

Role Of Self-Awareness In Interpersonal Communication

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Self-Awareness and Interpersonal Communication in The Birdcage

Interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in developing a healthy relationship, regardless of what phase of communication is effective. As stated by Canary and Beth (15), ineffective communication can create an interpersonal gap, and therefore, we should be culturally sensitive when communicating with different people. Effective communication can only be established when two types of communication complement each other and that is verbal and nonverbal. In most cases, culture affects both verbal and nonverbal since people brought up from different backgrounds have different understandings and nonverbal and verbal cannot be similar. Adopting self awareness, therefore, helps in addressing cultural gaps in interpersonal communication and hence helps in building self-esteem, which is essential in interpersonal communication. However, this paper tends to analyze the role of self-awareness in interpersonal communication in correlation with cultural practices as portrayed in the movie “Birdcage” focusing on two characters, Armand Goldman and Albert Goldman.

The Birdcage is a comedy movie of 1996, directed by Mike Nichols and featuring Albert Goldmine and Armand Goldman as the main characters. The movie gives the viewers a glimpse of how the two gay couples maintained their relationship for a long time. In the film, Armand Goldman plays the role of the club owner and the man, while Albert plays the role of a woman in the film. Albert also plays the role of a star attraction in the club. In a number of scenes, Albert and Armand are captured and engaged in a heated debate on their responsibilities as a family and couple. Armand seems to be calm and exploring personal control when it comes to discussion of their personal affairs. He uses a low tone and focuses on a reconciliatory tone to avoid getting the context out of the discussion. As stated by Wave (52), sexuality and gender influence personal behaviour and, therefore, impact interpersonal communication. Armand seems to be taking full control of the issues, and he seems to be self-aware and responsive in exercising communication. Armand informed Albert that it is good for you to be brought into the reality of society. In short, Albert should accept his position and their culture as well.

Tone, Conflict Resolution, and Relational Communication

When things seem not to be going well, the two couples resort to cordial talk in a low voice. They organize a trip for a holiday to reignite their bond. Armand and Albert went to each other several times to reconnect and strengthen their bond when they both realized that something was not right in their relationship. Both believe that a relationship is based on understanding and can only be built by effective communication (Wave 48). In order to exercise less disgrace in their relationship, the couple use less inflammatory language and always keen to detail when communicating. Canary (24) pointed out that communication can easily be distorted and, therefore, makes interpersonal communication ineffective. An individual should be keen and attentive to grasp the details of the message. And the fact that Armand and Albert were gay couples, their communication was always cordial, full of humour and satire to avoid [communication breakdown](#).

In the movie “Birdcage”, different tones and voices are used by characters to communicate or convey their messages. Armand seems to exercise self-awareness and dictate voice, which is basically meant to show who is in charge. It is something which is common in most family setups where male tends to use their voice to communicate just to feel the ego of being in charge. In the film, Albert plays the role of star attraction because he plays the role of a woman. It is something common on most movies where women are given less role to play in a movie (Murphy 21). Though the couples acted as gay couples, why would Armand Goldman play the role of star attraction instead of Albert Goldman? Albert Goldman speaks with a low tone and is submissive in most of his communication.

Dignity, Shared Values, and Character Interaction

William (Armand) seems to be more dignified in the film, especially in the way he handles other people. He is not jumping around the screen as a witness with other characters. In The Birdcage, he plays brilliantly and flawlessly. Armand seems to be more subdued but does not act weird or strange on the stage. He keeps the conversation low and uses a respectable voice when communicating with other people. For instance, in the club, he informs Albert to play his job, but unexpectedly, Albert seems to be unhappy because of the feeling that Armand would want to be in charge all the time and give orders around. In the book “Interpersonal communication” author Wave narrated that effective communication can be a great challenge to homosexual couples, especially when the roles are not defined well (pg.50). Albert believes Armand always wanted to have the final say on every issue, which downgrade his opinion and therefore, he feels he Armand is not giving him an opportunity contribute and make his opinion known.

