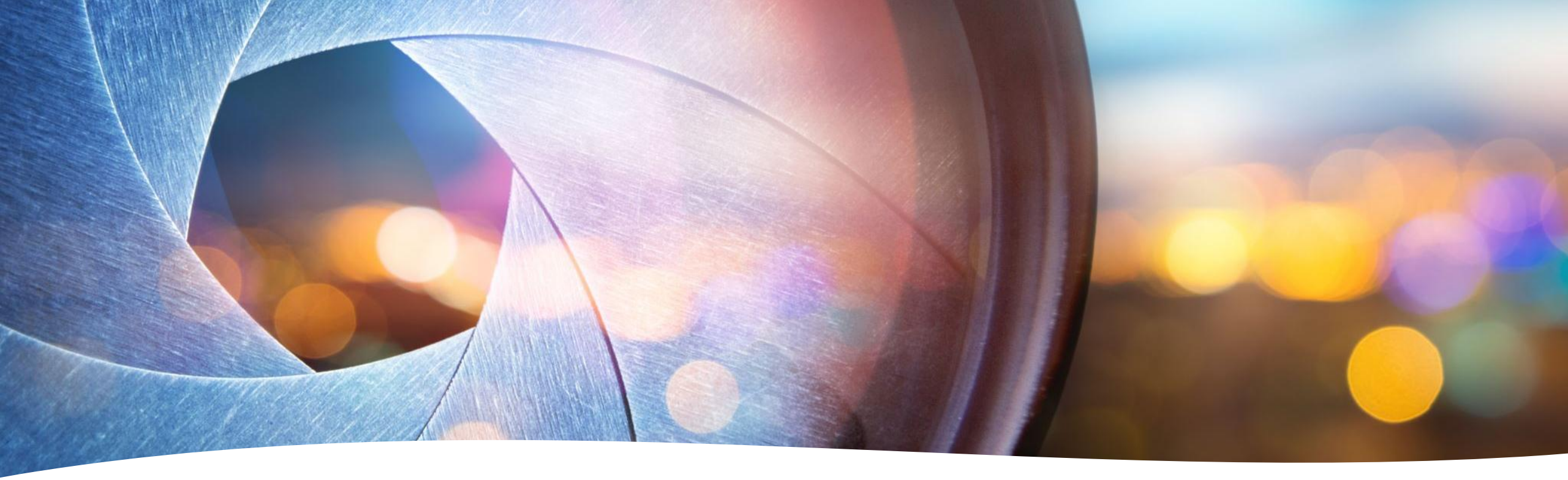
Cross-Cultural Considerations:

Connecting Versus Colliding

Community Workforce Institute

James Figueiredo, Ed.M



True or False?

1. Common sense is determined by culture.
2. Communication styles are rooted in culture.
3. To improve cross-cultural interactions, the first step recommended by experts is to understand the cultural values and beliefs of others.

A Definition of Culture

Beliefs, values, customs, and social behavior shared by a group of people with common identity. Identity may be based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, health condition, education, income, place, profession, history, or other factors.

Culture also includes organizational cultures, which are reflected in how organizations deliver services.

MA Department of Public Health

Aspects of Community and Culture

Culture

- Time
- Language
- Values
- Expected behavior, Courtesy
- Practices, Customs
- Roles and Relationships
- Verbal and non-verbal communication styles

Cultural Greetings (with Option to Pass)

United States: Firm handshake accompanied by direct eye contact

Nigeria: A slight nod and soft handshake with very brief eye contact

Japan: Bow slightly from the waist

Nepal: Press palms together and say softly “Namaste”

Niger: Raise your arm up high, move your first in a circular motion and say “WooShay!”

Philippines: The older person keeps their fist out and the younger person bows until their forehead touches the elders knuckles.

Maori (New Zealand): Touch foreheads and noses

Inuit (Northern Canada): Take turns spitting on each other’s shoes

Inuit (Alaska): Rub noses together

Culture is Like an Iceberg

How So?

Rules to Live By?

Golden Rule

“Treat others the way you want to be treated”

Platinum Rule

“Treat others the way they want to be treated”

IT'S NOT
ABOUT
THE
NAIL

Important to Remember:

Culture varies from local group to group

Culture co-exists with individual distinctness

Culture endures and evolves – it is never static

Culture is our lens, and our learned view of life

What Do You See?

Décor
Souvenir
Place of Prayer
Grandma's House
Antique Shop
Foot Warmer
Other?

Stereotyping vs. Generalizing

What is the Difference?

