

**Black and Racialized Women and
Non-Binary People Involved in
Research Partnerships in Quebec:**

***Between Structural Barriers and
Strategies of Resistance***

**RESEARCH REPORT
2024**

**Projet Promotion des Actrices
Racisées en Recherche (PARR)**

Relais-femmes

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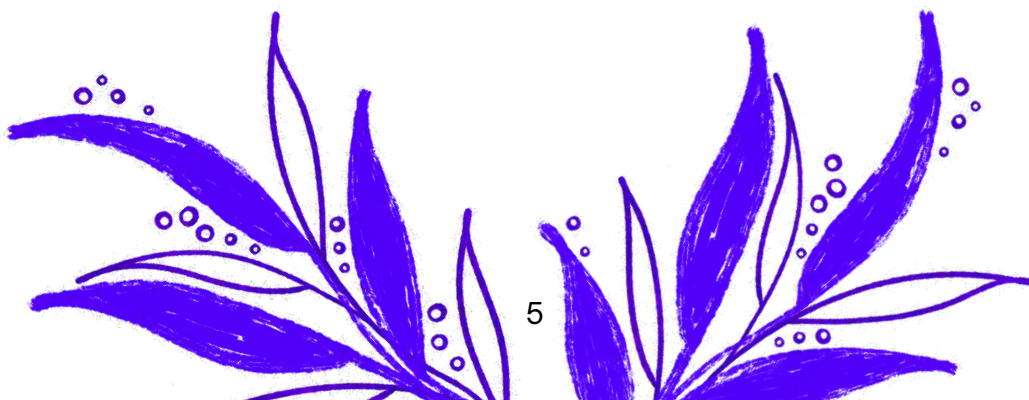
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Abstract

In the specific Quebec context, the production of knowledge about and by Black and racialized women and non-binary people is invisibilized and where they are underrepresented in research environments. Based on this observation, the PARR (Promotion des Actrices Racisées en Recherche) project, in affiliation with the organization Relais-femmes, aims to understand the structural barriers faced by Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnership, as well as current and future, individual and collective strategies, used by this specific population to overcome these obstacles while preserving themselves and their respective communities. To do so, the PARR project employs a qualitative “by us/for us/with us” methodology and relies on twenty semi-structured interviews and two focus groups with Black and racialized women and non-binary people who have been involved in research partnership projects in the province of Quebec.

Keywords

Research partnership; Black and racialized women and non-binary people; knowledge production; structural obstacles; resistance strategies; “by us/for us/with us” research; Quebec



Introduction

WHY THE PARR PROJECT?

Black and racialized[1] women and non-binary[2] people confront many systemic obstacles on a daily basis and specifically epistemic injustices that they endure in order to participate in the production of collective knowledge. Indeed, in community and university settings in particular, they experience various power dynamics – at the intersections of different systems of oppression based on race, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, and disability status – which prevent them from being considered as legitimate knowledge producers. Quebec, like other societies, is part of a particular context where the production of knowledge about and by Black and racialized women and non-binary people is invisibilized and where they are underrepresented in research environments.

Based on this observation, the PARR (Promotion des Actrices Racisées en Recherche) project, affiliated to the organization Relais-femmes, aims to understand systemic barriers faced by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnerships[3], and to understand the current and future,

[1] Racialization is the process of othering individuals and groups on the basis of a real or presumed difference (such as skin color, ethno-racial origin, accent) that distinguishes them as racially different (Hall, 1991).

[2] A non-binary person does not define their gender identity outside the exclusive binary frameworks that define male or female: “Non-binary people can feel themselves to be neither male nor female, both, or any combination of the two. Non-binarity includes identities related to gender fluidity. Non-binary people may identify as trans, depending on their self-identification” (Masson-Courchesne, 2018).

[3] Research partnership, or research in partnership, involves a variety of approaches, objectives and practices. In the social sciences, research partnership aims to improve “intervention practice, social development and political recognition” (Dumais, 2011). Research partnership involves the collaboration of a variety of social actors “such as organizations leaders, activists or government officials, or professionals in the social intervention and pedagogical professions” (*Ibid.*), with the aim of “appropriating academic knowledge and resources so as to align research with their practical concerns” (*Ibid.*).



individual and collective strategies, to overcome these issues while preserving their well-being and that of their respective communities.

Therefore, the specific objectives of the PARR project are: (1) to document the systemic obstacles experienced by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in Quebec's community and university sectors; (2) to identify the individual and collective strategies deployed to counter these obstacles and to promote their participation in knowledge production; and (3) to support the development of collaborative knowledge production practices and spaces for sharing and creating solidarity by and for Black and racialized women and non-binary people.

WHO ARE WE?

The PARR project team is made up of four Black and racialized members: Maud Jean-Baptiste, project coordinator; Ornella Tannous, event and community coordinator; as well as Félicia Cá and Saaz Taher, researchers. The PARR project workers also called on the expertise of Samia Dumais and Stella Lemaine for their work in transcribing interviews and focus groups. The PARR project also benefited from the translation work of Sarita Ahooja and Samia Dumais.

The PARR project works closely with an advisory committee made up of five Black and racialized members from the community and/or university sectors, in keeping with PARR's "by us/for us/with us" approach. This committee is composed of Anne-Julie Beaudin (Réseau québécois en études féministes), Carole Boulebsol (Université de Montréal), Naïma Hamrouni (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), Samanta Nyinawumuntu (Black Healing Center) and Fatima Gabriela Salazar Gomez (Hoodstock), who all relay their comments and feedback throughout the research



project’s theoretical and methodological development. At the beginning of the research process, an ad-hoc consultative committee was established. Composed of four Black and racialized women, this committee had the mandate to discuss the first drafts of the data collection tools. The PARR project also established an internal and independent ethics committee with a mandate to support the production of data collection tools and validate the team’s compliance with the ethical standards of qualitative research with human beings[4] regarding recruitment, collection, analysis, and data retention strategies. This committee is made up of Jade Almeida, Nelly Dennene and Hind Obad.

REPORT’S STRUCTURE

To begin with, we will first present the issue at the core of our approach, illustrated by a review of literature on structural inequalities encountered by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in community and university settings in Quebec, particularly the epistemic injustices they experienced within research environments. Then, we will present the qualitative methodology used for the PARR project and its “by us/for us/with us” approach. Finally, we will propose an analysis of our main research results, focusing on the challenges encountered in research partnership experiences, the impacts of these challenges on the personal and professional trajectories of our participants and their strategies of resistance, as well as their future prospects for the research community.

[4] One of the researchers, Saaz Taher, holds an ethics certificate issued by the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières for her postdoctoral work on the PARR project (certificate number: CER-22-292-07.19).





1. Epistemic Injustices and Research Partnerships: A Literature Review on Black and Racialized Women and Non-Binary People in Quebec

The experiences of Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnership projects in Quebec have rarely been the subject of scientific work. In order to carry out a literature review on this subject, we have listed existing writings from different types of research content (scientific and gray literature) that address various aspects of the experiences of people involved in research partnerships. This approach allowed us to overview the exploration of these themes in different research environments, including in francophone and anglophone circles. The literature review will demonstrate the relevance of focusing on these specific experiences for the production of scientific knowledge.

Hence, we will analyze the issue of intersectionality and the place of feminism in the experiences of Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnerships. We will then look at the divergent and convergent realities between community and university settings. Finally, we will examine the reproduction of epistemic injustices in research environments, specifically in the context of research partnership projects.





1.1 INTERSECTIONALITY AND FEMINISM AT THE CENTER OF EXPERIENCES

To begin, it is important to identify the existing literature regarding the participants at the center of this research: Black and racialized women and non-binary people who find themselves at the intersections of different structures of oppression. This section offers a definition of intersectionality and provides an overview of written works addressing the experiences of oppression of Black and racialized people in Quebec, describing how intersectionality is experienced by particular communities, and situating the Quebec feminist movement on this issue.

The intersectional perspective was developed in 1970 with the Afro-feminist critique of the white feminist movements that were considered “ethnocentric and indifferent to racism” (Bilge, 2010: 47), and the anti-racist movement which failed to consider the effects of misogyny suffered by Black and racialized women. For decades, American and British Afro-feminists have thus developed reflections and conceptualizations on the intertwining of oppressive structures, realizing the limitations of the white feminist movements in which they struggle to have their voices and experiences represented (*Ibid.*: 48). It was in 1989 that the concept of “intersectionality” was popularized by the African-American feminist researcher Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (1989) in order to “analyze the way in which the different systems of oppression” are interconnected (Pierre, 2016). This analytical tool, which has theoretical, political and practical implications, deconstructs the idea that the experiences of people who are part of the same historically marginalized social group are homogeneous. On the contrary, intersectionality demonstrates that one’s experiences do not depend on an isolated structure of oppression, but on the dynamic imbrication between all the

oppressive structures affecting an individual or a group (based on race, social class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, among others). Therefore, these structures of oppression cannot be considered independently from each other (Bilge, 2010: 62).

To better understand the intersectionality of different structures of oppression, the report “Racism and Systemic Discrimination in Contemporary Quebec” (“Racisme et discriminations systémiques dans le Québec contemporain”), brought forward by sociologist Myrlande Pierre and jurist Pierre Bosset (2020), documents and analyzes important manifestations of systemic discrimination, as well as the general public’s understanding and perceptions on the matter. It states that 55% of Canadians believe that racial discrimination is a thing of the past, while a number of studies reveal a significant gap between the rhetoric of equal rights and the “realization of de facto equality” (Pierre and Bosset, 2020: 28). Another article in this report presents eight activist testimonies from Muslims who are part of LGBTQ+ communities. In this specific article, all the participants mentioned having difficulty determining whether, in certain situations, they were being discriminated against based on their religious belief, race, gender identity or sexual orientation (Chehaitly *et al.*, 2020: 199). Some also mention the difficulty of finding safe spaces, since racialized and/or Muslim LGBTQ+ environments have also been identified as potentially violent places (*Ibid.*: 200). Therefore, existing at the intersection of different systems of oppression makes it difficult to find a safe space in which to evolve and thrive.

For Black and racialized women, creating safe spaces within Quebec feminist circles also has its challenges, as discussions about the relevance of intersectionality as a concept and as an on-the-ground reality are still being held. Feminist political scientist Geneviève Pagé (2014) draws on the expression “indivisibility of justice”, commonly





used by Afro-feminist researcher and activist Angela Davis, to emphasize the importance for the Quebec feminist movement “to fight against all injustices suffered by women” (2014: 202), whether these injustices are patriarchal or of various causes (racial, xenophobic, among others). The indivisibility of justice raises the idea that each movement fighting for social justice cannot be considered independently and exclusively, but rather as tied to one another. The idea that “an injustice committed anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” clearly illustrates this concept (Northend Agent, 2017).

Thus, Pagé argues that the Quebec feminist movement would respect the mandate of protecting and guaranteeing social justice for women by adopting an intersectional approach, in order to prevent the fight “from being [...] specific [only] to a single group”, that of women victims of injustices resulting exclusively from patriarchy (2014: 212). While many predominantly white feminists accuse intersectionality of endlessly fragmenting the category “women”, therefore dividing the feminist movement, Pagé argues, on the contrary, that this tool reconsolidates the movement by considering the experiences of all women. From this perspective, the feminist movement is not done until all women are said to be free. Even if some women’s groups have made gains over the years, until liberation is achieved for all, “justice has not been done”, according to the principles of indivisible justice (*Ibid.*: 213). While it seems obvious to some researchers that intersectionality should be a necessary analytical framework for thinking about Quebec feminist movements, it appears difficult to hear the demands of Black and racialized women and non-binary people in these spaces.

We can thus argue that the absence of intersectional analysis within mainstream feminist circles is not surprising. In an article published

in the journal *Recherches féministes* entitled “Intersectionnalités”, feminist researchers Dominique Bourque and Chantal Maillé (2015) point out that in Quebec’s feminist mainstream tradition, the “feminist analysis limited to the gender paradigm” has historically mainly focused on the binary concepts of feminine and masculine, woman and man (2015: 3). The categories of race and class, for example, have barely been explored (*Ibid.*). Highlighting the injustices observed through intersectional analysis and focusing on previously “invisibilized or trivialized” issues becomes an essential strategy for the development of Quebec feminist movements (*Ibid.*: 2).



The literature on Black and racialized women and non-binary people and their experiences at the crossroads of the systems of oppression, and within feminist sectors, remains limited in Quebec and elsewhere. Thus, considering the experiences of non-binary people alongside cisgender women[5] in research, and the realities of Black and racialized people in research partnerships, sheds light on the experiences of populations that are too rarely seen as the leading subject of a research project.

1.2 THE REALITIES OF COMMUNITY AND UNIVERSITY SETTINGS

Examining Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnerships begins with drawing a portrait of the divergences and convergences of lived experiences in community and university settings. In this section,

[5] A cisgender person is someone whose sex at birth matches their gender identity (Alessandrin, 2018: 117).





we observe the role played by the community sector in Quebec, the realities of Black and racialized women evolved in feminist community settings, and the ways in which existing racial discrimination within the university is reproduced.

It is essential to understand the place the community sector holds in Quebec, and how its position impacts the research projects it initiates. While the community sector exerted some influence on the State during the 1980s, particularly on the issue of knowledge democratization, the trend seems to have been reversed in recent years. In fact, the report by the Institute for socio-economic research and information (l'Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques) on the financing and the evolution of practices in Quebec community organizations reveals that they do not hesitate to adapt to their funder's priorities to ensure financial support for their projects (Depelteau *et al.*, 2013: 5). The evolution of "methods and types of funding" (*Ibid.*) in the community sector has increased accountability reports "as an instrument of control" (*Ibid.*), and has strengthened donors' influence on consultation committees. Funding is therefore a major issue in an environment where some organizations see their initial mission modified to respond correctly to funding requirements for which the existence and completion of their projects depend on. It can be hypothesized that, like intervention or awareness-raising projects, research projects initiated by groups also risk being influenced by donors' requirements. The organizations leeway to choose their research topic is therefore limited as projects cannot exist without funding.

While research project funding in community settings is an important issue to consider for our own research, understanding the reality of our participants (Black and racialized women and non-binary people) in these settings is a priority. Feminist and critical race researchers

Jade Almeida and Marlihan Lopez (2021) discuss the place of Black women in Quebec’s white feminist community groups from personal experience in an article entitled “Feminist Workplaces: ‘Safe Spaces’ for Black Women?” The two authors present a portrait of the conditions faced by these women and draw a portrait of the realities of Black women in feminist sectors. From stereotypes to various forms of violence experienced (white tears, expulsions, microaggressions,) as well as the survival and resistance strategies these women must adopt in their place of work, the authors observe that intersectionality in white feminist sectors in Quebec is influenced by the phenomenon of “whitewashing”, which removes the dimension of critical race from intersectional analysis when put into practice (Almeida and Lopez, 2021: 183).

This concept of whitewashing intersectionality is theorized by feminist and critical race sociologist Sirma Bilge (2015) as the process of depoliticizing intersectionality which occurs when academia strips away all activist knowledge from the notion by advocating for theory with the aim of making intersectionality a science (2015: 23). Removing the experiential knowledge of Black and racialized women that led to the development of intersectionality, in an attempt to generalize the concept for white people, implies that white experiential knowledge is the sole knowledge that can lead to theorization (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, white feminist sectors claiming to be intersectional are not exempt from this whitewashing phenomenon, and are therefore not necessarily safe for Black and racialized women. While the previous section questioned the place given to Black and racialized women’s demands in feminist sectors, we understand that the consequences are felt not only on a theoretical and conceptual level, but also in everyday practice. Black and racialized women working in mainstream feminist communities face a high level of violence.





