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Theatre as an Individual and Collective Art

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Theatre as an Individual and Collective Art

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Under the direction of Dr Wendy-Marie Martin

For Consideration as a Senior Thesis in Theatre

Hollins University

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Abstract

Art can be as tangible as objects. Art can also be as intangible as ideas. Art exists in multiple

forms, such as painting, music, literatures, dancing, acting, and so on, which at the same time

defines the form of theatre art. The multi-dimensional nature of theatre art is complex and

requires a lot from people, including time, money, and effort. Such effort is not singular but

rather diverse and multi-layered. It not only requires people to have contributive skills but also

the ability to bind together the skills that different people have. Theatre is collaborative by

nature, so communication is key. When people's attention is drawn to the performance itself, the

communication work behind the curtain is often left overlooked, which results in a lack of

acknowledgement of people's commitment and contribution and a lack of opportunity for

improvement. Therefore, this project aims to illuminate the leadership and internal

communication in a team, accompanied by a podcast episode "From Vision To Practice: A

Conversation with Wendy-Marie." Following Chapter One: Leadership and Internal

Communication, which examines and evaluates group communication from a leadership and

internal communication perspective, is Chapter Two: Practical Component describing the

production of a podcast episode, and Chapter Three: Reflections and Artistic Analysis which

recounts my artistic journey and my growth at Hollins University as a double major in

Communication Studies and Theatre.

Chapter One: Leadership and Internal Communication

Human interaction has always been a fascinating topic that leads people to understand each other and themselves. Different fields of studies discover and explain human interactions from different perspectives, ranging from natural science and social science to art. The foundation for human interaction to exist is communication. In the book *A First Look at Communication Theory* (Griffin et al., 2019), communication is seen as "the relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response" (p. 6). With this definition, five core elements are identified: (a) messages regardless of the medium or situation; (b) the creation of messages by people; (c) the interpretation of messages which may result in different meanings; (d) the messages that elicit any cognitive, emotional, or behavioral response, and (e) the relational process which involves two or more people and which can affect the relationship between the people involved (Griffin et al., 2019). From the perspective of seeing communication as a branch of social sciences, communication exists everywhere because it makes it possible for everything else to exist. Therefore, communication is an indispensable foundation for every human activity, which is especially the case for theatre.

A theatre production manifests itself as a performance in front of an audience, but theatre is more than that at its core. Everything that makes the production possible involves a variety of resources including time, money, intellect, and labor. In addition, it is the collective effort that brings a performance to life. People should not take a performance at face value, because it would not exist without all the backstage work and communication. Therefore, to understand the way communication works, this paper examines literature and previous studies that render quantitative and qualitative knowledge on leadership and internal communication in a group environment, which can guide the examination of communication in theatre.

The research question this paper aims to answer is: What are the ways to examine and evaluate group communication from a leadership and internal communication perspective?

Literature Review

Communication incorporates all aspects of human expression and activity (Bhattacharyya, 2013). It is the foundation for human interactions, especially when a group of people work together and make things happen. Theatre as a cultural institution is an accurate representation of such communication that involves people of skills, ideas, and diverse backgrounds. In Bhattacharyya's (2013) article, theatre is seen as a communication medium which serves multiple functions, including information, instruction, persuasion, education, entertainment, and development. Theatre is a medium that distributes information among the audience and that instructs and persuades the audience to do and think of certain things (Bhattacharyya, 2013). For example, the play *Nil Darpan* by Dinabandhu Mitra is seen as a part of the movement by Bengali people against the British colonial rule (Bhattacharyya, 2013). Theatre also serves to entertain and educate, as well as to help develop people's inner life (Bhattacharyya, 2013). Theatre experience brings people together, help build confidence and identity, raises awareness of social problems, and cultivates a critical understanding of human society, among many others (Bhattacharyya, 2013).

Not only does theatre serve distinct functions, some of which are overlapping, but it is also comprised of different elements. Theatre combines different aspects of art making, including acting, music, dancing, designing, crafting, and so on. It is a fusion of what appears on stage and what has to be done backstage. Without communication in between, coordination between these areas would not be possible, and, therefore, theatre productions would not possibly come to life. Theatre productions communicate with their audience. Meanwhile, they are built based on the

ongoing communication work behind the curtains. Therefore, it is especially important to acknowledge the backstage effort that makes a performance possible. The following sections of the research paper examines the useful aspects to help analyze the way leadership and internal communication interact in a team.

