Sonic Vocality: A Theory on the Use of Voice in Character Portrayal

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SONIC VOCALITY:
A THEORY ON THE USE OF VOICE IN CHARACTER PORTRAYAL

by

CINDY ANN MILLIGAN

Under the Direction of Patricia G. Davis, PhD

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to discover whether and how the voice alone can change audiences’ perception of character in films. It further sought to determine some of the specific changes in vocal performance that might construct that difference. Data were gathered from three focus groups that screened film clips between two and five minutes long. The clips were edited from five pairs of matched films—an original and its remake. Films were chosen to represent a variety of genres and release dates, and they included scenes where the dialogue was identical or similar. Although each focus group experienced the same set of edited film clips from the matched film pairs, one group experienced only the sound without any visuals, a second group watched only the visuals of the same clips without any sound, and a third group watched
the clips as they were produced with sound and visuals. Participants completed a short questionnaire and engaged in a discussion regarding the characters in the films. Data were analyzed using grounded-theory. Analysis included sorting and coding data into categories by focus group, film, character, and scene. Units of analysis were terms or phrases about how focus-group participants perceived or understood a character and the vocal techniques they used to describe them. After the variables were identified, data across focus groups were checked for redundancy, seeking instances where characterizations were the same for the visual or both the visual and vocal techniques. Characteristics that presented in multiple groups were eliminated, leaving only characterizations attributed to voice. Seventy-two character traits emerged that participants saw as developed through the voice, with 11 vocal techniques used to create those characteristics. A vocal continuum was developed to show how the actors in the study were perceived to use those vocal techniques to construct certain character traits. These results have potential practical uses for actors, vocal performers, acting and vocal coaches, screenwriters, and others involved in filmmaking.

INDEX WORDS: voice, character portrayal, film characters, actor’s vocal performance, vocal performance, voice and film, vocal techniques, vocal continuum, vocal traits, vocal characteristics
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CINDY ANN MILLIGAN

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
2015
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August 2015
DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Manual and Betty Milligan, who taught me the value of education and loved me unconditionally.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I’d like to acknowledge those who helped me and encouraged me on this educational journey. To the teachers, instructors, and mentors who shared their time, knowledge and talent with me: Dr. Patricia Davis, Dr. David Cheshier, Dr. Ted Friedman, Dr. Sonja Foss, Dr. William Waters, Dr. Birgit Wassmuth, and Dr. Penny Joyner Waddell. To my family: especially my brother Earl Milligan, who encouraged me to never give up; Jordan Milligan, Evan Milligan, and Kathy Hutter, who understood my interest in voice from the beginning; and to the rest of my family and friends who cheered me on with every phone call and conversation. Thank you!
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

To portray various characters in film, actors use a wide range of techniques—posture, bodily movements, facial expressions, dialect, and various vocal qualities. Directors, costume designers, and set designers add other mechanisms to aid them in the development of particular kinds of characters, including clothing, hairstyles, make-up, and locations. By mixing and matching these techniques, actors are able to depict dramatically different characters from one film or play to the next. That Dustin Hoffman could so convincingly portray the street-con Ratso Rizzo in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), the unstable savant Raymond in *The Rain Man* (1988), and soap-opera star Dorothy Michaels in *Tootsie* (1982), for example, is testament to Hoffman’s sophisticated application of the many resources available to him to construct widely varied characters that enthrall and entertain audiences. Hoffman’s portrayals do depend, to some degree, on a change of make-up, some new clothing, and “flipping his last name,”1 but these alone are not enough. If Hoffman were not able to modulate his voice so effectively, specifically the delivery of his dialogue across different emotional situations, then audiences would simply reject these portrayals as parodies, imitations, or spoofs.

The voice, one of the primary resources available to actors to develop characters, is consistently overlooked or devalued for the portrayal of character (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985; Churcher, 2003a; Weiss & Belton, 1985). Although the voice is an integral part of the portrayal of many characters on screen, it is an element that neither lay audiences nor industry professionals separate out as something that should receive particular emphasis for character depiction (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985; Churcher, 2003b; Sonnenschein, 2001). Both groups

1 Hoffman’s male character in *Tootsie* is Michael Dorsey.
tend to conceptualize actors’ voices as part of body language (Barton, 2003; Churcher, 200b; Kozloff, 2000; Sergei, 1999; Shingler, 2006a; Sundholm, 2003) rather than viewing it as something that deserves separate attention.

Devaluation of the voice as means for the portrayal of character can be traced back to the origins of film in the silent movies. The industry at first lacked the capacity to include the synchronized sound of the actors’ voices with their images. Without the ability for actors to employ vocal techniques to help audiences pick up on changes in mood or state, actors had to rely on nonverbal communication to portray characterizations. As a result, directors focused attention on and even exaggerated the visual aspects of the production—costumes, facial expressions, settings, and written dialogue shown on screen. That Charlie Chaplin prepared himself for his acting career by learning sign language at the California School for the Deaf at Berkeley, where he was a pupil of deaf art instructor Granville Redmond, makes perfect sense in this context (Gannon, 1981).

When the technology became available to synchronize the sound of the voice with the actors’ dialogue in film, many critics of the “talkies” believed that the sound of actors’ voices diminished the artistic status of the visual medium even though they did not object to the addition of other sounds and music to film (Arnheim, 1985; Eisensten, Pudovkin, & Alexandrov, 1985; Kracauer, 1985; Weiss & Belton, 1985). Although the incorporation of the voice into film was gradually accepted and to some degree encouraged by directors like Marshall Neilan, who were devoted to naturalism, lingering from this debate was the perception that the voice is not a very important part of character portrayal.

A lack of attention to the voice continues in many ways in the film industry today. Most directors do not focus specifically on the voice in casting actors and give little consideration to
actors’ ability or potential to use their voices effectively to enact their roles (Churcher, 2003a); directors, instead, cast actors for a specific “look” (Griffith, 2004; Pervis, 2005). Talent agents who promote actors to casting directors also contribute to the notion that visual appearance is more important than the voice of the actor. Agents forward the required headshot, or actor’s “calling card,” to casting directors first to see whether the actor has the desired “look” before directors even consider how an actor’s voice might sound in the project. Because of this practice, Churcher (2003b) calls sound “the Cinderella of the film industry” (p. 51), suggesting that the actor’s voice is often an afterthought (Churcher, 2003b; Griffith, 2004; Pervis, 2005; Woods, 2007).

The devaluation of the voice as a mechanism for creating character also can be seen in the lack of vocal training that is typically provided to film actors (Barton, 2003; Churcher, 2003a; Withers-Wilson, 1993). Although theatre directors regularly offer voice, speech, and dialect training to actors, this is typically not the case with film directors; film actors often can get vocal training only in the theatre (Withers-Wilson, 1993). Film directors typically hire vocal directors or dialect coaches only if a production demands a specific dialect or accent or a performer requires special help in order to carry a role (Churcher, 2003a; Woods, 2012). Even in these cases, the budget for the film must be sufficient to cover the cost (Church, 2003a). The lack of vocal support for actors on most productions affects actors’ perception of the importance of vocal training, and, as a result, many spend their training dollars on acting classes rather than vocal training (Woods, 2012; Churcher, 2003a; Withers-Wilson, 1993).

Neglect of the voice as a primary means of developing character is due as well to the new technologies that are available to capture film actors’ voices. Because film actors do not perform in front of a live audience, they have the benefit of microphones and technology to re-voice their
lines or to make adjustments to their vocal performances in post-production. When voices can be altered or repaired relatively easily through various technologies after scenes have been shot, they receive little initial attention by directors, sound designers, and actors (Churcher, 2003a; Finelli, 2012; Gil-Reues, Jeong, & Brunskog, 2011; Hardison & Sonchaeng, 2005; Houfek, 2010; Withers-Wilson, 1993).

The awards structures of film’s professional organizations also contribute to the devaluing of the voice. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science annually presents the most prestigious awards, the Oscars, to honor work in the film industry. The Academy, however, fails to recognize the use of voice in film as a distinct category worthy of acknowledgment or appreciation. A vast difference exists in the number of awards relating to visual elements compared to those dealing with sound and the voice. Out of 24 categories that honor the collaborative work of filmmaking, only four acknowledge sound: Best Sound Editing, Best Sound Mixing, Best Original Score, and Best Song. None of the categories acknowledges the use of voice, even in animated films where actors use only their (disembodied) voices to portray their roles. In 1978, Benjamin Burtt, Jr. won a Special Achievement Award for the creation of the robot voices featured in Star Wars: A New Hope (1977), the only award given for the specific use of voice in the 87-year history of the Academy Awards. Recognition of a vocal performance comes only in combination with other visual elements in awards such as those for Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Picture, or Best Film Editing (www.oscars.org, 2012).

Disregard for the voice among audiences, actors, film directors, and sound designers belies the creation of memorable film characters primarily through the sounds of their voices. Jamie Foxx’s portrayal of Ray Charles in the biopic Ray (2004) was accomplished largely through his voice. The portrayal won him an Academy Award for Best Actor, a Golden Globe, a
Screen Actor’s Guild Award, and numerous other awards (Denby, 2004; Collier, 2004; Edwards, 2004; Hart, 2004; Joseph, 2004; Mann, 2004; Murray, 2004; North, 2004; Thomson, 2004; Tyrangiel, 2004; Vineberg, 2004; Ward, 2004). Foxx not only matched Charles’s speaking voice but mastered his singing voice as well, playing the piano and singing several of Charles’s songs in the film (Hackford, 2004).

Two other examples suggest how crucial voice can be in the depiction of character. James Earl Jones’s vocal performance of Darth Vader in the film *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) immortalized the character for audiences and critics and serves as another example of the importance of voice. Although several actors played different components of the character Darth Vader in the two *Star Wars* trilogies, Jones’s voice made the masked villain seem truly evil. His voice so perfectly embodied the character’s persona that editors dubbed it over David Prowse’s (who played the original character Darth Vader) in the final production (with no formal credit to Jones). For another example, Marlon Brando used his voice to create another unforgettable movie character—Vito Corleone in *The Godfather* (1972). The harsh, gravelly tone of Brando’s voice gave Corleone a presence on film that did not require him to move much at all. He spent most of his time on screen sitting still or using measured movements and using primarily the sound of his voice to control the activities of his family and business.

### 1.2 Research Question

Anecdotal filmic evidence that vocal techniques alone may be able to create completely different characters contradicts the perception of audiences, film producers, film directors, and actors that the voice is not all that important in the portrayal of character. This study was designed to test the idea that, all else being equal, specific changes in an actor’s vocal techniques can and will create a unique characterization. The specific research question directing this
inquiry is: What changes in character portrayal do audiences attribute to differences in a character’s vocal performance in film?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for three primary reasons. It seeks to remedy the lack of attention to voice by providing a more sophisticated understanding of the function of voice in character development. This study is intended to provide support for the notion that the voice is as—and sometimes more—important than visual resources in actors’ development of characters in film.

This project’s key contribution to film scholarship is its investigation of voice and character portrayal from the audience’s perspective. Filmmakers design movies for audiences to experience, but little is known about how audiences receive and interpret vocal qualities of actors. Understanding what audiences are actually doing with the information they receive from actors’ voices will help directors and actors best use vocal resources in the portrayal of character. They will be able to do so with the confidence that vocal attributes are functioning in certain ways for real audiences.

This study also contributes to professional practice in the film industry. If audiences are found to be using vocal cues as a major way for perceiving character, aspects of film production that are now receiving a great deal of emphasis—and that are much more expensive to create—could be downplayed with greater attention to actors’ voices. This study, then, should help film professionals make the best use of their resources for the portrayal of characters.

Finally, if the voice is found to play a central role in the depiction of character, this study will encourage greater access to vocal training for film actors. If the voice functions as a shortcut, in a sense, for the portrayal of character, training to augment actors’ ability to control the various aspects of their voices is more likely to be seen as an essential part of filmmaking.
No longer will vocal qualities be neglected in the planning and production of films, and actors and directors will have access to another toolbox for the creation of character on film.

1.4 Terminology

Defining terminology about voice in this work is important in order to be clear about what will be examined.

- A *matched pair of films* consisted of an original film and a subsequent remake of that same film.
- *Visual cues* are markers the audience sees in an actor’s performance that help to communicate information about the character being portrayed by the actor.
- *Vocal performance, vocal cues, and voice* are the distinctive sound or sounds characteristic to a person uttered through the mouth and expressed by the controlled expulsion of air.

1.5 Outline of the Study

This study of how voice is understood to depict character in film is organized into six chapters. This first chapter has been an introduction to the study in which I set up the problem that led me to undertake the study, articulated the research question, and provided some reasons as to why I believe the study will be significant. The second chapter reviews the literature on voice, particularly what is known about what voice communicates and the means that are known about how it does so. The third chapter provides a discussion of the data for the study, the method used for collecting data, and the method used for analyzing it. Chapter four is an introduction to the findings, chapter five is a report of the findings from my analysis, and in chapter six, I interpret those findings and indicate limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Why the Voice Is Important

Previous scholarship shows a significant amount of research regarding the sound of the human voice. This section reviews the claims written about the voice by scholars in linguistics, film, audience reception, speech, psychology, theatre, and anthropology. Research indicates that the voice functions in many different ways in film and carries substantial power through the soundtrack. Additionally, scholarship confirms specific relationships between voice, character, emotion, personality, character traits, and narrative.

Research suggests that the sound of the actor’s voice plays an important role in how audiences receive and understand a film. Actors encode their performances with specific information about the characters they portray and other details that contribute to the meaning of the story. Audiences decode the actor-encoded data as they experience films, reading aural cues that both reveal information and entertain (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; Shingler, 1999, 2006; Sobchack & Sobchack, 1987). The subtlest details in a film actor’s performance, particularly the voice, offer insight into how audiences create meaning from the film.

2.1.1 Voice and Character

The individuality of each person’s voice and distinctive vocal features make it easier for audiences to identify a character. The sound of the human voice is so specific and important in cinema that it “hierarchizes everything around it” (Chion, 1999, pp. 5-6). Audiences tune their ears to listen for such specific vocal qualities as pitch, tone, and inflection (Kozloff, 2000). When sound is filtered through each speaker’s vocal tract, these three elements affect the voice in precise ways and, in turn, impact how audiences hear and perceive information about a character.
Distinct vocal qualities such as tone, accent, or hoarseness influence the voice. The inflection of a person’s voice and use of intonation when speaking becomes a key factor in how audiences read actor content. For example, Laurence Fishburne’s smooth calm voice as Morpheus in *The Matrix* (1999) showed the leadership, strength, and resolve in his character as the captain of the Nebuchadnezzar. Even in danger, unknown circumstances, and the death of some of his crew, Fishburne’s vocal qualities remained strong, calm, and direct. All of these elements working together contribute to the uniqueness of performers and the characters they portray. Some linguists refer to this ability to distinguish traits in the voice as *social indexicality* and discuss the voice as a “privileged marker of individual identity” (Cameron, 2001, p. 81). Social indexicality is any sign in the voice that points to or helps create social identity, such as inflection, accent, or rhythm (Cameron, 2001). These specific qualities help audiences to identify characters and understand their personality traits (Bordwell, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; Sonnenschein, 2001).

The voice authenticates the speaker as a believable character. Although audiences sometimes express unreasonable expectations and stereotype characters by the sound of their voices, they may be forgiven if the story is believable otherwise (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985). For example, Al Pacino’s portrayal of Tony Montana in the 1983 film *Scarface*, had to sound as if he was a Cuban assassin. The raspy texture of his voice and accent authenticated him in the film and made Tony Montana believable. Therefore, characters must be fully developed vocally and able to express layers of meaning through the tone of voice no matter what is required of the actor at the time in terms of dialogue (Barton, 1995). The voice must sound appropriate, realistic, and believable in the film’s diegesis, or the film’s story (Kozloff, 2000). For example, Helen Miren’s vocal performance as Queen Elizabeth II in *The Queen* (2006) had to sound as if she
was British royalty within the film’s story, or it wouldn’t be believable. Whatever was demanded of her in the film, her voice had to remain consistent and authentic to carry her role in the story.

Other filmic elements contribute to the construction of a character. The collaborative effort between the various production crew members contributes to what audiences understand about characters in a film (Bordwell, 1985; Kozloff, 2000). Various signs revealed throughout the film construct or build characters (Dyer, 1998; Lowe, 2006). Directors, recordists, and engineers help shape the performances of actors, editors weave the content provided into a meaningful audio/visual experience, and audiences decode and engage with the final product.

Audiences identify and recognize characters through the fundamental concepts of film sound—loudness, pitch, and timbre, which all work together to define the sonic texture of a film (Kozloff, 2000). To this end, a collaborative process involving many events and participants constructs a character (Altman, 1999; Bordwell, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; Sonnenschein, 2001).

2.1.2 Voice and Demographics

Audiences pick up information about characters by the way they speak. Moviegoers gather demographic information such as where the individual is from, age, gender, occupation, race, size, weight, height, and sexual orientation from a speaker’s voice (Karpf, 2006; McKay & Hornberger, 1996; Churcher, 2003a). The sound of the voice reveals other facts about the speaker such as education, socio-economic status, level of self-confidence, and even the state of sexual arousal (Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; Withers-Wilson, 1993). For example, audiences learn about a state of sexual arousal, anger, or even frustration from the speaker’s breath control and how it affect his/her voice. Biological and psychological statuses also disclose information in the sound of the voice and act as a stethoscope revealing anatomical abnormalities, illness, fatigue, and even certain types of cancer (Karpf, 2006; Withers-Wilson, 1993). Speech patterns,
rate of speaking, the tone and inflection in the voice, accents, and dialects unmask details about the speaker (Karpf, 2006; McKay & Hornberger, 1996; Churcher, 2003a). For example Angela Bassett made several adjustments to her voice in order to personify Tina Turner in the film *What’s Love Got To Do With It* (1993). She added a raspy texture, southern accent, and distinct speech pattern to create the female rock star with Tennessee roots. Listeners also learn about personality, degree of honesty, credibility, and socio-economic status through the sound of the voice (Peace & Conklin, 1971).

Speakers sometimes unconsciously reveal information about themselves when they speak. Other times, individuals consciously and purposely encode content (Karpf, 2006). For example, unaware speakers provide listeners with a profile about themselves that includes information about their backgrounds and geographic location. According to Kozloff (2000), “Speech is not some abstract, neutral communicative code: issues of power and dominance, of empathy and intimacy, of class, ethnicity, and gender are automatically engaged every time someone opens his or her mouth” (p. 26). Message and delivery are both important and enlighten receivers with additional information as they hear messages.

### 2.1.3 Voice and Emotion

In many cases, the voice accurately reveals emotion—sometimes subtly and other times with intent and focus. Emotion is communicated not only by what one says, but how one says it. Inflection, tone of voice, syllabic and word stress, pitch, length, and rate of speech all provide cues about the emotional state of the speaker. Listeners “associate particular patterns of acoustic cues with various discrete emotional states” (Bachorowski, 1999, p. 55). Speakers use their voices to communicate information about how they are feeling. As they express their emotions,
the acoustic features of speech change (Bachorowski, 1999), which allows listeners to decode information embedded into what the talker is saying.

Voice reveals emotion because of the anatomy and physiology of the vocal mechanisms within the body. The place in the body from which the sound of the voice originates (the larynx, or source) involves specific muscles that control the flow of air through the respiratory system. Any change in muscular tension impacts this flow of air. Certain emotions cause muscular tension and/or changes in breathing patterns, which in turn alter the sound of the voice (Bachorowski, 1999; Sonnenschein, 2001). Physiologically, the body’s movements directly impact any or all of the vocal mechanisms. Such facial expressions as smiling cause movement in the face and change the position of the lips, which in turn change the filtering effects (those in the vocal tract above the larynx). Physiological changes in the body create definite differences in the sound of the voice (Kent, 1997; Bachorowski, 1999). When you have a cold or the flu the body produces mucous and the vocal folds, nasal cavities, and throat change shape. These physiological changes impact breathing, the flow of air across the vocal folds, and the entire respiratory system, which changes the sound of your voice.

Speakers use the paralinguistic features of speech to convey emotion. Subtle non-verbal adjustments to elements such as pitch, volume, and intonation modulate the human voice (Frick, 1985). Loudness, pitch contour, and speech rate add to the emotive or attitudinal qualities in an utterance. The use of these features communicates consciously or unconsciously, similar to the information revealed about an individual’s background. Speakers express information about their attitudes intentionally through paralanguage, which is the emotional tone of voice or modulated voice, and they vent their emotions unintentionally (Frick, 1985; Karpf, 2006).
Prosody in the voice communicates emotion. Speakers use natural parts of speech patterns such as intonation, rhythm, and syllabic or word stress to communicate (Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; Murray & Arnot, 1993). Karpf (2006) called prosody “(the) audio version of our personality, our sonic self,” (p. 33) and, even though each voice has its own attributes, many of the fluctuations creating prosody and communicating emotion are very subtle. The slightest rise in pitch, change in rhythm, or stress of a syllable completely changes the meaning of an utterance. Subtle adjustments to tone trigger an emotion and shape how individuals respond to one another (Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; Sonnenschein, 2001)).

The prosodic features of speech allow speakers to express specific emotions. For example, a lower pitch signals aggression and a higher pitch indicates lack of aggression or happiness (Frick, 1985). Speakers convey contempt by having a wide downward inflection at the end of a phrase (Fairbanks & Pronovost, 1939) and happiness through temperate contours of pitch (Cowan, 1936; Davitz, 1964).

Research shows when the ability to accurately define emotion in the voice becomes evident. Some psychological research shows that individuals develop the ability to judge emotions through vocal features before they can judge emotions through such nonverbal communication as facial expressions and body movement (Karpf, 2006). Additionally, the ability to judge emotions via the vocal features may be innate. Individuals decode subtle inflection, tone, rhythm, pace, or patterns in the voice specifically related and connected to understanding emotion, which explains how audiences decode the subtleties infused in an actor’s performance (Kozloff, 2000).
2.1.4 Voice and Personality

Actors vocally encode information about a character’s personality into their performances. Even the etymology of the word *personality*, taken from the Latin *persona*, means to *resound*, which recognizes the connection between the voice and the personality (Karpf, 2006). Subtle changes in the voice indicate an individual’s personality and allow each voice to be distinguished from others (Karpf, 2006; Sonnenschein, 2001).

Audiences decode information about the personality of a film character through voice in two different ways. First, the actor brings his or her own personality to the role. At times, casting directors cast actors in particular roles because of their personalities, traits, or characteristics (Griffith, 2004; Pervis, 2005). Filmmakers incorporate the actor’s personalities and qualities into film characters to influence or affect the way audiences receive and understand the performance. Additionally, the actor’s creative choices in interpreting the role construct a new character. In most cases, both the actor’s personality and these creative choices happen simultaneously in the performance because the character’s body is the actor’s body and these two cannot be separated (Stanislavski, 1989a; Benedetti, 1990).

Voice is a major element in a film’s soundtrack. The sound of the voice helps create the sonic texture of a film that allows audiences to recognize, identify, and experience a character’s voice through the three main elements of loudness, pitch, and timbre. At specific times during a film, editors control sonic elements such as music and sound effects through volume and/or other technological enhancements in the postproduction editing process, giving way to the voice as the primary signifier (Chion, 1999; Sonnenschein, 2001).

Specific detailed elements in sound-based film contribute to audience understanding of character. Actors use such vocal techniques as speech rate, accent, tone, vocal quality,
pronunciation, articulation, volume, and breathiness to communicate information about their characters’ personalities or traits (Bordwell, 1985; Denison, 2005; Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; McKee, 1997; Mahoney, 1999; Sergei, 1999; Shingler, 1999, 2006; G. Smith 2002; Sobchack & Sobchack, 1987; Sonnenschein, 2001). Through these tools, actors express intelligibility, honesty, dignity, or even vanity. Speech rate reveals incapacity, dignity, confidence, self-image, and even one’s ability to be persuasive. If other film elements or specific dialogue fails to communicate these traits in a character, then actors may do so vocally in their performance (Karpf, 2006).

2.1.5 Voice and Narrative

Vocal performance is a key element in the narrative and plot of a film. As the principal carrier of narrative, the voice assumes prominence in film (Bordwell, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; Sobchack & Sobchack, 1987). Subtle nuances and details expressed in the voice illuminate storylines and critical plot points (Bordwell, 1985; Bordwell & Thompson, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; Sonnenschein, 2001). In the film The Conversation (1974), for example, the delivery of the line, “He’d kill us if he got the chance,” changes the film’s plot by the way the actor delivers the line. When the character initially says the line, one thing is believed to be true based on that vocal delivery. Later in the film, the plot reveals that the words delivered were completely misinterpreted because of the way the character used intonation and inflection. With this voice-influenced misinterpretation of plot, the entire direction of the film changes.

Actors’ vocal delivery accurately situates the characters in the proper time and place. Depending on the era and where the story takes place, actors need to sound like they belong in that time and location geographically (Sobchack & Sobchack, 1987). The wrong voice misplaces a character and interrupts a consistent narrative (Bordwell, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; Woods, 2007).
For example, an actor playing a teacher in the south of France during the 1830s sounds different from one portraying a steel worker from Iowa in the early 1950s. The voice anchors characters in the film’s diegesis with a human aural connection resulting in a willing suspension of disbelief (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; Shingler, 2006b; Sonnenschein, 2001).

