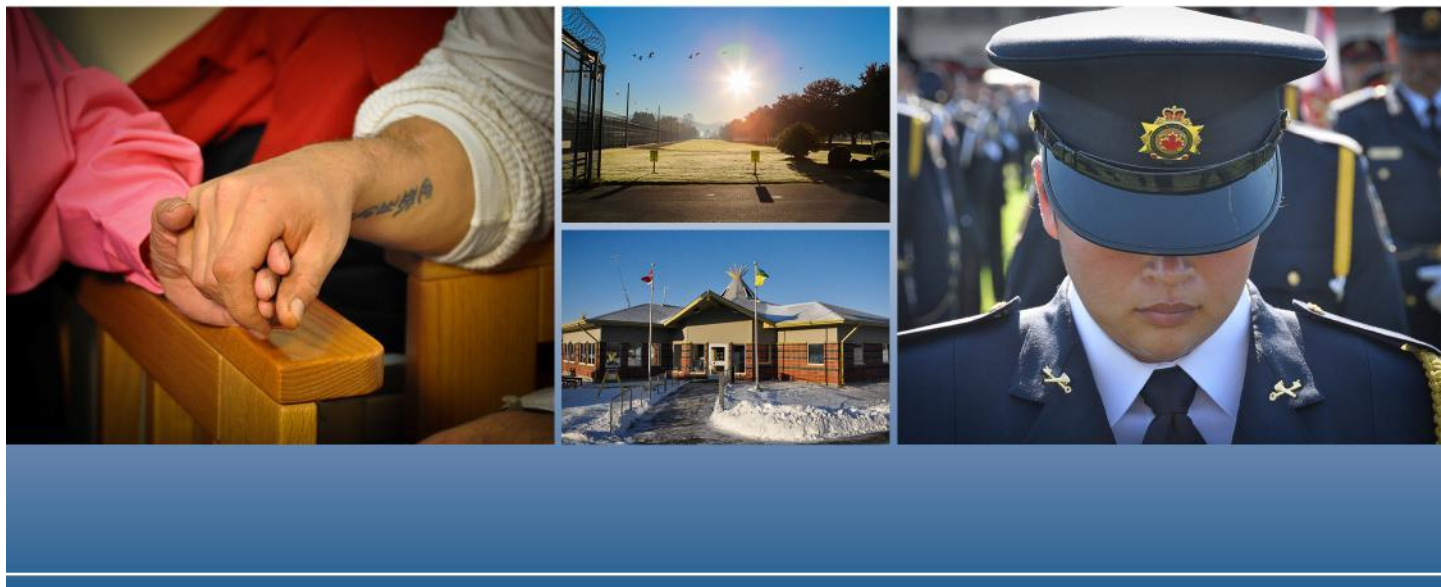


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RESEARCH REPORT

A Qualitative Study of Ethnocultural Offender Correctional Experiences: Programs, Services, and Community Connections

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This report is also available in French. Should additional copies be required, they can be obtained from the Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, 340 Laurier Ave. West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.

**A Study of Ethnocultural Offender Correctional Experiences:
Programs, Services, and Community Connections**

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The research reported here would not be possible without the willing cooperation and patience of the thirty-nine men and women who volunteered to participate in the study, in hopes that the information they provide might help to make institutional and community programs and services more sensitive and relevant to the unique needs of ethnocultural persons in prison or on conditional release in the community. The findings will contribute to a larger, ongoing study (*The Correctional Experiences of Ethnocultural Offenders: Admission, In-Custody, and Release*) being undertaken by the Correctional Service of Canada.

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Executive Summary

Key words: Ethnocultural offenders; qualitative study; prison; needs for programs and services

In Canada, the literature on racism in the correctional system has focused on Indigenous persons. The current study reports on personal interviews with $N = 39$ Ethnocultural federal offenders, here defined as any non-White, non-Indigenous person “who has specific needs based on race, language or culture and who has a desire to preserve his/her cultural identity and practices.” (Commissioner’s Directive-767, 2013a, para.1) Offenders who self-identify as Black make up the largest proportion of Ethnocultural offenders.

The objectives of the study are (1) to describe the experiences of Ethnocultural offenders, and Black offenders specifically, in participating in correctional programs and services while incarcerated, and (2) to describe the relevance and utility of correctional programs and services in preparing Ethnocultural offenders, and Black offenders specifically, returning to the community. Nonproportionate quota sampling was used to ensure representation from men, women, and a range of ethnocultural groups, along with regional representation. All federal offenders on conditional release who self-identified during the Correctional Service of Canada’s (CSC) admission screening protocol as being of ethnocultural background were eligible to participate. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed with questions drawn from the ongoing CSC study R-446 -*The Correctional Experiences of Ethnocultural Offenders: Admission, In-Custody, and Community Supervision*, items adapted from a review of the research literature and CSC’s Offender Management System database, and questions used by researchers at the Institute for Applied Social Research in previous offender-based studies. Interviews were conducted with $N = 39$ offenders, including 14 women and 25 men, of which 13 (34% of total) persons self-identified as Black.

Findings highlight the definitional complexity and heterogeneity of persons who self-identify as Ethnocultural. Nine of those interviewed chose not to identify as belonging to a racial group. Most persons said they were comfortable speaking English or French. When asked if they felt their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion affected access to programs or services, women were more likely than men to answer in the affirmative. Almost all (87.5% men, 100% women) of those interviewed participated in and completed programs while in prison. Employment skills training or related education were noted as the most useful programs. Most men (62.5%) and half of women (50%) reported that program facilitators made an effort to respect their ethnocultural background and needs, though only about half (51.3%) of the overall sample reported members of their case management team or other institutional staff made an effort to acknowledge and respect their ethnocultural background and needs, and nearly half (47.4%) of study participants reported specific instances of feeling disrespected.

Most interviewed persons reported feeling prepared to return to the community. Compared to men (66.7%), women (85.7%) were more likely to agree that there were services or resources they would have liked to receive but were not available or offered. Return to family was reported as the most positive aspect of community release. Future research on Ethnocultural offenders will help frame and nuance the findings presented here, including how best to understand

ethnocultural needs and design relevant programs and services for this heterogeneous group.

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Introduction

The practice of differentiating persons by socially constructed racial type is systemically woven into the fabric of Canada (Dua, Razack, & Warner, 2005; Mitchell & D’Onofrio, 2016)¹. Aiken (2007, 58) observes it “remains a defining feature of Canadian society.” Claims have been made that the practice also exists in the justice system (Bernard & Smith, 2018; Owusu-Bempah & Wortley, 2014) and correctional institutions (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2019).

In Canada, the literature on racism in the correctional system has generally focused on Indigenous persons (Arbel, 2019; Campbell & Wellman, 2020; Cesaroni, Grol, & Fredericks, 2019; Crosby & Monaghan, 2016; Gutierrez, Chadwick, & Wanamake, 2018; Martel, Brassard, & Jaccoud, 2011; Miller, 2017; Reasons, Hassan, Ma, Monchalin, Bige, Paras, & Arora, 2016; Ruddell & Gottschall, 2014; Stewart, Hamilton, Wilton, Cousineau, & Varrette, 2015; Turnbull, 2014), though there is growing interest in the carceral experiences of other racialized groups. In eastern Canada, this shift was marked by the work of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System and the *Stephen Lewis Report on Race Relations in Ontario*, which led to the former’s creation (Commission on Systemic Racism, 1994; 1995)².

Acting as the Advisor on Race Relations to the Premier of Ontario, Lewis (1992, 2) presents the initial observations of his report with a clarification of scope:

First, what we are dealing with, at root, and fundamentally, is anti-Black racism. While it is obviously true that every visible minority community experiences the indignities and wounds of systemic discrimination throughout Southern Ontario, it is the Black community which is the focus, it is Blacks who are being shot, it is Black youth that is unemployed in excessive numbers, it is Black students who are being inappropriately streamed in school. ... Just as the soothing balm of ‘multiculturalism’ cannot mask racism, so racism cannot mask its primary target.

¹ Like Douyon (2016, 13; see also Commission on Systemic Racism, 1995, 40), we recognize “the biological notion of ‘race’ became obsolete with the work of geneticists and anthropologists” and use the term and category as a means of identifying racialized persons or groups within a (human) rights framework.

² Interest in the province of Ontario is, in part, adjoined to the fact that a 2013 report by the Correctional Investigator of Canada (2013, 3) described the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System’s 1994 and 1995 work as “the principal Canadian study” on the experiences of visible minorities in correctional institutions and a foundation for his case study on diversity.

Two years later, and with a directive to focus on racism against or towards Black people, the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System found that “racist language and attitudes plague the environments of many Ontario prisons” (Commission on Systemic Racism, 1994, 27) and that

many prisoners, some prison staff, and most community organizations involved in prison services have serious concerns about systemic racism in the delivery of prison services, treatment, and programs. These sources maintained that black and other racial minority prisoners are much less likely than white prisoners to be placed in meaningful treatment, work, or other rehabilitation programs. (67)

Following the ‘nothing works’ and ‘what works’ shifts in correctional philosophy (Newsome & Cullen, 2017), and the resulting emphasis for correctional staff to “assess prisoners’ motivation and interest when making recommendations for treatment and program involvement” (Commission on Systemic Racism, 1994, 70), effective communication between classification staff and offenders was described as important when assessing the provincial situation. Specifically, “classification staff experience great difficulty in assessing motivation, particularly for prisoners who are not white” (Commission on Systemic Racism, 1994, 73). “Prisoners from these [black and other racial or linguistic minority] communities appear to some staff to be excessively alienated from the criminal justice system” (73), and “Officers interpret this alienation as evidence that such prisoners do not want to be helped and will not respond well to the rehabilitation and treatment programs” (73). The federal carceral experience may be framed by similar concerns and across the same timeframe.

Douyon (2016) provides a detailed account of ethnoculturalism as a concept and policy directive within the Correctional Service Canada (CSC). The tracing of target dates—e.g., the creation of a CSC task force on ethnocultural diversity in 1992 and a regional Ethnocultural Advisory Committee for Quebec in 1999—overlaps the Ontario reports cited above. Claims by offenders that “there is no ethnocultural perspective when programs are launched” (Douyon, 2016, 52), that the content of these programs is devoid of “their traditions or values” (52), and complaints by correctional staff that “Black offenders in particular used a non-verbal language that was difficult to decipher” (66) are also in line with the above provincial concerns. In addition to this alignment, Douyon (2016, 66) provides context for a focus on federally incarcerated Black offenders: “This problem [the problem of Black offenders in federal penitentiaries] is the second-largest among the racialized minorities at Correctional Service.” The

largest is the carceral overrepresentation of Indigenous offenders (Gamwell, Pardoel, & Wardrop, 2019; Zinger, 2019a), persons whose experiences are described as related to but independent from those of Canada's ethnic and cultural minority groups (Douyon, 2016).

Definitional and Methodological Issues

Douyon (2016, 14) writes of the history behind the use of the term “ethnocultural offender.” He refers to an agreement among national and regional ethnocultural advisory committees and CSC “to refer to ethnocultural groups when designating offenders from minority ethnic groups.” CSC uses the term ‘Ethnocultural offender’ to refer to any “non-Indigenous federally sentenced person ‘who has specific needs based on race, language or culture and who has a desire to preserve his/her cultural identity and practices” (Commissioner’s Directive-767, 2013a, para.1).³ Keown, Gobeil, Biro, and Ritchie (2015) follow this definition and exclude White offenders from their study on the social history characteristics of federal offenders at intake. Questions surrounding the decision to deal with Ethnocultural and Indigenous offenders as separate groups despite similarities in the challenges faced (Douyon, 2016) highlight definitional and methodological issues in conceptualizing and researching ethnocultural groups. Paired with the decision to treat Indigenous persons separately, the description of the ethnocultural group concept is similar to, but more wide-ranging than, the *Employment Equity Act’s* (S.C. 1995, c.44) use of visible minority—i.e., “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights also acknowledges the complexity of definition. The committee’s report refers to witness’ statements of the “vast differences within this [ethnocultural] categorization and the complexities of each sub-group (2019, 44).

Paralleling Keown et al.’s (2015) earlier work, in this report we use and build on the

³ It is possible to interpret CSC’s definition of Ethnocultural offender as including Indigenous persons. Indigenous individuals may also have specific needs based on race, language or culture and have a desire to preserve his/her cultural identity and practices. The Canadian Ethnocultural Council’s description is comparable: “The CSC ‘ethnocultural minority group offender’ refers to any individual or group of individuals who differ from the majority because of their racial, linguistic, or cultural characteristics, their system of beliefs, and their will to protect their cultural identity.” (CEC, 2009, 4) However, the existence of CSC’s strategic plan for Indigenous offenders (Commissioner’s Directive-702, 2013) substantiates an Indigenous-Ethnocultural distinction. Support of this contextualized reading may be found elsewhere (see Ambtman, 2013, 5; Turnbull, 2016, 159).

Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights' 2019 description of the term Ethnocultural offender to exclude White and Indigenous perspectives when exploring (1) how Ethnocultural offenders and, more specifically, the largest group within this category—i.e., Black offenders (Gamwell et al., 2019)—respond to current correctional intervention programs and (2) how links with ethnocultural-specific integration services and resources among this group of offenders affect their reintegration upon release. The term Black offenders refers to persons who self-identify as Black, African, Caribbean, or a related ethnic, cultural, or geographically oriented subgroup (e.g., Nevisian or Kalinago) and makes use of information available in CSC's Offender Management System (OMS), while providing, in discussions of race and racialization and via its use of self-identification, "more accurate results in most situations" (Commission on Systemic Racism, 1994, 32). The decision also employs logic advanced by the Correctional Investigator of Canada (2013, 4; see also Zinger, 2019b):

The case study uses the term 'Black' to denote those inmates who voluntarily self-identified during the CSC intake process as being 'Black'. ... Previously, Black inmates primarily self-identified under the category 'Black', however with the recent addition of geographical-based race categories, some may now self-identify as 'Caribbean' and 'Sub-Saharan African'. While many different terms (Black, African, Caribbean, etc.) are used throughout the literature, this case study employs the term 'Black' to be consistent with the way in which the CSC collects and reports race data. Further, it is recognized that this group is very diverse and comprises various nationalities as well as ethnic and cultural groups. However, in order to have a representative sample, it is necessary to group them together for the purposes of the analysis.

Canadian Research on Ethnocultural Offenders

Malatest (2009, 1) conducted focus groups with $N = 39$ ethnic—i.e., visible and religious—minority inmates and interviews with staff from eight CSC institutions to explore program and service participation, and the extent to which "different types of racism or systemic discrimination exist in the federal corrections system." The majority of inmates reported there were few programs focused on Ethnocultural offenders and, in six of the eight institutions, offenders witnessed racism and discrimination or "felt that racism and discrimination were prevalent among CSC staff" (11). To help overcome the lack of relevant programs, inmate participants suggest CSC work to create, facilitate, or strengthen "the relationship between CSC and ethnocultural communities." (16)

In a study related to Malatest (2009) and sponsored by the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, researchers conducted focus groups with $N = 44$ inmates and personal interviews with N

= 14 institutional staff members on the topic of ethnocultural programs (CEC, 2009). Many of the study participants expressed the belief that inmates should have access to ethnocultural focused programs, and “reference was made a number of times to the Aboriginal program which was used as an example of how CSC accommodated.” (9) Discrimination within the institution was also described as a problem by ethn racial staff, and some inmates believed its existence served to limit the use of programs or services. To address identified issues, the researchers recommended that CSC “conduct an equity and cultural diversity analysis of all the programs offered to inmates” (19), including CSC’s CORCAN program, and investigate ways to better connect programing initiatives to Ethnocultural communities able to provide work and community support.

Zakaria (2011) explored the importance of ethnicity and foreign-born status when identifying offender needs by comparing the demographic and risk and need scores of four offender groups: Canadian-born White, Canadian-born non-White, foreign-born White, and foreign-born non-White. Indigenous offenders were not included in the study “because they are already recognized as a distinct subgroup, and women were excluded due to their small overall size.” (para.2) When assessed against Canadian-born White men, non-White or foreign-born offenders were not found to represent a higher risk or need group.

Gottschall (2012a; 2012b) studied federally sentenced visible minority offender trends and found that the number of Black and Southeast Asian offenders in federal custody was greater than their proportional representation in the Canadian population. The researcher also found that the number of visible minority group members incarcerated in federal prisons was growing over time. According to Gottschall (2012b, para.9), “recent increases in the number of non-Aboriginal visible minority offenders may require the Service [CSC] to develop or modify institutional and community interventions and services to respond to the risks and needs of these ethnocultural groups.”

Stewart and Wilton (2012) examined differences in correctional program participation among four federal offender racial group classifications: Caucasians, Aboriginals, Blacks, and Other. Of the total group of high risk/high need offender admissions to CSC in 2008/2009, most of whom would normally meet the criteria for assignment to a Nationally Recognised Correctional Program (NRCP), the researchers found no differences in being assigned or enrolled in an NRCP based on racial grouping. Of the entire group of offenders who were

assigned to programs ($N = 3,392$) and eventually enrolled, Black offenders were described as least likely to end up enrolled in programs.

As part of the final report on an integration pilot project funded by CSC, Ambtman (2013) observed that the majority of the project's $N = 16$ registered Ethnocultural participants were interested in receiving education or employment related assistance. These offenders were also found to describe family as their primary source of support, while at the same time expressing "very ambivalent attitudes towards their communities" (16). Ambtman (2013) notes that such ambivalence may stem from the active presence of criminal associates in their communities and recommends reintegration plans for offenders returning to ethnic communities be centered or focused on their identified needs.

In what may be seen as a forerunner to Douyon's (2016) work, a review of Black inmate experiences by the Correctional Investigator of Canada (2013, 12) found that

while CSC programs provide Black offenders with important tools and strategies, they do not necessarily or adequately match their reality. Black inmates reported that they could not see themselves reflected in the programs and they felt that these were not rooted in their historical or lived experiences.

Black inmates were also found to report difficulties in securing prison employment, to lack community support or support from a group within the Black community, and to receive little assistance in developing such connections. The Correctional Investigator of Canada (2013) reported that Black community groups were capable of significantly impacting the ability of Black inmates to successfully reintegrate. At the time of the review, Black inmates accounted "for 9.3% of the total federal prison population (up from 6.1% in 2002/03) while representing approximately just 2.9% of the Canadian population" (4).

Usher and Stewart (2014, 213; see also Usher & Stewart, 2011) used a meta-analytic methodology to study the effect of correctional cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) on recidivism "with Canadian federal offenders who . . . self-identified as belonging to diverse ethnic groups." Results from eight different CSC studies of CBT treatment intervention programs were analyzed across four ethnic classifications: Caucasian, Black, Aboriginal, and Other. Usher and Stewart (2014) found that, irrespective of ethnic background, participation in CBT programming diminished the probability of readmission to custody.

Wilton and Power (2014) compared the criminal history, institutional behaviour, and program participation of $N = 88$ visible minority offenders with $N = 715$ non-visible minority

offenders assessed for concurrent mental health and substance abuse disorders and substance abuse disorders alone. Black offenders ($n = 30$) represented the largest segment of the visible minority group. Wilton and Power (2014) found no significant difference in the mental health or substance abuse treatment outcomes of visible minorities compared to other offender groups.

Nolan and Power (2014) examined the institutional and community employment activities of visible minority group offenders among a sample of $N = 4,460$ federal offenders released under supervision and into the community during the fiscal year 2010/2011. They concluded that, overall, the performance of visible minority groups in securing community employment and vocational certification relating to community employment was equal to or better than that of White offenders. Nearly all visible minority groups, including Black offenders, were found to have obtained institutional vocational certification at a rate greater than their White counterparts.

Keown, Gobeil, Biro, and Ritchie (2015) used data collected at intake to explore the social histories of $N = 725$ Ethnocultural offenders. Black offenders formed the largest ethnocultural subgroup, representing more than half (51%) of the sample distribution, and eight variables representing social history were extracted from the intake database: criminal history and Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (DFIA-R; Brown & Motiuk, 2005), community functioning, education and employment, attitudes, associates, substance use, marital and family, and personal/emotional factors. Additional data for White and Aboriginal offenders were included for comparison purposes. When compared against the social histories of $N = 2,643$ White and $N = 945$ Aboriginal offenders, Ethnocultural offenders were found to have less developed criminal histories, were less likely to engage in problematic substance use or to demonstrate some/high need in the family/marital domain, and were less likely to report unstable accommodation, financial instability, limited constructive leisure activities or community attachment, or using social assistance. Ethnocultural offenders were also described as less likely than their Aboriginal counterparts to evidence some/high need in the education/employment domain and personal/emotional domain of the DFIA-R, while displaying a rate of suspected gang affiliation two times that of White offenders. Keown et al. (2015, 14) concluded that when Ethnocultural offenders are represented as a single group, their “most prominent need areas may differ from those of their White and Aboriginal counterparts.”

Gamwell and Wardrop (2019) examined the intake profiles of $N = 10,461$ men and $N =$

971 women admitted to federal custody between April 1, 2016 and September 30, 2018. Black men and Black women represented the largest non-White, non-Indigenous, visible minority group. Black women and women from other ethnocultural groups had profiles showing relatively low risk for reoffending and a higher motivation for reintegration than White or Indigenous women. Black men and those with Arab/West Asian backgrounds were found to have lower rates of engagement in their correctional plans compared to other men.

Gamwell et al. (2019) analyzed data on the ethnocultural makeup of the federal offender population from 2009/2010 to 2018/2019 and reported that, compared to the previous decade 2000 – 2009, the growth rate of Ethnocultural offenders in CSC had significantly slowed. Black men and women continued to represent the non-Indigenous visible minority group most disproportionately overrepresented in the federal offender population. Gamwell et al. (2019, para.5) conclude that

the overrepresentation for these groups [Black men, Black women, and South East Asian men], along with the observed growth in some other ethnocultural groups reinforces the need for attention to diversity issues by reviewing programs and services for relevance to a diverse population.

In their February 2019 *Interim Report – Study on the Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons*, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (2019, 9) comes to a similar conclusion:

Throughout its study, the committee has become aware of a wide range of challenges faced by federally-sentenced persons. The committee was troubled by the frequency and consistency with which these issues were raised. The stories shared by federally-sentenced persons were similar from one institution to the next and from one region to another. ... One overarching theme was that CSC policies often discriminate. ... An important consequence of discriminatory policies is that federally-sentenced persons, especially those who are women, Indigenous, Black and racialized, have difficulty accessing culturally relevant rehabilitative programming. Without access to these programs, federally-sentenced persons are ill-prepared to reintegrate in their communities, which places them at a higher risk of reoffending. Tackling this issue is particularly urgent for federally-sentenced Indigenous and Black persons who are significantly overrepresented in the correctional system.

Objectives of the Current Study

The current study reports on the results of semi-structured in-person interviews with $N = 39$ Ethnocultural federal offenders on conditional release in the community. The objectives of the

study are as follows:

1. to describe the experiences of Ethnocultural offenders, and Black offenders specifically, in participating in correctional programs and services while incarcerated, including the identification of language, cultural, religious, and racial barriers to participation;
2. to describe the relevance and utility of correctional programs and services in preparing and supporting Ethnocultural offenders, and Black offenders specifically, returning to the community.

The findings will complement the results of a larger, ongoing study (R-446 - *The Correctional Experiences of Ethnocultural Offenders: Admission, In-Custody, and Community Supervision*) being undertaken by CSC. In the context of the Canadian carceral literature, this work also represents a further refocusing of the investigative lens at a time when research on Ethnocultural offenders is limited and “a growing body of research suggests that countries with more ethnocultural and socioeconomic diversity experience substantially more problems creating socially cohesive societies.” (Kaushik, Lee, & Lemon, 2018, 842)

Method

Research Design

A qualitative, in-person interview methodology was used to conduct the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Stuckey, 2013). Nonproportionate quota sampling helped ensure adequate representation from men, women, and a range of ethnocultural groups, with a specific focus on Black persons. In addition, the researchers attempted to achieve as broad a regional representation as possible (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Hoover et al., 2019; Morrow et al., 2007; Robinson, 2014).

The study was conducted under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between CSC and the Institute for Applied Social Research (IASR) of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Nipissing University. The Nipissing University Research Ethics Board reviewed and approved the study according to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Government of Canada, 2018).

Participants

All federal offenders on conditional release who self-identified during CSC's admission screening protocol as being of ethnocultural background were eligible to participate over the course of the recruitment period (August 1, 2019 – August 31, 2020). A total of $N = 39$ Ethnocultural persons volunteered to participate in the study, including $n = 14$ women and $n = 25$ men, with $n = 13$ (34%) persons self-identifying as Black. The breakdown of the sample by location, number of participants, and number of persons who could not be contacted or declined to participate is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of sample participants ($N = 39$) and number unable to contact, did not show, or declined or withdrew from interview, by location and region

Location	Region	Participants % (n)	Unable to Contact/No Show % (n)	Declined/ Withdrew % (n)
Halifax/Dartmouth	ATL	10.3 (4)	-	2
Vancouver	PAC	28.2 (11)	2	1
Toronto	ONT	53.8 (21)	4	1
Montreal	QUE	7.7 (3)		
Total All Locations		100.0 (39)		

Measures/Material

A twenty page, eighty-five question, semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) was developed to assess the participants' experiences and participation in CSC programs and services and is comprised of questions drawn from the ongoing CSC study R-446 - *The Correctional Experiences of Ethnocultural Offenders: Admission, In-Custody, and Community Supervision, and Release*, items adapted from a review of the research literature and the CSC-OMS database, and questions used by IASR researchers in previous qualitative interviews with offenders. A combination of closed-ended, numerically-scored screening questions and open-ended follow-ups were asked of the sample participants and spanned the following categories: Part A - Ethnocultural Background Screening Questions; Part B - Experiences with Programs and Services While in Prison; Part C - Exploring Ethnocultural Issues in Program Participation; Part D - Participating in Social Programs While in Prison, Part E - Ethnocultural Background and Prison Experiences; Part F - Ethnocultural Background and Release from Prison.