Differences in a Team

"Organization cannot function without communication" (Barkela, 2019, p. 136). An analogy of organization here can be seen as an entity of a group of people in charge of different areas while pursuing a collective goal. There are different fields within a team in a theatre, which can also lead to conflicts. Barkela's article *Theatre Leadership from a Communication Perspective* (2019) identifies three major fields that can cause conflicts in a theatrical production, including the field of financial management, the administrative field responsible for regulations and personnel management, as well as the aesthetic field striving for aesthetic goals. The reason conflicts arise could attribute to the fields' different interests and planning, such as that "the artistic side wants to make decisions as late as possible and the technical side and the financial side want to make decisions as fast as possible" (Barkela, 2019, p. 151). Conflicts exist between aesthetic goals, financial planning, and technical practice on various aspects (Barkela, 2019).

The nature of the work itself may amount to conflicts, too. Artists' visions, compared to the those in the technical and management field, are rendered more freedom and involve a range of subjectivity and individualism, whereas objectivity and practicality take up more consideration in the technical field (Barkela, 2019). More specifically, the technical field and financial field have to base their work on rules, conditions, and requirements (Barkela, 2019).

Conflicts can result from the different nature of work in a group. What can also account for conflicts in a team is the tension caused by differences in a shared environment. One way to

see and manage tension is through a dialectical perspective, which normalizes the existence of ongoing struggle between two ends in a process of relationship maintenance (Kramer, 2004). Common dialectical tensions in a working environment include the group of autonomy and connectedness, the group of predictability and novelty, and the group of openness and closedness (Kramer, 2004). In Kramer's study (2004), a community theatre was examined to identify the common dialectical tensions and people's coping mechanisms in the group. Based on the study's findings, the identified dialectical tensions involve the commitment dialectic between the theatre group and other life activities, the order and emergent dialectic, the inclusion and exclusion dialectic, and the dialectic of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (Kramer, 2004). This study finds that people deal with the tensions in different ways. Depending on the specific issue, some handle it on a more individual level, while others more on a group level (Kramer, 2004). Different coping strategies are used. Some tend to communicate more explicitly about certain tension, such as by discussing with others or venting to people who share similar ideas, whereas others communicate implicitly or resorted to no communication at all by avoiding, denying, and minimizing the tension (Kramer, 2004).

By understanding the conflicts caused by the nature of work as well as the tension brought by individual and situational differences, people can better navigate themselves in a highly complex team with different people. Theatre is a place where talents and skills come together to form a collective piece of art. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate such awareness of conflicts and tensions in a group.

The Chair as the Leader

Learning that where there is a difference, there is potential for conflict and tension, a group needs a leader who can manage different interests of multiple people and fields (Barkela,

2019). In a setting of an educational theatre in a university, the leader is the chair of the theatre department. As stated, "the role of department chair...is critical in framing departmental work and interactions" (Pifer et al., 2019, p. 542). As discussed earlier, individual members or employees in a theatre workplace go through conflicts and tension between different fields, such as the aesthetic field, the management field, and the technical field. As the leader of the department, the chair experiences these conflicts and tensions at a higher level. The chair not only manages these dynamics but also balances their own responsibility as a faculty member, an advisor, a scholar, and a contributor to the school as a whole (Pifer et al., 2019). Scholar Bowman suggests that "the real work of academic chairs demands a diverse set of leadership capabilities: well-honed communication skills, problem-solving skills, conflict-resolution skills, cultural management skills, coaching skills, and transition skills'' (Wolverton et al., 2005, p. 228). While fulfilling their leadership duties, department chairs are also expected to fulfil administrative tasks, remain faculty members, and continue their scholarly research (Wolverton et al., 2005). Usually, it comes at a cost for the chair to multitask different responsibilities, as Scholar Gmelch's study shows that 65% of department chairs feel pressured to continue their scholarly research and to teach while fulfilling the administrative tasks (Wolverton et al., 2005, p. 229). Wolverton, Ackerman, and Holt (2005) argue that there is no direct correlation between a good faculty member and a good chair, meaning that a good teacher doesn't guarantee their position of being a good department chair, because the responsibilities expected and skills required are different. They pointed out a distinct difference between a researcher and a department chair (Wolverton et al., 2005). An academic researcher develops their skills through a slow and deliberate process that allows them to develop in-depth knowledge and expertise (Wolverton et al., 2005). Their research is either conducted in isolation from others, or within