While academic settings do not suffer from funding challenges at the same scale as community settings, they are not exempt from reproducing forms of racial discrimination, among others. The article “Student Voices on Social Relations of Race in Québec Universities” (2021) reminds us that despite the refusal by the Quebec government to recognize systemic racism, the realities in Quebec universities reflect its existence. The racialized undergraduate students surveyed in this research reveal that they are often the victims of normalized microaggressions in the form of humour, therefore reinforcing their sense of inferiority to the white majority, who makes up the bulk of the student body (Magnan *et al.*, 2021: 12). The article also points out that white university staff do not seem to be trained to recognize or respond to microaggressions experienced by these students (*Ibid.*: 13).

These challenges in the context of community-based research are hardly discussed in gray literature. Thus, the reality of non-binary people in community or university settings is poorly addressed in Quebec scientific work. In addition, the role of Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnership is totally absent from the production of academic knowledge in Quebec.

1.3 EPISTEMIC INJUSTICES IN RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Given that the populations targeted by the PARR project are marginalized within various public spaces – particularly in terms of the importance their voices and words are given within these



spaces – this section will look specifically at the role of the epistemic injustices in research partnership projects, examining the origins of these injustices, the place they occupy within research partnership, and the solutions considered to counter them.

The scientific article “Epistemic Injustice and Participatory Research: A Research Agenda at The Crossroads of University and Community” (“Injustices épistémiques et recherche participative: un agenda de recherche à la croisée de l’université et des communautés”) defines epistemic injustice as the discrediting experienced by “members of certain historically stigmatized groups” when sharing their knowledge on a given subject (Godrie *et al.*, 2020: 4). The concept of epistemic injustice, theorized by philosopher Miranda Fricker in 2007, recognizes the link between “social inequalities and the production of knowledge” by stating that the lack of credibility associated with some knowledge producers directly impact how this knowledge is perceived. Epistemic injustices result from actions that silence the testimonies of certain people or groups because of identity biases with which they are associated. For testimonies to be recognized, the people sharing them must be recognized as legitimate and reliable producers of knowledge. If the identity biases afflicting these populations make them less credible in the eyes of their audience, they run a high risk of being perceived as non-reliable and silenced. Many Black women activists and researchers have previously discussed this concept since they are often considered less competent given the stereotypes with which they are regularly associated, such as the prostituted Black woman or the state-supported dependent Black woman (Dotson, 2011: 243).

But where do these epistemic injustices come from? While scholars have addressed how these injustices are co-constitutive of white ignorance and post-racial ideology (Eid, 2018; Taher, 2021), for





François Toutée (2018), a master's student in philosophy (UQAM), looking at the right to freedom of speech and stigmatizing discourses makes it possible to trace back the origins of the reproduction of epistemic injustices. While the question of freedom of expression has occupied and continues to occupy considerable space in academic circles, questions surrounding the consequences of stigmatizing discourses emerging from freedom of speech are remain limited. The author explains that this phenomenon stifles voices of “marginalized people who experience these discourses” in the academic world (2018: 72).

In the article “The Epistemic Costs of Hate: Stigmatizing Discourses, Epistemic Injustices and Freedom of Expression” (“Les coûts épistémiques de la haine : discours stigmatisants, injustices épistémiques et liberté d’expression”) (2018), the author looks at the origin of epistemic injustices in relation to stigmatizing and discriminatory discourses. For Toutée, it all starts with stigmatizing discourse. Stigmatizing or discriminatory discourse consists of “the use of words or symbols to stigmatize and/or marginalize” a target group by associating it with “highly undesirable qualities”, with the intention to “communicate an idea or opinion” (Toutée, 2018: 72). The dissemination of these stereotypes forges and reinforces negative stereotypes conveyed in society, associating negative attributes with certain groups and keeping them in use and “in circulation in the social world” (*Ibid.*: 78). These “negative stereotypes” attached to certain groups affect the way in which their experiences and knowledge will be received (Godrie *et al.*, 2020: 5). “The credibility judgment” of the group undergoing stereotyping, as well as the testimonies of its members will then be negatively affected (Toutée, 2018: 79). Stigmatizing discourses thus lead to epistemic injustices. The author also concludes that these

injustices undermine the freedom of expression of the groups that they target, since freedom of expression for all, theoretically, does have the same consequences for marginalized populations. Stigmatizing discourses thus end up discrediting the voices of people from marginalized groups, leading to their exclusion from certain collective spaces and preventing them from participating in the production of knowledge in said spaces.

Given that participatory research partnership[6] aims to listen to all individuals and groups, would it be possible for these collaborative spaces to be free of epistemic injustice? The goal of the research project “Epistemic Injustice and Participatory Research: A Research Agenda at The Crossroads of University and Community” (2020) is to measure the correlation between the growing number of research partnerships and the reproduction of epistemic injustices. This approach reveals that, although this type of research offers interesting levers for limiting epistemic injustices by enabling a better sharing of knowledge, there is no obvious correlation between research partnership and epistemic justice (Godrie *et al.*, 2020: 13-14). Indeed, it is emphasized that “working to establish more horizontal relationships between different types of knowledge and people” requires constant work and attention (*Ibid.*: 14). In academia, researchers are not necessarily trained to establish bridges with communities, whereas at the community level, and more particularly when talking about historically marginalized communities, past negative experiences with university researchers can slow down the process of creating a bond of trust which is vital to counter epistemic injustices (*Ibid.*). It is therefore necessary to constantly reflect on practices throughout the research project to ensure that harmful practices to participants’ security are not repeated.

[6] Participatory research partnership implies a form of research involved in a practice setting and a collaboration between two categories of actors: researchers and practitioners (Bonny, 2015: 36).





Certain research practices can nevertheless promote epistemic justice and promote social change. In her article “Can Life Stories Be A Tool for Social Change and Resistance for Epistemic Injustices?” (“Les récits de vie peuvent-ils être un outil de changement social et de résistance aux injustices épistémiques?”) (2019), the researcher Florence Piron suggests that life stories shared in research interviews would be essential shields in the “fight against racism or gender-based violence” (2019: 224). Indeed, she argues that these testimonies make it possible to “highlight the knowledge of the people who tell their stories” and maintain the ties between a participant and their knowledge (*Ibid.*). The author insists that the life story method, although centered on the participant and thus “subjective and personal”, can have considerable positive impacts in terms of social change (*Ibid.*: 296). She mentions that people who have gone through difficult experiences in their life, tend to repress their narratives within themselves. Research interviews therefore offer a relatively “protected and secure” space in which to talk about what they have experienced (*Ibid.*: 213). Assuming that the participant’s words are heard and desired by the researcher, and that sharing is welcomed with respect and dignity, the author argues that a space is thus created for both the participant and the researcher to begin a “process of resilience or political emancipation” (*Ibid.*). To maximize the influence of these narratives, open-access dissemination of testimonies via digital platforms, for example, would “transform the perceptions” of readers on specific groups or events and thus of the societies of which they are a part (*Ibid.*: 224). In this way, social change and the fight against epistemic injustice can be set in motion.





Although there is significant literature on epistemic injustices, studies on research partnerships instigated by marginalized populations is rather difficult to find. The PARR research project therefore aims to contribute to the literature on this subject by looking specifically at the place, the roles and the experiences of Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnership in Quebec. Black and racialized women and non-binary people working in community and university settings are still rarely considered in current Quebec literature. Our research project will help to shed light on some of their realities.

The three issues raised in this literature review not only highlight the small number of works dealing with these questions in Quebec, but above all, they underline the near absence of racialized researchers addressing them. The PARR research project will therefore contribute to filling an important gap by adopting the “by us/for us/with us” methodological approach.

2. “By Us/For Us/With Us” Methodological Approach

Born from an interest and a belief in the importance to collect and understand the lived experiences of Black and racialized women and non-binary people who take part in research partnerships both at the university and community levels across Quebec. This research project favours a qualitative methodological approach based on an integrated and cross-cutting “by us/for us/with us” logic. The “by us/for us/with us” approach means that the research subjects are also its protagonists and beneficiaries. In the case of the PARR project, Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnerships are

represented through the interviews' and focus groups's participants, the research team members, as well as the ethics and advisory committees' members.

In the summer of 2022, two committees were set up to get the project started: an ad-hoc advisory committee was put together by Fritzna Blaise, Félicia Cá and Alexandra Pierre, and an ethics committee was settled by Félicia Cá, Maud Jean-Baptiste and Alexandra Pierre. During this same period, the recruitment of participants for interviews was completed thanks to the mobilization of the personal and professional networks of Maud Jean-Baptiste and Alexandra Pierre. Subsequently, Maud Jean-Baptiste also coordinated the first stages of this research, through the coordination of meetings with the advisory committee, the submission of the documents for the ethical evaluation of the project, the drafting of registration and consent forms, the calls for participation in data collection activities, the review of interviews' and focus groups' questions, the logistics of interviews and focus groups (reservation of venues, signing of consent forms, invoicing of compensation), as well as the billing of the transcriptionists and the translators.

Félicia Cá and Saaz Taher were responsible for launching the calls for recruitment for the focus groups, establishing the questionnaires, conducting the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, monitoring their progress with the advisory committee, coordinating with the transcriptionists' work, coding the interviews' and focus groups' transcripts, as well as completing the data analysis and the writing of this report.





The research data collection phase was divided into three distinct stages over the course of 2022: establishing an advisory committee (June 2022), establishing an ethics committee (July-September 2022), performing 20 semi-directed individual interviews (September-November 2022), and holding two focus groups with a total of 5 participants (November 2022). Each of these stages had specific objectives which we will address in the following sections.

2.1 THE “BY US/FOR US/WITH US” METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

What do we mean when we say that research is carried out with a methodological approach by/for and with the populations who constitute the subjects of the research?

Above all, “BY” means that there is importance given to the fact that the composition of the research team reflects the profiles, realities, and experiences of the people who will be contacted and who will become the research subjects. Thus, it is a methodological approach which involves taking into account the positioning of each and every one and assuming and affirming that certain experiences of oppression can hardly be collected by researchers who are external to the groups at the center of the research. Also, in the approach by/for/with, “FOR” implies thinking that the beneficiaries of the research are the populations interviewed, those from whom we have come to extract the experiences, the expertise, and the time to carry out our research. And finally, “WITH” implies to think that communities and the research team co-construct together knowledge, research, and avenues of transformation of the work environments in which we evolve.

Adopting such a methodological approach entails various challenges (Souffrant *et al.*, 2022). As part of our PARR project,

engaging with communities that mirror our own ensures that the testimonies we receive summon realities that are familiar to us, allowing for moments of self-recognition for some. But it is also questioning our own positioning, as Black and racialized women within a white feminist organization and therefore it also puts into perspective the own challenges – for us – of conducting such a research in predominantly white spaces. Finally, and perhaps above all, the approach by/for/with is to be conceived as a process, a continuous learning, which we must always work to improve throughout our research, because it is always something that can be perfected.

2.2 THE AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The ad-hoc advisory committee was crucial as a first step for the data collection. After considering the existing literature on Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnerships in Quebec, we realized a gap in the available information concerning this population. The lack of documentation on our research subjects made it difficult to come up with an interview questionnaire in preparation of the data collection steps to come. Since existing literature gave us very little information about the populations at the heart of our research, we decided to go to them directly to fill possible knowledge gaps. Over the course of two days, we brought together four Black and racialized women and non-binary people involved in research partnerships, with the aim of testing our interview questions and identifying some of the blind





spots our data collection tools did not cover. The first day was mainly spent asking questions in a group interview atmosphere, while the second day consisted of group feedback regarding the previous day's experience. We wanted to know what they had thought of their experience, and what they would have liked to discuss in greater depth. This first stage was very enriching for the team, as we were now ready to create a comprehensive questionnaire that better reflected the reality of the participants we were planning to involve in our research.

On the first day, the research team quickly realized that the participants had a lot to say about the topics covered. We had planned three hours of discussion per day for this research activity, but we had to take almost two extra hours to get through the interview questions. While we had initially thought of using only focus groups as the data collection method, the results from this day convinced us to prioritize individual interviews. Despite the ad-hoc advisory committee's detailed sharing of their experiences, we found it difficult to dive deeper in their specific experiences as we lacked time. Interviews therefore seemed to be an ideal tool to focus on specific experiences of each individual. In the interest of time, it seemed more realistic to conduct twenty one-hour individual interviews, as opposed to ten three-hours focus groups. Recruitment was also one of our concerns, as people working in research partnerships tend to have busy schedules. It therefore seemed laborious to bring them together in groups of three to six researchers for different focus groups.


The second day mainly allowed us to fine-tune our questionnaire, and also identify possible blind spots with regard to the topics covered. Some participants questioned the need to exclusively consider people involved in research partnerships instead of those

involved in research more broadly. Others pointed out that the community sector is highly diversified and that it may be inaccurate to discuss experiences of participants from community organizations as homogenous. The questioning of gender differences also led to an interesting conversation in which the cisgender women present pointed out that, in a predominately feminine environment, men were not necessarily the main oppressors in places of work but that other women, mainly white women, would take that role. Lastly, the issue that generated the most interest was unequivocally that of ethics. Participants agreed that we needed to adopt an ethics process to protect future participants in our interviews and focus groups.

2.3 THE ETHICS PROCESS

The research team considered the need for an ethics assessment of the project due to the nature of the research topic, and the potential of the questions becoming emotionally charged. In addition, issues of data collection, processing, and confidentiality were obvious priorities. In this way, we wanted to provide the participants with the security of knowing that everything had been done and thought through to limit the health risks and harm to their well-being during the interviews, the focus groups, and aftermath. We therefore found ourselves faced with a dilemma as to how to approach this ethical issue. We knew that going through academic ethical processes to evaluate the PARR research project was a possibility, but we wanted to remain independent, at least in part, from academia. On the other





hand, we were unaware of any ethics board independent of academic circles that could evaluate our project from a community-based perspective. Gathering the comments of our ad-hoc advisory committee, along with the discussions with our advisory committee and members of the research team, we came to the conclusion that the beginning of the individual interviews phase should be delayed to give us time to create an independent ethics board that would evaluate our research project.

This objective was achieved in three distinct stages: forming an ethics committee, creating an ethical framework, producing an ethics evaluation form, and finally, submitting our project to evaluation. During this process, we wanted to respect the project's "by us/for us/with us" approach in establishing an ethics committee, while calling on people with different experiences in human research ethics to bring together diverse perspectives. We therefore brought together three Black and racialized women: one with more of an academic background (Jade Almeida), one with more of a community background (Nelly Dennene) and one with a particular interest in ethics (Hind Obad). Once the committee was set, we collaborated on the creation of an ethical framework and the formalization of an ethics evaluation process. This involved an iterative process with the ethics board to ensure that we had considered all the evaluation items that should be included. Once approval of the review process was completed, we submitted our research project for review, including the participant consent forms (See Annex 1 and Annex 2). After a second iterative process, we received final approval to begin our individual interviews (See Annex 3), and a few months later the ethics committee also approved the focus groups questionnaire (See Annex 4).

2.4 MAPPING THE PARTICIPANTS

To better map and identify the profiles of our research participants, we asked them to complete a socio-demographic form. Here is the socio-demographic mapping drawn from the data (data based on the 22 of 25 participants interviewed in individual interviews and focus group who returned their socio-demographic forms):

- The project made it possible to collect the testimonies of 25 Black and racialized women and non-binary people, including 20 individual semi-directed interviews and 5 participants for two different focus groups.
- 4 of our participants were in the 18-25 age category, 5 in the 26-35 category, 6 in the 36-45 category, 4 in the 46-55 category, 2 in the 56-65 category, and 1 in the 66 and more category.
- 14 participants reside in Montreal, 7 in other cities within the province of Quebec, in the Eastern Townships, Bas-Saint-Laurent, National Capital, Mauricie, Montreal and Laval regions, and 1 was living outside the province.





