 Sub-genres of Documentaries

“These modes establish a loose framework of affiliation within which individuals may work; they set up conventions that a given film may adopt; and they provide specific expectations viewers anticipate having fulfilled.”

Nichol (2001), pg.99

Identify the sub-genre of the trailers provided.

| Sub-genre | Identifying elements | Example text | Conventions used |
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| Expository mode | * Classic documentary format is overt; the viewer is directly addressed through narration and voice over techniques. * Factual information presented through a range of techniques including interviews. |  |  |
| Observational mode | * Often referred to as ‘fly on the wall’ documentary. * An event is presented, offering an interpretation or perspective on the situation without the film maker’s involvement being overt. * People are filmed in their ‘reality’. * Impact of editing impacts narrative and characterisation. |  |  |
| Participatory mode | * The film maker and crew’s role is overt and they often have a role in the documentary. * Interviews are often. * Location shooting with handheld cameras feature frequently. * Archival footage/materials are used to juxtapose the ‘here and now’ or to ‘reveal’ a secret/cover up. |  |  |
| Reflexive mode | * Often constructed in the style of feature film and follows a journey narrative. * Narration by film makers is often questioning and uncertain; not authoritative. * Film makers may be involved in the action but do not dominate. * The documentary acknowledges and focuses on the construction of the film to an extent. * Dramatic lighting and music used to heighten emotive response sometimes in ‘mockumentary’ style. |  |  |
| Performative mode | * Performative documentaries are often shaped as a determined investigation or search for a greater truth. * The subject matter is more conceptual rather than factual. For example, notions of identity, gender and family. * The audience is conscious of the purpose of the documentary. * The documentary encourages focus on contextual experiences and questioning of how personal context differentiates amongst a broader experience. |  |  |