small groups of people who share similar academic interests (Wolverton et al., 2005). However, the position of department chair is "a communal affair," as Wolverton, Ackerman, and Holt (2005, p. 229) called it. Unlike researchers, department chairs do not share "the luxury of long, protracted, uninterrupted expanses of time to think, ponder and write" (Wolverton et al., 2005, p. 229), and their day is usually filled up by interactions with different personnel, including faculty members in the department, students, deans, as well as faculty in other departments (Wolverton et al., 2005). Therefore, interpersonal skills are important for department chairs as well, which are not as highly emphasized as for a faculty member, or a scholarly researcher (Wolverton et al., 2005).

Ranked by the study's participants, the top responsibilities of a chair include budget management, faculty supervision and evaluation, community building, and legal aspects of the position among others (Wolverton et al., 2005). In order to handle all of these tasks, the chair has to develop skills in conflict resolution, decision-making, interpersonal communication, personnel and general management, detail-orientation, and so on (Wolverton et al., 2005). As mentioned in the former section Differences in a Team of this paper, the management field, the administrative field, and the aesthetic field are also part of the responsibilities of the chair in a educational theatre setting.

Chairship is complicated, demanding, and multi-dimensional. The department chair's versatility and flexibility are required for the department to function. The department chair can be seen as a public relations (PR) practitioner whose primary responsibility is to take care of his or her internal and external publics, especially in a theatre space. Tom Kelleher (2020) examines PR as "a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and their publics," who are "a group of people with shared interests" and who

are "organized in pursuit of a mission" (Kelleher, 2020, p. 2). Publics can be internal and external. The internal publics are the employees, who share similar interests and work together in an organization, whereas the external publics are those who share similar interests outside of an organization (Kelleher, 2020). In the case of a college theatre, the internal publics can be identified as the faculty, staff, and students of the theatre department, and the external publics include students who are not part of the production process or the department, the audience, and other people outside the theatre department. Both internal and external publics either have an influence on the organization or are influenced by it (Kelleher, 2020). However, the foundation of a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics is its internal publics (Kelleher, 2020), therefore, its employees.

The department chair as a leader of a team handles a variety of tasks while collaborating with people from different fields. In a theatre space, the chair, as discussed earlier, is in charge of bringing together the aesthetic field, management field, and the technical field through effective communication and well-rounded people skills. Meanwhile, the chair also fulfills his or her responsibility as a faculty member in the department collaborating with other faculty, as an advisor for students, as a scholar who strives to remain active in academia, and as a contributor to the school on a bigger scale. In order to create and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with their publics, the chair not only strategically communicatees internally with his or her team in the department but also people outside of this specific department. Therefore, it is logical to understand a department chair as a PR practitioner.

The Chair's Leadership

College theatre brings together the theatre department chair, other faculty and staff, as well as students. The role of the chair is exceptionally important in bringing these groups of

people together and fostering a positive and healthy culture. A major way to do so is through the chair's leadership. Department leadership is important for a department to function, and the chair as the leader of the department plays a key role in it. One type of leadership that scholars shed light on is transformational leadership.

The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by James MacGregor Burns and focuses on the process of achievement. Therefore, it stresses the importance of the team's "vision, mission, motivations, and goals" (Linabary, 2021). Since communication is the main process for leadership to take place, transformational leadership is comprised of interactive, inspirational, and empowering communication that invites group members to exchange ideas and "transcend self-interest for the sake of the group" (Men, 2014, p. 267). It is a bond that narrows the distance between leaders and team members, because it integrates "empathy, compassion, sensitivity, relationship building, and innovation" (as cited in Men, 2014, p. 267). With this communication and leadership pattern, team members are able to "clearly communicate their vision with passion" and "get things done with energy and enthusiasm" (Linabary, 2021).

