Content Type

Documentaries are longer videos (45–70 min) that examine an area of research in greater depth. Examples include Beauty Mark: Body Image and the Race for Perfection, What a Girl Wants, Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes, The Bro Code: How Contemporary Culture Creates Sexist Men, and The Purity Myth: The Virginity Movement’s War Against Women. Documentaries often bring together a collection of experts and ordinary people to shed greater understanding on particular issues. Many integrate videos, music, and film clips from popular culture to make the documentaries more exciting. Documentaries can be assigned as homework or be watched in class and form the basis of further discussion.

Suggested Courses or Topics

This documentary can be used across courses that focus on the relationship between gender, media, and society. Course examples might include:

- gender studies,
- gender and the media,
- media, gender, and identity, or
- gender and sexuality.

Classroom Clips

Listed below are a few examples of clips that focus on key concepts:

- This clip explains why there is a need to study misogyny in the media. Clip 00:45 – 1:20.
- This clip explains what misogyny is and how it is manifested. Clip 1:25 – 1:42.
- This clip discusses how sexualized images of women are seen to be a route towards empowerment. Clip 2:44 – 5:33.
- This clip discusses how some music artists such as Pink have tried to challenge the sexualisation of women through her music. Clip 5:57 – 6:30.
- Advertisers role in producing sexist messages is discussed here. Clip 7:46 – 8:46.
- Women are often portrayed as treacherous, self-serving, and in competition for one another over men. Clip 10:41 – 11:38.
- Changes in the appearance of Barbie dolls over time to become more sexualized are discussed. Clip 13:48 – 15:33.
- A discussion of the rise of the cosmetics industry is discussed here as well as the associated rise in eating disorders. Clip 19:04 – 20:27.
- The question, To what extent is the media responsible for eating disorders? is raised, with an example given about what happened in Fiji. Clip 24:09 – 25:17.
- The rise of cosmetic surgery is discussed, and questions are raised on if we should be teaching our daughters how to “look perfect.” Clip 25:17 – 28:30.
- Talking about how sexist attitudes, which develop with children, persist throughout people’s lives, limiting their options. Clip 35:21 – 36:22.
This section discusses the concept of “behavioral genetics”—that boys and girls are simply different. 

Here, the video suggests that how children are raised and socialized impacts how they will turn out as adults. 
Clip 38:00 – 40:12.

The pressure for men to act tough is discussed here, particularly in relation to musical lyrics. Clip 40:15 – 43:02.

Here, we are told about how men are programmed to be violent, and women are told to be attracted to these “bad boys.” Clip 47:30 – 49:17.


Research Assignment
See below for some example assignments that you might use for students

1. The documentary discusses the concept of behavioral genetics (Clip 36:23 – 37:13). Define what it is and to what extent are such views still common place today?

2. Select one media genre (e.g., action films, hip-hop music, TV drama) and summarize key academic literature on the ways women are represented. To what extent do sexualized or misogynistic representations dominate, and what, if any, space is provided for challenges to these representations?

3. Feminist activists have long been interested in studying the sexist and misogynistic representations of women. Read and summarize two of the three key articles on this topic, and discuss the extent to which you think their findings still hold true today:

Classroom Discussion
Here are some examples of questions which might be used for in-class discussion.

1. The documentary notes the ways that women are more likely than men to suffer from eating disorders (Clip 25:03 – 23:05). Why do you think this is the case? Are men less susceptible to media messages, or are media messages about thinness and beauty somehow different?

2. Eating disorder survivor Shelly Nelson argues that the media, such as magazines “hold a huge responsibility towards people striving to be that perfect person and have the perfect body and to be happy” (Clip 29:57 – 29:23). To what extent do you find yourself and your ideals of beauty influenced by the media? Can or should the media be forced to present more realistic images of women and what might that entail?

3. When thinking about the concept of gender training, reflect on your own life and the ways in which you have been socialized to act masculine or feminine. To what extent has this training been explicitly vs. implicitly enforced (e.g., your parents buying feminine dress and enrolling you in ‘feminine’ activities, vs. being verbally discouraged or bullied for challenging gender norms, e.g. boys being told not to cry).

4. In the video, Jean Kilbourne talks about how limiting performing one’s gender can be. What if anything do you think can be done to make gendered characteristics more fluid? (e.g., better role models, education, etc.)

5. In the video, Jackson Katz notes of Eminem (and other artists) that if they were to write about people of color the way they write about women, their music would not be tolerated. To what extent do you agree with this, and why do you think lyrics promoting violence against women are accepted?