

AM Ashley Maria
P Productions

DISCUSSION GUIDE



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Key themes and takeaways from the film include:

Intersection of Personal Life and Career:

The documentary addresses specific challenges like the "mommy penalty," the need for sponsorship, and the pressure of having to prove oneself repeatedly.

The "Ambition Gap": The documentary investigates why women's career ambitions often falter as they transition from school to the workforce, examining issues like the "likeability" penalty and lack of support.

Personalized Stories: Through personal narratives and interviews, the documentary explores the impact of these obstacles & biases on women & girls' lives, aiming to empower viewers to make a difference.

Impact on Future Generations: The documentary examines how these stereotypes start early and aims to inspire changes that allow young girls to pursue their ambitions without being limited by outdated societal expectations.

Systemic Bias vs. Individual Fault: The documentary emphasizes that women do not need to "fix" themselves; rather, cultural and structural forces, such as unconscious bias and stereotyping, create unfair obstacles.

The "Slow-Burn" Effect That Leads to Burnout: The documentary highlights how constant, small, or "unconscious" biases chip away at a woman & girl's confidence and ambition over time. These seemingly minor slights can accumulate over time (starting during childhood), leading women to start doubting themselves and giving up on their dreams.

Actionable Solutions: The documentary focuses on solutions, encouraging women & men to --

- become better allies and networks of support,
- challenge stereotypes, and
- foster inclusive, equitable cultures.

PIONEERS IN SKIRTS®

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WHEN HOSTING A MOVIE EVENT

We recommend convening for a discussion about the film after watching it. Because the film touches on personal themes, giving viewers an opportunity to reflect is important. Afterward, you can help direct those reactions toward positive next steps.



FOSTER MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE

Movies aren't just watched - they're experienced. To foster thoughtful post-screening discussions, address the audience's emotional response, ask about character viewpoints, and explore the film's themes.

PERSONAL CONNECTION QUESTIONS

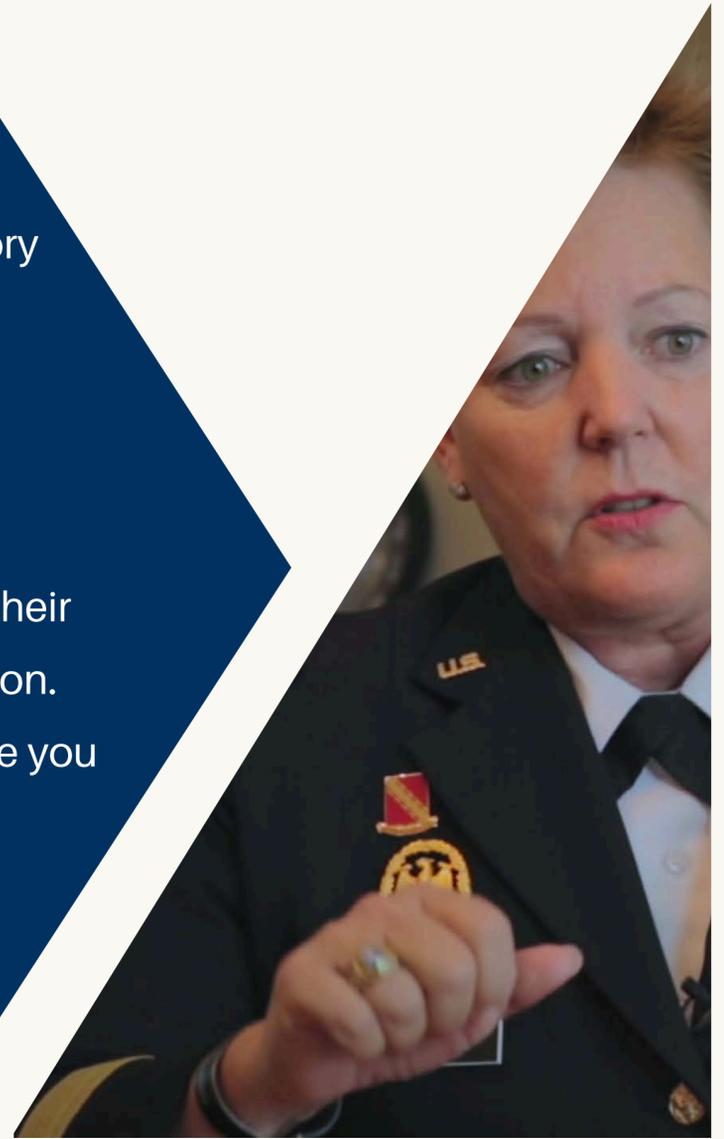
- What was your first thought when the credits rolled?
- How did this film make you feel?
- Was there anything that surprised you in the film?
- What scenes or moments in the film had the biggest impact on you? Why?
- Were you able to see yourself or someone you know in the film's storyline?
- Did any part of the film make you feel a sense of hope, despair, or excitement?

Start the discussion by acknowledging that the film is powerful and evokes various responses in you.



DEEPER IMPACT AND PERSPECTIVE SHIFT QUESTIONS

- Who was your favorite character and why? Was there a story you related to the most?
- Which person or story made you think differently about a situation you've been in?
- How has the film changed your thinking about this topic?
- The film shares statistics showing that women start out in their careers with loads of ambition, even leading men in ambition. However, within just 2 years their ambition plummets. Have you experienced this? If so, what triggered it?
- How has your ambition changed as you've progressed in your career? What advice would you give your younger self? Your colleagues?



- In the film, Ashley's mom advises Ashley to "go around the system and not use the system" because the system is not working for her. Have you ever found yourself in this position?

- We all have to be more self-aware of our own biases. In the film, Norman Lear said he started to have a bias about Ashley when he first met her, but then forced himself to take her seriously. Do you recall a time when this happened to you?
- The film shows several men who are championing their daughters and female colleagues. How do you think men can be most helpful for this cause?
- What does true gender-parity look like? How will we know when we have succeeded? Will having more women in leadership solve everything?





THEME AND WRAP UP QUESTIONS

- What do you think about the film's portrayal of what can cause a woman (or girl) to give up and re-think her dreams?
- If you could require one person or group to watch this film, who would it be and why?
- How has your perspective changed after watching this film?
- What are you taking back into your own life from this conversation?
- What will you do to help move the ball forward?



Having award-winning filmmakers at your event is invaluable!

After years of research and traveling the country making the film, the director and producer have been on a mission to help others understand what it takes to achieve a truly inclusive environment where women and girls can achieve their dreams.



[Invite A Filmmaker](#)



QUESTION IDEAS TO ASK THE FILMMAKERS:

1. How did you decide on who to interview for the movie?
2. You launched the movie during the global pandemic. How did it affect your plans with the film?
3. My favorite thing about the two of you is that you are a mother-daughter team. What has it been like working on this project together?
4. What inspired the title? What do you mean by "pioneers" and why "skirts"?
5. What inspired you two to make Pioneers in Skirts?
6. What were your biggest surprises when you were making the film?
7. What's been the most rewarding aspect of this project for you? And most challenging?
8. What do you most want people to take away from the film?
9. What can people start doing today to build a world where women and girls can go after and achieve their dreams without burning out?
10. How do you recommend having that dialogue with a young woman about the topics in the film?
11. How did you (Ashley) keep from burning out as you pushed against this kind of bias in the workplace every day? Give us an example of what it was like.
12. Ashley, did you face any negative repercussions for calling out these examples of bias in your industry? How can we create a workplace environment where calling these out won't lead to potential repercussions?