CHAPTER 10

NEGOTIATING PROMISCUITY

Straight Edge (sXe), Sex, and the Self

Jamie L. Mullaney

Anyone familiar with the straight edge music scene (from here on, sXe) knows that claiming sXe means more than just being a consumer of hardcore music; participants construct a self by abstaining from a variety of practices. Although individual straight edgers (sXers) vary as to whether they include veganism, vegetarianism, and/or abstinence from caffeine and over-the-counter drugs as part of their "edge," almost all agree at least on a baseline of not smoking, not using alcohol and illegal drugs, and avoiding promiscuous sex. When asked to describe the origin of this commonality, sXers often point to Minor Threat's early 1980s song "Out of Step." Although their song "Straight Edge" predates "Out of Step," it is in the latter where the lyrics thought to plant the seeds of the movement—"(I) don't smoke, (I) don't drink, (I) don't fuck; At least I can fucking think"—appear.

Almost immediately following the song's release, lead singer Ian MacKaye came on the defensive, suggesting that he did not intend to start a movement or set a mandate; in fact, this emphatic stance on the matter led the band to rerecord the song in 1983 with an explanation from MacKaye that stated, "Listen, this is no set of rules. I'm not telling you what to do." By this point, however, other bands were actively promoting sXe, and kids were "X'ing up" the backs of their hands (using a marker to place the X, shorthand for the XXX triad of abstinence) before going to hardcore shows (in Azerrad 2001:140).

Despite the controversy surrounding the scene's origin three decades ago, sXers continue to invoke variations on these lyrics when talking about how they "do" sXe in the present. Straight edgers go beyond cigarettes and alcohol by including illegal drugs in their abstinence from substances, an addition that seems consistent with their emphasis on clean living (Haenfler 2006:43). In contrast to these absolute abstinences, the one related to sex has never been as cut-and-dried in its execution. MacKaye insisted that the "don't fuck" line was

not a charge to maintain one's virginity but instead referred to a disdain for "conquestual" sex, where "all other issues, everything else that's important, like friendships or other people's feelings, are secondary" (in Azerrad 2001:139).

While researchers of sXe have focused on the scene's situation among youth and music subcultures as a substance-free scene (Haenfler 2004b, 2006; Wood 2006), its gendered and masculine dynamics (Haenfler 2004a, 2006; Mullaney 2007) and issues of authenticity (Mullaney 2012; Williams 2006; Williams and Copes 2005), no one has grappled seriously with this element of promiscuous sex. Furthermore, when talking to sXers themselves, they, too, do not appear to have much to say about this particular abstinence.[1] Still, sXers' discourse surrounding promiscuity serves as a gateway into potentially rich insights into the meaning-making practices of sex as they relate to the sXe self. Unlike in the cases of substances, which entail total abstinence, sXers must navigate and negotiate the fuzzy boundaries of promiscuity. Although sXers insist that their decisions as to how to define and practice abstinence from promiscuity are personal in nature, they recognize that they do not exercise complete control in setting the parameters; they must give convincing social performances even in the face of loose and ambiguous guidelines.

In this chapter, I use the framework of a symbolic interactionist (SI) understanding of meaning-making as it relates to the self. Starting from the position that "the key to comprehending a social world is to understand it from the perspective of the people actively engaged in it" (Schweingruber and Berns 2011:306), I rely on the firsthand accounts of 47 sXers in 2003 to untangle some of the issues surrounding constructing a self largely based on abstinence when one of the abstinences itself appears somewhat "out of step." After an overview of the theoretical background, I explore how sXers create meaning out of the fuzzy concept of promiscuity and how they evaluate these practices in the context of the scene. I then discuss the longer-term advantages of these constructions of promiscuity, in particular, how they allow for a flexible yet convincing sXe self over time.

CREATING A MEANINGFUL SELF

Coined by Herbert Blumer and rooted largely in the writings of his mentor, George Herbert Mead, symbolic interactionism takes on the task of understanding how individuals create meaning as social actors. According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism rests on three interrelated premises:

> [First], human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. . . . [Second], the meaning of such things is derived

> from, or arises out of, social interaction that one has with one's fellows. [Third], these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (2)

These premises extend to the concept of the self, regarded as an object created and understood in a social context. Departing from theoretical perspectives that conceptualize the self as an already-present structure, symbolic interactionists insist that the self gets established through interaction (Blumer 1969; Jenkins 1996; Mead 1934; Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine 2010). In fact, "It is the social process itself that is responsible for the appearance of the self; it is not there as a self apart from this type of experience" (Mead 1934:142).