- 4 identify themselves as belonging more to the academic sector, 2 to the community sector, and 16 to both simultaneously.
- On average, participants have been involved in the academic and/or community field for 9 years. The range of involvement for all participants varies from 2 to 25 years.
- 8 participants identified themselves as Black, 4 as Arab and North African, 5 as Latinx, 5 as South and Southeast Asian.
- 19 participants identified themselves as cisgender women, 2 as transgender and transfeminine women, and 1 as non-binary.
- 3 participants indicated that they were disabled.

2.5 THE SEMI-DIRECTED INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

As mentioned above, we decided to maximize the number of individual interviews instead of focus groups in order to provide a safer setting in which participants could share difficult experiences in complete confidentiality with only one interviewer. We also felt that this format would allow us to dive more deeply

into the experiences and perspectives brought forward by the participants, rather than a collective setting where less time is allocated to each individual testimony. When it came to recruiting participants for the individual interviews, we decided to target our respondents to cover a diversity of profiles. We included both French and English-speaking participants, from Montreal and other administrative regions of Quebec (Eastern Townships, Bas-Saint-Laurent, National Capital, Mauricie, Laval), but also from a wide range of racial backgrounds. It was also important that there be a balance in representation between researchers from the academic sectors and community sectors. Finally, we wanted to bring together researchers with different levels of experience in research partnerships, and from different age groups, to get a more diverse portrait.

These individual interviews were conducted virtually, in order to respect the pandemic reality, and to limit any travel-related obstacles that participants might encounter. Once the individual interviews had been recorded, we used the Word software to generate preliminary transcriptions, which we then sent to the two transcribers (Samia Dumais and Stella Lemaine) for revision and correction.

The twenty individual interviews conducted between September and November 2022, provided a lot of data that we were able to put into dialogue with each other. The project's two researchers were responsible for conducting the interviews: Félicia Cá did 19, and Saaz Taher did the last one[7]. Then, inspired by this first stage, the research team was able to formulate the focus group questionnaire that would constitute the final data collection stage of the research project.

[7] In order to respect her postdoctoral contract, Saaz was only able to conduct interviews after obtaining her ethics certificate from Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, in early November 2022.



We found it interesting to organize focus groups after the individual interviews took place, as we were able to bring out topics frequently mentioned by interview participants, and hear new participants exchange opinions on these same topics. Initially, the goal was to conduct four focus groups: two in Montreal (English/French), one in Trois-Rivières, and one in Rimouski. We wanted to cover as many regions as possible, and thus achieve a representation similar to that of the individual interviews. The choice of these regions was not random. We knew that these cities were known for their abundance of research partnership projects, which we thought would facilitate the recruitment of participants. Unfortunately, we were unable to complete the minimum amount of participants required to maintain the regional focus groups and had to limit ourselves to the two focus groups held in Montreal.

The francophone focus group consisted of two participants, and the anglophone focus group consisted of three. Despite our mobilization difficulties, these focus groups enabled us to confirm several of the directions identified through the individual interviews, and also revealed a few that had not stood out during this previous stage of data collection.

2.6 ANALYZING THE DATA

Once data collection, anonymization and transcription had been completed, we were able to begin analyzing the collected data using MAXQDA data processing software. Before starting to code, we created a numbered coding grid to ensure that the same codes were used when coding the transcripts of individual interviews and focus groups. Next, we identified recurring codes to highlight their content for the subsequent analysis stage.



3. Black and Racialized Women and Non-Binary People Involved in Research Partnership: Reflections on Challenges, Strategies, and Desired Resources

In this section, we will present the core research findings, relaying the systemic challenges and barriers reported by our participants, the impact of these challenges on their personal and professional lives, along with the resources they desire to better navigate the obstacles they face as well as their future perspectives for the research partnership community.

3.1 SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

The main systemic obstacles identified by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnerships are essentially centered around four points: lack of financial, logistical and human resources; overwork and divergent timelines and needs; underrepresentation and exploitation; and exclusion and devaluation of knowledge. As such, these points cover the disparities that exist between community and academic settings.



3.1.1 LACK OF FINANCIAL, LOGISTICAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The participants raise financial disparities between academic and community sectors as an important obstacle. In particular, they underline the challenges related to the lack of financial, logistical and human resources in the community sector when conducting research partnership projects. For many, this gap is part of a context where community workers are already overworked and oversolicited, while the funding obtained to carry out research partnerships is still managed by academic researchers.


In the academic world, several participants feel that there is political momentum in Quebec and Canada currently, and there are public funds – more than before – from which researchers can benefit to conduct research partnerships on racial minorities in particular. Joy[8] supports this view:

We're at a completely different moment now than, let's say, even 10 years ago or 15 years ago. So, you know, the topic of systemic racism.... not in Quebec, but at the federal level, [...] there's money out there. So, for example, for the project we did [...] with Black and Indigenous youth, we got money from the anti-racism action program at the federal government. [...] There's more, at least, an institutional kind of recognition. Like, you know, money being set aside for those issues. (Joy)

In comparison, many participants from the community sector point to the lack of logistical, financial and human resources within community organizations. According to them, this contributes to the fact that organizations rely on the ongoing efforts of a few people to survive. Consequently, the lack of resources encourages community organizations to participate in research partnerships, specifically to receive financial compensation. As Joannie reports:

[8] The participants' first names have been replaced by fictional ones, to ensure their anonymity.





[S]ometimes you say “oh my God, we don’t have capacity because we have no staff.” We were all volunteers. We have no money, but because [...], when [the university researcher] asked us to participate, she gave us a little bit of money. So, we said “OK, OK, good, we will have a bit of funds. [...] to pay for this, to pay for that, for our supplies.” But we don't even have an office! We don't even have supplies, like equipment. It's all our own, you know, we use our own equipment. [...] All the money that we collected, donations or fundraising is for expenses for when we do education, popular education with our members and [...] conferences. [...] We also get an honorarium from universities if they call us to talk in their classes, so that's... [...] That's how we survive. Ahah. We don't know, but our official address is my residence. [...] Our telephone is my residential telephone. So, we don't pay for any facilities, only for the important things. (Joannie)

Beyond the simple observation of a lack of resources, be they financial, logistical or human, participants deplore the fact that research funds are mainly allocated only to researchers from academic sectors. In other words, the expertise and knowledge of members of community organizations do not benefit from the same funding opportunities that would enable them to extensively participate in research by freeing up their time, instead of devoting 100% of their resources to the projects. Romy expands on this point:

The weak point is that when funding is obtained for research partnerships, very often this funding is allocated to the researcher, and not to pay salaries or support human resources or for administration in the organizations. This means that, once again, the organizations are not in a position to make their full contribution, because you can't dedicate an entire position to the research project. So the workers nibble away at their time here and there, on top of everything else they have to do to participate in the research project, which is a big weakness. I think that at that point the quality of the contribution of the organization is not the same. (Romy)

The lack of resources makes it difficult for many participants from academia to consider collaborating with members of these organizations without providing them with financial compensation to recognize the work and expertise they invest in research partnerships. As Axel relates:

First of all, it's community groups that don't really have base funding or very little base funding. [...] And they're also groups facing a shortage of human resources. So, it's clear that asking people to volunteer for us, it's, like... we're not consistent with our values because we too are fighting against the invisibilization of our labor. So volunteering, forming a group, asking people to join a workgroup, answering questions, taking part in meetings that we don't pay for, that's invisible work for us. (Axel)

This disparity in funding and the realization that research funds for partnership projects essentially goes to the main researchers is an issue deplored by the university research community itself. Indeed, a few participants deplore the fact that their work as research assistants, while indispensable and central to the research being carried out, was nevertheless not remunerated at the level of expertise provided, even when the research project has access to important funding. Nina explains:

From what I have heard, at the end, there was so much money left, it was so much money, you know. I can't say where that money went, but I remember very well [...] that at the beginning of the project, in the middle of the project, you know... the main researchers weren't necessarily generous in allocating financial resources. [...] We pushed hard to change our pay, to be more. You know, at the time, the pay was at \$15-20. In any case, we said it had to be much more. (Nina)

The disparities in financial, logistical and human resources between the academic and community sectors is a central, if not one of the primary issues raised by almost all of our participants. They see it as a decisive challenge, linked to that of divergent timelines and needs.





3.1.2 OVERWORK, DIVERGENT TIMELINES AND NEEDS

According to participants, community and academic settings do not face the same pressure in terms of research timelines, nor do they define research needs and objectives in the same way. Participants perceive a gap between community organizations that expect concrete answers to their immediate needs, and the academic sector whose objectives seem primarily oriented towards scientific production and the symbolic or financial capital that can be derived from it (notably future publications and research grants). In community sectors, they also denounce the additional workload involved in freeing up time dedicated to research partnerships in addition to full-time working hours. Within academic settings, this additional burden is also present for researchers involved in partnership projects, often constituting challenges in terms of team management and research supervision, in a context where academic deliverables are highly demanding.

Several researchers from academia reveal that research partnerships can be particularly valued within universities, especially due to the social benefits they entail. As Sora explains:

Society at the moment, well the academic world, the university world, places a lot of value on [our] work. We [focus not only on] partnerships, we often talk about the social [positive social output of our] work, [our] involvement [and] commitment as researchers. So it's very rewarding. (Sora)

However, while several researchers emphasize the value of research partnerships, others nuance these remarks by reporting that partnership projects are seen rather as projects that take too long to produce in view of the production requirements demanded within the academic world. As Joy conveys:

[U]nfortunately, academia does not reward this kind of work. Academia in fact inhibits this kind of work. Because it's so time consuming, right? So, it can slow down your publications, right? [...] Like, they want to see how much research and publications you're producing. They don't care what it's about. It is more about quantity over quality. (Joy)

Many participants talk about overwork in the universities, including the extra hours accumulated to meet the demands of funding applications, publications or other deliverables. As a result of this academic overload, many relate the issue of burnout – for both academic and community participants – making it particularly difficult to reconcile the time needed to conduct research partnerships. As Farah explains:

I have the impression [...] that it's a lack of time, of people who want to do research projects. [...] They don't have the time. Other problems are that they participate, but they don't have enough time to take part more in all the stages. Let's say, you don't stop, you don't give the same amount of time – whether you're in the practical environment or in the academic environment – to read the texts, you know, to pen little critiques. The commitment with this thing we're all working on isn't the same. [...] And I think that the constraints of our respective environments have a lot to do with how we work. In the academic world, the pressure to publish, the pressure to move fast, the work overload, [...] I think that when we do research partnerships with groups that deal, for example, with issues [of] intersectionality on a global level, when it's groups tackling these issues, these are groups that are overwhelmed. [...] I think that's where we still have a challenge, because they move fast, because they are in an environment that's often [...] in action, in the practice of activism, of making decisions [...]. We don't have the same deadlines in the research world. We're more into taking our time, thinking things through. There's a lot of pressure, but it's worth noting that it translates into articles. (Farah)

Several participants indicate that the overwork of university researchers, especially that of the main researchers of the partnership projects, sometimes results in arduous management and coordination of the research team. The participants Joy and Sora report:





[T]he paperwork involved in doing research with schools is very time consuming. Getting approval, building relationships. [...] PAR^[9], it's not like, you know, a handbook you're picking up, so "We need to do this next, we need to do this". No, right. It's really team driven, so every single thing is decided collectively, through conversation, you know what I mean, in a spirit of open mindedness. It's very organic. [...] So, because you're making decisions at every point, you know, there's no set formula. [...] And so that's why you have to be ready for changes. You have to be ready for things not working out. [...] Sometimes people want to know this is where we're going. You're the leader. I want you to show me where to go. But PAR is exactly the opposite. Right? We're not here to lead you. [...] And for young people, sometimes that, you know, it can take a while to get around that idea. And so, you know, for the first project on racial profiling, we were three years with the youth, right. [...] So, a PAR is open-ended. It could go any direction, right? You have a general idea of where you want to go, but getting there is open-ended. And so, I think there might have been a little bit of, you know, frustration with certain moments. (Joy)

I found that every time I organized a meeting, it was long and complicated because there were so many people there. I think there were 15 people [...] My project [...] was more intense in terms of the amount of activities we did for the research and in the dissemination of its results, as it required a lot more of my time, in proportion to the money I had. In the list of my projects, this project wasn't a priority for me, but it took up an enormous amount of my time. Each time, I felt like I was doing volunteer work. [...] There were new roles, new tasks. Sometimes I had to work on weekends to go to an event. [...] And then, [...] well, I knew that we didn't have the same time frame: the community sector and the university sector. We're very constrained by the school year, whereas for them, it depends on the events of the year. [...] You have to have reasonable expectations about how much time everyone can put into the project. Then, once we have this kind of expectation and understanding of the timetable, everyone is aligned. And you know, in my other project [...] with the community organization, I accept that sometimes they disappear because they're overwhelmed with something, where an employee has left, and they haven't been able to find anyone to replace them. So, I will wait a bit, and then when the person is available, they're my ally again. (Sora)

For academic researchers, these difficulties are compounded by facing the task of collaborating on the development of unconventional non-academic materials. As Sora explains:

[9] "PAR" (Participatory Action Research), in this context, refers to research projects using the "by/for/with" methodological approach.

As a researcher, you give lectures, you write scientific articles, you teach, you create teaching materials. But now I find myself making other promotional materials. There's also the events, organizing events to have exchanges with grassroots organizations, holding consultative roundtables, and even contacting elected officials. (Sora)


In particular, staff shortages and high turnover in community organizations make it difficult to follow-up during a research project. Axel states:

You may initially deal with one person and then they leave, and it takes time to explain the research to the new person. So, it's not easy. It's the time it takes, as well as the lack of staff which make people not respond. (Axel)

Despite the overwork, and additional management tasks added to an already busy schedule, academic researchers who choose to get involved in partnership projects do so, above all, for the social and political commitments these projects entail. As Chloé puts it:

I start with the assumption that walking through this world, in our bodies, is a full-time job. You know, navigating this world in this body. In any case, I'm talking as a Black woman, just to leave my house, moving from point A to point B, I know that I can be attacked in a thousand and one ways, subtle things, and not so subtle things. So that's my daily life. As such, if I choose to get involved in something, I can't get involved in something that's going to increase that pressure. [...] We, especially in the activist milieu and community sector, where it is widely known, that Black women are subject to enormous pressure. [...] In any case, whether they are really activists or not, they face enormous pressures. If they're also in academia or have a skillset that is recognized within the community, they are often sought out for many things. Like the number of parents in my entourage who call me because there's a problem with their children at school. If I tell you the hours I've spent writing emails, contacting people, doing things that had nothing to do with anything, that's work for which I, you know, I haven't necessarily planned in my day, for which I don't get paid, which I do with pleasure, but which also has a deep emotional impact on me. So, if I do a project, it needs to feed me, where I can reduce this pressure. [...] You know, you can't predict everything, but... am I interested in the subject? OK. Is it a project that I can contribute to? OK, but intellectually, do I have the capacity? Also, do I have the time and the physical and mental capacity to contribute to this project? Yes. Then, are my values aligned with the values of the people [who] are involved in the project? If I get a yes to all that, OK. [...] And at times, the only thing needed, is to manage oneself, that's one less person to pull out of the abyss, you know, and if I have one less person in my





entourage to whom I owe, with whom I need to have an hour-long conversation so that they don't sink into a hole of mental health crisis, that's already a lot. [...] Honestly, do things that bring pleasure and joy, it's underrated, but it's so important. It sounds utopian, but sincerely, I think we accept obstacles more easily when it's something that brings us joy. Obstacles become manageable. (Chloé)

The community researchers face specific challenges related to overwork and time constraints. This is particularly true in a context where organizations are flooded with requests to participate in research projects, while already operating on survival mode. As such, Chany and Joannie report:

And also as community workers, when doing this work, you know [...] it's not for the money, it's for the love of the cause. And so often I find that these are people that will overextend, have trouble saying no, and will always want to help when asked, you know, and so have trouble creating those boundaries. So that's kind of been a practice that I've seen. There's a lot of burnout because they're trying to do everything and help everyone, and they don't necessarily have an established role or responsibility. (Chany)

Most of our core members and officers or board members are full time workers and have family to look after. So, it's mostly, they are only available on the weekends or sometimes available only at night. So, I think that's the biggest challenge for our members and our organization. [...] When I hear that somebody has contacted us for help, I sometimes get overwhelmed because there's so many researchers who ask for help and I get overwhelmed. I don't have the time. (Joannie)

As such, faced with burnout on top of the difficulties of managing a team made up of academics and community researchers, several participants recommend that the roles and the expectations of each party within a research partnership project be clarified. Thus, Rachel and Nina explain:

In all of the projects that I've seen, even the ones I've evaluated, it's like people overstep roles or people are confused about what they can and cannot do, or there's too many chefs in the kitchen. [...] So, I think that's a big [...] issue in collaborative projects. It's role identification, and sustaining your role and working with it. Of course, there are communication issues and hierarchy issues as well. (Rachel)

I once stated my boundaries, you know. I remember it very well. It wasn't well received. Then, I remember, I said: "Listen, my job is to coordinate the project, to ensure that there is communication between the community organizations, our partners on one side, and the research team on the other". Then, as part of my research, one of my tasks was to draw up the questionnaires for the interviews. It had to do with the coding as well, and also deleting certain elements, flagging certain things. But, you know, it wasn't part of my job to, let's say, write the first draft of an article on some subject, you know?
(Nina)


Our participants link the pressures of a timeline, in addition to the divergent interests and needs of academia and the community, to the way research partnership is carried out and the conditions in which it takes place, lending itself to the exploitation of Black and racialized women and non-binary people.

