and being about the news, this means for them that it was not good enough to watch. They would rather watch something purely for entertainment or a more serious show that really teaches them something. All of the higher educated respondents ranked RTL-Boulevard as the least fun program to watch, most of them would not mind if this show would be canceled. They usually did not see any added value in this tabloid TV show. It is a program that none of the higher educated respondents really found enjoyable to watch, some mentioned that it is not informative, it does not add to your knowledge and it is just about drama and gossip. For them this show tries to portray newsworthy items, but they are usually about showbiz or just not serious enough to get the label news:

“Yeah, not quite news, not quite entertainment [...] I do not think it is about broadening your knowledge, that is not what it is about, or informing. Not even informing, of course some information is being told but it is not really information.” (Joshua, Bachelor University Degree)⁴⁵

“Well, I think RTL-Boulevard is a waste of time, really a waste of time [...] they are serious about things that are just not interesting which makes me think what this show is about [...]

⁴⁵ “Ja net niet, net geen nieuws, net geen entertainment [...] volgens mij gaat het niet om verbreding van kennis of, daar gaat het niet om, of informeren. Niet eens informeren, tuurlijk er wordt informatie verteld maar het is niet echt informatie.” (Joshua, Bachelor diploma)

and I think RTL-Boulevard is just about nothing important.” (Remedios, Bachelor University Degree)⁴⁶

These quotes show that for the higher educated respondents RTL-Boulevard really did not have any added value because it is not entertaining enough and not educational enough. Among the lower educated respondents there were some differences when it comes to their opinion about this particular show. Five of the respondents mentioned that this program sometimes has newsworthy items and they even connected RTL-Boulevard with the actual news. Some of them saw this program as the extension of the actual news, and about current affairs. One of the lower educated respondents is a true serious watcher of this program, she liked everything about it, watches it almost every day and mentioned multiple times that she sees this program as bringer of actual news:

“I see it as a form of news, because I do not watch the news. I see it as news but brought in a fun way [...] I really like it, it is an hour worth of news brought to you in fifteen minuten [...] it is more towards the news, so yeah, for me It is just a fun way to watch the news.” (Janka, High School degree)⁴⁷

This is in line with the theory that mentioned that because of the more popular content of these tabloid TV shows, the audience usually belongs to the lower classes in society (Konig, Rebels & Westerik, 2009). Other lower educated respondents were more conflicted when it comes to their opinion of tabloid TV. Some of them did not like the gossip part of the program, but they did like the more serious subjects about crime, lawsuits but also see this show as an extension of the news thus taking it more serious than the higher educated respondents. Just one lower educated respondent was very hostile and negative about this program, he did not have anything positive to say where the other respondents in this group did see some positive points in this program:

“They do come with information, with facts, so things about crime, those are things that really happen.” (Sher, intermediate vocational training)⁴⁸

⁴⁶ “Nou RTL-Boulevard vind ik echt tijdverspilling, dat is echt heel erg zonde van mijn tijd [...] ja het is het net niet want ze doen een beetje serieus over dingen wat echt niet boeiend is en dan denk ik ja waar gaat het over [...] en dat vind ik RTL-Boulevard, het is gewoon blabla over niks belangrijk.” (Remedios, Bachelor diploma)

⁴⁷ “Ik zie het eigenlijk als een soort nieuws want ik kijk geen nieuws. Ik zie het als nieuws, maar dan op een grappige manier zeg maar [...] ja dat vind ik gewoon fijn, het is gewoon een uur nieuws wordt in een kwartier verteld [...] ja omdat het meer naar het nieuws gaat, dus uhm, ja wat ik zeg het is voor mij gewoon een leuke manier om het nieuws te kijken.” (Janka, middelbare school diploma)

⁴⁸ “Ze komen wel met informatie, ze komen ook soms echt met feiten dan dus echt met dingen uhm, net als dat misdaad weet je dat zijn wel dingen dat ik denk het gebeurt wel echt.” (Sher, MBO)

“Well, I like it because they discuss current affairs where they also display people who have a strong opinion about things, that is interesting [...] yes news but also entertainment.” (Babet, High School diploma)⁴⁹

“I would say it is a form of horrible news. News that does not matter [...] just brainless TV. (Julien, intermediate vocational training)⁵⁰

