CHAPTER 8

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL COMPETENCE

Brian Ogawa, D. Min.[*]

Given the changing face of America and its growing cultural and spiritual diversity, it is essential for victim service providers to be increasingly sensitive to the beliefs, attitudes, and values of the victims they serve. This chapter describes best practices in cultural and spiritual competence as well as a number of barriers that service providers and victims face in communication and understanding. Also offered here are some strategies for self development and growth in cultural and spiritual awareness and sensitivity.

**NVAA Module 8
Learning Objectives**

- Define cultural and spiritual competence.
- Recognize the multidimensional nature of culture.
- Explain the importance of cultural considerations in providing victim services.
- Describe common barriers to providing culturally and spiritually competent services.
- Identify specific skills, strategies, and resources required to effectively serve diverse crime victims.

OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL COMPETENCE

The nature and extent of trauma and its aftermath for victims are never simplistic, ordinary, or universal. Each victim's experience intertwines with a number of variables, including intervening circumstances, relation to the offender, availability and timeliness of support, and racial, ethnic, and spiritual background. Humans in the midst of struggle share the bond of a search for well-being. Notwithstanding, this bond is experienced through a prism replete with "cultural and spiritual colorations." Every criminal justice and crime-related issue is thus fundamentally multicultural (OVC, 1998, p. 157).

America Is Changing

W.E.B. Dubois (1919) observed that *the* problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the color line. Race relations in the United States were historically marked with the successes and failures of blacks and whites to share equality in our nation.

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[*] The author of this chapter is Brian Ogawa, D. Min., Washburn University, Topeka, KS.

Population changes from 1990 to 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001), however, reveal a new dynamic in demographics as the result of an immigration boom. The foreign-born population increased 57.4 percent during that decade with the addition of about 10 million immigrants. The color line became color *lines*. As Molefi Asante has observed, "Once America was a microcosm of European nationalities. Today America is a microcosm of the world" (Henry, 1990**,** p. 29).

EXHIBIT VIII-1
U.S. POPULATION 1990-2000 (U.S. CENSUS)

Race/Ethnicity	Population (Millions)	Growth (%)
Hispanic	35.5	57.9
Asian	11.9	48.3
American Indian	4.1	26.4
Black	36.4	15.6
White	216.9	5.9

Since the turn of the century, the United States has become even more pluralistic, with the white population decreasing proportionately. This new demographic is fueled by both immigration patterns and differential birthrates.

In the United States in 2005, 12.4 percent of the U.S. population was foreign-born, compared with 11.2 percent in 2000 and 7.9 percent in 1990. Within that 12.4 percent,

- 53.5 percent were born in Latin America.
- 26.7 percent were born in Asia.
- 13.6 percent were born in Europe.
- 3.5 percent were born in Africa.
- 2.3 percent were born in other North American countries such as Canada, Greenland, Bermuda, etc. (Migration Information, 2007).

According to the PEW Hispanic Center (Passel, 2006) there are now more than 37 million legal immigrants in the United States; more than a million became citizens every year during the 2000s. More than half of them are change-of-status immigrants already

within the United States. The total unauthorized population is estimated to be 11.5 to 12 million.

Looking at one state, Texas, the population has doubled since 1970; since 2004, less than half the population has been Anglo. Projections are that 65 percent of the state will be Hispanic in 2010. Between 1990 and 2030, the state will grow at the rate of 20.4 percent for the Anglo population, 62 percent for blacks, 257.6 percent for Hispanics, and 648.4 percent for others, primarily Asian. This means that 87.5 percent of the change will be due to growth in minority populations. Almost 75 percent of this growth will be due to immigrants and their first-generation descendants (Murdock et al., 1997).

New immigrants, as contrasted with those whose families immigrated generations ago, are usually still closely tied to their own cultural and spiritual practices. Without at least some understanding of these practices, not to mention language itself, victim service providers will be unable to offer significant and meaningful services. After a generation or two, immigrants tend to become more "Americanized," and our more standard services may be more appropriate, even though they still need to be culturally and spiritually sensitive.

Culture

What is culture and, consequently, cultural competency for victim assistance? A straightforward definition of culture is "the shared values, beliefs, and traditions that guide and structure a certain people's lifeway." The "glue" that holds a group or community together (Poindexter and Valentine, 2007) includes specific attitudes and behaviors, communication styles, relationship matrices, religious practices, and paradigms of spirituality. Every aspect of living has some cultural underpinning to help ensure the health, cohesiveness, and continuation of the group. Cultures are also inherently diverse within themselves. People within a given culture may vary in how they approach and cope with victimization and trauma, but this does not mean that a particular perspective or method is "strange," "primitive," or useless. It is therefore important to understand and appreciate the ways dissimilar cultures view suffering and healing, relate to the criminal justice system, and are best served by victim assistance.

The more we understand the nature and purpose of culture, the more we become effective in serving across cultural differences. All people desire the same things in life but may take different paths to reach those outcomes. It is the hallmark of any culture to sustain its essential elements while at the same time carefully adapting to changing needs. Culture is not static. Victim assistance providers must be aware of specific cultural rubrics without

assuming that they are fixed in time and place. What is considered traditional culture for some may be different for others.

Is there then an American culture? Have successive immigrant cultures been reduced to a singular "melting pot?" We may speak about American freedoms as the attributes that attract immigrant groups to our shores, but these very same freedoms allow and encourage the fruition of a multifaceted American culture. Newcomers change society even as society changes its newcomers. Culture in America, therefore, will always be progressive and open as to what "real Americans" look like, how they act, and how they speak.

Unfortunately, we are most often peripheral observers and dabblers of cultural expressions that are commercialized for entertainment and amusement. We too casually examine cultures through music, dance, arts, and food. Attending a Cinco de Mayo festival, watching an American Indian powwow, or enjoying Chinese noodles do not in and of themselves make us knowledgeable about the underlying historical and spiritual meanings of these cultural forms. We are prone to dismiss their significance for these respective peoples. There is, however, a deeper culture that has been described by Cushner (1996, p. 215) as the overwhelming mass of the iceberg below the surface. It is here where values, norms of behavior, and world view must be examined "if interactions across cultural boundaries are to be effective."

It is also critical to note that race is not synonymous with culture. An example is the identifying term "Black Portuguese," indicating a person who is racially black African but culturally Portuguese as a result of colonization. This is one reason why the mere portrayal of a variety of races in victim assistance materials and media does not ever suffice as evidence of cultural competence. These depictions are important (Ogawa, 1997), but only in that they apparently make victim assistance available to all people. In reality, those within a certain racial group can be more culturally varied than those between races. There are, for example, common threads woven into the African American experience. Residents of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, however, may have more in common with non-African Americans in Hawaii than their racial counterparts in Chicago because of the peculiarities of urban and island cultures.

Social Constructs and Subcultures

Although racial background reasonably persists in being the social construct that captures our attention the most, myriad others factors infuse what we generally accept as culture. These subcultures include:

- Generation and age.
- Region or locale of residence.
- Socioeconomic status.
- Gender and sexual orientation.
- Occupation or profession.
- Developmental and chronic disabilities.
- Language.
- Politics.
- Nationality.

All of these areas, and others, directly affect our lives and influence our response to personal and societal challenges. We tend, for example, to coalesce with others according to familiarity and commonality. Recent immigrants and refugees often cluster for mutual support and develop their own living, business, and social communities. The existence of a Little Saigon, Koreatown, Chinatown, or Islamic neighborhood is highly visible in cities where these groups have settled. Recent arrivals, however, may have tenuous relationships with those of their same racial/ethnic background who have been Americans for generations because of differences in acculturation, facility in native languages, and adherence to ancestral customs. Mexicanos and their Chicano predecessors, for example, may have noteworthy differences that victim assistance providers must respect. Although there is usually some cultural stream through generations, not all Mexican Americans are fluent in Spanish or live in barrios.

