

# Subjectified: Nine Young Women Talk about Sex

Directed and Produced by Melissa Tapper Goldman

Running Time: 102 Minutes

Trailers and additional material at [subjectified.com](http://subjectified.com)



## Brief Synopsis:

Filmmaker Melissa Tapper Goldman traveled around the US looking for real answers to the basic but elusive question, “Why do girls have sex?” Through nine in-depth personal interviews with young women, she followed her curiosity into the homes of religious Christians, young moms, gay and straight women, friends and strangers. Allowing these women to open up about their most personal experiences, Goldman tapped into stories that are too complex and too real to fit into a television plot line, sometimes heartwarming and sometimes disturbing. From poignant to awkward to uncontrollably funny, the interviews peer into the minds of young women in America trying their best to make sense of a complicated subject.



Film Stills, Copyright 2009 Melissa Tapper Goldman  
Top to bottom: Mariluz, Joy, “Vanessa”

## Full Synopsis:

It was personal curiosity that first brought Melissa Tapper Goldman to the question “Why do girls have sex?” In a culture so saturated with images of female sexuality, it is surprisingly difficult to find real examples that aren’t scripted by men or promoted as “reality” television, flattening characters down to sound bites. When this commercial imagery is the first exposure that many girls have to sexuality, setting expectations and norms, how can we begin to distinguish between fact and fiction?

With faith in the depth of the real stories of women’s sexual histories, Goldman aimed to turn the politically divisive question of why girls have sex into a personal one. Camera in hand, she found young women around the country from different backgrounds, religions, classes and sexual identities, and asked them to explore their most intimate details on the record, with the common goal of heightening understanding and empathy among women from different walks of life.

*Subjectified* spans 3,000 miles across the country. Conservative and liberal, secular and Christian, gay and straight, these women answer the earnest questions that many of us have long wanted to ask people who are different from ourselves. Each woman’s own elements of bravery and weakness emerge in the personal narratives, showing female sexuality from a first-person perspective rarely caught on camera. From poignant to awkward to uncontrollably funny, the interviews peer into the minds of young women in America trying their best to make sense of a complicated subject: themselves.

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Photo by Rachel Goldman

**Melissa Tapper Goldman (Director, Producer)** lived in Boston, Albuquerque, New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area while shooting *Subjectified*, finding odd jobs and interview subjects along the way. She was a producer on *The Outs* (2012). This is her first feature documentary. Prior to *Subjectified*, she worked as a writer, researcher, percussionist, and designer. Her independent research has focused on the effects of media on individual behavior. Goldman resides in New York City. She holds degrees from the University of Chicago and Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

**Christy Ann Spindler (Editor)** grew up in West Virginia. She moved to Florida in 1992 to attend Florida State University where she received a BA in creative writing and a Masters Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language. She taught English for 5 years; first in Tokyo, then Seattle and finally in the public schools of New York City. She met Melissa one summer when they both taught at a boarding school in a small town in Massachusetts.



Spindler worked as a video editor for Naked Eye Editorial from 2005 to 2009, editing commercials, corporate videos and other long form projects for television. Currently, she works independently. She lives with her husband and baby son in Tampa, Florida.

## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

This project began as a simple question and a simple frustration. I thought I understood the motivations and pressures regarding girls' sexuality within the community where I grew up, but I had no clue what sexuality meant for other women around the country. I thought I understood what might make a teenage mother decide to raise a baby, or for a religious person to practice abstinence, but the models in my mind for why girls have sex just didn't add up to a believable picture. Why do girls have sex? Pressure? Libido? Emotional dependence? I realized that I drew many assumptions from examples in media rather than from real life, since few of us ever hear such intimate details from anyone but our closest friends. And even my own experiences come filtered through expectations shaped by stories drawn from external sources including television, movies and magazines. From all ends of the political spectrum, American men and women have strong opinions about the sex lives of girls, arriving at facile conclusions about how girls should manage the complexity of coming of age. When I first talked with people about my project, I often got the same response. "Oh, I know why girls have sex. It's because ..." followed by a variety of personally motivated theories projected onto all girls everywhere. Media does not create human sexuality, and it does not dictate our actions directly. But the stereotypes that we all rely on to make sense of the world are the same ideas that encourage us to reduce other people to two-dimensions, and allow easy judgment about an experience that has rarely been easy for the person actually going through it. I would like to replace some of those stereotypes, to overwrite some of these associations, with something more real, more nuanced, deeper and more heartfelt.

The answers that I received to my questions in these interviews defied all of my expectations and the research that I did in preparation for the nine intense conversations. The stories were both more sophisticated and more powerful than what I had anticipated. The film also follows my own process of testing my tolerance and empathy. For each of these women, getting honest in front of a camera was a true challenge. Who wants to talk about her sex life on film? And if she does, why? In an age of reality television, we hear a continuous stream of intimate personal narratives. But what "reality" television offers in exhibitionism, it lacks in dimensionality. Somehow in a sea of overexposure, images of real female sexuality, explored on their own terms, are still startlingly rare. For a woman to ask herself these intimate questions of motivation and sexuality, with a camera and a person as her witnesses, takes immense courage and conviction. I have grown to admire each of these women for her honesty and candor.

I invite you to open your heart to these women, and to see your own experience in a new light. Beyond questions of politics, contraception and sex ed, there are the human questions. What would the world look like if we exercised this empathy, if we brought an open heart to the people around us? How would that experience change us and how we treat others? How could our behavior change the way others treat *themselves*? As a society, are we finally ready for the answer to the question: why do girls have sex?

Melissa Tapper Goldman

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## Screening and Pre-Screening History

- Columbia University, March 2012
- Sherman Co-operative House UC Berkeley, November 2011
- University of California Davis, with support from the *Davis Feminist Film Festival*, September 2011
- San Francisco Independent Screening, Opera Plaza Cinema, September 2011
- Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, April 2011
- Brown University, March 2011
- University of California Berkeley, November 2010
- Bowdoin College, November 2010
- Lesley University, November 2010
- Moishe/Kavod House Community Center, October 2010
- Wellesley College, May 2010
- *Boston International Film Festival*, April 2010
- Women in Film/Video New England's *Chicks Make Flicks* series, in conjunction with MIT's Program in Women's and Gender Studies, February 2010

## Press Coverage

Our Bodies Our Blog (Official Blog of Our Bodies Ourselves)  
Carnal Nation  
The Boston Phoenix (featured weekly pick)  
Current.com  
Various college campus newspaper coverage

## Credits

### Interview Subjects:

Mariluz  
Rebecca  
Brittney  
Joy  
Jackie  
Samantha  
"Vanessa"  
Alexis  
"Moree"

Director and Producer:

Co-Producer:

Editor:

Co-Editor:

Associate Producers:

Assistant Producers:

Production Assistants:

Creative Consultants:

Music:

Audio Post Production:

Re-recording Mixer:

Video Post Production Services:

Colorist:



Film Stills, Copyright 2009 *That's What She Said*  
Top to bottom: Mariluz, Joy, "Vanessa"

Melissa Tapper Goldman

Christy Ann Spindler

Christy Ann Spindler

Melissa Tapper Goldman

Chloe Taylor Evans & Adam Goldman

Hannah Labaree & Aubrey Clayton

Aderonke "Ronnie" Adeola & Jane Leibrock

Aubrey Clayton, Jane Leibrock & Alexis Van Pelt

Melissa Tapper Goldman

Futura Productions, Boston, MA

futuraproductions.com

John Weston

Final Frame

Ben Laffin