Because only the voice expresses certain things, voice provides additional details and information to audiences not written in the script. What an actor can do vocally using the paralinguistic features of speech enhances meaning, adds underlying subtext, and communicates information in subtle ways. For example, sarcasm allows one to undermine and ridicule by using intonation instead of language. Retracting a sarcastic comment or using a nonverbal expression is easier than using words (Karpf, 2006). By using paralinguistic communication to augment content in the dialogue, actors deliver interesting, robust performances and provide audiences with coherent content that screenwriters could not include in the original script (Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000). Many times, filmmakers use the voice to solve problems with the narrative—the term is “verbal primacy”—and, in some cases, subtle nuances in tone or inflection reduce lengthy lines of script to more engaging and effective content in the final film product (Kozloff, 2000).

Audiences’ increasing sophistication and savvy abilities allow them to glean a great deal of information from narrative and storylines quickly. Additionally, contemporary audiences are bringing higher expectations to the films they view; in doing so, they also bring a certain advanced schema to experiencing films, and they look forward to following more complicated storylines (G. Smith, 2002). This savvier, movie-going audience forces filmmakers and practitioners in the film industry to push their creative limits both aurally and visually in order to engage them (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985). Characters with richer, deeper aural qualities help
expand all the interrelated systems of expression that make up the film—particularly sound and then ultimately voice (Bordwell, 1985; Kozloff, 2000; G. Smith, 2002; Sonnenschein, 2001).

2.2 Voice as a Lens to Understand Character

As the previous discussion indicates, the study of voice has garnered some attention in scholarship, but it deserves further investigation because of its potential to impact a film production’s bottom line. Films are costly to produce and actors are not encouraged to get voice training or focus on developing creative and flexible voices. Further, speech researchers cannot assume that earlier findings about the voice remain consistent over time and that it applies in the same way as stage to film generally or to more contemporary film specifically. The voice functions differently in the performances of film, theatre, and public speaking. Content, performance site, and presentation style affect the way speech is both delivered and received by audiences (Churcher, 2003a; Kozloff, 2000). For example, in film, the actor performs voice the way individuals speak naturally—whether whispering, talking softly, or yelling because technology amplifies sound in a way that requires no additional projection by the performer. On the other hand, stage actors must project their voices differently because audiences do not see or hear the performances close-up; instead, they experience the performance at a distance from the stage (Churcher, 2003a). Similarly, in public speaking, a miked speaker must also project the voice because of the stage-like site of performance and possibly the style of speaking, particularly if it is dynamic in nature (Jones, 1996; Karpf, 2006); the microphone alone is not sufficient to convey all that needs to be conveyed through the speech. However, the vocal performance of a film actor, stage actor, and public speaker remains different, and thus content, performance style, and the performance site impact the way audiences hear and/or receive messages (Churcher, 2003a; Joanne & Gulseker, 2012).
Current film scholarship covers the history of sound’s inclusion to film. It investigates such concerns as the transition from silent film to the talkies (Belton & Weiss, 1985; J. Smith, 2008), the debate over adding an actor’s voice synchronized with the on-screen image to film (Arnheim, 1957; Belton & Weiss, 1985; Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov, 1985; Kracauer, 1985), and the use of technology to enhance various types of vocal presentations (J. Smith, 2008; Sterne, 2003).

Some film scholars have investigated the voice from a psychoanalytical perspective (Chion, 1994, 1999; Doane, 1980; Silverman, 1988). Michel Chion (1999) argued that the voice is the first point of aural identification for audiences and is the primary signifier in all film sound. His work played a key role in setting the agenda for the study of sound within film studies. Addressing the voice and character, Chion brought attention to the acousmêtre—a mysterious voice that is heard, but separated from the image of its source. Because this character is not seen, it becomes omniscient and omnipotent, all-seeing and all-knowing. Chion (1999) explained that the acousmêtre takes the audience back before birth in the mother’s womb or the first few months of life when the voice—not vision—was everything and everywhere. Kaja Silverman (1998) addressed the sound of the mother’s voice, challenging Chion’s concept in her feminist approach to voice in the cinema; she explained the maternal voice as a fantasy articulated through psychoanalytic film theory. She also investigated the unequal treatment of male and female voices in cinema, applying Laura Mulvey’s (1975) male gaze theory to film sound. Silverman (1998) confirmed Mulvey’s (1975) conclusion about sexism in mainstream cinema, saying that the patriarchal system reserves voice-overs and voice-off for male characters only, while consistently connecting the female voice to the image of a female body. Mary Ann Doane (1980) agreed, saying that voices in Hollywood cinema are anchored to visualized bodies,

Some film scholarship analyzes the vocal performances of certain actors in specific films (Sergei, 1999; Shingler, 1999, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Denison, 2005; Kozloff, 2000; Lowe, 2006). These works tended to offer a content analysis of specific aspects of the actor’s voice. For example, Martin Shingler (1999, 2006a, 2006b) brought attention to Bette Davis’ vocal performances in the film *Now, Voyager* (1942) and *All About Eve* (1952). Part of his analysis highlighted how Davis used her breath and a style of strict pinched articulation to create a character that was believable and full of depth, passion, and intensity. Pamela Robertson Wojcik (2010) similarly drew attention to Rock Hudson’s vocal performances in *Pillow Talk* (1959) and *All That Heaven Allows* (1955). She highlighted the binary opposites Hudson vocally infused into the two characters he played in *Pillow Talk* (1959): Rex Sexton, a Texas gentleman, and Brad Allen, a promiscuous, seducing playboy. Philip Brophy (1991) explored Sylvester Stallone’s performance as Rocky Balboa in the *Rocky* (1976, 1979, 1982, and 1985) series and how his physical appearance affected his vocal performance. Rayna Denison’s article (2005) investigated issues of social class, education, and gender of characters through their vocal performances in the animated feature *Princess Mononoke* (1997). Exploring the use of voice and how it constructs stardom, she investigated the voices of actors Jada Pinkett Smith, Claire Danes, Billy Bob Thornton, Billy Crudup, and Minnie Driver, considering how they inscribed cultural meanings to the characters they portrayed and created a multicultural voicescape for the film.
Victoria Lowe (2006) conducted an in-depth analysis of British actor Robert Donat’s vocal performances in *Knight Without Armor* (1937), *The Citadel* (1938), and *The Ghost Goes West* (1935). She explored “The Emotion Chart,” a tool Donat created to help himself play the appropriate level of emotion in each scene for the character Dr. Andrew Manson in *The Citadel* (1938) because scenes were filmed out of sequence. Gianluca Sergi (1999) discussed Morgan Freeman’s portrayal of Detective Somerset in the film *Se7en* (1995) and highlighted the juxtaposition of Brad Pitt’s vocal performance as Detective David Mills.

Previous scholarship in film has given much consideration to the visual; it has attended to sound and, particularly, voice far less fully. As Jonathan Sterne (2006) pointed out, even today American culture is strongly visual, yet there still lacks a parallel construct of sound. He expressed that even though some scholars are interested in sound, it is considered “a parochial or specialized concern” (p. 4). These studies and their limitations suggest that it is important to re-balance the aural and the visual using a research methodology that can address new questions regarding voice and character in film. Theorizing voice and sound from the audience’s perspective is necessary to open the door for more focused listening and bring much-needed attention to the human connection of voice in film.

Audience studies literature highlights how audiences read the text of a film or artifact. Although this section of the literature review does not include content on the voice and character portrayal, a brief review of audience reception is useful since this study investigates the use of voice from the audience’s perspective. Reception studies focuses on a specific text for analysis and in this study that text is the performance of character. The way focus group participants receive and read the performance provides the data for analysis.
Much of the discourse in the study of audiences has centered on the text, the audience, or the context of text. Stuart Hall’s (1980) landmark work in cultural studies on the subject of encoding and decoding offers an inroad to exploring the meaning in a text communicated to audiences and how audiences receive the media product. Hall’s model of communication says that senders encode specific meaning into texts and then the receivers, or audiences then decode that content. He lays out three different ways a text can be received, or decoded, which include a dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional reading. The dominant, or preferred, reading of a text fully accepts the product without questioning any part of it. In a negotiated reading, audiences may question parts of the text but not the dominant ideology, which is the foundation of the production of the text. With an oppositional reading, the receiver understands the communication, but is at odds with its message and the system that produced it. Oppositional readings refuse to accept the text as it was delivered and may do something to create a new product with parts of the original work (1980).

In the 1980 ethnography of the British television news magazine show, *Nationwide*, David Morely extended Hall’s claims about negotiated meanings, arguing against the idea of a textual spectator. Instead, he suggests a more complex model of the interaction between text and reader dependent on the context of the reading. He says decoding is a struggle over the meaning of the text in which the audience actively engages with the program rather than being passively positioned by it (1992).

Other research in reception studies expands on the notion of the oppositional reading. For example, Jackie Bobo examined Black women’s responses to the film, *The Color Purple* (1985) after much controversy that claimed the film was an extremely racist depiction of Black men.
Her research showed that some Black women did not see the film as racist. She explains how a subversive reading may surface when something strikes the reader as strange.

   An audience member from a marginalized group (people of color, women, the poor) has an oppositional stance as they participate in mainstream media because we understand that mainstream media has never rendered our segment of the population faithfully. We have as evidence our years of watching films and television programmes and reading plays and books. Out of habit, as readers of mainstream texts, we have learned to ferret out the beneficial and put up blinders against the rest (Bobo 2003, 311).

If this happens, she says that it may cause the viewer to bring in other issues to watching the film and they may see things the filmmaker did not intend thereby mis-reading or ‘going against the grain’ of the film.

   Jackie Stacey (1994) argues that there should be an interactive model incorporating text, audience, and context. She believes that something needs to account for the complexity of the viewing process. Her work in feminist film theory seeks to develop the notion of the spectator as a historical subject in a way that the cultural locations of the text-audience encounter are understood.

   Janice Radway (1986) doesn’t agree with Stacey’s three elements in the same way. Rather, she challenges that notion saying the content of any message is not only found in that message, but is also constructed by the audience as they interact with that message. Additionally, there is no way the creator of a text can know how their own work will develop or how others may or may not receive or interpret the content.
2.3 Summary

This study fills the gap that exists in theatre literature by exploring the use of the actors’ voice to create and portray character. Current theatre literature has focused on the care and maintenance of the stage actor’s voice as well as training for actors relating to specific types of texts, such as those of Shakespeare (Barton, 1995; Benedetti, 1990; Berry, 1974). Other theatre scholarship has attended to the connection of the actor’s voice and body in performance (Barton, 2003; Lessac, 1996; Linklater, 1976, 1992). This dissertation study is unique because, unlike previous scholarship, it investigates how actors use their voices to portray character from the audience’s point of view. The research is significant because actors use their voices differently in a stage performance than in a film-based one. On stage, actors perform in front of a live audience and receive immediate feedback. Theatre actors rehearse longer and with more intensity, which places a greater demand on the voice (Berry, 1974; Churcher, 2003a). In most cases, the show is performed live several times a day and several days during the week for the entire theatrical run which may be weeks, months, or years. The repeated live performances force actors to use their voices in a different way and in a high-energy situation frequently and repetitively. Film actors repeat their scenes with multiple takes, aiming for a flawless performance; even then, editors manipulate and adjust the audio and visuals before the final product is released (Churcher, 2003a). Whereas in theatre the audience’s reception of the actor’s presentation is immediate, it is delayed in film. Although they use different performance sites, both stage and film actors portray characters in artistic story-telling formats. This study augments existing theatre literature by providing a different perspective on the portrayal of character through the human voice and how audiences perceive and comprehend them.
This study further addresses a gap that exists in speech literature by studying the use of voice in the connected conversational speech of film actors and how audiences receive information about a character through the use of voice. Current speech scholarship explores the use of voice in the expression of emotion and in public speaking, particularly as it is used in persuasion. Research exists on the use of voice in order to create technology to develop synthetic speech and to replicate the human voice and its emotive properties (Murray & Arnott, 1993). However, earlier work in speech does not examine the use of voice in the constructed environment of film for dramatic purposes. Speech delivered in a conversational style provides a way to study voice in a more natural way. This study uniquely investigates the voice in connected conversational speech delivered by professional actors in the structured environment of professional filmmaking. Previous researchers have used different content in their studies, such as short verbal segments or fragments of utterances read by subjects in an unnatural laboratory setting. Yet, in the context of a film, audiences hear speech in conversation, not in fragments. Thus, studying how audiences receive information about a character from conversational speech in the mediated context of film is valuable. Additionally, this project provides an opportunity to connect all the elements currently researched separately in speech literature such as voice, speech, emotion, and persuasion.

Examining the technologically enhanced and recorded voices of film actors is useful and important because their vocal performances provide a unique type of content to study. The actors’ voices in a film soundtrack—although stylized—offer clear, enhanced, and professionally produced content that most closely mirrors natural connected conversational speech. The films chosen for this study enable an investigation of vocal performances that come across to audiences as natural; in other words, the voices were not manipulated to change the way the
actors sound nor were the actors’ own natural voices technologically altered to my knowledge. The recorded medium of film offers a way to clearly investigate all the subtleties that create character in an actor’s vocal performance. Although actors perform scripted lines, which may seem unnatural, using a feature film performance offers professional high-quality content.

The audience’s response to the relationship between voice, actor, and character deserves attention because the voice functions as an important part of how audiences follow storylines and understand narrative. While reception analysis has been applied to different aspects of film texts, such as content and narrative, a gap exists in the literature relating to how vocal performances are read by audiences in the interpretation of character. Research in this under-recognized area of character portrayal and voice can provide practical information that benefits actors, practitioners, and theorists seeking to look into other functions of voice and film sound.

This project’s key contribution to film scholarship is its investigation of voice and character portrayal from the audience’s perspective. Further, the research focuses on sound studies and audience reception. Looking at both from a theoretical and practical perspective, scholars and industry professionals will be impacted by this project’s investigation of how the spoken human voice is received and processed by film audiences. Audience response to vocal performance in film merits further study because filmmakers design movies for audiences to experience. Without investigating how audiences receive and understand those experiences through the products and/or messages created for them, a fair and comprehensive analysis remains missing.
3 METHODS

3.1 Design

As mentioned in the introduction, there are various attributes that can contribute to an audience’s reception of an actor’s portrayal; some are visual, some are situational, and some are historical. To answer the research question regarding only the vocal techniques, I needed a method that accounted for and effectively neutralized all non-vocal techniques and influences. Therefore, I conducted a quasi-experimental qualitative study that collected audience reactions to matched film clips. Where an experimental design would compare changes in a variable across a control group and a treatment group, this design used a subtractive combination of three focus groups to collect audience perceptions of characterizations created solely by vocal techniques.

The overall framework for this study involved an iterative process of three separate focus groups. Participants either (1) only watched (visual), (2) only listened to (audio), or (3) both watched and listened (visual/audio) to the same five sets of matched pairs of film clips and then responded as to what accounted for an actor’s particular portrayal. Removing all duplicate characterizations found across multiple groups provided vocal-only data. In short, after comparing responses from each group of respondents, whatever character portrayals that were left unaccounted for by the auditory-only clips and the combined visual and auditory/visual clips could safely be assigned to and analyzed as being generated by voice techniques.

Before explaining the construction of the three match pairs of clips, it is important to explain why the research could not have consisted only of a set of vocal clips where respondents were asked, “What accounted for this actor’s portrayal?” Such a study design would assume vocal techniques as the only possible answer for these respondents, while the actual dialogue content might be equally or more responsible for the audience’s reception of a particular
characterization. To be assured that the data being analyzed were primarily generated by vocal techniques, I compared responses from the mode-specific focus groups and I analyzed only non-duplicate vocal techniques. This quasi-experimental design was constructed so that information collected from a visual only, auditory only, and visual and auditory representation of film worked together as a filter that minimized any characterization that might have been due to non-vocal techniques. I looked for recurring content that suggested a pattern or some type of relationship between voice and character portrayal. Collecting and filtering data from all three groups allowed me to focus on and analyze characterizations that were accounted for by vocal techniques alone.

3.2 Data

Short clips from pairs of matched films constituted the content used in the study. A matched pair consisted of an original film and a subsequent remake of that film. Clips ranged in length from two to five minutes in order to focus and hold participant attention and limit the material to which they could respond. Shorter segments served to isolate the voice and performance of the actor while keeping many of the other filmic elements such as the storylines and narrative structures the same. At the same time, shorter segments provided what was considered sufficient dialogue for analysis and discussion. The sheer length of full films makes it difficult to determine whether participants would be responding to the narrative, plot, misè-en-scène, direction, style, or other aesthetic film elements.

Highlighting a change in the actor from the original to the remake allowed for a clearer focus on the way a character was portrayed and how different voices may impact that portrayal. Using clips from two completely different films would not allow such a focus. In sum, the design
restricted the material to allow easier discovery of whether participants respond to voice, character, or something else.

The relative similarity in dialogue between the original and the remake was the key criterion in clip selection. Using clips with nearly identical dialogue was imperative in order to extrapolate differences in the performances resulting from the voice of the character. This research design provided an opportunity to isolate character portrayal as a component independent of other filmic elements such as editing, music, sound effects, narrative, cinematography, and misè-en-scène. Although these elements might be different between the two films, the research design took them into consideration by including a group focused on the film’s visuals and another group reviewing the clips as they were produced with both aural and visual elements.

Another criterion to determine which matched film clips were to be used was a variety of genres. I chose films in the drama, comedy, romance, thriller, family, musical, and fantasy genres. The first criteria of similar dialogue impacted the choice of genre. For example, filmmakers have categorized The Thomas Crown Affair (1968) in the crime, drama, and romance genres. The Internet Movie Database noted the genres of the subsequent remake of the film, The Thomas Crown Affair (1999) as crime, romance, and thriller (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0155267/?ref_=sr_1). Further, the criterion regarding identical dialogue limited the number of matched film pairs in some film genres.

The following film pairs shown in Table 3.1 have specific similar scenes depicting the difference in characters. These choices also fulfill all of the other noted criteria. In short, they were selected because they comprised a variety of genres, were released on widely varied dates, and included scenes where the dialogue was identical or almost so.
### Table 3.1 List of Original Films and Remakes

Five matched pairs of films, an original and a remake, were used as artifacts in the focus groups for study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Film</th>
<th>Remake</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genre: Crime, Drama, Romance</td>
<td>Genre: Crime, Romance, Thriller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre: Comedy, Drama, Fantasy</td>
<td>Genre: Comedy, Drama, Fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre: Comedy, Drama, Romance</td>
<td>Genre: Comedy, Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre: Drama</td>
<td>Genre: Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre: Family, Fantasy, Musical</td>
<td>Genre: Adventure, Comedy, Family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is a description of each of the matched film pairs and a brief summary of the scenes participants screened in the focus groups. Films ranged in release year from 1947 through 2008 and at least two scenes from each were included in the clips participants experienced. Scenes were chosen based on matching dialogue and were taken from various parts of the film without regard to the content. Only scenes from the matched film pair *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961 & 2008) had perfectly matched dialogue because both films used the script from Loraine Hansberry’s stage play. In the four other films pairs the dialogue was very close. For purposes of this study, each scene was titled based on it’s content and not the titles used on the DVDs. There are a total of five pairs of matched films with sixteen characters in fifteen different scenes.

#### 3.2.1 The Thomas Crown Affair (1968) & (1999)

The matched film pair *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968 & 1999) is about a wealthy man who goes to great lengths to “steal big” just for the fun of it. In the original version of the film, starring Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway, Thomas Crown is a wealthy bank executive who
pulls off a multi-million dollar bank robbery. The remake of the film stars Pierce Brosnan as Thomas Crown, and Rene Russo is his love interest. The remake has a slightly different story, which involves Thomas Crown pulling off a hundred million dollar art heist. In both films, Crown’s love interest is an insurance investigator who tries everything she can to catch the thief, but ends up falling for him.

Three scenes were analyzed in this matched film pair, which include, “Overpaid,” “Golf,” and “Introduction.” The first scene “Overpaid” takes place early in the film and is set in a boardroom where Thomas Crown and several other businessmen are gathered to sign a contract. The other businessmen think they’re tricking Crown out of a lot of money in a huge business deal, but it turns out that Crown gets the last laugh and the tables are turned when he tells them they ‘overpaid’ in the transaction.

In the second scene entitled, “Golf,” Crown is playing golf with a few of his friends on a Sunday morning. He makes outrageous bets--$10,000 on a single golf swing in the 1968 film and $100,000 on a single golf swing in the 1999 film. He loses the bet, but doesn’t care because he has money to burn.

In “Introduction,” the third scene participants screened, Thomas Crown meets his love interest for the first time at an art auction. In the original film, he meets Vicki Anderson, and in the 1999 remake, her name is Catherine Banning. Both women play insurance investigators.

3.2.2 The Bishop’s Wife (1947) & The Preacher’s Wife (1996)

The matched film pair The Bishop’s Wife (1947) & The Preacher’s Wife (1996) is about a minister who is desperately trying to raise money to get a new church built. He prays for guidance and an angel, Dudley, shows up to help him. Dudley isn’t there to help him with fundraising; instead his job is centered on teaching the minister a lesson about life.
Participants screened three scenes from the matched film pair *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947) & *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996). The scenes were titled, “Prayer,” “Introducing Dudley,” and “Stay Away.” David Niven, Cary Grant, and Loretta Young starred in the original version of the film, playing Bishop Henry Brougham, Dudley (the angel), and Julia Brougham (the Bishop’s wife) respectively. In the 1996 remake, Courtney B. Vance plays the preacher, Denzel Washington is Dudley, and Whitney Houston is Julia, the preacher’s wife.

Early in the film in the scene, “Prayer,” the bishop/preacher is praying for guidance about money for the church. He’s feeling the weight of worry and concern for the congregation and in desperation prays to God for help.

In the second scene, “Introducing Dudley,” also early in the film, Dudley shows up and introduces himself to the bishop/preacher as an angel sent from God as an answer to his prayer. Initially, Dudley is not well received. The bishop/preacher doubts that Dudley is really an angel and can’t imagine he was truly sent from heaven.

The third scene, “Stay Away,” takes place more than half way into the film. Throughout the narrative, the bishop/preacher has encouraged Dudley to spend time with his wife Julia because he’s busy raising money for the church. Dudley and Julia have enjoyed each other’s company and gotten to know each other and now the bishop/preacher is jealous of their friendship and yells at Dudley to stay away from his wife. Julia becomes upset and runs upstairs away from her husband.

### 3.2.3 *Sabrina* (1954) & (1995)

*Sabrina* (1954 & 1995) is about the daughter of a chauffeur to the wealthy Larrabee family. Sabrina and her father have lived above the garage on the Larrabee’s estate for many years. As a young girl, she had a big crush on the family’s younger playboy son, David Larrabee.
Sabrina goes away to school in Paris and comes back a beautiful fashionable young woman and David becomes interested in her. David’s brother Linus tries to come between David and Sabrina and starts to fall for her too. In the original film, Audrey Hepburn plays Sabrina and William Holden and Humphrey Bogart play David and Linus Larrabee. In the 1995 remake, Julia Ormond takes on the role of Sabrina, Greg Kinnear portrays David, and Harrison Ford is Linus.

The “Office” scene happens early in the film and establishes the conflict between the two Larrabee brothers, David and Linus. David is the playboy who never works, and Linus is the smart, driven executive who’s taken over the family business and does all the work, which supports David’s lavish lifestyle.

In the scene, “Station,” David comes across the beautiful and fashionable Sabrina when she comes back from Paris. Since he doesn’t recognize her as the chauffeur’s daughter who has lived on the family’s estate, he tries to make moves on her. Initially, she has a little fun and plays with him by not revealing her true identity.

The family has a big party and Sabrina is an invited guest instead of a young girl watching from a tree in the back yard. In the scene entitled, “Dance,” David and Sabrina talk and dance as he tries to get close to her. She tells him about the crush she’s always had on him.

In the “Solarium,” Sabrina waits for David, but Linus shows up with a bottle of champagne. Although David wanted to meet Sabrina, he injured himself when he accidentally sat on a champagne glass and wasn’t able to do so. Linus goes to meet her instead and took the opportunity to try and move in on Sabrina.
3.2.4  *A Raisin in the Sun (1961) & (2008) TV Movie*

*A Raisin in the Sun* (1961 & (2008) was originally a stage play written by Lorraine Hansberry². The original film starred Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, and Diana Sands. The 2008 remake was a made for television movie and was not released as a feature film. Sean Combs played Walter Younger, Audra McDonald was his wife Ruth, and Sanaa Lathan was Beneatha – Walter’s younger sister. The story is about the Younger family, who lives in an apartment in Chicago. Walter’s father has recently passed and his mother, Lena is waiting to receive a $10,000 insurance settlement. Family conflict arises about what to do with the money. Walter feels entitled to the money and wants to open a liquor store with two friends, but his younger sister Beneatha, contends the decision is up to their mother and should not automatically go to Walter for a business.

In the first scene, “Dream,” Walter tries to convince his wife Ruth to support his dream by talking to his mother Lena and suggesting she give him the money to start a business with his two friends, Willie and Bobo. Ruth is tired and doesn’t really want to get into trying to convince her mother-in-law to give Walter the money.

“Sibling,” establishes the strong conflict between Walter and his younger sister Beneatha. They get into a huge argument because Walter thinks he should get the money and that Beneatha wants their mother to support her ambition to become a doctor and go to medical school.

² The film *A Raisin in the Sun (1961) and (2008)* is the only film pair analyzed in this study that was adapted from a stage play. The original film was released in 1961 shortly after the Broadway play closed in June of 1960. After debuting on Broadway, the play toured the country and it was also produced as a musical in 1973, for which it won a Tony (Best musical), and then two TV movies in 1989 and 2008.
Beneatha argues with her brother saying it their mother’s decision and hers alone to decide how to spend the insurance settlement.