The age of the victim/survivor may or may not be helpful in sorting out these variations. There are nuances based upon immigration/citizenship standing and generational place and role that trump other attributes. It is thus helpful to listen to how people refer to themselves.

Regions in the United States also seemingly have cultural markings. For example, we speak matter-of-factly about Southern hospitality. We may wholly accept this description of Alabamans, Georgians, and Mississippians while at the same time recognize that living in Atlanta is unlike living in Savannah. *Where* we live helps mold *how* we live. Residents

of farming communities on the Midwestern prairie may seem like extraterrestrials to retirees in resorts on the Florida peninsula. Transplants to Las Vegas may have only minimal resemblance to diehard Milwaukeeans.

Culture, moreover, is linked to a person's socioeconomic position and occupation or profession. Former Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder, the first African American governor in the United States, has persuasively stated that *class difference* is the key issue for the 21st century. The cultural divide may be more determined by poverty and wealth than other conditions and identifiers. How does victim assistance take into account a victim's situation of "concentrated disadvantage" (Sampson and Raudenbush, 2001)—poverty, absence of social resources, high unemployment—in providing services? Are outreach and transportation, for example, key to being culturally competent for this population?

Occupational culture structures the lives of many Americans. Law enforcement, for example, organizes itself by a uniform code of conduct, in-group jargon and terminology, and loyalty that strongly exists among the ranks. The Los Angeles Police Department, accordingly, once adopted as its minority recruiting slogan "We are one color—blue" (Ogawa, 1999, p. 142). Law enforcement indeed serves cross-culturally to the civilian population. That stereotypes about law enforcement and misunderstandings with the general public exist is not surprising (Bickham and Rossett, 1993, p. 43).

Gender and sexual orientation also have cultural implications. Do women and men, in fact, think, act, and relate differently from one another? Is there an ideal of "womanhood" and another for "manhood" that is perpetuated in America and affects how we provide and receive assistance? Do female victims experience their victimization through issues and concerns different from those of men? Gender may, in fact, influence how we perceive the seriousness of crimes themselves. Male assault victims may constitute a very large number but infrequently either seek or receive services.

Seelau and Seelau (2005) found that perceptions about the severity of domestic violence do adhere to gender-role stereotypes. Violence perpetuated by men and against women, no matter the sexual orientation of the relationship, was regarded as more serious than violence perpetuated by women and against men. In other words, offending heterosexual or gay males were considered more dangerous than heterosexual females or lesbians regardless of their victims. The assignment of any group to the role of "outsider" or "misfit" does not lend itself to forthright and effectual service.

Persons with developmental and chronic disabilities, moreover, constitute a large subculture. Numbers for the noninstitutionalized civilian population (U.S. Census, 2000) indicate that one-fifth of the American population has some type of disability. Disabilities

can include physical, sensory, or mental impairment, or a combination of these conditions.

EXHIBIT VIII-2
PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION WITH A DISABILITY

Population 5 years and over	Total (n=257,167,527)	Males (n=124,636,825)	Females (n=132,530,702)
With a disability	49,746,248	24,439,531	25,306,717
Percent with a disability	19.3	19.6	19.1

Mobility assists, facility accessibility, caregivers and interpreters, vulnerability to abuse, and independent living choices occupy the lives of those with disabilities. Services to persons with disabilities (as with all cultural groups) must, therefore, be approached in a comprehensive manner (Nosek and Howland, 1998; Ivey et al., 2002). After all, as advocates sometimes point out, people without disabilities are TABs—temporarily able-bodied. There is the possibility that anyone may acquire a disability at some time in life (Poindexter and Valentine, 2007, p. 270).

Spirituality and Religion

In most cases, it is impossible to totally separate cultural concerns from spiritual concerns because they are so tightly interwoven. Spirituality and religion provide a person of faith's worldview and way of life.

The Japanese culture, for example, is heavily based on Buddhist holistic concepts and Shinto veneration of the human-nature connection. These elements are vital to the very being of the Japanese people (Ivey et al., 2002, pp. 254–255). A holistic philosophy also shapes life for American Indians. Everything that happens is part of a whole. This means, according to Melton (1995), that for offenders and victims, restoring spirituality and cleansing one's soul are essential for them to be able to return to their natural, circular way of understanding life. Prayer occurs throughout the healing process. Sweat lodge ceremonies, fasts, and purification are also employed.

Spirituality and religion, however, are not equivalent. Religion attempts to sustain and embody spirituality but does not circumscribe it. Spirituality is *personal*, an individual's need to connect with and harmonize with meaningful reality. Religion is *communal*, an

attempt to render spirituality public and institutional. Victimization dramatically affects, alters, prompts, and challenges both spirituality and religion. Competency in victim assistance thus requires an appreciation for the dynamic of spirituality and religion in people's lives, partnerships and networking with appropriate church bodies, and responsiveness to the spiritual impact of victimization.

As the Catholic Church, for example, continues to labor with child sexual abuse by clergy, some Mexican American parishioners are faced with a dilemma. Does disenchantment with the church and thoughts about leaving its fold also mean departing from those aspects of Mexican culture (such as community festivals and family customs) that the church has helped to define? The betrayal of the priesthood has tremendous ramifications for the interlocking identities of religion and culture for some Mexican Americans.

The coming together of culture and religion is also seen in the strong religious orientation of many African Americans. The church has historically been the only institution outside the family to be trusted. It provided a salve for the pain of slavery, a safe social gathering place, and a seedbed for leadership (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 176–177). The guidance of the church should therefore not be minimized in providing victim assistance for many African Americans.

Providers must also be careful how their own religious/spiritual views affect their work with victims (Ivey et al., 2002, p. xviii). Of the more than 300 million people in the United States, religious affiliation is estimated (ARDA, 2006) to be Christian (84.12 percent), Jewish (1.92 percent), Muslim (1.55 percent), Buddhist (0.91 percent), and Ethnoreligionist (0.39 percent). The strong heritage of the less widespread religions in the United States should, however, be measured by their numerical position and therefore cultural impact in the world as a whole. For example, Muslims are recorded as approximately 4.7 million in the United States but 1.3 billion internationally. American Buddhists number about 2.7 million, but adherents globally total 379 million. These approaches to spirituality constitute major forces in the lives of their believers. Religious teachings and communities are a reality for the majority of Americans and will never be neutral in their effects upon victims (Fortune and Enger, 2005).

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE

Before being able to incorporate best practices in cultural and spiritual competence, it is important to recognize some of the barriers to effective assistance and begin to develop strategies to overcome them. In the course of our daily interactions, we intentionally or unintentionally relate to others in the manner we perceive them to be "comparable" to us.

At times we may deny any differences or globalize them into overbroad statements of a group's cultural norms. Some of the barriers can be provider-based, and some may reside in the victim's own cultural and spiritual experience. Even so, victims who are unserved, underserved, or misserved are not responsible for culturally insensitive or incompetent services. The responsibility lies with providers. It is never the victims' fault even if they do not avail themselves of assistance readily offered. The provider must always strive to overcome barriers, whatever their source.

Provider-Based Resistance

Some victim assistance providers see little value in developing cultural and spiritual competency. Williams and Becker (1994), in a national survey of domestic partner abuse treatment programs, found that "little or no special effort is being made to understand or address the needs of minority populations." More recently, Donnelly et al. (2005) found the situation no better, likewise reporting in a study of battered women's shelters in several Southern states that three themes emerged regarding shelter policy: (1) race was not considered important so that all women were treated the same; (2) "othering" women of color based upon stereotypes to explain why they were different from white women and thus not receptive to or in need of services; and (3) normative practices based on the needs and experiences of white women. Lack of understanding and response to the concerns of battered women of color thereby deprived them of critical services.