3.1.3 UNDERREPRESENTATION AND EXPLOITATION

Participants cite the lack of representation of Black and racialized women and non-binary people – among other minority groups – within academic and community sectors as another obstacle they face. They reveal that this underrepresentation is at the root of practices that instrumentalize Black and racialized people (tokenism), their knowledge and their networks (extractivism), both between academic and community actors, and within both worlds as well.

Several participants, whether in the course of their academic career or in their current professional job, find that research environments – particularly in universities – are characterized by a strong underrepresentation of racial minorities, which contributes to a sense of isolation. As Chloé explains:





I'm currently a doctoral student at a university, working on a subject like mine. [...] I often feel isolated. In other words, when I arrive in a space where there are other researchers, I'm often the only Black person. Maybe I see one or two other racialized people, at least visibly, whom I can identify as such. (Chloé)

This underrepresentation is even more problematic when research projects are conducted on racial issues, with no or a low proportion of Black and racialized people leading the project. As Rachel relates:

I experienced a project, where we were working with racialized kids, but there were only two racialized people leading the project. [...] Yeah, in the academic project where I was the only Black woman. (Rachel)

For several participants, better representation of Black and racialized people and sexual and gender minorities within research in general, and partnership research in particular, would enable the next generation to feel more a part of mainstream institutions, such as universities. Èva raises this issue:

In general, just the fact that [...], we're minorities, we're definitely, we're underrepresented in many aspects of society, and that applies, you know, in the media, but also in the scientific world, in the research world as well. And you know, just in the world of higher education, we don't really see many teachers who represent us and who, you know, who have a common experience with us. So, sometimes, it can be, you know, unconsciously, it's things that affect us. We may create an image that research is a world, reserved for a certain type of person and [...] that's why we internalize it. And then, you know, our beliefs will apply to many areas of our life. Our beliefs are going to be applied to many areas of our lives, and maybe that's going to limit us in the pursuit of our goals and aspirations, and that's why, you know, we're a bit sidelined by society. But after that, when we internalize it, we also have the impression of being sidelined, and that it's difficult to join the herd. (Èva)

For many participants, the underrepresentation of Black and racialized people, and sexual and gender minorities within research, allow for the reproduction of racialized and gendered violence and microaggressions. Many denounce the racism as well as the transphobia and transmisogyny they have experienced. Chantale claims:

It's just interesting how the feminist sector is just so patently québécois in that way. Just how racism moves within the feminist sector, and how it's in complete denial. But bold denial, and also extremely trans exclusionary. (Chantale)

Several participants address the tokenism and instrumentalization of Black and racialized people within research partnerships, and note that the same representatives of the so-called diversity are oversolicited in research. As Sofia and Tania explain:

The professor knew somebody, and so they were prioritized in terms of: "Oh, if we're going to work with academia, we work with this certain person". It's always the same people, and so that also contributes to the lack of diversity. [...] Like it's rare that you see any of these organizations working with professors of color. Umm, but it's also not that weird because who has access to the big amount of funding in academia, it's white professors. [...] So, it's always so, I'm often asked to participate in a tokenizing way because they have no diversity. [...] So, it's like... I'm there because I am Black and, you know, a woman and they need, you know, diversity. [...] So, there was a lot of interest because of the lack of visibility, like I said before, and the lack of representation, the fact that they didn't have any person of color. (Sofia)

Sometimes I feel that, I don't want to become a token. So, I was like, I'm not going to answer for everybody. [...] I think I had good people around me who have guided and educated me, so I didn't face tokenism and all this cause usually this is what happens, you know? It's like there's one person who will represent the whole entire community, or a perspective, and not having that knowledge, you become like, oh, suddenly, the spokesperson of the whole community. (Tania)

Many participants deplore the fact that the instrumentalization of women and non-binary Black and racialized people means that they are mobilized for the knowledge they hold, related to their own lived experience (experiential knowledge), which is not considered to be as worthy as scientific knowledge. The solicitation of people for their experiential knowledge is often internalized, and also recognized and accepted by participants, like Èva in an interview, and Léa in a focus group, state:





The information I brought to the group, it was like more than just rigorous, quantitative scientific information. It was more of an experience that was, like, a concrete, real-life experience. So, I think it brought more, it brought another aspect to what I was saying, what I was sharing with my other colleagues. [...] I knew that because it was more [in] this part that I could share my knowledge, and contribute to the team [...]. When I applied [...], my supervisor told me that she wasn't necessarily looking for someone with a lot of research experience. She wanted someone who had personal experience with, you know, either being a racial, ethnic or sexual minority, you know, to really make a personal contribution and bring my experience to the team. (Èva)

I was really excited because it was one of my first work experiences as a researcher, but specifically in economics, which I really love. But somehow when I got the job and I received all the duties that I was supposed to do, the responsibilities, I was really excited to see them, but I was the only person on the team who spoke Spanish. A lot of my hours were me translating things for some reason and it was not part of my job that I had agreed to do. I felt like I didn't learn as much as my other coworkers because they were more focused on the research project. I was more focused on having to translate stuff, as if I was a translator assistant, I think that's definitely a challenge. When they see that you're part of a community or that you have skills that not everyone has, I think they abuse of our niceness, of saying yes one time, and then all of a sudden you're a translator. Now that's your job, and you're learning less skill sets than what you really wanted. (Léa)

Some explain that the inclusion of Black and racialized women and non-binary people in predominantly white, male and cisgender workspaces makes them more vulnerable because they are marked by their racial and/or gendered difference. In the case of Black and racialized women and non-binary people, several testimonies speak to the difficulties of navigating white and cisgender feminist research environments. Romy explains her experience as a researcher in mainstream feminist organizations as such:

Let's get down to the real business. Look at the structure, the system, the board members of women's groups. Who decides what? Who are the coordinators? Even when there are co-coordinators. Who has the real power of coordinator? And who speaks at team meetings? Who has the right to speak? Who's allowed to have emotions in a team meeting? Who's allowed to cry? A racialized woman isn't allowed to. She's not in a safe space to cry. Even getting angry in a team meeting, she swallows it. She has to have a straight face, because she doesn't have the right.


I think there's all that, and in my opinion, unfortunately, it has not been unpacked. [...] It's political. I know it's political what I've just said, but it's because there are power relations that aren't dismantled, that haven't been exposed in broad daylight and that are still taboo. Because white women, especially in Quebec, are afraid to admit that they're no longer the worst victims, that there are others who are going through things that are more difficult than what they are, you know. That's what I see, that is the work that needs to be done. For me, it's much more structural. That's why we talk about succession. I don't see the new generation. I do see racialized women coming in, and then running out. Then they enter organizations and then they run out, traumatized. They leave traumatized. For those who've been in there far too long, I see them going into retirement now, and they're women who've been broken by this system. So... Yeah, I'm out. I'll never go back to the women's groups. (Romy)

Beyond tokenism, several participants deplore the extractivist and intellectual appropriation practices they have lived through, as research partnership projects do not always lead to concrete improvements for the communities under study. Sofia and Bianca explain:

This is an extractive practice. We criticize this from academia. But the community does the same thing when it's doing a project or programming within vulnerable communities, you see it. You see these coalitions who get funding. They don't have the expertise. [...] And then they reach out to all these unfunded community organizations that are barely surviving to get that expertise. But they're the ones that have the money, [...] and target certain communities which are marginalized, like the trans communities, racialized communities, migrant communities. And you have these big coalitions that access the funding but don't have the expertise. [...] Community organizations working on gender-based violence are getting all this money to work with trans folks, and they have no connection with trans folks or trans organizing. (Sofia)

We were talking about intellectual property, and it's funny. I had an experience on Monday. In the six years I've been working at [name of community organization], it is always another researcher, [name of researcher], and I, who do the parliamentary briefs for the House of Commons, when they call for a study by a group. And they often call witnesses, and they've often called [name of community organization] to testify. [Name of researcher] and I do all the research, we do all the argumentation, and she's the one who takes my paper and presents it to the whole House of Commons, for six years! (Bianca)





Some participants also argue how these extractivist practices are indicative of the gap between the expertise held within academic spheres and that within communities. Thus, many deplore the fact that while academic research teams often do not hold the expertise required to conduct the research, it is nevertheless they who reap the rewards, prestige and social recognition. As Chany states:

I see that researchers want to work with the community, but there's resistance within the community to work with researchers for many reasons. Community workers are often an under resourced sector and undervalued. But they're doing so much, offering so many resources. Often, you know, the frontline workers are contacted by social workers, by institutions, and they're contacted by residents and by interns. They're like, they're really, really exploited for their expertise, for their contacts, and trusted relationships that they've built with residents. [...] And then, I guess as researchers who are sometimes not necessarily aware of all the work it entails, they have an extractive kind of approach where they need to go in and get data, or they need access to residents, or they need to do so many hours of whatever work and so they will tap into this sector and demand resources that it may not have. [...] And there's this frustration when they need help, no one is available. [...] And then, when [community organizations] need the social worker, or they need the CLSC to cooperate, or they need the researcher to tell them the results of the research, or where it is, or how it's going to help, they reply [to the researcher] like: "Well, where are you? We did all this for you. We're available to you, but I don't necessarily see you giving in return". So, the relationship is not balanced. (Chany)

Some participants explain how research partnership projects are predominantly led by white people, and how they come to appropriate concepts from minority backgrounds and thus invisibilize the concrete oppressions experienced by members of these groups. As Joy points out in the case of research on racial profiling:

And they [two white women] have appointed themselves, as you know, leading this organization to study social, political and racial profiling. And they call it intersectional, which is bullshit. How could you use a Black feminist concept which is about race, gender, class and sexuality, and decide that it's relevant to white people? Because basically their research on social and political profiling is

about white people. Not only that they didn't do a single thing on racial profiling the entire 10 years that they've been in operation or 7 years. [...] Unfortunately the power to talk about racial profiling, to do research, is still in the hands of white institutions and white experts. And, you know, unfortunately, the way they talk about these issues is disempowering. [...] And, you know, I later looked at their proposal and it was a joke, I mean, their knowledge is not up to date on racial profiling. It was all very general generalities, vagueness, you know. So, they don't, they don't even show strengths in terms of racial profiling when they got the money. Like in their proposal for the money and they talk about police training, police education. Excuse me, but we're beyond that, really? Maybe like I think we tried, been there, done that, you know. So their approach is very liberal, safe. You know, that we can reform police, that we could reform officers, blah, blah, blah. So, it's very status quo. It's very, it's not challenging and so it doesn't speak, you know, to the dire realities, unfortunately, that police, you know, creates for Black people in this city. (Joy)

Some participants feel that academic extractivist practices are indicative of a lack of investment in developing long-term relationships with field actors by academic researchers. As Sofia explains:

I can count on my fingers how many [academics] really have relationships with the communities they're working with, whether it be working with migrant communities or LGBTQ communities or any community per se. When I talk about the extractive nature, it's the fact that they don't really have any connections with the community that they're working on. You can see this in terms of the absence of solidarity when it comes to specific struggles. So, you know, for example, there are professors who work on migrant communities or migration but who are completely disconnected to other organizing that is happening around migrant justice. [...] Since I worked in the sexual violence sector, most of the students or professors work in sexology, [...] and in sexology cabinets, [it's] really white. [...] A lot of times, there's not a willingness to put in the work to build these relationships. It's not like sending an email saying, "we invite you to participate in our meeting." No, you have to build relationships [...] So yeah, there's a fragility, white fragility that is resistant to hearing criticism. Especially when it's based on lack of representation, racism, and white supremacy. There's, like, instant fragility. (Sofia)

Some claim that the participation of advisory committees in research partnership projects helps build these relationships of trust with communities. As Chloé states:





I'm currently involved in a project that brings together several researchers. [...] The main researcher is a professor from the University [name of university], but it's a partnership between researchers from several other universities, and we also have advisory committees, scientific committees made up of members from different communities. [...] What I find very interesting compared to what I was able to do before, is precisely because of this advisory committee, which is, as I was saying, made up of members of the communities who are people who have worked in education, so are teachers. We also have former school principals, students and young students. Honestly, it's the first time I've seen such an exact representation of different aspects. And I already feel that we're starting from a much stronger base because we have different perspectives. (Chloé)

Several participants mention that integrating people from minority communities into research partnership teams requires building a relationship of trust with them as well. As Tara puts it:

[If] they're going to hire queer, migrant, racialized people, [they] have to be careful not to instrumentalize people and fetishize them, but really include them in a transversal way. And like, with everything that comes with it, it's not just, we're going to sit at a table, then we're just going to say, we're just going to be there, you know, it's beautiful. No, that's not it. It's like they have to accept our feedback, they have to accept our criticism, and it has to be really implemented in the project. That's what advisory committees with decision-making power are all about. If we're going to hire you as a consultant, well, we're going to pay you what you're worth. So yeah, that's what good remuneration is all about, and a favorable context so that you feel at ease and that you are in a responsible space, so that you recognize yourself and don't feel instrumentalized. Because when that happens, it's like, maybe people don't realize it, but it's really hurtful. (Tara)

Thus, for some participants, these inclusive practices that build a bond of trust between researchers and communities are strengthened when they are based on a methodological approach known as "PAR" or "by us/for us/with us". Thus, Joy recounts:

I do the PAR method because I love it, you know, and so I'm happy. I feel fortunate. [...] For me, if work is not joyful, then it's not worth it. So, for me, it's always been important, you know, that we work, that we respect each other, that we have time for each other, that we respect each other's strengths, you know, and are aware of our weaknesses. I'm far from perfect, you know. [...] We're open to learning from each other and having a good time. So, there's always a lot of laughter, you know, and light heartedness, especially because the topics we deal with are tough. And

so, you can't let it get you down too much, you know. So, a fighting spirit is also important, you know, a sense of resistance that we live with daily, right, as people of color. Resistance is our second nature. (Joy)

For our participants, this exploitation of knowledge, and the people who reproduce it, is a major challenge that is intimately linked to the processes that exclude, silence and devalue the knowledge produced by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnerships.