3.2.5 Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) & Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005)

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) & Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) is the only matched film pair in the family and musical genre. In the original film, Willy Wonka is played by Gene Wilder, Charlie is portrayed by Peter Ostrum, Julie Dawn Cole plays Veruca Salt, Roy Kinnear is Mr. Salt, and Jack Albertson plays Grandpa Joe. In the 2005 remake, Johnny Depp is Willy Wonka, Freddie Highmore plays Charlie, Julia Winter portrays Veruca Salt, James Fox plays Mr. Salt, and David Kelly is Grandpa Joe.

The story is about how a poor young boy wins a tour of an extravagant candy factory created by Willy Wonka. In a huge contest to win the tour, Charlie Bucket finds the last of five golden tickets that allow him and his grandfather to take a tour of the strangest chocolate factory in the world. Wonka takes Charlie and four other kids on this journey – each having their own unique personalities and quirks.

In the first scene, “Factory,” Grandpa Joe tells Charlie the story of how and why Willy Wonka closed his chocolate factory. Since Grandpa Joe used to work there, he explains how other candy makers tried to steal Wonka’s candy recipes and the mystery of who’s running the factory since it’s reopening.

Veruca Salt is called a “Bad Nut.” In the film, the obnoxious, rude, and disrespectful child demands her father find her a golden ticket. So her dad, Mr. Salt, who owns a peanut factory, orders all his workers to stop doing their regular jobs of shelling peanuts and start unwrapping Wonka chocolate bars to search for one of the golden tickets to give Veruca.
In a scene near the end of the film entitled, “Chewing Gum,” Willy Wonka explains to the group of five children touring his factory that he’s developing a new chewing gum that tastes like a three-course dinner. Although he warns Violet that the product is still in testing, not ready for consumption, and that she shouldn’t chew it yet, she decides to do it anyway. Unfortunately, when she starts chewing she also starts turning violet because Wonka has not yet perfected the dessert part of the chewing gum dinner.

Focus group participants screened a total of 16 characters in fifteen different scenes. The following films and clip lengths shown in Table 3.2 shows the total running time for each set of clips screened for each film pair.

**Table 3.2 List of Clips Screened for Each Matched Film Pair**

Fifteen scenes and five clips were screened for all five matched film pairs. Total clip length for each pair is listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matched Film Pairs</th>
<th>Scene and Number</th>
<th>Clip Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Scene 2: Golf  
Scene 3: Introduction | 10:58     |
Scene 2: Introducing Dudley  
Scene 3: Stay Away | 8:04       |
Scene 2: Station  
Scene 3: Dance  
Scene 4: Solarium | 32:27      |
Scene 2: Sibling | 12:06      |
Scene 2: Bad Nut  
Scene 3: Chewing Gum | 14:52      |

**3.3 Focus Groups**

Focus groups provide a great deal of information about participants’ ideas in a limited amount of time. The interactivity of a focus group discussion tends to generate more ideas than
individual interviews would, and the group dynamic encourages people to “piggyback” on others’ views and thus to participate more. Focus groups “help stimulate disclosure of information by encouraging a chaining-out of shared perceptions” (Kreps, 1995, p. 177). Working in a group offers a researcher the chance to probe and clarify ideas expressed by the group, which results in richer data. Many times, people find it challenging to articulate their feelings, attitudes, motivations, emotions, or opinions on particular topics, but hearing others do so gives them the confidence to do the same (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 115).

Group interaction allows the opportunity to create an environment that maximizes exploration on the part of informants without leading them to particular conclusions. Studies seeking to investigate the attitudes, opinions, and ideas of viewers (Kaboolian & Gamson, 1983; Bernard, 2002) effectively use small groups because they offer participants an opportunity to interpret information and then discuss it (Kaboolian & Gamson, 1983). Focus groups produce ethnographically rich data and a wealth of information (Bernard, 2002). Other group members can challenge participant responses and, by working in a small group, note participant behaviors and encourage information sharing and creativity. The group dynamic allows for discussion in a way that results in a natural means of data gathering (Katz & Liebes, 1990). Free and open dialogue results in more relevant, timely data than individual interviews may provide (Kreps & Dan, 1995).

I chose to use focus groups because they most closely mirror the generalized response of a movie-going public. Typically, moviegoers talk about the film they have just watched immediately after experiencing it. Focus groups allow participants to emulate the discussion experience by talking about the clips immediately after screening them. Even though the screenings took place in a sizable screening room and not in a large movie theatre, participants
seemed comfortable in the provided environment. There were no complaints of discomfort nor did anyone mention any problems with the environment that would have hindered their participation or responses to the clips.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Participant Selection and Demographics

The first step in conducting the focus group was to recruit the respondents. Since seven is deemed an ideal number of participants for an effective focus group (Bernard, 2002), the goal was to recruit at least fifteen respondents per group. This goal provided additional participants beyond the minimum in case some potential respondents did not show up or elected not to sign the informed consent forms (see Appendix A). In fact, the first time this study’s focus groups were conducted, there were an insufficient number of participants who remained for the entire session to consider the data valid. The study was repeated in full and the initial focus groups became a pilot opportunity, leading to such changes as shortening the film clip lengths and the decision to show the pair of film clips (rather than each individual clip) before engaging in discussion.

A college campus provides an opportunity to recruit a diverse population of respondents. To that end, I recruited participants on the Georgia State University (GSU) campus. GSU’s broad definition of diversity considers students who are of different ages, national origins, sex, disabilities, veteran status, socioeconomic class, gender identity/expression, race, religion, gender, color, sexual orientation, and cultural backgrounds (Planning And Development Committee/Ad Hoc Subcommittee For Review Of The Diversity Strategic Plan, 2011). The GSU student population at the time of this study included traditional and non-traditional students from more than 150 countries. Its race ratio was 33% African American, 12% Asian, 7%
Hispanic/Latina/o, and 46% Caucasian; 60% of the students were female and 40% were male. Although focus group participants with cultural differences may read aural and/or visual cues in films differently, GSU’s diverse population from which the focus groups would be developed arguably mirrored the movie-going public.

Fliers were posted on campus seeking interested participants over the age of 18 who enjoy watching movies. Emails were sent to Communication Department faculty and staff asking them to spread the word to their students about the focus groups. With both of these efforts, there were enough participants to conduct the study. In total, there were twenty-seven focus group respondents, which included ten in the aural group, seven in the visual group, and ten in the combined aural and visual group. Participants did not need to possess specific qualities or characteristics nor did they need to be expert informants or film scholars; instead, the project needed honest, naïve impressions of perceived differences of characterization due to vocal techniques. I presumed that lay informants would not look for or expect to find any particular techniques to account for any specific differences as experts might. Whatever differences they perceived between film clip sets presumably would be the differences to which a general audience would most likely respond.

The invitation to focus group participants did not provide much detail about the study; it merely gave participants a choice of time they might choose to participate. Potential volunteer participants chose a specific time to attend through e-mail. They self-selected from three separate appointment times and were filtered into group #1, group #2, or group #3 by the time and date they were available. They did not know this was also the assignment process to the respective focus groups and that the participation appointment time and date automatically assigned them to either the aural, visual, or combined group. For example, Tuesday evening was designated to the
aural group, and respondents who chose that evening screened the clips with audio only. If they choose Wednesday evening, they were placed in the group screening only visual clips. And, if they chose Thursday evening, they participated in the combined aural plus visual group. Respondents in each group varied in terms of age and gender, but this was not controlled.

3.4.2 Focus Group Process

The focus groups were held in the GSU Digital Arts Entertainment Lab (DAEL), which is an entertainment, research, and production facility as well as an incubator for emerging media-arts businesses. The lab facilitates the creation and testing of digital media content and engages in academic research.

The focus groups proceeded as follows: When participants arrived, I introduced myself, briefly explained the project, and asked them to read and sign consent forms. The group then screened the first pair of matched clips (see Appendix B). Each of the three different focus groups only experienced one mode of the clips. The visual group only watched the visuals of the clips, without any sound. Clips for this group were edited without any audio components. The aural group only listened to the same clips but did not see any visuals. The last group screened the same clips with both the audio and visual elements as the films were produced and intended to be experienced. After participants screened the clips, each person responded in writing to a short questionnaire (described in the next section) based on the clips they just experienced. At this point, the focus group discussion, which was audio-recorded, began. This process was repeated for each of the matched pairs of film clips.

3.4.3 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was the first mode of participant response to the matched clips. Immediately after screening a pair of film clips and before the focus-group discussion,
informants were asked to complete a prepared questionnaire by writing responses to it. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect additional data from participants by giving them time to think about specifics of the clips and some of the issues of character portrayal before openly discussing them with other group members. The questionnaire also provided a place for participants to record their thoughts and focus their attention. Because filmgoers do not typically discuss sound and use of the voice, informants needed time to consider how they might articulate some of the characteristics they experienced in the clips about how an actor reveals the character being portrayed. Because some audiences may be unaccustomed to thinking about or discussing this after viewing a film, the questions were designed to provoke thought about how they might articulate those characteristics that, from their perspective, helped form or create the characters. Participants were asked to complete only two or three questions at the end of each clip; the rationale for this decision was to encourage them to think systematically and formally about their responses to increase productivity.

Each group was given a slightly different questionnaire:

**Aural Group**
1. What characteristics do you attribute to character X?
2. What vocal features in the clip lead you to believe this about the character?

**Visual Group**
1. What characteristics do you attribute to character X?
2. What visual features in the clip lead you to believe this about the character?

**Visual and Aural Group**
1. What characteristics do you attribute to character X?
2. What vocal features in the clip lead you to believe this about the character?
3. What visual features in the clip lead you to believe this about the character?

Focus-group participants could refer to their completed questionnaires during the discussion, but before leaving the sessions, they were asked to submit the documents for research analysis.

3.4.4 Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions always started with a set of unstructured questions about character portrayal and the key factors that the group believed contributed to character portrayal. The developed questions did not suggest any specific answer, but kept the group focused on character portrayal and the elements that contributed to that portrayal. I encouraged participants to speak freely and to share their own personal responses to each question. Follow-up questions depended on participants’ responses:

*Aural Group*

1. What do you know about Character X based on this particular clip?
2. Can you provide some specific details?
3. How do you know this?
4. What specifically leads you to believe this about that particular character?
5. What did you hear that made you know or learn ______ about this particular character?

*Visual Group*

1. What do you know about Character X based on this particular clip?
2. Can you provide some specific details?
3. How do you know this?
4. What specifically leads you to believe this about that particular character?
5. What did you see that made you know or learn _____ about this particular character?
**Visual and Aural Group**

1. What do you know about Character X based on this particular clip?

2. Can you provide some specific details?

3. How do you know this?

4. What specifically leads you to believe this about that particular character?

5. What did you see and/or hear that made you know or learn _____ about this particular character?

The goal of these questions was to capture the differences perceived among the three groups. During the analytical phase of the study, any variances or dissimilarities in the data were linked back to the basic concepts and terminology of the discipline, both of which were derived from the literature review and the researcher’s expertise.

### 3.5 Summary of Data Gathered

The following is a summary of the data gathered from the three focus groups. There were two rounds of focus groups conducted; however, the first round did not have enough participants and data to use for the study. A second round of focus groups was conducted, which netted enough participants to gather data for the research study. There were a total of 27 informants who participated in three separate focus groups. There were 10 participants in the aural only group, 7 in the visual only group, and 10 in the combined group. Each group screened 15 clips, which contained 16 characters in 10 different films.

Data gathered from the focus group discussions and questionnaires given to participants resulted in 88 pages of single spaced transcribed content. There were 36 pages from the aural group, 24 pages from the visual group, and 28 pages from the combined group. Coding from these 88 pages of data netted 705 codes of traits/characteristics; 291 codes from the aural only
group, 207 codes from the visual only group, and 207 codes from the combined group. After putting the data through the first round of the constant comparison method, there were 332 different characteristics and 33 different vocal techniques. Continuing to use the constant comparison method, the final results were narrowed down to 72 different traits/characteristics that could be directly and solely attributed to the voice and 12 different vocal techniques used to create those traits/characteristics.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Grounded theory.

The study reviewed and analyzed participant responses from the questionnaires and focus group discussions using the grounded-theory method. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is an inductive process rather than a deductive one; the theory is developed in the exploratory stages of a research project from an analysis of the patterns in the data rather than from a deductive process where an existing theory is imposed on the data. The focus of such a process is on theory generation rather than theory verification, which was an appropriate approach to take for this dissertation study given the lack of published information about audience views of film characters’ voice. I did not undertake the research project with a formed hypothesis to prove or disprove, verify or reject, or test empirically. Instead, the focus was on the systematic review of data that resulted in the development of propositions or hypotheses about the data. This approach required that I not analyze the data with any preconceived ideas or notions about what the data would reveal. Instead, my goal was to remain open to allowing the theory to emerge out of the data and not from any preconceived ideas brought to the project. The idea was to become grounded in the data so that the theory emerges from it. Patterns of behavior
or thought thus surfaced from a set of texts, which in this case were the written questionnaires and the transcribed focus group discussions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The basic grounded theory method that I selected involved constant comparison as a strategic means for generating theory to discover concepts and themes. The result was a theoretical model that explained the phenomenon being studied—characterizations and vocal techniques. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained:

In discovering grounded theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. The evidence may not necessarily be accurate beyond a doubt (nor is it even in studies concerned only w/accuracy), but the concept is undoubtedly a relevant theoretical abstraction about what is going on in the area studied. (p. 23)

The method, then, uses constant comparison as key to the process of theory development by drawing attention to the similarities and differences in the data that, in turn, lead the researcher to generate abstract categories and their properties (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

I selected grounded theory as a method to analyze the data in order to develop a theoretical description of the function of voice. Current studies on voice take a broad approach to sound and do not share a common conceptual framework. Currently, there is a lack of research on the relationship between voice and character portrayal. Much of the work in film sound studies to date focuses on music and sound effects, but it lacks focus on the function of voice in the portrayal of character, as demonstrated in the literature review of Chapter 2. Since research provides no comprehensive theoretical description of the function of voice in performing a character, the ramifications to an audience are unknown. Such a description seems appropriate as
a first step toward building a more comprehensive understanding of the functions the voice may play in character development. The method offers a systematic set of procedures that allows the researcher to determine exactly what those concerns are because they derive directly from real life experiences instead of speculation or hypothesis (Skeat & Perry, 2008). Grounded theory was chosen to help uncover the major concepts of voice directly through audience members, thus providing a starting point to delve more deeply into this particular component of sound.

Beyond the initial foundation that grounded theory provides, this analytical method leads to information about which direction to go next in terms of future research projects. In this case, as informants provided data directly from their experiences of the film pairs, I was able to extrapolate critical features not previously identified. This research project offered a strong foundation for future studies relating to voice because it discovered information about how voice functions, particularly in the portrayal of character, and what key vocal features support this portrayal. This study produced basic and key findings about voice for other researchers to study the nuances of voice in character portrayal.

3.6.2 Steps in grounded theory.

Grounded theory as a method includes four major steps, which I followed. The process involved producing transcripts from the questionnaires and interviews, identifying potential categories, combining those categories to compare them and to see how they may be linked, and then using the relationships among those categories to build a theoretical model. I constantly checked the emerging model against the data and then presented the results using exemplars directly from the questionnaires and transcripts that illuminated the theory (Bernard, 2002). Following is a description of each step and an explanation of how it functioned in this study.
The collected data included information from a written questionnaire given to participants before the focus groups began and transcripts of focus group discussions. I transcribed each focus group discussion, being careful to listen several times for different voices and to ascribe comments to individual participants as accurately as possible. I then coded the material within the computer’s technology by highlighting material and giving it a code name (see Appendix C). The data were read several times with the different focus considerations of film, character, and scene.

I coded data analytically. Initially, I sought to organize the data in a way that an explanatory schema could be developed and eventually lead to a theory. Coding the data allowed me to build rather than test theory, providing me with the necessary analytical tools for dealing with a lot of raw data and helping me consider alternative meanings of phenomena. Additionally, coding the data allowed me to respond simultaneously in systematic and creative ways and to identify, develop, and relate the concepts used to build the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis of data through the process of coding was essential because it was the vehicle for developing the theory.

Coding involved sorting these data into significant concepts that helped to lay the foundation for developing a theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To this end, I coded the data using analytic processes according to content that was relevant to answering the research question. This process first involved identifying the unit or units of analysis that would reveal which aspect of the data to focus on when coding (Foss & Waters, 2007). Foss and Waters (2007) defined a unit of analysis as “the concept, idea, or action that illuminates the significant features of your data” (p. 187). My units of analysis were the characteristics of vocal techniques.
I then analyzed content from the questionnaires and transcribed discussions, looking for a quality, trait, or characteristic that contributed to an audience’s perception and understanding of a particular character, and I marked those sections that were relevant to the research question. In this case, relevant terms or phrases that constituted a unit of analysis in the study were specific aspects of how the voice or visual elements related to how an actor portrayed character.

As texts were coded, I sought variables that described the features of voice and visual appearance participants used to attribute certain traits to characters in the film. For example, in a discussion about Pierce Brosnan’s portrayal of Thomas Crown in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999), one participant said: “He had a smooth even pace. His voice goes up at times in his sentences. There’s a curve or tilt in his words – especially at the end of his phrases or sentences. He talks like there’s something going on. There’s an undercurrent of deviousness in his voice.” That comment was selected as a unit of analysis and coded as “smooth even pace = cunning/con-artist, rising inflection = cunning/con-artist, and devious tone = cunning/con-artist.”

Throughout the coding process, I marked the units of analysis with a code that summarized what was seen in the data or what I saw as relevant in the excerpt. For example, one participant noted the following of Harrison Ford’s portrayal of Linus Larrabee in the 1995 version of the film *Sabrina*: “He had a faster and more erratic speech pattern. Nothing was even-paced. There was some energy in his sound—like something was bothering him. It was louder. There was some choppy phrasing that gives you a feeling of uneasiness.” This excerpt was coded as “agitated = faster speech, agitated = erratic speech pattern, agitated = uneven pacing, and agitated = choppy phrasing.”

The coding process turned the text or data into a set of variables used to develop an explanatory schema or theory. I derived these variables directly from the coded data (Bernard,
2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and sorted them into like categories. For example, several respondents talked about vocal cues in different ways. One participant talked about Audra McDonald’s portrayal of Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008): “She speaks some words while she’s sighing—while she’s breathing out. It was like she was letting something go or releasing her frustration. She is allowing herself to be where she is with her husband.” This excerpt was sorted under the category of “breathing techniques,” which became a label for that variable. Or, in the case of the visual group, one participant noted Courtney B. Vance’s portrayal of Reverend Henry Brougham in *The Preacher’s Wife*: “He looked suspicious. His eyebrow was raised, he was squinting, and his head was slightly tilted to the side.” This comment was coded “raised eyebrow and tilted head = suspicious.”

I then physically sorted all of the variables that emerged from the coded data by collecting similar data as paper-based excerpts into piles. Afterwards, I reviewed that content to ensure the tentative label accurately reflected or described all the piles. Piles later became material for a computer-based chart that provided a more compact visual and enabled more facile organization and reorganization. At all times, I reviewed the data to ensure that sufficient support existed for the variables that described the elements contributing to character portrayal.

An important analytical step was to find and remove redundancies in audience perception among the three focus groups. In order to identify the vocal specific techniques, the coded data for each group was compared for redundancies that would preclude suggesting vocal techniques alone. Any characterizations that were equally attributed to visual techniques or to both visual and vocal techniques were set aside for this reason, leaving a set of vocal-only technique data.

Once I categorized all the vocal-only data and determined the major variables, I organized the concepts into an explanatory schema that used all the labels and groups. This
organization led to a meaningful story, or a theory, of vocal characterization that could then tentatively be explained. An explanatory schema is an account of what is seen in the coded data. My goal was to create an original and insightful framework to serve as the basis for a strong explanatory schema (Foss & Waters, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested, the purpose of the grounded-theory method is to “generate a theory that is integrated, consistent, plausible, close to the data and in a form clear enough to be (if only partially), operationalized for testing in quantitative research” (p. 103).

I created the explanatory schema by looking for relationships among the variables, comparing them with one another, and investigating any similarities and differences (Foss & Waters, 2007). Glaser and Strauss (1967) called this the constant comparison method and contended that such a method is the key to generating a grounded theory (p. 97). The relationships among the variables can appear in various ways and could create a schema organized in chronological, cause-and-effect, or hierarchical orders among others. For the purposes of this study, the goal was to see what patterns emerged from the data and not to impose an existing framework on them.

I knew when to stop the process of rearranging the variables and to decide on one version as the explanatory schema when several criteria were met. First, the schema included all the major categories in the data. In other words, all the emerging key variables had a clear function in the schema. A second criterion was seeing an “organic and coherent relationship” among the variables (Foss & Waters, 2007, p. 206). The variables had to function together to answer the research question. The schema also exhibited reasonable inference, which allowed me to explain to others how the explanatory schema fit the variables from which it was derived. A fourth criterion was to see an insightful schema within the data that produced new understanding, not
necessarily an obvious one, for vocal characterization within the paired film clips. Finally, the schema captured what I literally saw in the data through this iterative and reiterative process, explaining the data in a way that made sense to me and enabled me to explain it to others.

The final step of the process was to create the names or terms for the concept or variables in the explanatory schema and the relationships among them. These constituted the variables of the theory. The goal at this point was to create terms that were new, parallel in form, and internally consistent. Examples include pitch or inflection and the characteristic of cheerfulness. The complete set of these terms can be found in Chapter 4 in this dissertation.
4 RESULTS: CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction: Data Analysis

The following is an explanation of the major differences in the portrayal of characters in each of the matched film pairs. Descriptions are attributed solely to the vocal performances of the actors, although data from all three focus groups was used to isolate these traits and the vocal techniques participants used to describe them. In this part of the analysis, visual cues are not discussed – instead they were only used as a means to isolate the character traits ascribed to and understood by participants as creating the characters in the films.

This analysis compares all matched film pair characters scene-by-scene. For example the performance of Steve McQueen as Thomas Crown in the original film The Thomas Crown Affair (1968) was compared to Pierce Brosnan’s portrayal of Thomas Crown in the 1999 remake. Each of the 16 characters is investigated in all of the 15 scenes (see Appendix B for a list of all the characters and scenes). The following breakdown is first organized by film, then scene, and finally each character in that scene. The purpose of this part of the analysis is to provide context for the subsequent investigation that follows by linking particular character’s vocal qualities to specific scenes and films.


Scene 1: Overpaid

Character: Thomas Crown - Steve McQueen (1968) and Pierce Brosnan (1999).

In the 1968 film, Steve McQueen played Thomas Crown and Pierce Brosnan took on the role of the wealthy thief in the 1999 remake. Participants thought Steve McQueen’s portrayal of Crown (1968) showed him to be a more articulate, professional businessman because of the way he used aural communication. They described his voice as strong with good, clear enunciation.
and a calm, deep, formal vocal tone. On the other hand, Pierce Brosnan’s portrayal of Crown (1999) was said to sound sly and cunning because of his “Aristocratic British speech,” how he carefully chose his words, and his use of inflection and pace. Additionally, Brosnan’s higher pitch, rising inflection, slow speech rate and tone created the slick con artist they believed him to be.

**Scene 2: Golf**

**Character: Thomas Crown - Steve McQueen (1968) and Pierce Brosnan (1999).**

In the “Golf” scene participants attributed Crown’s (1968) careless, un-phased and nonchalant character to McQueen’s calm, monotone, and unemotional voice. Although they attributed his good articulation, direct, short answers, and softer tone to his rich and persuasive manners, Crown’s manipulative nature came through a calm and easygoing tone, vocal variety and inflected tone.

In the 1999 film, participants thought he was an aristocratic, carefree, and confident, but a loose Brit. They thought his easygoing, calm tone and smooth voice made Crown seem to be confident, and his carefully chosen words spoken in slow Standard English revealed the aristocratic Brit. The higher and lighter tone made Crown sound carefree and loose.

**Scene 3: Introduction of Thomas and Vicki/Catherine**

**Character: Thomas Crown - Steve McQueen (1968) and Pierce Brosnan (1999).**

In the third scene entitled, “Introduction,” both McQueen (1968) and Brosnan’s (1999) portrayal of Crown was perceived as flirty, confident, persuasive, rich, and attracted to Vicki/Catherine. The difference between the vocal performances in this scene is highlighted by McQueen’s use of voice to show Crown as a friendly, and classy man. Participants perceived the talkative McQueen to be friendly because he used a lower volume, and softer, warmer pitch. His
relaxed tone and approachable voice with soft inflection made him come off as flirty. But it was his lack of regional accent, clear voice, and good articulation that created the wealthy, well-educated Crown. Speaking few words well with a soft direct tone caused participants to see him as a persuasive rich man. On the other hand, Brosnan’s character was deemed to be a younger man with swagger. Informants believed his good grammar spoken slowly and his calm easy going, unemotional tone made him come off as a flirty rich Brit. His rising pitch at the end of phrases and sentences caused him to be perceived as persuasive.

**Scene 3: Introduction of Thomas and Vicki/Catherine**

**Characters: Vicki Anderson – Faye Dunaway (1968) and Catherine Banning – Rene Russo (1999).**

The characters Vicki Anderson and Catherine Banning were Thomas Crown’s love interest in the films. Faye Dunaway played Vicki Anderson in the 1968 film and Rene Russo was Catherine Banning in the 1999 version. Both women were insurance investigators assigned the task of catching Crown as the thief.

