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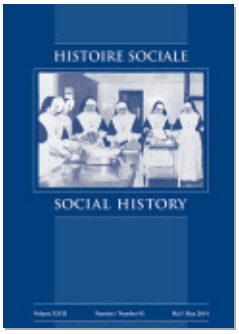

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Hitchin' a Ride in the 1970s: Canadian Youth Culture and the Romance with Mobility

LINDA MAHOOD*

Today, a "gap year" is regarded as an excellent opportunity for a young person to travel for his or her personal growth. However, in the 1970s, civil society saw dropping out of school or work and drifting around as the sign of youth alienation and crazy hippie ideas. In 1969, the Trudeau government struck a task force to investigate why thousands of middle-class young people were observed hitchhiking along the Trans-Canada Highway. This article looks at the federal government's reaction to the "transient youth" subculture through the lens of what hitchhiking meant to restless teenagers and twenty-somethings. In the early 1970s, Canadian thumb-travellers subverted hegemonic class and gender expectations by putting a new twist on the rituals associated with traditional Canadian tourism. By self-consciously adorning themselves with backpacks, beads, Canada flags, and long bushy hair or by flipping a peace sign to oncoming traffic, they performed rituals of a romantic subculture. Then, as now, their road stories highlight more than the monotonous and carnivalesque moments of alternative travel; they can be read as key biographical moments when understandings of landscapes, national identity, and citizenship were formed.

Prendre une année de congé est aujourd'hui perçu comme une excellente occasion pour les jeunes de voyager à des fins de croissance personnelle. Dans les années 1970, cependant, la société civile considérait le fait de quitter l'école ou le travail pour aller à gauche et à droite comme le signe de l'aliénation de la jeunesse et des folles idées hippies. En 1969, le gouvernement Trudeau a mis sur pied un groupe de travail pour analyser les raisons pour lesquelles on voyait des milliers de jeunes de la classe moyenne faire de l'auto-stop le long de la Transcanadienne. Le présent article examine la réaction du gouvernement fédéral à la sous-culture des jeunes nomades sous l'angle de la signification de l'auto-stop pour de fébriles adolescents ou jeunes dans la vingtaine. Au début des années 1970, les auto-stoppeurs canadiens ont bouleversé les attentes – celles d'une classe hégémonique

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et celles par rapport au genre – en donnant une coloration nouvelle aux rituels associés au tourisme canadien traditionnel. En s'affublant consciemment de sacs à dos, de colliers, de drapeaux canadiens, en portant les cheveux longs en broussaille ou en agitant des symboles de la paix au-devant des automobilistes, ils accomplissaient les rituels d'une sous-culture romantique. Comme de nos jours, leurs récits de voyage mettaient alors en évidence plus que les moments monotones ou carnavalesques du voyage non conformiste; ils peuvent être vus comme des moments biographiques clés au cours desquels les jeunes se formaient une conception des paysages, de l'identité nationale et de la citoyenneté.

TRAVEL ALWAYS occurs within a social and historical context.[1] Today, a "gap year" is regarded as an excellent opportunity for the next generation of "pillars of society" to take short vacations "from affluence" and travel for their own personal growth and self-fulfilment.[2] The expectation is that, in the process, young travellers will accumulate cultural capital for future careers in the global marketplace. However, a couple of generations ago, social workers, teachers, and parents believed that dropping out of school or work and drifting around were the actions of alienated young people with crazy hippie ideas. In 1969, Canadian adults were so anxious about "transient youth" and the "new style" of vagrancy that the Trudeau government struck a task force to investigate why thousands of middle-class teenagers and university students were seen hitchhiking along the Trans-Canada Highway.[3] At the time, many communities across Canada viewed the "summer army" of hitchhikers as "going nowhere in search of adventure."[4]

Academic interest in alternative forms of travel such as hostelling and backpacking is growing; however, very little is known about the hitchhikers of the late baby-boom cohort, who were the "pioneers of alternative tourism."[5]

1 Christopher Howard, "Speeding Up and Slowing Down: Pilgrimage and Slow Travel Through Time" in Simone Fullagar, Kevin Markwell, and Erica Wilson, eds., *Slow Tourism: Experiences and Mobilities* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2012), p. 11.

2 Anders Sørenson, "Backpacker Ethnography," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2003), p. 849; Greg Richards and Julie Wilson, "Drifting Towards the Global Nomad" in Richards and Wilson, eds., *The Global Nomad: Backpacker Travel in Theory and Practice* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2004), p. 6; Kate Simpson, "Dropping Out or Signing Up? The Professionalization of Youth Travel," *Antipode*, vol. 37, no. 3 (June 2005), p. 448.