Such color blindness, Tello (n.d., p. 3) warns, subverts needed services:

> Typically, one may hear service providers…minimize cultural differences by stressing the similarities between ethnic groups. Statements such as, "We all have feelings, the same emotions, want the best for our children and therefore are all alike," or "You really just have to look at each family or person on an individual basis rather than looking at their culture and community," are often heard . . . . Although these and other such remarks merit discussion, these points cannot and should not negate cultural differences based on traditions, customs, history and socio-economic experiences. What it does demonstrate is the service provider's inability to understand and articulate these differences. When this occurs, the service provider may attempt to further justify his own position by minimizing the role of culture.

A provider's rigid ethnocentricity and the adherence to routine models of service may also foster hostility to accommodate minorities. One of the drawbacks of designating cultural minorities as special populations is that some people disdain giving such groups special attention. This "ethnoprison," as Ridley (1989, p. 61) insightfully points out, is the behavioral essence of racism:

Mistakenly, racism is often equated with prejudice, and solutions to the problem are generally limited to attitude change and consciousness raising. Certainly, these concerns are important. However, such a focus distracts from the more basic problems of identifying and modifying the specific types of behavior that systematically produce adverse consequences for ethnic minorities.

Direct services and rendering of justice to victims are also complicated by misleading stereotypes and victim blaming. Attitudes of superiority by providers, for example, have been noted in Native American communities (Hamby, 2004). In a survey of sexual assault agencies, Wgliski and Barthel (2004) also found that underrepresentation of minority clients was partly due to their "negative experiences with community agencies operated by majority representatives."

Lafree (1989, p. 290), moreover, studied 38 rape trials in Indiana and found that "jurors were less likely to believe in a defendant's guilt when the victim was black." Interviews with jurors suggested that stereotypes of the sexual behavior of black women had an influence. A rape victim, in general, is judged by her part in what occurred, the intensity of her resistance, or the credibility of her character. For women of color, this screening may be compounded by degrading myths. As Hawkins, a sociologist in the Black Studies Department of the University of Illinois-Chicago states, "Society has this outdated notion that good girls don't get raped and most Black girls are not good girls" (O'Brien, 1989, p. 9; Madriz, 1997).

Stereotypes of Cultures That Are Not Real

When aspects of a culture are exaggerated or misinterpreted, effective cross-cultural interaction is threatened. Generalizations about "violent cultures," for example, persist, despite the fact that no culture, for its own survival, can actively promote violence.

Similarly, when the Mexican value of *machismo* is popularized to portray an overaggressive male who is domineering, jealous, and explosive, it distorts a valuable element of Mexican family life. The *macho*, according to Rodriquez and Casaus (1983, p. 42), is a "man who meets his family responsibilities by providing food, shelter, and protection for his wife, children and, in some cases, other relatives living with the family." The husband must show respect (*respeto*) for his family and not commit selfish and outrageous acts. The wife shows respect by supporting her husband as provider and protector. Mexican culture is thereby not pathological, as has been postulated by those who have seen machismo as promoting wife-battering. Such a false culture may serve to justify excess by Mexican males themselves (cultural birthright) and eventually destroy the best in the culture itself (T. Martinez, personal communication, January 8, 1998). Machismo, in fact, safeguards *against* domestic abuse.

Pronouncements concerning female passivity and male power in other cultures (Kasturirangan et al., 2004), in other words, must be cautious so as not to label certain groups as fostering domestic abuse. Yick (2000) points out, for example, that traditional gender role beliefs in Chinese American families were not related to physical intimate violence. Acculturation, on the other hand, was a significant predictor. Kim and Sung (2000) also noted that absence of egalitarian decision-making and high level of stress are important variables related to violence in Korean American families. Immigration burdens certain Korean American husbands who have unproductive coping skills. This precipitates the need to forcefully dominate. As Blackman (1996, p. 15) summarizes, "Violence in the family is no basis for cultural distinction."

Condemning an entire race or ethnicity as being violence-prone can lead us to minimize the victimization experience of entire communities. Some time ago, for example, the newspaper headlines announced: "Just Another Day in South Central Los Angeles." Yet another gang-related slaying involving drug dealers, automatic weapons, and bullet-ridden bodies in this besieged neighborhood. The shooting did involve the notorious Eight-Trey Gangster Crips, but this time two innocent teenage girls were murdered in a case of mistaken identity. This was not just another day for the mothers, loved ones, and classmates of these two girls. Because they live in an area where violence is prevalent does not mean that they are immune to pain. A high incidence of homicide does not mean absence of hurt and suffering (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 70–71).

Practitioner Fears about Discussing Religion or Spirituality

Spiritually sensitive victim assistance is not religious counseling or pastoral care. Yet, because some victim service providers think it is, they conclude that they are incompetent to address victims' spiritual concerns as they would address their physical, mental, emotional, financial, and justice-related concerns. Thus, they fail to address the whole person by avoiding inquiry about how the victim's faith and religious perspectives may be affected by trauma.

Some victim assistance providers who are in agencies that receive government funding may have been told that they should not concern themselves with victims' spirituality because of First Amendment restrictions. The First Amendment issue is confusing to many providers.

The First Amendment states:

> *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*

Before the 1947 case of *Everson* v. *Board of Education* (330 U.S. 1 (1947), the Court's attention to religion focused primarily on ensuring that no single denomination would be established as the national religion (the Establishment Clause) and that no one would be denied the right to freely exercise the religion of his or her choice (the Exercise Clause). The intent was not to limit religious expression or activity but to limit the power of government to prohibit or interfere with that expression.

In 1971, *Lemon* v. *Kurtzman* (403 U.S. 602 (1971), provided more specific standards for the passage of laws. Even though this decision addressed laws rather than individual practitioners, its influence may have caused many practitioners to believe that they cannot react to the spiritual concerns of clients. The decision states that laws:

- Must create no excessive entanglement between government and religion.
- Must have a predominately secular purpose.
- Must neither advance nor inhibit religion.

The U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime has never questioned the ability of the victim services field to respond sensitively and appropriately to the spiritual concerns of crime victims. In fact, the landmark 1982 Presidential Report on Victims of Crime pointed out that "The victim, certainly no less than the victimizer, is in need of aid, comfort, and spiritual ministry" (OVC, 1982). When that document was updated and revised in 1998, *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* offered eight additional recommendations to bring faith communities and crime victim services agencies together (OVC, 1998). For several years, the Office for Victims of Crime has supported projects and programs that address the spiritual needs of victims.

Negative Influence of Some Faith Communities

Religion can be a source of hope and solace for many victims. Clergy and fellow believers can form a profound matrix of support and healing. On the other hand, religious leaders who conclude that religion is the answer to everything can constitute a major roadblock to victims as they seek understanding, counseling, and justice (Fortune and Enger, 2005). Perspectives on family life and the role of women and children, for example, can impede disclosure or thwart assistance in situations of family violence and sexual assault. Giesbrecht and Sevcik (2000), for example, noted that because the church (in their study, conservative evangelical) functioned as an extended family, it could "minimize, deny, and enable abuse."

Fortune and Enger (2005) summarize how certain renderings of three world religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—have constituted barriers to assistance. They cite the

following Christian scripture as an example of "prooftexting" (selective use of text out of context to support one's position) to erroneously justify male violence: "Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord" (Ephesians 5.22-24 NRSV). Either by silence or instruction, the church has thereby communicated to battered women to accept "discipline" by their husbands and to "forgive and forget."