When Crown and Vicki meet, participants perceived her as a complex character with many sides. At times she was seen as an emotional, sexy, seductive, and independent women. In other instances she was seen as a woman with an attitude not easily impressed by anyone. Vicki was perceived as acting shocked - like a “deer caught in the headlights.” Faye Dunaway’s portrayal of Vicki was largely communicated through her vocal performance. At the beginning of the scene, Dunaway used a calm, even pace with a serious tone, which highlighted her attitude and the fact that she was unimpressed by those around her, but later her attitude shifted and her speech rate sped up. Participants noted her emotional side through a lot of vocal variety, and changes in pitch that were sometimes lower. A breathy, airy voice with a lower tone led
informants to pick up on her sexy, seductive side. Vicki could easily turn her persona to that of an innocent female by using a light softer tone, but within seconds her sarcastic side became evident through a monotone, flat voice void of vocal variety and few pitch changes. Independent Vicki had a strong, clear, direct, and focused voice.

Rene Russo’s portrayal of Catherine Banning (1999) was a slightly less complex character. Informants believed her to be sexy, seductive, and mysterious, yet independent and sometimes standoffish. Catherine, like Vicki was not impressed with those around her, particularly Crown. This was exhibited by her monotone voice. Her independence was evidenced by vocal variety, a calm tone, and strong voice. The sexy, seductive and sensual woman who was trying to entice Crown had a smooth flow of words and sentences with a very inflective voice. There was a rising pitch at the end of her phrases and sentences and her tone was intentional, direct, and focused. At times, she dragged out the pace. Russo’s short answers, choppy pacing with a lot of pauses, and distant tone caused her to be perceived as standoffish. Like Vicki, played by Dunaway, Catherine was a multi-faceted woman.

4.3 The Bishop’s Wife (1947) and The Preacher’s Wife (1996)

Scene 1: Prayer


In the “Prayer” scene, the major distinctions between Bishop Henry (1947), played by David Niven and Reverend Henry (1996), portrayed by Courtney B. Vance were aggression and defensiveness. Participants understood David Niven’s Bishop as an exasperated and helpless man through his use of breathiness. He was exhaling deeply and sighing heavily. His slow, choppy pace was riddled with a lot of pauses and a softer, weaker, low tone. The Bishop
struggled to find the right words and when he spoke, it was with a stressed, uneasy, tense tone. The flow of his speech was constantly interrupted and punctuated by heavy sighs, pauses, broken words, and low volume.

Courtney B. Vance’s portrayal of Reverend Henry (1996) was a more aggressive and defensive preacher. These traits were characterized by good enunciation with a loud tense, higher pitched voice. At times, his slower, softer speech showed his vulnerability, helplessness, and humility but it could quickly change to reveal a very direct upfront man in trouble. Some participants read his clear speech and neutral accent as lower middle class. Others thought his elongated words and sentences, even pace, and lower pitch revealed the Southern accent of a family man.

**Scene 2: Introducing to Dudley**

**Characters: Bishop Henry Brougham- David Niven (1947) and Reverend Henry Brougham - Courtney B. Vance (1996).**

In the second scene, “Introducing to Dudley,” Bishop Henry is a more cheerful character, but comes across as a middle class, less educated minister. David Niven’s speech rate and use of pitch and tone were key components in distinguishing his portrayal of the Bishop. Participants believed he was always searching for the right words and that his choppy speech and uneasy speech flow showed his need for help. His voice was described as strained, tense, stressed, and full of struggle, which made him appear nervous and seem uncomfortable. When the nervousness took over, he began talking faster but his speech was still riddled with pauses and his tone was tense. The Bishop was perceived as a less educated, middle class minister because of his regular, plain tone. Although the tension and stress in his voice were pervasive in this
scene, at one point, a cheerful man came through, which was described as having a rising higher pitch and brighter tone.

Courtney B. Vance’s interpretation of Reverend Henry Broughton was perceived as a more confident hopeful man, although still full of struggle. His confidence was read through an even pace and a strong, direct, inflected tone. Hopefulness in this character was understood through rising inflection at the end of his sentences and an overall softer, brighter tone. A slower speech pattern with elongated words, phrases, and sentences caused informants to see the Reverend as a southern man, but his clear speech and a neutral accent with a lot of pitch variety suggested his lower middle class status. The stronger side of Reverend Henry was described as defensive, which was explained by loud fast-talking and by the tension and fight in his tone. Overall, David Niven’s portrayal of the minister seemed to be a more neutral character and Courtney’ B. Vance’s interpretation of the character proved him to be more confident, but defensive.

Scene 3: “Stay Away”


In the third scene, “Stay Away,” Bishop Henry (1947) and Reverend Henry (1996) both are loud aggressive characters. Informants said Bishop Henry’s voice carried a loud, defensive and aggressive tone with a restricted sound in his voice. Although they also deemed him to be loving and caring, which was evidenced through a softer, lower tone, and drawn out, elongated words spoken at a slower pace. On the other hand, participants said Reverend Henry revealed his envious side and aggressive behavior through a deep stern tone and a lot of loud yelling.
Scene 2: “Introducing Dudley”

Character: Dudley – Cary Grant (1947) and Denzel Washington (1996).

The angel Dudley was introduced early in the film. Cary Grant played the 1947 character, and Denzel Washington was the 1996 angel. Participants considered Grant’s 1947 Dudley to be suave, friendly, and comforting by his low, firm, calm tone and even pace. His professional, straightforward, serious tone caused him to be deemed very business oriented and determined. But aside from his serious tone, there were times participants noted that Dudley was cheerful, enthusiastic and carefree, which was evidenced by his positive energy, the rising inflection in his voice, and higher pitch. There were a lot of highs and lows in his voice that created a lot of variety, and his tone was described as bright, non-aggressive and light-hearted.

Denzel Washington’s 1996 portrayal of the angel Dudley was seen as a witty and funny jokester who could be serious when necessary. A bright tone and higher pitch defined these characteristics along with a lot of inflection and vocal variety – particularly rising inflection at the end of some words, phrases, and sentences. When Dudley got serious, in an effort to take care of his “God assignment,” he became a very frank and persuasive salesman who used a calm, direct, and focused tone. The strength in his voice came from an easy speech rate and a leading tone without a lot of pauses. Although Dudley was seen as an angel serious about his business, his humor and light-hearted spirit endeared other characters in the film to him. His dependable, caring side was evidenced by a concerned and loving tone. The easiness in his voice and persistent tone caused audiences to believe Dudley was very polite in doing his very serious work.
Scene 3: “Stay Away”

Character: Dudley – Cary Grant (1947) and Denzel Washington (1996).

In the third scene analyzed from this pair of films entitled, “Stay Away”, Bishop Henry/Reverend Henry becomes very confrontational with Dudley. The minster is jealous of the relationship Dudley has cultivated with his wife Julia and yells at him demanding he stay away from Julia. Dudley’s response to this anger and aggression showed him to be respectful and convincing yet very sophisticated through Grant’s slow easy pace and tone. His voice was very effective in creating the kind angel on a mission from God. Participants described his voice as low, deliberate, calm, serious and empathetic, which created a binary opposite when juxtaposed against the ranting Bishop Henry/Reverend Henry.

In the 1996 film, Denzel Washington’s portrayal of the angel was seen as very caring, but also a frank and persuasive salesman. He used a calm, concerned, and loving tone but made it clear to the out-of-control minister that everything would be much better if he wasn’t so angry. Washington used an easy speech rate and reassuring but leading tone to convince the reverend to calm down. Participants also described his tone to be direct, focused, and un-rattled – but not too serious.

Scene 3: “Stay Away”

Characters: Julia Brougham – Loretta Young (1947) and Whitney Houston (1996).

Julia Brougham is the bishop’s/reverend’s wife in the film. Loretta Young played this character in the 1947 version of the film and Whitney Houston played Julia in the 1996 version. Participants thought that Young’s interpretation of Julia as a weak, shaky wife had a lot to do with the year the film was made – 1947. They noted that wives of ministers during that time were not supposed to be very strong even though they may have had a direct connection with
God. Rather, it is their minister husbands who are to be the strength of the family. Julia’s pitch made a big impact on informants’ interpretation of the character, particularly as it related to her acting weak. They described her pitch as super high, hysterical, and screechy, which made her seem brittle, guilty, shaky, and anxious. The high pitch, grating tone, and choppy speech rate with lots of pauses made her inarticulate and a quivering confused and stressed-out wife. Her voice was all over the place and strained with an apprehensive and shaky tone. Although she was seen as a weak mess, Julia (1947) was also described as loving, concerned, and caring, which was evidenced by an uplifting, serious, and much softer tone. When she was in this mode, participants said she sounded like a scolding mother that was a force to be reckoned with. Her voice had lots of highs and lows and a variety of pitch changes. Julia’s tone was strong and direct and her pace evened out – but at times became faster.

Participants believed Whitney Houston’s interpretation of Julia was also directly tied to the times. They believed that in 1996, an African American wife of a preacher would be a much stronger character. In this scene, she was confused, irritated, and frustrated with her husband for suggesting Dudley was stepping out of line with her. Her voice was tense and strained, the pace was choppy and uneven and her pitch was also grating, hysterical, and high. The fact that Julia didn’t hold back and spoke up easily when she had something to say made participants believe she was feisty. When she wanted to, she could be an instigator and in this role, she used few words, but was yelling loudly.
4.4 *Sabrina* (1954) and *Sabrina* (1995)

Scene 1: Office

**Character: David Larrabee – William Holden (1954) and Greg Kinnear (1995).**

In the 1954 version of the film *Sabrina*, David Larrabee is played by William Holden, and portrayed by Greg Kinnear in the 1995 remake. David Larrabee is a wealthy playboy who doesn’t have much time for his family’s business. Instead he spends his time chasing women, travelling and spending money frivolously. In the scene entitled, “Office” David storms into his brother Linus’ office to confront him about Linus arranging a marriage for him as “good business.”

Participants believed Holden’s loud fast-talking performance made David seem obnoxious and his smooth, low rhythmic tone created the playboy. His voice was said to have a soft swagger. They also thought David had a certain respect for his brother evidenced by a low, calm, restrained and respectful tone. However, his direct, focused tone showed his stern demeanor. Storming into Linus’ office with a loud and serious but skeptical tone, showed David was upset and annoyed, as he demanded answers from Linus about his impending arranged marriage.

Greg Kinnear’s portrayal of David Larrabee was perceived differently. Instead of a fast talking playboy, informants said David’s smooth tone and fluid speech created a different kind of playboy. Slow stuttering speech and a shaky, unstable, and uneasy tone made him appear to be nervous. Fast and heaving breathing with a lot of sighs punctuated his speech and created a frantic man. Although both characters were viewed as playboys, Holden and Kinnear played that character trait very differently.
Scene 1: Office

**Character: Linus Larrabee – Humphrey Bogart (1954) and Harrison Ford (1995).**

In the film *Sabrina* (1954), Humphrey Bogart plays Linus, the wealthy businessman and Harrison Ford plays the character in the 1995 remake. Bogart’s slow pace and unemotional flat tone was key in making Linus come across as dry and sarcastic. The low tone in his voice lacked emotion, but his clear voice, good articulation and enunciation showed him to be a professional businessman. When Linus and David talk in the office, Linus picked up a pistol and starts shooting at a target. Linus responds to David’s shock at his action with an unconcerned attitude evidenced by his low flat tone. Shortly after their initial exchange, things quickly change and Linus starts talking fast. His voice had a lot of highs, lows, and pitch changes. Participants read this as reckless and said his voice was loud and “all over the place.” They believed Linus was a smoker because his deep, rough raspy voice sounded damaged. Other informants saw Linus as stuck up, arrogant, and careless, which was read by his clear, matter-of-fact speech and the fact that he spoke with conviction and clarity.

Harrison Ford played Linus differently—as snippy and agitated. Participants thought he had a lot of repressed anger, which they read by his erratic speech pattern and choppy phrasing/chunking, cutting off words, and putting emphasis on the last word in sentences. An aggressive pitch and short words were markers for repressed anger although there were times when Ford showed Linus to be concerned and reasonable through his slow pace and calm tone. There were lots of pauses and hesitation in his communication but not many pitch changes or inflection in his voice. Although his brother was deemed the playboy, Linus was flirtatious. This trait was read through his playful voice and using a rising pitch at the end of sentences. Finally,
participants believed Linus was controlling, tricky and manipulative because of Ford's persuasive, pushy, and straightforward tone and the lack of inflection in his voice.

Scene 2: Station and Scene 3 Dance


In the scenes entitled, “Station” and “Dance,” Holden plays David as a more sensitive playboy by using a lower pitch, rhythmic voice and softer tone. Because Sabrina seems familiar to David in the “Station” scene, he is skeptical, which participants perceived through a serious but skeptical tone and rising inflection—especially at the end of sentences. In the “Dance” scene, participants read David’s attraction to Sabrina by his kind, smooth, deep voice, and loving sentimental tone. A slightly shaky voice showed his nervousness when in her presence.

In the 1995 version of the “Station” and “Dance” scenes, Kinnear plays David as a calm, soft-spoken man, using a slow, even pace, and calm, reassuring tone. He’s still a playboy, and shows that he is smitten with Sabrina, by his smooth tone and fluid speech. In “Dance,” Kinnear shows a more flirtatious David by a low, questioning tone, and a bit of playfulness in his voice.

Scene 2: Station


Audrey Hepburn played Sabrina in the 1954 version and Julia Ormond portrayed Sabrina in the later version. At the “Station,” Sabrina has just returned home from design school in Paris. She’s all grown up and looks beautifully fashionable. David Larrabee, in his playboy state sees her and offers her a ride from the train station. He’s flirting with her but doesn’t recognize her as the daughter of the family’s chauffeur. Sabrina’s flattered by the fact that the man she’s had a crush on for so many years doesn’t recognize her, rather seems interested in her and she enjoys playing a little game with David while he drives her to the family estate where they both live.
Participants saw Sabrina in both versions of the film as light-hearted, carefree, excited about life, and happy. The major difference between the two women was Julia Ormond portrayed Sabrina more old-fashioned and shy, but flirtier than Audrey Hepburn’s Sabrina in the “Station” scene. Audrey Hepburn (1954) portrayed Sabrina, as a young woman who cared about others, but was patient and playful. Her care and patience was shown through a calm, warm, and peaceful tone. Her voice was described as “reaching, bringing calm, peace and health.” The optimism and playfulness in her performance was perceived through an even pace, and higher pitch – rising at the end of sentences, and her shyness came through a soft, giggly, lower tone. The apprehensive and tentative tone in her voice made her seem more old-fashioned than Hepburn’s portrayal of Sabrina in the 1954 film.

**Scene 3: Dance, and Scene 4: Solarium**

**Character: Sabrina Fairchild – Audrey Hepburn (1954) and Julia Ormond (1995).**

In the “Dance” and “Solarium” scenes, participants deemed Hepburn’s portrayal of Sabrina to be mysterious, mischievous, and upper class. This was evidenced by a low, soft, reserved tone with a slow even pace. There were a lot of highs and lows and pitch changes in her voice. Her clear, distinct pronunciation – especially of the “a’s” and vowels made her sound like an upper class seductress.

On the other hand, Ormond’s 1995 performance showed Sabrina to be a woman full of sexual energy and in love. She used a high-pitched, light, airy tone to sound flirty. Contrasted against Hepburn’s pitch changes, Ormond brought out an intense sexually energized Sabrina through her warm, low tone and slow rhythmic pace. She changed that tone to a softer more excited voice and that made her sound like she was in love.
Scene 4: Solarium

**Character: David Larrabee – William Holden (1954) and Greg Kinnear (1995).**

When Sabrina and David talk in the 1954 “Solarium” scene, participants perceived him to be an old, nasally, portly man through heavy breathing and a sloppy tone. They also believe him to be angry and accusatory because he was speaking through his nose, which creates a higher pitch. He was talking fast and his voice was loud and tense. Precise enunciation and clipped words created the angry and emotional character.

Participants read Kinnear’s portrayal of David in this scene as scared and worrisome. They described his voice as light, whiny, weak, and lacked depth. Some thought his higher pitch and light childlike tone made him sound like a nerd, and his questioning, fluctuating, sing-song-y tone created the scared and worrisome man. Through all of this, he continued to flirt with Sabrina shifting his voice from talking smooth to adding a rising pitch at the end of sentences.

**Scene 4: Solarium**

**Character: Linus Larrabee – Humphrey Bogart (1954) and Harrison Ford (1995).**

During a party thrown at the family mansion, Linus meets Sabrina in the solarium. In the 1954 version, participants considered Linus to be a funny jokester, but at the same time—calculating. The funny jokester had an even pace and calm tone in his voice with a higher lighter pitch. Bogart used a playful voice to make the character funny. The calculating Linus was evidenced through a calm, slow, smooth pace, and an even unchanging tone. He chose his words very carefully and took his time when speaking. Informants thought Ford’s portrayal of Linus was the same as in the office scene – snippy and agitated with a lot of repressed anger.
4.5 *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and (2008)

**Scene 1: Dream**

**Character: Ruth Younger – Ruby Dee (1961) and Audra McDonald (2008).**

In one of the earlier scenes of the film, entitled, “Dream,” Ruth and Walter Younger are arguing about money from an insurance settlement Walter’s mother is waiting to receive. Participants noted several differences in the portrayal of the two Ruth Younger characters—Ruby Dee (1961) and Audra McDonald (2008). They thought Ruby Dee’s 1961 performance showed the wife to be a soft-spoken realist, pessimistic, un-confident, and defeated. A shaky voice that drags with a slow pace identified the defeated characteristic and her soft, low tone, and easy voice showed her to be soft-spoken. Participants also described her voice as having a low volume, less forward, with some inflection. She didn’t have much to say, which made her seem calm, but the dull flat tone caused participants to read her character as a pessimist. And, a more deliberate and direct tone made her sound like a realist when talking with her husband. On the other hand, they believed Audra McDonald played Ruth as a scared, but well-spoken woman through a tentative clear tone.

**Scene 2: Sibling**

**Character: Ruth Younger – Ruby Dee (1961) and Audra McDonald (2008).**

In the scene, “Sibling,” Ruth doesn’t have a lot to say because her husband Walter is in a heated argument with his sister Beneatha. Informants continued to read Ruby Dee’s portrayal of Ruth as soft spoken but they now see her as detached because of her low grumbly voice. In the remake, Audra McDonald was also deemed detached by participants, but more stressed out. She used a low tone, and spoke few words at a slower pace.
Scene 1: Dream


Sidney Poitier played Walter Younger in the original film (1961) and Sean Combs portrayed the 2008 dreamer. Walter was considered a very passionate and persuasive man in the original film but more genuine and loving in the 2008 remake. Participants believed Walter’s Caribbean accent in the original film, which had a rhythmic quality and a specific island pace caused him to bend some words and phrases as he spoke. These qualities made his voice stand out and his fast speech and loud fluctuated voice made him sound passionate. They noted a special emphasis on the first word of his sentences and a lot of variety in tone and inflection, which made him sound very persuasive. Strong vocal variety coupled with a lot of energy added to his passion, and punctuated his dreamer mentality.

Sean Comb’s portrayal of Walter in the first scene was different from Poitier’s version. Comb’s depiction was read as genuine, loving, and compassionate. A slow pace and sweet, direct, but soft tone defined his compassion and a lower tone made participants perceive him as genuine. Speaking softly with less aggression caused them to read his character as a loving husband. On the other hand, his higher pitch and faster speech rate made his sound like a hater and an intense focused tone caused his character to be read as desperate.

Scene 2: Sibling


Walter gets into a heated argument with his sister Beneatha in the “Sibling” scene about their mother’s insurance settlement. Sidney Poitier’s 1961 Walter is perceived to be passionate, upset, and sarcastic. His use of pace, tone and inflection caused participants to read the sarcastic trait, and led them to perceive him as “snake-like” because he used a very slow pace dragging
out the vowels with a lower tone. The perception of upset was read through a heightened and fluctuated voice, full of highs and lows and lots of vocal variety. Jealousy and envy were identified by an intense voice and tone while inconsiderate, rude, and pushy were described by a loud, harsh, intense tone and a lot of loud yelling.

In contrast, Sean Comb’s Walter Younger (2008) was not well received by participants at all. At the top of their comments regarding his portrayal of the character was his poor acting ability. They described his voice as having “no truth,” and that he sounded like he was reading from a script instead of speaking to his wife Ruth or his sister Beneatha. Participants strongly noted him as a “terrible actor,” and said his speech was unfocused. Fast-talking, poor enunciation, and lazy speech defined the excited Younger. However, at one point, when he slowed down, his voice became forceful with a tilt on some words and this caused him to come across as manipulative.

Scene 2: Sibling


The argument between Beneatha and her brother Walter showed her to be a strong character. Diana Sands’ use of voice in the portrayal of Beneatha Younger was very important to focus group participants. They read her as a multi-faceted woman; determined, hard working, independent, and smart through her fast-talking, strong, direct voice. Her vocal performance was also described as focused, loud, aggressive, and forceful with a highly inflected tone. Vocal variety, pitch changes, and rhythmic paced created a “hard ass woman with an attitude,” but it was her emphasis on certain words that created the passion in her character. Sand’s showed Beneatha’s exasperation and frustration with her brother by a lot of exhaling, heaving breathing, and sighing. A direct tone with a “slight down feeling in the voice” made her seem selfish and
the rising inflection at the end of words and phrases coupled with a pushy, aggressive tone made her come across as insulting. Some informants called her mean and said she was “throwing vocal darts,” at her brother Walter. This was explained by an aggressive attacking tone and a speech rate that was so fast that she had to stop and take a breath.

Sanaa Lathan’s 2008 Beneatha was viewed differently. Participants thought she was arrogant and bougie, which was evidenced by a strong tone, high pitch, and rising inflection at the end of some phrases and sentences. Her attitude showed up through a loud strong voice, and low pitch, with a deep and condescending tone. A low degrading, detached, and aggressive tone explained Beneatha’s arrogance. Using clear articulation and a style that pronounced every syllable of every word, Beneatha appeared educated and her focused, direct tone contributed to her character’s ambitious spirit. However, there was a dreamer in her who used a slower, softer tone.

4.6 Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005)

Scene 1: Factory


In the first scene of the film entitled, “Factory,” Grandpa Joe is talking with his grandson Charlie. Grandpa is telling Charlie how the local chocolate factory where he used to work closed down. Jack Albertson plays Grandpa Bucket in the original version of the film released in 1971, and in the 2005 version of the film; David Kelly plays Grandpa.

Albertson’s use of vocal variety, pitch changes, elongated words and slower speech made his character come across as a great animated storyteller who is young-at-heart. His tired, non-aggressive voice and weak, raspy tone made participants perceive his portrayal of Grandpa as an
older man who was trying to make his grandson feel secure. He created a safe place by using a comforting, caring, calm, and lower tone. Informants believed he painted a picture vocally by using a lot of inflection and emotion. He had a very dramatic voice and sincere tone, incorporating pauses in the right places and putting emphasis on certain words to make his story come alive. However, it was the happy excitement and energy in his voice that made him sound young-at-heart. Although participants believed Grandpa loved his grandson and used his voice to engage Charlie in the story, they also felt that at times he sounded crazy and somewhat depressed. A sad, low, quiet tone suggested depression and a low, unobtrusive tone void of any excitement made some participants read Grandpa as a little crazy.

David Kelly’s portrayal of Grandpa Bucket (2005) was not as grandfatherly as Albertson’s character. Participants read Kelly’s slow speech and low tone as a child molester, and his raspy, scratchy, grating tone defined a creepy grandpa. A creaky, unenthusiastic, low energy voice with slow speech suggested he was old, while his sad, calm tone implied he was depressed. To one informant a central European accent signified he was Polish.

Scene 1: Factory

**Character: Charlie Bucket – Peter Ostrum (1971) and Freddie Highmore (2005).**

Charlie listens intently to his grandfather’s story about the closing of the chocolate factory. He’s a young boy, who clearly loves his Grandpa and hangs on Grandpa’s every word. Peter Ostrum plays Charlie in the early version of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) and Freddie Highmore plays Charlie in the 2005 version of the film. Tone was of particular interest to participants in defining the character Charlie Bucket. Informants believed Ostrum’s easy, carefree tone, and light pitch made him sound child-like. His use of a softer, hushed, and reserved tone showed him to be shy and the inquisitive/questioning tone was
evidence of his ambitious and optimistic traits. A clear sound and excited energy caused the
participants to deem him smart and attentive. On the other hand, Highmore, in the 20205 film,
portrayed the young boy as a “kid with a cool attitude.” Highmore’s use of proper speech, good
articulation, and strong pronunciation led participants to read Charlie as a child who didn’t sound
deprived, although the family was extremely poor. The British accent, good pronunciation, quick
pace, and specific inflected tone with a lot of vocal variety confirmed his cultural background.

**Scene 2: Bad Nut**

**Character: Julie Dawn Cole – Veruca Salt (1971) and Julia Winter (2005).**

Veruca Salt, played by Julie Dawn Cole, is called a “Bad Nut” in the original version of
*Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) because of her horrible attitude and blatant
disrespect for her father, who owns a peanut company. In the 1971 remake, *Charlie and the
Chocolate Factory*, Veruca is referred to as a “Bad Egg,” and played by Julia Winter.