Interesting to see is that among this group of respondents, the ranking of RTL-Boulevard was very different than in the higher educated group. The ranking was not used as a way to formally categorize the shows, but more as a tool to see what kind of considerations people use in order to make this ranking. Here, the higher educated respondents all ranked RTL-Boulevard as the least fun program of the three because it was not entertaining enough and not educational enough. The lower educated groups were more diverse in their ranking. Three out of the seven respondents ranked this program as the least fun program, three as the second fun program and one as the most fun program. So, it can perhaps be said that among the lower educated respondents there was more preference for this show than among the higher educated group. Perhaps because indeed lower educated people can relate more to the popular knowledge and sensational topics that these programs circulate.

⁴⁹ “Nou ik vind het wel leuk omdat er actuele dingen worden besproken waar ze tegelijkertijd wel mensen neerzetten die wel vaak een vrij sterke mening hebben over dingen dus dat vind ik wel interessant [...] ja nieuws maar tegelijkertijd entertainment.” (Babet, middelbare school diploma)

⁵⁰ “Ik zou zeggen, ik denk gewoon een soort van vreselijk nieuws om het zo te zeggen. Nieuws wat er niet toe doet [...] gewoon hersenloze tv.” (Julien, MBO)

Legitimization of watching a serious Talk Show:

For this research fragments of the serious talk show Jinek was shown to the respondents. The choice for a serious talk show, in combination with the more lower trash TV categories, was to control if indeed higher educated respondents could more identify with this kind of program than lower educated people. These higher forms of talk shows are considered to be more sophisticated, with more high-profile guests and discussing more serious issues such as the news, current affairs and politics. It is also considered that these type of talk shows are watched by more intellectual, higher educated, people (Mittell, 2013). As mentioned before, lower educated people are usually more avoiding in watching complex programs with serious topics about the news or politics (Koning, Rebels & Westerik, 2009).

The first thing to look at is if there are significant differences among the respondents when it comes to the identification with this serious talk show. There were some small differences between the two groups, in which all of the higher educated respondents said that they could identify with this show. They legitimized this identification by mentioning the seriousness of the show, stating that they appreciate the professional and intellectual side of it and that it fits better with their own norms and values. Some also mentioned that they could identify with the guests of this show because, according to them, these guests are usually highly educated:

“Just discussing things in a professional and intellectual way. That is what I can agree with and identify with.” (Roxanne, Master University Degree)⁵¹

“Well in a sense, yes. I think, within my own expertise I am also scientifically grounded.” (Cesar, Master University Degree)⁵²

When it comes to the lower educated respondents, there was a variety whether they could identify with this show or not. Some of the respondents said that they could identify with some of the subjects on this show, or that they could identify with the way the guests communicate. These respondents mentioned that Jinek sometimes has interesting subjects, but in their explanation why they thought the subjects were interesting they did not really use words such as serious, academic, scientifically, intellectual etc. which the higher educated respondents did. Meaning that the higher educated respondents really emphasized the academic/serious quality of this talk show. But there were also two lower educated respondents that could not identify with this show at all, specifically with the more serious topics which they labeled as boring:

⁵¹ “Gewoon op een professionele en intellectuele manier met elkaar een discussie aangaan. Daar kan ik mij op zich wel in vinden en mee identificeren.” (Roxanne, Master diploma)

⁵² “Naja in zeker zin wel. Ik vind, zelf binnen mijn eigen expertise ben ik ook wel wetenschappelijk onderlegd.” (Cesar, Master diploma)

“No, it is just boring [...] I do not think it is interesting, you know, the subjects that they choose.” (Janka, High School diploma)⁵³