Reflexivity also plays a key role in this process, as the final stage in the self's development occurs when individuals find themselves able to take the attitude of the other. The ability to see oneself as others do, to develop what Cooley calls a "looking-glass self," occurs not in isolation as a philosophical exercise but in "the real social world of interacting individuals" (Adams and Sydie 2002:312). Far from being inconsequential, this process whereby "people come to see themselves as they think others see them" (Gecas and Burke 1995:51) solidifies a sense of self and highlights the interconnectedness between self and others. As Cooley sums up, "the imaginations which people have of one another are the *solid facts* of society" (in Adams and Sydie 2002:312). The self, then, remains "something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual" (Giddens, 1991:52). For Mead (1934), it is language that ultimately anchors the self in this process; as he insists, "I know of no other form of behavior than the linguistic in which the individual is an object to himself, and, so far as I can see, the individual is not a self in the reflexive sense unless he is an object to himself" (142).

Both classic and contemporary strands of symbolic interactionism appear when thinking about straight edgers' construction and performance of the self. First, sXers insist that their sXe identity does not just "happen" but arises through a series of intentional choices. As Patrick insists,

> You can't happen to be straight edge. I don't think anybody's born straight edge. Just because you're born, you haven't drank [sic] and you haven't smoked, you haven't done any drugs, you haven't had any promiscuous sex. It doesn't mean you're straight edge. There's plenty of people who do that and they're not straight edge. (Interview transcripts)

Patrick's quote illustrates a central point from my earlier work on abstinence (Mullaney 2006), that is, that not doing something alone does not qualify as abstinence; the behaviors have to be deliberately incorporated into the self.

Second, this group-level understanding of sXe surfaces in the intentional use of language and symbols. Not just anyone calls him- or herself sXe; when identifying as such, the accompanying abstinent practices are not random but instead hinge around the triad reflected in the XXX symbol. Interestingly, many sXers like to frame their abstinence choices as personal, believing that they exercise great agency in constructing their sXe identity. Patrick continues,

> I have always believed that they're not rules. A rule's made to be broken, pretty much. Like if there was no breaking a rule, then it wouldn't be in existence. And I don't really believe that these are rules because they are something I would never break. And also there have been times when I would change something, like I considered something a part of straight edge, and then I'd be able to change it later on, as my perception of whatever was changing, you know? (Interview transcripts)

Despite this claim that how one performs sXe is a personal decision, the practices of sXe cluster around the triad of abstinence (alcohol and drugs; cigarettes; promiscuous sex). Although many sXers cling to the idea of sXe's personal element, their general definitions of edge closely mirror those of others in the scene, and their individual practices fall very close in line with these definitions, especially in relation to drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. In fact, every single interviewee included strict abstinence from these substances in the general definition of *edge* as well as their personal practice of it. For these reasons, other sXers scoff at the idea that sXe is personal. With a hint of exasperation in his voice, Donnie says,

> What [sXe] means to me? I don't know if I can answer as much as what it means to me as to what I think it IS. Like I feel really weird when people say over and over again that it's a personal choice. I don't know what the fuck that means. If there's not some sort of structure to it, you can keep adapting it any way you want. (Interview transcripts)

Straight edgers reinforce a third and final connection to symbolic interactionism, reflexivity, in their discussions of potentially shifting practices related to edge. Straight edgers recognize that, while they might shift to vegetarianism or eliminate caffeine or over-the-counter drugs, they cannot easily alter the core abstinences of sXe if they wish to be recognized as such. Although straight edgers make space for a personal past in which individuals may have engaged in some of these acts, they take an especially rigid view not only on what one does in the present (gauged by the popular saying in the scene

"If you're not now, you never were") but also on what one will do in the future. For sXers, in order to be deemed authentic by others in the scene, edge must be a permanent and consistent part of one's identity. In the language of Goffman (1967), in order to give a convincing performance of the self, individuals must become self-regulating, recognizing that "some situations and acts and persons will have to be avoided" (43). In the context of sXe, this means no alcohol, no drugs, and no cigarettes now or ever, moving forward.