3.1.4 EXCLUSION AND KNOWLEDGE DEVALUATION

Black and racialized participants from both academic and community settings also describe epistemic injustices and power relations in team meetings for research partnership projects as an obstacle they have to face. This can be seen in the forms of exclusion they experience while participating in knowledge production, or in the devaluing of their knowledge and expertise by the research team. Participants associate these forms of exclusion and devaluation of knowledge with the biases based on race, gender and/or professional status with which they are associated.

Several participants point to the invalidation of their expertise and knowledge within academic institutions. As Farah puts it, "Moments of invalidation are certain moments where you're not recognized. You're not made to feel like you belong. Instead, you are made to feel like you don't belong." Joannie and Romy both exemplify not feeling at home when they are in the workplace:

It seems like, you know, there was not one major experience, bad experience, that I had with researchers. But I have this feeling hanging in the atmosphere during a meeting when you cannot contribute. So, you're a passive participant. You're just listening, you know. But even if you listen and you don't understand, sometimes it's not productive, for me. (Joannie)





When I was a community worker, in a room with researchers, I felt out of place. Since my contribution was as a community worker, I was listened to but only half-heartedly, because I wasn't supposed to understand how research worked. On the other hand, when I was a postdoctoral researcher, I felt in my element, because I was there for what I brought, what I contributed, and the roles were clear. (Romy)

Some describe epistemic injustice in the ways that their scientific contributions get silenced or ignored within these institutions, as expressed by Chloé and Élisabeth:

There have been times when I have felt that I've proposed ideas and then another person proposes the same idea as me. But when I say it, they can't hear it, like when the other person suddenly proposes it... Then, you know, I let it go once, twice, three times. Then at some point, we were talking about [...] authorship, which is really, looking at what order we put our names for a publication. And the main researcher, who [...] likes me a lot, but [...] when I said something, it went right over her head. She put the names in order, then [...] my name was last and it took two of my colleagues to say that I had in fact been the one to work on this article. So, I think there's something to be changed there, and that made me laugh because I'd let plenty of other opportunities like that go by. But it had to be something so visual for the others to react and they said :“No, no no, but she's the one who worked on it”. (Chloé)

In this project, what's interesting is that there's a willingness to get access to our expertise, to give acquiescence to our expertise, physically in the meetings. Then, what we realize is that even in the development of questionnaires, even when it comes to adding to the study, literature or whatever, we do indeed bring this expertise to the table. But it's systematically discarded. In fact, in the questionnaire, I remember, the person who represented the LGBT organizations was there. We were both exhausted, since we had made several suggestions in relation to certain issues, questions or even angles of analysis that would enable us to have access to data [...] in marginalized populations. They were addressed in general terms, but the specific questions were not taken into consideration. It's the same with the data. We had a meeting a week ago, and it's exactly the same thing: there's no specific data on people at the crossroads of oppression [...]. It's always the same thing, to be used for some kind of desire for appearances and representations, for expertise that claims to be intersectional, but which isn't in fact. [...] It's glossed over, and we have to keep pointing to it. (Élisabeth)

Some also report how these forms of invalidation and slander of their expertise reinforce a sense of insecurity of their own knowledge appreciation. As Èva and Zoé describe:

But I think I was a bit insecure about having less experience than the others, so during the meetings, I tended to talk less about my projects, or talk less about the details that I'd found really interesting for fear that it wouldn't fit into the professional framework, or it's not on the agenda, or not on the meeting schedule. That's it, maybe more insecurity, on my part, in relation to my skills. (Èva)

There's always the impostor syndrome. It's something that's very present in the academic field. I can't say that enough, I'll never say it enough. [...] So, of course, you can do well, but sometimes you get the impression that you're going to be judged, that it's like you're not up to scratch, because universities are an elitist environment, you know. So, you don't want to talk about what doesn't work, because if you do, it means that you can be judged to be not a good researcher. [...] It's hard when you're a student, it's hard to trust yourself, to say :“Yeah, what I'm doing is right,” and then they tell me maybe this isn't for me, because it's a lot. We question ourselves a lot, we're not sure if it's the right way to do it. (Zoé)

Despite these forms of invalidation and denigrating knowledge, several participants explain that it is important to validate and recognize each other's expertise, following Michelle's example:

I find it difficult [...] to have a kind of parity among researchers, practitioners, experiential experts and project managers. When they are in a kind of democratic horizontality, and where my word or the word of researchers, is not necessarily superior, or that the researcher's analysis is not necessarily superior to the analysis of practitioners or experiential experts. [...] It's the issue of maintaining epistemic justice, this is what I find most delicate and demanding. (Michelle)

The participants perceive that their expertise and knowledge are invalidated through the interconnected systems of oppression in which they are situated, at the intersections of race, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or employment status. Several participants, including Romy and Zoé, recount their experiences of oppression – which they link to different systems of oppression – within research partnerships in Quebec :





It's paradoxical what I'm about to say. There's a kind of invisibilization that takes place, like, I'm in a meeting, my hand is raised, and it's like I'm not seen. And nobody raises their hand, and then everyone interjects, you know? And I, who don't dare interject, raise my hand. The feeling of invisibilization that finally leaves me free to speak. I feel like I'm intruding, like I felt I was one too many. And maybe it's because during these meetings, I was with an extremely charismatic and brilliant person, [name of person], so of course everyone was referring to her and I was next door. It was like, you know, who's the little Black girl next door? [...] Sometimes I'd think to myself: "Do they think I'm like the administrative assistant?" Often, people would look at me when it came to setting a date in the calendar. They'd look at me at times when we were talking about things that were really down-to-earth, basic. Like when's the next committee meeting? Then, I'd write it down and that's when people would look to me, but not as someone who can contribute with ideas, research directions, orientations, and bring analysis that could inform the methodology. Then there was always that look of surprise when I said something that everyone else thought was relevant like: "Oh like, it's like, wow, where did that come from? It's unexpected. We didn't think she could say something like that!". (Romy)

There's a general lack of space for racialized people, non-binary people, LGBT people, women too. [...] It can be very difficult to be in an academic environment. There are a lot of barriers. [...] And [...] there are still institutional obstacles, things to navigate like in addition to the work you have to do, that everyone has to do when you're in this academic environment. [...] There's always the impostor syndrome, and that's something that's very present in the academic field. I can't say that enough. [...] Then, I think that [...] it's much more present when you're a minority. [...] I asked myself, "if I were Canadian, would it have been different?" [...] Well, I say to myself, "perhaps I'm seen as someone who isn't socialized here and who isn't French from France." [...] Of course, there's also the fact, I think, that I'm not French. The fact that a racialized person speaks French, is like "we're not going to trust her because of the language." Even though I'm also aware of these things, I said to myself, maybe or maybe not, [...] It's dominated by white researchers and students in any case, in Quebec. It's white francophone Quebecers in the field of aboriginal research. [...] I felt like an intruder in that field because I wasn't white, I wasn't Quebecer, I wasn't white. (Zoé)

Several participants also report language barriers limiting their participation in knowledge construction. On the one hand, some find technical language and academic jargon difficult to understand. As Joannie and Tania explain:

If I don't understand things and they are discussing technical issues that I don't understand then I feel, you know, I don't have to stay in the meeting. Although I have, I don't understand what's the use if I don't understand, you know? But they try hard to clarify things, but because I don't know, maybe it's my internal feelings as well, that if I am in the company [of] academics, then I feel inferior because I have very limited knowledge. So, probably it's me. [...] Of course, there's always a feeling of being excluded. (Joannie)

I was telling one of the staff [...]: "The language that you guys are using, it's so high for me. Not that I don't understand it, but it takes time for me to digest it and to understand." And now I'm using these terms myself, but being conscious that there are people [...] that cannot use your language of academia or research. When you're working with people as a translator, we keep in mind that they are great people, but are coming from a very specific language and that language doesn't belong to the general public. Even a doctor, a doctor would not understand, let's say, anthropology, you know, because that's not their field. But people forget, you know? So, language was a problem because they used such high terms. (Tania)

On the other hand, some participants tend to cite barriers linked to having an accent when they speak French as non-native French speakers. They illustrate how it is difficult for them to contribute to knowledge within research partnership meetings due to this linguistic obstacle. As Zoé and Farah explain:

You know, I write something, and people say, "Your French isn't Québécois." They say, "Ah, but that's not what we're looking for." Then I say to myself, "but it's French anyway, you know. I know the language well, and I grew up with that language". It felt weird, it felt like a blow, like, what does this mean? (Zoé)

Having an accent also discredits you on how you carry your message. [...] It's that personal posture, you know, of a woman who has an accent and is racialized [...]. This tension of feeling that in the English-speaking world, it's easier. It's [in] Quebec [that] we experience different obstacles and it's quite specific. (Farah)

Lastly, several participants use the methodological approach by us/for us/with us as a way to prevent certain forms of epistemic injustices within research partnerships. Joy states:





I remember experiencing, you know, being stigmatized or being dumped on, you know, and talked about in ways, what's called deficit language, right? So always being approached with a bunch of deficits. And so, I said no. I know who we are. I know what we're capable of. And so, I did the first project, a participatory project with Black students, you know, to put forward their views on the issue of dropouts. Is there a dropout problem? What is it? How do you experience it and so on, right? [...] I had so much fun with the group. I learned so much from those young people and from that process that I said, wow, this is a powerful by/for/with methodology. It is so powerful. [...] So, I realized how incredibly profound the methodology was, how much fun, how much joy it can bring to the experience of doing research and analysis. How it can be such a collective experience as well. Like, it's not just me benefiting, right? Together, we're experiencing this, we're learning from it, we're growing through it, right? And also, we can speak to the world, collectively we can share our experience and say, you know, this is how we feel. These are some of the differences between us, you know, cause, we're not a monolith. And so, I realized just on so many levels, how powerful and meaningful and fulfilling the by/for/with is, you know, especially with Black and racialized youth. (Joy)

The exclusion and devaluing of knowledge of Black and racialized women and non-binary people is a challenge for almost all our participants, and for other members of their communities, rather than being an isolated individual experience.

3.2 MANAGING CHALLENGES : REACTIONS, REPERCUSSIONS AND RESOURCES

Beyond the structural challenges and obstacles they may encounter in the research partnership environment, Black and racialized women and non-binary people also describe the different reactions they adopt when faced with these challenges, and relate the repercussions on their personal and professional lives, as well as examine the resources they have already used to surpass these challenges.

3.2.1 REACTIONS TO CHALLENGES

Participants adopt different types of reactions to the challenges they face in their research partnership experiences. In particular, some talk about how they find themselves in confrontational situations when they explicitly identify the challenges encountered, or after they formulate legitimate requests. For example, when they ask for financial compensation or remuneration for work done, as Chany did:

I've recognized the inequality. I'm trying to be more forthright about demanding compensation, about demanding that I am paid for my time, and advocating on behalf of others when I can. (Chany)


Others verbalize the lack of consultation and representation of Black and racialized people contributing to research, which leads to conflict, as Sofia and Farah explain:

I called it out. [...] So, they gave me the task to list concerns in terms of the lack of representation. And what I was telling them, they were listening, but they gave excuses like "oh, we don't have any racialized students that work on sexual violence". (Sofia)

As an activist, when I see the environment I'm in when it is a partnership research, and that the most relevant people involved in the research were not consulted upstream, then that is where we call it. We name it politically. But we don't do that within the framework of research. (Farah)

Lastly, several participants recount how their colleagues from dominant groups reacted emotionally and with hostility when they spoke out, and how this has resulted in an invisibilization of their contributions and experiences of oppression. As Romy demonstrates:





They were touching their chests and weeping: “Oh well, if that’s how you feel”, “No, come on, that’s not what we meant”, “That’s not what we wanted to do”, “Sorry, you took it like that”, “Oh no, no, it’s not really that, it’s just that we didn’t want to give you any more work than you already had, no”. So, there was both denial, a denial of what I brought to the table by saying that’s not what we wanted. There was denial. Secondly, there was a kind of, I’d say, “flipping the script”, so there really was a sort of “no”. I was the one who was causing trouble, I was the one who was stirring up trouble. I was the one who was hard to please, hard to reassure. I think my contribution was when I left, I called a meeting, and I presented my recommendations to them, and the reasons I was leaving. I told them that if they want to hire any racialized person, anyone with diverse origins, in the future, they have to look at their team. Team with a big T. [...] But my departure wasn’t understood for what it was, because afterwards, some people were blaming each other, pointing the finger: “You’re the one who made her feel bad”. But they made it into a problem between individuals, an interpersonal relationship between two individuals, and not about a more systemic problem, of how the system which plays into an organizational culture [...] doesn’t make room for women who aren’t from the homogeneous white group. All the white baby boomers of Catholic origin, Quebecois, French Catholics. For anyone who doesn’t fit into that grouping, it’s more difficult. (Romy)

Like Chloé, several participants speak about the difficulty of navigating predominantly white institutions, and how they choose the strategies they use in conflict situations based on the capacity they have:

I choose my battles too, which means that I leave at a given moment. But I never leave without expressing things first. Today, I think that I no longer want to put my energy there anymore, especially in a predominantly white institution. [...] I don’t see my role as being the one to transform the institution. My role is rather to support my own, and other communities. So as soon as things aren’t working anymore, well, I leave. That’s a choice I’m making more recently, you might say. But I always express myself on what is not working. (Chloé)

Beyond confrontational tactics, other participants explain how they have adopted a withdrawn attitude and do not speak out on the problems they face. According to several participants, the cost of verbalizing their experiences of oppression is too high. It would reinforce their exhaustion specifically because they would have to provide explanations to people from dominant groups. As Zoé explains:

Denouncing takes energy, like saying “No”, doesn’t it? You have to make a lot of noise. I was like “Hey, I’m tired [...]. I’ve got a thesis to write, and I really don’t feel like it, nor do I have the strength to do it.” (Zoé)

In particular, several participants point out that the reason they kept quiet is linked to a lack of self-confidence and the internalization of the idea that they have a golden opportunity. As Tara demonstrates:

I felt it was already like a privilege to be there, because [...] it seemed normal to me, you know. And it was only after other experiences that I realized, this isn’t normal. (Tara)


Still other participants recount how job insecurity prevents them from addressing their experiences of oppression for fear of reprisal. As Rachel points out:

I feel like I’ve been prepared for these issues and so I know when to speak up and when it’s best to not say anything. So, in this situation, I decided to not say anything, to not express my grievances, I guess. I’m happy that I didn’t. Because the more people started to speak up, the more they were being removed from the project. [...] When the director asked me if I had any problems with anyone, I was like, absolutely not. I’m here to do my job and I can do it well, in any environment or in any capacity, I’m fine. I felt that really worked for me. And in the end, I was paid. I put this job on my resume and the project worked out. I didn’t speak up at that time. (Rachel)

Some participants explain that they use alternative ways to deal with the difficulties they face such as peer support within the institution itself, general meetings, team meetings or private conversations amongst colleagues. As Chloé and Chantale explain:

I often had to – how shall I put it – rely on allies who weren’t part of my research team. I needed to have conversations with people who weren’t directly involved, to try and assess the situation, ask myself if I was reading it a certain way? Maybe what I saw wasn’t so bad. Maybe it’s normal. So, I will talk about it. I have mentors [...] who don’t see themselves as mentors, who see themselves more as friends, but who have a lot more experience than I do and who give me their really honest perspectives. [...] They are people who have had to participate in this kind of project or are in academia as well. I think there’s a language to understand, a very academic way to understand things. These people tell me: “Hmmm, you know, maybe you should pay more attention to this, pay more attention to that”. (Chloé)





