**Spellcheck For Bias: *American Underdog***

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 *American Underdog* for Lionsgate:

* [Gender](#bookmark=id.gjdgxs)
* [Race/Ethnicity](#bookmark=id.30j0zll)
* [LGBTQ+](#bookmark=id.1fob9te)
* [Disability](#bookmark=id.3znysh7)
* [Age (50+)](#bookmark=id.2et92p0)
* [Body Size](#bookmark=id.tyjcwt)

**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 1 line of text or more. In *American Underdog*, 45 characters met this criterion:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER NAME** | **LINE COUNT** |
| KURT | 607 |
| BRENDA | 428 |
| SUE | 75 |
| JIM FOSTER | 75 |
| MIKE MARTZ | 50 |
| ZACK | 40 |
| LARRY | 32 |
| MIKE HUDNUTT | 30 |
| COACH ALLEN | 29 |
| COACH MOOCH | 18 |
| DICK VERMEIL | 17 |
| ISAAC | 16 |
| TV ANNOUNCER | 15 |
| MATT | 13 |
| ALVAREZ | 12 |
| RICH | 11 |
| COLOR MAN | 11 |
| KIM | 9 |
| COMMENTATOR | 7 |
| DAVID GILLIS | 7 |
| DAD | 6 |
| WEARY TEACHER | 5 |
| GUARD | 4 |
| COACH RAMSDELL | 4 |
| RAY LEWIS | 4 |
| OTHER SPORTSCENTER GUY | 3 |
| BARTENDER | 3 |
| REGGIE | 3 |
| CASHIER | 2 |
| MARSHALL | 2 |
| ATTENDANT | 2 |
| SPORTSCASTER 2 | 2 |
| ANNOUNCER | 2 |
| TINY | 1 |
| CHEERLEADER | 1 |
| RADIO NEWS | 1 |
| JESSE | 1 |
| SPORTSCASTER | 1 |
| ESPN TALKING HEAD | 1 |
| RADIO | 1 |
| PA ANNOUNCER | 1 |
| TV ANNOUCER 1 | 1 |
| TV ANNOUCER 2 | 1 |
| TAGLIABUE | 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.***

* 7 characters are specified as female.
* The leading character is specified as male.
* The script contains 12 character opportunities to increase gender diversity.

Characters by Gender

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **FEMALE CHARACTER** | **MALE CHARACTER** | **GENDER UNSPECIFIED** |
|  | KURT |  |
| BRENDA |  |  |
| SUE |  |  |
|  | JIM FOSTER |  |
|  | MIKE MARTZ |  |
|  | ZACK |  |
|  | LARRY |  |
|  | MIKE HUNDUTT |  |
|  | COACH ALLEN |  |
| JENNY JO |  |  |
|  | COACH MOOCH |  |
|  | DICK VERMEIL |  |
|  | ISAAC |  |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER |
|  | MATT |  |
|  | ALVAREZ |  |
|  | RICH |  |
|  | COLOR MAN |  |
| KIM |  |  |
|  |  | COMMENTATOR |
|  | DAVID GILLIS |  |
|  | GENE |  |
| WEARY TEACHER |  |  |
|  |  | GUARD |
|  | COACH RAMSDELL |  |
|  | RAY LEWIS |  |
|  | OTHER SPORTSCENTER GUY |  |
|  | BARTENDER |  |
|  | REGGIE |  |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  | MARSHALL |  |
|  | ATTENDANT |  |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER 2 |
|  |  | ANNOUNCER |
|  | TINY |  |
| CHEERLEADER |  |  |
|  |  | RADIO NEWS |
| JESSE |  |  |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER |
|  | ESPN TALKING HEAD |  |
|  |  | RADIO |
|  |  | PA ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 1 |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 2 |
|  | TAGLIABUE |  |

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.***

* 6 characters are specified as characters of color.
* The leading character is specified as white.
* The script contains 26 character opportunities to increase racial/ethnic diversity.

Characters by Race/Ethnicity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER OF COLOR** | **WHITE CHARACTER** | **RACE/ETHNICITY UNSPECIFIED** |
|  | KURT |  |
|  | BRENDA |  |
|  | SUE |  |
|  | JIM FOSTER |  |
|  | MIKE MARTZ |  |
| ZACK |  |  |
|  |  | LARRY |
| MIKE HUNDUTT |  |  |
|  | COACH ALLEN |  |
|  | JENNY JO |  |
|  | COACH MOOCH |  |
|  | DICK VERMEIL |  |
| ISAAC |  |  |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER |
|  | MATT |  |
| ALVAREZ |  |  |
|  |  | RICH |
|  |  | COLOR MAN |
|  | KIM |  |
|  |  | COMMENTATOR |
|  |  | DAVID GILLIS |
|  |  | GENE |
|  |  | WEARY TEACHER |
|  |  | GUARD |
|  | COACH RAMSDELL |  |
| RAY LEWIS |  |  |
|  |  | OTHER SPORTSCENTER GUY |
|  |  | BARTENDER |
| REGGIE |  |  |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | MARSHALL |
|  |  | ATTENDANT |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER 2 |
|  |  | ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TINY |
|  |  | CHEERLEADER |
|  |  | RADIO NEWS |
|  |  | JESSE |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER |
|  |  | ESPN TALKING HEAD |
|  |  | RADIO |
|  |  | PA ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER 1 |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER 2 |
|  | TAGLIABUE |  |

The Sidney Poitier Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Sidney Poitier test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **YES** | 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 specified as heterosexual.
* The script contains 30 character opportunities to increase LGBTQ+ diversity.