DEFINING AND MANAGING PROMISCUITY

The question remains as to how abstinence from promiscuous sex fits into this conceptualization of sXe. For a group that promotes such a rigid understanding of the self and total abstinence from substances, what does it mean to incorporate an abstinence that is so fuzzy and ambiguous? How can reflexivity occur when the practice of one X of the XXX may vary from sXer to sXer?

In order to begin to answer these questions, it is important to understand how sXers make meaning out of the blurry concept of promiscuity. Popular conceptualizations of abstinence frame it in cut-and-dried, black-and-white terms with a clear line separating the doing from not doing. Although sXers adopt this type of thinking in regard to substance use, the wide range in quantitative and qualitative understandings of promiscuous sex suggests that they understand this abstinence to be more of a negotiable zone than a defined point between not doing something and doing it one time (Mullaney 2006:108–112). To be sure, sXers' understandings of what counts as sexual abstinence in the first place appear far less cohesive than in the case of substances. Although two informants (both men) include total sexual abstinence in their definition of sXe, most sXers, like Cindy, believe that such views reflect more "hard-line" and militant views of the scene rather than those of everyday sXers. Indeed, 39 of the 47 sXers (26 men, 13 women) interviewed frame edge as including abstinence from promiscuous sex. The remaining six (five men, one woman) who fall outside of these two categories claim that they do not include sex as part of their edge at all. (It is also important to note that two of these six are married and see promiscuous sex as irrelevant to their lives.)

So what exactly is abstinence from promiscuous sex? As Karl notes, the "whole sex thing gets blurry." While variation in personal understanding exists, sXers are not at complete liberty to define promiscuity if they expect others to recognize their abstinence from it. Below, I include a sampling of the axes along which sXers define promiscuous sex both as a practice of edge and how it applies to their own lives.

Some Highlight the Type and Commitment of Relationship:

> "[Promiscuous sex refers to] any sexual relationships outside of a closed, caring relationship." (Rick)
>
> "Many feel that sex for the sake of sex, without commitment to your partner, is also not part of the movement." (Xavier)

Others press the notion of commitment one step further by adding the emotional tie of love for one's partner:

> "I will never have sex with another girl without meaning. I think sex is something sacred that should have love attached to it." (Eric)
>
> "Sex should be kept for relationships where you love the person and have intent to marry them." (Anne)
>
> "[Avoiding promiscuous sex means] not having like sex with just like any random person. Like for me it was like, if you want to have sex, have sex with somebody you love." (Tony)

For others, motivations also matter in addition to relational ties:

> "I don't consider that being edge, like just going around just seeing who you can sleep with. I see kids that will see a girl and will just be like, 'I'll get her in two weeks.'" (Russ)
>
> "With the sex thing, I do my best to have sex only in a relationship. I am not the town whore, but I am by no means a choirboy. I just don't let my actions and my motive be determined by lust." (Simon)

An exchange between Donnie and his fellow band members highlights the nonmutually exclusive quality of these definitions of promiscuity while further revealing the difficulty of agreeing on its parameters:

> Donnie: It's kind of tough to nail down the definition. I would say that I have a problem with people who kind of uh—how can I say this—like someone who actually says, "Man, tonight I'm going to get laid" or "Tonight I'm going to go out and try to get laid."
>
> Jay: It just seems like it takes love out of the equation.

Donnie: I can even accept love not being in the equation, but I can't like, I don't know. It can't be a game or . . . just be for your, I don't know. It's a weird area; it's not as clear-cut. And I just don't know what it is. I haven't figured it out.

JM (to Tucker): Do you want to add anything?

Tucker: I'll put it in the best word that I can, like it shouldn't be something like it's a hobby or something that they do for the pleasure of feeling good. And it shouldn't be something where you should do it for the gratification and feeling of, "I'm a big man 'cause I got laid last night" and like shit like that.

It is important to note, however, that this amorphous and variable character of promiscuous sex precludes neither the presence of boundaries nor the serious nature of transgressing them. After all, in a very social and public scene, sXers know that their claims to edge matter little should their actions not pass the scrutiny of their peers.