3 The term "transient youth" was coined during the St-Adele Consultation. Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth: Report of an Inquiry in the Summer of 1969* (Ottawa: Canadian Welfare Council, 1970), pp. 5, 9-10; John A. Byles, *Alienation, Deviance and Social Control: A Study of Adolescents in Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: Interim Research Project on Unreached Youth, 1969), pp. 7-10, 77-78.

4 "Youth Going Nowhere in Search of Adventure," *Globe and Mail*, July 18, 1970.

5 Greg Richards and Julie Wilson, "Widening Perspectives in Backpacker Research" in Richards and Wilson, eds., *The Global Nomad*, p. 265; Jo-Anne Hecht and David Martin, "Backpacking and Hostel-Picking: An Analysis from Canada," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* vol. 18, no. 1 (2006), pp. 70-71; Marg Tiyce and Erica Wilson, "Wandering Australia: Independent Travelers and Slow Journeys Through Time and Space" in Fullagar, Markwell, and Wilson, eds., *Slow Tourism*, pp. 115, 117; Stephen Wearing, Deborah Stevenson, and Tamara Young, *Tourist Cultures: Identity, Place and the Traveler* (London: Sage Publications, 2012), p. 47; Sørenson, "Backpacker Ethnography," p. 852. For Canada, see Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties* (Vancouver: New Start Books, 2010), p. 18; Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 206; Crystal Luxmore, "Vice, Vagabonds, and VD: The

Given that civil society depends upon charity, trust, diversity, and tolerance, we have much to learn from the intimacy and risk-taking that hitchhiking implies.[6] This research stands at the junction of several scholarly approaches to youth subculture, mobility, and social problems. It is indebted to Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical sociology, Stanley Cohen's (1972) and Mike Brake's (1977) pioneering studies of comparative youth subculture, and John Urry's work on automobility and the tourist gaze, which emphasizes the sensual, visual, and bodily nature of the tourist performance.[7] Looking at the federal government's reaction to the "transient youth" subculture, this article examines what hitchhiking meant to restless teenagers and twenty-somethings and how they made sense of the liminal moments in late adolescence when travel was part of their subcultural identity.[8] The links between the public spectacle of hitchhiking, the performance of youth subculture, and the construction of a social problem lie in Erik Cohen's assertion that "the drifters" of the 1970s were true rebels of the tourist establishment.[9] Their road stories highlight more than the monotonous and carnivalesque moments of alternative travel; they can reveal key biographical moments when, as tourism research on youth travel has shown, understandings of national identity and citizenship are formed.

In the early twentieth century, due to the expansion of the automobile industry, highway construction, the "democratization" of car ownership, and the association of automobility with "the good life," social status became connected to "road status."[10] While car ownership made various modes of private and public travel possible, hitchhiking afforded the carless thumb-traveller an extraordinary opportunity for physical and social encounters along the motorscape. From the perspective of the tourist gaze, hitchhiking and backpacking were romantic, individual, social, and collective forms of travel.[11] To many impressionable

Skyrocketing Popularity of Hitchhiking During the Sixties and Seventies Led to a Generation of 'Modern Nomads'," *The Walrus*, July 2008, accessed March 22, 2011.

6 Graeme Chesters and David Smith, "The Neglected Art of Hitch-Hiking: Risk, Trust and Sustainability," *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2001), section 1.2; Erik Cohen, "Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter-Tourism," *International Journal of Comparative Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1-2 (March 1973), p. 90.

7 John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 2002). The individual solitary gaze is the romantic gaze and the collective gaze is levelled at sights and events where crowds of fellow-gazers add to the experience. See also Erving Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1961); Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 2002); Mike Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain, and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1985).

8 Chandra Mukerji sees hitchhiking as a "voluntary role." Hitchhikers may "spend only a few months or summers on the road, never committing themselves to the road in the way that a worker may become committed to their jobs, but they can develop stakes in making life on the road a stable, if not long-term, source of identity." See Chandra Mukerji, "Bullshitting: Road Lore among Hitchhikers," *Social Problems*, vol. 25, no. 3 (February 1978), pp. 246-247.

9 Erik Cohen, "Toward a Sociology of International Tourism," *Social Research*, vol. 39, no. 1 (Spring 1972), p. 177.

10 Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The City and the Car," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 24, no. 4 (December 2000), pp. 737, 749.