Cole’s excited eagerness is evidenced by high pitched, fast-talking with an anxious,
enthusiastic, and energetic tone. She uses rising inflection at the end of her sentences to create an
obnoxious and annoying character. Participants defined her demanding characteristic as having a
loud, repetitive, obnoxious, pushy, and nasally tone, “one that grates on your nerves.” Her fast
aggressive tone shows her impatient nature. Cole uses loud fast speech coupled with a piercing
high pitch and disrespectful tone to make Veruca sound angry, crazy, disrespectful, devious, and
stuck up.

Winter’s Veruca in the 2005 film was equally a horrible child. She used a stern, calm,
direct, and forward tone to make the character come across as passive aggressive and sound
pushy and intimidating to her father. Loud fast yelling, and a higher tone provided evidence of a
bratty, selfish, and unappreciative little girl.
Scene 2: Bad Nut

Character: Roy Kinnear – Mr. Salt (1971) and James Fox (2005).

Mr. Salt, Veruca’s father tries to please his daughter, but she makes it nearly impossible for him to do so. Roy Kinnear plays her dad in the early version of the film, and James Fox portrays Mr. Salt in the 2005 film. Kinnear and Fox played the character Mr. Salt differently. Veruca and her father created contrasting characters and strong binary opposites. Informants read Kinnear’s Salt as loud and disorganized with an “out-of-control” voice, which made him sound like he was extremely stressed out and going crazy. His daughter Veruca annoyed and frustrated him, which was evidenced by a higher pitch and a tone that didn’t ring true to participants. Mr. Salt tried everything to get his daughter to calm down – even changing the tone of his voice and the way he spoke with her. At times, he tried using reason and a calm tone with Veruca, which led participants to say he had “a fake voice” and was soft, whiny, flat, and weak. Yet at other times, she was so rude and disrespectful to her father, that he was forced to use a loud and aggressive tone with her.

James Fox played Mr. Salt very differently. Participants perceived him as confident and sexy. The confidence was read through changes in his speech rate, a rhythmic pace and tone with a lot of pauses. Salt’s sexiness came through a low, deep, strong tone with swagger. His voice had a lot of bass in it and was said to be manly. The “he-doesn’t-care” perception was demonstrated through a voice that was not very loud, void of emotion, and lacked stress or tension. A slow, restricted and tight tone caused audiences to read the character as arrogant and stuck up. At times his voice seemed tenser and his ability to draw out and elongate some words led participants to deem him a man with an attitude. Finally, near the end of the scene his restricted voice and deep breath and heavy sigh signaled relief from his “Bad Nut” daughter.
Scene 3: Chewing Gum

**Character: Gene Wilder – Willy Wonka (1971) and Johnny Depp (2005).**

*Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) is the only children’s film pair analyzed in this study. In the original version of the film, Gene Wilder was Willy Wonka and Johnny Depp played the character in the 2005 version. Gene Wilder portrayed the chocolate factory owner as a weird, whimsical, animated man who was excited about life and a proud businessman.

Pitch and tone led participants to read Gene Wilder’s Wonka (1971) as weird and whimsical. They called him “fruity,” saying his tone was feminine, flirty, and exaggerated. Wilder used a lot of inflection, pitch changes, vocal variety, and a laughing tone to create the highly animated and excited candy factory owner. Wonka’s proud demeanor came across through a high-pitched bragging tone and his sarcasm was perceived through a nonchalant, doesn’t care attitude. As a weird man, he was perceived as being detached from the real world, which was evidenced through a soft, mellow, calm tone and further described as “a man who wasn’t always there.”

On the other hand, Johnny Depp portrayed Wonka as an eccentric, unstable, worried, and nervous man who got over excited and lacked confidence. The use of a nasal tone led participants to read Wonka as eccentric, and his smirk-y undertones suggested he was sarcastic. A high pitch, low energy, lack of emotion and vocal variety together with a hesitant and unsure tone made him come across as nervous and unstable; Wonka was fidgety and shaky all the time.

The vocal techniques described by participants that led them to understand specific characters were noted as critical features actors used in the portrayal of character. Differences in

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3 Although participants were encouraged to be open and honest in their responses, I acknowledge that the term “fruity” is crude and may be deemed offensive. Comments such as this were not encouraged.
the aural/vocal cues and techniques were important in understanding character because they were not reproduced through visual signs or signals. More specific analysis connecting character traits to certain vocal techniques is explored in the next chapter.
5 RESULTS

Findings from data gathered through three focus groups are presented in this chapter. Participants in each group experienced clips from an original film and a subsequent remake in three different ways. One of the focus groups screened clips from both sets of films as they were produced with aural elements alone. A second focus group watched a visual-only version of the same clips without any sound, and the third group experienced both visual and aural elements of the same clips. Discussions focused on participants’ reactions to content about the characters in the film clips. My goal was to determine whether audiences, represented by focus group participants, could articulate distinguishing vocal features between the characters playing the same role in a film and a remake of the same film through the actor’s vocal performance.

As described in Chapter 3, data from each group were sorted, organized, and coded. Participant comments were kept separate by original film and the subsequent remake and then organized by character, scene, and characteristic. Characteristics are the specific traits participants identified that created the characters, as they understood them, in the films. The characteristics named by the participants and the vocal techniques that supported them were charted. If participants named identical traits in the matched films, I eliminated those traits from the analysis because different vocal traits were not making a difference in those characters. For example, in The Thomas Crown Affair (1968), participants in the aural only group identified Thomas Crown as a “confident businessman,” those in the visual only group identified him as an “arrogant” and “confident businessman,” and those in the combined group said he was “arrogant” and “confident.” For this character, the traits of “confident,” “businessman,” and “arrogant” were eliminated because those traits were identified in all three groups, so they were not determined by voice alone. In the 1996 film The Preacher’s Wife, Dudley was deemed to be
a “funny” character by all three groups so the trait “funny” was eliminated from the analysis of this character.

All the remaining traits that were present in both matched films were included for analysis. Those remaining traits reveal instances where participants perceived a character differently from the same character in the matched film clips presumably because of some difference in the vocal portrayal by the actor. Participants in the aural only group described the character of Walter Younger as a dreamer, passionate, and persuasive in the 1961 version of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Visual only respondents said he was “calm,” “controlling,” “frustrated,” and “stressed out,” and those in the combined group labeled him as “inconsiderate,” “unappreciated,” and “desperate.” Since these traits created different character portrayals, they were taken into consideration in the analysis. Similarly, Grandpa Joe Bucket in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) was identified by the aural only group as a “very animated man” who was a “great storyteller” and “young at heart,” while respondents from the visual only group said he was a “tired old man” who was “ready to die,” and the combined group saw him as “crazy” and “depressed.” Because none of these traits was the same, all were included in the data I analyzed.

Although the following list of traits were identified as produced by the voice, there may be overlap of characteristics. For example, traits like aloof could also be classified as cold, calculating might function as manipulative, shy could be deemed timid, anxious could be categorized as excited or nervous, and irritated could be understood as agitated. I decided to keep these traits separate because they were responses by participants from different films, scenes, and characters. So, the context of the terms was relevant to participant understanding.
5.1 Character Traits Created Through Vocal Difference

The 72 different traits created specifically through vocal techniques are presented in the following section. Arranged alphabetically, each character trait is identified with a brief explanation followed by reference to the actor described by that trait, the role he or she played in the film, the film title, and its release date. This information is followed by a list of the major categories of vocal techniques the actor used to convey that trait, with at least two quotes from participants included as support for the claim I am making about the connection between the trait and the vocal technique or techniques perceived to have created the trait.

5.1.1 Abusive

Abusive characters are prideful, insult others with the intent of offending or hurting them, and refuse to show them any respect. Diana Sands, who played Beneatha Younger and Sidney Poitier who played her brother Walter Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961), used tone, pitch, inflection, volume, and emphasis to create an abusive characterization. One participant described the vocal techniques that created an aggressive Beneatha: “She was pushy and had an angry tone in her voice. At the end of some of her words, the pitch would go up and sometimes it would go down. When she was trying to emphasize a word or a point, her inflection would go up at the end of the phrase or word.” Another participant agrees, “His tone of voice was very rude and inconsiderate of his wife. He was headstrong in his beliefs and his tone of voice was loud and intense.”

5.1.2 Affluent

Affluent characters are wealthy, own nice things, and live in beautiful neighborhoods. Audrey Hepburn portrayed Sabrina Fairchild in the film Sabrina (1954) and Steve McQueen played the wealth Thomas Crown in The Thomas Crown Affair (1968). These two actors and
used a formal tone, speech rate, precise articulation, enunciation, and pronunciation to create the quality of affluence. Sabrina was perceived by one participant through her vocal skills as an upper class socialite, even though she was the chauffeur’s daughter: “Sabrina enunciates and pronounces her words very clearly and distinctly, so it’s easy to understand her. She especially enunciates ‘a’s and vowels.” Another participant noted McQueen’s portrayal of Crown: “He has good grammar, no regional accent and speaks slowly with a calm tone. He’s a little distant and not so friendly and his voice has a cold and unemotional even and calm tone.” Other informants agree: “His tone is formal and you can tell he’s used to being in power because he speaks slowly and clearly. He enunciates all his words.”

5.1.3 Agitated

Agitated characters are upset, disturbed, or angered. William Holden played David Larrabee in the 1954 version of *Sabrina* and Harrison Ford played Linus Larrabee in the 1995 remake. They both created agitated characters by adjusting their speech rate, speech pattern, volume, enunciation, fluency, and energy. One informant said Holden’s David Larrabee was clearly annoyed: “His tone of voice says he’s not sure why his brother is trying to set up an arranged marriage for him and he’s annoyed because he wants to keep living his carefree lifestyle. He was grumbling and really annoyed.” Linus Larrabee was perceived as agitated by another participant because the actor “used faster and more erratic speech patterns; nothing was even-paced. There was some ‘up’ energy in his sound—like something was bothering him. It was louder, but has some choppy phrasing that gives you a feeling of uneasiness.”

5.1.4 Aloof

Aloof characters are not very friendly and usually keep to themselves instead of interacting socially. Fluency, rate, pace, and tone are the vocal techniques Faye Dunaway used to
portray Vicki Anderson in the original version of *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) and Rene Russo used to depict the character of Catherine Banning in the 1999 remake of the same film. Two participants thought Faye Dunaway played Vicki Anderson as aloof in one of the scenes and described her portrayal as “ kinda monotone. She has a tone that is even-keeled. It’s a calm even pace.” Catherine Banning was described as aloof because “She has a lot of short answers, is very distant, and uses a lot of pauses and choppy pace.”

### 5.1.5 Ambitious

Ambitious characters are sometimes deemed pushy or aggressive and, at the very least, are considered assertive and persistent. Pierce Brosnan embodied Thomas Crown in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999), personifying the wealthy, ambitious playboy through, energy, fluency, inflection, and pitch. One informant said that Crown was persuasive because “he was more talkative, and the pitch goes up at the end of phrases and sentences. The pitch is a little curved.” A second participant said, “He sounds like he’s really driven and his voices is full of strength and tone.”

### 5.1.6 Amorous

Amorous characters are in love and show strong feelings of affection or sexual desire for another person in a romantic way. Julia Ormond’s depiction of Sabrina Fairchild in *Sabrina* (1995) used speech rate, tone, energy, and pitch to create a woman in love. One participant said that Sabrina’s voice showed her love for David because “she used a very soft speaking voice. It was slower and easy but with warm undertones. It can have some excited features and higher pitches in it. She’s excited to be in love.” Another participant said, “Her tone of voice when talking with him is soft, open, and welcoming. She speaks to him with a genuine-ness in her voice.”
5.1.7 Angry

Angry characters exhibit strong feelings of being upset or annoyed. Participants described five actors in the study as angry. In the film Sabrina, several characters were deemed angry including William Holden (1954) and Greg Kinnear (1995), both who played David Larrabee in the films and Harrison Ford, who portrayed Linus Larrabee, in the 1995 remake. Additionally, Sidney Poitier as Walter Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961); Sanaa Lathan as Beneatha Younger in the 2008 version of A Raisin in the Sun; and Courtney B. Vance as Reverend Henry Brougham in The Preacher’s Wife (1996) were also perceived as angry. These six actors, according to the participants, used rate, fluency, energy, articulation, tone, pitch, inflection, and emphasis to personify angry characters. William Holden’s portrayal of David Larrabee was described as, “attacking. He attacks his brother, talks fast, points and directs his anger at his brother. He yells at him to tell him about why he’s upset.” Regarding Harrison Ford’s David, one participant identified anger through specific vocal techniques:

He was loud and fast-talking. He punctuated words by clipping the words. Sometimes he just cut them off, like he was really trying to make a point. Very precise with his words and very definite. He knew what he wanted to say.

In A Raisin in the Sun, one participant perceived Sidney Poitier’s Walter Younger as very upset through his use of voice noting, “He had a heightened fluctuating voice with a lot of variety in the highs and lows.” Another participant said much the same thing about Beneatha Younger in that she “enunciated every word with very pointed articulation. She was articulating her words very clearly and emphasizing certain things that she wanted to make sure he heard. It was a loud and direct voice.” Courtney B. Vance’s Reverend Henry was a strong character, “His
tone of voice was tense and angry. He was very aggressive, strong and loud. Distressed, fast paced, and quick to answer.

5.1.8 Animated

Animated characters are full of movement, life, and energy. In Jack Albertson’s depiction of Grandpa Joe Bucket in the film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) and Gene Wilder’s portrayal of Willy Wonka in the same film, Albertson and Wilder created animated personas through the use of inflection, rate, tone, pitch, and vocal variety. One participant described the vocal skills of Jack Albertson that created Grandpa Joe: “He elongated his words and talked slowly so he could be understood.” Another participant echoed this comment, noting: “There were varied tones. Lots of highs and lows in his voice.” Gene Wilder’s Wonka was full of life, “He was all over the place and he used a lot of inflection in his voice. He sounded like he was always talking to kids.”

5.1.9 Anxious

Anxious characters are stressed, nervous, and worried about what may happen. They experience feelings of anxiety and are uneasy. Roy Kinnear, who depicted Mr. Salt in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), and Audra McDonald, who played Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008), both used the vocal techniques of volume, fluency, breath, and pauses to create anxious characters. Mr. Salt was described by one participant, as a man desperately trying to please his daughter: “He’s loud and out of control. He sounds disorganized and like he doesn’t know what’s going to happen next.” Another participant, said Audra McDonald’s 2008 Ruth Younger was very anxious: “She was breathing heavy and sighing a lot. There was a slight moan when she breathes out. She used a lower pitch tone of voice and spoke slowly”
5.1.10 British

A British accent may have various dialects associated with it, depending on the person’s origin. Freddie Highmore who played Charlie Bucket in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) and Pierce Brosnan who played Thomas Crown in The Thomas Crown Affairs (1999) both had British accents. One informant described the child actor’s accent as executed in this way: “Quick words with an up and down inflected tone. Speaks very proper and has very good articulation and pronunciation. Sounds like he should be wealthy.” In defining Pierce Brosnan’s Crown, another participant said, “He speaks slower, and chooses his words carefully. His words are closer to Standard English and he sounds really rich.”

5.1.11 Calculating

Calculating characters scheme, plan, and think carefully about how they may get what they want; their plans are shrewd and selfish. In Humphrey Bogart’s portrayal of Linus Larrabee in Sabrina (1954) and Sidney Poitier’s depiction of Walter Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961), both actors used pace, speech rate, and tone to construct calculating personas. The vocal techniques that created Humphrey Bogart’s portrayal of Linus Larrabee were described by one informant in this way: “He spoke slowly. He was choosing his words carefully. There was an even tone that didn’t change a lot. He had a smooth, even pace. “Another participant’s description of Poitier’s Walter said: “He was yelling at his sister and being aggressive – in her face). His tone of voice was forceful…the way he talked to her was under-handed.

5.1.12 Calm

Calm characters are generally quiet, easy going, and peaceful. Greg Kinnear’s David Larrabee in Sabrina (1968), Steve McQueen’s Thomas Crown in The Thomas Crown Affair (1968), and Audra McDonald’s 2008 Ruth Younger used the vocal techniques of volume, pace,
and tone to create their calm characters. One participant said Greg Kinnear’s vocal techniques defined David Larrabee: “He wasn’t yelling and keeping a calm and even pace in his voice. He’s not wild but more reserved.” Another participant, noted Thomas Crown’s (1968) calmness: “There was an easy sound in his voice. No tone changes, smooth talking, slow, even pace.” Audra McDonald’s Ruth was described in this way: “She spoke in a slow, easy tone. She was pretty quiet and didn’t have a lot to say.”

5.1.13 Cheerful

Cheerful characters are happy and light hearted; they appear to work to make everyone around them happy and upbeat. Cary Grant’s portrayal of Dudley in The Bishop’s Wife (1947) and Audrey Hepburn’s enactment of Sabrina in Sabrina (1954) depicted the quality of cheerfulness through tone, pitch, inflection, rhythm, and pace. One participant described Dudley’s voice as having “a rising and a bright tone.” Because of the vocal techniques, another participant classified Sabrina as cheerful because of her “light and higher pitch with playfulness and happiness, and there’s an easy, light rhythm and pace in her voice.”

5.1.14 Childlike

Childlike characters are innocent and trusting, and Peter Ostrum conveyed this trait in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) to personify Charlie Bucket and Audrey Hepburn as Sabrina in Sabrina (1954). They created childlike personas by using pitch and tone, as one participant suggested: “Charlie was childlike. He had a lighter voice and it was very easy. He had a light, carefree sound and attitude.” Noting Audrey Hepburn’s Sabrina, another participant said, “She seemed very innocent. She sounded like she was trusting and spoke with a light tone. She also took her time and had an easy going sound.”
5.1.15 Cold

Cold characters are less comforting and do not put much effort into trying to help another feel better or less worried about something. David Kelly’s Grandpa Joe in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) and Audra McDonald’s Ruth Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (2008) created cold characters through vocal variety, pitch, and low tone. One participant as a result of his “low, raspy tone” perceived Grandpa Joe’s voice as cold. “He didn’t have a lot of tones in his voice. His voice wasn’t warm at all.” Another participant thought Audra McDonald’s Ruth “didn’t have too much to say and when she did speak it was in a low tone. She didn’t want to argue…she just wanted to keep going.”

5.1.16 Common

Common characters are not well off economically or powerful and have little influence on people and events. Roy Kinnear personified Mr. Salt in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) and David Niven played Bishop Henry in The Bishop’s Wife (1947) and they both created a perception of commonness through the use of volume and a flat tone. One informant described Mr. Salt as a commoner in the film as a result of a tone that “sounds weak and flat, like he has nothing. It’s a soft sound. He should speak up—he’s very whiny.” Another participant described David Niven’s Bishop Henry,

There was a regional/local accent that made it seem like he was a hard worker. Not using big words, just a plain man that was not very well off. You can hear the struggle in his voice. Not very well off, had normal regular speech. He doesn’t use language that is wealthy or rich – just a plain tone, and pace. He was just a normal man.
5.1.17 Confident

Confident characters are strong, generally have a positive outlook on life, and believe they can accomplish anything. Four actors depicted confidence in this study’s films: Faye Dunaway as Vicki Anderson in the 1968 version of The Thomas Crown Affair, Rene Russo as Catherine Banning in its 1999 remake, James Fox playing Mr. Salt in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005), and Denzel Washington as the angel Dudley in The Preacher’s Wife (1996). These actors used rhythm, pace, tone, energy, enunciation, vocal variety, and pitch to create confident characters. Through the voice of Faye Dunaway, Vicki Anderson was perceived by one participant to be very poised, “She’s confident and has a strong voice with a variety of tones—highs and lows.” Another participant called Rene Russo’s portrayal of Catherine Banning in the 1999 remake “very confident” and justified the perception as the result of her “blunt, short answers. Her voice was not pitchy. It had a direct tone. Not a lot of pitch changes.” One participant defined Mr. Salt, through his vocal techniques: “There is a rhythm and swagger in his tone. The pace changes with a lot of pauses. His tone of voice was very professional and business like - very straight forward and professional.” Denzel Washington’s Dudley was described in this way, “He speaks in a very calm voice and very matter of fact. His tone said he was serious about business.”

5.1.18 Crazy

Crazy characters are unpredictable, speak impulsively, and act unpredictably. This term was not necessarily used in connection with mental illness but in connection with a flawed person who was acting erratically. Roy Kinnear took on the role of Mr. Salt in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) and Jack Albertson and David Kelly both played Grandpa Joe in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) and the subsequent remake, Charlie and the
Chocolate Factory (2005) and primarily used volume to portray an irrational and crazy character. One participant talked about Roy Kinnear’s Mr. Salt, who he described as having loud and out-of-control behavior: “He sounds disorganized and like he doesn’t know what’s going to happen next.” Another participant noted how differently Jack Albertson portrayed a crazy character, “He sounded like he was going to do something… His voice was low and he talked too slow.” David Kelly’s Grandpa Joe was similar, “He had a quiet tone in his voice… not too excited, but those are the one you should watch out for.”

5.1.19 Defeated

Defeated characters come across as if they have lost or failed at something. Ruby Dee’s Ruth Younger in the 1961 version of A Raisin in the Sun, Audra McDonald’s Ruth Younger in the 2008 remake of the same movie, and David Niven’s Bishop Henry Brougham in The Bishop’s Wife (1947) all made use of breathing techniques, low tone, energy, and pitch to personify defeated characters. On informant said Ruby Dee’s vocal skills shaped the picture of the defeated housewife: “It was her tone of voice that created the completely defeated Ruth. She was literally dragging around the room, and her voice was dragging down with her. Her tone was low and her voice was soft, and so shaky. She was done.” Audra McDonald’s portrayal of Ruth Younger showed the character at the end of her rope: “Ruth was breathing heavy and sighing a lot, and there was a slight moan when she breathes out. She was so defeated. I felt sorry for her, the way she was talking and moving.” Another participant noted the use of breath in the creation of the defeated Bishop Henry in The Bishop’s Wife (1947) and how “his voice sounds like he gave up with one big deep breath out. His voice had sadness in the sound. It was low and quiet.”
5.1.20 Defensive

Defensive characters are guarded and generally in a protective mode or restrained frame of mind. In *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996), the defensive character of Reverend Henry Brougham, who came to life through actor Courtney B. Vance, and Sanaa Lathan’s portrayal of Beneatha Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008) were created through the use of energy, volume, rate, and enunciation. The Reverend’s defensiveness was defined by one participant as the result of the “fight and tension in his voice; it was loud and faster in some places—with some phrases. But, he enunciates well.” Regarding Sanaa Lathan’s portrayal of Beneatha, “There was a sassy twist in her voice; some words go up at the end when she talks.”

5.1.21 Determined

Determined characters do not let anyone or anything stop them from achieving their goals and are certain and focused in their efforts. Diana Sands, who played Beneatha Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and Denzel Washington who played Dudley in *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996) used volume, strong tone, inflection, vocal variety, pitch, rhythm, and pace to create determined characters. One participant noted Sand’s vocal techniques in the portrayal of Beneatha: “That was a very focused and direct voice. She’s so strong. She’s loud, aggressive, and sometimes very forceful. Nothing was going to stop her. A lot of strong inflection. And, she was relatable.” Another participant agreed with: “Yeah, she had a very strong tone of voice with a lot of variety in her pitch; it was all over the place. There were a lot of highs and lows and in-betweens in her voice. She also had a rhythm and pace to her language. She was not afraid to say what she wanted to say. Her voice was very direct and focused. You knew when she was talking to you.” Participants thought Denzel Washington’s Dudley was very professional, “His tone of
voice said he was taking his job seriously. He was more technical in the way he spoke and went about getting things done.”

5.1.22 Distressed

Distressed characters are very uneasy and uncomfortable. Loretta Young embodied a distressed Julia Brougham in The Bishop’s Wife (1947), as did Ruby Dee and Audra McDonald in their portrayals of Ruth Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961) and (2008). These three actresses used tone, and pitch to create distressed characters. One participant noted the vocal performance of Loretta Young, “Julia was a weak, nervous mess. She had a shaky, higher pitched voice. It was strained and had a stressed-out tone. There was a lot of tension in her voice. It was a quivering and unsettled tone.” Another participant though Ruby Dee was totally stressed out, “She didn’t have too much to say and when she did speak it was in a low tone. She didn’t want to argue…she just wanted to keep going.” And of Audra McDonald’s Ruth, one participant thought, “She had a lower pitch and tone of voice. Her sounds dragged as much as she did. She spoke very slowly.”

5.1.23 Dull

Dull characters are boring and uninteresting. Participants defined this trait by actors’ use of energy, pitch, tone, inflection, and pace. Humphrey Bogart’s voice crafted Linus Larrabee in the 1954 version of the film Sabrina and Faye Dunaway played Vicki Anderson in The Thomas Crown Affair (1968). As a result, one participant talked about Bogart’s Linus and stated, “He had no feeling or emotion—no highs and lows or a lot of inflection in his voice. It was a flat tone and slower pace in his speech.” Of Faye Dunaway, another participant said her “tone is even-keeled and a little monotone. She has a calm even pace.”
5.1.24 Eccentric

Eccentric characters act in strange or unusual ways and are likely to shift their thinking or actions quickly. They usually do not follow the conventional way of doing things and constantly deviate from the norm. Johnny Depp interpreted Willy Wonka in the 2005 version of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* using inflection, pitch, tone, rhythm, and energy to channel an eccentric Willy Wonka. One participant noted Johnny Depp’s vocal practices in his portrayal of the character and said: “He uses lots of voice inflection and a high pitch. He sounded unsure and hesitant and unsure of his products. He’s not as loud and excited. His voice didn’t change much.” Another participant described Willy Wonka’s voice as “fruity light, and airy.” One other informant said “His voice sounds nasally. He’s a quirky kinda guy and you never know what he’s going to say next. His voice has a little jerkiness to it.”