When it comes to the legitimization of watching this serious talk show, there were also some differences among the two educational groups. None of the higher educated respondents were frequent watchers of this talk show, but they did see it as the highest quality program out of the three. This is because they thought that the topics were of a high quality, objective, socially relevant, newsworthy, about current events and with guests who are highly educated and academically educated. Interesting to see is that only two out of the seven higher educated respondents ranked Jinek as the most fun program to watch. The other five thought Jinek was the second most fun program to watch and Temptation Island the most fun. They did legitimize this by saying that Jinek is a serious program that needs their full attention and usually, after a long and serious day at work, they would rather watch something easy than watch something serious. But they still mention that they sometimes like watching serious talk shows such as Jinek. As said before, reality TV is considered to be part of the lower segments of trash TV, and interesting to see is that the higher educated respondents legitimize this consumption in an ironic kind of way. Whereas serious talk shows about current events and the news are considered to be part of the higher segments of television and here, they legitimize their consumption in a more serious way, noticing the added value this program can have, how important it is to be educated and that it is newsworthy. So, for this program they did not really feel the need to legitimize their consumption, they were more serious watchers or mentioned how serious this program is and that it is of a high quality. They seem to make a value distinction between what is considered to be good and bad, high and low. They also take a more elevated position to justify their consumption of trash reality TV. So, the higher educated respondents only felt the need to ironically legitimize their consumption of the lower TV program Temptation Island because it does not match with their own identity and beliefs (Warren & Mohr, 2019). The following quotes are a good illustration of the opinion that the higher educated respondents have of Jinek:

⁵³ “Nee het is gewoon saai [...] naja ik vind het niet interessant, weet je, de onderwerpen die ze kiezen dan denk ik bij mijn eigen weet je.” (Janka, middelbare school diploma)

“At Jinek, the content is of the highest quality out of the three shows. That is because it has more intellectual content and there is a bit more in-depth discussion in a more professional way.” (Roxanne, Master University Degree)⁵⁴

“But I also think this program is made because it is important to have a discussion about difficult subjects, discussing topics brings up new perspectives and I think that is important. It makes you think. So, it is an important thought process in order for you to look a bit more critically at the news.” (Cesar, Master University Degree)⁵⁵

Within the lower educated respondents' group there were some differences among them. They almost all thought that Jinek is the highest quality show out of the three. Just one respondent did not think Jinek was the highest quality program, she thought that RTL-Boulevard was the highest quality program, this is the same respondent who was the only real serious watcher of this show which can explain this outcome. All of these respondents do not really watch Jinek, but some of them mentioned that they do like the serious topics. They just do not watch it, but they see how this show can contribute to the viewer because it is about serious topics and because it is educational:

“I think it is good that it exists, it informs people who want to go deeper than what the news tells you [...] it is still about informing people which is indeed important. Because you still inform the people who watch this and that is very pleasant.” (Julien, intermediate vocational training)⁵⁶

When it comes to the ranking of the three shows as of which of the shows is the most fun to watch, something interesting is visible. Four out of the seven lower educated respondents found Jinek the most fun program to watch, which is not in line with the literature that states that lower educated people can usually not really relate to the more serious topics discussed on serious talk shows. The literature also states that lower educated people usually do not like topics about politics, the news, current affairs and would identify more with popular topics. So, it is interesting to see that so many of the lower educated respondents think this is the most fun program, where only two of

⁵⁴ “Bij Jinek vind ik wel de inhoud van de drie programma's van de hoogste kwaliteit. Omdat het wat meer zit op een wat intellectuelere inhoud uhm en er wat meer diepgaand wordt gediscussieerd en gepraat op een wat professionelere manier.” (Roxanne, Master diploma)

⁵⁵ “Maar ik denk ook dat het gemaakt wordt omdat het belangrijk is om discussie te voeren over moeilijke onderwerpen en uhm, door te discussiëren over onderwerpen komen verschillende, nieuwe perspectieven, aan bod en ik denk dat dat belangrijk is. Dat zet je aan het denken, het zet je tot nadenken. Dus, dat is een belangrijk denkproces om wat kritischer naar het nieuws te kijken.” (Cesar, Master diploma)

⁵⁶ “Ik vind het goed dat het bestaat, het informeert de mensen die iets dieper uhm, hoe zeg je dat, die iets dieper willen gaan dan dat het nieuws zegt [...] maar het is nog steeds ook wel om een stukje informeren en dat is toch wel belangrijk inderdaad. Want je informeert toch de mensen die het kijken en dat is heel prettig.” (Julien, MBO)

the higher educated respondents think this is the case. The ranking of the lower educated respondents can perhaps be explained because they have a bigger cultural goodwill than higher educated people, they want to keep up with the legitimate culture and pursue the taste of the higher classes. Or it could also be the case that they are just pretending to like it because they know it is seen as a more serious program. But it can also be explained by the mode of consumption that some of them have. As mentioned before, the lower classes in society are usually more functional in their consumption (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017). In this more functional mode of consumption, watching television needs to have a specific function, usually either educational or a pure form of entertainment:

