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*"By focusing
their message at
their families,
subcultural peers,
mainstream youth,
and the larger
society, sXe
created a
multilayered
resistance that
individuals could
customize to their
own interests."*

RETHINKING SUBCULTURAL RESISTANCE
Core Values of
the Straight Edge Movement

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This article reconceptualizes subcultural resistance based on an ethnographic examination of the straight edge movement. Using the core values of straight edge, the author's analysis builds on new subcultural theories and suggests a framework for how members construct and understand their subjective experiences of being a part of a subculture. He suggests that adherents hold both individual and collective meanings of resistance and express their resistance via personal and political methods. Furthermore, they consciously enact resistance at the micro, meso, and macro levels, not solely against an ambiguous "adult" culture. Resistance can no longer be conceptualized in neo-Marxist terms of changing the political or economic structure, as a rejection only of mainstream culture, or as symbolic stylistic expression. Resistance is contextual and many layered rather than static and uniform.

Keywords: *resistance; straight edge; subculture; youth; punk*

Resistance has been a core theme among both subcultural participants and the scholars who study them. Early subcultural theorists associated with Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) concentrated on the ways youth symbolically resisted mainstream or "hegemonic" society through style, including clothing, demeanor, and vernacular (Hebdige 1979). Subcultures emerged in resistance to dominant culture, reacting against blocked economic opportunities, lack of social mobility, alienation, adult authority, and the "banality of suburban life" (Wooden and Blazak 2001, 20). Theorists found that young working-class white men joined deviant groups to resist conforming to what they saw as an oppressive society (Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson 1976). Scholars have given a great deal of attention to whether these youth subcultures resist or reinforce dominant values and social structure (Hebdige 1979; Willis 1977; Brake 1985; Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, and Roberts 1975). The CCCS emphasized that while subcultural style was a form of resistance to subordination, ultimately resistance merely reinforced class relations (Cohen 1980; Willis 1977). Therefore, any such resistance was illusory; it gave subculture members a feeling of resistance while not significantly changing social or political relations (Clarke et al. 1975). In fact, according to this view, subcultures often inadvertently reinforce

rather than subvert mainstream values, recasting dominant relationships in a subversive style (see Young and Craig 1997).

The CCCS has drawn substantial criticism for ignoring participants' subjectivity, failing to empirically study the groups they sought to explain, focusing too much on Marxist/class–based explanations and grand theories, reifying the concept of subculture, and overemphasizing style (Muggleton 2000; Clarke [1981] 1997; Blackman 1995; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). Based on solid ethnographic work, contemporary theorists have acknowledged the fluidity of subcultures and retooled the notion of resistance to include the subjective understandings of participants. Leblanc (1999), studying female punks, found that resistance included both a subjective and objective component. Leblanc redefined resistance broadly as political behavior, including discursive and symbolic acts. Postmodern theorists have further questioned CCCS ideas of resistance, suggesting that many narratives can simultaneously be true, contingent on one's perspective. They encourage us to examine subcultural quests for authenticity from the participants' points of view, paying particular attention to the individualistic, fragmented, and heterogeneous natures of subcultures (Muggleton 2000; Rose 1994; Grossberg 1992). Viewed in this way, subcultural involvement is more a personal quest for individuality, an expression of a "true self," rather than a collective challenge. In fact, most members have an "anti-structural subcultural sensibility" (Muggleton 2000, 151), view organized movements with suspicion, and instead criticize "mainstream society" in individualized ways (Gottschalk 1993, 369).

Each of these critiques demands a broader understanding of resistance that accounts for members' individualistic orientations. Resistance may be "political behavior" broadly defined, but how individuals express and understand their involvement needs further attention. My analysis builds on new subcultural theories and suggests a framework for how members construct and understand their subjective subcultural experiences. I suggest that adherents hold both individual and collective meanings of resistance and express their resistance via personal and political methods. Furthermore, they consciously enact resistance at the micro, meso, and macro levels, emerging at least partly in reaction to other subcultures instead of solely against an ambiguous "adult" culture. Resistance can no longer be conceptualized in neo-Marxist terms of changing the political or economic structure, as a rejection

only of mainstream culture, or as symbolic stylistic expression. A conceptualization of resistance must account for individual opposition to domination, "the politicization of the self and daily life" (Taylor and Whittier 1992, 117) in which social actors practice the future they envision (Scott 1985; Melucci 1989, 1996). Resistance is contextual and many layered rather than static and uniform.

As a relatively unstudied movement, straight edge (sXe) provides an opportunity to rethink and expand notions of resistance. The straight edge[1] movement emerged on the East Coast of the United States from the punk subculture of the early 1980s. The movement arose primarily as a response to the punk scene's nihilistic tendencies, including drug and alcohol abuse, casual sex, violence, and self-destructive "live-for-the-moment" attitudes. Its founding members adopted a "clean-living" ideology, abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and promiscuous sex. Early sXe youth viewed punk's self-indulgent rebellion as no rebellion at all, suggesting that in many ways punks reinforced mainstream culture's intoxicated lifestyle in a mohawked, leather-jacketed guise.

Straight edge remains inseparable from the hardcore[2] (a punk genre) music scene. Straight edge bands serve as the primary shapers of the group's ideology and collective identity. Hardcore "shows"[3] (small concerts) are an important place for sXers[4] to congregate, share ideas, and build solidarity. Since its beginnings, the movement has expanded around the globe, counting tens of thousands of young people among its members. In the United States, the typical sXer is a white, middle-class male, aged fifteen to twenty-five. Straight edgers clearly distinguish themselves from their peers by marking a large X, the movement's symbol, on each hand before attending punk concerts. While scholars have thoroughly researched other postwar youth subcultures such as hippies, punks, mods, skinheads, and rockers (e.g., Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979; Brake 1985), we know little about sXe, despite its twenty-year history.

The basic tenets of sXe are quite simple: members abstain, completely, from drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and usually reserve sexual activity for caring relationships, rejecting casual sex. These sXe "rules" are absolute; there are no exceptions, and a single lapse means an adherent loses any claim to the sXe identity. Members commit to a lifetime of clean living. They interpret their abstention in a variety of ways centered on resistance, self-realization, and social transformation. Clean

living is symbolic of a deeper resistance to mainstream values, and abstinence fosters a broader ideology that shapes sXers' gender relationships, sense of self, involvement in social change, and sense of community.