The interview sessions took between thirty minutes and one and one-half hours to complete and were manually transcribed by the researchers or, with the permission of the participant, digitally recorded. The numerically scored interview protocol data were later entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 (IBM Corporation, 2019) program for analysis and reporting. Participants' verbal responses were transcribed and entered into the NVivo 12 Pro (QSR International, 2018) program to facilitate their coding, classification, and analysis. The transcribing and qualitative coding of verbal responses was reviewed by at least two IASR researchers to ensure inter-rater reliability (Campbell, Osseman, & Pedersen, 2013).

Assessor Training. Members of the IASR research team are experienced in conducting interviews with federal offenders—including men, women, Indigenous persons, older persons, and those with mental disorders—both in institutions and on conditional release in the community. To guarantee consistency in the completion of the interview protocol with sample participants, two members of the research team were present for more than half of the scheduled sessions; the senior research assistant completed the interviews in Vancouver alone. The pairing of researchers at parole office sites helped to further ensure the validity of the study’s findings by allowing questions about the interpretation of terms or the scoring or transcribing of data to be immediately addressed (Cho & Trent, 2006; Cypress, 2017; Jones, 2007; Patenaude, 2004).

Procedures/Analytic Approach

Participant Recruitment. Over the course of the study’s participant recruitment period (August 1, 2019 – August 31, 2020), CSC staff regularly provided IASR researchers with an updated regional and parole office specific list of offenders who met the study criteria and, when informed of the study by a Parole Officer, were willing to meet with an IASR researcher. Two members of the IASR research team were dispatched to conduct interviews at parole offices with a sufficient number of potential participants to help ensure a response rate that was adequate and emphasized the recruitment of Black persons, based on their greater proportionate representation among Ethnocultural offenders (Gamwell et al., 2019). In advance of each visit, an information letter was sent by the Director General, Strategic Policy and Planning CSC, explaining the research and asking for an on-site contact to be named to assist IASR researchers in making facilitative arrangements. Upon arriving at each research site, IASR researchers would meet with the designated on-site contact to confirm arrangements and answer any additional questions about the research. With the support and assistance of the manager and staff, interviews with volunteer sample participants were conducted by IASR researchers at the parole office in a room made available for that purpose.

Informed Consent and Data Management. IASR researchers provided volunteers with a verbal summary of the informed consent form and encouraged them to ask questions about the procedures to be employed and the terms of their participation. All participants were asked to sign a paper copy of the informed consent form, including permission to access their OMS file, prior to proceeding with the interviews. Participants were given a \$20.00 Tim Horton’s gift card to compensate them for their time and travel to attend the interview. Debriefing procedures were

outlined on the consent form. Interviews were conducted in English at the Toronto, Vancouver, and Halifax/Dartmouth parole offices and in French at the Montreal parole office.

Analytic/Statistical Techniques. Frequency counts and percentages are reported for the numerically-scored interview protocol questions using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 (IBM Corporation, 2019). Participants' verbal responses to the interview protocols were coded, classified, and analyzed using the NVivo 12 (QSR International, 2018) qualitative analysis program.

Though the sample of Ethnocultural offenders ($N = 39$) employed in the current study is more than adequate in comparison to most qualitative studies (Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2016; Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, & Young, 2018), reported results should be interpreted with caution and are best viewed as exploratory and suggestive of areas requiring broader study (Hunter & Howes, 2020).

Results

As a qualitative research study, results of the personal interviews are reported verbatim. There may be instances where those who participated in the study used potentially hurtful or harmful language in their responses to interview questions. While IASR researchers in no way endorse the use of offensive language, we here report participants' responses as expressed during the interview process.

Participant Responses to Interview Protocol Screening Questions, by Gender

Participant responses to the numerically-scored interview protocol screening questions by main category and gender, including a detailed summary of participants' verbal responses to the interview questions, are shown in Table 2 beginning on the following page.

Race. The number of participants who identified their racial group as Black represents the largest proportion of persons interviewed, with Asian representing the second largest group (see Appendix A, interview protocol question Q4). All persons categorized as Mixed reported Black and White as the two included racial group components⁴. Nine study participants did not identify as belonging to a racial group, and religion affiliations were presented as an alternative classifier ("No [I do not identify as a member of a racial group]. I belong to a religious group though"). In cases where additional information on race was provided, religion was used as a qualifier ("I am Brown Hindu") and, later, cultural description.

Culture. Most participants (>80%) reported that their cultural identity was 'Important' or 'Very important', with women (64.3%) more likely to report it as 'Very important' compared to men (54.2%). Responses to interview protocol question Q14 show that most interviewed persons considered themselves to be religious or spiritual, with women (78.6%) more likely to report being religious or spiritual persons when compared to men (70.8%). Many also considered their religion to be part of their culture ("I was raised in it. So, that's my culture"), and the two were perceived to be causally related ("You kind of adapt the religion to your culture").

⁴ One participant who presented as Mixed ("I'm White and Black") contextualized this claim with the following: "I was adopted. So, my parents are Black, and my family is White."

Table 2

Participant Responses to Numerically Scored Interview Protocol Screening Questions, by Main Category and Gender ($N = 38^a$)

Category/Question Response	Men			Women		
	Yes	No	Missing/ NA	Yes	No	Missing/ NA
Part A – Ethnocultural Background Screening Questions						
Q3. Do you identify yourself as a member of a racial group (e.g., Black, Asian, Indigenous, White, etc.)?	79.2 (19)	20.8 (5)	-	78.6 (11)	21.4 (3)	-
Q4. If yes, what racial group do you identify with?	None		20.8 (5)	None		28.6 (4)
	Asian		25.0 (6)	Asian		14.3 (2)
	Black		33.3 (8)	Black		35.7 (5)
	East Indian		8.3 (2)	East Indian		-
	Mixed		8.3 (2)	Mixed		7.1 (1)
	Other		4.2 (1)	Other		14.3 (2)
	*missing		-	*missing		-
Q5. Have you changed the ethnocultural group you identify with since going to prison?	8.3 (2)	87.5 (21)	4.2 (1)	7.1 (1)	85.7 (12)	7.1 (1)
Q6. From the following options, how important is your ethnocultural identity to you?	Very important		54.2 (13)	Very important		64.3 (9)
	Important		29.2 (7)	Important		28.6 (4)
	Of low importance		12.5 (3)	Of low importance		-
	Not important at all		4.2 (1)	Not important at all		-
	*missing		-	*missing		7.1 (1)
Q14. Do you consider yourself a religious or spiritual person? (This could be part of your culture or not)	70.8 (17)	29.2 (7)	-	78.6 (11)	21.3 (3)	-

^a One individual reported their ethnocultural identity as 'Not important at all' and, according to the definitions used in this study, was consequently excluded in the calculation of results (see Footnote 5 of this report for additional information).

Table 2 (cont'd)

Participant Responses to Numerically Scored Interview Protocol Screening Questions, by Main Category and Gender ($N = 38^a$)

Category/Question Response	Men			Women		
	Yes	No	Missing/ NA	Yes	No	Missing/ NA
Part B – Experiences with Programs and Services While in Prison						
Q22. When you were in prison, did you have a chance to participate in any correctional programs?	87.5 (21)	12.5 (3)	-	100 (14)	-	-
Q25. Did you complete the programs you participated in?	75.0 (18)	12.5 (3)	12.5 (3)	100 (14)	-	-
Q26. If you had to do it again, would you want to participate in the same programs?	70.8 (17)	16.7 (4)	12.5 (3)	57.1 (8)	35.7 (5)	7.1 (1)
Q28. Could you relate to the exercises and examples used in the programs?	75.0 (18)	12.5 (3)	12.5 (3)	71.4 (10)	21.4 (3)	7.1 (1)
Q30. Overall, did you feel motivated to learn from the correctional programs you were involved in?	79.2 (19)	8.3 (2)	12.5 (3)	85.7 (12)	7.1 (1)	7.1 (1)
Q31. Since release, have you been able to apply any of the strategies/skills you learned through the programming you received while in prison?	83.3 (20)	4.2 (1)	12.5 (3)	78.6 (11)	14.3 (2)	7.1 (1)

Table 2 (cont'd)

Participant Responses to Numerically Scored Interview Protocol Screening Questions, by Main Category and Gender ($N = 38^a$)

Category/Question Response	Men			Women		
	Yes	No	Missing/ NA	Yes	No	Missing/ NA
Part C – Exploring Ethnocultural Issues in Program Participation						
Q33. What language(s) do you feel most comfortable communicating in?	English		70.8 (17)	English		71.4 (10)
	French		8.3 (2)	French		-
	Other language		16.7 (4)	Other language		7.1 (1)
	Eng or Fre and Other		4.2 (1)	Eng or Fre and Other		21.4 (3)
Q33a. Do you feel your language made it hard for you to engage in any programming	4.2 (1)	91.7 (22)	4.2 (1)	14.3 (2)	50.0 (7)	35.7 (5)
Q33b. Did you ever have access to any help such as a translator or language training?	4.2 (1)	91.7 (22)	4.2 (1)	7.1 (1)	50.0 (7)	42.9 (6)
Q34. Do you feel that your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion affected your experience in accessing and benefitting from correctional programs?	16.7 (4)	79.2 (19)	4.2 (1)	57.1 (8)	42.9 (6)	-
Q35. Did program facilitators make an effort to acknowledge, respect, or support your needs based on your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion?	62.5 (15)	29.2 (7)	8.3 (2)	50.0 (7)	42.9 (6)	7.1 (1)
Q36. Besides your language, that we already asked you about, were there any ethnocultural barriers or obstacles that made it hard for you to participate in the programs you wanted or in your correctional plan?	12.5 (3)	79.2 (19)	8.3 (2)	21.4 (3)	78.6 (11)	-

Table 2 (cont'd)

Participant Responses to Numerically Scored Interview Protocol Screening Questions, by Main Category and Gender ($N = 38^a$)

Category/Question Response	Men			Women		
	Yes	No	Missing/ NA	Yes	No	Missing/ NA
Part D – Participating in Social Programs While in Prison						
Q39. Were you aware of any of these social program kinds of activities happening at your institution, even if you didn't participate in them?	100 (24)	-	-	100 (14)	-	-
Q44. Did you participate in any of these kinds of activities?	83.3 (20)	12.5 (3)	4.2 (1)	100 (14)	-	-
Q48. Did you have a chance to interact with other members of your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion while you were in prison?	87.5 (21)	12.5 (3)	-	85.7 (12)	14.3 (2)	-
Q51. Before you were released, were you in contact with any community supports or groups?	41.7 (10)	58.3 (14)	-	64.3 (9)	35.7 (5)	-
Q56. Now that you're in the community, are you using any resources/support services?	58.3 (14)	41.7 (10)	-	71.4 (10)	28.6 (4)	-

Table 2 (cont'd)

Participant Responses to Numerically Scored Interview Protocol Screening Questions, by Main Category and Gender ($N = 38^a$)

Category/Question Response	Men			Women		
	Yes	No	Missing/ NA	Yes	No	Missing/ NA
Part E – Ethnocultural Background and Prison Experiences						
Q65. Did the members of your case management team make a specific effort to acknowledge and respect your ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, or beliefs?	45.8 (11)	50.0 (12)	4.2 (1)	57.1 (8)	42.9 (6)	
Q68. Did anyone else at the institution make a specific effort to ensure that your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or beliefs were respected?	41.7 (10)	50.0 (12)	8.3 (2)	64.3 (9)	35.7 (5)	-
Q70. Were there any specific instances when you felt disrespected because of your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or beliefs?	45.8 (11)	50.0 (12)	4.2 (1)	50.0 (7)	50.0 (7)	-

Table 2 (cont'd)

Participant Responses to Numerically Scored Interview Protocol Screening Questions, by Main Category and Gender ($N = 38^a$)

Category/Question Response	Men			Women		
	Yes	No	Missing/ NA	Yes	No	Missing/ NA
Part F – Ethnocultural Background and Release from Prison						
Q75. Overall, do you feel like you were prepared to return to the community?	87.5 (21)	8.3 (2)	4.2 (1)	92.9 (13)	7.1 (1)	-
Q79. Are you experiencing anything in the community that the correctional programs and social program activities didn't help prepare you for?	33.3 (8)	50.0 (12)	16.7 (4)	28.6 (4)	71.4 (10)	-
Q82. Would you have liked more attention to have been paid to your ethnicity, culture, spirituality and/or background, and past experiences while in prison?	29.2 (7)	62.5 (15)	8.3 (2)	78.6 (11)	21.4 (3)	-
Q85. Can you think of any services or resources that you would have liked to receive but that weren't offered to you?	66.7 (16)	29.2 (7)	4.2 (1)	85.7 (12)	14.3 (2)	-

The cultures identified by study participants include “Afro-Caribbean”, “Filipino”, “Hindu”, “Asian”, “Canadian”, and “Middle Eastern” and return us to the interplay of race, ethnicity, geography, and religious identity noted above and reinforced by the following:

So, do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group and if so which one?