“It has to interest me, and I do not like to waste my time. If I waste my time, I would rather look out of the window which is a very conscious choice.” (Babet, High School diploma)⁵⁷

“That I develop, it teaches me things that I do not encounter in my daily life. You are dealing with specialists who tell their story and explain things. I think it is a source of development [...] I would rather spend my time on this.” (Heily, intermediate vocational training)⁵⁸

This mode of consumption makes this group less omnivore than the higher educated consumers, who usually have a broader range of television categories that they watch. But in this case, all of the respondents consume both lowbrow television and more serious TV, the only thing that differs is the way they legitimize their consumption for these different categories of TV. What is also in line with the theory is that two lower educated respondents found this program the least fun because they mentioned that they do not like the seriousness of this talk show, it is not something that has their interest:

“I have watched it a few times but at some point, I lose my attention and the subjects do not interest me at all.” (Sher, intermediate vocational training)⁵⁹

So, even though the differences among the educational groups are not very large, there are still some significant differences visible that are in line with the existing theory. The biggest similarity can be found in the fact that all of the higher educated respondents valued the serious talk show for

⁵⁷ “Ja het moet mij wel interesseren en ik hou er niet van om mijn tijd gewoon te verdoen. Zeg maar zelfs als ik mijn tijd verdoe dan staar ik uit het raam maar dat is dan een hele bewuste keuze.” (Babet, middelbare school diploma)

⁵⁸ “Ja dat ik mij ontwikkel, wat ik zei, ik krijg dingen mee die ik in het dagelijks leven niet tegenkom of wat dan ook. Je hebt te maken met specialisten die hun verhaal komen doen of dingen komen uitleggen. Ik vind dat een bron van ontwikkeling, [...] ik ben eerder mijn tijd hier aan het besteden.” (Heily, MBO).

⁵⁹ “Ik heb het wel een paar keer gekeken hoor maar ja op een gegeven moment verlies ik mijn aandacht of het onderwerp boeit mij niet.” (Sher, MBO)

its seriousness, and that they could identify with this, while some of the lower educated respondents were more hostile to these serious topics and could not identify with them.

Conclusion and discussion:

Giving an answer to the following research question: *“What is the difference between the way higher educated and lower educated people between the age of 24-39 legitimize their consumption of different forms of “Trash TV”?”* was the purpose of this research. The different forms of trash TV that were looked at were reality TV, tabloid TV and talk shows. For the talk show genre, a more serious talk show was chosen in order to test the theory that higher educated people usually have a preference for this type of talk show.

The general conclusion that can be drawn from this research, is that the differences in consumption behavior can be found in the different ways people consume trash TV rather than what kind of TV they actually consume. All of the respondents watched, or were familiar with, the different forms of trash TV and the serious talk show. But the main difference lays in the way how the respondents from different educational levels consume these forms of television. It can be said that overall higher educated people consume the trashiest form of trash TV (reality TV) in a rather ironic kind of way. For them it is something they cannot identify with because it does not match with their class position. It is something to watch as a malicious form of pleasure, to make fun of and to watch with others. It can be concluded that a class distinction is made by the higher educated respondents by distancing themselves while watching the trashier form of trash TV in an ironic kind of way. The tabloid TV show on the other hand seemed to be not trashy enough for the higher respondents to watch. For them, it was not entertaining and not educational or newsworthy enough. The serious talk show on the other hand was appreciated by the higher educated respondents for its seriousness and academic value, even though they were not frequent watchers of these kinds of shows. This can mean that overall, higher educated people give more value to a serious talk show than the trashier shows because they feel the need to defend their class position and to keep a distance between what is considered lowbrow and highbrow. They do this in order for them to maintain the invisible boundary between them and others.