This article fills a gap in the literature by giving an empirical account of the sXe movement centered on a description of the group's core values. I begin by providing a very brief overview of several previous subcultures, to place sXe in a historical context. I then discuss my involvement in the sXe scene and the methods I employed throughout my research. Next, I examine the group's core values, focusing on how members understand their involvement.[5] Finally, I provide a new framework for analyzing members' experiences that encompasses the multitude of meanings, sites, and methods of resistance.

PREVIOUS YOUTH SUBCULTURES

Studies of hippies, skinheads, and punks demonstrate both similarities and profound differences between these groups and the sXe movement. Hippies evolved in the mid-1960s from the old beatnik and folknik subcultures (Irwin 1977; Miller 1999). Their lifestyle was a reaction to the stifling homogeneity of the 1950s, emphasizing communalism over conformity and deliberate hedonism over reserve (Miller 1991). "If it feels good, then do it so long as it doesn't hurt anyone else" was the scene's credo. Hippie core values included peace, racial harmony, equality, liberated sexuality, love, and communal living (Miller 1991). They rejected compulsive consumerism, delayed gratification, and material success (Davis 1967). "Dope," however, was one of the group's most visible characteristics (Miller 1991; Irwin 1977). Dope differed from drugs; dope, such as LSD and marijuana, was good, while drugs, such as speed and downers, were bad. For hippies, dope expanded the mind, released inhibitions, boosted creativity, and was part of the revolution. It was the means to discovering a new ethic, heightening awareness, and "understanding and coping with the evils of American culture" (Miller 1991, 34). LSD "gave the mind more power to choose, to evaluate, even, perhaps, to reason" (Earisman 1968, 31). Like dope, sex, in its own way, was revolutionary. "Free love" rejected the responsibilities normally associated with sexual relationships: marriage, commitment, and children (Earisman 1968). By practicing what most at the time would call promiscuous sex, the hippies

deliberately threw their irreverence for middle-class values in the face of dominant society (Irwin 1977).

Skinheads received a great deal of attention during the 1990s, as reports of their growing membership in neo-Nazi groups infiltrated both popular media and scholarly work (Bjorgo and Wilte 1993; Moore 1994; Young and Craig 1997). Skinheads emerged in late-1960s Britain as an offshoot of the mod subculture (Cohen 1972; Hebdige 1979). While most of the fashion-conscious mods listened to soul music, frequented discotheques, and dressed in impeccably pressed trousers and jackets, the "hard mods," who eventually became the skinheads, favored ska and reggae, local pubs, and a working-class "uniform" of heavy boots, close-cropped hair, Levi jeans, plain shirts, and braces (suspenders) (Brake 1985). While the mods attempted to emulate the middle-class, hip 1960s style, the skins were ardently working class. Nearly everything about skinheads revolved around their working-class roots. Hard work and independence were among their core values; they abhorred people, such as some hippies, who they believed "live off the system." Skinheads were extremely nationalistic and patriotic, adorning themselves with tattoos, T-shirts, and patches of their country's flag. After a long day at work, they enjoyed drinking beer with their friends at the local pub. Although there were some women skins, males dominated the subculture and often reinforced traditional patriarchal ideals of masculinity.

The original skinheads borrowed heavily from the West Indian culture, adopting their music, mannerisms, and style, including among their number a variety of races. While they were not violently racist at the level of the current neo-Nazi groups, these skins, both black and white, engaged in violence against Pakistani immigrants ("Paki-bashing") (Hebdige 1979, 56). Eventually, with reggae's turn to Rastafarianism and black pride, many white skinheads became increasingly racist. At the turn of the century, three main types of skinheads prevailed: neo-Nazis (racist), skinheads against racism (e.g., Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), and nonpolitical skinheads, who took neither a racist nor an antiracist stand (Young and Craig 1997). Skinheads were quite visible at punk, ska, and Oi! music shows, though the nonpolitical and antiracist skins were more prevalent. Very rarely, a skinhead was also sXe.[6]

In many ways, punk was a reaction to "hippie romanticism" and middle-class culture; punk celebrated decline and chaos (Brake 1985,

78; Fox 1987; O'Hara 1999). In mid-1970s Britain, youth faced a lack of job opportunities or, at best, the prospect of entering a mainstream world they found abhorrent (Henry 1989). They attempted to repulse dominant society by valuing anarchy, hedonism, and life in the moment. Early punks borrowed heavily from the styles of Lou Reed, David Bowie ("Ziggy Stardust"), and other glam-rock and new-wave artists. Adorned with safety pins, bondage gear, heavy bright make-up, torn clothing, flamboyant hairstyles, and spiked leather jackets, punks lived by their motto "No Future," celebrating rather than lamenting the world's decline. They embraced alienation, and their "nihilist aesthetic" included "polymorphous, often willfully perverse sexuality, obsessive individualism, a fragmented sense of self" (Hebdige 1979, 28).

Like the skinheads, punks disdained hippies; the preeminent punk band the Sex Pistols titled one of their live recordings "Kill the Hippies" (Heylin 1998, 117). Unlike the skins, and like the hippies, however, punks chose to reject society, conventional work, and patriotism. Many used dangerous drugs to symbolize "life in the moment" and their self-destructive, nihilistic attitude (Fox 1987). Straight edge emerged relatively early in the punk scene and has shared certain values and styles with punks, hippies, and skins ever since. While some punks today are sXe, the two scenes have become relatively distinct, and the sXe movement has replaced many of the original antisocial punk values with prosocial ideals.

METHOD

My first encounter with sXe occurred in 1989 at the age of fifteen through my involvement in a Midwest punk rock scene. As I attended punk shows and socialized with the members, I noticed that many kids scrawled large Xs on their hands with magic marker before they went to a concert. I eventually learned that the X symbolized the clean-living sXe lifestyle and that many punks in our scene had taken on a totally drug- and alcohol-free way of life. Having tried the alcohol-laden life of most of my peers, I quickly discovered it was not for me. I despised feeling I had to "prove" myself (and my manhood) again and again by drinking excessively. I could not understand why the "coolest," the most highly regarded men were often the ones who most degraded

women. Furthermore, given my family's history of alcoholism, I wanted to avoid my relatives' destructive patterns. Finally, the local sXers' involvement in progressive politics and activist organizations connected with my interest in social justice and environmentalism. My association with sXers led me to adopt the sXe ideology as what I viewed, at the time, to be an alternative to peer pressure and a proactive avenue to social change. After a period of careful consideration (like many punks, I was suspicious of "rules"), I made known my commitment to avoid consuming alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, and the group accepted me as one of their own. Since then, I have attended more than 250 hardcore shows, maintained the lifestyle, and associated with many sXers on a fairly regular basis. The data I present result from more than fourteen years of observing the sXe movement in a variety of settings and roles and interviewing members of the scene.