I can think of some really amazing colleagues of mine, and lifelong friendships I've made at [name of organization], for example. [...] That became a really important space for me to survive the entire experience. [...] When we say partnerships, I think of networks of survival and support. (Chantale)

Other participants explain that they delegate certain tasks that are too intensive in emotional labor to their colleagues from dominant groups. As Chany reveals:

In educating and informing them, I sometimes delegate this to a colleague [who] will tell them the straight up truth, "Listen, you can't do that, you need to pay people". Or "This is the approach that you have to use. How is this going to benefit them? You need to tell us directly, like, really clearly how it will benefit the community, and be clear about your intentions and what you expect to give back". (Chany)

In minority situations, some participants say they simply ally themselves with colleagues who are experiencing other situations of marginalization. As Romy explains:

I'd say that there was one person who was a real ally for me at the time, [...] who was an LGBTQ woman, an immigrant woman, even if she wasn't racialized. [...] So, in a way, my ally was another person who was experiencing marginalization, because she too, had to endure microaggressions. Oh my God! [...] At lunchtime! Questions, endless questions about it: "Ah yes, I have 2 lesbian friends", "Oh yes, you're a lesbian. I have 2 lesbian friends". This type of behavior, like "You're Black. I have a Black friend". (Romy)

Beyond these types of reactions, some participants say the challenges become the driving force which make them care for themselves, and invest in the defence and preservation of their communities. They believe that they must set limits to what could potentially affect them in order to preserve themselves and survive their professional environment. As Rachel puts it:

I have different masks I can put on [...] that help me prepare myself. [...] Like I'm able to draw a line like: "No, you can't get this close to me. No, I'm not going to get this excited. It's called being Black in academia. Like, this is what we have to do to survive? Or at least, I've had to do it. Many people that I know back home have had to do it. So, it may sound negative or depressing to some people, but it's, honestly, the best practice that I've taken on and learned from academia. (Rachel)

Some participants explain how they are serious about remunerating their research participants, and they strive to find ways to ensure that all participation is paid. Chany explains:

I think some of our advocacy work is in recognizing that there is inequality. Being the middle person who relays the message that [...] “their time [of the participants] is worth something and they may not tell you directly, but I can tell you. It’s safer if I tell you”. (Chany)

The variety of reactions to the challenges encountered reflects the diverse contexts in which our participants operate, but also the divergent scale of the challenges faced and the considerably varied impacts of these challenges on their respective lives.

3.2.2 PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REPERCUSSIONS


Many participants explain that the repercussions from these challenges can be both private, impacting their personal lives, or public, having effects on their professional lives.

Some of them state there were consequences on their personal lives as the challenges impacted their mental health and psychological well-being, causing anxiety attacks, even burn-outs. As Romy recalls:

I was in a male environment, often white, often male. For the first time in my life, I went on sick leave because of work at [name of a feminist organization]. That’s why I left, as a postdoc. Afterwards, I had 6 weeks of sick leave, and the repercussions were immense. I started having anxiety attacks. I’d get off the bus, I’d have to cross the street to get into the building where the [name of the organization] office was. I couldn’t do it. [...] So yes, it absolutely has had repercussions on my mental health, on my psychological state too. For me, it was a sign that I had to leave. (Romy)

Other participants recount how these difficulties have been particularly isolating, and have made them wary of investing in new interpersonal relationships. As Rachel explains:





I'm uncomfortable being here, and it probably translated a bit in my social life, which is why I don't really try to make friends with people in academia, because I can't really tell how transparent and authentic the people are, whether they're Black or White. Like in the US, it used to be okay, I just won't get too close with the white people because, I don't really think that it's going to be a sustainable relationship. In the end, it's just something for classroom purposes. (Rachel)

Some participants mention how underrepresentation specifically enables the internalization of a feeling of insecurity about their place in the research community, as well as within society more broadly. Èva explains:

In the world of higher education, we don't really see many teachers who represent us and who, you know, share a common experience with us. Sometimes, it can be, you know, unconscious, but it does affect us. We may create an idea that research is a world reserved for a certain type of person, and so [...] we internalize that. And then, you know, our beliefs apply to many areas of our lives. And maybe it limits us in the pursuit of our goals, the pursuit of our aspirations. So that's why, you know, we're a bit sidelined by society. But after that, when we internalize it, we also have the impression of being sidelined, and that it's difficult to join the herd. (Èva)

Other participants also denounce the repercussions on their personal lives and on their families. Chloé gives an example:

To be honest, in general, I feel comfortable, but I always think about the repercussions on not just me, but on other people too. [...] I must say, I've been thinking about this recently because I'm on an anti-racist committee at my daughter's school. [...] And in that space, I had a lot to say. But at a certain point, when I saw the reactions there, I said to myself that I mustn't. [...] It creates problems between my daughter's teacher and me. [...] This teacher [...] joined the committee, and everything I said, [...] that wasn't controversial at all, he reacted very strongly. [...] So, I said to myself: "I've got to think about when I speak and when I don't because it can have repercussions". (Chloé)

Regarding the consequences impacting their working lives, several participants maintain that the challenges have particularly undermined their safety at work, thus making them more vulnerable and precarious. As Sofia argues:

They decided not to renew my contract because I would never stay quiet. [...] Well, for women, you know, for folks that are gonna call these things out, of course, there are consequences. [...] And you know, in the community sector, people who call things out, name things, a lot of times face consequences and it impacts their job security. (Sofia)

Other participants recount how these challenges have produced new forms of stress and anxiety at work, as Èva and Rachel explain:


I spent more time questioning my work, like double-checking, double-checking again, trying to look at online models. [...] I was spending a lot of time in uncertainty, so it's not really a productive way to work. So, after that, on a more personal level, it made it so, I was definitely more stressed on the days I wasn't working. I was still worrying in my head. (Èva)

I think I developed anxiety. [...] And so now whenever I get into situations where there is some level of indirect abuse, I get really anxious. When I would go to meetings, I would notice that my stomach would start hurting, my hands would be shaking, and I would kind of shiver like a chihuahua, even though it's not cold. Anytime I would leave a meeting, I felt like I could punch a wall or something and so, [...] I would give so many hours of my time to this community. I think I developed another level of social anxiety, like, I don't want to be here, or I feel nervous to be here. (Rachel)

Still others report how they became aware of the significance of their racial and gender identities in their working relationships and the weight given to their voice. As Chloé explains:

Depending on who is at the table, there are social norms that make people form an opinion of me before they even get to know me. I know that. It often comes through in our exchanges. [...] When I find myself in an environment, for example, at a university where I'm the only one. In my cohort, everyone knows who I am, not because I'm extraordinary, but simply because, I mean, it's so easy to identify me. So, if I speak out and express myself, I know what the repercussions can be, but I do it anyway. But when I speak out about something to do with race or racism, I know it's not received in the same way as a colleague who's [...] not racialized, but who's White or maybe just not Black. That's a reality too. I also see that being [...] a junior, in that I'm a doctoral student and I'm dealing with professors who think that's it, they have nothing to learn from others. It has an impact. As a woman, I found myself in conversations and meetings with partners, and they were all men over fifty and Black. Really, I just missed the popcorn because it was incredible. There was one Black woman, well, except for me. There was one Black woman, and it was as if she didn't exist. I didn't





exist, that's for sure. But it's as if she wasn't there too. But she was there, just like them, and she stopped coming to the meetings. In the end, she withdrew, even though she's a woman activist from the same generation as them. (Chloé)

In discussing the repercussions from the challenges they face in research, our participants recall how their experiences of exploitation and instrumentalization in research disrupt their lives, both personally and professionally, both in the short and long term.

3.2.3 USEFUL PRACTICES AND RESOURCES

Among the resources mobilized by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in partnership research, several participants sought support and started individual psychotherapies. Other participants explain that they have devoted time to getting involved with their own communities, as Rachel states:

I try resources like counseling, like therapy, and that is not super great. [...] I tried looking for a Black therapist who is recommended here, but they all seemed really young and I kind of recognized them all from my community work. [...] Something that really helped me, I guess, was slow practices. I started doing things with more intention, like making a cup of coffee. [...] I have to set aside time in the morning to wake up, stretch, and make my cup of coffee. You know, cleaning a little bit, like moving slowly, it really helped. I started volunteering. I volunteered on Tuesdays, every morning at [name of the Church], the first Black Church in Montreal. (Rachel)

Other participants recognize their work colleagues and peers as allies, like Chany and Zoé:

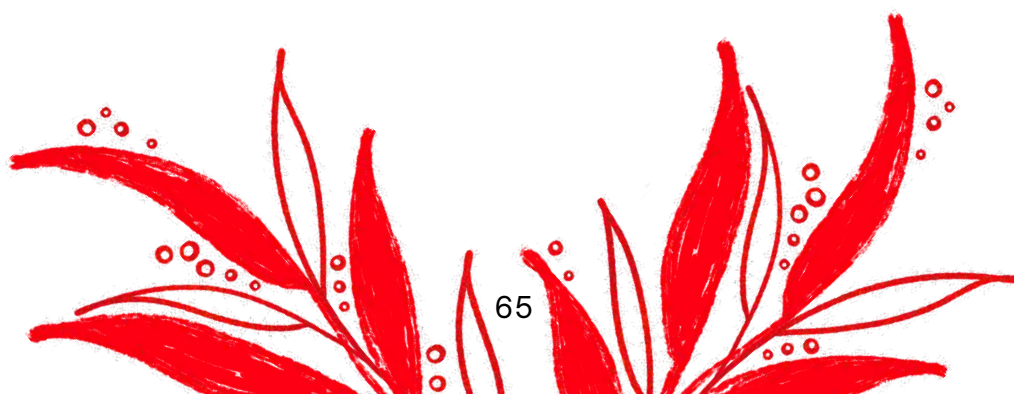
I mean, fortunately the people that I have come to work with in the community have also become my friends. So, we support each other, and we can complain, and we can offload and yeah, we can help each other, and support each other. So, that's been really helpful. Some group members weren't initially my friends. They became my friends and family eventually. Then with another group, they were my friends initially, and then [it] was natural, it seemed natural to work with them. So that helps. (Chany)

I had a lot of support from my thesis supervisor. [...] Without him, it's like, without the support I got from him, I think it would be very very very difficult. [...] My PhD program is a very supportive environment. It helps when you know that there are people who want you to succeed. They want us to do our work. They also have a participatory, respectful research philosophy, "I see where you're going with this. Yes, we support you. Yes, we can offer you, if we're able to, we can offer you either funding or support". (Zoé)

Some participants refuse to be limited to their racialization. Michelle explains:

What helped me was that I got out of the racialized box, to stop myself from racialization, to stop myself from fixating on my gender, and to stop racializing others too. I know that's weird [...]. I'm an intersectional feminist. I'm an African woman. I see racialization everywhere. And when I'm in my environment, it is endless. I know that a refugee woman who has just arrived from a 70-year-old refugee camp, who doesn't speak French, and is in the organization, she's going to be racialized. I don't feel racialized. I'm not racializable. In fact, they don't have the right to lock me in anymore. [...] They no longer have the ability to lock me into my racialization. Does that mean that they don't see a Black woman? No, no, I know. They see a fat old Black woman. It's my responsibility to show them that I'm not just that. And what helps me? It's stripping myself from that, when I'm working, you know. I am myself before I'm that thing. (Michelle)

Several participants state that some spaces have been particularly conducive to co-constructing knowledge between researchers from community and academic settings, and the populations under study in their partnership research experiences. Some participants explain that research partnerships facilitate the merging of multiple perspectives, and thereby, decenter the gaze away from the research subjects. Farah explains:





The strengths, I think, in a more of a collaborative approach are the moments of joint decisions about aspects of the project. [...] We have to validate things. We have to validate our goals and we validate our analyses. I think this is the good side of using a collaborative approach. I think it's the strength of collaborative approaches, generally speaking. I also think that there are other strengths, like giving people who are often on the frontlines a chance to step back and take a critical look. If we take the time to analyze together and find solutions to our problems, or face things head on, you see things in a different light. For people who are more into research, it allows us to bring us back to the concrete. (Farah)

Other participants argue that the alternative research practices used during the fieldwork phase of their study improved representation of Black and racialized women and non-binary people, and that the “by us/for us/with us” methodology also favoured better bonds of trust with the community members. Nina illustrates:

People opened up more and that is because the core research team had decided we would only recruit people from the community we were working with. We hired those people, you know. That was really cool. It created a good working atmosphere between the research assistants, those who did the interviews, or the coders, and me, the coordinator at the time, it was really fun. [...] It was a great working atmosphere. [...] And that meant I had a lot more respect for the research results, the integrity, the content, for the results themselves. I know that other people in the community were more respectful of this research because, you know, at the end of the day, it comes from the community. It's done in collaboration with actors who are, you know, the organizations who work directly with the people who are affected. (Nina)

Although few in number, several participants can identify current professional practices within partnership research that are good. They consider and recognize some of the resources and current practices in place which should be maintained in partnership research.

3.3 FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

The interviews and focus groups disclose the need for a safe research partnership environment where Black and racialized women and non-binary people can thrive. This section of the report looks at the participants' testimonies that focus on their needs and highlight their suggestions for research partnership projects that better respect Black and racialized women and non-binary people.

3.3.1 DESIRED RESOURCES

When responding to questions about the resources they wished they had access to when facing challenges, the participants identified five main needs: more support, more access to mental health resources, more formal and informal networks for Black and racialized people, more funding and easier access to human resources external to the workplace.


3.3.1.1 LONG-TERM SUPPORT

In both community and university sectors, participants asked for more support in facilitating partnerships. Several participants from community settings noted a need for support around the issue of language. Patricia explains:

I have [difficulty] writing in French. [...] But there is a Quebecois on our committee [name of organization], an ally, a feminist. [...] What I mean is, I can write and then [...] I [...] send it to her [for correction]. (Patricia)

Linguistic support may be necessary to ensure that workers can communicate their intentions and be understood. In addition to linguistic difficulties, there are those who do not fully grasp the academic language used by researchers in this setting. Support in this aspect is also necessary. Joannie recounts:





What could have helped me? Probably [...] the planning of the research. [It] should [take into account the] level of understanding and level of knowledge and skills [of our partners], [...] so it's easier to understand each other. [...] It would be nice if there's simultaneous translation. But I know it's expensive, and Quebec, for sure will not [...] try to accommodate [...] that kind of service. We need to include that in the project's budget. (Joannie)

This statement expresses the need for more translation and mentions the need to properly transfer and receive each other's knowledge. This highlights the need for the academic sector to commit to an inclusive and accessible language which facilitates an understanding for all research partners involved. Furthermore, the support needed within academia could resemble something like mentoring opportunities. Several participants seek out someone to lean on and get advice from regarding their research partnership project. Zoé explains:

I would have needed someone [...] who can give us a little guidance. In terms of participatory research interviews, how to do it, how to ask questions. [...] A lot more training. [...] How to do interviews? For now, we have to learn everything [on our own], even if it's true that students often make mistakes, they learn by doing. [...] I think [that if there was] more support for doctoral students or people doing research, even if they're not doctoral students, master's students even, [...] if they [had] the desire to do [...] community or participatory research, well, they'd know how to do it. (Zoé)

Èva also validates this feeling of needing someone to turn to in times of need:

I did mention to my supervisor that this was the first research experience I'd had. But I still felt like I was jumping into a void. Having, you know, more detailed informations, like more structure, for me, I would have [...] avoided [these feelings] [...]. We want more reflection and better guidance. (Èva)

This kind of support was described by some of the participants who were newer to academia and who wanted to ensure that their research was done efficiently and with as few mistakes as possible.