When it comes to the television and consumption behavior of the lower educated respondents, it became clear that there were some differences among the respondents in this group. The trashiest form, namely reality TV, was divided by serious watchers and ironic/guilty pleasure watchers. The main difference between this groups and the higher educated group was the fact that more people in this group could identify with this trashy form of television. The same can be said about the tabloid TV show, here there also was a division among the respondents. Some could identify with the subjects and saw it as a real serious newsworthy program, while others did not like this program at all. When it comes to the serious talk show, some of the lower educated respondents could not identify with the seriousness of the program. Others in this group did appreciate this program for its seriousness but they still did not watch it. The reason for this difference is perhaps

the cultural goodwill that some lower educated people have. They feel the need to conform to more higher standards, they do this by expressing cultural tastes that are usually found among the higher classes in society. But overall, it can be concluded that the television consumption behavior of the lower educated respondents, both in the identification with the programs and the legitimization of watching them, is more heterogeneous than the higher educated respondents who are more homogeneous.

It can be a limitation of this research that the differences are not that significant, so it is more difficult to really make assumptions about the legitimization differences between educational levels. One of the reasons for this limitation could be the fact that only respondents with prior exposure to trash TV were interviewed. People who really dislike this form of television, or who never watched it before, were not part of this research. These people could perhaps have different forms of legitimization than the respondents with prior exposure to trash TV. So perhaps that could be the reason why the differences between these groups were not that significant. But differences in the way higher- and lower educated people legitimize their consumption of watching trash TV were still there in some cases.

One finding that was not discussed in the result part of this research could be interesting for future research. This was the fact that all of the respondents connected age to taste preferences. Because this was so clearly visible, it might be a nice topic to do further research on. A lot of the respondents noticed that the three different programs have a different target audience which is specifically based on age. Temptation Island (reality TV) was seen as a program more suitable for a younger audience. RTL-Boulevard (tabloid TV) on the other hand was considered to be more suitable for a bit older public, mostly because the gossip topics were not something younger people could identify with. Jinek (serious talk show) was also considered to be more suitable for an older generation. Mostly because, according to the respondents, serious topics are more interesting for an older generation. This connection between generation and preferences can be very interesting to do further research on. It can be expected that, if intergenerational research were to be conducted, there would indeed be differences in the preferences among different age groups. It can be speculated that younger people would indeed find reality TV more interesting than serious talk shows, they could perhaps identify more with the topics because they grew up with them (sex, violence, younger people, relationship struggles). The older generations on the other hand would prefer more serious topics, because they have different expectations or standards when watching television perhaps due to the fact that they did not grow up with trash TV as the millennials did. But, as mentioned, those are speculations that are interesting enough to investigate. It is also nice to know what this might mean for television genres in general, if some of these genres will perhaps go extinct when the younger generation gets older. So, what does it mean knowing that the younger

generation likes more reality TV, will they always prefer it over more serious topics, or does it perhaps mean that preferences and interests change when you get older?

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Appendices:

Appendix A. Interview guide (Dutch and English version):

Dutch version:

Allereerst bedankt dat jij mee wil doen met dit interview, ik gebruik het materiaal voor mijn master scriptie. Mijn scriptie gaat over de verschillende manieren waarop mensen naar bepaalde programma's kijken. Ik vraag dus echt naar jouw persoonlijke mening, geen antwoord is fout. Ga jij akkoord dat ik het interview opneem en de data voor mijn scriptie gebruik? Kan ik jouw echte naam gebruiken of heb jij liever een schuilnaam? (Consent gedeelte).

Eerste deel interview: persoonlijke vragen ± 10 minuten

1. Wat is jouw leeftijd?
2. Heb jij een opleiding gedaan? Zo ja, wat is jouw hoogst behaalde opleiding?
3. Wat zijn jouw hobby's?
4. Wat doe jij graag in je vrije tijd?
5. Als je kon kiezen uit de volgende activiteiten, welke drie zou je het liefst doen?
 - a. Naar het museum gaan
 - b. Naar een balletvoorstelling gaan
 - c. Gamem
 - d. Naar de bioscoop gaan
 - e. Naar een musical gaan
 - f. Naar het theater gaan
 - g. Stripboeken lezen
 - h. Literatuur lezen
 - i. Klassiek concert bezoeken
 - j. Tv kijken
 - k. Poëzie lezen
 - l. Popmuziek concert bezoeken
6. Welk van deze activiteiten mis jij momenteel het meest?
7. Hoe vaak kijk jij naar televisie?
 - a. Wat zijn voor jou de redenen om naar televisie te kijken?
 - b. Waarom spreken dit soort programma's jou het meest aan?
8. Wat voor programma's kijk je dan vooral?
9. Kijk je dit op TV, Netflix, Videoland, YouTube of op andere streamingsdiensten?
10. Kijk je vaak alleen of samen met iemand?