During college, my involvement with sXe waned, and for several years I had little contact with the group. After completing my undergraduate career, I moved to "Clearweather," a metropolitan area in the western United States, to begin graduate training. I lived in a predominantly white university town of approximately ninety thousand people, attending a large research university with twenty-five thousand students. Soon after arriving, I sought out the local hardcore scene and began attending shows. The setting's richness and my interests led me to take advantage of this opportunistic research situation (Riemer 1977). My four-year absence from the scene allowed me to approach the setting with a relatively fresh perspective, while my personal involvement and knowledge of the sXe ideology enabled me to gain entrée into the local scene very quickly. Since fall 1996, I have participated in the sXe scene as a complete member (Adler and Adler 1987).

I gathered data primarily through longitudinal participant observation (Agar 1996) with sXers from 1996 to 2001. The sXers I studied were mostly area high school or university students from middle-class backgrounds. My contacts grew to include approximately sixty sXers in the local area and another thirty sXe and non-sXe acquaintances associated with the larger metropolitan hardcore scene. My interaction with the group occurred primarily at hardcore shows and simply socializing at sXers' houses.

To supplement my participant observation, I conducted unstructured, in-depth interviews with seventeen sXe men and eleven women

between the ages of seventeen and thirty. To learn from a variety of individuals, I selected sXers with differing levels of involvement in the scene, including new and old adherents, and individuals who had made the movement central or peripheral to their lives. I conducted in-depth interviews at sXers' homes or at public places free from disturbances, recording and later transcribing each session. Though I organized the sessions around particular themes, I left the interviews unstructured enough that individuals could share exactly what sXe meant to them. I sometimes asked for referrals in a snowball fashion (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981), though I knew most participants well enough to approach them on my own. The variety of participants allowed me continually to cross-check reports and seek out evidence disconfirming my findings (Campbell 1975; Stewart 1998; see also Douglas 1976). Through participant observation, I was able to examine how participants' behaviors differed from their stated intentions. I consciously distanced myself from the setting to maintain a critical outlook by continually questioning my observations and consulting with colleagues to gain an outsider perspective. I was especially attentive to variations on the patterns I discovered.

In an effort to expand my knowledge of sXe beyond my primary circle of contacts, I sought interviews with adherents from outside of the local scene, including individuals from other cities and members of touring out-of-state bands who played in Clearweather. I sometimes contacted other individuals around the country via e-mail with specific questions. I also spent several days in New York City, Los Angeles, and Connecticut to experience the scenes there, taking field notes and conducting informal interviews. In addition to participant observation, casual conversation, and interviews, I examined a variety of other sources including newspaper stories, music lyrics, World Wide Web pages, and sXe 'zines,[7] coding relevant snippets of information into my field notes.

To record and organize my data, I took brief notes at shows and other events that I immediately afterward expanded into more full field notes on computer. Using headings and subheadings, I coded data according to particular topics of interest, beginning the process of organizing data into useful and interesting categories (Charmaz 1983). Throughout my research, I sought patterns and emerging typologies of data (Lofland and Lofland 1995). Reexamining the coded field notes and transcribed interviews led me to analyze several themes, including the subculture's

core values. I continually refined these themes as I gathered more data through emergent, inductive analysis (Becker and Geer 1960).

STRAIGHT EDGE CORE VALUES

A core set of sXe values and ideals guided and gave meaning to members' behavior: positivity/clean living, reserving sex for caring relationships, self-realization, spreading the message, and involvement in progressive causes. Adherents maintained that sXe meant something different to each person assuming the identity, and as with any group, individual members' dedication to these ideals varied. However, while individuals were free to follow the philosophy in various ways, often adding their own interpretations, these fundamental values underlay the entire movement.

T-shirt slogans, song lyrics, tattoos, and other symbols constantly reminded sXers of their mission and dedication: "It's OK Not to Drink," "True till Death," and "One Life Drug Free" were among the more popular messages. The "X," sXe's universal symbol, emerged in the early 1980s, when music club owners marked the hands of underage concert-goers with an X to ensure that bartenders would not serve them alcohol (see Lahickey 1997, 99). Soon, the kids intentionally marked their own hands both to signal club workers of their intention not to drink and, more importantly, to make a statement of pride and defiance to other kids at the shows. The movement appropriated the X, a symbol meant to be negative, transforming its meaning into discipline and commitment to a drug-free lifestyle.[8] Youth wore Xs on their backpacks, shirts, and necklaces; they tattooed them on their bodies and drew them on their school folders, skateboards, cars, and other possessions. The X united youth around the world, communicating a common set of values and experiences. Straight edgers found strength, camaraderie, loyalty, and encouragement in their sXe friends, valuing them above all else.[9] For many, sXe became a "family," a "brotherhood," a supportive space to be different together. A powerful sense of community, based in large part on the hardcore music scene, was the glue that held sXe and its values together for twenty years.

Like the other youth movements, sXe was a product of the times and culture that it resisted; oppositional subcultures do not emerge in a vacuum (Kaplan and Lööw 2002). The lifestyle reflects the group's emer-

gence during a time of increasing conservatism and religious funda-
mentalism, an escalating drug war, and Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No"
campaign. The rise of the New Christian Right in the late 1970s and
early 1980s contributed to a more conservative national climate that
influenced youth values (Liebman and Wuthnow 1983). Fundamental-
ism gained appeal among populations who felt they were losing control
of their way of life (Hunter 1987). The unyielding, black-and-white
strictures on behavior of sXe were similar to fundamentalist religion's
rigid, clear-cut beliefs (Marty and Appleby 1993). In particular, sXe's
emphasis on clean living, sexual purity, lifetime commitment, and
meaningful community was reminiscent of youth evangelical move-
ments, while the focus on self-control suggested Puritanical roots. In
addition to these conservative influences, sXe was, in many ways, a
continuation of New Left middle-class radicalism oriented toward
"issues of a moral or humanitarian nature," a radicalism whose payoff is
"in the emotional satisfaction derived from expressing personal values
in action" (Parkin 1968, 41). The movement's core values reflect this
curious blend of conservative and progressive influences.