In Judaism, likewise, the Jewish value of *shalom bayit* (peace in the home) has been misused to burden women with the sole responsibility of maintaining the perfect home, in which abuse and other problems are covered up as shameful. In Islam, Ayah 34 of Surah 4 of the Qur'an has been mistranslated to state: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah gave more to the one than the other." This has been taken by some to condone hitting a disobedient wife. Hassouneh-Phillips (2001), for example, studied the lives of American Muslim women and the effects of one particular *hadith*: "Marriage is half of faith and the rest is fear Allah." Abused wives found themselves in the predicament of inner conflict and negation of the self when they believed they must submit to their husbands because of strongly held religious tenets.

For Catholic Latinas, Destito, Santiago, and Darder (1985/1986) describe a similar internal conflict among those who have been raped. These Latinas are caught between the moralistic extremes of madonna and whore. The marriageability of a single woman who has been raped is placed at risk because her virginity is lost and reputation tarnished. The only acceptable reason for not being a virgin is motherhood. The married woman who has been raped by someone not her husband is therefore disgraced. The church in its attempt to sanction sexual mores and family life has, in effect, brought confusion to the Latina's formation of self-concept as women (Ogawa, 1999, p. 174).

The preservation of marriage is vital in most religions. However, this union must be viewed within the context of mutual respect and mercy. As Fortune (1995, p. 267) emphasizes:

> The crisis of family violence affects people physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Each of these dimensions must be addressed, both for the victims and for those in the family who abuse them. Approached from either a secular or a religious perspective alone, certain needs and issues tend to be disregarded…Thus, the importance of developing a shared understanding and cooperation between secular and religious helpers to deal with family violence cannot be emphasized too strongly.

Impediments to this collaboration include a religious leader's presumption that domestic violence advocates are intent on "breaking up families" or "undermining a woman's faith" (Fortune and Enger, 2005). Secular advocates, on the other hand, may distrust

clergy as sexist or endangering a woman's life. If both religious leaders and secular advocates truthfully focus on the well-being of the abused woman, she may be guided to safety and strength rather than sentenced to peril and endurance.

Experiences of Immigrant and Refugee Victims That Cause Them to Fear Government-Supported Programs

Many victims come from countries where their rights and freedoms were not honored. Government and criminal justice authorities may have exercised brutal, callous, or arbitrary authority. Political corruption, internal warfare, and social instability may have contributed to this situation. A distrust and avoidance of officials is an understandable result of pervasive injustice, lack of due process, and unresponsiveness to needs.

Since 1993, in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, for example, hundreds of young women who worked in the *maquiladoras* (manufacturing plants) have died violently (Knox, 2001). They came to the border (across from El Paso, Texas) from poverty-stricken towns farther south, drawn by the promise of steady work and a more exciting life. Many were sexually assaulted, murdered, mutilated, and left in desolate areas. Activists and family members of the victims say that authorities have shown little concern and have made little effort to identify or even find bodies—a task mostly undertaken by concerned private citizens. Although several individuals have been charged and prosecuted, activists and families believe this was through coerced confessions and little hard-nosed forensic work.

That Mexico's justice system is deeply flawed is no secret. That many Mexican immigrants initially do not trust the criminal justice system in the United States should therefore be no surprise. As Davis et al. (2001) report, mistrust of authorities, coupled with language difficulties, denies access to a "uniform system of justice." Given the unsettled nature of current U.S. immigration policies, moreover, especially in the wake of homeland security measures, numerous undocumented workers are even more reluctant to seek the involvement of criminal justice authorities and victim assistance in their lives. The stark reality of the vulnerability of immigrant and refugee women is particularly revealed by the plight of low-income and foreign-born Latinas who are abused by their partners. As explained by AYUDA (1997, p. 3), a community-based advocacy group in the Washington, DC, area,

> They are new arrivals in a foreign country, traumatized by the life-threatening experiences that caused them to flee their homelands, separated from their families, living under the threat of deportation, and often dependent upon the financial resources and language abilities of an abusing spouse. Fearful of seeking

legal or other assistance, they remain marginalized and alone, with no traditional cultural support.

A wide range of predators, in fact, are known to victimize undocumented immigrants. According to the National Institute of Justice (McDonald, 1997, p. 4),

> Guides and organized gangsters have robbed, raped, and killed them; abandoned them in the desert; tossed them overboard at sea or out of speeding cars under hot pursuit; or forced them to work in sweat shops or prostitution rings to pay off the cost of the trip. Bandits prey upon them during their journeys. Xenophobes and hatemongers terrorize them. Some employers cheat them of their earnings. The fact that illegal immigration is a crime makes the immigrants particularly vulnerable because they are unlikely to seek the protection of the law.

The entire circumstance of undocumented residents does, in fact, involve complex issues of racial prejudice, international politics, cross-border economics, and antiterrorism initiatives. The discussions concerning state and local criminal justice agencies having supplementary jurisdiction in arresting and detaining illegal aliens, and the prospect that service providers will be outlawed or restricted in providing assistance to undocumented resident victims, erect a substantial barrier to services not only for victims but also for providers (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 58–63).

Some of this barrier has been overcome by the need for federal prosecution of trafficking through special assistance to victims, including residency and services (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000). U.S. Government estimates indicate that approximately 800,000 to 900,000 people annually are trafficked across international borders worldwide (Clawson, Small, Go, and Myles, 2003). Their destinations are industrialized nations and countries with higher standards of living, including 18,000-20,000 trafficked into the United States, primarily from Southeast Asia, Middle America, and the former Soviet Union (Clawson et al., 2003, p. 3).

These victims do not know how to escape the violence or where to go for help. They generally avoid authorities out of fear of being jailed or deported, especially if they have fraudulent documents. A backdrop to this barrier to seeking assistance is the relatively high degree of collusion between officials and organized crime in trafficking. Corruption provides the lubricant that allows criminal organizations to operate with maximum effectiveness and minimum interference. Assistance to victims willing to cooperate with criminal justice authorities is critical to breaking this pattern.

Group Survival Concerns That May Affect Reporting of Crime

Between 1992 and 2001, American Indians experienced violence at rates more than twice that of blacks, two and a half times that of whites, and four and a half times that of Asians (Perry, 2004). Many Native American tribal communities face the possibility of extinction (Hamby, 2004, p. 4). Only 11 tribal groups have more than 50,000 members. Victims may be unwilling to report crime or participate in the prosecution of tribal members because it reduces community size, including the limiting of intraracial couplings (Hamby, 2000). The power of this motivation may not be fully appreciated by non-Native Americans, but decimation is both a historical reality and a future prospect for a culture that thrives on ancestral lineage. Native Americans are a kinship network whose strength is interdependence and group affiliation. This is more than genealogy. Among the Sioux, for example, it is an abiding contract with *wakan tanka*, the Great Spirit that unites all forms of being into an unbroken network of relationship (DeMaille, 1994). Everything must therefore lend itself to ensuring continuity.

In 1997, African American males comprised 38 percent of the U.S. correctional population. This meant that about 9 percent of the black population was under some form of correctional supervision, compared to 2 percent of the white population and over 1 percent of other races. An estimated 12 percent of black males, 3.7 percent of Hispanic males, and 1.7 percent of white males in their late 20s are in prison or jail (Harrison and Beck, 2006). Furthermore, in 2002, 39 percent of all felons convicted of violent offenses in state courts were African American. Of these, 24 percent were sentenced to incarceration, compared to 21 percent of whites (Durose and Langan, 2005).