It seems that Albert and Armand had a common interest and belief in most of the things they did. This is witnessed in their mode of communication and reaction. Throughout the movie, the couples seems to be belief on consultation, listening and assertiveness to make sure that there is less confrontation

in their relationship. The couples work together in a club and rarely have a confrontation because of the mode of communication between them. Armand communicates directly and never shies away from handling any problem. In the movie, he informs Albert to accept the situation at the moment. It meant that they were gay, and he was the man. This happened when Albert confronted him in the club regarding his contribution to their relationship.

Communication Styles and Relationship Management

Throughout the movie, Armand stretches his warm and candid communication techniques to develop a strong bond between them and to avoid any kind of misunderstanding which could arise. Armand also adopted a close communication method to address issues between them and also to grow care for Albert. Evidently, Armand managed to rise above his character of shutting down Albert and other people. He becomes aware that in communication, he must be willing to give others a chance to express their feeling, which is the best method to allow relationships to grow. Armand became willing to sit down with Albert to discuss problems in their relationship. They also started to visit different places as a way of building their relationship and growing the connection they shared.

In the film, nonverbal communication is rarely used since it can be interpreted differently. Most of their communication is verbal and direct, and this helped in avoiding creating confusion, which could have led to greater misunderstanding between the couples. Though some misunderstanding could arise a time, the Albert and Armand developed their own way of solving a problem and this was through consultation and taking a break to a place where the two of them could sit down and heatedly have a fruitful discussion. It is a great idea that they develop to make sure that the communication between them is cordial and effective to avoid getting into problems due to misunderstanding. Albert talks a lot, but he takes control of what he says. It is noted that Albert develops listening tactics to embrace their relationship and to make sure that they do not get off the affairs. Therefore, Albert is a good listener, but he becomes demanding, especially when he wants to get something from Armand. It is because Albert and Armand are gay couples, and initiating effective communication could be a problem is

However, Albert is a bit out of control, has a high temper and like attracting attention. But he consults and speaks his mind as well. Albert seems to be seeking a lot of attention and following Armand most of the time. He understands when and where to engage Armand in a serious conversation. It shows improvement in the way he handles interpersonal communication to avoid getting into trouble, which can break their relationship. When an issue arose, he could pull Armand aside to have a candid discussion where nobody could hear them. In the movie, Armand pulled Albert's side many times to have a candid dialogue and apology when he felt he went overboard during their discussion where the misunderstanding was arising.

Humor, Mutual Understanding, and Conclusion

In the scenes in the movie, Albert and Armand discussed some of the obvious pleasures in both material and each other. The conversation was filled with undeniable humour as they faced off about the matter of sexuality and gender. Albert acted soft and always wanted to prove a point about who was in charge. The issue of sexuality and gender is deeply grounded in society, and therefore, the discussion was centred on the culture of homosexuality to help Albert come to the reality of society. Seemingly, Armand is exercising self-awareness to maintain cordial communication with Albert.

Albert acts calm and listens to comprehend the idea presented by his partner, and this is witnessed in several scenes. According to Canary and Beth (18) gender and sexuality culture influences communication due to the fact that it determines the tone and behavior which is essential in interpersonal communication. Therefore, Albert exercises a lot of aggressiveness when communicating and always feels he is being denied an eye. It causes communication breakdown, which can lead to conflict or relationship breakup. For instance, in one of the scenes in a club, Albert shows a lot of displeasure with the way Armand seems to be controlling and ordering things around. Though it was a business environment, Armand might have had a genuine reason for business. Albert felt disgraced by the action.

In conclusion, the movie *Birdcage* is a classic example of a film in which characters demonstrate a high level of interpersonal communication. Despite being gay couples, they kept their level of communication cordial, which helped in building a greater understanding, which the two enjoyed throughout the film. Albert and Armand control their temper, voice and tone and use more verbal than nonverbal communication. It strengthens their relationship throughout the film, and even when issues arise, they find a place and solve their misunderstanding amicably without letting it grow into a bigger problem. Self-awareness in interpersonal communication between the couples so they could maintain their relationship. In the movie, Albert Goldman continuously acts smart and mature to protect Albert and make sure that they keep their relationship strong. The film introduces the viewers to a new type of culture and shows how two couples interact in different scenes of the play. The *Birdcage* is a movie that carries a very serious message about the culture of homosexuality.

Works Cited

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