POSITIVE, CLEAN LIVING

The foundation underlying the sXe identity was positive, clean liv-
ing. It was, as Darrell Irwin (1999) suggested, fundamentally about
subverting the drug scene and creating an alternative, drug-free envi-
ronment. Clean living was the key precursor to a positive life. Many
sXers shunned caffeine and medicinal drugs, and most members were
committed vegetarians or vegans.[10] Positive living had broad meaning,
including questioning and resisting society's norms, having a positive
attitude, being an individual, treating people with respect and dignity,
and taking action to make the world a better place. Straight edgers
claimed that one could not fully question dominant society while under
the influence of drugs, and once one questioned social convention, sub-
stance use, eating meat, and promiscuous sex were no longer appealing.
Therefore, clean living and positivity were inseparable; they reinforced
one another and constituted the foundation for all other sXe values.
"Joe,"[11] an eighteen-year-old high school senior, explained how the
"positivity" he gained from sXe shaped his life:

> To me, I guess what I've gotten from [sXe] is living a more positive life-style. Striving to be more positive in the way you live. Because where I was at when I found it was really (*laughs*) I was really negative myself. I was negative around people and influenced them to be negative. I was surrounded by negativity. Then I found this and it was like something really positive to be a part of. Also, like the ethics, drug free, alcohol free, no promiscuous sex. It's just saying no to things that are such a challenge for people my age, growing up at that time. It's a big thing for some people to say "No."

Refusing drugs and alcohol had a variety of meanings for individual sXers, including purification, control, and breaking abusive family patterns. Purification literally meant being free from toxins that threatened one's health and potentially ruined lives. Popular T-shirt slogans proclaimed "Purification—vegan straight edge" and "Straight edge—my commitment against society's poisons." Straight edgers believed that drugs and alcohol influenced people to do things they would normally not do, such as have casual sex, fight, and harm themselves. By labeling themselves as more "authentic" than their peers who used alcohol and drugs, sXers created an easy way to distinguish themselves. They experienced a feeling of uniqueness, self-confidence, and sometimes superiority by rejecting the typical teenage life. Refusing alcohol and drugs symbolized refusing the "popular" clique altogether as well as the perceived nihilism of punks, hippies, and skinheads.

The movement provided young people a way to feel more in control of their lives. Many youth felt peer pressure to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or try illegal drugs. For some, this pressure created feelings of helplessness and lack of control; acceptance often hinged on substance use. Straight edgers reported that the group gave them a way to feel accepted without using and helped them maintain control over their personal situations. Many sXers celebrated the fact that they would never wake up after a night of binge drinking wondering what had happened the previous evening. Adherents reported that sXe allowed them to have a "clear" mind and be free to make choices without artificial influence. Walter, a reserved twenty-one-year-old university student, explained,

> I don't make any stupid decisions. . . . I like to have complete control of my mind, my body, my soul. I like to be the driver of my body, not some

foreign substance that has a tendency to control other people. I get a
sense of pride from telling other people, "I don't need that stuff. It might
be for you but I don't need that stuff." And people are like, "Whoa! I
respect that. That's cool."

In addition to the personalized meanings the identity held for adher-
ents, sXers viewed their abstinence as a collective challenge. The group
offered a visible means of separating oneself from most youth and
taking a collective stand against youth culture and previous youth sub-
cultures, including punks, skinheads, and hippies. Furthermore, for
many positivity and refusing drugs and alcohol were symbolic of a
larger resistance to other societal problems including racism, sexism,
and greed.

Straight edgers made a lifetime commitment to positive, clean liv-
ing. They treated their abstinence and adoption of the sXe identity as a
sacred vow, calling it an "oath," "pledge," or "promise." Members made
no exceptions to this rule. Patrick, an easy-going twenty-year-old musi-
cian and ex-football player, said, "If you just sip a beer, or take a drag off
of a cigarette, you can never call yourself straight edge again. There's
no slipping up in straight edge." Ray, raised in an alcoholic family and
already heavily tattooed at age nineteen, compared the sXe vow to vows
of matrimony: "It's true till death. Once you put the X on your hand, it's
not like a wedding ring. You can always take a wedding ring off, but you
can't wash the ink from your hands." Ray proceeded to show me a tattoo
on his chest depicting a heart with "True till Death" written across it.
Many sXe youth had similar tattoos, signifying the permanence of their
commitment.

Some sXers took their commitment so seriously they labeled people
who broke their vows of abstinence as traitors or "sellouts." Despite
their vehement insistence they would "stay true" forever, relatively few
sXers maintained the identity beyond their early to midtwenties. Many
maintained the values and rarely used alcohol or drugs, but "adult"
responsibilities and relationships infringed on their involvement in the
scene. When formerly sXe individuals began drinking, smoking, or
using drugs, adherents claimed they had "sold out" or "lost the edge."
While at times losing the edge caused great conflict, I observed that
more often the youth's bonds of friendship superseded resentment and
disappointment, and they remained friends. However, a former sXer's
sXe friends often expressed deep regret and refused to allow the

transgressor to claim the identity ever again. Brent, a serious and out-spoken twenty-two-year-old vegan, said, "It's frustrating to see people who you think are your friends make such heavy decisions without con-sulting you. . . . It's not a betrayal like turning around. It's just that you feel abandoned. . . . It's demoralizing." Kate, a twenty-two-year-old activist, explained her frustration with sellouts:

> It was hard for me at first because I think when people do that it takes away the power of sXe. When people are like, "I'm sXe" and then the next day they're not. It—not delegitimizes completely—in a way it takes away some of the legitimacy of the movement. . . . It definitely upset me a little bit. How can you go from claiming sXe one day and the next day just forget about it completely? That was the main thing, I just didn't understand it.

When particularly outspoken or well-known members of the scene sold out, sXers spoke as if another hero had fallen. A very small minority of individuals did base their friendships on adherence to the movement and almost practiced "shunning," the religious equivalent of casting someone out. It was this type of action, despite its rarity, that contrib-uted to outsiders' conceptions of sXe as a judgmental, dogmatic group. Straight edge youth were less likely to socialize regularly with people who used simply because of the incompatibility of the lifestyles. Straight edgers rarely openly criticized friends who had sold out, but during interviews participants expressed to me a deeper frustration and sense of betrayal than they would ever publicly show.