5.1.25 Emotional

Emotional characters have intense feelings about something and then react strongly. This trait is defined by several main vocal techniques including pitch, volume, vocal variety, inflection, tone, and pace or speech rate. One of the participants described Audrey Hepburn’s portrayal of Vicki Anderson in the 1968 version of *The Thomas Crown Affair* as a result of the “highs and lows” in her voice as well as “a lot of pitch changes.” One informant said the character David Larrabee, portrayed by William Holden in *Sabrina* (1954), was an emotional character resulting from “a lot of tension in his voice. It was very loud, and there were a lot of highs and lows.” Another participant noted Courtney B. Vance’s Reverend Henry Brougham as a, “Very emotional man with a lot of high pitches and low pitches. He had a lot of bass in his voice and a very serious tone.”
5.1.26 Exasperated

Exasperated characters are frustrated, irritated, and annoyed. Characters who were perceived as exasperated were David Niven as Bishop Henry in *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947), Ruby Dee as Ruth Younger in the 1961 version of *A Raisin in the Sun*, and Audra McDonald as Ruth in the 2008 remake of the same film. All of these actors used pitch, breathing techniques, and speech rate to create exasperated characters. For example, one informant talked about David Niven’s use of breath to craft the Bishop: “He had a higher pitch with a lot of heaving sighing. His voice sounds like he gave up with a big deep breath out.” Another participant, said that Ruby Dee’s Ruth Younger “had a low tone; it was soft. Her voice was shaky. She was done!” This participant similarly noted that Beneatha Younger, in the same film, also used breath to construct the character, “She was speaking very fast, and she would sigh at the end of her sentences even though she had more to say. She was releasing a lot of frustration. Exhaling a lot.” Another participant had a similar description of the 2008 Ruth Younger: “She was breathing heavily and sighing a lot, and she had a slight moan when she breathed out. You could hear her frustration and she didn’t even have to speak any words.”

5.1.27 Excited

Excited characters have a lot of energy and enthusiasm and are eager to do something and get things moving. The use of pitch, rhythm, pace, energy, tone, speech rate, breath, enunciation, and fluency to create excited characters is evident in Audrey Hepburn’s personification of Sabrina Fairchild in the film *Sabrina* (1954) and in Julia Ormond’s portrayal of the same character in 1995. Other examples of excited characters included Sean Combs’ portrayal of Walter Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008), Julie Dawn Cole’s version of Veruca Salt in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), and Gene Wilder’s Willy Wonka in the same film.
One participant talked about Audrey Hepburn’s Sabrina, “She got anxious and started talking fast with a high pitch. She’s really enthusiastic and her words go up at the end of her sentences.” Of Julia Ormond’s portrayal of Sabrina, one participant said, “She has a light and airy voice. It has a higher pitch with a slightly excited sound. Slightly excited has more high tones and there is a rhythm and beat to it that goes up from time to time. It’s easy and light.” Another informant referenced Sean Combs’s portrayal of Walter Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008) as created through speech that was “very fast with a lot of energy. He was not enunciating his words very well when he got excited. He can have lazy speech.” One informant described Julie Dawn Cole’s Veruca Salt, “She is so hyper! She got so excited talking to her father, she was almost gasping for air.” In describing Gene Wilder’s vocal performance as Willy Wonka in the 1971 film, another participant said he was “very excited” and explained he perceived him as such because “he’s talking a lot and very fast. He was laughing with a high pitched tone and some gasps.”

5.1.28 Flirtatious

Flirtatious characters show their sexual attraction toward someone, but the other person may not take their behavior seriously. Steve McQueen as Thomas Crown in the original 1968 version of *The Thomas Crown Affair*, Pierce Brosnan as Crown in the 1999 remake, and Julia Ormond as Sabrina in *Sabrina* (1995) all were perceived to be flirtatious. These three actors used a rhythmic speech pattern, pace, tone, inflection, and pitch to construct flirtatious personalities. One participant read Thomas Crown as flirty with Vicki Anderson in the 1968 film because “he used a higher pitch when he’s trying to flirt. He speaks slower. This is a different voice than his business voice. Softer inflection and more relaxed. Not as clipped. Sounds more approachable—more relaxed tone. Softer voice and slower rate of speech.” Another participant indicated that Pierce Brosnan used similar vocal techniques, such as a lighter sounding tone with an easy, even
pace when flirting with Catherine Banning in the remake. In describing Greg Kinnear’s portrayal of David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1995) one participant described it in a similar manner: “There is a less whiny, lower tone, smooth talker with a playfulness in his voice. The pitch and tone in his voice would go up at the end of his sentences—almost sounds like he’s asking a question. But not as high pitched if he was actually asking a question.”

### 5.1.29 Frank

Frank characters speak and behave honestly, and Denzel Washington used tone, fluency, and pauses to create a perception of frankness in his portrayal of Dudley in *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996). One participant referenced Washington’s Dudley in the film as the result of a “strong and direct tone. Not too serious, but has a good, easy flow with not a lot of pauses or hesitation. There’s a reassuring tone that is calm but gently pushing you in a certain direction. Focused and directed to lead you a certain way. He’s un-rattled—nothing bothers him or gets under his skin.” Other participants agreed saying, “He is very direct and focused but not in a strong way. His voice sounds serious, but he’s calm and not so pushy.”

### 5.1.30 Frantic

Frantic characters exhibit a lot of fear, and nervous energy. Greg Kinnear’s depiction of David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1995) and Johnny Depp’s depiction of Willy Wonka in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) were both perceived as frantic because of breathing and speech rate. One participant labeled Kinnear’s David Larrabee as frantic because of his “fast talking and heavy breathing and fast breathing. There were a lot of sighs in his sentences when he talked.” Johnny Depp’s Willy Wonka was also described as frantic, “He had a lot of jittery energy – it was jerky energy. It was the kind that makes you nervous. His speech was fast and jerky.”
5.1.31 Frustrated

Frustrated and irritated characters are annoyed, angry, and upset because something is not going their way. Ruby Dee’s who played Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and for her performance as Julia Brougham in *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996), Whitney Houston used pitch, tone, and speech rate to create frustrated characters. One informant described Ruby Dee’s portrayal of Ruth Younger saying, “She had a lower pitch and tone to her voice. She sounded so tense and annoyed and her voice was tight. It sounded like she was clenching her teeth.” Another participant agreed, “Her voice was low and grumbly. She had a lower pitch and tone to her voice.” One participant said Whitney Houston’s Julia sounded extremely frustrated because of the “screechy high pitch” of her voice. “It was a hysterical pitch and a very tense voice. She had a strained sound, talking fast and unsettling tone.”

5.1.32 Genuine

Genuine characters are sincere and honest. Denzel Washington’s Dudley, and Sean Combs’ portrayal of Walter Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008) were both perceived as genuine. Washington’s voice was described as “Caring and concerned. That’s how Dudley sounded. His tone was very calm and reassuring.” Combs’ Walter Younger was perceived as genuine because “he had a lower and sweeter voice with more compassion. He sounded kind.”

5.1.33 Haughty

Haughty characters exhibit blatant and strong pride in themselves and believe they are better, smarter, or more important than others. Humphrey Bogart who played Linus Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1954) and Steve McQueen portrayed Thomas Crown in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) both used tone and pitch to create the haughty characters. One participant said Humphrey Bogart was full of himself, “He was too busy making money in front of his executives. His voice
is direct and straightforward. He spoke with conviction and clarity and in a very direct way. His
tone was clear, and he spoke with a pitch that was even and calm.” Another informant said,
“Steve McQueen made Crown a very cocky character through the “higher tone, or pitch in his
voice. It was a more formal tone of voice.”

5.1.34 Helpless

Helpless characters speak softly, are weak, and lack determination. David Niven played
Bishop Henry Brougham in The Bishop’s Wife (1947) was seen as helpless. He used tone, speech
rate, pace, volume, and energy to create the helpless Bishop Henry Brougham. One participant
said Niven’s voice really made the Bishop sound weak, “His lower tone of voice—it makes him
sound so helpless. There was some uneasiness in his voice. He was praying real slowly, and it
should have been giving him strength, but his voice was weak and soft and not very loud. You
could barely hear him.” Another participant agreed about Bishop Henry’s use of voice
techniques to create helplessness: “His tone was soft, but hopeful. His speech was slow and his
voice was weak.”

5.1.35 Humorous

Humorous characters try to amuse and entertain others. For his portrayal of the angel
Dudley in the 1996 film The Preacher’s Wife, Denzel Washington applied rhythm, speech
patterns, vocal variety, inflection, pitch, tone, and speech rate to create a humorous character.
Humphrey Bogart played Linus Larrabee in Sabrina (1954), and Johnny Depp who portrayed
Willy Wonka in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) both used pitch to create funny
characters. One participant described Dudley as a jokester saying, “even though the angel wasn’t
trying to be funny, he said and did things that were funny.” Another informant agrees and said,
“He had a sing-songy tone with a lot of changes and variety in pitch. He put emphasis on certain
words and phrases. His voice may go up at times and down sometimes, depending on what he’s joking about.” Of Humphrey Bogart’s Linus, one informant described his voice, “He had a light tone, higher pitches with a calm and even pace. There was a playful sound in his voice…not too fast.” One participant called Depp’s Wonka “Joke-y, there was a smile in his voice. The pitch was light and funny.”

5.1.36 Immature

Immature characters are not fully developed or grown; there is something that is not yet complete. Greg Kinnear’s portrayal of David Larrabee in Sabrina (1995) and Johnny Depp’s Willy Wonka in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) relied on the use of tone and pitch to create immature personas. One participant said Kinnear’s voice defined David Larrabee: “He had a whiny and weak-sounding voice. He sounds younger, and the voice is lighter and has no depth.” Describing Johnny Depp’s Wonka, another participant said, “He’ kinda goofy sounding. The tone of his voice was nasally and childlike. He didn’t sound like a businessman who would own a factory. His tone was not serious at all.”

5.1.37 Impatient

Impatient characters are anxious, restless, and short tempered. To create impatient little girls, Julie Dawn Cole and Julia Winter used speech rate, energy, and tone in their portrayals of Veruca Salt in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005). Of Cole’s Veruca, one informant said her voice made her sound like a strong-willed kid: “She talks fast and won’t listen. She has a very aggressive tone of voice.” Another participant, described Winter’s Veruca saying, “Her voice is so aggressive and pushy. She’s a fast-talked and will not let her father get a word in. Her pitch is high and her tone is too pushy.”
5.1.38 Independent

Independent characters are self-reliant, strong, and refuse to be under anyone’s control. Faye Dunaway’s version of Vicki Anderson in the original version of *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), Renee Russo’s Catherine Banning in the 1999 remake of the film, and Diana Sands portrayal of Beneatha Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) used tone, vocal variety, inflection, and pitch to create a perception of independent women. One participant noted the strength of Faye Dunaway, “She had a strong clear voice. It was direct and focused and to the point.” Of Renee Russo’s Catherine, another informant similarly observed, “She sounds independent. A strong voice with a lot of variety and inflection.” Another participant agrees about the strength of Sand’s Beneatha, “She is very forward with her voice. Her tone is direct and in-your-face. She uses inflection like a knife and her voice will cut. She did not back down to her brother but spoke to him with a clear strong voice. She was not afraid.”

5.1.39 Industrious

Industrious characters are hard workers and take their positions or jobs seriously by applying themselves and doing whatever is necessary to get things accomplished. For Sands’ role of Beneatha Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and Rene Russo’s Catherine Banning in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999) both actresses used tone, vocal variety, pitch, rhythm, and pace to create an industrious characters. One participant talked about the voice of Beneatha Younger in defining the industrious nature of her character, “She had a very strong tone of voice with a lot of variety in her pitch. It was all over the place. There were a lot of highs, lows, and in-betweens in her voice. She also had a rhythm and pace to her language. She was not afraid to say what she wanted to say. Her voice was very direct and focused. You knew when she was talking to you.” Referencing Russo’s professional tone as Catherine Banning insurance investigator, another
informant said, “She’s got a professional sound in her voice like she’s about business. Her tone is
direct but calm with a lot of pitch changes and inflection. You couldn’t back away from her
voice.”

5.1.40 **Intimidating**

Intimidating characters try to demean others or make them feel scared, uneasy, or
uncomfortable. They put people down in order to elevate themselves. Julia Winter’s intimidating
Veruca Salt in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) and Sidney Poitier’s Walter Younger
came to life through the use of such vocal techniques as strong tone and energy. One participant
described Veruca’s voice in creating a bully, “She kept a calm, but stern tone. She would speak
directly, never holding back her words. It was like she was always ‘in-your-face’ but not
physically in your face. She was in your face with her voice.” Describing Poitier’s Walter,
another informant said, “He’s loud and fast-talking voice with a very aggressive tone. He has a
pushy tone of voice and directs a lot of energy in his words.”

5.1.41 **Irritated**

Irritated characters are aggravated and annoyed because something is bothering them.
Diana Sands who played Beneatha Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961) and Whitney Houston
who portrayed Julia Brougham in *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996) both used pitch, speech rate, and
tone to create irritated characters. One informant said Sands had “a pushy, angry tone in her
voice. At the end of some of her words, the pitch would go up and sometimes it would go down.
When she was trying to emphasize a word or a point, her inflection would go up at the end of the
phrase or word.” Another participant said Whitney Houston created a frustrated wife with the
“screechy high pitch” of her voice: “It was a hysterical pitch, a very tense voice. Strained sound,
talking fast and an unsettling tone.”
5.1.42 Jealous

Jealous characters are hostile to anyone they think may have an upper hand or advantage over them. David Niven who played Bishop Henry in *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947) and Courtney B. Vance who took on the role in *The Preacher’s Wife*, the 1996 remake both used tone, and volume to exhibit their envy toward Dudley. One informant said Niven’s use of voice was important in creating the Bishop because “he had a defensive tone with some aggressive undertones. There was some tension with angry undertones, and his voice sounds tense and restricted like he was holding back but wanted to explode with a loud angry and aggressive sound at Dudley. He didn’t want to lose to him.” Of Courtney B. Vance’s Reverend, another participant said, “His tone of voice was deep and angry. He was really annoyed and yells, “You’re trying to move in on my family! He had an intense tone of voice.”

5.1.43 Loving

Loving characters are affectionate and kind toward others, easily expressing their care, concern, and empathy. Loving characters were played by Audrey Hepburn as Sabrina Fairchild in *Sabrina* (1954), David Niven as Bishop Brougham in *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947), Whitney Houston as the reverend’s wife Julia in *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996), Sean Combs as Walter Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008), and William Holden as David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1954). These five actors all used the vocal techniques of tone, pace, speech rate, inflection, pitch, volume, and energy to create loving characters. For example, one participant described Audrey Hepburn’s use of voice to portray Sabrina Fairchild in this way, “Her voice reaches out to you to bring calm, peace, or health. Whatever you may need. There was a lot of inflection in her tone that shows care and concern.” Another participant believed David Niven’s portrayal of the 1947 Bishop was loving because “he had a lower, softer tone and a slower pace. He draws
out the words and kind of elongates them.” Of Houston’s Julia, one participant read her as a character full of love and compassion because “she was yelling, she was yelling softly—soft pitch and soft tone. Even though she was yelling, there was a seriousness in her voice.” This same participant also noted that Sean Combs’s use of voice showed him to be a loving husband: “He was talking slower with a softer, less aggressive tone. His voice was not so ‘in-your-face’ although he was direct, it was a quieter, softer tone.” William Holden’s David Larrabee was perceived as loving too. “His tone of voice shows his love and care for her…deep, kind, smooth. He sounds more emotional and sentimental and gentle.”

5.1.44 Manipulative

Manipulative characters are cunning people who try to take advantage of others through devious or calculating control. Julia Winter’s Veruca Salt in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) and Harrison Ford’s Linus Larrabee in Sabrina (1995), and Sidney Poitier’s Walter Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961) used volume, tone and energy to create manipulative characters. One participant described how Julia Winter used her voice almost as a physical tool of intimidation because “she kept a calm but stern tone. She would speak directly, never holding back her words. It was like she was always ‘in-your-face’ but not physically in your face. She was in your face with her voice.” Another informant described Harrison Ford’s Linus saying, “His tone of voice says he’s trying to trick his brother into believing in this arranged marriage. He’s trying to make it sound like its no big deal. He has a tone that is straight forward, and dark. He sounds criminal.” Sidney Poitier created a manipulative Walter, “His tone of voice seemed very pushy. His voice was loud, and intense and he was yelling at his wife. He sounded abusive with his wife.”
5.1.45 Mean

Mean characters are unkind and relentless in attacking others. Diana Sands who played Beneatha Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and Sean Combs who portrayed Walter Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008) created mean characters through their use of speech rate, energy, and breath. One participant said Beneatha used her voice to be cruel, uncaring, and nasty to her brother:

She was speaking fast with anger and aggression in her tone. Her voice sounded like she was attacking him. It was like she was pushing or throwing vocal darts at him. She was talking so fast she had to stop and take a breath.

Describing Comb’s Walter, another participant said, “He is loud, rude, obnoxious. He used a very high volume and higher pitch and was talking fast. There was a lot of aggression in his voice. He was throwing his voice at everyone – especially Beneatha like it was a dagger and he wanted to kill her.”

5.1.46 Mischievous

Mischievous characters are devious, tricky, and out to cause others a lot of trouble. Audrey Hepburn, who depicted Sabrina Fairchild in *Sabrina* (1954) and Julia Winter who played Veruca Salt in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) used tone, inflection, pitch, fluency, pauses, and emphasis to create mischievous personalities. As one participant explained, Audrey Hepburn’s use of vocal techniques constructed a woman who was up to no good through:

She had a reserved tone that sounds like there’s a lot of inflection—ups and downs in pitch. The sound goes up slightly at the end of her sentences, but it’s a softer sound and nothing harsh or aggressive. There’s a kind of ‘hide-and-sit-back-and-watch tone, which is pulled back and reserved. There is some hesitancy and some pauses in her speech.
Another informant talked about Winter’s voice in playing Veruca, “Her tone of voice is lower and quieter, and she didn’t have to scream to get what she wanted. She spoke quietly, but with a knife in her mouth.”

5.1.47 Mysterious

Mysterious characters instill curiosity in some and wonder in others. Both Rene Russo, as Catherine Banning in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999), and Audrey Hepburn, as Sabrina Fairchild in *Sabrina* (1954), used breath, tone, pace, pitch, and inflection to portray characters who impart a mysterious quality. As one informant remarked about Rene Russo’s vocal skills creating the mysterious Catherine Banning, “She had an airy, low, and smooth voice. It was breathy and a lot of gasps before she says a word.” Hepburn’s Sabrina was also perceived as mysterious. One participant said the vocal techniques of Audrey Hepburn made Sabrina sound as if she was trying to conceal something:

Her tone goes lower and she talks slower when she’s trying to hide something and not reveal much about herself. It’s a softer and slower pace. The tone is easy and even. It’s a reserved tone, like there’s something she wants to hide.

5.1.48 Nerdy

Nerdy characters are generally socially awkward individuals; Greg Kinnear as David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1995) and Gene Wilder in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) both used pitch and tone to sound nerdy. One participant said Kinnear’s voice crafted him as an awkward man: “He didn’t have a very deep or mature voice. It was childlike – a lighter voice with a higher pitch. He sounds like a nerd.” Another informant talked about Gene Wilder’s Wonka, “This guy is just too goofy. He sounds like he wears pants that are too short. He doesn’t sound like a businessman.”
5.1.49 Nervous

Nervous characters are worried, shaky, and afraid of what might happen. Such characters were created by Loretta Young as Julia Brougham in *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947), Greg Kinnear as David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1995), Audra McDonald as Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008), and Johnny Depp as Willy Wonka in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005). These actors used vocal techniques such as tone, pitch, inflection, breathing, volume, energy, and pauses to convey a nervous quality in their characters. One participant described Julia Brougham as scared because “she has a low tone, shaky, and stressed sound by breathing heavy and a lot of gasps.” Greg Kinnear’s vocal techniques created a nervous David Larrabee through:

A shaky voice that didn’t sound stable. He was stuttering and questioning himself. He didn’t have an even tone in his voice. The words were not flowing out easily—he was kind of stumbling over some of his words. Words were breaking up and he was taking a long time to get his thoughts out. Uncertainty and uneasiness and a shaky tone in his voice.

Audra McDonald’s portrayal of Ruth Younger in 2008 made her sound very fearful because “with one word or small phrase, the pitch goes up and down. She has a shaky voice. It sounds like she’s trembling inside.”

5.1.50 Obnoxious

Obnoxious characters are difficult for others to be around. They constantly offend, annoy, and disgust other people. To create obnoxious characters, William Holden, as David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1954), Julie Dawn Cole, as Veruca Salt in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) and Sanaa Lathan as Beneatha Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008) used the vocal techniques of resonance, pauses, fluency, energy, speech rate, volume, and vocal variety to
suggest their obnoxiousness. One participant remarked that Cole created an insufferable little girl because “she had a nasally high-pitched tone. Very persistent with no pauses in her speech. She talks too fast.” Another participant agreed noting, “She repeats her words over and over. She’s loud, obnoxious, and pushy. And she won’t listen and talks fast. She has a nasally tone—like she’s talking through her nose. Just annoying!” William Holden’s David Larrabee was perceived in the 1954 film to be obnoxious, “He asks too many questions too fast. He was talking fast and loud. All his words were running together because he was talking so fast and was upset. Loud. He was yelling loudly to gain respect and trying to make a scene.” Referencing Sanaa Lathan’s Beneatha Younger, one participant said, “The way she talked to her brother... she talked down to him. Her tone was very condescending and degrading. Her tone was detached, deeper, louder. It was like she was above him. She had a ‘I’m-better-than-you’ attitude. Her tone was harsh and abrupt. Another participant noted Julie Dawn Cole’s Veruca, “Her voice sounds loud, high-pitched, and she was talking fast. She kept talking and talking and would not stop… She kept talking about what she wanted in a rambling tone. Her voice sounded like she was throwing daggers at her father and that she knew if she kept talking, she would get her way. She talked a lot.”

5.1.51 Old

Age is an important factor in defining characters and roles in films. Both Jack Albertson as Grandpa Joe Bucket in the original Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) and David Kelly as Grandpa Joe in the 2005 version of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory used vocal devices such as breath, tone, energy, pace, and speech rate to support the image of older characters. Noting Albertson’s vocal qualities one participant said he created an old man because “his voice was raspy and weak. Not very strong or aggressive.” Another participant, said David
Kelly’s use of voice was important to define Grandpa and highlight his relationship with his grandson in the 2005 version of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, “He talks slower; he is not as enthusiastic a storyteller as in the first version.”

### 5.1.52 Optimistic

Optimistic characters believe that good is all around and will happen to them. Optimistic qualities were conveyed by Audrey Hepburn as Sabrina in *Sabrina* (1954) and by Peter Ostrum as Charlie Bucket in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971). Both actors used inflection, pitch, tone, and pace to create optimistic identities in the characters they portrayed. One participant perceived that Audrey Hepburn’s vocal techniques created a positive and hopeful Sabrina in that “she had a high and light tone of voice and sometimes the pitch goes up at the end of the sentence—like she’s looking forward to something and is waiting. Very positive, light and even tone and pace.” Another informant noted Peter Ostrum’s Charlie stating, “His voice goes up at the end of his sentences. This goes along with his curiosity. He had a “questioning” tone in his voice, but it was very positive.

### 5.1.53 Overweight

Overweight characters are heavy or fat, exemplified by William Holden’s David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1954). Participants believed he was overweight because of the vocal techniques of tone and breath. One participant perceived that David Larrabee was heavy set or “portly” from his voice. “He sounded like he had a big round stomach, heavy and weighty. There was some sloppiness in his voice, like he was having a hard time talking because his breathing was heavy.”
5.1.54 Passionate

Passionate characters are not afraid to express their emotions or feelings strongly. Jack Albertson who played Grandpa Joe in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), Diana Sands’ portrayal of Beneatha Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961), and Sidney Poitier’s portrayal of Walter Younger in the same film were all seen as passionate because of their use of the vocal techniques of emphasis, inflection, speech rate, energy, volume, tone, and pitch. One informant Albertson’s created a passionate character, “His tone of voice shows that he loves telling stories. He draws out his words and tries to make the story sound interesting by using a lot of inflection. He also puts a lot of emotion into what he’s telling Charlie. It sounded like he was painting a picture with his voice – lots of inflection and emotion.” Another participant described Sands’ passion use of voice created also created a very passionate woman as a result of her “strong voice with a lot of emphasis on certain words when she was trying to make a point. There’s lots of character and strength in her tone.” Observing Sidney Poitier’s voice, a passionate Walter Younger was crafted through a similar kind of emphasis and energy; “He put emphasis on the first word over every sentence. He was fast-talking with a lot of energy and can get loud sometimes when he’s trying to make a point. He had a very fluctuated voice.”

