

Invitation to Collaborate



Category Is: A Study of Ballroom, Black Excellence, & Anti-Black Racism in Canada Community Partner Information Package

We invite you to partner with us for an exciting upcoming community-based research project! Category Is: focuses on Black 2SLGBTQ+ young adults aged 18–29 who participate in Montreal and Toronto’s Kiki and Ballroom scenes. We want to understand:

- The challenges they face with anti-Black racism in mainstream 2SLGBTQ+ spaces and throughout Canada.
- Do Toronto’s and Montreal’s Kiki and Ballroom scenes nurture Black excellence and joy?
- What other supports Black 2SLGBTQ+ young adults need to thrive in Canada.

With your help, this project can be as relevant, and useful as possible for Black 2SLGBTQ+ young adults involved in Kiki and Ballroom

This study is not just about Ballroom; it is for Ballroom. This is a manageable commitment, and we are truly grateful for any help you can offer at any stage of the research.

Your collaboration will assist us in working towards a Canada where Blackness fully belongs in the queer community and where racist and homophobic practices are identified and eradicated.

Let’s achieve our goals together!

Keith Adamson & Gerard Dee, on behalf of the Category Is: research team.

CATEGORY IS:

Keith Adamson and Gerard Dee have been friends for many years, and often speak about the challenges they face as Black men in the Canadian 2SLGBTQ+ community. They've also acknowledged that younger generations experience the same obstacles as they do, and face new challenges presented by social media and dating apps. In due course, they began discussing how they could make a difference for Black 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

Guided by these conversations, this project aims to understand the challenges that 2SLGBTQ+ Black youth face in clubs, over social media, and through dating apps. By listening to the ballroom community, we will begin addressing how racism impacts the inclusion and participation of 2SLGBTQ+ Black youth in today's mainstream queer culture.

THE TEAM



Dr. Keith Adamson (he/him)

The co-Principal Investigator (PI) of Category Is:. He is an Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (FISW), University of Toronto.



Gerard Dee (he/him)

Co-Principal Investigator (PI) for Category Is: Gerard is a Montreal-based writer/editor/researcher who has over 20 years' experience as a freelance journalist.



Dr. Shelley Craig (she/her)

The co-Principal Investigator (PI) of Category Is:. She is the Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Youth and Professor at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto.



Dr. Ashley Brooks (he/him)

The Research Manager for Category Is:. He is a social psychologist from London, UK who has been working with and on behalf of LGBTQ+ communities for 10 years in voluntary, professional, and scholarly capacities.



Martin Austin (he/him)

The Research Assistant for Category Is:. He is a PhD student at University of Toronto's Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, and dance critic for Toronto's Intermission Magazine.



Oveesh Mian (she/her)

The Graphic Designer for Category Is:. She is a multidisciplinary artist with an educational and professional background in marketing, design, and the arts.

Stage I: One-On-One Interviews

What we'll be doing: For the first stage of Category Is:, Keith and Gerard aim to conduct twenty 60-90-minute-long interviews with young people who meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a Black 2SLGBTQ+ person.
- Aged 18-29 years old.
- Living in Toronto or Montreal.
- Self-identifying as participants in the Kiki and/or Ballroom scenes.
- Able to do the interview in either English or French.
- Able to complete an interview online or in-person.

In these interviews, we aim to learn about:

- The participants' experiences of racism in 2SLGBTQ+ spaces, both physical (e.g., bars) and online (e.g., dating apps).
- How and why the participants came to Ballroom.
- Which supports they need more of on social media, from governmental/financial bodies, and 2SLGBTQ+ community members.

Funding provided: We will provide interviewees with a \$100 cash honorarium as thanks for their time. Some of the interviewees will be invited for shorter follow-up interviews to check that our analysis accurately reflects their stories, for which they will receive an additional \$25 cash honorarium.

Our asks: As a trusted leader in the Ballroom community, our asks for this phase of the study is that you:

- Advise on our recruitment and data collection approaches (e.g., by giving feedback on a recruitment flyer or our interview questions).
- Share our calls for participants with community members who meet the study's eligibility criteria and encourage them to participate.

Stage II: Organizing a Ball

What we'll be doing: In the second stage, the Category Is: research team will present themes from the interview back to Ballroom community leaders in either a Zoom or in-person gathering. Then, our goal is to work together with you and other community organizers to put on a Ball(s) with Categories that represent the themes of the interviews.

The performances will be recorded and photographed, which we will analyze to better understand how the contestants realize the themes of the Categories. All consenting participants in the ball(s) will receive these professional photos and videos of their performance after the ball as well

Funding provided: We currently have a base funding amount of \$2000 for ball expenses, plus expenses for photography and videography. We have also identified multiple grant and sponsorship opportunities to secure full funding for a Ball. With your support as a community partner, our goal is to apply for these grants and sponsorships co-signed with Kiki/Ballroom alliances and organizing committees.

Our asks: This is the most important stage in our study for community participation from leaders like yourself; the Ball can't happen without you! If you'd like to continue working with us, the ways you can help us in this stage of the study are:

- Attend an info session where we will present our findings.
- Utilize your community connections and influence to help us assemble an organizing committee for the Ball(s).
- Co-sign on grant and sponsorship applications for ball expenses.
- Be part of the organizing committee and assist with planning the Ball(s).

Stage III: Post-Performance Focus Groups

What we'll be doing: After the ball, the performers will be invited to participate in an in-person focus group to discuss their experience of being in the Ball(s) and participating in the study.

The videos and photos will be used as discussion prompts as part of follow-up focus groups lasting 90 minutes with around 5 performers per group, where the participants will react to their performances, reflect on what the performances meant to them, and discuss how they thought about their performances as a response to the performance categories.

Confirmed funding: We will provide interviewees with a \$60 cash honorarium as thanks for their time. We will also provide refreshments at the focus group.

Our Asks: If you would like to continue helping us at this stage of the study, our asks are that you:

- Encourage those who performed at the Ball(s) to participate in a focus group.

Anticipated Outcomes

Following data collection, our goal is to distribute what we've learned in the following ways:

- Pairing interviewees' stories with photos and videos of their Ball performances on the INQYR website and social media spotlights as a 'digital exhibition'.
- Resources that can be used by Kiki/Ballroom community organizations to advance measures against anti-Black racism and queerphobia in Canada.
- Journal articles in high-quality peer reviewed journals. The Houses that supported the project will be acknowledged in these articles and interested community members may inquire about or be invited to be a co-author on articles.
- Presentations at international conferences; with acknowledgements to those that have contributed and/or participated.