RESERVING SEX FOR CARING RELATIONSHIPS

Reserving sex for caring relationships was an extension of the posi-tive, clean lifestyle. Straight edgers viewed casual sex as yet another downfall of dominant society, their counterparts in other youth subcul-tures, and their more mainstream peers. It carried the possibility of sex-ually transmitted diseases and feelings of degradation and shame. Whereas hippies viewed liberated sex as revolutionary, punks saw it as just another pleasure, and skinheads valued sex as a supreme expres-sion of masculinity, sXers saw abstinence from "promiscuous" sex as a powerful form of resistance. Rejecting the casualness of many youth sexual encounters, they believed that sexual relationships entailed

much more than physical pleasure. They were particularly critical of their image of the "predatory," insatiable male, searching for sex wherever he could get it. Kent, a twenty-one-year-old university student with several colorful tattoos, said, "My personal views have to do with self-respect, with knowing that I'm going to make love with someone I'm really into, not a piece of meat." Kyle, a twenty-three-year-old senior architecture major at Clearweather University, said, "For me personally, I won't sleep around with a bunch of people just for health's sake. A good positive influence. [Sex] doesn't mean anything if you don't care about a person." Walter, the university student, said,

> For me it's just choosing how I want to treat my body. It's not something I'm just going to throw around. I'm not going to smoke or use drugs. My body is something that I honor. It's something we should respect. I think sex, if you're gonna do it you should do it, but you shouldn't throw your body around and do it with as many people as you want. If you love your body so much as to not do those things to your body you should have enough respect to treat women and sex how they deserve to be treated.

Though sXe values regarding sexuality appeared conservative when compared to many other youth subcultures, sXers were neither anti-sex nor homophobic as a group. Premarital sex was not wrong or "dirty" in the sense of some traditional religious views, and numerous sXers and sXe bands took a strong stance against homophobia.[12] Sex could be a positive element of a caring relationship. Believing that sex entailed power and emotional vulnerability, sXers strove to minimize potentially negative experiences by rejecting casual sex. Kevin, a twenty-seven-year-old martial artist who had dropped out of high school, said,

> To this day I'm by no means celibate; however . . . in the last eight years I've had sex with three girls. I'm not celibate by any means but I also don't believe in fuckin' bullshit meaningless sex. So those tenets kind of took place in my life even though I didn't take it to the actual celibacy extreme. . . . It should be on an emotional level. It's an addiction like everything else. My first understanding of sXe was to not be addicted.

There was no direct religious basis for sXe views on sex. In fact, many of the sXers I associated with grew up with no formal religious

involvement, and almost none of them were presently involved in formal religion. While a few sXers connected their sXe and Christian identities, the group advocated no form of religion, and most adherents were deeply suspicious or critical of organized faiths.

Most sXers also believed that objectifying women was pervasive and wrong, rejecting the stereotypical image of high school males. A local sXe band (five male members) decried sexual abuse and rape: "This song is the most important song we play. It's about the millions of women who have suffered rape. One out of four women will be the victim of a sexual assault in her lifetime. We've got to make it stop."

The movement's "rule" against promiscuous sex was more difficult for members to enforce, and thus there was greater variation in belief regarding sex than substance use. Several of my participants, both males and females aged twenty-one to twenty-three, had consciously decided to postpone sex because they had not found someone with whom they felt an intimate emotional attachment. Most of the young women believed not drinking reduced their risk of being sexually assaulted or otherwise put in a compromising situation. Jenny, an eighteen-year-old college freshman and activist, said,

> Like I said, it's all about control over your own body, over your own life. It's about reclaiming, claiming your dignity and self-respect. Saying I'm not going to put this stuff into my body. I'm not going to have you inside of my body if I don't want you in there. It all just very much ties together. I like sXe because it allows me to make very rational, intelligent decisions. That's one of the decisions I think it's really important to think through very carefully. I'm not against premarital sex at all. But personally, I've got to be in love.

Some adherents insisted that sex should be reserved for married couples, while a few believed sXe placed no strictures on sexual activity. Only one young man with relatively little connection to the Clearweather scene had a reputation as a "player." A minority of sXe men were little different than the hypermasculine stereotype they sought to reject. Most insisted that sex between strangers or near strangers was potentially destructive, emotionally and possibly physically, and that positivity demanded that sex should be part of an emotional relationship based on trust.

SELF-REALIZATION

Like members of other subcultures, sXers sought to create and express a "true" or "authentic" identity amid a world that they felt encouraged conformity and mediocrity. Straight edgers claimed that resisting social standards and expectations allowed them to follow their own, more meaningful path in life toward greater self-realization. Like punks, they abhorred conformity and insisted on being "true to themselves." Similar to hippies, sXers believed that as children we have incredible potential that is "slowly crushed and destroyed by a standardized society and mechanical teaching" (Berger 1967, 19). Subcultures, like social movements, engage in conflict over cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization; they are often especially concerned with quality of life, self-realization, and identity formation (Habermas 1984-87; Buechler 1995). Straight edgers believed toxins such as drugs and alcohol inhibited people from reaching their full potential. This view sharply contrasted with the hip version of self-realization through dope (Davis 1968). For sXers, drugs of any kind inhibited rather than enabled self-discovery; they believed people were less genuine and true to themselves while high. A clear, focused mind helped sXers achieve their highest goals. Kate, the activist, said, "If you have a clear mind you're more likely to be aware of who you are and what things around you really are rather than what somebody might want you to think they are. A little bit more of an honest life, being true to yourself." Elizabeth, a twenty-six-year-old with an advanced degree who had been sXe and vegetarian for many years, said,

> You're not screwed up on drugs and alcohol and you can make conscientious decisions about things. You're not letting some drug or alcohol subdue your emotions and thoughts. You're not desensitizing yourself to your life. And if you're not desensitizing your life, then yeah, you're gonna feel more things. The more you feel, the more you move, the more that you grow. . . . I truly believe [sXers] are living and feeling and growing, and it's all natural growth. It's not put off. That's a unique characteristic.

Like adherents of previous subcultures, sXers constructed a view of the world as mediocre and unfulfilling, believing society encouraged people to medicate themselves with crutches such as drugs, alcohol, and sex to forget their unhappiness. Straight edgers felt the punks',

skinheads', and hippies' associations with these things blunted their opportunities to offer meaningful resistance. Substances and social pressures clouded clear thought and individual expression. Claiming that many people used substances as a means to escape their problems, the movement encouraged members to avoid escapism, confront problems with a clear mind, and create their own positive, fulfilling lives. Brent emphatically insisted that self-realization did not require drugs:

> There are ways to open your mind without drinking and smoking. . . . You definitely don't have to take mushrooms and sit out in the desert to have a spiritual awakening or a catharsis of any sort. People don't accept that. People think you're uptight. . . . There is a spiritual absence in the world I know right now, in America. To be money driven is the goal. It's one of the emptiest, least fulfilling ways to live your life. . . . The way people relieve themselves of the burdens of their spiritual emptiness is through drugs and alcohol. The way people see escape is sometimes even through a shorter lifespan, through smoking. To be sXe and to understand and believe that means you have opened the door for yourself to find out why we're really on this earth, or what I want to get out of a relationship with a person, or what I want my kids to think of me down the line.