5.1.55 Patient

Patient characters stay calm even when they have been waiting for a long time for something or have to deal with difficult problems or people. Audrey Hepburn as Sabrina Fairchild in *Sabrina* (1954) and Humphrey Bogart in the same film both used speech rate, energy, tone, and pace to create a patient persona. Of Audrey Hepburn’s vocal techniques, one participant noted how she created a calm demeanor: “She used a slower pace and even tone in her pitch. She talks slowly and calmly.” Another informant described Bogart’s Linus, “He has a
calm and easy going sound. It was easy to listen to him. There was just enough variety and change in his voice that made it seemed like everything was OK with him. There was an even pace to his words and an unchanging tone and mood in his voice.”

5.1.56 Persuasive

Persuasive characters work at convincing others to do what they want. In some cases, they push hard, with their blatantly manipulative tactics. Sidney Poitier played a persuasive character as Walter Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961) as did Sean Combs in the 2008 remake of the film. Poitier conveyed persuasive qualities through vocal techniques such as inflection, fluency, tone, pitch, and speech rate. One participant said Sidney Poitier built a persuasive character through his “fast talking and fluctuated voice. He used lots of inflection and variety in his tone.” Another described Comb’s Walter saying, “His tone of voice was intense and focused. He wanted to move on but was so into convincing her that it seemed like he was wouldn’t take it if he didn’t get what he wanted. He was very direct and tried to push her with his voice.”

5.1.57 Philanderer

Philanderers seek physical pleasure everywhere they go; their primary pursuit is women, and they do what they can to attract a female’s attention. William Holden, who portrayed David Larrabee in Sabrina (1954), created the playboy character through his use of rhythm and tone. One participant described how William Holden’s vocal techniques crafted a perception of philandering:

There was rhythm in his voice. His swagger. He sounded like he was a smooth talker and used to getting his way, like he could talk anyone into anything. It was a softer voice,
rhythmic, sing-songy pace. He put certain phrases together in a pattern and rhythm.

Lower pitch tone with phrasing that made a rhythm.

Another participant agreed,

His tone of voice with her was smooth. He was whispering in her ear. He knew what he wanted and how he was going to get her. He was deliberate and focused with his attention completely on her. You can tell he’s smitten with her because his speech is more fluid.

5.1.58 Playful

Playful characters are happy and eager to have fun, full of energy and anxious for others to join them in play. Audrey Hepburn, who portrayed Sabrina Fairchild in Sabrina (1954) and Humphrey Bogart who played Linus Larrabee in the same film, used pitch, inflection, fluency, and pauses to create playful characters. Audrey Hepburn’s Sabrina use of specific vocal techniques created a fun and playful Sabrina,

She used a higher pitch, happiness and light pitch. No heaviness or worry sound in her voice. All her words have a rising inflection and the sentences go up at the end.

Sometimes there’s a jumpiness or choppiness—her words, phrases and sentences are cut up with pauses—a lot of stops and starts in her voice but very light.

Another participant described Bogart’s Linus, “He has a light tone of voice, higher pitches with a calm and even pace. There is a playful sound in his voice and it’s not too fast.”

5.1.59 Polish

A Polish character has an accent specific to the Slavic language. Jack Albertson as Grandpa Joe in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) used a Polish accent to construct his character. One participant noted Albertson’s accent: “He sounds like he’s from Central Europe.”
5.1.60 Polite

Polite characters are well mannered, gracious, and courteous towards others. Denzel Washington as Dudley in *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996) and Audrey Hepburn as Sabrina in *Sabrina* (1954) used tone and pitch to create a polite identities for the characters they portrayed. For Dudley, one participant said Denzel Washington’s vocal techniques created a very polite, well-mannered angel: “He has an easy voice. He’s persistent. His voice is not too deep or low.” Noting Audrey Hepburn’s portrayal of Sabrina, “She had a very easy voice. Her tone was calm and the pitch was very pleasant.”

5.1.61 Proud

Proud characters are pleased at the accomplishments of themselves and others, exemplified by Gene Wilder’s Willy Wonka in the original *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) and Harrison Ford’s Linus Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1995). These actors use the vocal techniques of pitch and energy to create proud personas. One participant said Gene Wilder, as the chocolate factory owner, was a little full of himself, “He’s bragging with a higher pitched voice, and he talks a lot.” Another participant described Harrison Ford’s Linus saying, “He’s so direct when talking to his brother that it was hard to hear. It was like he was bragging all the time, but maybe he was just proud of himself for all the work he does. His talks to people in a condescending way with a lower pitch.”

5.1.62 Realistic

Realistic characters have a greater concern for facts and what is possible instead of the imaginary or impractical. In Ruby Dee’s depiction of Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and Harrison Ford’s portrayal of Linus Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1995), tone and energy were used to create a realistic trait. One participant described Ruby Dee’s portrayal of Ruth Younger
as realistic because “she has a very deliberate tone; it was direct, but she was very tired.” Referencing Harrison Ford portrayal of Linus, “He has a calm and even tone and pace in his words and speech. Not a lot of loud changes in pitch – not a lot of going up and down in his tone. He had a very even pace.

5.1.63 Reckless

Reckless characters throw caution to the wind and do not care about possible negative consequence of their actions. Pierce Brosnan who played Thomas Crown in The Thomas Crown Affair (1999) and in Sabrina (1954), the character Linus Larrabee, played by Humphrey Bogart, used volume, energy, and fluency to add a reckless component to their characters. One informant described Brosnan’s Crown attitude, “Even though you could hear the confidence in his voice, the calmness in his tone said he would do anything – that he was reckless. It was his calm easy voice that was kinda scary.” On the other hand, Humphrey Bogart created a reckless Linus Larrabee in a different way because, “he was loud and all over the place. He wasn’t really thinking about what he wanted to say before he said it; he just kinda came out and said it. Talking fast with a lot of highs and lows in his voice.”

5.1.64 Respectful

Respectful characters have an understanding or feeling that someone or something is important and act accordingly. Cary Grant’s portrayal of the angel Dudley in The Bishop’s Wife (1947) and William Holden’s depiction of David Larrabee in Sabrina (1954) used pitch and tone to create respectful characters. One participant described the vocal techniques that created Dudley, “He was at ease with a serious tone. Sometimes has a lower pitch; the pitch doesn’t rise a lot. Calm speaking voice.” Another informant referenced similar techniques,
There was a tone of respect in his voice. Even though he was mad and angry, he kinda restrained himself from going all the way off and telling his brother what he really wanted to say. He sounded restrained in his tone, like he was holding back… in other words he could have been louder and angrier and more over the top, but he didn’t want to do that because he had respect for his older brother. He calmed down, which shows seniority to older brothers…his voice and tone got calmer and not as loud. He lowered the pitch too.

5.1.65 Sarcastic

Sarcastic characters use words and language that are the opposite of what they really want to say with the intent of insulting others or to be funny. Johnny Depp as Willy Wonka in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005), Sanaa Lathan as Beneatha Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (2008), Sidney Poitier as Walter Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (1961), and Humphrey Bogart as Linus Larrabee in Sabrina (1954) used the vocal techniques of tone, inflection, volume, and speech rate to create sarcastic characters. Johnny Depp’s 2005 portrayal of Wonka was sarcastic, for example, because “he sounds like he was trying to keep a straight face, but his voice had undertones of a smirk.” Another participant said Sanaa Lathan’s vocal skills created Beneatha’s biting tone: “She has a straight tone, no inflection when she was being sarcastic. She was directly making her point. Her voice was strong, but not loud.” Similarly, another participant noted Sidney Poitier’s sound crafted a sarcastic Walter Younger: “He draws out his words with a slower pace and lower tone. He’s snide.”

5.1.66 Sexy

Sexy characters are attractive and can be suggestive as exemplified by Faye Dunaway as Vicki Anderson in The Thomas Crown Affair (1968) and Audrey Hepburn as Sabrina in Sabrina
(1954). These actresses used the vocal techniques of a low tone, breath, and pitch to create sexy personas. Vicki Anderson’s character used “a softer more seductive tone. She seemed like she was a deer caught in the headlights, but she was trying to act like a shy innocent doe that got caught. Her tone was a lot lower and so was the pitch.” One informant describes Audrey Hepburn’s vocal techniques in creating Sabrina: “She talked to him with a low tone of voice, which was kinda sexy and sensual. She was talking to him very quietly and then takes a deep breath to finish him off.”

5.1.67 Shy

Shy characters are nervous and uncomfortable about meeting and talking with people. Peter Ostrum, playing Charlie Bucket in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), and Julia Ormond’s depiction of Sabrina Fairchild in *Sabrina* (1995), were both seen as shy. These actors used tone, volume, pace, speech rate, and pitch to create shy characters. One participant described the vocal techniques used by Peter Ostrum to create the shy Charlie Bucket as “a very light voice” that “sounds soft and has a child-like innocence. Hushed speaking. More reserved and hushed tone.” Another informant defined Julia Ormond’s vocal techniques that created Sabrina: “She’s talking slow, calmer, with lower tones and lower pitch. She was giggling and had a soft tone.”

5.1.68 Snippy

Snippy characters are short with others because they are irritated or annoyed. Rene Russo played Catherine Banning in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999), and in the 1995 film *Sabrina*, Harrison Ford played Linus Larrabee. These actors used the vocal techniques of pace, fluency, emphasis, and inflection to create snippy personas. Rene Russo created an annoyed Catherine Banning, “with blunt, short answers. Her voice was not very pitchy but she had a direct tone and
not a lot of pitch changes.” Harrison Ford’s irritable Linus was described in this way: “He’s short, cuts off his words, phrases and sentences. He’s very short, and he emphasized the last word of his sentences.”

5.1.69 Sophisticated

Sophisticated characters are generally smart people who have a well-rounded knowledge about the world and society as well as art, culture, and literature. Audra McDonald’s portrayal of Ruth Younger in A Raisin in the Sun (2008), Cary Grant’s Dudley in The Bishop’s Wife (1947), and Steve McQueen’s version of Thomas Crown in the 1968 film were all perceived as sophisticated characters. These three actors used speech rate, pace, tone, enunciation, pauses, pace, and fluency to create sophisticated characters. One participant described Audra McDonald’s vocal techniques used to create Ruth Younger as “a clear, articulate tone; good pronunciation; careful about her words; and an even pace. Sounds like she came from a better place at some point than her husband. She had more affluence than Walter but she accepts her fate.” Another participant described Cary Grant’s 1947 portrayal of Dudley as accomplished through “a slower speech rate and a lower, calm tone.” Steve McQueen’s 1968 Thomas Crown “has a clear voice and enunciates well. He has a calm even pace without a lot of pauses.”

5.1.70 Stern

Stern characters are generally strong, serious, and have no problem expressing their opinions; they do not easily change their opinion or stance on something. Steve McQueen as Thomas Crown in The Thomas Crown Affair (1968), Pierce Brosnan as Thomas Crown in the 1995 remake of the same film, and William Holden in the role of David Larrabee in Sabrina (1954) used fluency, energy, tone, and inflection to create stern characters. The vocal practices Steve McQueen used to build Thomas Crown were described by one participant in this way: “He
uses short words and doesn’t have much to say, a strong, forward voice. Positive energy and tone.” Participant perceived Pierce Brosnan as a stern businessman, “He has a slower pace, short answers and he speaks very clearly. He uses a lower, deeper voice with a stern and direct tone. There is no enthusiasm in his voice.” Another participant, noted how William Holden used his voice to create David Larrabee’s stern approach to his brother: “The sound of his voice went down on certain words and especially at the end of sentences. He was direct and focused when he was talking to his brother.”

5.1.71 Suave

Suave characters are confident, relaxed, and in control. They are smooth in the way they speak and act. Steve McQueen as Thomas Crown in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), Pierce Brosnan as Thomas Crown in the 1999 remake of the same film, and Cary Grant as Dudley in *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947), created suave character through pitch, tone, and pace. Steve McQueen used, “short answers, a slower pace and clear diction. There was an easy sound in his voice and he was a smooth talker.” Pierce Brosnan also used, “a smooth pace. His voice goes up at times in his sentences. There’s a curve or tilt in his words…especially at the end of his phrases and sentences. He has a very calm, easygoing voice with a smooth sound.” One informant said Cary Grant, “used a low and even tone” to create the suave angel Dudley, “He has a lower tone, low key, and calm voice with a firm and silky tone. He has a very smooth and even tone.”

5.1.72 Timid

Timid characters have quiet gentle voices and mannerisms, are calm and peaceful, and lack confidence. Ruby Dee’s Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961), Julia Ormond’s Sabrina in *Sabrina* (1995), and Greg Kinnear’s David Larrabee in *Sabrina* (1995) used tone, pitch, inflection, volume, and pace to create timid characters. One participant described the vocal
techniques used to create Ruth Younger in this way: “She has a low soft voice. It’s an easy voice with some inflection and less forward speech.” Julia Ormond was also a very coy and bashful, “Although she was direct in some ways, she was a little careful in the way she approached him. Her tone of voice was a little apprehensive.” Another participant highlighted the vocal practices Greg Kinnear used to construct the character David Larrabee as “a low tone without a lot of loudness. It is a very easy tone with even pace, very calm sounding.”

5.1.73 Vulnerable

Vulnerable characters are sometimes defenseless, helpless, or at risk in some way. Loretta Young’ depiction of Julia Brougham in The Bishop’s Wife (1947) and Roy Kinnear’s portrayal of Mr. Salt in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) were all perceived as vulnerable characters by using the vocal techniques of tone, fluency, and pitch. One participant defined Julia as an inarticulate woman who could barely speak a full sentence: “Her words were breaking up, she had real choppy speech and a lot of pauses. You wanted to get the sentence out for her she was having such a hard time. She was just weak.” Another participant noted Roy Kinnear’s Mr. Salt, “His voice sounds weak and frail. He does use a lot of inflection, but the tone is very light and not strong at all.”

5.2 Vocal Techniques for Character Development

The preceding list of character traits created by vocal techniques reveals one aspect of the data analysis. This next section outlines an analysis of the vocal techniques used to create those particular traits.

As noted in my previous analysis, focus group respondents identified 72 different characteristics directly attributed to vocal techniques. These characteristics or traits were reduced to the list presented below to capture the key vocal techniques the participants identified as
resulting in particular character portrayals. There were 33 vocal techniques on the original list, but there was some overlap in terms. This list is shorter than all those observed in the previous analysis because I have combined irregular synonymous terms used by the participants into the terms commonly used by film professionals (Barton, 2003; Benedetti, 1990; Berry, 1974; Bordwell, 1985; Brophy, 1991; Churcher, 2003; Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; Lessac, 1996; Linklater, 1976; Rodenburg, 2002; Sergi, 1999; Shingler, 1999; Sonnenschein, 2001; Stanislavsky, 1977; and Woods, 2012) for the vocal qualities about which they were speaking. For example, speech pattern was added to rhythm, enunciation and pronunciation were added to the articulation category, and energy and onset were added to emphasis.

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<td>Breath</td>
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After classifying the traits identified by participants, each trait was placed on a vocal continuum that, like the participants, categorized the vocal techniques used according to degrees: louder or softer, higher or lower pitch, more or less enunciation or articulation, or a faster or
slower speech rate. Table 5.1 presents each vocal technique, its definition, and where on the continuum of “less,” “neutral,” or “more” the character trait identified by the participants is located.
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<tr>
<th>Vocal Techniques and Definition</th>
<th>Continuum of Voice</th>
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<td>The manner, style, and clarity of spoken words, phrases or sentences</td>
<td>Manipulative Philanderer Vulnerable</td>
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<td><strong>Breath</strong></td>
<td>Defeated Mean</td>
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<td>Additional and/or varied amount of air exhaled in speech</td>
<td>Defeated Mean</td>
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<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
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<td>Agitated Aloof Anxious Crazy Mischievous Playful Snippy Vulnerable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ease, fluidity, or smoothness of speech</td>
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<td>Rise, fall, and pitch change in a person’s voice</td>
<td>Cold Confident Determined Dull Humorous Independent Loving Mischeious Mysterious Persuasive Sarcastic Sexy</td>
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Continuum of Voice

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**Pace**
Tempo, beat, or cadence of an utterance

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<th>Calm</th>
<th>Confident</th>
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**Pause**
Temporary stops in speech, which can signal meaning or limits

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<th>Frank</th>
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**Pitch**
Highness or lowness of speech sounds

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<td>Vocal Techniques and Definition</td>
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<td>Speed of spoken words, phrases, or sentences</td>
<td>Amorous British Calculating Exasperated Helpless Humorous Loving Old Patient Persuasive Shy Sophisticated</td>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>Agitated Angry Animated Defensive Emotional Excited Frantic Frustrated Irritated Humorous Mean Nervous Obnoxious Passionate Persuasive Snippy</td>
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<td><strong>Rhythm</strong></td>
<td>Confident Determined Humorous Nervous</td>
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<td>A regular or repeated pattern of sounds in speech</td>
<td>Calm Common Crazy Determined Helpless Loving Sarcastic Shy Timid</td>
<td>Crazy</td>
<td>Abusive Agitated Angry Anxious Crazy Determined Emotional Nervous Passionate Reckless</td>
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<td><strong>Volume</strong></td>
<td>Calm Common Crazy Determined Helpless Loving Sarcastic Shy Timid</td>
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<td>Abusive Agitated Angry Anxious Crazy Determined Emotional Nervous Passionate Reckless</td>
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<td>The degree of loudness or intensity produced by the voice</td>
<td>Calm Common Crazy Determined Helpless Loving Sarcastic Shy Timid</td>
<td>Crazy</td>
<td>Abusive Agitated Angry Anxious Crazy Determined Emotional Nervous Passionate Reckless</td>
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On the continuum, for example, “speech rate” as a vocal technique can be seen as “less” (slow), “neutral” (at an even pace or a comfortable rate of speed that is easy for the listener to hear and understand, or “more” (faster). If speech rate is fast, the communication is shown on the right on the chart under “more”; if a speaker slows communication to a slower rate than “neutral,” then the communication is shown on the left side of the chart under “less.” Thus, the
continuum as developed allows for a visual representation of how the application of less or more of a particular vocal technique is likely to create a particular character trait by an actor. By moving away from the expected point of neutral on the continuum, articulation, fluency, pitch, rate, and volume present various options that are available to an actor who seeks to depict a particular kind of character through control of his or her vocal performance.

Extending this vocal technique of speech rate, an actor who wants to create a character with a lot of energy might change her rate of speech. She increases it to suggest that she is agitated, excited, or possibly even passionate. If, on the other hand, she speaks more slowly than the cultural norm, she is moving to the left of “neutral” and uses less speed, more likely creating a character who may be perceived by audiences as aloof, calculating, or loving—all traits associated with a slower rate. In contrast, an actor trying to create a sarcastic character would attempt to maintain his speech rate at a “neutral” position because sarcasm is developed with a vocal rate this is neither fast nor slow. The actor, in other words, would settle at the cultural norm for speech rate to convey sarcasm although certainly other vocal techniques would be required to convey this trait; it would not be conveyed by speech rate alone.

Table 5.1 also clarifies that in some cases, the same trait is created by different vocal techniques. The characteristic of “excited,” for example, shows up on the vocal continuum as being produced by several different vocal techniques. This combination of vocal techniques suggests the complexity of the connection between vocal techniques and character traits. In this case, each of the vocal techniques for “excited” is on the continuum to the right of “neutral,” which means actors use “more” of each of the coded techniques to create the trait of “excited.”

As the vocal continuum chart shows, higher and lower levels of any of the vocal traits suggest character traits marked by greater or less vocal control. As actors vary the amount of
vocal technique by using more or less of it or by adjusting their voices higher or lower, they are able to communicate traits that are perceived as either of lesser or greater degrees of control. Although one might suppose that actors always have control over their voices, in portraying a character, they may need to exercise particular levels of control; if they move away from neutral or the normal cultural use of that particular vocal technique, whether toward the right or left, the character is seen to be a trait that is more or less in control of a situation as well as of his or her voice. Thus, for example, a greater volume suggests anger, a more out-of-control trait, while clear articulation generates a suggestion of industriousness and sophistication, which are perceived as requiring a greater degree of control.

According to the vocal continuum derived directly from the data and presented in Table 5.1, there are a limited number of vocal techniques that, by controlling them more or less from the expected or neutral point, may have been used to create perceptions of different characteristics in the matched pair of film clips. Actors presumably can use any combination of these techniques to create complex characters. Using more or less of such techniques appears to be the key in distinguishing the differences in character portrayal. The degree of departure from the norm in these techniques is a vocal strategy that allows the voice sometimes to outweigh visual elements of film in the creation of character.
6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Research Summary

The purpose of this study was to discover whether the voice alone can change audiences’ perception of character in films. The research question guiding my study was: “What changes in character portrayal do audiences attribute to differences in a character’s vocal performance in film?”

The artifacts to which I asked audiences to respond were short clips from five pairs of matched films—original and remakes of *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968, 1999), *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947), *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996), *Sabrina* (1954, 1995), *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961, 2008), *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005). The films were selected according to the following criteria: They embodied a variety of genres; had a variety of release dates, and included scenes where the dialogue was identical or almost so. Short clips between two and five minutes in length were selected and edited from each of the matched film pairs.

I then showed the scenes to three focus groups. Each focus group experienced the same set of edited film clips from each matched pair of films. One group listened to the clips as they were produced with sound and without visual. A second group watched only the visuals of the same clips without any sound, and the third group experienced both sound and visuals. After screening the clips, participants completed a short questionnaire about the characters and how they understood them. Following completion of the questionnaires, the participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of the characters in the films together; these conversations were audio recorded. The discussions were guided by an initial set of questions, but I asked follow-up
questions depending on what the participants said. Following the focus groups, I transcribed the discussions.

I analyzed the data to discover how audiences understand character using the constant–comparison or grounded-theory method of analysis. Grounded theory is an inductive methodology used to construct a theory through data analysis. Using this iterative method, I sorted and coded the content into categories by focus group, film, character, and scene. My units of analysis were terms or phrases about how focus-group participants perceived or understood a character and the vocal techniques they noted that brought them to that understanding.

After all of the variables were identified, I checked across all three focus groups for redundancy. I looked for instances where the characterizations were the same for the visual or both the visual and vocal techniques. Those characteristics that presented in multiple groups were not included, so I was left with only the characterizations attributed to voice. From those data, 72 different character traits emerged that participants saw as developed through the voice, with 11 vocal techniques used to create those characteristics. In answer to the research question, in this study, changes in perception of the characters on these traits are directly attributed to voice. These differences in perception were not because of dialogue, lighting, wardrobe, set design, or other visual elements.

Although meaning communicated about a character through visual elements was not the focus of this study, it is worth acknowledging the possible contribution visual elements may make toward enhancing meaning perceived through aural cues. Physical body movements can affect the sound of the voice (Sonnenschein, 2001); therefore any physical aspects of the character connected to the embodied performance of the actor may contribute to audience perception of character. Some of those physical aspects may be visual elements that may support
and/or enhance specific character traits. Because facial expressions, gestures, and body movement including wardrobe elements cause the body to move certain ways, they may affect the voice and thus impact the communication of character. For example, Johnny Depp’s quirky facial expressions and erratic body movements while wearing a top hat and holding a cane made Willy Wonka in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) an eccentric character. Those elements coupled with his vocal performance constructed the character Willy Wonka and enhanced Depp’s portrayal of candy factory owner.

While the goal of this study was to determine the contribution voice makes to audiences’ understanding of character portrayal, the characteristics participants highlighted are common traits that could be seen in any character and film. Traits like persuasive, angry, jealous, passionate, or sophisticated could all potentially be a part of any character. While the results from this study can be applied to other characters in different film scenes, the data gathered was taken from individual moments of characterization from specific films. Respondent’s comments in each of the three focus groups were based on specific aural and visual cues they experienced while screening clips from the matched film pairs.

Sidney Poitier’s portrayal of Walter Younger in *A Raisin In The Sun* (1961) led respondents to read Walter as a persuasive man. By using inflection, fluency, tone, pitch, and speech rate, Poitier’s Walter tries to persuade his wife Ruth to talk to talk his mother into giving him money from an insurance settlement. Evidence of Walter’s persuasive characteristic was specific to a particular character in a specific film scene. It is possible that these same vocal techniques, whether placed in the same position on the vocal continuum, or moved to another location on the continuum, could create the same characterizations. However, other elements such as dialogue, narrative, the actor’s understanding of the character and scene, and film context
may also suggest persuasive traits in a character. Hypothetically, an actor may choose to create these same traits by applying the same vocal techniques even though they could be affected by elements other than the voice. Characterizations are individual moments in a film’s narrative and any traits and associated vocal techniques noted in this study are not limited to the same characterizations in any given film.

6.2 Interpretation of Findings

The voice has been doing a lot of heavy work in film over the years, but it has been overshadowed by attention to visual elements. My research confirms and extends work in the study of voice in film by reinforcing the importance of the voice and the techniques that actors may use to create characters. As this study shows, voice has the power to carry narrative and, in fact, audiences can and do rely on it for information and insight into characters. By substantiating a solid connection between voice and character portrayal from the audience’s perspective, this work helps to rebalance the role of the aural with the visual elements in film.

Another contribution of this study is that it extends current literature about the connection between vocal techniques and character. Character traits that can be created by differences in voice, identified by participants in this study, provide a substantial amount of information about the distinctive types of features, qualities, or attributes that can be developed through manipulation of particular vocal qualities. In the previous literature, only a few character traits had been specifically identified as being created through the sound of the voice, and in most cases, the focus in these studies was not on how actors could create those characters vocally. Attention typically was on the dialogue, which was more about what actors were saying rather than how they said it (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985; Kozloff, 2000).
An example will demonstrate the kind of extension this study provides to the existing literature concerning the connection between voice and character portrayal. In Kozloff’s (2000) work on film dialogue, she analyzed the ways in which actors bring words from screenplays to life, but she did not deal with the kinds of vocal techniques used to create the characters in those scripts. My study provides a necessary supplement to work such as Kozloff’s because it identifies a specific characteristic or trait and all of the vocal techniques—emphasis, pitch, rate, and the like—that my participants suggested create that characteristic.