Hispanic.

Okay, and you feel like you belong to a cultural group and if so which one?

Same.

Same?

Yeah.

Okay, do you identify yourself as a member of a racial group?

Hispanic.

Do you feel that you belong to an ethnic group and if so which one?

Yes, African American.

And you feel that you belong to a specific cultural group?

I guess, yeah.

And what cultural group would that be?

African American.

Perfect, and do you consider or do you identify yourself as a member of a racial group?

Black? Asian? Indigenous? White?

. . . We're all the same thing. But I mean, yeah, I'm Black.

Blacks represented the largest cultural group, but related discussions highlighted the fluidity of language or use of terms as synonyms or guides for inclusion (“*And do you feel like you belong to a cultural group. . . . Yeah, Black or West Indian. Okay, sorry you said West Indian? Well Caribbean*”). Also noted was the exclusion of cultural considerations from Canadian persons (*Do you feel like you belong to a cultural group? No, I'm from Canada. . . . And do you identify yourself as a member of a racial group? No*”).

Ethnicity. The exclusion of Canadians from group affiliation re-emerged in categorizations of ethnicity (“*Do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group? Not really, because I consider myself Canadian by far*”) and alongside a revision of the returning issue of geographic space or place:

Do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group?

In general or while I was in prison?

Well, actually, both. In general. . . . we'll start with that one?

No, not in general. And in prison, yeah, obviously. I mean, in there it's a little bit different. But not really on the streets, no. But in prison, a little bit.

And can I ask what group you felt you belonged to in prison or you belong to in prison, sorry?

Well I'm half-Black. . . . So, I would hang with the Black guys.

Blacks accounted for the largest grouping of ethnic persons, and discussions here highlight how attempts to fit oneself within a forced or assumed system of classification can be seen to complicate how persons identify:

Okay, so, now we'll start. The question, do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group?

Yes.

And which one is that?

I am from, I would say African. ... Yeah, well I am Jamaican, but I don't know how you guys put it.

Persons from Africa who said they did not belong to an ethnic group may, in turn, complicate attempts to establish static definitional parameters for understanding the composition of differing ethnic categories:

The first question is do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group and if so which one?

No, not really.

Okay, how about a cultural group?

No.

Okay, would you identify yourself as a member of a specific racial group?

Well, when people ask, I do say I'm from Africa.

Okay.

And they're like "Well you don't look Black". ... My skin is brown.

Ethnocultural Offenders. Though the above descriptions limit our ability to clearly delineate the contours of certain participant groups, the fact that no persons interviewed identified as exclusively White or Indigenous when discussing racial, ethnic, and cultural associations allows us to consider them not yet beyond the operational parameters of this study. Our conclusion, of course, assumes that we continue to adopt an inclusive approach to linguistic analysis (e.g., that we understand (1) "mixed [White and Black] race" persons who do not identify as belonging to an ethnic or cultural group and (2) persons who do not identify as belong to an ethnic, cultural, or racial group as non-White and non-Indigenous). But this consideration addresses only the first component of our Ethnocultural offender definition: the requirement that persons are non-White and non-Indigenous. And while the second definitional part is attended to by the fact that all interviewed persons spoke of specific needs—things that are "wanted or required" (Stevenson, 2010, para. 5), though not necessarily lacking and, at times, identified via claims of prejudicial treatment—based on their race, language, or culture, the question of 'importance' remains.

In line with Keown et al. (2015) and building on the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights' (2019, 44) description of how "CSC uses the term", Ethnocultural offenders are

defined as any non-White, non-Indigenous person “who has specific needs based on race, language or culture and who has a desire to preserve his/her cultural identity and practices.” (Commissioner’s Directive-767, 2013a, para.1) When discussing the importance of ethnocultural identity (interview protocol question Q6), only one participant described their ethnocultural identity as ‘Not important at all’ (see Table 2) and, according to the definitions used in this study, was consequently excluded in the calculation of results⁵. The majority of persons interviewed characterized this identity as ‘Very important’, and when asked if they changed the ethnocultural group they identify with since going to prison (interview protocol question Q5), only three respondents said ‘Yes’:

So, I'm half White half Black . . .

Okay, and you identify with one more than the other or just both, half White half Black?

Both, you know what I mean? It don't really matter, right?

No. I understand that. And have you changed your ethno-cultural group . . . since going to prison? So, you said, that with regards to ethnicity, yes? That you, when you went in it was different and so . . . does that include before going in and after coming out? So, it was just that period in prison?

Well, yeah. It's like, you've got no choice, right? Like you don't have to have the Black guys, but there is like the Black guys—you know—there's fucking natives. You know what I mean? The Whites, shit like that. . .

So, if I understand correctly, it's kind of like you didn't have to, but there are incentives to join a group?

Yeah . . . it's just like ‘your Black I'm Black, okay, we stick together.’ You know what I mean?

⁵ To be clear, this person was not the only respondent to answer interview protocol question Q6 with ‘Not important at all’, ‘It's not of importance’, or some version thereof. They were, however, the only interviewed person who said their ethnocultural identity was not important, did not identify as belonging to a cultural group, and did not view their religious belief structure as culturally situated. In the 3 other cases where participants answered interview protocol question Q6 with a ‘Not important at all’ claim, non-White, non-Indigenous persons spoke of valuing their religious identity and tied this belief structure to their culture or considered a particular culture to be part of their core understanding of self (“Je suis Québécois en dedans de moi”). These findings highlight two important features of the Ethnocultural definition here employed. First, the specific needs identified need not be directly aligned with the cultural identity a person desires to preserve (e.g., a race-based wants and a spiritual identity) or the means by which one lives or practices that identity. And, second, the identity of racialized persons may include spiritualities they describe as “Indigenous” (see Footnote 7 of this report) and cultures others characterize as “white francophone majoritarian” (Bakali, 2015, 412) or comprised of persons who are “now part of the dominant racial grouping and have access to white privilege and the everyday unearned institutional and material advantages of being white.” (Scott, 2016, 1293)

Context and Identity. When participants were asked to expand on their ethnocultural identity, the above complexities were found to hold, and caution is therefore required when interpreting understandings of place (“I was born in Lebanon and we kept with that traditional foods, morals, values”; “I’m Jamaican and we are family oriented”; “I’m Indian, but I’ve been raised in England”) and the related centrality of religion (“*Can you tell me a bit more about your ethnocultural background?* I am from Sri Lanka. . . . I speak Tamil and Sinhala. And I am Hindu religion”). Responses to interview protocol question Q9 (*What aspects of your ethnocultural upbringing are most important to you?*) were similarly widespread (“I think everything is important”). Participants spoke of food, religion, family or combinations of the above (“I would say food, family, religion”), language, and a “respect for elders.” Having polite regard for or “being able to get along with others” was also described as a most important aspect, underlined by claims that it was not always easy to be accepted by one’s cultural group, the routine description of family members as persons sharing one’s culture (e.g., “*Do members of your immediate family share the same culture as you?* Yeah, every single one”), and the characterization of peer groups as less homogeneous (“I don’t have a lot of cultural peers . . . other than family and friends of family”).

Cultural Activities. The desire to protect one’s self and family from prejudicial treatment or people who “would [because of my charges] look at me different and probably weird” limited opportunities for cultural engagement (“So, my culture, normally we go to jail and nobody, nobody respects you [if you do]. *And so that prevents you from engaging in certain types of cultural activities?* Yes sir, yes sir”; “I don’t want them to see me and then, in front of my children, if. . . . if they say anything about why I went to jail and why I’m here. . . . I don’t want to make them sad”).

Timing (“I just got out”; “I just started working. I just came out”) and a change in religion (“I’m actually Catholic. I just joined”) were additional reasons for which participants reported shifts in their pre- to post-custodial cultural activities (e.g., attending church, temple, “the Lebanese festival”, “Caribana . . . Kwanzaa, stuff like that”). However, unlike a change of religion or a loss of cultural place, time or timing was not always described as having caused a shift:

Yes [I engage in the same cultural activities as before], and again I will repeat: Eight months of a person’s life is not that long. . . . There’s no reintegration required for somebody

like me. It was very easy to get back into my cultural and religious routine. It wasn't that much of an effort, because there is no psychological impacts, there's no—you know—PTSD . . . there's nothing.

Most respondents represented the frequency in which they engage in post-release cultural activities—their answer to interview protocol question Q12—as similar to their pre-custodial rate of cultural participation, and being “back with my family” justified increased engagement. Reasons to support the importance of frequency were expressed (“Yes, you have to keep it up man. You can't fail. Because if you fail, the Devil gets you”), as were reasons to exercise caution when interpreting the measure:

Well I am a lot older. I think I would say [my participation in cultural activities is] about the same, but in a different more dedicated way. Before it was just formality, because you're a kid with your parents.

Time spent in prison—or the effect of going to prison (interview protocol question Q11)—was predominantly described as limiting the ability of persons to keep up with activities related to their culture. Prison was characterized as a place without “any cultural activities” or without “cultural activities . . . for me”. The activities that were available were “Euro, Anglo centered” and dependant on “the whims of certain officers.”

Religion. The majority of interviewed persons considered themselves to be religious or spiritual (interview protocol question Q14) and adjoined themselves to a specific system of faith (“I'm a Muslim”; “Jewish”; “Black Jewish”; “Roman Catholic”; “Seventh-Day Church of God”; “Hindu”; “Indigenous”; “None of them. My own”). While links to culture are addressed above, descriptions of related practices include attending significance events (“Friday prayers with my father”), helping “feed the poor”, and drumming, “worshipping, it's all the same thing.” Most of the study's participants said they were able to participate “one hundred percent” or to a “limited” extent in religious or spiritual practices and activities while in prison:

I was doing my time, and I was reading my Bible, and I was putting people together. I was doing a lot of study—like . . . things that I might not be able to have time to do when I was running around in the city.

When asked if participants prefer to be alone when practicing their religion or spirituality (interview protocol question Q17), a few said ‘Yes’ (“Well my preference is now alone”). A larger number said they enjoyed “being around other people”, but the majority of interviewed persons categorized themselves as falling somewhere in between (“It depends on what I'm

doing”; “It varies”; “It doesn't really make a difference”). Again, women were more likely than men to report being a religious or spiritual person.

A Unique Experience. For some respondents, the importance of numbers in shaping experiences in prison (interview protocol question Q20) was adjoined to the ability of persons to stand out or be ignored for the wrong reasons:

A lot of the times I was the only Black kid. ... So ... there's just a certain amount of attention that gets brought to you ... levels of racism, all that stuff which I encountered. ... But it's nothing new. ... It's just a little bit more dangerous.

There was a unit called little Jamaica, and this is what they called it, and they stuck all of us there, and all of us had programs together, and we all had the same programs. We were all given like the same like.

While numbers were said to matter elsewhere (e.g., as part of their response to interview protocol question Q37, one respondent did not “know how many people it takes for changes to be triggered. ... Whatever that number is ... they are certainly not going to develop a program for one person”), the size of an identifiable group was not presented as the only means of calculating one’s sense of institutional worth:

I'm straight. I'm not part of the LGBTQ and I feel like in jail that was like...if you are lesbian or transsexual or something you get a little bit, like they seem to care a little bit more about you. So, like just being like a Black straight person they don't care compared to anyone else.

Be it, for example, due to limited or unavailable resources (“There was nothing available for me”, “nothing for Hispanic”; “They had nothing for our hair”), or religious or spiritual differences (“Many people don't believe in God”), or a variety of factors (“It was really hard, because ... they didn't understand it [my spirituality]. Also ... the colour of my skin ... that didn't make it any better”) most offenders said their experience in prison was different than that of other inmates or that they “felt totally different”. Those who “didn't see” differences also spoke of feelings, as well as the importance of behaviour and the culture to which one relates (“I think when you're in an institution your experience is completely based on your behaviour, how you interact with other people. ... I take responsibility for all of my actions”; “I relate to the Western culture. I mean, I grew up here. I didn't feel foreign at all”).