This means that a highly disproportionate number of black males have been at least temporarily removed from their communities. This "shrinking pool of marriageable men" results in the stark and enormous reality of single-parent households (Wilson and Neckerman, 1987, p. 258). For some victims, particularly in domestic violence cases, the reporting of crime and cooperation with criminal justice authorities has thus been regarded as an act of treason. As Boyd (1990, p. 227) writes,

> Generational teachings regarding trusting others outside the ethnic and cultural community have been strongly enforced by family and respected community members. From early childhood, black women have been taught that personal disclosure outside the community is synonymous with treason. This strong devotion to non-disclosure has for many years silenced black women in personal crisis.

The view, coupled with the historical reinforcement of the fact that "whites enslaved the blacks" (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 148–151), persists and appears to be confirmed by

incarceration rates. Supporting such an intractable trend is presumed by some to, in effect, betray the African American family life and community. It is an exceedingly sad form of victim blaming that tragically has some measure of fact. Out of every 1,000 persons in a particular racial group, 26 blacks, 21 whites. and 13 persons of other races were victims of a violent crime (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). Nevertheless, according to Kingsnorth and MacIntosh (2004), a study of 5,272 domestic violence cases processed through the prosecutor's office in a certain California county revealed that African Americans, although no less likely to call for assistance and support arrest, are "significantly less likely to support prosecution." Until socioeconomic situations seriously change, this barrier for a significant number of victims may continue to haunt the African American community.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL COMPETENCE STRATEGIES FOR VICTIM SERVICES AGENCIES

Parson (1985, p. 315) states that the "client's ideas, feelings, beliefs, values, gestures, intonations, perceptions, and evaluations can only be understood within the patient's ethnocultural context." At the same time, the ethnocultural context never exactly matches for everyone within a culture. In the process of seeking to enhance cultural and spiritual competence within an agency, what constitutes appropriate service may have to be redefined. Each agency, for example, should scrutinize its policies, programs, and protocols for unwitting blocks to service. The following are some important guidelines:

- Acknowledge that there are different and equally valid cultural definitions of personal well-being and recovery from traumatic events.

- Include cultural awareness training that gives staff the capacity and skills to serve victims whose thinking, behavior, and modes of expression are culturally different.

- Develop multiethnic teamwork (and advisory committees) for implementing and monitoring effective services, including referrals and community networking.

Consider Key Findings on Cultural and Spiritual Competence

Much of victim assistance has centered upon the individual victim. Although the social consequences of victimization have been addressed, the focus has been on the effects, strain, and detriment to the victim. Interventions, for example, have thus been based upon individual well-being. Many cultures, however, focus on a more ecological framework. This includes the "being-in-relation" orientation found particularly in cultures that are grounded in religion and spirituality.

Self-in-Relation

In many cultures, instead of focus on the individual self (I suffer), more attention is brought to bear on the self-in-relation (My family or community suffers). The impact of victimization is primarily a disharmony in core relationships. Mary, for example, was a 6-year-old Vietnamese girl who was raped by her 26-year-old male cousin in the bathroom of the apartment in which their family lived (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 76–77). Her cousin warned her not to tell anyone and bribed her by giving her a new box of crayons. In the days that followed, Mary had nightmares and would awaken screaming. She then began to have severe pain in urinating. Her mother took Mary to a medical clinic, not realizing the cause of her daughter's suffering. The doctor found a gonorrhea infection and a criminal investigation followed. The cousin was the only son of Mary's father's brother. Her father had allowed the boy to live with the family so that the money he earned in the United States could be sent back to Vietnam for his parents. The father felt badly for his daughter but also had a strong sense of obligation that he did not guide his nephew firmly enough. He did not want the nephew imprisoned—otherwise the family in Vietnam would suffer.

A Vietnamese social worker was able to explain the circumstances sufficiently for the court to order probation with strict conditions of employment, treatment, and residence elsewhere. This allowed the father to fulfill his promise to his brother and also provided for Mary's safety. This may not seem like a good outcome if we take into account only the welfare of the child. Undoubtedly, attending to Mary's physical and emotional trauma was paramount. The outcome, however, did reflect the cultural context. Mary would have suffered from extreme (though unwarranted) self-blame for her family's hardship. The cousin, of course, deserved all the blame. The dire social consequences for Mary's relatives were also, nevertheless, a major concern. Fortunately, in this case, these were addressed in the sentencing.

The impact of social disconnection is tragically seen among trafficking victims. Traffickers often move victims from their home communities to other areas—within their country or to foreign countries—where the victim is often isolated, unable to speak the language, and unfamiliar with the culture. Most importantly, trafficking victims lose their support network of family and friends, thus making them more vulnerable to the traffickers' demands and threats. Direct physical threat to the safety of the victim's family is a large controlling factor. Victim assistance must offer some assurance to trafficking victims not only that they will be protected but that every effort will be made so that their families will not be harmed. Young women who are forced or coerced into servitude in brothels and sex clubs are also regularly moved so as not to form ties. Traffickers intentionally and cruelly sever family ties and meaningful associations. The

consequences of escape from trafficking, disclosure to authorities, and cooperation with prosecution can be exceedingly severe.

Self-in-Context

Criminal victimization may be the immediate matter, but the historical experience of the victim's cultural group should not be disregarded. Self-in-context refers to the collective experience (My people suffer). The salient point for African Americans is the summation by some that the heightened consciousness brought about by the black identity movement in America has done more for the mental health of African Americans than all counseling theories combined (Ivey et al., 2002). For Native Americans, it means that the intergenerational "soul wound" or traumatic suffering (Duran and Duran, 1995) from centuries-long genocide and assault on culture must be incorporated into victim assistance. This is done by avoiding condescension and paternalism, networking with credible resources, and accepting culturally relevant ways of coping.

The Sioux, for example, practice a form of self-treatment called *wacink*o, usually translated as "pouting" (Trimble and Fleming, 1989, p. 187). Wacinko is a sort of time-out by which nonproductive activity is purposefully set aside. This practice has frequently been misdiagnosed by non-Native American psychiatrists as a reactive depressive illness and a maladaptive form of withdrawal. As Blue and Blue (1993) report, however, the Sioux are simply waiting out the circumstances of an intransigent problem because they trust a resolution will naturally occur. This is a culturally expressive form of healing, a passivity that is not hopelessness but hopefulness. To discredit its use would be yet another form of cultural destruction.

Self-in-Environment

The attainment of home as a place of security, acceptance, and peace is fundamental for meeting whatever life brings to us. When victimization robs us of that comfort and belonging, there can be serious disorientation. Home invasions, residential burglary, domestic violence, and intrafamilial child abuse leave victims feeling unattached and dislocated. Although change of residence, including moving to other cities and states, is now relatively common in the United States, for some cultural groups the meaning of a particular place remains important. The forceful removal of Native Americans, for example, has meant displacement from not only their lifeways but also from the places of their life source. As a Karok shaman lamented, without a land, the children of the creator are left in darkness and all will become like the "off-colored white people" who are lost in their wanderings (Buckskin, 1990). Crime on reservation lands has meant not only a violation of space but also the reminder of alienation from historic areas where healing

ceremonies and practices were developed. The practice of shamanistic powers is usually reserved for specific locations because tribal identity is rooted to a particular space and topography (Ogawa, 1999, p. 181).

Some cultures also believe that crime pollutes and desecrates the place where it occurs. In Stockton, California, on January 17, 1989, Patrick Purdy, a white 26-year-old drifter, unleashed a murderous assault on the playground of Cleveland Elementary School. In less than 2 minutes, five children were dead and 29 children and one teacher were wounded. A compelling explanation for the shooting was that Purdy blamed all minorities for his failings and selected Southeast Asians as his particular target (Kempsky, 1989, p. 2). Most of the Cleveland schoolchildren were Cambodian. Their families had fled their country during the murderous reign of the Khmer Rouge. They settled in the San Joaquin Valley in the late 1970s because of the area's mild climate and delta landscape, not unlike their homeland (Ogawa 1999, p. 116–119). A father whose daughter was killed wept and said, "I feel like I try to escape the killing fields in Cambodia, but here is only more killing field for my family" (Fitzgerald, 1989, p. A-10).