- a. Spreek jij wel eens af met mensen om programma's samen te kijken?
- b. Wissel jij wel eens berichten met mensen tijdens een programma? Appen over het programma, als er iets gebeurt bijvoorbeeld.

Tweede deel interview: 3 fragmenten laten zien (Reality TV/Tabloid TV/Talk show) + vragen

hierover ± 40 minuten (Per fragment dezelfde vragen stellen, maar ruimte bieden om in te spelen op de antwoorden van de geïnterviewde).

- Fragment 1: Reality TV, **Temptation Island**, twee korte fragmenten (3/4 minuten)
 - o <https://youtu.be/GJs8mNs93WQ>
 - o <https://youtu.be/9sk0PYIXpbc>
- Fragment 2: Tabloid TV, **RTL-Boulevard**, twee korte fragmenten (3/4 minuten)
 - o <https://youtu.be/PYV7HLJwtpQ> tot 2.18
 - o <https://youtu.be/L8g30blNaPo>
- Fragment 3: Talk Show, **Jinek**, twee korte fragmenten (3/4 minuten)
 - o <https://www.gids.tv/video/311014/jinek-gemist-daan-roosegaarde-ontwierp-kunstzon-tegen-coronavirus> 0.30-3.13
 - o <https://www.gids.tv/video/311008/jinek-bezwijken-mark-rutte-en-hugo-de-jonge-onder-druk-van-de-samenleving> tot 1.42

1. Heb je dit programma wel eens gezien?
 - a. Zo ja, wat vind je van dit programma?
 - b. Hoe vaak kijk je het programma? Is dit af en toe of volg je het programma wekelijks?
 - c. Zo nee, waarom kijk jij hier niet naar?
2. Hoe zou je het programma waarvan jij net een fragment hebt gezien omschrijven?
3. Wat voor emoties roept dit programma bij jou op?
4. Wat is jouw mening over dit programma?
 - a. Als iemand er bekend mee is: over het programma in het algemeen
 - b. Als iemand er niet bekend mee is: mening over het fragment
 - c. Zou je dit kunnen toelichten?
5. Hoe voel jij je als je naar dit programma kijkt?
6. Wat vind je van de kwaliteit van dit programma?
 - a. Waarom lage/hoge kwaliteit?
 - b. Vind jij het een goed programma? Op basis van het fragment of eerdere kennis over het programma.
7. Onder welk genre TV valt volgens jou dit programma?

8. Kan jij jezelf herkennen in de personen of de situatie die jij net hebt gezien?
 - a. Waarom wel/niet?
9. Kijk je dit programma op TV of via een streamingdienst?
10. Kijk je het programma alleen of samen met iemand?
 - a. Heeft deze keuze nog een specifieke reden?
11. Heb je het met vrienden wel eens over dit programma?
 - a. Waarom wel/niet?
 - b. Bij wel: Wat zeg je dan over dit programma? Wat bespreken jullie hierover?
 - c. Bij niet: Wat is de reden waarom je hier niet met vrienden over spreekt?
12. Zou je het programma aanraden aan anderen?
 - a. Waarom wel/niet?
13. Wat denk jij dat het imago is van dit programma, hoe anderen denken over dit programma?
14. Waarom worden volgens jou dit soort programma's gemaakt?
 - a. Wat zouden de makers willen bereiken met dit programma?
15. Kijk je soortgelijke programma's?
 - a. Waarom wel/niet?
 - b. Zo ja, welke programma's?
16. Voor welk publiek is dit programma volgens jou bedoeld?
 - a. Hoe ziet de gemiddelde kijker van dit programma er volgens jou uit?
 - b. Behoor jij denk je tot de doelgroep van dit programma?
 - c. Zo niet, waarom kijk jij er dan toch naar?
17. Ben je bekend met de term Reality TV? (Vraag: fragment 1.)
 - a. Zou je mij in je eigen woorden kunnen uitleggen wat deze term voor jou betekent?
 - b. Zijn er programma's die jij kent die volgens jou onder deze term vallen?
18. Ben je bekend met de term Tabloid TV? (Vraag: fragment 2.)
 - a. Zou je mij in je eigen woorden kunnen uitleggen wat deze term voor jou betekent?
 - b. Zijn er programma's die jij kent die volgens jou onder deze term vallen?
19. Ben je bekend met de term Talk Show? (Vraag: fragment 3.)
 - a. Zou je mij in je eigen woorden kunnen uitleggen wat deze term voor jou betekent?
 - b. Zijn er programma's die jij kent die volgens jou onder deze term vallen?