Stereotype

a "stopping point". A restrictive schema that is assumed to represent everything important about a person

Generalization

a "starting point" from which a person can go on to more accurately understand the needs of an individual

"The problem with stereotypes is not that they are incorrect, but that they are incomplete.

No one is a 'single story'."

-Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Values Associated with Dominant US Culture

- Equality
- Individualism (self-help)
- Privacy
- Future Orientation (planning ahead)
- Informality
- Directness
- Efficiency

Is There Such Thing as Drug Culture?

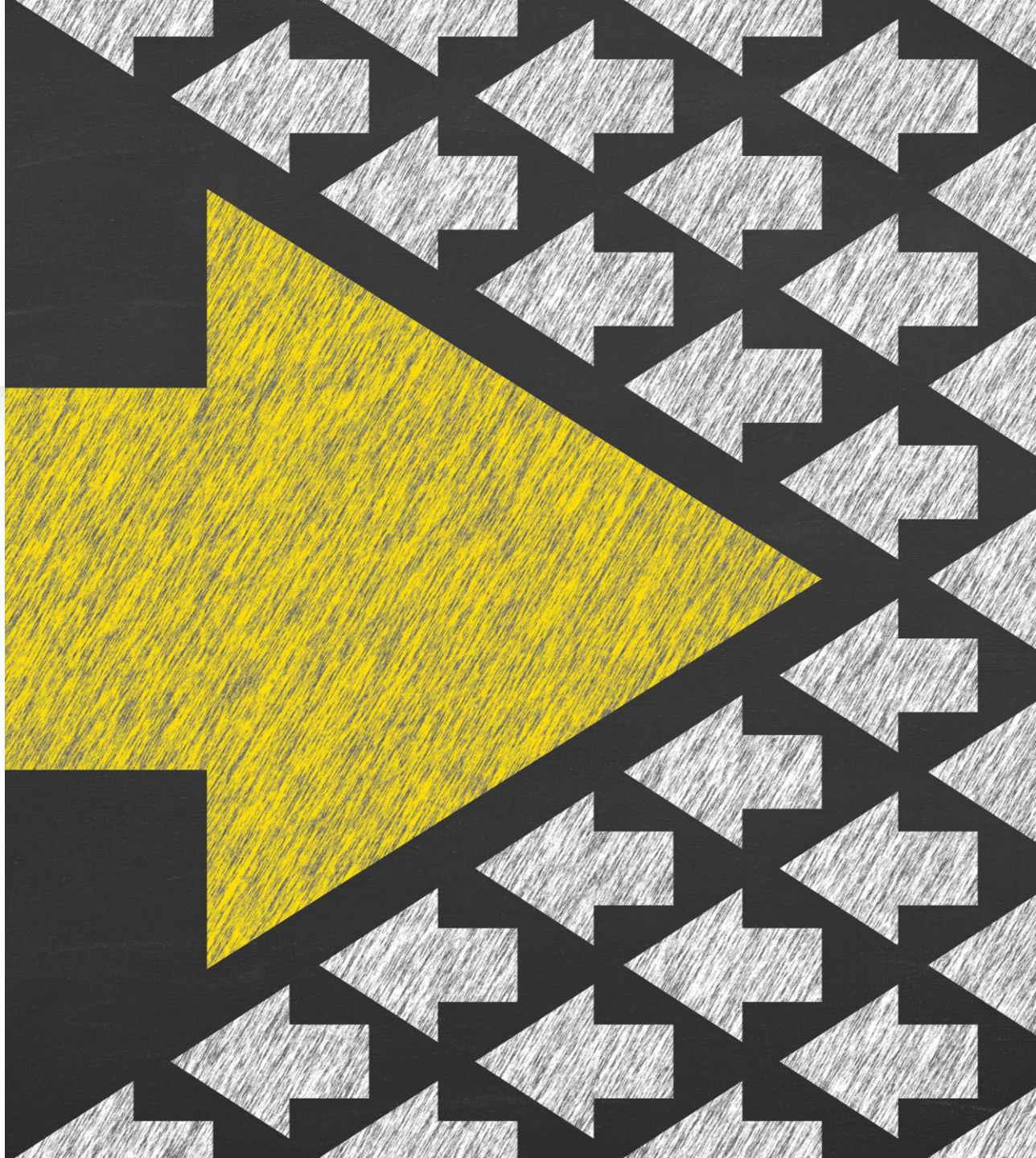
EVERYTHING COVERED BUT HER EYES, WHAT A CRUEL MALE-DOMINATED CULTURE!
NOTHING COVERED BUT HER EYES, WHAT A CRUEL MALE-DOMINATED CULTURE!