Characters by LGBTQ+ Status

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **LGBTQ+ CHARACTER** | **HETEROSEXUAL CHARACTER** | **SEXUALITY UNSPECIFIED** |
|  | KURT |  |
|  | BRENDA |  |
|  | SUE |  |
|  |  | JIM FOSTER |
|  | MIKE MARTZ |  |
|  |  | ZACK |
|  | LARRY |  |
|  |  | MIKE HUDNUTT |
|  |  | COACH ALLEN |
|  | JENNY JO |  |
|  | COACH MOOCH |  |
|  | DICK VERMEIL |  |
|  | ISAAC |  |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | MATT |
|  |  | ALVAREZ |
|  |  | RICH |
|  |  | COLOR MAN |
|  | KIM |  |
|  |  | COMMENTATOR |
|  |  | DAVID GILLIS |
|  | GENE |  |
|  |  | WEARY TEACHER |
|  |  | GUARD |
|  | COACH RAMSDELL |  |
|  | RAY LEWIS |  |
|  |  | OTHER SPORTSCENTER GUY |
|  |  | BARTENDER |
|  | REGGIE |  |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | MARSHALL |
|  |  | ATTENDANT |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER 2 |
|  |  | ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TINY |
|  |  | CHEERLEADER |
|  |  | RADIO NEWS |
|  |  | JESSE |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER |
|  |  | ESPN TALKING HEAD |
|  |  | RADIO |
|  |  | PA ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 1 |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 2 |
|  | TAGLIABUE |  |

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.***

* 1 character is specified as having a physical and cognitive disability. No characters are specified as having a communication disability.
* The leading character is not shown having a disability.
* The script contains 44 character opportunities to increase disability diversity.

Characters by Disability Status

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER WITH DISABILITY** | **CHARACTER WITHOUT DISABILITY** | **DISABILITY STATUS UNSPECIFIED** |
|  |  | KURT |
|  |  | BRENDA |
|  |  | SUE |
|  |  | JIM FOSTER |
|  |  | MIKE MARTZ |
| ZACK |  |  |
|  |  | LARRY |
|  |  | MIKE HUDNUTT |
|  |  | COACH ALLEN |
|  |  | JENNY JO |
|  |  | COACH MOOCH |
|  |  | DICK VERMEIL |
|  |  | ISAAC |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | MATT |
|  |  | ALVAREZ |
|  |  | RICH |
|  |  | COLOR MAN |
|  |  | KIM |
|  |  | COMMENTATOR |
|  |  | DAVID GULLIS |
|  |  | GENE |
|  |  | WEARY TEAHCER |
|  |  | GUARD |
|  |  | COACH RAMSDELL |
|  |  | RAY LEWIS |
|  |  | OTHER SPORTSCENTER GUY |
|  |  | BARTENDER |
|  |  | REGGIE |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | MARSHALL |
|  |  | ATTENDANT |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER 2 |
|  |  | ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TINY |
|  |  | CHEERLEADER |
|  |  | RADIO NEWS |
|  |  | JESSE |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER |
|  |  | ESPN TALKING HEAD |
|  |  | RADIO |
|  |  | PA ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 1 |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 2 |
|  |  | TAGLAIBUE |

The Marlee Matlin Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Marlee Matlin test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **YES** | 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.***

* 5 characters are specified as ages 50+.
* The leading character is under 50.
* The script contains 27 character opportunities to increase age diversity.

Characters by Age

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER 50+** | **CHARACTER UNDER 50** | **AGE UNSPECIFIED** |
|  | KURT |  |
|  | BRENDA |  |
|  | SUE |  |
|  | JIM FOSTER |  |
| MIKE MARTZ |  |  |
|  | ZACK |  |
| LARRY |  |  |
|  | MIKE HUNDUTT |  |
|  |  | COACH ALLEN |
| JENNY JO |  |  |
|  | COACH MOOCH |  |
| DICK VERMEIL |  |  |
|  | ISAAC |  |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER |
|  | MATT |  |
|  |  | ALVAREZ |
|  |  | RICH |
|  |  | COLOR MAN |
|  | KIM |  |
|  |  | COMMENTATOR |
|  |  | DAVID GILLIS / BUSINESSMAN |
|  |  | DAD / GENE |
|  |  | WEARY TEACHER |
|  |  | GUARD |
|  |  | COACH RAMSDELL |
|  | RAY LEWIS |  |
|  |  | OTHER SPORTSCENTER GUY |
|  |  | BARTENDER |
|  | REGGIE |  |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | MARSHALL |
|  |  | ATTENDANT |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER 2 |
|  |  | ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TINY |
|  |  | CHEERLEADER |
|  |  | RADIO NEWS |
|  | JESSE |  |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER |
|  |  | ESPN TALKING HEAD |
|  |  | RADIO |
|  |  | PA ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 1 |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 2 |
| TAGLIABUE |  |  |

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.***

* 2 characters are specified as having a large body type.
* The leading character is not specified as having a large body type.
* The script contains 32 character opportunities to increase body type diversity.