Derde deel interview: evaluatie van de getoonde fragmenten ± 10 minuten

1. Maak een rangschikking van de drie getoonde fragmenten en begin bij het fragment die jij persoonlijk het leukst vindt om naar te kijken.
 - a. Wat maakt dit programma zo leuk in vergelijking met de andere fragmenten?

- b. Wat is voor jou de reden dat je dit programma leuk vindt?
 - c. Waarom vind jij nummer drie het minst leuke programma?
- 2. Vind jij het leukste programma ook van de hoogste kwaliteit?
 - a. Waarom wel/niet?
 - b. Welk programma vind jij dan wel van de hoogste kwaliteit?
- 3. Van de drie getoonde fragmenten, is er een programma die jij vaker zou willen zien? Of is er één die jij zeker niet vaker zou willen zien?
 - a. Waarom deze keuze?
- 4. Welk fragment is volgens jou het meest informatief?
 - a. Waarom heb je voor dit programma gekozen?
 - b. Waar moet een programma volgens jou aan voldoen om informatief te zijn?
- 5. Welk fragment is volgens jou het meest entertainment?
 - a. Waarom heb je voor dit programma gekozen?
 - b. Waar moet een programma volgens jou aan voldoen om entertainment te zijn?

English version:

First of all, thank you for participating in this interview. I will use the data for my Master thesis, and it is about the different ways that people consume different forms of television shows. I will ask about your personal opinion, so no answer is wrong. Do you agree with me recording this interview and using the data for my thesis? Can I use your real name, or do you prefer me using a fake name? (Consent part).

First part interview, personal questions ± 10 minutes

1. What is your age?
2. Did you do a study? If so, what is your highest level of education?
3. What are your hobbies?
4. What do you prefer doing in your spare time?
5. If you could choose out of these activities, which three would you prefer doing?
 - a. Going to the museum
 - b. Going to the ballet
 - c. Gaming
 - d. Going to the cinema
 - e. Going to a musical
 - f. Going to a theater performance
 - g. Reading comic books
 - h. Reading literature
 - i. Visiting a classical music concert
 - j. Watching tv
 - k. Reading poetry
 - l. Visiting a pop-music concert
6. Which kinds of activities do you miss most at the moment?
7. How often do you watch tv?
 - a. What are the reasons for you to watch tv?
 - b. Why do you prefer these kinds of programs?
8. What kind of programs do you usually watch?
9. Do you watch this on cable TV, Netflix, Videoland, or other streaming services?
10. Do you prefer watching alone or with others?
 - a. Do you sometimes meet up with people to watch a program together?
 - b. Do you ever exchange messages with people while watching a program?
WhatsApping about a program when something happens for example.

Second part of the interview: 3 fragments are shown (Reality TV/Tabloid TV/Talk show) + questions about them ± 40 minutes (Asking the same questions per fragment, but offering space to respond to the interviewee's answers)