Scholar Linabary (2021) identified four key elements to help organizations practice transformational leadership. The first component is idealized influence, in which leaders function as role models for team members to learn and develop trust and respect for the leader. The second element is inspirational motivation which allows the leader and the members to communicate the team's vision and steps to completing certain tasks. The third element is individualized consideration, meaning that the leader should acknowledge and celebrate individual team members' contributions to the team. The fourth element is intellectual stimulation, which requires the leader to encourage creativity and integrity among team members. Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and

intellectual stimulation function together to help a transformational leader guide his or her team towards creating a collective team spirit and using this shared spirit to guide their collective tasks (Linabary, 2021).

Besides what it can do for the group, transformational leadership also requires the leader to genuinely care for the well-being of the team members, cultivate an environment of trust, and encourage confidence-building and personal development among the team (Men, 2014). One way to genuinely care for the employees is through symmetrical internal communication. Symmetrical internal communication is a communication practice that emphasizes "trust, credibility, openness, relationships, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, feedback, adequacy of information, employee-centered style, tolerance for disagreement, and negotiation" (as cited in Men, 2014, p. 267). It is a communication process that is interactive, or two-way, in nature, which allows for dialogue development between the department and its employees. Transformational leaders should be open, empowering, and communicative with its team members, and provide the members with a meaning of being part of the group (Men, 2014).

Transformational leadership and symmetrical internal communication go hand in hand not only to cultivate an active and positive departmental culture, but also to improve employees' satisfaction. Satisfaction, defined by Hung (Men, 2014), is "a favorable feeling about the other party...[the] feeling [that] can be nurtured through a positive expectation of relationships" (p. 268). Here, the "other party" can be understood as the department as a whole or the chair. In an academic department, this positive experience can lead to trust in the leader, leader-follower relationship satisfaction, work performance, organizational commitment, and loyalty, as well as a sense of belonging.

Internal Power Relations

One way to distinguish between leaders and members are the power individuals hold in a group. There are three identified types of power, including power-over, power-from-within, and power-with (Linabary, 2021). Power-over, defined by Starhawk (as cited in Linabary, 2021), "enables one individual or group to make the decision that affect others, and to enforce control," meaning that the power on the higher end comes as a cost at the lower end, and therefore, the power is not balanced. Power-from-within highlights the notion of personal agency which allows people to communicate their needs and ideas (Linabary, 2021). Power-with is the type of power that is to "suggest and be listened to" in a group where people are equal (Linabary, 2021). In order for a healthy group to be developed and sustain, mutual respect and equality are a necessity in community and the leader should not take advantage of power-with or turn power-with into power-over (Linabary, 2021).

Another perspective to understand power is by examining the nature of the five bases of power (Linabary, 2021). First, referent power is established when an individual follows another for his or her "personal qualities, characteristics, or reputation" (Linabary, 2021). Second, expert power is when one individual follows another because of his or her more advanced knowledge or expertise (Linabary, 2021). Next, legitimate power takes place when an individual is perceived to have a right to wield power in certain ways (Linabary, 2021). Fourth, reward power is exercised when an individual controls certain rewards relevant to others (Linabary, 2021). Fifth, coercive power is established when one individual can direct some form of physical or mental reward or punishment to others (Linabary, 2021). Based on a study by Rice University (Linabary, 2021) on employee reactions to bases of power, coercive power tends to be more resisted by employees, reward and legitimate power gain more or less compliance from employees, whereas expert and

referent power score highest in generating employees' commitment. Therefore, expert power --
highlighted by one's advanced knowledge and expertise -- and referent power -- composed by
sound personal qualities, characteristics, and reputation -- are optimal for achieving mutually
beneficial and long-term relationship in a group. Moreover, the leader of a group, in addition to
fulfilling their various tasks, should also endeavor to advance their knowledge and expertise as
well as developing their interpersonal skills.

Leadership is essential in a team. However, highlighting the importance of a leader and
leadership should not come at the expense of the group's internal publics, namely, employees.
The part that employees play in an organization is often underplayed in PR and academics, and
as O'Murch (2016) noted, "internal communication is still the 'poor cousin' to external
communication" (p. 90). Thus, this section is dedicated to illuminating employee
communication. Internal communication is defined as the communication process that allows for
exchange of "rules and processes" as well as "values, purpose, strategy, goals, and brand"
(O'Murch, 2016, p. 86). Collins suggests that "workplace democracy is more ethically superior
approach than authoritarian management," but its "elastic nature" renders it unstable in an
established workplace (O'Murch, 2016, p. 84). Employee engagement matters, as studies show
that it benefits not only the individual employees' well-being, satisfaction, and commitment, but
also the productivity of the team or the organization in general (Barkela, 2019; Men, 2014;
O'Murch, 2016; Pifer et al., 2019) To foster workplace democracy, one form of power that can
empower employees in a group is power-with, giving space for back-and-forth communication
and negotiation, allowing decisions to be made through dialogue between the leader and
members, promoting an environment of inclusion (O'Murch, 2016). Through this form of power,

all members, including those with little power, are able to engage and voice their ideas in the group (O'Murch, 2016).