Program Participation in Prison. When in prison, nearly all interviewed persons participated in correctional programming (interview protocol question Q22) and completed the programs they participated in (interview protocol question Q25), with 100% of women reporting participation and completion. Most participants were also able to relate to the exercises and examples used within programs (interview protocol question Q28). The tendency of interviewees to focus on a particular set of programs or “narrow it down to one program”, however, limits the generalizability of participation-related findings. Individual expectations (“It’s like they say—you know—you should only take so much, because it doesn’t identify with me. . . . It’s not part of my experience”) and the role of group dynamics further complicate these readings:

I think it’s more the people that were involved with it. . . . When you saw someone that had been in the program ahead of you and able to . . . open up, then it—you know—enabled me to feel a little more trust and lessen the fear. So, it’s not so much specifically what parts of the program but involvement in the program.

Despite the noted difficulties, the finding that most participants were able to relate to the exercises and examples used, or to “some of them”, may be read to support the fact that a majority of respondents also described feeling motivated to learn from the programs they were involved in, completed the programs they participated in, and would participate in the same programs if they were to re-write their institutional history (see Table 2).

Reasons for participants not wanting to repeat the same programs (interview protocol question Q26) revolved primarily around notions of applicability that were not focused on ethnocultural considerations (“It doesn’t apply to my work”; “I don’t think it’s geared to my needs”; “Not every person that goes in has an emotional issue”). Similar claims were expressed by persons who wanted to take programs that were not available (“There was . . . a computer program I wanted to get into”; “I was trying to take the entrepreneurial courses”; “I really wanted to take . . . the escorted temporary absences”; “I tried to ask for trade”) or reported not feeling motivated to learn:

Overall did you feel motivated to learn from the programs you took?

No.

And what’s your reason for that?

Honestly, because I knew I wasn’t staying anyway, and I knew what I did. I knew my crime. I knew why I did it, and that’s technically why you go to the program . . . so.

Though noted in a minority of responses to interview protocol question Q30,

employability skills training or similarly directed education was included among the reasons for which persons were motivated to learn, and the results of program participation were understood as having a positive (“I learned how to make my own business plan”; “Definitely utilized it to get into college”), albeit not always direct, influence (“I guess overall learning to communicate”, “solving family issues, disputes, containing your anger, making better decisions”; “It taught me a lot about myself and having set boundaries”). There are, however, reasons not to discount the indirect or ‘slow’ route:

And since release, have you been able to apply any of these strategies or skills that you learned in the programming you received while in prison?

Yeah, yeah, yep for sure.

And can I ask which ones?

The framing course that I took. I wasn't so big on the drywall, the second part of it. Not really my cup of tea. . . . Where I work now, the job that I actually got is I work with wood . . . and we do all wood all day. I am on the paint line. I paint wood. So, it's stuff that I was doing. . . . Like all that stuff, it helps me when I came out and got this job.

Do you think it helped you get the job?

No, I wouldn't say that, because . . . I didn't really put it out there. . . . because I won't put like “Oh, I had this drywall course, and I had this framing course”, because usually after that they will be like “Oh, where did you get that?”

Mention of educational training again emerged when participants were identifying the most useful part of the programs they participated in (interview protocol question Q27). Simply put, it was the “hands-on stuff”, the college credits (“Even if it's half a college credit”), or the things “I could take . . . and use . . . down the road for work” that were “always good”. The development of the non-professional “me” was important too (“It made me look deeper into myself”; “Basically it taught me more about myself”).

Along with the claim that the most useful part of programming was that it provided a routine or “something to do, because there's nothing to do in there [prison]”, the above responses and descriptions of the least useful programs (“Parenting was the least [useful]”), or parts thereof (“Getting into things that have nothing to do with my crime”), work to delineate the limits of the response spectrum. Most interviewed persons, however, said they “don't think there's any [parts of programs] that weren't useful” or responded to interview protocol question Q27 by saying “everything was useful” or that they could not recall parts of the programs they would categorize as least useful.

The positive lean of the above portrayals is in line with how the majority of offenders

described program facilitators (e.g., as persons who “listened when I needed to speak”, “were not judgemental” or “just straight up with you”, and “certainly had my best interests in mind”), but stands out when stretched over the descriptions of rehabilitative opportunities and overall prison experiences (interview protocol questions Q32 and Q21 respectively). In both of the latter instances, the categorization of descriptions is relatively balanced along positive or beneficial and negative or not beneficial categorizations. When asked about the opportunities for rehabilitation, responses routinely flipped between the categorization of CSC services as “I wouldn't say excellent—very good”, “beneficial”, or “there if you utilize it” and assertions that the opportunities provided were “poor”, “not useful”, or “a joke” (“Oh, they offer that?”). Similar descriptions are found in offender characterizations of their overall prison experience (“It was a good experience”, “smooth”, “helped me grow”; “It was really bad”, “not a positive”, or “not very pleasant”; “I wouldn't even wish it on my worst enemy”).

Ethnocultural Issues in Program Participation. More than 70% of persons interviewed said they were most comfortable speaking English or French (interview protocol question Q33). Persons who were most comfortable communicating in a language other than English or French spoke Tamil, Creole, Cantonese, or Vietnamese and Chinese, and four participants identified more than one language (e.g., English and Filipino) as their most comfortable. When asked if having to communicate in English or French made it hard to engage in programming (interview protocol question Q33a), ‘Yes’ responses—one of which included a person who identified “both English and Spanish equally” as the languages they are most comfortable speaking—included the inability of others to recognize or accurately interpret language-related coping strategies:

Spanish is my first language. ... So, I think in Spanish. Like before I actually say something, I've actually said it in Spanish in my head, and then I've translated it to English. So, I think a lot of times people think that I'm questioning what I'm saying because I take a little longer to say it.

To help with the translation process, other participants made use of “an English and Tamil dictionary” or sought to work through things with a friend. Instances where a translator or language training were accessed were characterized as helpful, if only “a little bit.” Compared to men (4.2%), women (14.3%) were more likely to report language made it harder to engage in programming.

Asked if they felt their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion affected their experience

in accessing and benefitting from correctional programs (interview protocol question Q34), most participants said ‘No’, or “not at all”, or provided a similarly categorized response (“I don't really think so . . . because anyone can sign up”; “No, because everyone has to do it pretty much”), and women (57.1%) were more likely to view their background as impeding access to programs when compared with men (16.7%). Those who said ‘Yes’, their experience in accessing and benefitting from correctional programs was affected, differed in how they positioned their response:

Do you feel that your ethnicity, culture, or spirituality, or religion affected your experience in accessing or benefitting from correctional programs?

One-hundred percent. I wouldn't have gotten—I think—the kind of treatment that I did inside if I didn't have . . . that I'm Muslim written on a file somewhere or being Brown and having a beard. So, 100 percent it affected it.

Sometimes I did feel that the programs are catered . . . to White and Indigenous people . . . but then again there are so many different cultures in prison. How can you make a program compatible to every culture?

Much like the aforementioned inability of others to recognize or accurately interpret language-related coping strategies, ethnocultural practices were, at times, misread:

I was brought up . . . you do not stare a person in the eye . . . and you do that when you want to confront somebody. . . . So, it's kind of a sign of respect not to stare in the eye.

Even when you're having a conversation?

Even when you are having a conversation. I mean, short eye contact is okay but if I keep staring at you in the eye that is considered kind of rude. Now I was brought up like that.

Now here, when you don't make eye contact, it's translated that you are lying, you're hiding something, and . . . it took me a long time to retrain myself to get rid of that thing. But in the meantime, I was accused of . . .

Not being truthful?

Exactly.

The above ethnocultural-related obstacles stand out among reports that, when the topic of language is excluded, more than three-quarters of the female and male respondents said they did not feel as though there were any ethnocultural barriers or obstacles that made it hard for them to participate in the programs they wanted or in their Correctional Plan (interview protocol question Q36). Other barriers included the absence of appropriate religious programming (“There was nothing offered for Jewish people”) and persons to provide spiritual guidance (“There was a man, he was a Rasta. . . . and for some reason they cut him out. So, a lot of us kind of don't have that person to continue our spirituality”). In response, participants learned to adapt their

behaviour “and, some of the stuff, you just did it because you knew that—you know—you can't change the entire system.”

Though systemic change can prove difficult, program facilitators were often described as trying to acknowledge, respect, or support the ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religious needs of participants (interview protocol question Q35). The responses provided by women were less positive in this regard than those provided by men, and Table 2 depicts their quantitative breakdown, which requires care when reading.

Some ‘Yes’ or “I don't really think there was ever an issue with program facilitators” responses were anchored by claims that the above topics were “never brought up”, because “we were in there talking about other things”, or because “I didn't specifically identify that [needs based on ethnicity, culture, or spirituality] as an issue”:

Did program facilitators make an effort to acknowledge, respect, or support your needs based on your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion?

Yes.

Did you have any specific needs?

No.

A second concern arises if readers understand ‘No’ responses—i.e., my facilitators did not make an effort to acknowledge, respect, or support my ethnic, cultural, spiritual, or religious needs—as inherently pejorative:

Did program facilitators make an effort to acknowledge, respect, or support your needs based on your ethnicity, culture, religion, or spirituality?

No. They didn't discriminate either, but they saw us as

Just people?

Yeah. They didn't distinguish race or anything.

Do you think that if they had maybe acknowledged specific ethnicities or cultures, do you think that that would have made programs more helpful for either yourself or other individuals?

I think it might have made it worse, because then other groups would have been like “Why are you showing favouritism?”. ... That's what I would think, and then it would sway the other groups not to get attention anymore, and that's why they try to do it where everyone is equal.

The above said, some participants identified areas for improvement (“I didn't want any special treatment. ... I just wanted them to acknowledge that a lot of the materials that they were teaching weren't pertained to me, pertaining to me, and the way I was brought up in my culture), and differences between Ethnocultural and Indigenous offenders were also flagged:

They preferred the Aboriginals. The Aboriginals would always stand out. They would always be first. ... They got more respect than anybody else. They got more things than anybody else. ... They were the top and then we were under the bottom, looking down like “Okay what's going on?”

Indigenous and non-Indigenous comparisons were again raised when interviewees were asked about amendments to programs or parts thereof (interview protocol question Q38). Here, some participants called for the removal of course components (“I would love for them to take . . . Aboriginal out of the program, and just let it be for everyone”), others pushed for the inclusion of something new (“The natives have drumming. Like maybe something like that towards Caribbean or Black culture”). Additional classes (“That would discuss . . . different cultures and upbringing”) and class times (“It would be good to have it three times a week”), facilitators who “could actually connect with somebody because of their past”, and a focus on employment-based initiatives (“Maybe more helping guys getting jobs”) were among other suggestions that formed a contrast to claims “I really didn't see any things that could be changed in the programs” or “I like it the way it is.”

Participating in Social Programs in Prison. All of the study's participants said they were aware of social program-related activities happening at their institution, and the vast majority reported taking part (interview protocol question Q39). The frequency of organized activity offerings was said to vary from “maybe once in a while” to “two or three times a week”, but there were “a lot of cancellations” and an individual's security ratings, the “institution you were in”, and how one defines the term organized are significant qualifiers:

Okay how frequently were these types of activities offered? You said the movies were once a week?

Right.

Any other activities you can think of?

They have like sports . . . you can play: soccer, tennis. You can play badminton, ping pong, chess. So, it was quite entertaining.

Okay and how often would you get to do those things?

As often as I want.

Because “every culture would have their own cultural meetings”, and “most of them were for native people”, the focal group was also said to matter and, in turn, supported calls to recalibrate institutional notions of balance:

I know they did that [Smudging] like every day—if not every, twice a day—which I know that's a thing . . . for the Indigenous people, to cleanse themselves and to release any

bad omens. ... And I feel like, yeah, there should be a little bit, maybe balance it out a little bit ... because they have the Aboriginal smudging or they have the dances, and ... the drumming, and all that stuff. Maybe incorporate a little bit of Asian into it or ... have like an Asian program, where they just kind of learn about their Heritage or background.

Social program-related activities were primarily said to be organized by inmate committees (interview protocol question Q41), but staff, volunteers, and community organizations (“This group called STRIDE”) were described as playing a significant role. The most common or “two main sources” for inmates to find out about such happenings were word of mouth and posters or bulletin boards (“Word of mouth. And there would be like posters in the gym or at the ... church ... but mostly it's inmates”).

The activities about which interviewees heard (interview protocol question Q43) were often not related to their ethnocultural background (“No, nothing was [related to my ethnocultural background]. We tried to organize certain things ... and they just give us the runaround”; “They have a lot of stuff for natives. ... They had nothing for Muslims”; “We don't have any Hindu background program”; “That’s right, nothing”). In circumstances where the ethnocultural background of interviewees and learnt activities were connected, the identified relations were not always diverse (“They did allow us to watch Tamil movies once a week”; “Maybe just the Black History Month”; “We had Zumba once a week and that ... gave us a chance to listen to something in Spanish”) or direct:

They had that Black History Month thing, and then there was some girls ... from Toronto. So, they brought ... things to do—like crafts and stuff—but they were ... from different backgrounds, like some were White, some were Black. ... So, that kind of—I guess that relates to me too, because like I'm from Toronto, and I'm used to a multicultural situation.