- Fragment 1: Reality TV, **Temptation Island**, two short fragments (3/4 minuten)
 - o <https://youtu.be/GJs8mNs93WQ>
 - o <https://youtu.be/9sk0PYIXpbc>
 - Fragment 2: Tabloid TV, **RTL-Boulevard**, two short fragments (3/4 minuten)
 - o <https://youtu.be/PYV7HLJwtpQ> tot 2.18
 - o <https://youtu.be/L8g30blNaPo>
 - Fragment 3: Talk Show, **Jinek**, two short fragments (3/4 minuten)
 - o <https://www.gids.tv/video/311014/jinek-gemist-daan-roosegaarde-ontwierp-kunstzon-tegen-coronavirus> 0.30-3.13
 - o <https://www.gids.tv/video/311008/jinek-bezwijken-mark-rutte-en-hugo-de-jonge-onder-druk-van-de-samenleving> tot 1.42
1. Did you see this program before?
 - a. If so, what do you think of this program?
 - b. How often do you watch this program? Is this occasionally or do you really follow this program weekly?
 - c. If not, why did you never see this program before?
 2. How would you describe this fragment?
 3. What kind of emotions do you feel while watching this program?
 4. Do you have an opinion about this program?
 - a. If someone is familiar with this program, ask their general opinion about it.
 - b. If someone is not familiar with the program: ask their opinion about the fragments.
 - c. Can you explain yourself?
 5. How do you feel while watching this program?
 6. What do you think about the quality of this program?
 - a. Why is it of a high/low quality?
 - b. Do you think it is a good program? Based on the shown fragments or their previous knowledge of this program.
 7. What kind of genre TV does this show falls under?
 8. Can you recognize yourself with the characters or the situations that you have just seen?
 - a. Why or why not?
 9. Do you watch this program on cable TV or a streaming service?

10. Do you watch this program alone or with someone?
 - a. Does this specific choice have a reason?
11. Do you sometimes discuss this program with your friends?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. If so: what do you discuss about this program?
 - c. If not: what is the reason why you do not discuss it with friends?
12. Would you recommend this program to others?
 - a. Why or why not?
13. What do you think is the overall image of this program, how do others think about it?
14. Why do you think these kinds of programs are being made?
 - a. What do the makers want to achieve by producing it?
15. Do you watch similar programs?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. If so, what kind of programs do you watch?
16. Who do you think the audience is?
 - a. How does the average viewer of this program look like?
 - b. Do you belong to the general audience of this program?
 - c. If not, why do you still watch it?
17. Are you familiar with the term Reality TV (question: fragment 1.)
 - a. Can you explain in your own words what this term means for you?
 - b. Are there programs that you watch which belong to this term/genre?
18. Are you familiar with the term Tabloid TV? (question: fragment 2.)
 - a. Can you explain in your own words what this term means for you?
 - b. Are there programs that you watch which belong to this term/genre?
19. Are you familiar with the term Talk Show? (question: fragment 3.)
 - a. Can you explain in your own words what this term means for you?
 - b. Are there programs that you watch which belong to this term/genre?

Third part interview: evaluation of the shown fragments ± 10 minutes

1. Make an arrangement of the three shown fragments and start with the fragment that you personally like watching the most.
 - a. What makes this program so much fun to watch in comparison to the other fragments?
 - b. What is your reason to like this program?
 - c. Why do you think number three is the least fun program to watch?

2. Do you think the most fun program to watch is also of the highest quality?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. Which program is from the highest quality?
3. From the three shown fragments, is there a program that you want to watch more often? Or is there a program that you certainly do not want to watch more often?
 - a. Explain yourself.
4. Which of the fragments is the most informative?
 - a. Why did you choose this specific program?
 - b. What qualities does a program has to meet in order for it to be informative?
5. Which of the fragments is the most entertaining?
 - a. Why did you choose this specific program?
 - b. What qualities does a program has to meet in order for it to be entertaining?

Appendix B. Overview of interview respondents:

Name:	Age:	Educational level:	Gender:
1. Remedios	31	University bachelor's degree (completed)	Female
2. Roxanne	30	University master's degree (completed)	Female
3. Madiha	27	Higher vocational degree/HBO (completed)	Female
4. Tessa	28	University master's degree (completed)	Female
5. Johnny	29	Higher vocational degree/HBO (completed)	Male
6. Joshua	32	University bachelor's degree (completed)	Male
7. Cesar	27	University master's degree (completed)	Male
8. Aurelia	24	Intermediate vocational training/MBO (completed)	Female
9. Janka	38	High school (completed)	Female
10. Sher	29	Intermediate vocational training/MBO (completed)	Female
11. Babet	28	High school (completed)	Female
12. Heily	34	Intermediate vocational training/MBO (completed)	Male
13. Austenilde	32	Intermediate vocational training/MBO (completed)	Male
14. Julien	28	Intermediate vocational training/MBO (completed)	Male