The leader of the department influences the shaping of the organization's culture, which, in turn, influences the department faculty members' experience in the department, therefore the students' experience, and, in turn, the department's reputation, especially in a liberal arts college (Pifer et al., 2019). When departmental culture allows for employee/faculty member satisfaction, this positive experience will also transform into positive experienc students can have in the department, as positive interactions between faculty and students greatly contribute to students' success (Pifer et al., 2019).

Employees as Major Internal Publics

From a PR perspective, employees are an essential group of stakeholders, or publics, of an organization, because employees are responsible for an organization's function, they are foundational for an organization to achieve its goals, and most importantly, employees are more "likely to have a long-term relationship with an organization" than other stakeholder groups—such as legislators, associations, media, community, and activists (O'Murch, 2016, p. 88). With a focus on employees, the leader of an organization should understand and practice the way to foster such unique relationship. O'Murch (2016) suggests leaders make time to communicate with employees, communicate clear information, explain the implications of the information communicated, involve and engage team members in conversations, and accommodate people's styles in communication. This, to a certain extent, requires the leader of a team to loosen their grip of their power or control, for effective internal communication to be interactive and empowering.

Engagement communication is an organizational practice influenced by internal communication, which can help convey organizational values to all employees and involve them with the organization's goals (Welch, 2016). Engagement communication requires leadership vision, and employees must make sense of their roles in that vision (Welch, 2016). It would be best if the organization could cultivate the alignment between employees and the organization's goals and engage employees (Welch, 2016). Organizations are encouraged to attend to the dimensions of emotion, cognition, and physicality and the physiological conditions for meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Welch, 2016).

The role of clear, consistent, and continuous communication is identified as essential for employee engagement by communication practitioners and academics (Ruck, 2016). The content and the way the content is delivered matter (Ruck, 2016). It is important for the employees to feel well-informed by receiving relevant, timely, and honest information. In a group or team setting, the leader's role is exceptionally important, because it should keep employees updated on the plans, progress, achievements, as well as changes the group experiences (Ruck, 2016). This information should not only be communicated clearly and timely but also should be communicated in the context with the organization's values (Ruck, 2016). Leadership communication plays a big role in inspiring, informing, listening to, and involving employees by providing a clear direction, building understanding and awareness, addressing concerns from employees, and creating space for the whole team to develop solutions. (Ruck, 2016). The leaders should develop certain expertise, build trustworthiness with team members, demonstrate goodwill in collaborating with one another (Ruck, 2016).

While the context is available for employee engagement, employee voice matters too. Employee voice is a communicative process of continuous dialogue between leaders and

employees (Ruck, 2016). Employees having a voice means they are able to express their ideas, raise concerns and suggest practical solutions on a continuous basis, and at the same time, the leaders should take them seriously and provide honest feedback, even if the employees' voice sounds negative to the leader (Ruck, 2016). In general, it is important for the employees to speak up and for the leaders to listen and provide feedback.

New media has paved the way for more effective internal communication to take place in today's society. Social media, for example, are "interactive, communal, and relational by nature" (Men, 2014, p. 270), and are crucial in providing face-to-face communication when people are not in the same physical space at the same time. Men's (2014) study shows that transformational leadership, employee satisfaction, and symmetrical internal communication go hand in hand because their commonalities lie in the concept of openness in voicing ideas, listening, and providing feedback between the leader and the organization's employees (Men, 2014). The two-way, especially face-to-face, communication is essential in promoting transformational leadership, employee satisfaction, and symmetrical internal communication, which is largely facilitated by new media, in which ongoing listening, feedback, and conversation are made possible (Men, 2014).