DOING EDGE, BREAKING EDGE

In addition to not always defining abstinence in uniform ways, individuals also adopt different strategies for "doing" abstinence. When examining abstinence from a more generic approach—including individuals who avoided practices ranging from diet to sex to technology—I identified two general strategies of abstinence, ones I termed "fence building" and "fire walking." Fence building describes how most people likely think about abstinence, that is, as a commitment to never engaging in the act one claims to not do. But fence building entails one additional element: It involves adding a layer of insulation or protection around one's abstinence. For example, someone who fence builds might not only avoid intercourse but also any acts that could be seen as leading up to intercourse, such as oral sex. Fire walking, however, takes an altogether different approach to abstinence. When individuals fire walk, they test how close to the fire they can get without getting burned. Taking that same example of sexual abstinence, someone who fire walks would perhaps engage in physically intimate acts while avoiding intercourse. Rather than regarding these practices as hypocritical, individuals who fire walk propose that toeing the line of abstinence (but not crossing it) serves as an identity-affirming act, and *not* one that discredits or disconfirms their abstinence.

Outsiders to the scene might expect the variability in definitions within the scene to manifest in fire walking when it comes to sexual abstinence. However,

just because the zone that lies between promiscuous and nonpromiscuous sex may appear a somewhat gray area does not mean that sXers practice this abstinence loosely. In fact, precisely because of this ambiguity, many sXers engage in acts of fence building as a way of adding an additional guarantee that they will not cross the line from acceptable sex to promiscuity, however defined. For Eric, fence building means dating largely within the scene. He says, "I have dated girls that were not [sXe], and my character and their characters would conflict greatly. I will never knowingly date another girl that partakes in any form of drinking, drugs, or promiscuous sex again." Quinn, too, discusses how his practices changed over time as he became more committed to his current girlfriend:

> When I was at the age when I knew I could hang out with a lot of girls and go to shows and hang out with girls from shows afterwards, I was in love with this girl, so I knew that I was in love with this girl and I wasn't going to jeopardize that by, you know, doing something stupid just for the satisfaction of one day or a one night stand or whatever. . . . I never look at girls on the street and say, "Oh, I wonder what it would be like to be with someone else?" I find it in my heart not to think that way, so I'm not tempted really. (Interview transcripts)

Although sXers express confidence in their own methods of avoiding promiscuity and what would violate their abstinence, consensus disappears when attempting to generalize to the scene.

Discrepancies arise when trying to delineate what would count as a transgression of those boundaries. When asked what would disqualify someone from convincingly claiming edge, the blurriness resurfaces. Smith grapples with this dilemma when he says,

> Who's to say that I broke edge because I'm having sex with this girl? Like nobody knows for sure if I'm in love with her. It's always that extremely grey area. Then, you know, it's like, "Well what counts as sex? And what counts as fucking?" And then you get into this whole big thing. (Interview transcripts)

To be sure, all sXers who include avoidance of promiscuous sex in their understanding of edge state that engaging in such acts would disqualify edge, yet there is no clear definition of what that means. Whereas sXers apply what could be thought of as an identity performance version of the one-drop rule of substances (that is, by suggesting that one cigarette, drink, or illegal substance would destroy one's claim to edge), they do not offer any comparable quantitative parameters of promiscuous sex (number of encounters, number of

partners). When asked what would disqualify someone from claiming edge, the short answer for almost every sXer hinges on drinking, smoking, using drugs, or engaging in promiscuous sex. The more revealing data, however, appear in the elaborations (and nonelaborations) of the short answer.

When sXers talk about breaking edge in the interviews, they experience no shortage of real-life examples. Almost every sXer reflects on someone who broke edge and what behaviors constituted that fall. Although sXers claim that participating in any of the abstinences violates edge, their examples suggest that all abstinences do not fare equally in their ability to break edge. Again, drinking, smoking, and using drugs *even one time* can nullify one's edge, but sXers remain conspicuously silent on whether one sexual act can make someone promiscuous. Instead, in the rare moments when sXers discuss breaking edge through a violation of sexual abstinence alone, they present them in extremely egregious forms. Jenna describes with distaste "a kid that wouldn't do drink or do drugs and considered himself straight edge but yet had sex with different girls every night. I hate that." While this kid did abstain from substances, the repeated, excessive actions ("every night") disqualified his edge in her mind.