In a film’s overall soundtrack, the voicescape created by all the actors enriches the final film product by providing the most critical element that carries the film’s narrative. Future research on film and sound must include studies that focus on the sound the actor’s voice adds to the film because it is such an important part of the final product (Bordwell, 1985). Silent movies are no longer produced and audiences have come to expect authentic performances by actors, which includes not only the actor and how they look, but also their use of voice to deliver dialogue, which in turn provides the plot, story, and narrative.

In rethinking how film sound scholarship has addressed voice, an approach that includes the multiple functions of voice in film is needed. The voice has various roles in film including carrying plot, story, and narrative, creating and developing character, uncovering emotion, revealing personality traits, shaping how characters respond to each other in a scene, and contributing to the film’s overall soundtrack, and direction. With all the current uses of technology in film production, and more constantly being explored, these changes may affect how actors are cast in a role, as well as their onscreen performance. Technology has also impacts the planning, creation, distribution, and exhibition of films. Filmmakers may call for diverse acting styles, which might require the actor’s voice to be used differently particularly in the ways
characters interact and relate with each other in any given scene. Further, the human connection and the study of voice should incorporate linguistics and language. This study is specific to Standard English, but the use and function of the voice changes in different languages through the same elements and vocal techniques described in this project such as intonation, inflection, and speech rate (McKay & Hornberger, 1996). The issue of language is important, particularly as it relates to the lost meaning when sub-titles are used. All the subtle nuances that add meaning to an actor’s performance are lost when the voice is not heard and understood. There are many details that are important in the spoken communication of the actors/characters. An investigation of these different elements of the function of voice will offer a more comprehensive study of film.

6.3 Application of Findings

The key benefit for this research is to provide practical ways to help actors create and develop characters. The characteristics, traits, and associated vocal techniques that make up the Vocal Continuum offer data in a unique format. As a vocal coach and consultant, I can use the Continuum and its content to create teaching materials for vocal performers. It is the beginning of a catalog of characteristics, traits and vocal techniques that offers a solid basis to develop exercises and ways to workshop the voice to enhance the performer’s skillset. Additionally, since there are so many characteristics and vocal techniques, there is a built in flexibility that allows for more creativity both on my part and for those I’ll share the content with. There are no hard and fast rules about how an actor or any other vocal performer expresses their art, and they are always looking for different ways to develop their skills and hone their craft. The Continuum opens the door for me to offer them a variety of options for the performance of voice. I can
develop different methods of training and tools with the data gathered in the Continuum to help them build and refine their vocal skills.

When actors gain a deeper understanding of the importance of voice and how their vocal performances can create and change a character, they may want to invest more training, time, energy, and effort into their voices. Actors who understand the way voice functions in the portrayal of character may significantly increase their chances of being cast in films because they will have purposeful tools for auditioning as a character. Once cast into a role, actors may find that using their voices more effectively in character development will energize and enhance their abilities. As they begin to exercise more control with their voices, they may be able to create stronger characterizations, have better overall performances, save time in rehearsals and on set in production, and avoid having to re-record pick-up lines in post-production.

Industry professionals such as voice and dialect coaches, screenwriters, producers, directors, sound recordists, engineers, and editors all will benefit from the actor’s ability to create more complex and believable characters. Stronger vocal performances may translate into shorter production and post-production time, which saves production money and may result in higher box office dollars. Time, money, and other production resources can be better used as a result.

Voice and dialect coaches can benefit greatly from the findings of this study because their primary role is to work with actors’ voices. Having information about which specific vocal techniques create particular kinds of characters will allow them to focus their coaching on the development and enhancement of the vocal techniques that will produce the greatest benefits in terms of character portrayal. The kind of a guide this study provides also will save voice and dialect coaches time in their coaching and training efforts because of their ability to target the development of particular vocal techniques.
Screenwriters may be able to write more efficiently if they keep in mind the kind of information that can be communicated through the actor’s voice. For example, when complicated information about a character needs to be incorporated into a scene, if the screenwriter knows that an actor can convey that information vocally, the writer can leave character traits up to the voice of the actor and will not have to work them into the screenplay in other ways. Information communicated through the performer’s voice, then, can impact the way dialogue is written. Similarly, they can write specific tips and directions for vocal performance into the screenplay, enabling actors to understand the screenwriter’s goals more immediately and potentially more clearly.

Recordists and editors also can save time and money when an actor uses the vocal techniques in this study to construct character. Sound crews will not have to spend additional time in post-production to re-record actors’ voices when they deliver weak vocal performances. Because re-recording actors’ voices after a scene is shot, in postproduction, are expensive and time consuming, avoiding this process because actors know how to use their voices effectively in the development of character can be beneficial.

Findings from this study also can address two of the most difficult challenges that actors face in character development. One is that maintaining a consistent character over the length of a long production is very difficult. Because films are shot out of sequence and a character’s emotional arc in the film usually does not happen in the same sequence in which the scenes are shot, actors must figure out how to match their performance in one scene with the same emotion, energy, and character portrayal in a scene that is shot at a different time. By applying the vocal techniques identified in this study, actors can maintain consistency across their vocal
performances, more easily matching the same character components across scenes even if they are shot on different days.

Another aspect of consistency for an actor lies in the issue of maintaining a consistent sound no matter what the scene demands. A character may have to talk and ride a horse, run upstairs while speaking in a British accent, or jog while arguing with another character. If two characters are jogging in the park together and get into a heated argument, for example, they must display the angry voices needed to continue the dialogue yet keep up with the increased physical demands created by jogging. The amount of breath required to jog cannot change, yet breath control must be used for the vocal performance. Knowing the specific vocal techniques that will create and maintain a particular characteristic will allow the actors to enact that trait no matter what else the scene requires. If the actors apply the vocal techniques of, for example, articulation, emphasis, fluency, or inflection, they will be able to stay in character, continue the argument, and keep jogging.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

As is the case with all studies, there were some limitations to this study. One of the major limitations has to do with the fact that participants recruited for studies such as this are often not committed to or invested in the study and thus may not fully participate. The first time the groups were scheduled, many of the people who showed up and agreed to participate in the discussions left early. What started out as a group of eight or nine in two of the groups ended up with three participants in each. I was not able to gather enough data from those groups, so I had to conduct a second round of focus groups. I used those initial groups as an opportunity to gain experience with the focus-group method, but some mechanism such as a monetary incentive to ensure that
those who agree to participate will complete the tasks expected of them would be useful in future studies.

Another limitation of the study related to the participants’ lack of willingness to spend as much time with the study as I expected had to do with the length of the clips. Because some of the clips were long, to watch them and then to discuss them required more time of the participants than some of them wanted to spend. As a result, I re-edited and shortened the clips to maintain participant focus and to reduce the amount of time required of the participants.

Other questions regarding the use of shorter clips in this study as artifacts instead of full-length films may arise as it relates to obtaining sufficient and accurate information about characters. Some scholars believe that it takes a significant amount of narrative time for a character to fully develop because as the plot and narrative of a film progresses, characters change, evolve, and grow (Bordwell, 1985; McKee, 1997). This progression is called a character arc. While it may be true that more data could be collected about characters in the matched film pairs if the entire films were screened, it is beyond the scope of this study to do a full content analysis on each character in 10 movies. If participants screened each film fully, it take too much time and there would be no way for me to distinguish what content or mode of delivery would be attributed to the audience’s understanding of a character trait or personality. There are so many aural and visual cues in every scene that I would not be able to extrapolate whether any content was read through aural, visual, or a combination of aural and visual cues. It could be argued that asking participants to define a character from a few random scenes in a film does not provide enough material for a character to be completely described. However, fully defining all aspects of a character was not the focus of this study. By allowing participants to screen scenes in short
clips instead of viewing the entire movies was sufficient to determine how audiences understand and read characters, and which cues reveal specific traits or characteristics.

While this study focused on how participants read and understood film characters, it did not consider the gender, race, class, or sexual orientation of the characters or actors. These societal and cultural issues were not specifically factored into the focus group questions/discussions or questionnaires. However, if participants mentioned any of them in the discussions, their comments were not excluded. While watching movies, people take larger cultural cues from voice by ascribing certain characteristics to homosexual, Black, Hispanic, or even women’s voices (Cameron, 2001; Dennison, 2005; Hornberger, 1996; Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; McKay & Hornberger, 1996). For example, the matched film pair *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947) and *The Preacher’s Wife* (1996) could have addressed several cultural cues such as class, race, and gender. Even the titling of the films suggests an issue of class. The original 1947 film is entitled, *The Bishop’s Wife* and the 1996 remake is entitled, *The Preacher’s Wife*. In church administration the position of Bishop is a higher ranking than a preacher. Further, the original 1947 film is about a white family and the lead character is the Bishop of a church of wealthy parishioners. The 1996 remake of the film is about the head of a Black church in a poor neighborhood with parishioners who are struggling in many ways and not financially well off. The original film portrays the Bishop’s wife, Julia as a weak and fragile woman, whose sole responsibility is to take care of the couple’s daughter and be there to support her husband with her presence. This gender issue was not addressed at all. Although the film is supposedly about the Bishop’s wife, it really isn’t. It’s more about the Bishop. His wife had no significant role in the church or with the parishioners. This was not the case however, in the 1996 remake, which further connects the issues of gender and race. The Preacher’s wife in the 1996 Black church
plays a major role as a songstress, director of the church choir, and Christmas play. Her role working with the children of the church is like a mother and she not only supports her husband, but also is active in the functioning of the church. Again, these differences were not addressed in any of the focus group discussions.

The age of the participants and their reactions to the stars of the films was also a limitation. Most of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 25, and they were very vocal about celebrities and stardom. Many of them knew and could relate to the actors who played in the remakes of the films, but they often did not know the actors in the original films. They were unaware that these actors were major stars in the prime of their careers and some of the participants seemed to dismiss these actors simply because they did not know who they were. For example, several of the participants noted that they did not know Gene Wilder, an actor and comedian who was popular in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and played Willy Wonka in the original *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971). One participant asked, “Who’s that goofy looking guy who played Willy Wonka? I don’t like him. Johnny Depp was so much better.” Another participant said, “I don’t know a lot of these actors.” Some made comments about Steve McQueen, who portrayed Thomas Crown in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968). They had heard of him but did not recognize him as a professional, well-known actor and described him as “fake.” Additionally, many participants objected to Sean Combs, a well-known rapper, starring in a role that was made iconic in Black theatre and film by seasoned actor Sidney Poitier—Walter Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2008). The participants’ perceptions of these actors may have influenced their responses, particularly when they were assigning character traits to them and trying to discern which vocal qualities were responsible for the perception of those traits.
Participants’ dislike of old movies; particularly black-and-white movies could have affected focus group data. They strongly expressed their feelings and said they were not used to watching them and did not like or appreciate them. Complaints about black and white films include style, cinematography, music, wardrobe, and stilted acting. As one participant explained, “That’s one of the reasons I don’t like watching old movies. I don’t know most of the actors and plus, the way they’re shot is so boring and the music is even worse.” Another participant particularly did not like the music in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968): “What’s up with the music? That is horrible! And I don’t like this black and white movie. It’s too old. They need to bring this movie up to the 21st century.” Commenting on the way one of the films was shot, one participant said, “This is really bad. It’s so slow, and watching it without the sound is painful. The black and white is boring.” The oldest films out of the five matched film pairs that were a part of this study include *The Bishop’s Wife* (1947), Sabrina (1954), and *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961). Younger 21st century ears and eyes that are more tech savvy and accustomed to digital technology in filmmaking, which generates clearer, strong film images, and sound that is very different than it was 67 years ago were experiencing films produced with much older tools and techniques than are available today.

Issues of film style, cinematography, and sound design were not matters that were part of the list of planned questions to ask in the focus group discussions, nor on the questionnaires given to participants. The fact that they volunteered this information about their strong dislike of black and white films could suggest there are larger issues that generated such powerful feelings. For example, participant responses could have been affected by things like their knowledge of film history and the function old films played in that history, their knowledge (or lack thereof) of the norms and conventions of the times being portrayed in the films. People have different levels
of societal knowledge, historical knowledge, and film knowledge and these things may have affected how they respond to films. Issues surrounding the treatment of women or people of color, race, or other societal norms such as women in the workforce may be underlying matters that could have also affected participant responses.

It was surprising there was no discussion of issues of race and ethnicity during the focus group discussions, especially as it relates to two of the matched film pairs; *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and (2008) and *The Bishop's Wife* (1947) and *The Preacher's Wife* (1996). In particular, the narrative of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and (2008) dealt specifically with issues of race and class in the 1940s, yet none of the participants ever mentioned it. Struggles of race and equality as well as any negative portrayals of African Americans seemed to be avoided. This was even more surprising from the aural group, which was comprised of all African American women. Even though respondents in the aural group did not see any visuals that confirmed the race or ethnicity of any of the characters, the dialogue was clear in terms of subject matter and addressing the topic of race. Both the visual and combined groups were diverse including people of color, yet race was not discussed in any of the focus groups⁴. Scholarship, particularly in communication and linguistics, shows that demographics such as race, culture, and ethnic background are heard and revealed in the voice and speech through specific markers such as tone, pace, and intonation (Brophy, 1991; Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; McKay & Hornberger, 1996). Although the storylines in both films eventually showed the Younger family making progress in their lives, much of the content showed them in a very negative way.

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⁴ Focus group participants noted their race on a participant information form given to them at the beginning of the session along with consent forms. They identified themselves as follows; 10 African Americans/Blacks in the aural only group, 5 African Americans/Blacks and 2 Caucasians/Whites in the visual group, and 3 Hispanics, 3 African Americans/Blacks and 4 Caucasians/Whites in the combined group.
Other issues of race involve direct connections with the media because of the negative portrayal of people of color, particularly Blacks. Although the film *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and (2008) is an iconic work in Black theatre, much of the content portrays the Black family very negatively. For example, the film was full of strong familial disagreements – mother versus children, husband versus wife, brother versus sister, son versus mother, and friend versus friend. As the story developed, there were major arguments in most of the scenes between the characters, even the youngest Younger son in an argument with his mother. The negative portrayal of Blacks in media is broadly accepted in American culture since Blacks have been victims of destructive stereotyping for years (Jhally and Lewis, 2003). The breakdown of the Black family is a common theme in media and Jhally and Lewis (2003) argue that black viewers are caught in a never-ending trap because the only way out of the negative portrayal is through showing blacks as upper middle class – which carries with it a set of ideologically loaded conditions.

It could be that participants accepted the racism depicted in the lives of the Younger family (characters featured in the film), even in 2008 remake because the story is a classic in theatre and the creator of the work, Lorraine Hansberry is an iconic African American playwright and writer. Respondents may have circumvented the topic altogether to avoid creating any negativity or tension within the group. Talking about race, class, and ethnicity may be uncomfortable to some and they may have preferred to stay away from potentially volatile topics.

Participants may have taken an oppositional reading of the characters in *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) and (2008), and accepted the family as strong African Americans who were determined to fight their way out of poverty. If this was the case, they could have deemed the
story a positive one even though the majority of the narrative showed the family’s intense personal, financial, and racial struggles, which could be deemed very negative. By not discussing issues of race and class respondents are possibly confirming Jhally and Lewis’ (2003) notion that Blacks have a powerful desire to escape the negative world of stereotyping and that some people choose to see the positive in all things.

Avoidance of the race issue was noted in another matched film pair, The Bishop’s Wife (1947) and The Preacher’s Wife (2008). In the original 1947 film, the cast was all White and in the remake, the film featured a predominantly Black cast. Again, participants did not discuss race, ethnicity, or class in any way. Differences in the portrayal of character between these two films were markedly different, and although respondents noted the differences in tone, pace and intonation, which can be markers of race, they did not mention race (Brophy, 1991; Karpf, 2006; Kozloff, 2000; McKay & Hornberger, 1996). So it is possible that the race of the participants may have impacted the data gathered in either the types of vocal techniques used by the actors, traits, and characteristics of the characters identified, or a combination of both. It is unclear why any of the participants failed to bring up issues relating to the race or ethnicity of some of the characters or the cultural context of the films. Whether participants were aware of the issues, and chose not to discuss it in the group, or if they made a conscious decision to ignore them, the lack of discussion on these important issues could have affected the data.

Another limitation, also related to race was that of the aural only focus group, which was composed of ten African American females. This was not planned; my recruitment efforts simply produced a group that contained only participants of this demographic. Cultural background certainly may impact the way audiences perceive and read film content and also may have affected the participants’ knowledge of and likes and dislikes concerning the older movies and
actors. That the most important group in the study—the one that only heard the films—was composed of individuals of all one race and gender does raise issues about whether my findings would have been different with a more diverse group.

Finally, another limitation may have been due to the fact that one of the participants in the visual-only group was lip reading. Because the visual-only group watched the clips without any audio, it was noticeable when one of the participants started talking about the dialogue. When I asked her if she had seen the films before, she said “no” and explained she knew what the actors were saying because she was reading their lips. Her mother was deaf, so she grew up in a household where lip reading was necessary. I do not know whether this one participant’s ability to lip-read had an impact on the group’s responses, but it certainly may have simply because she was introducing content into the focus group that otherwise would not have been there.

6.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study constitute a starting point to continue investigating how voice is used in the portrayal of character, but future research using a similar focus-group method would benefit from some changes from the study I conducted. Future studies might control the demographics of the participants to ensure that all of the groups contained more diversity. On the other hand, much research in the United States on any topic involves Caucasian participants, and the fact that this study had very few may constitute an important addition to an understanding of audiences’ perceptions of character in film, especially if the study is otherwise replicated. Certainly, if possible, future studies would do well to be constructed with participants of a greater variety of ages and races with the intention of producing more generalizable results. A similarly designed study that eliminates old movies (at least for a younger age group) or that uses
only older movies might neutralize the possible effects of the strong dislike of those movies in the findings.

Research such as this study also could benefit from using three matched films rather than two. While searching for films for this study, I realized that some films have been remade multiple times. For example, there are several different versions of *A Raisin in the Sun*. The first film was made in 1961, a television movie was made in 1989, and another television movie followed in 2008. Using three films instead of two would provide even more information about different perceptions of characters based on vocal techniques.

Another possibility for future study would be to investigate how the vocal techniques interact with each other because multiple techniques function together to create specific characteristics. Future research could be used to discern which particular vocal techniques work together most often to create the perceptions of certain characters and the ways in which the introduction of a particular vocal technique subtly transforms the perception of character.

Future study on this topic also would benefit from more attention to the literature on and processes involved in audience reception and spectatorship positions—work, for example, by Radway (1991) and Mulvey (1989). Although this study was concerned with how audiences perceive an actor’s voice and subsequent character on screen, I paid little attention to this literature in designing and conducting the study. Incorporating such literature at the design phase of the study might produce changes in the study’s design and/or in the interpretation of the findings.

Despite the limitations of the current study, it has added to an understanding of the ways in which audiences perceive characters in films based on vocal qualities. By providing information about the creation of film characters through voice and the specific vocal techniques
used to produce perceptions of those characters, my hope is that increased recognition will be
given to the important role that the voice plays in film.
REFERENCES


Cowan, M. (1936). Pitch and intensity characteristics of stage speech. *Archives of Speech (Supplement to December issue), 1*, 1-92.


United Kingdom: London Motion Picture Productions.


United States: Lucasfilm, Twentieth Century Fox Motion Picture Corporation.


APPENDICES

Appendix A Informed Consent

Georgia State University
Department of Communication
Informed Consent

Title: Sonic Vocality: The Use of Voice in the Portrayal of Character in Film
Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Davis
Student Investigator: Cindy Milligan

I. Purpose:
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate how
the human voice is used to portray character in film. You are invited to participate because you
have expressed an interest in film. A total of thirty participants will be recruited for this study.
Participation will require about two hours of your time one day.

II. Procedures:
If you decide to participate, a series of film clips will be played for you. You will then be
asked to complete a brief questionnaire about the clips you’ve just experienced. Afterward,
you will be asked some questions about what you thought of the clips and can talk about it
with others in the group. This will be held in a conference room at Georgia State University,
in the Department of Communication. The conversation will be audio taped.

III. Risks:
In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits:
Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. Overall, we hope to gain information
about how the human voice is used by actors to portray character in film.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you
decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time.
You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not
lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:
We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. However, we cannot promise
that other members of the focus groups will do the same. Dr. Patricia Davis (Principal
Investigator) and Cindy Milligan (Student Investigator) will have access to the information you
provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly.
(GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP). We will use a code rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet in the student researcher’s office. The code sheet will be kept in another location separate from the other documents to protect your personal information. The primary investigator and the student investigator will have access to the data after it is collected. Transcribed papers of the audio recordings will be password protected and firewall-protected on the student investigator’s computer.

Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

All of the documents and audio recordings will be kept for further research with de-identified data.

VII. Contact Persons:
Contact Dr. Patricia Davis at 404.413.5670 or joupad@langate.gsu.edu or Cindy Milligan at 404.680.8253 or cmilligan@gsu.edu if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, or suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:
We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio or video recorded, please sign below.

____________________________________________  _________________
Participant        Date

_____________________________________________  _________________
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent  Date
Appendix B Films, Characters, Actors, and Scenes

*The Thomas Crown Affair (1968) & (1999)*

- Thomas Crown (Steve McQueen, Pierce Brosnan)
- Vicki Anderson & Catherine Banning (Faye Dunaway, Rene Russo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Character(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Overpaid</td>
<td>Thomas Crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Golf</td>
<td>Thomas Crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Introduction</td>
<td>Thomas Crown &amp; Vicki Anderson/Catherine Banning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Bishop’s Wife (1947) & The Preacher’s Wife (1996)*

- Bishop Henry & Reverend Henry Brougham (David Niven, Courtney B. Vance)
- Dudley (Cary Grant, Denzel Washington)
- Julia Brougham (Loretta Young, Whitney Houston)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Character(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Prayer</td>
<td>Bishop Henry Brougham/Reverend Henry Brougham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Introducing Dudley</td>
<td>Dudley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Stay Away</td>
<td>Henry &amp; Julia Brougham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sabrina (1954) & (1995)**

- David Larrabee (William Holden, Greg Kinnear)
- Linus Larrabee (Humphrey Bogart, Harrison Ford)
- Sabrina Fairchild (Audrey Hepburn, Julia Ormond)

Scene 1: Office  
David & Linus Larrabee

Scene 2: Station  
David Larrabee & Sabrina Fairchild

Scene 3: Dance  
David Larrabee & Sabrina Fairchild

Scene 4: Solarium  
Linus Larrabee & Sabrina Fairchild

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**A Raisin in the Sun (1961) & (2008)**

- Ruth Younger (Ruby Dee, Audra McDonald)
- Walter Younger (Sidney Poitier, Sean Combs)
- Beneatha Younger (Diana Sands, Sanaa Lathan)

Scene 1: Dream  
Ruth & Walter Younger

Scene 2: Sibling  
Beneatha & Walter Younger
Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971) & (2005)

- Grandpa Joe Bucket (Jack Albertson, David Kelly)
- Charlie Bucket (Peter Ostrum, Freddie Highmore)
- Veruca Salt (Julie Dawn Cole, Julia Winter)
- Mr. Salt (Roy Kinnear, James Fox)
- Willy Wonka (Gene Wilder, Johnny Depp)

Scene 1: Factory
   Grandpa Joe & Charlie Bucket

Scene 2: Bad Nut
   Veruca & Mr. Salt

Scene 3: Chewing Gum
   Willy Wonka
## Appendix C Screenshot of Coded Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Aural Cues</th>
<th>Visual Cues</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Visual Cues</th>
<th>Aural Cues</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Visual Cues</th>
<th>Aural Cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scene 1 - Office</strong></td>
<td>Faster more erratic speech pattern</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Body position sitting with other businessmen</td>
<td>Persuasive tone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>“office”</td>
<td>Uneven pacing</td>
<td>Body movement interacting with others</td>
<td>Manipulative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Some “up” energy in his</td>
<td>Nodding signalled authority and asking them to have</td>
<td>Listening to his brother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Louder</td>
<td>Well put together</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Chaotic plexing creating</td>
<td>Body movement through the office</td>
<td>Jumpy</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Uneven</td>
<td>Easy body movement</td>
<td>“office”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Volume - Louder</td>
<td>Unherited movement</td>
<td>Keeps working even though his brother is trying to talk to him</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Erratic speech patterns</td>
<td>Not rushed in body movement</td>
<td>Keeps working even though his brother is trying to talk to him</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>“solarium”</td>
<td>Relaxed easy and unrushed body movement</td>
<td>Shooting the gun and making phone calls instead of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pacing - Uneven</td>
<td>“solarium”</td>
<td>Listening to his brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Chaotic speech phrasing</td>
<td>Posts on the soft - not too relaxed and not stiff</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Body position and interaction with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td>Slow speech</td>
<td>“office”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lots of pauses and hesitations</td>
<td>Unrefined to shoot a gun in the office</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>Calm speech</td>
<td>“office”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Talks slowly and clearly</td>
<td>Picks up the gun nonchalantly</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pays attention to details</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Flirtatious</td>
<td>Less whiny</td>
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