The United States was no longer the safe haven for which these refugees had hoped. They had been out of sight in housing projects but were now the center of intense media attention and crisis intervention. Mental health treatment was offered but politely refused. What proved to be most important in terms of victim assistance was facilitating the Cambodian families' request that the school playground be formally blessed according to their religious practices. Because the children had died unnaturally and violently, their spirits were not at rest. The purification of the playground by a venerable Buddhist monk provided the major source of comfort for the Cambodians in their very painful loss.

Recognize Natural Helpers as Appropriate Interveners

Eurocentric helping is said to depend on professionals (Ivey et al., 2002, p. 302). In cultures that emphasize self-in-relation and group life, however, there is more reliance on "natural helpers." It is not uncommon for Mexican Americans, moreover, to consult *curanderos* (folk healers). This does not mean that Latinos shun all formal professional help, but such assistance may occur simultaneously with help from other sources (West, 1988, pp. 139–140). Native Americans are also apt to use help from Western health and human service providers as well as indigenous healers (Hamby, 2004).

Because of the cultural moorings in collective identity and spirituality, the counsel and guidance of ancestral spirits is often sought. This openness to the spirit realm may seem puzzling, superstitious, or delusional to some victim assistance providers. Reliance on deceased ancestors, however, is celebrated through various festivals and rituals, including

Dia de Los Muertos (Mexican), *obon* (Japanese), and powwows (Native American). Dreams, visions, and visits by ancestral spirits also play an important role. These are all "expressions of a greater universe of sharing and belonging" (Coyote, 1988, p. 7). Victim service providers must strive to honor and work in concert with all these sources of intervention to be culturally competent.

Respect Diversity Within Diversity

Cultural differences obviously endure between groups of people, but their nature and extent need to be clarified beyond misleading stereotypes and over-generalizations. People are basically both similar *and* dissimilar from one another. No person is solely what we label or classify him or her. We are "multidimensional beings" (Ivey et al., 2002, p. xxiii). Categorizations are, accordingly, *part logic and part insult*. The term Hispanic, for example, tries to encompass Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Cubans, and others. It promotes the linguistic and historical ties of these peoples but blurs the "finer distinctions" (Hecht, Andersen, and Ribeau, 1989, p. 178). Not all Mexicans, that is, have Spanish as their first language. Those of Mayan and Aztec descent living in remote mountainous regions speak their native languages and, consequently, are not Hispanic. There are, admittedly, ways that any particular Mexican American is like all other Mexican Americans. But there are also ways in which any particular Mexican American is like no other Mexican Americans (Roll, Millen and Martinez, 1980, p. 165). These within-group differences may be even more notable than between-group ones.

The same is true for those members of the 562 federally recognized Native American tribes. Native Americans speak languages from many different linguistic groups, including Algonquian, Athapascan-Eyak, Hokan, Iroquoian, Penutian, and Siouan (U.S. Census, 2000). Within these large categories, there are also numerous subsets. For example, the Algonquian cluster includes Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Cree, Delaware, Fox, Kickapoo, Miami, Ojibwa, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Shawnee, Yurok, and other languages. Almost half of Native Americans also do not live on reservations (National Institute of Justice, 2005).

Another example of sometimes unacknowledged diversity is the Islamic American population. Muslims are not all Arab. Only 25 percent of American Muslims are of Arab descent; 33 percent are South-Central Asian; and 30 percent are African American. Likewise, not all Arabs are Muslims. The first Muslim communities in America were in the Midwest. Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is the home of the oldest mosque still in use. Dearborn, Michigan, has long been home to both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims from many parts of the Middle East. Many were initially drawn by the opportunity to work at the Ford Motor Company plant, and having formed a community, they have been joined by other

Muslims. Together with Middle Eastern Christians, these Detroit area Muslims form the largest Arab-American settlement in the country (Smith, 2006).

There are, in other words, many variables among individuals, just as there are between cultures. People are inseparable from their cultural backgrounds but not strictly determined by them. All crime victims deserve to be treated as individuals even as race and culture (and degrees of acculturation) are taken into account. This becomes even more important as we include interracial marriages and those persons with biracial or multiracial backgrounds. The U.S. Census now seeks to delineate, through self-reporting, a person's racial and ethnic identity. It allows "check all that apply" for this self-identification. How much of what heritage is dominant should thus be evaluated before too many assumptions are made. If the information is not readily available through other trustworthy sources, a brief inquiry into a victim's cultural self-identification—prefaced by an explanation of the desire to be aware of the victim's cultural preferences—might be useful. Making false assumptions is more risky than announcing an effort to understand what matters to the victim.

Anticipate Unique Service Needs

Given the present population trends in the United States, providers cannot assume that the victim populations they have dealt with in the past will remain the same. Shifting economies, variable markets, and mobile labor forces, have created unexpected community demographics. When chicken processing plants in northern Arkansas needed a new labor pool, for example, large numbers of Mexican workers were recruited. Almost overnight, communities were faced with a new cross-cultural reality. Most providers, including law enforcement, were not prepared. Immigration does not cause crime, but it does alert criminal justice and human service providers to the need to adopt culturally appropriate ways to respond and serve resulting new victim populations.

In El Paso, Texas, a slightly different scenario has occurred. El Paso has been a primarily Latino city. It is very difficult to be a service provider there without the ability to speak at least some Spanish and value Mexican culture. Almost everyone embraces a bicultural identity. However, when thousands of Koreans from South Korea, New York, and Los Angeles settled in the area because of the many business opportunities, providers were confronted with a new foreign culture. Korean crime victims, including merchants who were robbed, posed a unique test to customary approaches. Fortunately, the already existing commitment to and practice of cross-cultural services provided the will and framework to respond.

Recognize Varying Perspectives of Trauma, Suffering, and Healing

Cultural groups have developed numerous ways to meet and recover from hardships. These include determining when to ask for help, whether to trust helpers, and what is acceptable behavior. Service providers also have "cultures of helping" (Poindexter and Valentine, 2007, p. 38) that may coincide or conflict with various victim cultures. These may include the provider perspectives that there are "rational" causes of distress, experts know what is best for those seeking help, and maintaining formal settings and personal detachment from clients are important. But what types of services are, in fact, most important to different cultural groups? Do service providers have viable and available alternatives so that diverse victims are respected for their choices and preferences?

About 49 percent of murder victims are white, 47 percent are black, and 3 percent are Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2004). Victim assistance to homicide survivors has often emphasized death notification, supportive counseling, and emotional recovery. These provide undeniable valuable assistance to many survivors. Nevertheless, other services may be even more critical for some groups. African American communities, for example, are especially sensitive about personal identification of their deceased loved ones. Tangible evidence and the need to physically confirm death are important. Support before and during victim identification, being able to actually touch and caress their loved ones, and the manner in which the deceased are addressed are important. As a long-time advocate in Los Angeles' 77th Precinct describes (Ogawa, 1999, p. 72), responding to a mother whose daughter was murdered required being prepared with "practical suggestions and straightforward answers."

> Norma (the advocate) offered emotional support and information on mortuaries that had designed funerals to match the state criminal injuries compensation guidelines…She then escorted Cheryl (the mother) to select a casket and plan the services…Cheryl wanted to know if her daughter's face had been badly disfigured by her injuries. She was also concerned how Jeanine's (her daughter's) body would be treated during the autopsy. Norma promised her that she herself would go to the coroner's office to witness the autopsy while it was being performed. She knew that the only way Cheryl would continue to trust law enforcement authorities was if someone she trusted could provide her with first-hand knowledge.