More commonly, sXers do not discuss sexual transgressions alone but instead couch them among other ways of breaking edge (e.g., getting drunk). In these examples as well, sXers characterize a fall from edge as entailing a spiral into excess. Dylan, for example, says,

> I had two friends that were both straight edge at one time that when they sold out, went on this mad binge; they'd get drunk all the time and they were both into coke for a little while. They both got gonorrhea from this one girl. I like to make fun of them for it all the time because it's like if you were so serious, it never would have happened, you know. (Interview transcripts)

While Luke speaks at the hypothetical level, he offers a similar example:

> I mean, if, if someone came up to me and said, "Oh, I'm straight edge." You know, and I said, "Oh, okay. Cool." And then a friend of theirs comes up and says, "So how was the drunken frat orgy that you had, you know, each night for the past three weeks?" or something like that, I would just be like, "Hmmm, wait a second." (Interview transcripts)

Straight edgers may limit their examples of breaking edge through sex to situations of excess and/or in conjunction with other violations of edge for several reasons. First, due to the more private nature of sex, a sexual transgression of edge may simply be less visible and more difficult to "see" than

the more public acts of drinking and smoking. Second, as Haenfler (2006) suggests, perhaps "the movement's 'rule' against promiscuous sex is more difficult for members to enforce" precisely because "there is greater variation in belief regarding sex than substance use" (45). Finally, and not unrelated to the first two explanations, by opening the door to looser and more personal interpretations of the range of acceptable sexual practices, sXers simply cannot rely on a standard measuring rod to evaluate violations; instead, to use the old cliché applied to pornography, they believe that they will know it when they see it. Due to the porous understandings of promiscuity, violations of other abstinences—ones that do have agreed-upon parameters—can more swiftly discredit one's edge, especially when paired with questionable sex practices.

"I've Got the Straight Edge" (But Can It Change?).

Given that sXers exhibit less consistency as a scene as to whether abstinence from sex (promiscuous or otherwise) is a primary tenet of edge, interpret the parameters of sexual abstinence in different ways, and evaluate violations of sexual abstinence on a case-by-case basis, the importance of this abstinence comes into question. In this final section, I suggest that, even when varied and contested, definitions of promiscuity matter greatly in creating and providing meaning to the sXe self, not only on the level of the individual but also on the larger scale of the scene.

For women in the scene, the avoidance of promiscuous sex carves out a legitimate space for them in a hypermasculine, male-dominated scene. Many women discuss the double standard applied to them, evidenced by charges that sXe women participate in the scene only because of men. Not only do women endure the ironic charges of being sluts, they hear also the label "coat rack" hurled at them, an implication that women serve an incidental and passive role while men actively participate. Jenna describes this struggle:

> When I was starting to do shows, it was very hard for me to get respect. I was often treated like I must be some band member's girlfriend. To get respect in [the hardcore] community is hard enough and then be straight edge, you're saying blatantly, "No, I'm not gonna drink with you; I'm not gonna have sex with you. I'm not here for that. I'm here for something more." [As a form of protest], women make shirts that say "Coat Rack Attack." (Interview transcripts)

In addition to the benefits for women in combating sexism, abstinence from promiscuous sex offers a less recognized benefit for all sXers: the possibility of

a flexible self over time. On the one hand, the notion of a flexible self runs counter to how sXers regard their edge. In fact, most sXers view their edge as fixed, permanent, and unchanging moving forward. As Donnie suggests,

> Straight edge is not just the ACT of not drinking and not smoking and not having promiscuous sex. It's the act of saying, "I am NEVER going to drink; I am NEVER going to do drugs; I am NEVER going to have promiscuous sex." It's not just the physical not doing it; it's the mental saying, "I'm NEVER going to do this. This is something that I reject so wholeheartedly that there's no chance that I'm ever going to do this again." (Interview transcripts)

Still, when young kids claim edge, they often do so without imagining the self through time. Donnie continues,

> That's why I feel like it's such a mishandled term because I really feel that there are people who say that they're straight edge who really haven't thought about the future of their life and who really haven't thought about what their life is going to be like when they're 30 or 40 or 50 years old. Can they still maintain these ideals and objectives? I don't think they can. (Interview transcripts)