Straight edgers rarely spoke openly about self-realization, and they would likely scoff at anything that suggested mysticism or enlightenment (which they would connect to hippies and therefore drugs). Nevertheless, for many, underlying the ideology was an almost spiritual quest for a genuine self, a "truth." Some connected sXe to other identities: "queer edge," feminism, and activism, for example. For others, sXe offered a means of overcoming abusive family experiences. Mark, a quiet sixteen-year-old new to the scene, claimed sXe as a protest: "Straight edge to me, yeah, it's a commitment to myself, but to me it's also a protest. I don't want to give my kids the same life I had from my father."

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

Straight edge efforts at resistance transcended members' simple abstention. Straight edgers often actively encouraged other young people to become drug and alcohol free. Some hippies believed their "ultimate social mission is to 'turn the world on'—i.e. Make everyone aware

of the potential virtues of LSD for ushering in an era of universal peace, freedom, brotherhood and love" (Davis 1968, 157). Likewise, many sXers undertook a mission to convince their peers that resisting drugs, rather than using them, would help create a better world. A minority of sXers, labeled "militant" or "hardline" by other sXers, were very outspoken, donning Xs and sXe messages at nearly all times and confronting their peers who used. While sXe promoted individuality and clear, free thought, for some adherents the rigid lifestyle requirements created conformity, close-mindedness, and intolerance, a far cry from the "positivity" the movement promulgated. There was an ongoing tension within the movement over how much members should promote their lifestyle. At one extreme was the "live and let live" faction— individuals should make their own choices, and sXers have no right to infringe on that choice. At the other end was the more militant branch, often composed of new adherents, who believed sXers' duty lay in showing users the possibilities of a drug-free lifestyle. Most sXers maintained that their example was enough. Jenny, the student-activist, said,

> I wanna show people there's a community out there that it doesn't make you a fucking dork to be sXe. There are other people out there who are really, really into it. There's a whole group of people you can belong to. You don't have to belong to just them obviously. I just think it can be a really positive thing for people. I go to a dorm where you walk down every fucking hall and the smell of pot knocks you upside the head. I just think that in that case it's really important to get your message out there. . . . I think the best political, social, personal statement you can make is to live by example. That's definitely what I try to do.

Cory, an artist and veteran of the scene at age twenty-one, explained why sXers should set an example for others:

> It's all about calling yourself straight edge. You could be drug free and you can not drink and not smoke and go to parties and do whatever, but you're not helping out. There's a pendulum in society and it's tilted one way so far, and sitting in the middle of the pendulum isn't going to help it swing back. There needs to be more straight edgers on the other side to help even it out, at the least.

Thus, while adherents maintained that sXe was a personal lifestyle choice rather than a movement directed toward others, many members "wore their politics on their sleeves" in a not-so-subtle attempt to encourage others to follow their path. Wearing a shirt with an sXe message may be a personal stylistic decision, but when an entire group of people wears such shirts that so clearly defy the norm, style has the potential to become collective challenge.

Straight edge resistance also targeted the corporate interests of alcohol and tobacco, which adherents claimed profit from people's addictions and suffering. Kate, who clearly connected sXe with her activism, said, "By rejecting Miller Lite and Coors, they have less control over me and my life because I'm not giving them my money; I'm not supporting them." Brent, the outspoken vegan, said,

> Each individual in society is connected to one another. When you hurt yourself, you're hurting your society. You're leading by example; your kids will see what you're doing and they'll pick it up. . . . Resisting temptation, resisting what's thrown at you day after day, by your peers, by your parents, by their generation, by businesspeople, by what's hip and cool on MTV. Resistance is huge. That's why sXe is a movement. . . . It's all connected: resisting drugs, resisting rampant consumerism, resisting voting Democrat when you can vote third party.

By focusing their message at their families, subcultural peers, mainstream youth, and the larger society, sXe created a multilayered resistance that individuals could customize to their own interests.

INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL CHANGE

Like members of the other subcultures, sXers often became involved in a variety of social causes. The sXe youth with whom I associated insisted that working for social change was not a prerequisite of sXe. Indeed, only a few belonged to the substantial activist community in our city. However, many viewed involvement in social change as a logical progression from clean living that led them to embrace progressive concerns and become directly involved at some level. Clean living and positivity led to clear thinking, which in turn created a desire to resist and self-realize. This entire process opened them up to the world's

problems, and their concerns grew.[13] Tim, twenty-seven, the singer of a very popular sXe band, explained,

> The reasoning behind [sXe] is to have a clear mind and to use that clear mind to reach out to other people and do what you can to start thinking about fairness, thinking about how to make things more just in society and the world as a whole. . . . It's about freedom. It's about using that freedom that clarity of mind that we have as a vehicle for progression, to make ourselves more peaceful people. And by making ourselves more peaceful people we make the world a more just place. (Sersen 1999)

Jenny considered sXe central to her activism:

> I think every element of my life philosophy is very much interconnected. They all sort of fit together like a puzzle piece. The connection I make between sXe and political activism is sort of that whole attitude like you see something wrong, fix it. I don't like the things that drugs and drinking bring about in society so I fix it by fixing myself. When I see other problems in society as well, I have the same drive to fix it by doing everything that I can do. It's all about claiming power, saying, "All right, I'm in charge of my life. I can do as much good as I want to do."

Kevin, the martial artist, believed that sXe was fundamentally about becoming a strong person in every aspect of life. Strength included rejecting stereotypes and prejudices:

> Technically, according to the "rules," you can be homophobic and racist and fuckin' sexist and shit like that and still technically be sXe. You're not drinking; you're not smoking; you're not doing drugs. But I don't personally, on a personal level, I wouldn't consider that person sXe. Because they're weak. I don't think you can be sXe and weak.

Again contrasting against the hippies, punks, and skinheads, for sXers, a clear, drug-free mind was pivotal to developing a consciousness of resistance. The movement provided a general opening up or expansion of social awareness. Kent, the rather quiet young man with many tattoos, said, "I would never have even considered being vegetarian or vegan if it wasn't for sXe. Once you go sXe, I don't really think you're supposed to stop there. It's supposed to open you up to more possibilities. . . . It just makes me think differently. It makes you not so complacent."

