 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.
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| 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.
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| 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.
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| 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.
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| 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.
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