Organizational Change

It is rarely the case that a group, or a team, does not experience a change. Understanding what the change is helps a group plan for its communication. Salem (Harrison, 2016) pointed out two orders of change, with one being a "continuous learning process which results in gradual improvements in efficiency," and the other being a turning point that "[challenges] the reason why an organization does what it does" and the way it does it. What is noteworthy is that not all changes take place at an organizational level, because some changes can be more gradual in a

more specific area, while other changes can amount to an organizational change (Harrison, 2016). Some changes are an organizational decision, which is also considered planned, while others are unplanned (Harrison, 2016). Change is not always successful, and its failure could result from delayed communication, overreliance on technology, and a lack of communication of outcomes (Harrison, 2016).

Since change is sometimes inevitable, groups or organizations are expected to react in the best way they can. However, organizations can be proactive, too. Some organizational cultures are more "change-ready" by nature than others, and for effective change to take place, an organization should equip itself with culture that "encourage accountability, synergy, cross-cultural skills, managing interfaces, and financial realism" (Harrison, 2016, p. 58). The people who are in a more change-ready organization also perceive encountering change as part of their work in the organization and are always learning and communicating ideas with one another (Harrison, 2016). In this case, transformational leadership is more important than ever, as leaders create spaces that allow voices to be heard and considered and that foster two-way communication, or dialogue, to collectively develop the next step. Some effective ways to tackle change in an organization is to start at the right time, prepare the right resources and practices, understand that things are in flux, and abandon a rigid implementation plan. Organizations should also take different staff groups through the change and communicate the right content in the right way (Harrison, 2016).

Group Culture

Culture has a variety of definitions, and its meaning is always in flux. This section focuses on the communication aspect of culture. Borman sees culture as "the sum total of ways of living, organizing, and communing built up in a group of human beings and transmitted to

newcomers by means of verbal and nonverbal communication" (McAleese, 2016, p. 16). This directly aligns with Jaques' definition of organizational culture, among other early definitions -- "customary and traditional way of doing things, which is shared to a greater or lesser degree by all members, and which the new members must learn and at least partially accept" to be part of the organization and achieve the organization's goals (McAleese, 2016, p. 15).

The way people think guides the way people do things, and the way people do things reinforce the way people think. This back-and-forth process emphasizes the way a group does things, the "essential expectations of the group members established by the group" (Linabary, 2021), also known as group norms. Because a certain way of doing things becomes normal to a group, it gradually becomes a norm for group members to abide by and judge other members if they violate the norm either intentionally or unintentionally. As Brilhart and Galanes noted, these general norms "direct the behavior of the group as a whole" (Linabary, 2021). There is another type of norm called role-specific norm, which is closely associate with an individual member's particular role, such as the group leader (Linabary, 2021). Group norms inform members what it takes to be a part of the group. They also help an organization function. In Feldman's study (Linabary, 2021), norms are understood to serve the function of facilitating group survival, informing expected behaviors, helping avoid embarrassing situations, and helping identify the group and express its values to others.

Reflecting on the elements that can make up a group culture, in addition to the differences of tasks, cultural differences should not be underplayed. Studies show that diversity brings innovation to the team and can avoid group think, in which group members feel pressured to avoid conflict and therefore miss the opportunity to bring in new or different ideas (Linabary,

2021). As the world becomes more global and more people with diverse cultural background collaborate in a workplace, cultural intelligence is essential in fostering a group environment.

Cultural intelligence is "a competency and a skill that enables individuals to function effectively in cross-cultural environments" (Linabary, 2021), meaning that it can be learned, practiced, developed, and improved. Understanding the way cultural intelligence functions in human interactions requires an examination of the areas that can lead to different views people may hold. Some of them include: high context/low context—people's high or low reliance on context in verbal communication; uncertainty avoidance—the degree of one's comfortability of ambiguity; and masculinity or femininity—the degree to which a culture values masculine traits such as assertiveness, or feminine traits such as caring for others (Dhanesh, n.d.; Linabary, 2021). Other dimensions include high or low power distance, meaning that people have a different tendency to feel more comfortable in a more hierarchal structure or in a more equal structure (Linabary, 2021). The individualism/collectivism tackles the difference in emphasizing individuality and personal uniqueness versus group solidarity and individuals' relation to the group as a whole (Linabary, 2021). The short/long-term orientation posits the difference in the way people focus on short- or long-term goals and tasks, and the monochromatic/polychromatic deals with the way people see time with some completing one task at a time and others multi-talking (Linabary, 2021). Differences in culture and individuals can be examined through the dimensions discussed above. These dimensions are essential in understanding the way an individual group member works, and they are also important for the whole group to identify and make use of these patterns in order to collaborate.