When asked if they participated in social program-related activities (interview protocol question Q44), 83.3% of men and 100% of women answered ‘Yes’, “I did actually”. The described activities included joining “the book club”, “going to a couple sweats and things”, Black History Month activities, and playing “hockey twice a week ... basketball like once a week ... [and] tennis when the weather was nice”. Nearly all attending persons described the experience as “positive”, “good”, “pleasant”, or some version thereof (“Better than sitting on the range scratching your head”). Building on the importance of context, mindset was said to influence one’s reading of events (“If you go there and you're ... negative it's not going to work”). For those who attended the events of other cultural groups, maintaining a positive

outlook had its difficulties:

It was a good experience, because you go there and you see how—you know—there's a sense of community amongst them [Indigenous offenders] and, at the same time, it just reminds you that your community in here doesn't exist.

Where possible, the takeaways were however rewarding (“It helps me to embrace myself”; “I felt like I was outside . . . like I was just an ordinary human. I didn't feel like I was in prison”).

More than 80% of interviewees described having had a chance to interact with members of their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion while in prison (interview protocol question Q48). The majority of these interactions were described as occurring during unstructured activity (“Like running into people . . . talking together, hanging out, watching TV, just casual things”) or through a combination of (“I would say both”) structured and unstructured interactions that were described as building communities that were to dissolve upon one’s release:

Well they had one of the dumbest—Now look, you spend years in prison with somebody. You build community. You build trust, whatever, whatever else you build right, and then you come out and you're not allowed to talk to them on the outside.

Upon being released from the institution and returning to the community, the majority of participants continued to interact with members of their ethnic, cultural, spiritual, or religious group through activities that moved from structured to “we got together, watched a movie, and socialized.” The use of background checks that identify past criminal conduct was presented as a reason to be selective in choosing the activities in which one engaged. Problems with stereotyping the communities to which released Ethnocultural offenders return were also uncovered:

I have quite a few Black friends out here. I mean, it's not a lot of Black people but—you know—I've got a few friends. I don't hang with them all the time. It's not like a thing, like it is in other communities. I guess my story is a little different . . . because I always lived in communities where there were hardly any Black people, and it's almost like if you went to a place where there is no White people and someone came up to you and said “You know what? I saw a White girl just down the street. Do you know her?” I mean yeah, I do. I do.⁶

Interview protocol questions Q51-Q53 asked interviewees whether they were in contact

⁶ Similar claims, one of which is noted in Footnote 4 of this report, were presented in response to interview protocol question Q9: “I grew up—like honestly—I grew up around all White people. . . . And I was the only Black guy. Like I'm not even really that Black”; “I was adopted. So, my parents are Black and my family is White.”

with any community support groups prior to their release. The need for contacted organizations to do more than “just talk” was noted, as was the ability of family supports to address needs (“I know guys who don't have family and stuff—then I understand being more into groups. ... But I have a strong support group with my family and my girlfriend. So, I didn't see a need”). For persons whose needs were not entirely met, the noted pre-release supports that would have been most helpful included those that would provide access to addiction services (“I wanted help. I wanted to go to rehab before I go into the community”), assistance with housing, or “somebody from my religious background to be a contact for me”. These supports overlap with those secured by respondents making use of individual “research and Google” and the assistance of “other inmates”, “my cousin”, etc. Underlying the need to be proactive was the claim that incarcerated persons were themselves responsible for securing necessary supports (“Yeah, because they [groups that provide community supports] come [to the institutions]. It depends on the person, on the inmate, how proactive. ... I think it is our job [as inmates] to go make contacts like that”).

Once in the community, the majority of persons interviewed were using resource or supportive services (interview protocol question Q56), with women (71.4%) more likely than men (58.3%) to report their use. The services, which included the John Howard Society, Elizabeth Fry Society, WoodGreen (“It’s an employment resource”), and the Ontario Student Assistance Program were primarily described as helpful “because, one, it keeps me in my spiritual walk. Two, it actually keeps me grounded with just—you know—being able to have actually somebody to talk to. And three, it actually got me to where I am.” Others provided additional details (“They help me with a lot of things, like daycare, resumes, and stuff like that”; “They helped me find a job” and access “free groceries”). Despite these advantages, the use of resource or supportive services was not always a choice (“I have to go to AA and stuff like that”; “I'm using the services at the Salvation Army but, keep in mind, that's not my choice—that's by the Parole Board of Canada's decision”). And, much like the above descriptions of why services were helpful, the majority were not related to one’s ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion (“No, no, no that had nothing to do with that”).

Participants described finding out about community resource and support services through “the parole office” or “my Parole Officer”, “primary worker”, or “halfway house”. Others knew what they needed (“Well I knew that it's available. So, I requested it”). When asked,

most respondents did not identify other community supports or services they would like to be in contact with (interview protocol question Q63). Some of these responses were framed around knowledge (“Not that I know of”) and notions of time (“Not really right now . . . because I’m still starting to just adjust back to the normalcy of my being out”). Similar considerations were used to contextualize the responses of persons who said they would like to get in touch with other services (“I have to research it first. I have to research a few things. I’m just sort of getting familiar with being outside”).

Respondents who said they were not using any community resource or support services identified educational planning (“I really want to go back to school, but I don’t know what to take because of my criminal record”) and employment or financial assistance as the focus of organizations whose services were sought. When these persons were, in turn, asked if they thought it would have been helpful to have contact with a community support group related to their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion (interview protocol question Q58), responses were mixed (“It would be nice . . . to see some familiar faces”; “No, I don’t think so”).

Ethnocultural Background and Prison Experiences. Participants who responded ‘Yes’ or “yeah, of course”, when asked if the members of their case management team made a specific effort to acknowledge and respect their ethnocultural background (interview protocol question Q65), spoke of officials allowing persons to access religious or spiritual items and respecting related practices. But such displays of due regard were not always immediate, and all sides of a person’s background were not treated equally:

So, did members of your case management team make a specific effort to acknowledge and respect your ethnicity, culture, and spirituality?

At first no but then when they saw how serious I was, and how involved I was, yes.

Okay, what did they do for you and how did it help you?

Well they allowed me to actually have access to the community outside. But, then again, with my Caribbean side no.

Okay, so it was just your Indigenous side that they—

Right.

Okay, so, were the aspects of your ethnicity, culture, and spirituality—were they reflected in your Correctional Plan or your release plan?

Yeah, my Indigenous was, because I took Section 84.⁷

⁷ Despite the mention of an “Indigenous side”, this respondent was not counted as an Indigenous person in Table 2. The reasons for this decision are as follows: Though the respondent also describes “telling my mom that I had gotten closer to the indigenous way of life, and she actually told me that I am part Indigenous” when responding to interview

Also important is the finding that not all persons here described having detailed needs (“I didn't think I needed much help in there to be honest”; “No incidents where it wasn't respected. . . . There was no requirement for that. If that kind of makes sense”) and, once more, not all ‘No’ responses proved pejorative (“I'm sure . . . he would have, but it never really came up. Like my Parole Officer . . . I really like him . . . He did everything he could for me”).

The categorization of answers to interview protocol question Q68 was nearly identical to those of Q65 (see Table 2). A focus on ‘Yes’ responses shows “staff”, “teachers”, “some prison guards”, “the librarian”, “members of the church who come in”, and food service providers as persons at the institution who made a specific effort to ensure that one’s ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or beliefs were respected, albeit unsuccessfully at times (“They tried, the food services, but there was no, basically, results”). While institutional roles allow for different forms of assistance, examples of effort or help often revolved around religious considerations (“They [The Correctional Officers] don't disturb you when you are praying in your room. They let you pray”).

When asked if there were specific instances where they felt disrespected because of their ethnicity, culture, or spirituality (interview protocol question Q70), half of those interviewed responded ‘Yes’, and some spoke of instances where abusive behaviour was directed towards others:

I heard guards calling them—you know what I mean—squabs and shit like that . . . and fucking telling them they don't care about their fucking sweats and all that fucking shit. . . . But there's racism everywhere you go . . . we all know that.

Those who understood disrespectful behaviour to have been directed at themselves also spoke of the use of racial slurs, as well as a threat made by a Correctional Officer following the United States-led invasion of Iraq (“[He] came to my cell and said ‘Oh, yeah, you're going to pay for

protocol question Q16 (*Do you consider your religion/spirituality to be part of your culture?*), they characterize the ethnic and cultural group they belong to as “Caribbean, Afro-Caribbean” (when answering interview protocol question Q1 and Q2), their racial group they identify with as “Black” (when answering interview protocol question Q4), responded “no” when asked if they have changed the ethnocultural group they identify with since going to prison (interview protocol question Q5), and described having “two Caribbean parents” when responding to interview protocol question Q7 (*If ethnocultural identity is important to you . . . can you tell me a bit more about your ethnocultural background?*).

what you did”), how “guards stepped on a prayer mat”, food guidelines were ignored (“I don't believe the food we were getting was halal”), and hair care products were defined as contraband (“I don't have any products at all, and a lot of girls hair broke off in there. ... They didn't care”).

Release from Prison. Nearly all of those interviewed said they felt prepared to return to the community (interview protocol question Q75). What was described as most helpful in facilitating this process varied and moved between religious (“My Christianity background”) and programming components (“Like the employment or ready for integration type”), a supportive Parole Officer (“I think it's my current, existing Parole Officer”) or someone “helping us out with job search and workshops”, and family (“Support from friends and family”), thoughts of family (“Just knowing that I have a son out there”; “Knowing that I love my dog”), and “my own mindset” (“I guess it was my attitude”). There was also reference to the custodial experience itself:

Honestly, just the experience. ... I can't say that I'm thankful I went inside, but I kind of am because it did give me some insight. It gave me a lot of time to think. It gave me a lot of time to analyze and distinguish all the flaws that I have and I've accepted those flaws.

Asked specifically about correctional or social programs and activities, or the parts thereof, that were most helpful in preparing for release (interview protocol question Q78), interviewees again spoke about “a bit of everything.” The church or chapel’s focus on a “second chance to live our life”, the social integration program’s aim to assist persons obtain essential documentation (“Like your health card, your driver's license”), the use of escorted temporary absences and work releases to help inmates “get used to people again”, educational initiatives that “made me . . . realize that I had to do more stuff with school”, access to “a good psychologist”, and “support from the other inmates” help delineate the scope of responses that contrasted claims the correctional or social programs and activities did “nothing, absolutely nothing.”

Interview protocol question Q79 asked interviewees whether they are experiencing anything in the community that correctional programs and social program activities did not help prepare them for. Table 2 once more provides a quantitative breakdown of how persons responded and, in so doing, notes the majority of participants answered ‘No’ or “not that I can recall right now”:

No, they were pretty honest. ... They said “Hey, it's not going to be easy. ... You're going to want to get out there, and you're going to want to do a thousand things, and you're

going to realize that you got to be patient.' You have to wait, and they were very honest about it. Like they didn't try to get our hopes up super high or super low either.

Others qualified their response by referencing personal characteristics:

Not really, because . . . I'm so determined. But for people that I've witnessed, it's more like job readiness . . . and housing. Those are the two big keys that they should have, have more support in or talked about, before being released.

The need to look inward was also advanced by participants who said they were experiencing things in the community that correctional programs and social program activities did not prepare them for:

There's so many things that could have helped, that CSC could have done. However, we realized that CSC is a business. So, we don't look to them for help. You look to yourself initially, and then if you match with someone and you have things in common or if they have your best interests at heart—even if it's advice—that's what we look forward to.

In addition to this requirement, those who responded 'Yes' to interview protocol questions Q79 focused on stigma ("I lost a lot of friends on this one. . . . I had a good career"), employment ("Getting a job was hard"), budgeting ("Some people get out and . . . don't have a fucking dollar to their name"), the realities of a world that continued to evolve without them ("Its changed if you've been in for 20 years"), and the difference between life inside the classroom ("Things are very basic, cut and dry") and the community.

On whether interviewees would have liked more attention to have been paid to their ethnicity, culture, spirituality and/or background, and past experiences while in prison (interview protocol question Q82), responses differed along gender lines. Most men (62.5%) reported not wanting to have more attention paid to their background and past experiences ("No, I didn't really care about that") and there were practical reasons as to why:

Because I was the only one. You don't like to get singled out. It's not a thing in prison . . . because then you have a lot of attention, and you get jealousy, and yeah. Anything that people can use against you they will use against you, and that's a fact.

