**Spellcheck For Bias: *Sixteen States***

Geena Davis Institute for Gender in Media

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**Overview**

The purpose of this report is to identify opportunities for content creators to diversify character representations. This report measures representations of six identities in the script *Sixteen States* for Lionsgate:

● Gender

● Race/Ethnicity

● LGBTQ+

● Disability

● Age (50+)

● Body Size

**Methodology**

Spellcheck for Bias is based on inventions and software developed at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering. For this report, we analyze characters who spoke one line of text or more. In *Sixteen States*, 33 characters met this criterion:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER NAME** | **LINE COUNT** |
| April | 265 |
| Isabella | 159 |
| Colonel Bedford | 154 |
| Josh | 147 |
| Major Stenz | 47 |
| Matt | 43 |
| Posey | 35 |
| Cole | 29 |
| Doctor | 29 |
| Officer Blake | 29 |
| Lynn (a.k.a. Tall Woman) | 26 |
| Boone | 17 |



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Jen | 9 |
| Ginny | 6 |
| Sporting Goods Cashier | 6 |
| Helicopter PA | 5 |
| Emaciated Man | 5 |
| Young Soldier | 5 |
| Male Nurse | 4 |
| USVC Team Member | 4 |
| Ann | 3 |
| PA System | 3 |
| Tiff | 3 |
| Ricky | 3 |
| Friendly Shopper | 2 |
| Father | 2 |
| Big Sister | 2 |
| Beau | 2 |
| Student | 1 |
| Little Brother | 1 |
| Cashier | 1 |
| Deputy | 1 |
| Radio | 1 |

Automated coding is combined with expert human coding to generate the quantitative and qualitative analysis below.



**Gender Analysis**

***For comparison, women constitute 51% of the U.S. population.***

● 12 characters are specified as female.

● The leading character (April) is female.

● This script contains 6 character opportunities to increase gender diversity.

Characters by Gender

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **FEMALE CHARACTER** | **MALE CHARACTER** | **GENDER UNSPECIFIED** |
| APRIL |  |  |
| ISABELLA |  |  |
|  | COLONEL BEDFORD |  |
|  | JOSH |  |
|  | MAJOR STENZ |  |
|  | MATT |  |
| POSEY |  |  |
|  | COLE |  |
| DOCTOR |  |  |
|  | OFFICER BLAKE |  |
| LYNN (A.K.A. TALL WOMAN) |  |  |
|  | BOONE |  |
| JEN |  |  |
| GINNY |  |  |
|  | ≈ | SPORTING GOODS CASHIER |
|  | ≈ | HELICOPTER PA |
|  | EMACIATED MAN |  |
|  | YOUNG SOLDIER |  |
|  | MALE NURSE |  |
|  | USVC TEAM MEMBER |  |
| ANN |  |  |



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | PA SYSTEM |
| TIFF |  |  |
|  | RICKY |  |
| FRIENDLY SHOPPER |  |  |
|  | FATHER |  |
| BIG SISTER |  |  |
|  | BEAU |  |
|  |  | STUDENT |
|  | LITTLE BROTHER |  |
| CASHIER |  |  |
|  |  | DEPUTY |
|  |  | RADIO |

The See Jane Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the See Jane test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **YES** | At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is a woman who; |
| **YES** | Is not depicted with gender stereotypes or tropes. |





**Race/Ethnicity Analysis**

***For comparison, people of color constitute 38% of the U.S. population.***

● 0 characters are specified as characters of color.

● The leading character has an unspecified race/ethnicity.

● This script contains 33 character opportunities to increase racial/ethnic diversity. Characters by Race/Ethnicity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER OF**  **COLOR** | **WHITE CHARACTER** | **RACE/ETHNICITY**  **UNSPECIFIED** |
|  |  | APRIL |
|  |  | ISABELLA |
|  |  | COLONEL BEDFORD |
|  |  | JOSH |
|  |  | MAJOR STENZ |
|  |  | MATT |
|  |  | POSEY |
|  |  | COLE |
|  |  | DOCTOR |
|  |  | OFFICER BLAKE |
|  |  | LYNN (A.K.A. TALL WOMAN) |
|  |  | BOONE |
|  |  | JEN |
|  |  | GINNY |
|  | ≈ | SPORTING GOODS CASHIER |
|  | ≈ | HELICOPTER PA |
|  |  | EMACIATED MAN |
|  |  | YOUNG SOLDIER |
|  |  | MALE NURSE |
|  |  | USVC TEAM MEMBER |
|  |  | ANN |



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | PA SYSTEM |
|  |  | TIFF |
|  |  | RICKY |
|  |  | FRIENDLY SHOPPER |
|  |  | FATHER |
|  |  | BIG SISTER |
|  |  | BEAU |
|  |  | STUDENT |
|  |  | LITTLE BROTHER |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | DEPUTY |
|  |  | RADIO |

The Sidney Poitier Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Sidney Poitier test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **NO** | At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is a character of color who; |
| **NO** | Is not depicted with race/ethnicity stereotypes or tropes. |





**LGBTQ+ Analysis**

***For comparison, LGBTQ+ people comprise 4.5% of the U.S. population.***

● 0 characters are specified as LGBTQ+.