Characters by Body Size

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER WITH LARGE BODY TYPE** | **CHARACTER WITH SMALL/MEDIUM BODY TYPE** | **BODY SIZE UNSPECIFIED** |
|  | KURT |  |
|  |  | BRENDA |
|  |  | SUE |
| JIM FOSTER |  |  |
|  | MIKE MARTZ |  |
|  |  | ZACK |
|  |  | LARRY |
|  | MIKE HUDNUTT |  |
|  |  | COACH ALLEN |
|  |  | JENNY JO |
| COACH MOOCH |  |  |
|  | DICK VERMEIL |  |
|  | ISAAC |  |
|  |  | TV ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | MATT |
|  | ALVAREZ |  |
|  |  | RICH |
|  |  | COLOR MAN |
|  |  | KIM |
|  |  | COMMENTATOR |
|  |  | DAVID GILLIS / BUSINESSMAN |
|  |  | DAD / GENE |
|  |  | WEARY TEACHER |
|  |  | GUARD |
|  | COACH RAMSDELL |  |
|  | RAY LEWIS |  |
|  |  | OTHER SPORTSCENTER GUY |
|  |  | BARTENDER |
|  | REGGIE |  |
|  |  | CASHIER |
|  |  | MARSHALL |
|  |  | ATTENDANT |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER 2 |
|  |  | ANNOUNCER |
|  | TINY |  |
|  |  | CHEERLEADER |
|  |  | RADIO NEWS |
|  |  | JESSE |
|  |  | SPORTSCASTER |
|  |  | ESPN TALKING HEAD |
|  |  | RADIO |
|  |  | PA ANNOUNCER |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 1 |
|  |  | TV ANNOUCER 2 |
|  | TAGLIABUE |  |

The Cooper Test

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In order to pass the Cooper test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| **YES** | At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) with a large body type who; |
| **YES** | 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** | **YES** | **NO** | **NO** |
| **LGBTQ+ Character** | **NO** | **NO** |  | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** |
| **Character with a Disability** | **NO** | **YES** | **NO** |  | **NO** | **NO** |
| **Character 50+** | **YES** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** |  | **NO** |
| **Character with Large Body Type** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** | **NO** |  |

**Positive Aspects**

* In a movie that revolves around the world of sports, it is notable how Kurt and other male characters demonstrate healthy masculinity and male mentorship on numerous occasions (e.g., Kurt's relationship with Zack and Jesse is rooted in emotional vulnerability, there is a beautiful scene where Kurt cries and is comforted by Zack, Kurt openly shows his mother love, there is an ongoing theme where various coaches prioritize collaborative gameplay over being the star).
* While the story focuses on Kurt, Brenda’s storyline refreshingly makes space for her to feel empowered and go back to school for nursing.
* Larry and Jenny Jo are positive representations of characters ages 50+ who are still active, taking care of their families, working, and having their own lives.
* On multiple occasions the script flips gender expectations in ways that defy harmful stereotypes (e.g., Brenda drinks Dark Lager and Kurt has a daiquiri with an umbrella, Brenda makes the first move on Kurt).
* The script does an awesome job describing NFL cheerleaders in non-objectifying terms.

**Potential Pitfalls**

* Potential Sexism: On occasion the script refers to women in objectifying terms and gender diminutive language (e.g., referring to women by their hair color, referring to adult women as “girls”). When we first meet Brenda, she’s shown with a "short skirt" and we learn she's "Miss August" on the calendar because she won the "hot pants" competition.
* Potential Sizeism: If Matt is cast with a large body type, take care not to portray him in stereotypical ways, especially in the scene where he is already eating nachos before they've gotten to the car after the market.
* Potential Sexism: The script seems to normalize the act of showing up at a woman's house uninvited. Brenda asks how did you get my address and why are you here, to which he replies "friend from the bar…I wanted to meet your kids." This invasion of privacy is written in a way that is meant to be endearing.
* Potential Ableism: Brenda’s son Zack embodies the inspirational disability trope throughout the script. On multiple occasions he is used to inspire Kurt and talked about as such: “he's gonna show the world what he can do...he always finds a way to prove everyone wrong." At the end of the film he's literally used to inspire Kurt to win his first NFL game: "that little boy has defied all odds, every time. Proved everyone wrong. And so can you."
* Potential sexism: Brenda and Sue, two of the more prominent female characters, often embody the maternal caretaker tropes. Their main role in the script is to keep the main character from giving up on his sports pursuits.
* Potential Racism: Since Alvarez is hyper-masculine (he “loves pain and raging”), take care not to make him the Machismo Trope.
* Potential Ableism: The term "crazy" appears in the script, and can easily be swapped for less ableist language.