Men who said "yes, I wish that they would have" paid more attention, spoke of greater access to cultural foods and events, Indigenous accommodations ("Yeah, I think so, because there's times I felt like the natives got a lot of things"), and equality ("As long as I'm just being treated like everyone else, as long as shits equal, I am happy, I'm fine with that. . . . I just feel like . . . people should have stuff for them too").

Female respondents were more likely (78.6%) to report wanting more attention paid to their ethnocultural background. They also called for greater access to cultural foods and events, “like festivals and stuff”. While access to hair care products was an addition unique to female interviewees, the aforementioned comparison to Indigenous offenders was not gender specific— i.e., it was addressed by women too:

Would you have liked more attention to have been paid your ethnicity, culture, spirituality and/or background, and past experiences while in prison?

Yeah . . . like what I said before . . . because I wasn't gay or like native. . . I kind of feel like they babied those people more. I don't know how bad that sounds, but like they helped them more. If it's me and . . . another person that . . . identifies as one of those people, they are going to help them before me.

This Indigenous/Non-Indigenous comparison would again emerge when participants were asked to think of any services or resources they would have liked to receive but were not offered (interview protocol question Q85):

Maybe . . . help to identify ourselves more and who you are. . . Maybe have some one-on-one program or one-on-one programming that we can relate [to]. . . because, like I said to you before, it was more based on the Aboriginal. So, I felt like the jail was for Aboriginals, and I'm not Aboriginal.

As was the case with responses to interview protocol question Q82, responses to interview protocol question Q85 differed along gender lines, with women (85.7%) more likely than men (66.7%) to identify needs for additional services and resources. When assessed as a collective, most responses supporting the need for additional services and supports can be categorized into familiar themes: nutrition (“More halal food in the canteen” and “if they have a mother child program . . . stuff on canteen for the children”), pecuniary matters (“I would like it if I could get some more help financially”), education and training for inmates (“I would have liked to receive some more educational tools. . . academic related courses” or “programs that would definitely secure me a good job”), training for Correctional Officers (“A lot of them are ignorant and. . . don't realize that they have things in common with us”), and staff I can relate to (“There was no Black counsellor”). Similarities between the above claims and the things participants described looking forward to are also evident (“I guess it changes often, but I'm looking forward to going back to school. . . seeing people that I connected with and . . . just experiencing that”; “I wanted to be able to work. . . Although I am already 64 [years old]”; “Being with my family, being back in touch with . . . my culture . . . our food, our celebrations,

and just to speak my own language”).

While desired futures remain somewhat diverse, the most commonly noted aim was “family time” (“Just putting my family back together”, “getting back with my family”, “spending more time with my family”, “having my own family”). The trend echoed notions of family or the importance of family (“I’m just terribly worried about my kids”, “just my family and their life in general”) that previously dotted responses to interview protocol question Q72 (*Complete this sentence: Now that I am back in the community, I am most worried about...*), which included having “no worries”, worrying about “my mental health”, “adjustment and acceptance”, and “going back inside”, because “it’s easy to get in trouble too. You don’t have to be doing much. You could just be at the wrong place at the wrong time”.

At the time of their interview, the majority of participants described living in a private residence. These living arrangements were almost always framed positively (“Oh, for sure”; “I’m happy”; “I’m feeling happy”). The descriptions provided by persons living in a halfway house were less sanguine (“It could be better if I could stay home, but the halfway house is much better than staying in prison. ... [It] is close to family. I can see them”).

Discussion

The findings from qualitative interviews with $N = 39$ offenders who volunteered to participate in this study highlight the definitional complexity and heterogeneity of Ethnocultural persons. Nine of those interviewed chose not to identify as belonging to a racial group. The decision to not identify or be characterized along racial lines underlines the discord between individual autonomy, the power dynamics adjoined to discriminatory behavior, and the related classification or categorization of persons by external individuals or groups.

In line with federal offender population data (Gamwell et al., 2019; Public Safety Canada, 2019), Black offenders represented the largest group of persons interviewed (34%).

Overview of Findings

When identifying as a member of a racial, cultural, and ethnic group, those interviewed used terminology that crossed religious, biological, and geographic discursive lines and was in line with the study's broad and overlapping definitions of ethnicity, culture, and ethnocultural group. Religion was often tied to participant characterizations of culture ("I was raised in it. So, that's my culture"), and culture was linked to race and geographic space ("Afro-Caribbean", "Filipino"), which again and in turn helped identified Blacks as the study's largest cultural and ethnic group. More than 80% of those interviewed rated their cultural identity as 'Important' or 'Very important'. Women were most likely to rate their cultural identity as an 'Important' or 'Very important' part of their life and report being a religious or spiritual person. Our definition of Ethnocultural offenders as any non-White, non-Indigenous person "who has specific needs based on race, language or culture and who has a desire to preserve his/her cultural identity and practices" (Commissioner's Directive-767, 2013a, para.1), led to the removal of one participant from the study's sample size of $N = 39$.

Descriptions of the most important aspect of ethnocultural upbringing varied (e.g., from food to religion, family, language, and having polite regard for others) as did the types of cultural activities participants described engaging in (attending places of worship and cultural festivals, etc.). Interviewees routinely classified family members as persons sharing their culture, and most offenders reported the frequency with which they engaged in post-release cultural activities as similar to pre-custodial rates. Going to prison, a place without "cultural activities . . . for me", was described as temporarily limiting cultural engagement. The effect of prison on religious or

spiritual practices was less pronounced, and participants described being able to participate “one hundred percent” or to a “limited” extent in faith-based practices. Nevertheless, interviewees described their prison experience as different from or feeling different from that of other inmates.

Nearly all interviewed persons participated in correctional programming and completed the programs they participated in. All (100%) of women participated in and completed programs, but women were less willing than their male counterparts to participate again. Reasons for not wanting to repeat the same programs were primarily related to notions of applicability that were not focused on ethnocultural considerations (“It doesn't apply to my work”; “I don't think it's geared to my needs”).

Employability skills training or related education was included among descriptions of the most useful parts of the programs persons participated in, and interviewees spoke positively of program facilitators. Views on rehabilitative opportunities and overall prison experiences were more balanced along the following respective lines: “very good” - “not useful”; “a good experience” - “I wouldn't even wish it on my worst enemy.”

Most persons interviewed said they were most comfortable speaking English or French and when asked if they felt their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion affected their experience in accessing and benefitting from correctional programs, a majority responded it did not. Some offender coping strategies were, however, described as being incorrectly and negatively interpreted by institutional staff.

Most male respondents said they did not feel as though there were any ethnocultural barriers or obstacles that made it hard for them to participate in the programs they wanted or in their Correctional Plan, but more than half of the women interviewed (57.1%) reported experiencing barriers or obstacles. Women were also somewhat more likely than men to report that language made it hard to engage in programming.

Though not all persons identified as having programming needs that were ethnoculturally-rooted, program facilitators were often characterized as trying to acknowledge, respect, or support the ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religious needs of participants. Identified areas for improvement included the acknowledgement “that a lot of the materials that they were teaching weren't pertained to me, pertaining to me, and the way I was brought up in my culture.” Differences in the treatment of Ethnocultural and Indigenous offenders were also noted (“They [program facilitators] preferred the Aboriginals”) and echoed in suggested amendments to

institutional programming (“I would love for them to take . . . Aboriginal out of the program and just let it be for everyone”) and discussions of social programs (“I feel like . . . there should be a little bit, maybe balance it out a little bit”).

All of the study’s participants said they were aware of social program-related activities happening at their institution and the vast majority identified as taking part. The frequency of organized program offerings varied from “maybe once in a while” to “two or three times a week”, with answers dependent on the type of activity described. Social program-related activities were primarily said to be offered by inmate committees and information on their occurrence distributed by word of mouth and via the use of posters or bulletin boards.

The activities about which interviewees heard or read were often not related to their ethnocultural background (“It was mainly Indigenous or just Canadian, nothing really . . . Asian, East Asian, or anything like that”). However, nearly all persons who attended these events described the experience as “positive”. Noted difficulties included the following: “It was a good experience, because you go there and you see how—you know—there’s a sense of community amongst them and, at the same time, it just reminds you that your community in here doesn’t exist.”

Almost all interviewees described having had a chance to interact with members of their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion while in prison. Most of these interactions were described as occurring during unstructured activity or through both structured and unstructured interactions, and the majority of participants continued to interact with members of their ethnic, cultural, spiritual, or religious group upon their return to the community.

When asked about being in contact with community support groups prior to their release, respondents provided answers that were balanced overall but inverted along gender lines. The need for contacted organizations to do more than “just talk” was noted, as was the ability of family supports to alleviate the need for external assistance. Participants identified a number of pre-release supports (e.g., “I wanted to go to rehab before I go into the community”) that would have been helpful and spoke of the need for incarcerated persons to be proactive. Having returned to the community, many interviewed persons were using resource or support services. These services were primarily described as helpful, and women (71.4%) were more likely than men (58.3%) to report their use.

Responses were almost evenly split (Yes/No) when participants were asked (1) whether

members of their case management team made a specific effort to acknowledge and respect their ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, or beliefs and (2) whether anyone else at the institution made a specific effort to ensure that their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or beliefs were respected. While examples of effort often revolved around religious considerations, not all persons here described having detailed needs (“I didn't think I needed much help in there to be honest”). Responses again verged on an even Yes/No divide when participants were asked about any specific instances when they felt disrespected because of their ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or beliefs. Recognized instances of disrespect include the use of threats and intentionally disregarding the needs of inmates.

While that which was described as most helpful in facilitating one's return to the community varied (religion, programming, “my own mindset”, family, etc.), nearly all persons interviewed said they felt prepared to return. Asked specifically about correctional or social programs and activities, and the parts thereof, that were most helpful in preparing for release, interviewees again spoke about “a bit of everything.”

Responses to the question *Would you have liked more attention to have been paid to your ethnicity, culture, spirituality and/or background, and past experiences while in prison?* differed along gender lines, with most men responding ‘No’ (62.5%) and most women responding ‘Yes’ (78.6%). Comparisons with Indigenous offenders were noted and repeated when participants were asked to think of any services or resources that they would have liked to receive but were not offered (“Maybe . . . help to identify ourselves more. . . I felt like the jail was for Aboriginals, and I'm not Aboriginal”).

While the things participants were looking forward to most on release from prison remain somewhat diverse, the most commonly anticipated was “family time”. Family or concern for family was also noted when respondents were describing the things and people they were most worried about (“I'm just terribly worried about my kids”).

Limitations of the Study

As observed in the interim report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System (1994, 5)

Victims and survivors of racism respond to deprivation of their rights with pain and anger. They may distrust government inquiries, suspect the motives of researchers and experts, and resent exposing their anguish to public scrutiny. In addition, many victims and survivors of racism feel frightened and powerless. Often a reluctance to speak out is

based on the knowledge, drawn from experience, that there will be reprisals.

The final report (Commission on Systemic Racism, 1995, 57) goes further:

A second limitation of relying on experience to recognize racism is that gaining access to experience is difficult. Contrary to what some people think, racialized people are often reluctant to relate their experiences of racism. Few enjoy publicly recounting incidents in which they felt humiliated, and the impact of racism is for many among the more degrading, if only too common, experiences of their lives.

While interviews related to the current study were conducted by IASR researchers experienced in conducting interviews with diverse groups of federal offenders—including men, women, Indigenous persons, older persons, and those with mental disorders—both in prison and on community release, the hesitancy of Ethnocultural persons to disclose personal experiences of racism and discrimination must be understood as almost certainly under-representing the true scope of the problems in both organizational and societal-level contexts. The use of Parole Officers in the recruitment process, parole offices as places to conduct interviews, and exclusion of persons not able to communicate in either of Canada's official languages (English and French) may be read to exacerbate this point. At the same time, the inherent subjectivity of self-identification poses a problem for classifying and quantifying groups of persons who may appear to share racial, ethnic, culture, or religious characteristics (Gullickson, 2019; Pap, 2021).

As an in-person assessment and qualitative interview study, the sample size of Ethnocultural offenders on release in the community ($N = 39$) is more than adequate in comparison to most qualitative studies but, again, reported results should be interpreted with caution and viewed as suggestive of areas requiring broader study (Hunter & Howes, 2020). The use of two-person assessment and interview teams, along with two-person transcription and validation of the NVivo results ensured that coding of qualitative responses was consistent, supporting both the reliability and validity of findings.

Conclusions

Ethnocultural people, including Black persons in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019), present backgrounds and experiences that are dissimilar and adjoined to differing needs. The above exploratory study builds on this position by presenting the views and impressions of $N = 39$ Ethnocultural offenders. The findings show that interviewees experienced prison differently and are not united in the desire to have more attention paid to their ethnicity, culture, spirituality and/or background, and past experiences while in prison. They are, however, comparatively united in their reported motivation to learn from the correctional programs they were involved in, their ability to relate to the exercises and examples used in those programs, and their ability to apply the strategies/skills learned through their enrolment in the same. Women are more likely than men to experience their ethnocultural background as central to their identity and to experience that background as a barrier or obstacle within the federal correctional setting.