Young kids break edge frequently in part because they do not foresee life changes ahead of them. Many older edgers lament that kids claim at such a young age before fully understanding the gravity of pronouncements. But kids also break edge because the strict parameters surrounding substances force them out should they experiment or choose to drink or smoke on occasion. However, Kier illustrates how abstinence from promiscuous sex—precisely in its fuzziness—allows for change over time in a way that the other abstinences associated with edge do not. He says,

> I think that straight edge has a very rigid definition itself, but my interpretation of what is and what isn't is somewhat flexible and fluid. And, it's something that I'm still trying to explore and figure out what is permissible and what isn't. [For example], if I don't agree with the institution of marriage, then what is promiscuous sex within a straight edge rubric? And so, you know, if I don't believe that in order, if I don't believe in church-sanctioned sexual activity, then what is the moment in my life in which I can say, "This is fine and not promiscuous?" So it opens up a lot of really heavy problems to kind of work through and I don't know if straight edge has successfully resolved them. (Interview transcripts)

This is not to say that sXers frame the sexual abstinence component in loose terms because they intend to act promiscuously in the future. Nonetheless, conceptualizing abstinence in such a manner allows for behavioral change over time in ways that the rigid framing of abstinence from alcohol and substances does not.

Most sXers would vehemently oppose the notion that one can use drugs or alcohol in moderate ways (or even one time) because partaking in them violates the clean living principle of the movement. However, their insistence of avoiding promiscuous sex (and not sex entirely) suggests that certain behaviors are not inherently dirty or tainting in and of themselves. As sXers themselves make clear, in the case of sex, the act itself does not threaten to contaminate or discredit one's edge, but *how* one participates in the act may. Rather than being static, the meaning of these behaviors is one that sXers must navigate and negotiate as situations arise and life circumstances change.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary theorizing suggests that identities that are more group-based (versus role- or person-based) in nature assume more uniformity of perception (Burke and Stets 2009:119), and, "because the meanings (responses) to the objects and categories are shared, they also form the basis of expectations for the behavior of others" (15–16). As a result, issues of authenticity, a focus "on the motivational implications of beliefs about self with regard to what is real and what is false" (Gecas 1991:177), frequently surround group identities. In its contested and varied meanings, the tenet of avoiding sexual promiscuity presents a challenge for sXers as they try to make sense of and assess their decisions and practices surrounding sex (as well as those of others) as they relate to edge. Unlike the clarity in relation to drugs and alcohol, evaluating sexual practices presents murky terrain in trying to determine who is "truly" sXe and who is not.

Although sXers and researchers alike remain fairly silent on the avoidance of promiscuity, this abstinence provides rich insight into the sociological and social phenomenon of meaning-making as it relates to the self. While many sXers like to insist that their interpretative understandings of sex are personal in nature, sXers must ultimately concede that, in practice, their actions must withstand the scrutiny of their peers in the scene. As Goffman (1967) notes, while "the general capacity to be bound by moral rules may well belong to the individual, [the] particular set of rules which transforms him . . . derives from requirements established in the ritual organization of social encounters" (45).

Even with room for personal variation, then, sXers quickly learn to see themselves as other sXers do, recognizing the limits on their actions if they desire others to see them as credible and authentic.

The constraints on their ability to freely improvise on the sexual dimension of their edge notwithstanding, sXers collectively challenge popular notions that "real" abstinence demands a complete refusal to engage in a given act but instead demonstrate that individuals can engage in sex in a manner deemed appropriate. In doing so, sXers model how flexibility and fluidity do not preclude the creation and experiencing of a self that is both meaningful and adaptable to change over time. Despite the unwillingness (or perhaps) inability of many younger sXers to acknowledge it, interviews with older sXers reveal that edge *does* change over time (Haenfler 2006; Torkelson 2010) in both practice and meaning. Burke and Stets (2009) insist that individuals must be able to imagine the self in the future in order to move it effectively from point A to point B in time (20). Rather than complicating or discrediting their edge, the fluid nature of promiscuity affords sXers the opportunities to negotiate and modify the meanings of their edge rather than forcing them to leave it behind.

NOTE

1. In the present study, this shortage of commentary may have to do with the fact that the interview guide centered largely around gender relations within the scene. Nonetheless, even though it was not the focus of the interviews, sXers do have a lot to say about not smoking, drinking, and using drugs, especially in proportion to their discussions of sex.