In the mid-1980s to late 1980s, sXe became increasingly concerned with animal rights and environmental causes. Influential leaders in bands called for an end to cruelty against animals and a general awareness of eco-destruction. At least three out of four sXers were vegetarian, and many adopted completely cruelty-free, or vegan, lifestyles. Among the approximately sixty sXers I associated with regularly, only fifteen ate meat. Several individuals had "vegan" tattooed on their bodies. Others led or actively participated in a campus animal defense organization. Essentially, the movement framed (see Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986) animal rights as a logical extension of the positivity frame underpinning the entire lifestyle, much like reserving sex for caring relationships and self-realization. Brian, an extremely positive and fun-loving twenty-one-year-old, explained vegetarianism's connection to sXe: "sXe kids open their minds a lot more. They're more conscious of what's around them. . . . Some people think it's healthier and other people like me are more on the animal liberation thing." Elizabeth, the older veteran, said,

> If you are conscientious and care about the environment or the world, which perhaps more sXe people are than your average population, then [animal rights is] just going to be a factor. You're going to consider "How can I make the world a better place?" Well, being vegetarian is another place you can start. . . . I'm glad it's usually a part of the sXe scene because it just goes along with awareness and choices. What kind of things are you doing to yourself and how is that impacting the world and the environment? The big corporate-owned beef lots and cutting down the rainforests . . . the most impactful thing you can do for the environment is to stop eating meat.

Some sXe youth involved themselves in social justice causes such as homelessness, human rights, and women's rights. They organized benefit concerts to raise money for local homeless shelters, and often the price of admission to shows included a canned good for the local food pantry or a donation to a women's shelter. I observed several sXers participating in local protests against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in conjunction with the large 1999-2000 protests in Seattle and Washington, D.C., and others took part in a campus anti-sweatshop campaign. Similar to progressive punks, some sXe youth printed 'zines on prisoners' rights, fighting neo-Nazism, challenging police brutality, and various human rights and environmental issues.

Many sXe women disdained more traditional female roles and appreciated the scene as a space in which they felt less pressure to live up to gender expectations, and the movement encouraged men to reject certain hypermasculine traits and challenge sexism on a personal level. A majority of bands wrote songs against sexism, and many young sXe men demonstrated an exceptional understanding of gender oppression given their ages and experiences. However, despite the movement's claims of community and inclusivity, some sXe women felt isolated and unwelcome in the scene. Men significantly outnumbered women, often creating a "boys club" mentality exemplified by the masculine call for "brotherhood." The almost complete lack of female musicians in bands, the hypermasculine dancing at shows, and the male cliques reinforced the movement's own unspoken gender assumptions that women were not as important to the scene as men and ensured that many women would never feel completely at home.

While some sXers joined animal rights, women's rights, environmental, and other groups, most strove to live out their values in everyday life rather than engage in more conventional "political" protest (e.g., picketing, civil disobedience, petitioning). Instead of challenging tobacco, beer, or beef companies directly, for example, a sXer refuses their products and might boycott Kraft (parent company of cigarette manufacturer Phillip Morris), adopt a vegetarian lifestyle, or wear a shirt to school reading "It's OK not to drink. Straight Edge" or "Go Vegan!" In sXe and other youth movements, the personal was political. Subcultures are themselves politically meaningful, and they often serve as a bridge to further political involvement.

CONCLUSION

Straight edgers' understandings of the group's core values show that resistance is much more complex than a stylistic reaction to mainstream culture. I conclude by discussing an analytical framework for understanding the individual and collective meanings, multiple sites, and personal and political methods of resistance of any subculture.

Members of youth subcultures construct both individualized and collective meanings for their participation. Participants may hold individualized meanings that are not central to the group's ideology while simultaneously maintaining collective understandings of the

subculture's significance. Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995), for example, found that "punk may be constituted both through shared goals, values and so on, and through individual members" (p. 204). Subcultures help define "who I am" during the uncertainty of coming of age (p. 25). They offer a space for experimentation and a place to wrestle with questions about the world, creating a "home" for identity in a modern era when personal identity suffers a homelessness brought about by the forces of modernity (Melucci 1989; Giddens 1991). Thus, at the individual level, resistance entails staking out an individual identity and asserting subjectivity in an adversarial context. In addition, for most participants, individualized resistance is symbolic of a larger collective oppositional consciousness. The collective meanings central to the sXe identity included defying the stereotypical "jock" image, setting a collective example for other youth, supporting a drug-free social setting, and avoiding society's "poisons" that dull the mind. Youth claimed the sXe label rather than simply remaining "drug free" specifically because they believed their individual choices would add up to a collective challenge. Here, resistance involves collectively showing disapproval for some aspect of culture, questioning dominant goals, making an invisible ideology visible, and creating an alternative.

Members of youth subcultures understand their resistance at the macro, meso, and micro levels.[14] Past theorizing on resistance has privileged mainstream hegemonic adult culture, the class structure, or the state as the macro-level target of subcultural resistance (Hall 1972). Indeed, sXers rejected aspects of a culture they believed marketed alcohol and tobacco products to youth, established alcohol use as the norm, promoted conformity, and glorified casual sexual encounters. In addition to challenging culture at the macro level, youth movements offer resistance at the meso level. Straight edgers focused much, if not most, of their message toward their fellow youth, reacting against mainstream youth and perceived contradictions in other subcultures. Overall, sXe illustrates that subcultures form in reaction to other subcultures as well as the larger social structure. Members resisted what they saw as youth culture's fixation on substance use and sex; punks' "no future" and nihilistic tendencies; skinheads' patriotism, sexism, and working-class ideology, as well as some members' racism; and hippies' drug use, passivity, and escapism—believing that these undermine the resistance potential each of these groups share. However, despite its insistence on countering counterculture, sXe co-opted many values of the previous

youth movements, clearly owing its "question everything" mentality and aggressive music to punk, its intimation of self-realization and cultural challenge to hippies, and its clean-cut image, personal accountability, and sense of pride to skinheads. Analyzing youth movements at the meso level in terms of their relationship to other youth cultures is vital to an accurate understanding of these groups, as is recognizing the identity battles within the group. Youth reflexively examine their own groups and often attempt to resolve intragroup contradictions. Leblanc (1999, 160) noted, for example, that female punks "subvert the punks' subversion" just as some sXers resisted militant "tough guys" within their scene. All youth movements share disdain for the mainstream; how they express their contempt and challenge existing structures depends in large part on current and previous youth subcultures that often become meso-level targets for change. No doubt the contradictions in sXe will provoke new innovations both within sXe and from other subcultures seeking to transcend sXe's limitations.

