

# Working *in* the Kinks: Exploring the Use of Kink to Empower Queer People

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## Abstract

As the debate about kink's place within the LGBTQ+ community, particularly at pride, continues to rise, the divide between kinky and 'vanilla' queer people seems more prominent than ever. While the leather body suits, black stiletto boots, and ball gags may look intimidating initially, kink's relationship with the LGBTQ+ community has been enduring, positive, and meaningful. In fact, sexual and gender minorities have long played a foundational role in the development of the kink community and vice-versa.

This paper uses both qualitative and quantitative secondary research to synthesize three benefits of the presence of kink in queer spaces. These include increased involvement with the LGBTQ+ community and its history, the processing of trauma resulting from living as a marginalized individual and using kink as a method to reclaim societally ascribed labels of deviance. Through the exploration of these topics, it has become clear that the participation of sexual and gender minorities within the kink community is an effective means of empowering LGBTQ+ people and increasing pride in one's queer identity. Furthermore, this paper intends to prompt further nuance in the discussion about kink's place at pride and the LGBTQ+ community at large.

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