Further research on Ethnocultural offenders will help frame and nuance the findings presented here, as well as improve our understanding of who is and what it means to be part of this heterogeneous group.

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APPENDIX A

**A Study of Ethnocultural Offender Correctional
Experiences:
Programs, Services, and Community Connections
Interview Protocol**

Correctional Service of Canada

&

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**A Study of Ethnocultural Offender Correctional Experiences:
Programs, Services, and Community Connections**

Current date: _____

Parole Office: _____

Interview Number: _____

Interviewer: _____

Introduction

My name is _____ and I am a researcher from _____. I would like to ask you some questions about your ethnocultural background and your experience at CSC. The information you provide about your experiences with offender programs and services while incarcerated will help CSC to make improvements that will support individuals being successful on release.

As mentioned on the consent form I asked you to sign, providing us with your FPS number will allow us to collect some background information from the CSC-OMS database (e.g., demographic and offence information). When we do the research and write the research report none of the documents will have your name on it and only grouped information will be presented. No one will be identified.

****Depending on whether the participant has consented to participate prior to interviewers' visit, you may or may not want to reiterate the following information:*

Also, as mentioned in the consent form, any information you provide will remain confidential except under the following circumstances: If you disclose information about plans to harm yourself or others, information concerning any unknown emotional, physical or sexual abuse of children, or information about any other criminal activities not already known to authorities, the researcher is required to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Do you have any questions or any concerns?

All completed research published by the Correctional Service of Canada is available on the web - <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/index-eng.shtml>. This project is not likely to be completed for at least a year.

PART A - Ethnocultural Background Screening Questions

Probe if necessary. Try to encourage as much detail as possible without asking leading questions.

Before we start, I'd like to make sure we are on the same page for some of the terms I will use today. When I say 'ethnic group' or 'ethnicity', I'm talking about the sense of belonging to a group based on shared characteristics such as nationality, ancestry, race, culture, or language. When I say 'culture', I'm talking about the 'way of life' of groups of people. This can include things like the customs, arts, language, food, beliefs, clothing, tools, and music of a social group. So here, ethnocultural group means the ethnic or cultural group to which someone feels a sense of belonging.

Q1. Do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group? If so, which one(s)?

Q2. Do you feel like you belong to a cultural group? If so, which one(s)?

Q3. Do you identify yourself as a member of a racial group (e.g., Black, Asian, Indigenous, White, etc.)?

No

Yes *If yes...*

↳ Q4. What racial group do you identify with?

Q5. Have you changed the ethnocultural group you identify with since going to prison?

No

Yes *If yes...*

↳ Q.85 Why? Please explain.

Q6. From the following options, how important is your ethnocultural identity to you (*check ✓ answer given*)

Very important

Important

Of low importance

Not important at all → jump to Q10

} *continue with Q4*

Q7. If ethnocultural identity **IS** important to you (very important, important, low importance) can you tell me a bit more about your ethnocultural background?

↳ Q8. Do members of your immediate family share your culture? What about your peers? Do most of them share the same culture as you?

↳ Q9. What aspects of your ethnocultural upbringing are most important to you?

↳ Q10. What culturally specific activities – like events, celebrations, festivals, holidays, feasts – did you take part in before going to prison?

↳ Q11. How did going to prison affect your ability to do these cultural activities?

↳ Q12. What about since release - do you engage in the same cultural activities as you did before going to prison? Do you participate as often as you used to do before going to prison? If not, why not?

Q13. If ethnocultural identity IS NOT very important to you (not at all): Would you have given a different answer before going to prison? How so?

If offender indicates that ethnocultural identity was important before prison, revisit questions on cultural background and practices.

Q14. Do you consider yourself a religious or spiritual person? (This could be part of your culture, or not)

No *If no, → [jump to Q18](#)*

Yes

↳ Q15. What religion/spirituality do you identify with?

↳

Q16. Do you consider your religion/spirituality to be part of your culture?

↳ Q17. Do you prefer to be alone when practicing your religion/spirituality or to be around other like-minded people?

↳ Q18. What are some things you do to practice your religion/spirituality?

↳

Q19. Did you feel like you could still engage in religious/spiritual practices/activities while in prison? If no, why not?

Q20. Do you think your experiences in prison were different than for other inmates because of your ethnicity, spirituality, religion, or culture? If so, in what ways?

Ok, thanks – it's helpful to have you talk about your culture and background in your own words. Now I am going to ask you some more specific questions. These questions are about your experiences participating in programs and services offered in prison and about what parts you did and didn't find helpful in preparing for release. For example, programs like the Integrated Correctional Program Model (ICPM) or the Violence Prevention Program, or the Women Offender Moderate Intensity Program (WOMIP) or High Intensity Program, which are intended to help you develop skills or address issues related to your offence

PART B – Experiences with Programs and Services While in Prison

Q21. In general, how would you describe your experience in prison?

Q22. When you were in prison, did you have a chance to participate in any correctional programs?

No If no, why not?

↳ Q23. Were there correctional programs that you wanted to take but were not available to you?

↳ Q24. What made you think these programs might be helpful to you?

Yes If yes, which ones? Can you describe them?

↳ Q25. Did you complete the programs you participated in?

Yes

No *If no, why not? What happened?*

↳ Q26. If you had to do it again, would you want to participate in the same programs?

Yes

No *If no, why not?*

↳ Q27. In your opinion what were the most and least useful parts of the programs you participated in and why?

(a) Most useful:

(b) Least useful

↳ Q28. Could you relate to the exercises and examples used in the programs?
No *If no, were there some things about the programs you could not relate to?*

Yes *If yes, can you describe some of the things you could relate to?*

↳ Q29. Did you feel as though the program facilitators had your best interests in mind? Can you tell me a bit more about what they were like on a personal level?

↳ Q30. Overall, did you feel motivated to learn from the correctional programs you were involved in?

Yes *If yes, what did you learn? Did what you learned help you*

No *If no, why not?*

↳ Q31. Since release, have you been able to apply any of the strategies/skills you learned through the programming you received while in prison?

No *If no, why do you think that is?*

Yes *If yes, which ones? Can you give me an example?*

Q32. Complete the sentence. *Overall, I think the opportunities for rehabilitation offered by the CSC while I was in prison were*

PART C – Exploring Ethnocultural Issues in Program Participation

****Note: It is possible that not all offenders will have indicated that they identify with an ethnicity or cultural group. For these participants, give them the option of answering the following questions while acknowledging that at the beginning they did not identify with an ethnocultural group. Otherwise, skip to question*

- Q33. What language(s) do you feel most comfortable communicating in? (*check ✓ all answers given*)
- English
- French
- Other language → if another language

↳ Q33a. Do you feel your language made it hard for you to engage in any programming?

No

Yes Q33ai. *If yes, how did you handle any problems with your language in engaging in programming?*

↳ Q33b. Did you ever have access to any help such as a translator or language training?

No

Yes Q33aii. *If yes, was this helpful?*

- Q34. Do you feel that your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion affected your experience in accessing and benefitting from correctional programs?

No

Yes *If yes, how so?*

Q35. Did program facilitators make an effort to acknowledge, respect, or support your needs based on your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion?

No *If no*, what were these needs? What would have made the program more helpful for you?

Yes *If yes*, what were these needs? Did this help you to get more out of the programs you participated in? How so?

Q36. Besides your language, that we already asked you about, were there any ethnocultural barriers or obstacles that made it hard for you to participate in the programs you wanted or in your Correctional Plan?

No

Yes *If yes*, what were these barriers? Were you able to overcome them? If not, what got in the way?

Q37. Let's pretend you had to do the programs again – what changes to the program would you want to see? (*If needed, prompt*): You can suggest changes to any part of a program – so stuff like the content itself, the examples used, how the facilitator(s) led the sessions, not enough chances to practice, etc.)

↳ Q38. Would you recommend any changes to make the programs more relevant to people from different ethnocultural backgrounds?

PART D – Participating in Social Programs While in Prison

The questions in this next section are about types of services and activities that CSC has in institutions, other than correctional programs. CSC calls them ‘social programs’ but they can include activities related to a specific culture or even just more general leisure or recreation activities. Some examples include things like cultural awareness activities such as yoga sessions or drum circles, workshops on topics like mental health or resilience for ethnocultural groups, language training, job mentorship, inmate ethnocultural groups, or anti-discrimination days. Does that make sense?

Q39. Were you aware of any of these social program kinds of activities happening at your institution, even if you didn’t participate in them?

No *If no* → [jump to Q44](#)

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q40. How frequently were these types of activities offered?

↳ Q41. Who organized them? (e.g., inmate committees, volunteers, community organizations, staff)?

↳ Q42. How did you find out about them (word of mouth, posters, IPO, SPO, etc.?)

↳ Q43. Were the activities (or at least some of them) related to your ethnocultural background? Or were they related to other cultures?

↳ Q44. Did you participate in any of these kinds of activities?
No *If no* → why didn't you participate?

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q45. If yes, which ones?

↳ Q46. How was your experience?

↳ Q47. What did you take away from them?

Q48. Did you have a chance to interact with other members of your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion while you were in prison?

No *If no* → [jump to Q47](#)

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q49. Did this take place in structured, unstructured activities, or both activities? Please explain.

↳ Q50. How about since your return to the community? If so, what kinds of activities?

Q51. Before you were released, were you in contact with any community supports or groups?

No *If no*

➤ ↳ Q52. Is this something that you would have wanted?

↳ Q53. Can you describe what kind of supports you think would have been most helpful to have been in contact with before release? Why?

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q54. Which ones?

↳ Q55. Who put you in touch with them?

Q56. Now that you're in the community, are you using any resources/support services?

No *If no*

↳ Q57. Can you think of any types of resources or supports that you would like to be connected with?

↳ Q58. Do you think it would have been helpful to have contact with a community support group related to your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion? Why or why not?

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q59. Which ones?

↳ Q60. Are these helpful? If so, why?

↳ Q61. Are any of them related to your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion?

↳ Q62. How did you find out about them?

↳ Q63. Are there any others you would like to get in touch with?

↳ Q64. Do you think it has been helpful to have contact with a community support group related to your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion? Why or why not?

PART E – Ethnocultural Background and Prison Experiences

The next questions are mostly about your general experience in prison based on your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or religion. Again, if you don't feel that this is something that's important to you, you can let me know as we go through and we can skip the questions.

Q65. Did the members of your case management team make a specific effort to acknowledge and respect your ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, or beliefs?

No

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q66. What did they do and how did it help?

↳ Q67. Was this reflected in your Correctional Plan and/or release plan?
How so?

Q68. Did anyone else at the institution make a specific effort to ensure that your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or beliefs were respected?

No

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q69. Who helped you? What did they do? How did it help?

Q70. Were there any specific instances when you felt disrespected because of your ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or beliefs?

No

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q71. Can you tell me what happened and who was involved?

PART F – Ethnocultural Background and Release from Prison

The next questions are really general, OK? You can say anything that comes to mind.

Q72. Complete this sentence: *Now that I am back in the community, I am most worried about...*

Q73. What are you looking forward to the most now that you have been released?

Q74. Where do you live right now? Is this a good situation for you?

Q75. Overall, do you feel like you were prepared to return to the community?

No *If no*

↳ Q76. What do you think could have been done to better help you?

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q77. What was most helpful to prepare you for release?
(*Prompt, if needed*). Was it a program, a staff member, the support of family or friends, personal change, a combination of things, or something else?

***If the offender has not participated in ANY programming (correctional or social), skip the next two questions.

Q78. Overall, what parts of the either the correctional or social program(s)/activities did you find most helpful in preparing you for release? How did they help you with your return to the community?

Q79. Are you experiencing anything in the community that the correctional programs and social program activities didn't help prepare you for?

No

Yes *If yes....*

↳ Q80. What challenges are you experiencing?

↳ Q81. What types of things do you think would have helped you be better prepared for your release?

We are down to the last few questions! Feel free to add in anything that you don't feel that you've had a chance to talk about so far.

Q82. Would you have liked more attention to have been paid to your ethnicity, culture, spirituality and/or background, and past experiences while in prison?

No *If no,*

↳ Q83. How come?

Yes *If yes....?*

Q84. Can you tell me a bit more about what you would have liked? (e.g., your current needs, history, other culturally-specific needs or wants....)

Q85. Can you think of any services or resources that you would have liked to receive but weren't offered to you?

No

Yes *If yes...* Can you give me some examples?

OK – that's all the questions we have for you today.

Thank-you so much for taking the time to do this interview with us. The information you have given us will be used by the Correctional Service of Canada to plan ways to improve the process of release into the community, so that everyone will have a good chance at being successful.

Again, thank-you!