Finally, sXers also reported resistance at the micro level as they rejected the substance abuse within their families and made changes in their individual lives. Many sXers claimed that they abstained from drugs and alcohol at least in part in defiance of family members' substance abuse or their own addictive tendencies. Clearly, meanings of subcultural involvement extend beyond contradictions in adult culture and the class structure.

Furthermore, sXe demonstrated that subcultures use many methods of resistance, both personal and political. Distrustful of political challenges and organized social activism, subcultures often embody a more individualistic opposition. Many sXers did seek to change youth culture, but their primary methods were very personal: leading by example, personally living the changes they sought, expressing a personal style, and creating a space to be "free" from their perceived constraints of peer pressure and conformity to mainstream culture.[15] As Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) noted in their study of punk identity, "We observed in particular that these oppositional narratives do not invoke radical activities or public displays of resistance; rather, they are fashioned around the routine, the personal and the everyday" (p. 204). Everyday resistance has political consequences (Scott 1985), and (collective) resistance and (individual) authenticity/realization are not mutually exclusive (Muggleton 2000). Buechler (1999, 151) wrote, "In

the case of life politics, the politicized self and the self-actualizing self become one and the same. The microphysics of power also points to identity as the battleground in contemporary forms of resistance" (see also Giddens 1991).

Though focused on personal methods of resistance, sXers understood their involvement in political terms as well.[16] Their abstinence from drugs, alcohol, and casual sex was an essential component of a broader resistance to dominant society and mainstream youth culture. As Buechler (1999) pointed out, "Although this form of politics originates on the microlevel of personal identity, its effects are not likely to remain confined to this level" (p. 150). The movement engages in what Giddens (1991, 214-15) called "life politics"—a "politics of choice," a "politics of lifestyle," a "politics of self-actualization," and a "politics of life decisions." Through their individual actions, sXers seek a "remoralizing of social life" (Buechler 1999, 150). For example, becoming a vegetarian or vegan may be an individualistic dietary choice, but when a subculture does so and advocates their choice, it opens up possibilities for other youth. As Leblanc (1999) noted, the intent to influence others is an important component of resistance: "Accounts of resistance must detail not only resistant acts, but the subjective intent motivating these as well. . . . Such resistance includes not only behaviors, but discursive and symbolic acts" (p. 18).

Looking at resistance through the lens of meanings, sites, and methods forces us to reexamine the "success" of subcultural resistance. Analyzing sXe's core values shows that members' understandings of resistance are many layered and contextual. The issue of resistance goes beyond whether a subculture resists dominant culture to how members construct resistance in particular situations and contexts. Certainly, sXe, like other subcultures, has illusory tendencies; the movement's contradictions include its antisexist yet male-centered ideology. However, examining sXe with the framework I suggest shows that involvement has real consequences for the lives of its members, other peer groups, and possibly mainstream society. Personal realization and social transformation are not mutually exclusive (Calhoun 1994). Although sXe has not created a revolution in either youth or mainstream culture, it has for more than twenty years, however, provided a haven for youth to contest these cultures and create alternatives.

NOTES

1. Straight edgers abbreviate straight edge as sXe. The *s* and the *e* stand for straight edge, and the *X* is the straight edge symbol.

2. Hardcore is a more aggressive, faster style of punk. Though punk and hardcore overlap, in the 1990s the two scenes increasingly became distinct. While present in both scenes, sXe is considerably more prevalent in the hardcore scene. The hardcore style is more clean-cut than punk.

3. Punks and sXers draw a sharp distinction between "shows" and "concerts." Shows attract a much smaller crowd, are less expensive, feature underground bands, often showcase local bands, and are set up by local kids in the scene at little or no profit. Concerts are large, commercialized, for-profit ventures typically featuring more mainstream bands.

4. Straight edge individuals never refer to themselves as *straight edgers* and find the term quite funny. It likely comes from media portrayals of the group. Adherents call themselves sXe "kids," no matter their ages. I use *straight edger* in this article simply for ease of communication.

5. See Muggleton (2000) for a discussion on the importance of grounding any subcultural analysis in members' subjective experiences.

6. I encountered one antiracist skinhead who also claimed to be sXe. He eventually dropped out of both groups, however. An older Latino sXer I knew, a veteran of the scene, claimed he was a skinhead many years ago.

7. Individuals or small groups produce 'zines filled with artwork, stories, record and concert reviews, band interviews, and columns on everything from police brutality and animal rights to homelessness and freeing journalist and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal from prison. 'Zines, like concerts, are generally DIY; that is, kids create them at home, distribute them, and rarely make any money off of them (in fact, 'zines often cost the producers a great deal of money).

8. Movements often appropriate and modify their oppressors' symbols. The gay and lesbian liberation movement changed the pink triangle from a Nazi death camp label for homosexuals into a symbol for unity and pride. The American Indian movement turned the American flag upside down to demonstrate its disgust with the U.S. government.

9. The community in Clearweather was very tight knit. In addition to shows, frequent potlucks, movie nights, parties, hanging out at popular campus locations, involvement in local animal rights activism, and even the occasional sleepover kept members in regular contact. Many sXe youth lived together. With the advent of e-mail and the Internet, sXe kids communicated via a virtual community around the country and sometimes the globe.

10. Veganism had become such a significant part of sXe by the late 1990s that many sXers gave it equal importance to living drug and alcohol free. Thus, many sXe vegans would self-identify as "vegan straight edge," and some bands identify as "vegan straight edge" rather than simply "straight edge." Veganism, while still widely practiced, had a declining presence after 2000.

11. All names are pseudonyms.

12. The popular bands Earth Crisis, Outspoken, and Good Clean Fun encouraged listeners to challenge homophobia. At one time, there was even a Web site dedicated to "Queer Edge."

13. Earth Crisis, one of the most popular sXe bands, sings, "An effective revolutionary, with the clarity of mind that I've attained."

14. Leblanc's (1999) work with punk girls illustrates multiple sites of resistance to hegemonic gender constructions. At the macro level, these young women resist society's dominant constructions of femininity; at the meso level, they resist gender roles in punk; and at the micro level, they challenge gender constructions in their families and focus on personal empowerment and self-esteem.

15. Leblanc (1999, 17) wrote, "Whereas subculture theorists conceptualize resistance as stylistic, and feminist theorists consider discursive accounts, recent critics of resistance theorizing have begun to examine the behavioral forms of resistance constructed by oppressed individuals in their everyday lives."

16. "To an increasing degree, problems of individual identity and collective action become meshed together: the solidarity of the group is inseparable from the personal quest" (Melucci 1996, 115).

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