11 Irena Ateljevic and Stephen Doorne, "Theoretical Encounters: A Review of Backpacker Literature" in Richards and Wilson, eds., *The Global Nomad*, p. 62; Torun Elsrud, "Risk Creation in Traveling: Backpacker Adventure Narration," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 38, no. 3 (January 2001), p. 600;

teenagers, a hitchhiking trip was not unlike an hallucinogenic drug trip. Both experiences offered new realms of consciousness and an exotic and authentic experience.[12] The embodied performance of hitchhiking required the presence of other people, too. It was collective and akin to being present at a "happening." Or in the language of the sixties' counterculture, "making the scene."[13] From the perspective of host communities, or the "local gaze," the public spectacle of youth hitchhiking was a social problem.[14] One dominant truth at the time about youth hitchhiking was that it was naive, misguided, and inviting trouble to expect to get something for nothing.[15]

Figure 1: "Hitchhikers on the Trans-Canadian Highway." Source: University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, Winnipeg Tribune Fonds, 1972.

Chiam Noy, "Traveling for Masculinity: The Construction of Bodies/Spaces in Israeli Backpackers' Narratives" in A. Prichard, N. Morgan, I Atelijevic, and C. Harris, eds., *Tourism and Gender: Embodiment, Sensuality and Experience* (Oxford: CAB International, 2007), p. 48.

12 Cohen, "Towards a Sociology," pp. 89-90; Jay Vogt, "Wandering: Youth and Travel Behavior," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 4, no. 1 (September/October 1976), p. 33; Phil Macnaughton and John Urry, eds., *Bodies of Nature* (London: Sage in association with Theory, Culture, and Society, 2001), p. 2.

13 Luke Desforges, "Traveling the World, Identity and Travel Biography," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 27, no. 4 (2000), pp. 10-11.

14 Darya Maoz, "The Mutual Gaze," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2005), pp. 221-239, and "The Conquerors and the Settlers: Two Groups of Young Israeli Backpackers in India" in Richards and Wilson, eds., *The Global Nomad*, pp. 115-116.

15 Jeremy Packer, *Mobility without Mayhem: Safety, Cars and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 91.

The most informative primary sources on the topic of youth hitchhiking are contemporary newspaper accounts, the reports by the Canadian Welfare Council's *Transient Youth Inquiry*,[16] and oral history narratives from people who took long and short trips during the late 1960s and the 1970s. Travel narratives are an essential part of tourism and, more generally, part of the pleasures of leisure travel. Chandra Mukerji argues that "road talk" is a special kind of oral travel story because the pleasure of telling a hitchhiking story is as important to the narrator as the content of the story. For Mukerji, therefore, road stories sit somewhere between "road reality," a "fish-story," and "scary bullshit."[17] More succinctly, Chaim Noy's work on Israeli backpackers suggests that post-trip travel adventure narratives illuminate hegemonic gender expectations and the ways in which young travellers resist, improvise, and subvert normative discourses.[18]

The data for this paper consist of written accounts and open-ended interviews with 100 women and men of the late baby-boom generation who participated in the "transient youth" movement.[19] A snowball sample was created in three ways. First, to capture the romantic and collective travel gazes, I enlisted the assistance of friends who had been hitchhikers or knew hitchhikers. Second, I used *Google* to locate travellers and youth workers who were quoted in contemporary newspaper reportage about youth hostels. Finally, following public talks and press interviews, many people contacted me to offer their stories about hitchhiking and hostelling in the late 1960s and the 1970s.[20] To capture the full public reaction to hitchhiking, I compared interviewees' travel accounts with media coverage, the reports of social welfare and voluntary agencies, and government records on transient youth. The challenge of travel narratives is how to interpret the way people recreate tales over time. In this research, the tellers-as-responsible-adults were asked to reflect upon their "self-imposed" rite of passage and the reactions of significant others to their adolescent risk-taking.[21] Long after the crisis of adolescence had passed, interviewees' travel memories captured the emotion and imagination of

16 In 1970, the Canadian Welfare Council was reconfigured and renamed the Canadian Council of Social Development. See Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth;* Canadian Welfare Council, *More About Transient Youth* (Ottawa: Canadian Welfare Council, 1970); Canadian Council of Social Development, *Transient Youth, 70-71: Report of an Inquiry about Programs in 1970, and Plans for 1971* (Ottawa: Department of National Health and Welfare, 1970); Canadian Council of Social Development, *Youth, '71* (Ottawa: Department of National Health and Welfare, 1972).

17 One traveller warned Mukerji that hitchhikers like to bullshit. By this he meant they told great stories that may not be entirely true, but were valuable nonetheless. Like Georg Simmel, Mukerji sees "bullshitting as a form of sociability" ("Bullshitting," pp. 241, 244).

18 Noy, "Traveling for Masculinity," p. 67.

19 Reginald Bibby defines the baby boomers as born between 1945 and 1965 in *The Boomer Factor* (Bastion: Toronto, 2006), p. 3; Doug Owram says that "if you were born in 1960 you are more likely a Generation X-er in outlook and experience, what ever the demographers say" (*Born at the Right Time,* introduction). See also Lesley Andres and Johanna Wyn, *The Making of a Generation: The Children of the 1970s in Adulthood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 33.

