Two bilingual staff members working together are communicating in their own language and continue to do so as they're approached by an English speaking staff member. They stop and answer the English speaking staff in English and then continue to communicate with each other in their native tongue. The English speaking staff member leaves feeling frustrated and wary that they are speaking about her. She shares her experience with other English speaking staff and all agree that they have had the same experience and are equally frustrated. There is consensus that even though the bilingual staff may be ‘good workers’ they should be forced to speak English at all times in the workplace after all it is the language of the majority. A more vocal English speaking staff says loudly, “If they want to keep their jobs they should speak English only or go back to their own country!”

There is an ongoing issue in the workplace where bilingual staff members speak to each other in their native tongue in the presence of monolingual peers. This has led to complaints from monolingual staff because they feel that they are being discussed. Tension between staff members is evident.

* * * *

Consideration Questions

• What is the English-speaking staff member’s current reality?

• What is the bilingual staff’s current reality?

• What could each party have done differently to acknowledge the other’s reality?

• What does honest validation look like in this scenario?

• What would be the shared preferred outcomes of this scenario?

• How can each person negotiate to achieve these outcomes?

• What actions can be taken by each person to achieve the preferred outcomes?
Mona, a counselor at a community mental health agency, was filling out intake paperwork with a new adult client. She wondered if some of the questions on the form would feel invasive to her client, who was Cambodian. She had worked with clients from this ethnicity before, and knew that until she built rapport and trust there would be discomfort in answering questions such as:

“Have you ever been sexually abused?” or “Have you ever tried to hurt yourself?” or “Are you a victim of domestic violence?”

Revealing private family information can be a taboo for many cultures. The more that Mona thought about it, the more concerned she was that the intake procedure might put up barriers in her relationship-building with clients. But, the agency had a rule that the intake form had to be completed fully.

1. How can Mona ask the required questions and preserve her relationship with her client?
2. Who could Mona consult with to figure out how to handle sensitive questions?
3. Are there any questions that you have ever wondered how to ask a certain client?

* * * *

Consideration Questions

- What are the cultural challenges?
- What does honest validation look like in this scenario?
- What would be the shared preferred outcomes of this scenario?
- What actions can be taken by Maria to achieve the preferred outcomes?
Luisa the Grandmother

Jennifer, a Children’s Village nurse, and her Spanish speaking interpreter come to the home of Patricia Gomez, a new mother with a two week old son, Ramon. Ramon was born with a cleft palate. They are greeted at the door by Ramon’s grandmother, Luisa. Luisa brings them inside and immediately begins to ask questions through the interpreter about how Ramon should be fed. Luisa seems very concerned and asks many questions. After answering many questions, Jennifer becomes frustrated and says, “Now we really need to see Patricia and Ramon. They need to be a part if this conversation.”

In response, Luisa angrily gets up and launches into a long speech in Spanish, which the interpreter interprets for Jennifer: “I don’t understand!! Why do you need to see her? She’s in the bedroom with Ramon and doesn’t need to be out here. All these nurses and doctors, what do they know about what Ramon and Patricia need? I don’t know what sin was committed that he was punished with this cleft palate!! Such a challenge! Why can’t you just tell me how we should feed him? Why do you need to see him? Don’t you know what a cleft palate looks like?”

1. Why does Luisa react this way?
2. How should Jennifer (and/or the interpreter) respond?
3. What could Jennifer (and/or the interpreter) have done differently?

There can be cultural barriers when communicating with the new mothers in Latino culture, because often the grandmother will try to make all of the decision for the care for the newborn, and it may be difficult to be respectful of both new mom and grandmothers’ role within the Latino culture. Members of the Latino community may also have specific beliefs about children with special needs and how it can be sometimes viewed as a punishment from God for a sin committed.

What could have been done differently for a different outcome in this cross-cultural interaction?

* * * *

Consideration Questions

- What are the cultural challenges?
• What does honest validation look like in this scenario?

• What would be the **shared** preferred outcomes of this scenario?

• What actions can be taken by Maria to achieve the preferred outcomes?
A new Mexican immigrant family, the Ronaldos, join an ABA intervention program for families with Autistic children. Mr. Ronaldo was recently hired by Microsoft and moved his family from the suburbs of Mexico City to Bellevue, Washington, where they have many other elderly family members that emigrated recently. Mrs. Ronaldo stays at home with their five year old son, Abel, who was recently diagnosed with Autism just a few weeks ago. Mrs. Ronaldo speaks limited English.

The Ronaldos are in their intake and assessment meeting with the ABA therapist. An interpreter is not present for Mrs. Ronaldo. One of the goals they would like to include in the treatment plan is that Abel learn to look at and hug and kiss his elders when they greet family members upon entering social functions. Mr. Ronaldo explains that this has been a point of frustration for them because Abel “refuses” to greet their family members appropriately and throws embarrassing tantrums and for this Abel is punished. Upon hearing this the PBI therapist interrupts Mr. Ronaldo and explains that Abel’s inability to greet people is a manifestation of his autism. Mr. Ronaldo interrupts her and emphasizes the extreme cultural importance of respecting your elders and acknowledging community members when you enter their home, regardless of any disability. The therapist repeats the same message to the Ronaldos and adds that they must try to put themselves in his sensory sensitive shoes. Mr. Ronaldo passionately responds saying “Our son needs to be raised in our cultural traditions!” Mrs. Ronaldo remains quiet as tears begin to escape her and Mr. Ronaldo begins to be upset. He asks for a new ABA therapist.

What could have been done differently for a different outcome in this cross cultural interaction?

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Consider the Five Steps

Step 1: Self- & Other-Awareness

Self-Awareness
• What is the PBI Therapists’ current lens and reality?

• From what cultural framework might the ABA Therapist tool box be coming from?
Other-Awareness

- What is Mr. Ronaldos current lens and reality?
- What is Mrs. Ronaldos current lens and reality?

Step 2: Acknowledgement

- What could the ABA therapist do to acknowledge the reality of the Ronaldos and her own?

Step 3: Honest Validation

- What does honest validation look like in this scenario on behalf of the ABA Therapist?

Step 4: Negotiate

- What would be the shared preferred outcomes of this scenario?
- How can each person negotiate to achieve these outcomes?

Step 5: Action

- What actions can be taken by each person to achieve the preferred outcomes?