**Spellcheck For Bias:** *The Grace Year*

Geena Davis Institute for Gender in Media

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*Cameron Espinoza*

**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 The Grace Yearfor Universal Pictures:

* [Gender](#7rdsrmby8a10)
* [Race/Ethnicity](#km0uzj1c47vm)
* [LGBTQ+](#l5fofjr5yyu7)
* [Disability](#phoxthamc9m4)
* [Age (50+)](#w6ssfbo3nmng)
* [Body Size](#ua15q4ot3gj6)

**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 five lines of text or more. In *The Grace Year*, 22 characters met this criterion:

| **CHARACTER NAME** | **LINE COUNT** |
| --- | --- |
| Penny | 5 |
| Clara | 6 |
| Tierney | 251 |
| Aunt Linny | 15 |
| Abe | 78 |
| Kiersten | 162 |
| Tommy | 5 |
| Michael | 75 |
| Jessica | 10 |
| Jenna | 15 |
| Mr. Welk | 37 |
| Meg | 9 |
| Martha | 8 |
| Hannah | 22 |
| Rachel | 8 |
| Dena | 13 |
| Helen | 7 |
| Tammy | 5 |
| Gertrude | 79 |
| Tall Guard | 6 |
| Ryker | 166 |
| Anders | 17 |

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.***

* Female characters make up 68% of the prominent characters with a specified gender.
* Two of the three most prominent characters in the script are women, including a female lead (“Tierney”).
* Seven character opportunities to undo gender stereotypes and tropes written in the script.

Characters by Gender

| **FEMALE CHARACTER** | **MALE CHARACTER** | **GENDER UNSPECIFIED** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Penny | Abe |  |
| Clara | Tommy |  |
| Tierney | Michael |  |
| Aunt Linny | Mr. Welk |  |
| Kiersten | Tall Guard |  |
| Jessica | Ryker |  |
| Jenna | Anders |  |
| Meg |  |  |
| Martha |  |  |
| Hannah |  |  |
| Rachel |  |  |
| Dena |  |  |
| Helen |  |  |
| Tammy |  |  |
| Gertrude |  |  |
|  |  |  |

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; |
| **NO** | Is not depicted with gender stereotypes or tropes. |



**Race/Ethnicity Analysis**

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

* No characters with race specified are characters of color
* The leading character in the script (“Tierney”) is identified as white
* 16 character opportunities to increase racial diversity.

Characters by Race/Ethnicity

| **CHARACTER OF COLOR** | **WHITE CHARACTER** | **RACE/ETHNICITY UNSPECIFIED** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Penny | Tommy |
|  | Clara | Michael |
|  | Tierney | Jessica |
|  | Aunt Linny | Jenna |
|  | Abe | Mr. Welk |
|  | Kiersten | Meg |
|  |  | Martha |
|  |  | Hannah |
|  |  | Rachel |
|  |  | Dena |
|  |  | Helen |
|  |  | Tammy |
|  |  | Gertrude |
|  |  | Tall Guard |
|  |  | Ryker |
|  |  | Anders |

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.***

* One of the characters (4.5%) is specified as LGBTQ+.
* The leading character (“Tierney”) is specified as heterosexual.
* There are fourteen character opportunities for sexual orientation diversity.

Characters by LGBTQ+ Status

| **LGBTQ+ CHARACTER** | **HETEROSEXUAL CHARACTER** | **SEXUALITY UNSPECIFIED** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gertrude | Abe | Penny |
|  | Kiersten | Clara |
|  | Tommy | Aunt Linny |
|  | Michael | Jessica |
|  | Mr. Welk | Jenna |
|  | Ryker | Meg |
|  |  | Martha |
|  |  | Hannah |
|  |  | Rachel |
|  |  | Dena |
|  |  | Helen |
|  |  | Tammy |
|  |  | Tall Guard |
|  |  | Anders |

The Vito-Russo Test

| **In order to pass the Vito-Russo test, a script/manuscript must:** | |
| --- | --- |
| **YES** | Contain a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer. |
| **YES** | 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). |
| **YES** | 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.***

* Three characters (13%) are specified as having a physical disability.
* Zero characters are specified as having a cognitive or communication disability.
* Six character opportunities to improve disability representations.