3.3.1.2 MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Some participants request easier access to mental health services in times of need. Tara insists:

Mental health support means having access to a mental health professional who can listen to me, who can help me, you know, like, especially [...] when I thought I was in burnout. To have someone [...] who's there, you know, if you need it. You don't have to make everyone doing research have a psychologist, that's not it. But really just in case, for someone to be there for you. [...] I think it would be beneficial to have some kind of program within the university for the research staff. Support groups too, that would have been helpful. Support for racialized people, BIPOC and queer people, that would have been, that would be helpful. (Tara)


Certain participants think it does not have to be compulsory, but offering the option to use mental health services is considered beneficial.

3.3.1.3 SOLIDARITY NETWORKS

Participants mention the need to create community and feel supported by safe and racialized networks that adhere to the “by us and for us” logic. For some, the core issue is the need to be understood. Chloé explains:

I'm lucky enough to have a network of people with whom I've developed ties that are not specifically related to research, but happen to do research. But I think it would have been really helpful to have some sort of network of racialized women researchers who understand what [...] intersectionality is. [...] As a young Black researcher in a francophone or anglophone environment, whichever, how do I navigate through [all these obstacles]? You know, I think there's a lot to discuss and a lot to unpack, and it would have been great to have been able to say: “Well, I'm stuck here. I know there's such-and-such a group. I'm going to write to them and say: How do you handle this situation? Have you ever been through this? Then what do you suggest?”





What have you done that has worked, and what should I avoid at all costs?” You know, that would have been very helpful. As I said, personally [...], I do have a network. I would discuss similar situations with them. But not everyone has people, so I think it could be helpful. (Chloé)

Having people who can understand what they are going through and give advice seems to be a need shared by several participants. Given the homogeneity of most research environments, several participants feel the need to be in contact with people sharing similar challenges. Farah recounts:

For racialized people, I think it would help to be more connected, to be more in dialogue with each other. I think academia continues to [be] very homogeneous. [...] [Giving] more space to creativity, more space to name things, a little less academic and formal. So [making it] more inviting for people from the field to dialogue with us, not just [...] among ourselves, the academics. Thinking about doing things in different places. [...] So, if I talk a lot about creating spaces, [it's] that kind of space. [It's] about doing things differently. (Farah)

For others, these networks are necessary to maintain a critical stance and gain perspective on their roles in the research environment. Chantale confides:

I think we need to actually get together [...] in spaces of solidarity [...] and come up with our own tools. People are doing that, right? Also, thinking about how academia is such a difficult context for it. I'm always going back to the lesson, like, what I learned in academia [...] are not all good. [...] There's accountability around having a university diploma. Honestly, you know, if you have a university diploma, [...] it is like [...] drinking colonial kool-aid. [...] That is a university diploma, and I have two and a half. Like, imagine how I have internalized all the violence doing my job, right? (Chantale)

From this statement, we understand that it becomes difficult to apply ongoing reflective practices and to discard the acquired terms the more one frequents academia. Networks of Black and racialized researchers can take shape in the spaces where there is reflection and criticism of current research methods. These networks help Black and racialized researchers from academic

and community sectors exchange and innovate together. The need for belonging and the desire to break their isolation also leads them to connect with each other. Zoé explains:

Without a doubt, when you do collaborative research, it means building bridges. When you want to build bridges [and] you don't have a network around you, it's a bit difficult, and I think that it is the case for networking racialized academic communities. If I had that, I think my experience would be very different. I'd be much more at ease. I'd be more at home. I'd [have] found myself at home. But that's not the case here. [...] I work on my own. (Zoé)


A strong need to establish a network of Black and racialized researchers is highlighted by the majority of our participants. There are multiple reasons ranging from the need to build community to the need to discuss and create tools that make research environments more supportive.

3.3.1.4 INCREASED FUNDING FOR BLACK AND RACIALIZED RESEARCHERS

The lack of funding was an issue raised specifically by participants from community settings, and university students as well. Joy explains that the issue of funding is intimately linked to that of racialization:

Because we asked to [an institution], we said, "Give us money, we'll take care of it". [...] It's a question of power. It's not a question of, you know, whether you're nice or not. [...] Anyway, so you know, what they should have done is : "Here's a pot of money, you do something with it", but no, they won't do that. [...] Like just give support and get out of the way, you know what I mean? Like, white institutions, uh, just stop trying to control everything. You know this world is to be shared. (Joy)





It is clear that the need for more funding is not just limited to researcher's salary, but is linked to the notion of becoming a funding source for Black or racialized people themselves. Sofia adds:

I think that Black folks and racialized folks need to have access to funding and then build their own structures and have their own projects. [...] That's what needs to change. [We need] to see more racialized women and have programming and funding by [us] and for [us]. (Sofia)

For many, Black and racialized researchers should never be marginal within management and funding roles, and especially in situations that can create new funding opportunities. The absence of Black and racialized researchers in positions of power has a considerable impact in the field. Chany explains:

[I would like to see] more women like me, I guess, in positions of power. From where we have the [...] power to allocate resources to where we think it belongs. [...] People who are taking these positions are a bit disconnected from what's happening on the ground. I don't think they are allocating resources in the best way or seeing what is needed. [They] want to keep the power rather than share it. So, I feel like in the spirit of collaboration, it also means shared power [and] shared resources. (Chany)

Sharing this power could then lead to a betterment of services and interventions in practice.

The question of funding for doctoral students was raised by some participants who find it difficult to do research partnership projects. Indeed, the latter suffer from a significant funding gap compared to so-called "traditional" research projects. Zoé recounts:

[T]here aren't more funding opportunities for doctoral graduates doing fieldwork and then writing their thesis. [...] There should be some kind of [reform] in doctoral programs to offer financial support for people finishing their doctorate. [...] So it's clear that [for] financial aid opportunities from universities and research centers for graduates. [...] Eligibility needs to be a little broader. Why do we make PhD students eligible only in their first 4 years? Why not extend it to 6-7 years? That's

what students need. Changes in eligibility, to be more inclusive for people in the last phase of their doctorate. (Zoé)


Our participants want not only more funding, but funding over which they can enjoy a certain degree of flexibility.

3.3.1.5 NECESSARY HUMAN RESOURCES

The fact that many community organizations lack sufficient human resources has a considerable impact on many of the participants. Romy recounts:

[One] of the things I miss in community settings, and in organizations like that, is that we don't have human resources. The person in charge of human resources [also has other roles]. I'm living it myself right now. I'm in charge of [human] resources at my community center. Right now, I'm human resources. I'm fundraising. I'm the accountant, [...] I do everything at the same time. I think that's dangerous because it doesn't create a community environment. There could be some kind of external resource to which each organization is affiliated, but which operates autonomously and independently of the organizations, [...] which acts as [...] outside HR and [...] really has the expertise to be able to listen to us. [...] I would have liked to have had something external [and] not to have to turn to the same colleagues [with whom I was experiencing a problem]. As a result, they experienced my input as an attack and [they] became the victim. [They said]: "Oh well, immigrant women, we wanted to integrate them. We hired one, but then it became a big deal, and now we're not ready for the next one". And indeed, the next one was a long time coming. The next person after me was [name of a person], who called me before accepting the job. She called me at home, she said, "Listen Romy, I'm calling you because I know you were here, [and that] you left. [...] I want you to tell me, frankly, what's it like? [...] Because I'm not sure I want to take the job. [...] [I] would have liked [...] to have an [external resource]." (Romy)





Addressing the need for community organizations to have access to independent human resources could be a good way to manage various workplace issues, and protect Black and racialized people experiencing conflict or violence. Having to confront a colleague in the workplace who is also responsible for human resources can lead to more violence. An independent body would create anonymity, at once lightening the mental load for Black and racialized employees who do report, and allowing future Black and racialized employees to feel protected in the event of conflict. According to many, the lack of human resources allows some people to act with impunity despite their abusive behavior. During a focus group, Irina testifies:

[Some] people are not the best leaders in the community. Like even if these people are doing really important things, [...] the way they behave with other people just isn't okay. It's just not okay. (Irina)

For community organizations, having independent human resources would provide the tools to limit people with reprehensible behavior taking positions of power. Thus, employees would be protected by independent human resources. In a focus group, Olivia recounts:

Sometimes your main coordinator or specific people get training, but not everyone. So, this really [feeds] dynamics of power, [...] but also sometimes, the fact that you're ill equipped [...] makes you [make] mistakes you could have avoided if you just had this information. [...] I don't know if the solution is to create a non-partisan government body that ensures good working relations, and extended practices like during transitions. Something to respect HR regulations [...] in Quebec, make sure they are respected in all non-profit institutions, or required by the law or something. I don't know. Just to make sure that it's embedded, like actually, an acknowledged practice in all organizations. All of this creates many imbalances, and so many issues could be easily avoided if we had the tools to deal with conflict. If we had the tools to deal with it our [own way], and with our own insight [on] issues, you know? So, things could evolve. (Olivia)

Independent human resources would therefore enable a more fluid sharing of information among members of an organization. Not only could this blur certain power stakes, but it could also better protect employees and look after their interests.

3.3.2 IMPROVING RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS


The answers gathered during the data collection clearly reveal that there are three elements that facilitate partnership work: 1) when the research team and the participants are from the same community (approach by us/for us/with us), 2) when each step and decision is the subject of collective reflection between all partners, and 3) when the project respects the working rhythm of the communities involved.

3.3.2.1 THE BY US/FOR US/WITH US APPROACH

Some participants seem to attribute the success of their partnership to the “by us/for us/with us” approach used for the research projects in which they have participated. Nina explains how “by us/for us/with us” influences a project:

Community organizations [have] more confidence in a project, and [are] less defensive. It also creates [...] a bond of trust with the participants. People are more open to you. Basically, it's because the main research team [decided] that we were going to recruit only people who belonged to the community we were going to work on, and that we gave contracts to these people. You know, that was really cool, and it also created a really nice working atmosphere. (Nina)





The “by us/for us/with us” approach of the project in which Nina participated in, helped to establish a better bond of trust between the research team, the community and the participants. In addition, the working atmosphere improved as well. Some participants working in their home communities try to protect those who are identified as vulnerable. Michelle recounts:

I’m actually only approaching [my community] with projects where I see a clear benefit for the people and for the community. And if it’s not clear, and if it’s going to take too many resources away, [...] I won’t recommend it, and I won’t refer. (Michelle)

When participants belong to the communities they work with, they prioritize their protection. According to some, the increase in “by us/for us/with us” projects would therefore create partnerships better adapted to the lived realities and needs of communities.

3.3.2.2 CONSTANT PARTNERSHIPS

Other participants attribute the success of their research partnership projects to the commitment to teamwork throughout the whole process, even if the pace of the project has to be slowed down. Michelle recounts:

I wanted the research questions to be defined by everyone. The methods for addressing them should be defined by everyone and chosen by everyone. Everyone produced data. [...] In fact, everyone did data collection. We each had file holders, obviously, but the questions to ask, we defined them together. You know, we’re involved, we’re together. We do things together. We understand the issues together, we research together, we produce together, we produce knowledge together. In my opinion, this combination is absolutely the glue that holds a research partnership together. (Michelle)

The involvement of every actor at all times is clearly identified here as the prerequisite for partnership-friendly research. Regarding the difficulties that can result, Michelle explains:

[Paying attention to] how practitioners learn to speak about their own experience as practitioners. It's not about the experience of the people they accompany, it's how people who are accompanied learn to speak on their own behalf, and aren't letting the practitioners and researchers define them. That's the point, you see [...] it's delicate, it's subtle, it's relational, it's dialogical. I refuse [...] not to be listened to. [...] It's difficult. It's difficult and it takes time. Sometimes it challenges our values and our principles regarding what has been decided [...] and you have to rework it. You have to renegotiate it. You have to understand communication. (Michelle)

A successful partnership is based on taking the time to listen and perfect communication between partners and thus it requires intentionality and flexible schedules. According to some participants, these elements are indispensable and fundamental to the success of research partnership projects.


3.3.2.3 COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF THE APPROACH

Participants agree that research partnerships best serve communities if their needs are the main priority of the project. Zoé recounts:

Truly participative, truly collaborative research requires respect for certain principles. These principles focus on the communities, to give time for relationships to be created, forged and strengthened, in order to achieve work that is reciprocal and respectful of individuals. (Zoé)

Respecting the working pace of communities during the creation of a partnership is also a concrete way of ensuring that their interests remain at the heart of research concerns. Zoé explains:





[At the beginning] it's more a process of meeting each other, building trust, creating links, trust on both sides. [...] Discussing how [we want] the link to be made, [...] transparent, [how] I think I'm doing [the research]. But it's open, you know. If you have a different idea of how you see things, I adapt to you, you know. It's how I see things in relation to what I've got. In relation to my abilities too, because it's all about staying within my abilities in terms of what I can do. [...] It's like just giving time for relationships to form. That's how I did it. That's really my approach. I let people come to me. I went to them. But I also let them come to me so as not to be imposing, because it's very prevalent in this field. [...] The focus wasn't on the research or the publication per se, but more on the research link that was created with the people. (Zoé)

To properly serve the needs and interests of all, it is important that the methodological approach be developed by all the partners of a research partnership, in the spirit of limiting the effects of existing power relations. Taking the time to establish a bond of trust between partners throughout the research project therefore strengthens the viability of their partnership, and also facilitates a fairer project in which the needs of communities are taken into greater consideration.



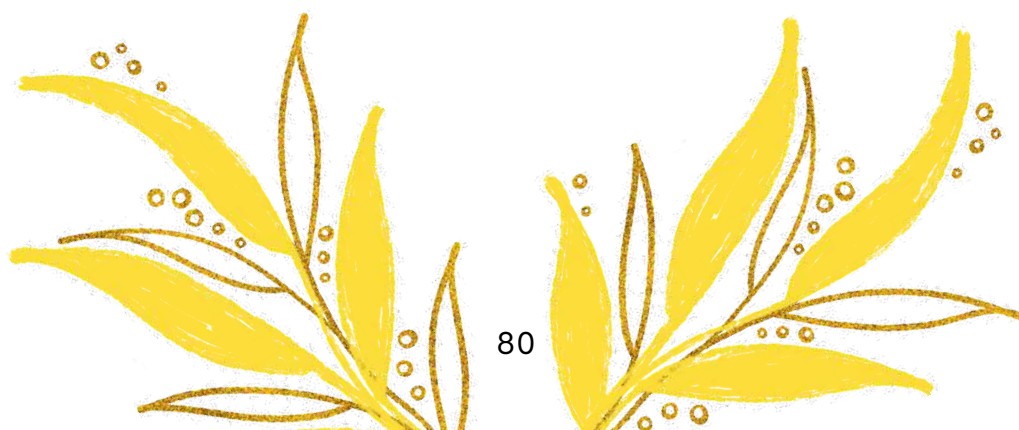
Conclusion

The goal of this research was to identify and analyze the systemic barriers faced by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnerships, as well as current and envisaged individual and collective strategies for overcoming said barriers, and to preserve their well-being and that of their communities. Using a methodological approach “by us/for us/with us” and carrying out twenty semi-structured interviews, along with two focus groups composed of Black and racialized women and non-binary people with experience in research partnerships, we identified three main findings.

The testimonials we collected expose the challenges and systemic barriers experienced by our participants, the impact of these challenges on their personal and professional lives, as well as their perspectives for the next generation of research partnerships. To begin with, we presented the systemic barriers identified by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnerships, and we covered the lack of financial, logistical, and human resources, the overwork and divergent agendas and needs, the underrepresentation and exploitation, as well as the exclusion and devaluation of their knowledge. Secondly, beyond structural challenges and obstacles, our study examined the different reactions that participants adopt when faced with these challenges, the repercussions on their personal and professional lives, and the resources they adopt to surpass them. Thirdly, we analyzed the need for a safe environment for Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnerships in which they can evolve.