● The leading character is heterosexual.

● 24 unspecified characters present an opportunity to increase LGBTQ+ diversity (3 unspecified characters are children).

Characters by LGBTQ+ Status

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **LGBTQ+ CHARACTER** | **HETEROSEXUAL**  **CHARACTER** | **SEXUALITY**  **UNSPECIFIED** |
|  | APRIL |  |
|  | ISABELLA |  |
|  |  | COLONEL BEDFORD |
|  | JOSH |  |
|  |  | MAJOR STENZ |
|  | MATT |  |
|  |  | POSEY |
|  | COLE |  |
|  |  | DOCTOR |
|  |  | OFFICER BLAKE |
|  |  | LYNN (A.K.A. TALL WOMAN) |
|  |  | BOONE |
|  | JEN |  |
|  |  | GINNY |
|  | ≈ | SPORTING GOODS CASHIER |
|  | ≈ | HELICOPTER PA |
|  |  | EMACIATED MAN |
|  |  | YOUNG SOLDIER |
|  |  | MALE NURSE |
|  |  | USVC TEAM MEMBER |



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | ANN |
|  |  | PA SYSTEM |
|  |  | TIFF |
|  |  | RICKY |
|  |  | FRIENDLY SHOPPER |
|  |  | FATHER |
|  |  | BIG SISTER |
|  |  | BEAU |
|  |  | STUDENT |
|  |  | LITTLE BROTHER |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | DEPUTY |
|  |  | RADIO |

The Vito-Russo Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Vito-Russo test, a script/manuscript must:** | |
| **NO** | Contain a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer. |
| **NO** | That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity (i.e. they are comprised of the same sort of unique character traits commonly used to differentiate straight/non-transgender characters from one another). |
| **NO** | The LGBTQ character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect, meaning they are not there to simply provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punchline. |





**Disability Analysis**

***For comparison, people with disabilities constitute 19% of the U.S. population.***

● 0 characters are specified as having physical, cognitive, or communication disabilities. ● The leading character does not have a disability.

● The script contains 33 character opportunities to increase disability diversity. Characters by Disability Status

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER WITH DISABILITY** | **CHARACTER WITHOUT DISABILITY** | **DISABILITY STATUS UNSPECIFIED** |
|  |  | APRIL |
|  |  | ISABELLA |
|  |  | COLONEL BEDFORD |
|  |  | JOSH |
|  |  | MAJOR STENZ |
|  |  | MATT |
|  |  | POSEY |
|  |  | COLE |
|  |  | DOCTOR |
|  |  | OFFICER BLAKE |
|  |  | LYNN (A.K.A. TALL WOMAN) |
|  |  | BOONE |
|  |  | JEN |
|  |  | GINNY |
|  |  | SPORTING GOODS CASHIER |
|  |  | HELICOPTER PA |
|  |  | EMACIATED MAN |
|  |  | YOUNG SOLDIER |
|  |  | MALE NURSE |
|  |  | USVC TEAM MEMBER |



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | ANN |
|  |  | PA SYSTEM |
|  |  | TIFF |
|  |  | RICKY |
|  |  | FRIENDLY SHOPPER |
|  |  | FATHER |
|  |  | BIG SISTER |
|  |  | BEAU |
|  |  | STUDENT |
|  |  | LITTLE BROTHER |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | DEPUTY |
|  |  | RADIO |

The Marlee Matlin Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Marlee Matlin test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **NO** | At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) with a physical, cognitive, or communication disability who; |
| **NO** | Is not depicted with disability stereotypes or tropes. |





**Age (50+) Analysis**

***For comparison, people ages 50+ constitute 34% of the U.S. population.***

● 2 characters are specified as ages 50+

● The leading character’s age is unspecified.

● 21 unspecified characters present an opportunity to increase age diversity.

Characters by Age

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER 50+** | **CHARACTER UNDER 50** | **AGE UNSPECIFIED** |
|  |  | APRIL |
|  | ISABELLA |  |
|  |  | COLONEL BEDFORD |
|  |  | JOSH |
|  |  | MAJOR STENZ |
|  |  | MATT |
|  | POSEY |  |
|  | COLE |  |
| DOCTOR |  |  |
|  |  | OFFICER BLAKE |
|  |  | LYNN (A.K.A. TALL WOMAN) |
|  |  | BOONE |
|  |  | JEN |
|  | GINNY |  |
|  |  | SPORTING GOODS CASHIER |
|  |  | HELICOPTER PA |
|  |  | EMACIATED MAN |
|  | YOUNG SOLDIER |  |
|  |  | MALE NURSE |
|  |  | USVC TEAM MEMBER |
| ANN |  |  |



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | PA SYSTEM |
|  | TIFF |  |
|  |  | RICKY |
|  |  | FRIENDLY SHOPPER |
|  |  | FATHER |
|  | BIG SISTER |  |
|  | BEAU |  |
|  | STUDENT |  |
|  | LITTLE BROTHER |  |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | DEPUTY |
|  |  | RADIO |

The Betty White Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Betty White test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **Yes** | At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is 50+ who; |
| **Yes** | Is not depicted with age stereotypes or tropes. |





**Body Size Analysis**

***For comparison, people with large body types constitute 39% of the U.S. population.***

● 0 characters are specified as having a large body type.