Characters by Disability Status

| **CHARACTER WITH DISABILITY** | **CHARACTER WITHOUT DISABILITY** | **DISABILITY STATUS UNSPECIFIED** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Aunt Linny | Tierney | Penny |
| Hannah | Abe | Clara |
| Gertrude | Kiersten | Tommy |
|  | Michael | Mr. Welk |
|  | Jessica | Tall Guard |
|  | Jenna | Anders |
|  | Meg |  |
|  | Martha |  |
|  | Rachel |  |
|  | Dena |  |
|  | Helen |  |
|  | Tammy |  |
|  | Ryker |  |

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.***

* None of the characters are specified as over 50.
* The 17 characters with age specified are under 50.
* The leading character (“Tierney”) is 16.
* Five character opportunities to improve age representation.

Characters by Age

| **CHARACTER 50+** | **CHARACTER UNDER 50** | **AGE UNSPECIFIED** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Penny | Aunt Linny |
|  | Clara | Abe |
|  | Tierney | Mr. Welk |
|  | Kiersten | Tall Guard |
|  | Tommy | Anders |
|  | Michael |  |
|  | Jessica |  |
|  | Jenna |  |
|  | Meg |  |
|  | Martha |  |
|  | Hannah |  |
|  | Rachel |  |
|  | Dena |  |
|  | Helen |  |
|  | Tammy |  |
|  | Gertrude |  |
|  | Ryker |  |

The Betty White Test

| **In order to pass the Betty White test, a script/manuscript must have:** | |
| --- | --- |
| **NO** | At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is 50+ who; |
| **NO** | 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.***

* None of the characters are specified as having a large body type.
* 21 character opportunities to improve representation of characters with large body types.

Characters by Body Size

| **CHARACTER WITH LARGE BODY TYPE** | **CHARACTER WITH SMALL/MEDIUM BODY TYPE** | **BODY SIZE UNSPECIFIED** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Ryker | Penny |
|  |  | Clara |
|  |  | Tierney |
|  |  | Aunt Linny |
|  |  | Abe |
|  |  | Kiersten |
|  |  | Tommy |
|  |  | Michael |
|  |  | Jessica |
|  |  | Jenna |
|  |  | Mr. Welk |
|  |  | Meg |
|  |  | Martha |
|  |  | Hannah |
|  |  | Rachel |
|  |  | Dena |
|  |  | Helen |
|  |  | Tammy |
|  |  | Gertrude |
|  |  | Tall Guard |
|  |  | Anders |

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

**General Positives**

* Woman collaborate to build a new camp and eventually are able to put aside their differences to begin to overcome male oppression.

**General Negatives**

* Background and prominent disabled or disfigured characters are described in demeaning ways to elicit disgust (“they all walk..bowed heads, eyes downcast” (7); “egregious wounds” (22))
* All female characters are either visually or verbally sexualized, crazed, cruel to other women (“mean girl” trope) in their younger years or “shrews” in older years, rescued by men (Tierney is rescued by Ryker and her father), obedient and compliant(5;8), or have brutal physical violence inflicted upon them.
* Lead female character (Tierney) described as “wild with fury” (16), “unhinged” (58), and “defenseless” (100) and the young women are depicted as crazed and petty, while almost all men in the script are described as “stoic” (17), calm, sexually predatory (“pawing all over Kiersten” (21); reaches out and runs finger...near Tierney’s collarbone” (8)), or violent.

Other:

* If the majority of characters are 16 and being married off, should they be called girls? Can they be referred to as women?
* Men rescue Tierney throughout the script (by Ryker when she gets wounded by the axe, by Ryker again when she tries to help Kiersten, and by her father’s advice when she decides she wants to live).
* Two scenes where women are fully naked and all fours on the ground (39; 48). Could be a humiliating image for the women, is it necessary?
* Script claims that Tierney is revolutionary, however she tries to make change within the system at the end--is that revolutionary strictly speaking?
* The lie about magic legitimates the gender hierarchy and brutality against women, however the society is also puritanical/faith based. Without confronting the biblical motivations for subjecting women throughout the script, the script diminishes the power of one its central themes: the power of myths and ideology to perpetuate unjust distributions of power (in this case along the lines of gender) and the experience of liberation (even if silent) when those myths or ideologies, as well as their function are uncovered.