Conclusion

This paper examines group communication from a leadership and internal communication perspective. Current research gathers, organizes, and analyzes knowledge from literatures as well as previous studies that encompass general organizational settings and more specific theatre contexts. In the Introduction, this paper delivers the importance of communication and the interconnectedness between communication and theatre. The Literature Review section provides a background examination of the differences involved in a theatre as well as the conflicts and tensions cause by the inevitable differences. It then deeply explores the position of department chair in an academic setting as well as the chair's responsibility and leadership. Furthermore, an emphasis is put on internal power relations and internal employees, to examine the often underestimated part of a team. Additionally, organizational change and group culture are discussed to examine group dynamics on a bigger context, which highlights the importance of communication and raises awareness of the ever-ongoing difference-dynamics.

This paper presents knowledge from general contexts, such as organizational change and employees, as well as more specific contexts, such as chairship in college department and theatre productions. The goal is to bring a variety of viewpoints together to form a strategy for related groups, teams, or organizations to assist their communication process. What's more is the hope for proper acknowledgement for the effort leaders and members put forth in their work which benefits a bigger community.

Chapter Two: Practical Component

Chapter One is a literature review of the practices of leadership and internal communication that can serve as a guideline to examine and strategize the communication process in a theatre setting. Using this review as a guide, I produced a podcast episode with Dr. Wendy-Marie Martin, the chair of the Hollins University undergraduate theatre department, to understand her leadership and her team dynamics in the complex and multi-layered environment of educational theatre.

The essence of the podcast is about the content and the value of the message that is being delivered to the audience. I am aware of the fact that our attention span is gradually reduced due to daily consumption of high-volume information available everywhere, and I appreciate my audience for spending time listening to the episode. At this point, I am more focused on the quality and the values of the content. Therefore, I believe it is important to have the messages delivered to the community and beyond.

The process of this podcast production took three weeks to complete, including the processes of recording and editing. I recorded three different versions, and the best is the last one which was recorded on Monday, April 11, 2022. What I learned from this process is the art of asking question and being the audience's advocate. In my role as the host, or interviewer, I need to ask questions that lead to answers of valuable information, and at the same time move the conversation along while representing the audience's best interest by asking what they are probably interested in knowing. In addition, I learned that it is fine to be put on the spot. In the past, I over-relied on scripts that I prepared for myself, because I am afraid to "be wrong." In this production process, being "right" by limiting myself to the pre-written script came at the cost

of losing spontaneity and authenticity. When it becomes all natural, not only does it sound better, but genuineness also seeps through. We hear the excitement, the curiosity, and the honesty.

The most important thing is to develop a transparent conversation that makes the department's work and mission heard, that inspires the community as a whole, and that supports an understanding and empathetic environment in which collective action and storytelling take place. I also aim to develop more appreciation for the department, faculty, and staff, who help make our higher education at Hollins possible. I see this project as both a souvenir of my educational journey at Hollins and an experiment that I learn from as I move on.

I overcame a lot of hurdles throughout my journey in seeking higher education. When I look back, I appreciate myself for always moving forward. The spirit of a self-starter accompanied me throughout my time at Hollins, and it remains indispensable for my academic performance today. I appreciate my professors for acknowledging my work and encouraging me to go the extra mile. Their scholarship and care for students inspire me to go further in academics and be a better person every day. Therefore, one of the major things I want to do in my life is to let my professors know that I appreciate them from the bottom of my heart. As a Chinese idiom says, "吾(wu)日(ri)三(san)省(xing)吾(wu)身(shen)," meaning "I reflect on myself multiple times a day". Besides my studies and being, I also reflect on the effort professors put into students. And one thing that I can do is to give back with acknowledgement and gratefulness.

This podcast episode, "From Vision To Practice: A Conversation with Wendy-Marie"[1], entails my appreciation for Hollins Theatre department, but to a bigger extent, it is my gift for all my professors and the whole Hollins community. As Chapter Two highlights department chair's care for his or her colleagues, this podcast is designed to care for our chair.

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[1] Link to the podcast episode: https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-vhrs9-1226086

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