We believe it is important to produce research – such as ours – to further expose systemic challenges and obstacles encountered by Black and racialized women and non-binary people in research partnerships, and to enhance the survival strategies they use. However, as our PARR project proposes, it is also important that the communities who are research subjects feel safe and can build responsible spaces for discussion and find ways to transform institutional environments together.





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Annex 1 : Individual Interview Consent Form



Preamble

Through this form, we invite you to participate in a research project. Before accepting and signing this form, it is important that you take the time to read and understand the information below. If there are any words or sections that you do not understand or that do not seem clear, please do not hesitate to ask us questions or to contact the project coordinator. This consent form has been reviewed by an independent ethics committee, compensated by Relais-femmes, with whom we co-created the ethical process for this project.

Project objective

The main objective of the study is to document the experiences in collaborative research of racialized women and non-binary people. The research project brings together a team of racialized women with a "by us, for us, and with us" focus. The idea is that research on the experiences of racialized women and non-binary people in the collaborative research environment is more relevant if it is conducted by those who are concerned. Upon completion of the study, the team will host a three (3) day Forum during which the findings will be presented. These will serve as a starting point for workshops to reflect on how to collectively improve the experiences of women and racialized non-binary people in the collaborative research environment.



Nature of participation

Your participation consists of a one-on-one interview with the PARR Research Assistant. The interview will focus on your experiences in collaborative research. The interview will last between 1 hour and 90 minutes. It will be conducted virtually and recorded via the Zoom/Teams application. The interview will be scheduled at a date and time convenient to you.

Benefits

By joining this study, you will be able to share your experiences in collaborative research, both positive and negative, in a safe space. Based on all the interviews, we will be able to propose a three (3) day Forum that will allow you to meet and exchange with other racialized women and non-binary persons involved in collaborative research in Quebec.

Risks and disadvantages

Some interview questions may bring up unpleasant emotions related to your own life experience. You do not have to answer questions that make you uncomfortable. In addition, you can ask the interview to be suspended temporarily. Finally, we can provide referrals to support services if ever you require it.

Compensation

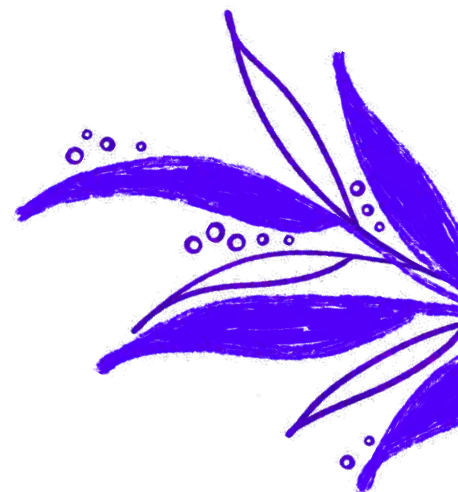
It is understood that you will receive compensation of seventy (70) dollars for your contribution to the project. This compensation will be given to you even if you decide to terminate the interview before it is completed.

Confidentiality

It is understood that all information about your participation in the study will remain confidential. Only members of the research team will have access to it. The recording of your interview and your consent form will be stored in the research assistant and the project coordinator's computers, which are password protected. To keep your identity and your interview concealed, we will create a pseudonym for you and erase your real name. In the data analysis, aspects of your identity (such as your organization or institution, age or gender, etc.) may also be removed to limit the potential for you to be identified. Your actual name will only be known to the research team. The audio recording of your interview will be deleted after it has been transcribed. Please be aware that despite our best efforts to conceal your identity, some of what you say could accidentally reveal parts of your identity especially because the collaborative research community in Quebec is small and few racialized people are part of it. No publication or communication about the research will contain information that directly identifies you. Your consent will be requested for any publication using your data. All anonymous data will be kept for five (5) years and then destroyed.

Voluntary participation and right of withdrawal

Your participation in this project is voluntary. That means you agree to participate in the project without any outside pressure. It also means that you are free to terminate your participation at any time during the research, without prejudice of any kind, and without having to justify your decision. In this case, and unless you have given verbal or written instructions to the contrary, all documents, information, and data concerning you will be destroyed. The



verbatim of your interview will be given to you once it has been transcribed. You will have two (2) months from the date of receipt of the verbatim to request, if you wish, the destruction of the data collected about yourself. After this period, we reserve the right to keep the anonymized data collected. The project team or the coordinator may terminate your participation without your consent if it feels that your well-being is being compromised or if you fail to comply with the project's guidelines.

Contact

You can contact the project coordinator at mjeanbaptiste@relais-femmes.qc.ca for additional questions about the project or for the conditions of your participation. If you wish to bring an ethical issue to the attention of the Ethics Committee during your participation or file an ethical complaint, you may contact the committee members at the following email address: comiteethiqueparr@outlook.com.

Acknowledgments

Your collaboration is important to our project and the research team is grateful for your participation and contribution. If you would like a written summary of the main findings of this research, please add your contact information below.

Participant's consent

I hereby acknowledge that I have read this information and consent form. I understand the objectives of the project and what my participation entails. I confirm that I have had sufficient time to consider my decision to participate. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to contact the project coordinator to ask any questions regarding my participation and that I have received satisfactory responses. I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty or any kind of justification. I voluntarily consent to participate in this research project.

I agree to participate in this research project: Yes No

I would like to receive a summary of the project results: Yes No

Signature:

Date:

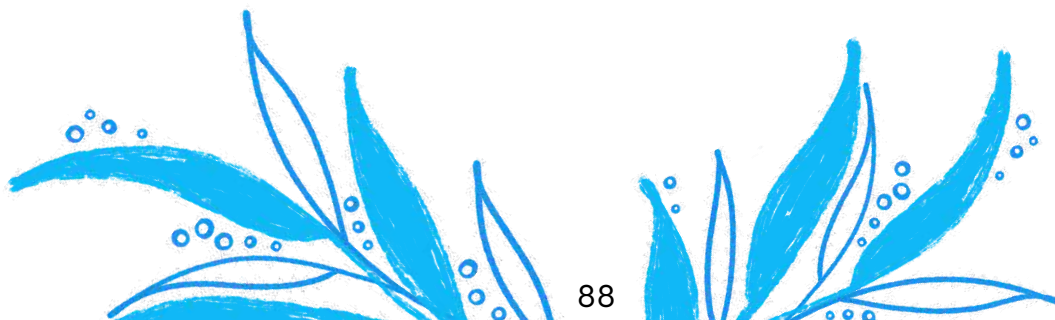
Name:

Address:

Email address:

Phone number:

A copy of this signed document must be given to the participant.



Annex 2 : Focus Group Consent Form



Preamble

Through this form, we invite you to participate in a research project. Before accepting to take part in the project, it is important that you take the time to read and understand the information below. If there are any words or sections that you do not understand or do not seem clear, please do not hesitate to contact the project coordinator for any questions. This consent form has been reviewed by an independent ethics committee, compensated by Relais-femmes, with whom we co-created the ethical process for this project.

Project Objective

The study's main objective is to document the experiences of racialized women and non-binary people in collaborative research. The research project is led by a team of racialized women with a "by us, for us, and with us" aim. We start with the principle that research on the experiences of racialized women and non-binary people in collaborative research is more relevant if it is conducted by those who are concerned. Upon completion of the study, the team will host a three (3) day Forum during which the findings will be presented. These results will serve as a starting point for workshops to reflect on how to collectively improve the experiences of women and racialized non-binary people involved in collaborative research in Quebec.



Nature of Participation

Your contribution consists of participation in a focus group facilitated by our two PARR research officers. The focus group will focus on your experiences in collaborative research. It will last between two (2) and three (3) hours. It will be conducted face-to-face and audio recorded via a recorder. The focus group will be held on [date] from [time] in Montreal.

Benefits

By joining this study, you will be able to share your experiences in collaborative research, both positive and negative, in a safe space. Based on all focus groups, we will be able to propose a three (3) day Forum that will allow you to meet and exchange with other racialized women and non-binary people involved in collaborative research in Quebec.

Risks

Some focus group questions may bring up unpleasant emotions related to your own life experience. You do not have to answer questions that make you uncomfortable. In addition, you can ask to leave the focus group temporarily or permanently. Finally, we can provide referrals to support services if ever you require it.

Compensation

It is understood that you will receive compensation of seventy (70) dollars for your contribution to the project. This compensation will be given to you even if you decide to leave the focus group before it is completed.

Confidentiality

It is understood that all information about your participation in the study will remain confidential. Only members of the research team will have access to it. The recording of your interview and your consent form will be stored in the computers of the research assistant and the project coordinator, which are password protected. To keep your identity and your interview concealed, we will anonymize your contributions. In the data analysis, aspects of your identity (such as your organization or institution, age or gender, etc.) may also be removed to ensure your anonymity. Your actual name will only be known to the research team. The audio recording of your interview will be deleted after it has been transcribed. Please be aware that despite our best efforts to conceal your identity, some of what you say could accidentally reveal parts of your identity since the collaborative research community in Quebec is small and few racialized people are part of it. No publication or communication about the research will contain information that directly identifies you. Your consent will be requested for any publication using your data. All anonymous data will be kept for five (5) years and then destroyed.

Voluntary Participation and Right of Withdrawal

Your participation in this project is voluntary. That means you agree to participate in the project without any outside pressure. It also means that you are free to terminate your participation at any time during the research, without prejudice of any kind, and without having to justify your decision. In this case, and unless you have given verbal



or written instructions to the contrary, all documents, information, and data concerning you will be destroyed after all the other participants' interventions have been transcribed. The verbatim of the focus group will be given to you once it has been transcribed. You will have two (2) months from the date of reception of the verbatim to request the destruction of the data collected during your interview. After this period, we reserve the right to keep the anonymized data collected. The project team or the coordinator may terminate your participation without your consent if your well-being is being compromised or if you fail to comply with the project's guidelines.

Contact

You can contact the project coordinator at mjeanbaptiste@relais-femmes.qc.ca for additional questions about the project or about the conditions of your participation. If you wish to bring an ethical issue to the attention of the Ethics Committee during your participation or file an ethical complaint, you may contact the committee members at the following email address: comiteethiqueparr@outlook.com.

Acknowledgments

Your collaboration is important to our project and the research team is grateful for your participation and contribution. If you would like a written summary of the main findings of this research, please add your contact information below.



Participant's Consent

I hereby acknowledge that I have read this information and consent form. I understand the objectives of the project and what my participation entails. I confirm that I have had sufficient time to consider my decision to participate. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to contact the project coordinator to ask any questions regarding my participation and that I have received satisfactory responses. I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty or any kind of justification. I voluntarily consent to participate in this research project.

I agree to participate in this research project: Yes No

I would like to receive a summary of the project results: Yes No

Signature:

Date:

Name:

Address:

Email address:

Phone number:

A copy of this signed document must be given to the participant.

Annex 3 : Individual Interview Questionnaire

Intro

1. Can you present yourself briefly?
 - a. (If not already mentioned) If you can share, how do you identify yourself?
2. How did you hear of the PARR project?
3. What motivated you to participate?
4. Why did you choose to do a research partnership?

History of Research Partnerships

5. Can you tell me about your experience in research partnerships?
 - a. (If not already mentioned) Can you describe one or two concrete examples?
6. How do you choose the partners for your research? How do partnerships emerge?

Challenges and Solutions

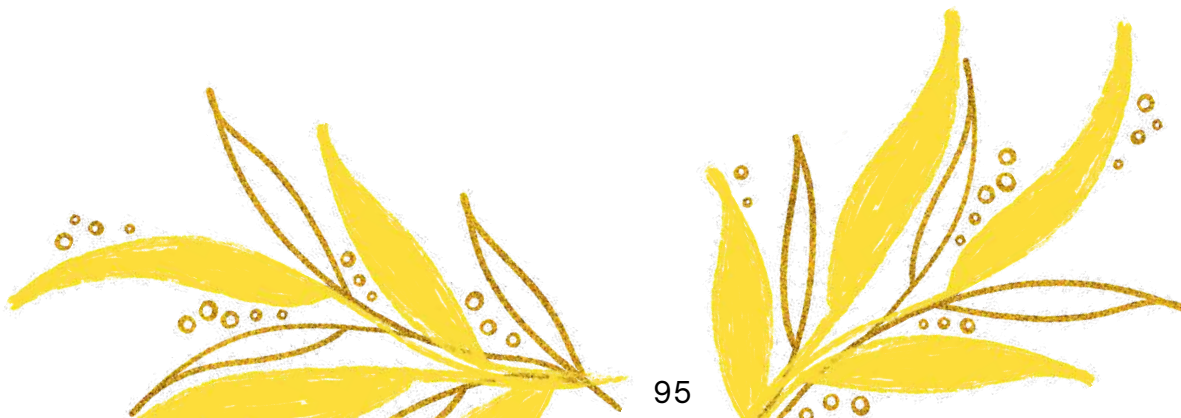
7. Considering all your experiences, what are the main difficulties or challenges you have encountered during your career in research partnerships?
 - a. How do you explain these difficulties?
 - i. What is your role (contract worker, intern, etc.)? In your opinion, did your position play a role in difficult situations?
 - b. How did you feel? How did you react?
 - c. How did your organization/ institution react?
 - d. Can you describe the repercussions on your life (emotionally, professionally, financially, personally, etc.)?
 - i. What were the repercussions for your peers in your organization/institution?
 - e. (If not already mentioned) Did your racialization and gender identity play a role in these experiences?



8. How did you face these challenges or which resource helped you to overcome them?
9. Who are your main allies in the workplace?
 - a. How do they support you?
10. Which resource or support system did you wish for during the difficult experience?

Work Dynamic

11. How do you describe the collaboration in research partnerships you have worked in?
 - a. What are the positive and negative aspects of these collaborations?
 - b. What would make these collaborations perfect for you?
12. Can you describe your workplace atmosphere?
 - a. What are the positive and negative aspects?
 - b. What do you believe is needed to meet your expectations?
13. Do you see yourself reflected in your workplace, or in the research milieu when you are involved with research partnerships?
 - a. Do you feel comfortable in these settings?
 - b. (If not already mentioned) Did your racialization and gender identity play a role in these experiences?



Epistemic Issues

14. During research partnerships, how is your knowledge, skill set, and input received by both the university and community sectors?
 - a. Do you think they value your knowledge and take it into account?
 - b. How does this differ from your peers? How do you explain this?
 - c. (If not already mentioned) Does your racialization and gender identity play a role in these experiences?

15. What suggestions do you have for improving the recognition of your knowledge and enhancing the promotion of your own research interests?

16. What are some good practices or initiatives that can increase the recognition of your knowledge and enhance research partnerships experiences?

Utopia

17. As a Black or racialized woman/non-binary person, what would help you feel fulfilled, supported, and happy in a research partnership environment?

18. Do you have suggestions or advices to offer to the next generation in those settings?

19. Is there anything that you would like to speak about or add to the discussion?

Annex 4 : Focus Group Questionnaire

1. Can you describe an experience you have had in a research partnership in Quebec?
2. What difficulties or challenges have you encountered in your research partnership experience?
 - a. Did your racialization and gender identity have an impact on these difficulties?
 - b. Did you talk openly about these difficulties? If so, how did the process go? If not, why not?
3. How is your knowledge, skill set, and input received by the university and community members during a research partnership?
4. What impact did it have on your professional life?
5. What resources did you use to overcome these difficulties?
6. What advice would you give to Black and racialized women and non-binary people starting out in the field of research partnerships in Quebec?