For an advocate to lend support by attending funerals and burial services may also be warranted. Moreover, most cultures have some "place of remembrance" in the home for a deceased family member. These places may be elaborate Asian family shrines, Catholic religious icons, or simply photos and flowers. No matter what their nature, they are the

focus of a family's mourning and honoring. Proper attention and respect to these sites by the advocate when visiting homes help generate trust. Disregard of the sites may jeopardize survivors' belief in the sincerity of the provider's expressions of concern.

Service providers, counselors, or therapists trained in Western/European modalities adhere to mental health perspectives on trauma and recovery. The basic model has been the psychological interpretation of suffering, with the therapeutic goals of healing emotional wounds and regaining a healthy state of mind. The techniques for accomplishing these goals have relied on verbalizing worries and fears and providing symptom relief through prescribing medications (Eth, 1992, p. 105; Lee and Armstrong, 1995, pp. 447–448). This emphasis in much of Western psychotherapy can be related to the Judeo-Christian tradition (Ivey et al., 2002, p. 9).

> At the shelter everyone is supportive and helpful. On the top of food, clothing and a place to live, they were always there whenever I needed help. While I worked, the volunteers and staff helped with my children. Asian Women's Shelter helped me find permanent housing, a child care center and more. It is just like an extended family (Yamamoto, 1991, p. 1).

In other cultures, however, trauma is seen as affecting the whole person. There is no dichotomy between the mind and body. There are accordingly unique "idioms of distress" to communicate hurt and discomfort. Southeast Asian refugees often complain about bodily ailments such as headaches or chest pains when experiencing depression (Nishio and Bilmas, 1987, p. 343). Asians in general experience and report stress psychosomatically (Root, 1985). When Western approaches minimize these complaints as hypochondria, important information influencing treatment can be lost. Working toward achieving insight may, accordingly, be less essential than concentrating on other aspects of living.

Kim, for example, a Southeast Asian refugee, was told by a therapist that she needed to "heal the child within" (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 190–192). Kim became very nervous and agitated. She wondered how this white woman would know that she was pregnant when Kim herself was unsuspecting. Even more, she did not want to be pregnant with another child from the abusive husband she was attempting to flee. Noticing the anguish in Kim's face, the therapist hurriedly explained that the term "child within" was not to be taken literally. It was an expression in Western therapy that meant the spirit of a child within someone. After the session, Kim returned to the battered women's shelter and cried to a staff member that the spirit of the child she had lost through miscarriage several months earlier was distressed and trapped inside of her. It was many hours before Kim could be

reassured that her fears were not necessary. She still could not understand what the therapist meant but was less upset with it.

What Kim was most anxious about was the stigma and loss of connection she now faced in the community. She no longer had her primary identity from her husband and his family. She was an oddity. The service providers helping Kim had to meet this sense of isolation by providing an especially strong base of support. Kim's cultural moorings did not stem from empowerment through independence as a woman but from finding interdependence and social esteem within her community. This search for a "sense of belonging" helped her to offset the previous lonely and silent endurance of abuse and establish a network of support and broad ties to the community.

Some have criticized this approach as too protective and fostering dependency. This criticism, however, reveals a cultural bias and does not appreciate the cultural context for Kim and other Asian women. Self worth is not arrived at through psychological processes but through a rebuilding of social acceptance.

Provide Communication Methods Based on Client Need

In a baseline study of victim services in Texas, the Crime Victims Institute (CVI) confirmed that the methods of serving crime victims varied greatly depending on the type of agency and its role (CVI, 1999, p. 48). More than 1,400 agencies were surveyed as to their primary means of communicating with crime victims: face-to-face, telephone, or written correspondence. Exhibit VIII-3 summarizes the findings, with the greatest percentages shown in bold italics.

EXHIBIT VIII-3

COMMUNICATION METHODS

	Face-to-face	Written correspondence	Telephone
Law Enforcement	*52.5%*	32.5%	15%
Prosecutors	11.1%	*48.1%*	40.8%
Family Violence/Sexual Assault	30.7%	0.4%	*68.9%*
Probation/Community Service	2.7%	*59.8%*	37.5%

It is readily apparent that victim assistance relies on assorted means to have contact with victims and that the skills needed to work with diverse cultural populations must be refined for each agency category. Rape crisis counselors, therefore, must be specially trained to assist victims with whom they have no direct in-person contact. Since many Asian Americans are not accustomed to verbalize problems but rely on direct example and guidance by someone respected, it is important to establish a trusting relationship as soon as possible. This can be accomplished through intonation, repetition, and word choice. Referrals that are sensitive to privacy and confidentiality matters in Asian American communities help relate the caller to supportive providers. A carefully constructed list of culturally competent providers is therefore crucial.

In face-to-face interactions, communication styles differ. The manner of greeting often sets the course of the exchange. While a firm and vigorous handshake is expected by many Americans, a softer offering of the hand of friendship for Native Americans is more customary. In Muslim cultures, moreover, touching between males and females who are not related is not acceptable. The ability and willingness to listen is critical to any culture, but indicators of listening differ. For many white Americans, direct and unwavering eye contact indicates attentiveness and interest. For Mexicans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans, contrastingly, such eye contact might indicate discourtesy, defiance, and disrespect.

Furthermore, written correspondence must be adapted and generalized for a larger population group than is usually the case. For most recipients, legal terminology is unfamiliar and confusing. Correspondence translated into other languages may be necessary, although there are pitfalls to this approach. Hamby (2004, p. 4) points out, for example, that languages other than English do not have as extensive terms for victimization:

> The U.S. social movements against rape and intimate violence have influenced American English. English-speakers have many terms for sexual victimization, including "rape," "sexual assault," "date rape," "sexual abuse," "incest," and "molestation." There are also many terms for physically and psychologically abusive behavior. For purposes of both intervention and prevention, it can be hard to identify comparable words in other languages. Even English speakers who are not immersed in addressing these social problems may not appreciate the subtle distinctions between these terms.

Offer Appropriate Translations and Translators

The emphasis in American society on English as the commanding language compromises communication and reassigns roles by using children or staff members from other agencies as interpreters and fostering negative self-esteem in people who are not bilingual (Szapocznik, 1995; Rodriquez and Casaus, 1983). Although the "English only" movement is rife in parts of the United States, this approach is far too inflexible to be adopted by victim assistance providers. Language is a purveyor of culture, and the degree of respect one has for other ethnic groups is shown in one's attitudes toward proficiency in English. It is undoubtedly practical for immigrants to learn English, but it is equally important to retain elements of one's heritage.

No one can be conversant or fluent in all the hundreds of languages spoken among U.S. residents. Victim assistance providers, however, can learn at least some key words that convey the provider's concern and help demystify courtroom and other processes. As the number of foreign-born residents increases, raising the percentage of languages other than English that are spoken in the home, reliance on translations and translators obviously grows. The California Penal Code, for example, mandates that translation services be made available for the non-English-speaking populace in comprehensive victim service centers and at certain court proceedings.

EXHIBIT VIII-4
ENGLISH AND OTHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Population 5 Years and Over by Language Spoken at Home and Ability To Speak English	U.S. Census 2000	%
Population 5 years and over	262,375,152	100.0
Speak only English	215,423,557	82.1
Speak a language other than English	46,951,595	17.9
Foreign born	31,485,018	12.8

Translations do not necessarily produce material that is culturally meaningful. Providing directions to the courthouse is fine, but explaining the impact of crime and recommending coping skills must be adjusted to the victim's experience and perspective and not just the provider's bias. As Tello (n.d., p. 6) argues regarding the ubiquitous translating of materials into Spanish,

Agencies typically offer translations of materials, information, and articles that are based on conventional theory. The idea being promoted is that a linguistic translation alone makes the information culturally appropriate. Clearly, this is a false assumption. All it does is make the information readable to those literate in Spanish. Frequently, mere translations have done more harm than good.

