



HISPANIC BEHAVIOR

LATINAS - RECOGNITION AND TRUST

Latina gossip follows a pattern similar to that of white women, except that Latinas seem to gossip even more than white women do. Perhaps the more conflict avoidant a culture is, the more it relies upon gossip as a way to deal with issues and align relationships. A common gossip theme of Latinas in the workplace (Hispanics, generally) is over recognition and parity (or lack thereof). For example, at a week-long training program in Southern California Latinos were unhappy with the representation of the Latino segment which began the second day of the program. This unhappiness was registered quickly with the resident Hispanic diversity focal who, acting as the authorized and designated broker, brought the matter up to those of us in charge of the program. At issue was a) the amount of information that was covered and b) the amount of time given to the program relative to the amount of time that had been given to the African American segment the day before. The matter of representation and proportionality – respect or dignidad is the ultimate issue-- was especially strong because the program was being done in Southern California which, demographically, is heavily, if not preponderantly, Hispanic, and the considerable number of Hispanic participants in the program. Culturally relevant was the collective way the matter was handled among Hispanics themselves and then, through a broker or mediator, communicated to those in charge. Also relevant was the difficulty in trying to repair the damage after the fact. At issue were not only matters of proportional representation –we were ultimately able later to create a better program balance there— but residual matters of hurt pride and anger that the group felt over having been initially disrespected, which, no matter what we tried to do afterwards, we were not entirely able to dispel.

Another gossip theme revolves around trust. Deep levels of trust develop among insiders, often by creating personal relationships outside of the workplace. Insiders of a clique spend time creating solidarity and getting to know each other's families. Latina women have their "chismes" or gossip. Sometimes whispering even happens in the presence of others. Covering one's mouth with fingertips is sometimes considered "private". For Latinas, it is not considered rude to do this in the presence of others. One Latina talked about connecting with another within the company. She said, "We kept each other sane. In order to survive within the company, and try to get ahead, we would process



collectively, going over data points and information, trying to figure out white people. She had an amazing work ethic. She was also very nurturing, taking care of both people and things. Once you have loyalty with her, she is fiercely loyal!”

2 Harrison, P. C. 1972. *The Drama of Nommo*. New York: Grove.

3 Kochman, T. 1981. *Black and White Styles in Conflict*: The University of Chicago Press.

4 Ibid.