● The leading character has a small/medium body type.

● This script contains 31 character opportunities to increase large body type diversity. Characters by Body Size

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER WITH LARGE BODY TYPE** | **CHARACTER WITH SMALL/MEDIUM BODY TYPE** | **BODY SIZE**  **UNSPECIFIED** |
|  | APRIL |  |
|  |  | ISABELLA |
|  |  | COLONEL BEDFORD |
|  |  | JOSH |
|  |  | MAJOR STENZ |
|  |  | MATT |
|  |  | POSEY |
|  |  | COLE |
|  |  | DOCTOR |
|  |  | OFFICER BLAKE |
|  |  | LYNN (A.K.A. TALL WOMAN) |
|  |  | BOONE |
|  |  | JEN |
|  |  | GINNY |
|  |  | SPORTING GOODS CASHIER |
|  |  | HELICOPTER PA |
|  | EMACIATED MAN |  |
|  |  | YOUNG SOLDIER |
|  |  | MALE NURSE |
|  |  | USVC TEAM MEMBER |



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | ANN |
|  |  | PA SYSTEM |
|  |  | TIFF |
|  |  | RICKY |
|  |  | FRIENDLY SHOPPER |
|  |  | FATHER |
|  |  | BIG SISTER |
|  |  | BEAU |
|  |  | STUDENT |
|  |  | LITTLE BROTHER |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | DEPUTY |
|  |  | RADIO |

The Cooper Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Cooper test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **No** | At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) with a large body type who; |
| **No** | Is not depicted with size stereotypes or tropes. |





**Intersectional Analysis**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Female**  **Character** | **Character of Color** | **LGBTQ+**  **Character** | **Character with a**  **Disability** | **Character 50+** | **Character with Large Body Type** |
| **Female**  **Character** |  | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** | **YES** | **NO** |
| **Character of Color** | **NO** |  | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** |
| **LGBTQ+**  **Character** | **NO** | **NO** |  | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** |
| **Character with a**  **Disability** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** |  | **NO** | **NO** |
| **Character 50+** | **YES** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** |  | **NO** |
| **Character with Large Body Type** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** | **a** |

**Positives Aspects**

● The leading character, April, is both strong and compassionate, ultimately saving herself and her family from death and destruction.

● April, a female lead, gets to be a hero. She leads the (ultimately fruitless) rescue of the folks trapped in the capsized container, Ginny, etc.

● On multiple occasions characters hurl insults at one another that refrain from punching down or degrading an entire identity (e.g., “you little shit,” “pieces of shit”).

● There are two female characters who are 50+, one in a STEM leadership position, who are portrayed without harmful ageist stereotypes.

● The theme of families being separated at the border, and April being deported, humanizes the contemporary immigration crisis.

● Male nurse, female doctor-- a great reversal of stereotypical gender roles in medicine.



● Josh’s show of emotion when he discovers Posey is infected challenges toxic masculine notions that men don’t cry.

**Negatives/ Potential Pitfalls**

● Sexism: Isabella uses a gender slur (“pussy”) to put down Josh after April disappears and he is left to raise the family by himself.

● Sexism: Consider changing the gendered derogatory “fucking dick” to “fucking asshole” (11).

● Sexism: After April is taken out of the country the script refers to the newly single-parent household as “mom-less chaos,” implying that men are incapable of running an organized home without the presence of a woman. While April’s character is rooted in her innate maternal instinct, Josh is portrayed as the Violent Man stereotype, “emotionally ill-equipped” to parent on his own therefore resorting to fits of frustration and rage. When the next door neighbor inquires about screams coming from inside, Josh responds “house full of women… you know.” Women are both blamed for the domestic chaos and responsible for keeping it in order.

● Sexism: Isabella, who is 14 years old, is shown engaging in a sex scene with an older character when she is close to blacking out from intoxication: “He lowers her down to the ground and slips a hand into her jeans. Her head falls back for a moment. She’s swimming - too drunk. In fact she is blacking out, but this doesn’t stop the young man... perhaps the opposite.” In addition to the sexualization of a teen being problematic, this scene plays into the stereotype that female

characters are rapeable, sexual objects.

● Racism: Currently, April is unspecified for race/ethnicity, but if she is cast as a Black character, avoid the Strong Black Woman trope. This Black female character is rendered inhuman, not given the opportunity to experience

appropriate feelings and pain. She is able to endure trials and tribulations that would break weaker characters.