Written materials, in other words, must reflect cultural symbols, practices, concerns, and needs. Ideally, these materials should be written first in the languages of the various groups to help ensure cultural relevance. They can then be translated into English so that English-speaking providers can better understand the victim's culture.

Using translators poses interesting issues of confidentiality, accuracy, and trust. For example, translators have been known to alter what is said because of bias or difficulty in conveying what was intended (Ivey et al., 2002, p. 42). The interpreter may also be either too far removed from or too familiar with the victim's personal history and situation. Translators may miss nuances but may also be valuable sources of cultural interpretation. All providers that rely on translators must therefore be properly trained in the optimum use of their services.

The following strategies can help to improve a victim assistance provider's cultural competency.

Know the Principal Cultural Values of Your Own Community Groups

First, become increasingly knowledgeable about various cultures, especially those within your agency's demographic area. You can avail yourself of the growing number of written materials and conference trainings on the subject (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html), but you can also learn from each person you serve who is from a different background. Spending time in different communities when you are not responding to criminal activity or crises provides a more balanced experience. Crime represents only a fraction of a community's daily reality.

Remember, however, that it is impossible to understand all the idiosyncrasies of any culture. Providers are "tentative learners" (Poindexter and Valentine, 2007) of another culture. Therefore, do not compile and memorize a set checklist of cultural do's and don'ts. Victims are never well served by formulaic or methodical responses. Instead, learn some of the principal values of a culture. A key cultural value among Asian Americans, for example, is not to be overly oppositional or confrontational. As Ivey et al. (2002, p. 184) state, "What is assertive for European-American cultures may be considered intrusive and aggressive by those from other cultural groups." This is

frequently expressed in the tendency to be very agreeable in conversation, to not demand (deserved) services, and to not burden someone (e.g., a victim assistance provider) with one's troubles.

A Chinese American sexual assault victim, for example, found it difficult to schedule pre-trial meetings with the victim advocate because of the advocate's busy schedule (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 67–68). The victim would apologize each time for disturbing the advocate. She made less use of what was available to her in order not to inconvenience or impose upon the advocate, who was quite willing to help. If the advocate better understood this victim's reluctance, she might have offered more encouragement to meet. This may require asking several times. A victim's initial decline of help may reflect culturally-based humility rather than flat refusal.

Practice Sincerity and Respect

Even if you are not familiar with a victim's prevailing culture, sincerity is the greatest communicator. Victims sense insincerity. Sincerity is a matter of character. Therefore, the more we grow in character, the more we grow in cultural competency. One facet of character is respect for others. "Respect" means, literally, to "look again." That is, we do not minimize, quickly dismiss, or superficially address the concerns of those different from us. Respect leads us to be more observant and willing to adjust our routine approaches.

A lieutenant in a certain city's police department, for example, arrived at a Laotian community meeting to unexpectedly find "a whole pile of shoes outside" (Ogawa, 1999, pp. 145–146). Although taken by surprise, but without undue hesitation, he removed his own shoes before entering. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the recent surge in vandalism and intimidation directed at the Laotian residents in a subsidized housing project. The lieutenant's removal of his shoes was an important gesture of courtesy to the Laotians. It was a sign that he came respecting their customs and feelings—a crucial step toward working jointly to find solutions. A custom may seem odd, but leaving our prejudices/biases (literally) at the door as we enter into service to others communicates that we are viewing their victimization from their perspective as we offer our help.

Include Spirituality in Assessments for Long-Term Services

Not all victim services roles are appropriate for spiritual assessment. It may feel intrusive to victims who are meeting with a provider for one specific purpose, such as to fill out a Crime Victims Compensation form or to learn about the justice system. Spiritual

assessment is suggested only for providers who expect a reasonably long-term relationship with a victim.

Conducting a brief spiritual assessment may be all that is required for many victims of crime. When being asked a few simple questions, some victims will make it clear that they do not wish to include spiritual concerns in their services. Those who do, however, may feel validated because their provider has inquired in a respectful manner.

Some unassuming questions that may encourage victims to begin talking about their spiritual concerns include:

- What is most important to you in your life right now?
- What has been meaningful and helpful to you as you have coped with your victimization?
- What has strengthened you as you deal with this?
- Do you have a support system as you go through this experience?

If the responses to these questions are not spiritually oriented, that's fine. You may not want to explore spirituality any further.

If the victim's responses are spiritually oriented, continue to explore their answers as you would any other information that helps you assess their strengths and resources as well as stressors.

Establish Personal Integrity in Your Professional Surroundings

Even if we do not feel the same about all peoples and cultures, we are called upon to base our behavior on our professional responsibilities and not on our personal likes and dislikes. We are called upon to treat others equally and fairly even as we find it impossible to feel the same way about everyone. We must of course assess and eliminate our own discriminatory practices, whether individual or institutional. Self-development in cultural competency ultimately, however, depends upon personal integrity in the victim assistance field. The ethical treatment of victims mandates cultural competency.

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RESOURCES

Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute

www.bcdvi.org
1-770-909-0715
bcdvorg@aol.com

First Response to Victims of Crime Who Have a Disability

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/infores/firstrep/2002/welcome.html

This handbook for law enforcement officers (NCJ 195500) describes how to approach and help victims who have Alzheimer's Disease, mental illness, or mental retardation or who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, or hard of hearing. It is designed as a field guide for personnel who respond first to crime victims and includes contacts for assistance.

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence

www.incite-national.org

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

1-877-NIDVAAC
nidvaac@umn.edu

MADD

www.madd.org/madd_programs/9294

A description/summary of MADD's diversity programs and statistics.

Minority Community Victim Assistance

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/infores/minor/welcome.html

This handbook (NCJ 170148) prepared by the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers offers minority community residents a practical approach to assisting crime victims in their communities and neighborhoods.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

www.thetaskforce.org

This is a civil rights organization dedicated to promoting freedom and equality for all lesbians and gay men. Its Antiviolence Project was initiated to promote appropriate response to antigay violence, improve treatment by the criminal justice system, and assist local communities in organizing against prejudice and violence. It reports annually on antigay/lesbian victimization.

National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women

www.immigrantwomennetwork.org

The National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women is a coalition of survivors, immigrant women, advocates, activists, attorneys, educators, and other professionals committed to ending violence against immigrant women by (1) working with diverse immigrant communities to prevent violence against women; (2) building capacity for immigrant women to become leaders against all forms of violence; (3) promoting an understanding of the complex realities of immigrant women facing violence; (4) providing technical and training support to service providers, attorneys, community advocates, and other professionals (both governmental and nongovernmental) working with immigrant women at the local, state, federal, and international levels; and (5) promoting law and public policy reforms at the local, state, and national levels that benefit immigrant women facing violence.

Needs Assessment for Service Providers and Trafficking Victims (2003, October)
(OJP-99-C-010)

Prepared by Caliber Associates for the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, it is the first-ever assessment of the needs of trafficking victims and the domestic service providers who work with them. The report, complete with survey instruments and focus group protocols, will help educate the field at large on meeting the specialized and complex needs of trafficking victims.

Southern Poverty Law Center

www.splcenter.org

Through its Klanwatch project, this group monitors hate crimes and groups across the nation. It also provides training for law enforcement and community groups.

Trafficking in Persons: A Guide for Non-governmental Organizations (2002)

www.dol.gov/wb/media/reports/trafficking.htm

This brochure (BC 000674) from the U.S. Department of Justice is intended for nongovernmental organizations, such as service providers and other community-based organizations, to use as a reference guide to help trafficking victims.