Bidirectional Ethnocentrism

Bidirectional = In both directions.

Ethnocentrism= The tendency to view one's own culture, values, or norms as the "right" or "normal" way of being.

Bidirectional ethnocentrism happens when both parties feel disrespected or dismissed, and genuine empathy is blocked.



The Importance of Stories

"They want my symptoms, but not my stories."

-Somali patient at Community Health Center

The 4 C’s Mini-Assessment

Concern

Cause

Cure

Challenges

Cultural GPS

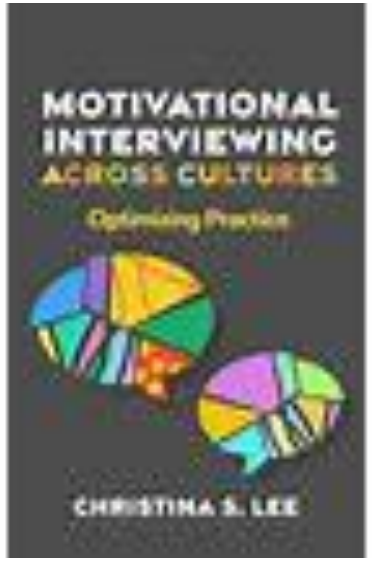
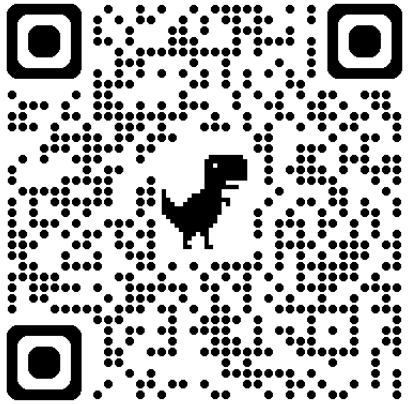
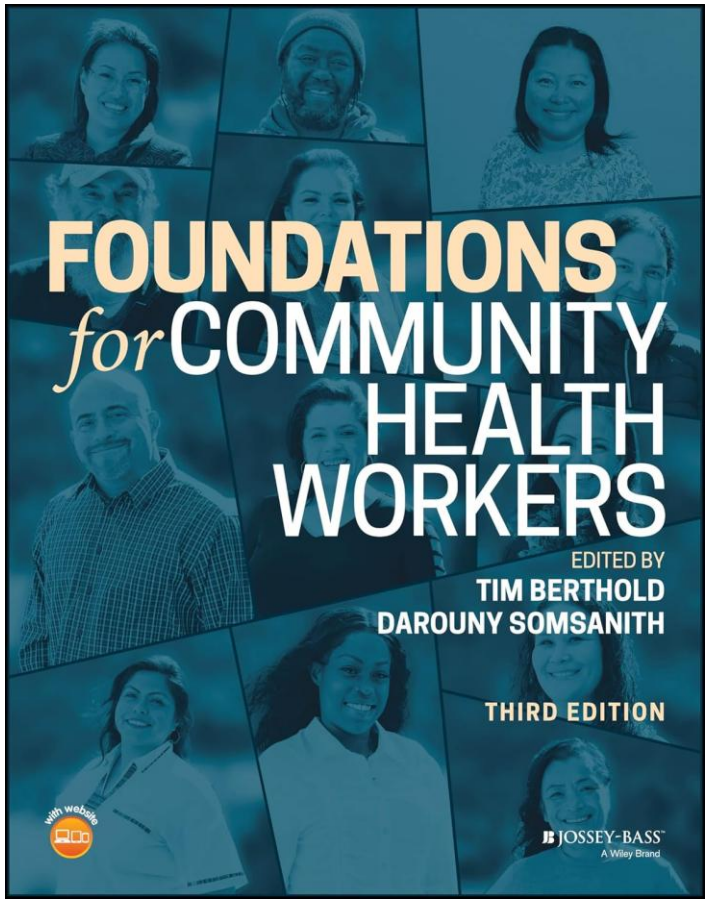
Pause	Pause before assuming sameness.
Notice	Notice when you are operating out of your comfort zone.
Ask	Ask what matters to them.
Adapt	Adapt your communication style.
Reflect on	Reflect on the difference between empathy and ethnocentrism.

High Value Questions

The Late Arrival

A peer coach arrives 10 minutes late to a multidisciplinary team meeting. The clinician sighs and says, “Time management is part of professionalism.” The peer shuts down and doesn’t speak again.”

1. What unseen cultural differences might be at play?
2. How could each person respond differently?

Recommended Reading

- HRSA TIPS 59
- Motivational Interviewing Across Cultures
- Foundations for Community Health Workers