

Straight Edge: A Drug-free Identity



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BACKGROUND: *Straight edge (sXe) is a drug-free identity for young people on the HC/punk scene. Little is known about the dynamics behind adopting and giving up the identity.* **AIMS:** *How do young Czechs adopt sXe? What are its attributes and the factors for pursuing it?* **METHODS:** *Literature review; qualitative analysis of semi-standardised interviews with ten current and former sXe members from Prague.* **RESULTS:** *In addition to being drug-free, the sXe identity is associated with punk music, progressive attitudes, human and animal rights, self-control, and tolerance. It is adopted through positive role models (peers, musicians) rather than persuasion. Perceived pros include*

higher levels of life satisfaction and self-actualisation, while the cons include a lower ability to relax and social isolation. The identity is maintained through participation in the sXe community. It tends to be abandoned with increasing age and changes in social roles and environment. **CONCLUSIONS:** *Active participation in the sXe community is an important protective factor for staying drug-free. sXe inspires drug prevention by enabling adolescents to adopt a positive identity and grow up in their own way while staying drug-free.*

KEY WORDS: STRAIGHT EDGE – SUBCULTURE – IDENTITY – HC/PUNK SCENE – ABSTINENCE

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