20 Interview with Mark Forsythe, "Hitchhiking in 1971," *BC Almanac* (CBC, Vancouver, June 10, 2011), https://gpodder.net/podcast/bc-almanac-from-cbc-radio-british-columbia/ hitchhiking-in-1971/; Interview with Anna Maria Tremonti, "Hitch-Hiking Eco-Friendly Transportation or Risky Ride," *The Current* (CBC, Toronto, March 13, 2013), http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/episode/2013/03/13/hitch-hiking-eco-friendly-transportation-or-risky-ride/.

21 Sørenson, "Backpacker Ethnography," p. 853.

travel.[22] No doubt, in the construction of this generation's coming-of-age story, some details about "back in the day" when "everyone" was hitchhiking were exaggerated, romanticized, manipulated, or omitted.

By the middle of the twentieth century, "the triumph of the automobile in everyday life was undeniable."[23] In the 1920s, there were approximately one million automobiles in Canada. According to the Motor Vehicle Registry, automobile ownership doubled between 1945 and 1962 and doubled again by 1964. Fifty per cent of householders owned a car in 1953, and by 1960, two-thirds had a motor vehicle.[24] Automobile hitchhiking began in the 1920s with girls and boys looking for rides to the beach or the ball diamond or simply seeking the novel experience of riding in a car.[25] College students in letterman sweaters thumbed to campus, and universities had hitchhiking clubs and contests. During the Second World War, servicemen and women in uniform hitchhiked to the military base.[26] Entire families were on the road during the Depression, thumbing toward greener pastures.[27] In Canada, hitchhiking was a violation of various sections of the *Highway Traffic Act* of the 1930s. However, the law was rarely enforced because the purpose was to protect drivers from harassment by "road beggars" and, by extension, from feeling guilty about passing someone in need. The police usually issued warnings to troublesome "knights of the highway" rather than fine them or put them in jail.[28] From the pre-1970s perspective of the double-sided mutual tourist gaze, picking up a hitchhiker could be variously regarded as an act of charity, patriotism, paternalism, or chivalry and a real or imagined danger.[29]

Following World War II, cold war paranoia generated a suspicion of strangers, and motorists were cautioned against picking up unfamiliar hitchhikers. In 1950, *Reader's Digest* magazine depicted a wave of American road crime by hitchhikers, and crime fiction, cinema noir, and urban legends of vanishing hitchhikers

22 Wearing, Stevenson, and Young, *Tourist Cultures*, p. 47.

23 Steve Penfold, *The Donut: A Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 54.

24 *Ibid.*; Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, p. 181.

25 John T. Schlebecker, "An Informal History of Hitchhiking," *Historian*, vol. 20, no. 3 (May 1958), p. 311; "Just Kids' Safety: Here's Where We Meet," *Globe and Mail*, July 9, 1932; "Along Boy Scout Trails; Discourage Hitch-Hiking," *Globe and Mail*, December 10, 1932; "Along Boy Scout Trails; Hitch-Hiking Taboo," *Globe and Mail*, June 3, 1933; Robert Sellow, Juliana Shellow, Elliot Liebow, and Elizabeth Unger, "Suburban Runaways of the 1960," *Monograph for the Society of Research in Child Development*, vol. 42, no. 3 (1967), pp. 29, 31.

26 Schlebecker, "An Informal History of Hitchhiking," p. 311; "A Canadian's Journey: Hitch-hiking round the World," *The Scotsman*, September 14, 1928; "Any Mode of Travel Welcome as Youths Head for Congress," *Globe and Mail*, June 22, 1939; "Two Students Hitch-hike 600 Miles to Spend Week-end at Home," *Globe and Mail*, November 12, 1938; "Young Hitch-Hikers Have Bennett's Blessing," *Globe and Mail*, July 27, 1934; "He Thumbed his Way Through College," *The Reader's Digest*, May 1941, pp. 77-78; "Grows With Hitch-Hiking Among Students," *Globe and Mail*, December 12, 1935; "Emily Post Gives Nod to Hitch-hiking and Frames Rules for 'Defense Debutants'," *New York Times*, December 23, 1942.

27 "Hitch-hikes across Huron to Save Farm," *Globe and Mail*, January 30, 1935; A photograph of the River Family from Vankoughnet, Ontario, includes three women, two girls and an eight-month old baby under headline: "Hitch-Hikers – Even the Baby," *Globe and Mail*, August 1, 1938.

28 Section 39, Section 1 of the *Highway Traffic Act* provided a fine from $5 to $25 for "soliciting a ride from any motor vehicle on the traveled portion of the public highway." See also "Hitch-Hiking Pass Jobs on Farms, Say Police," *Globe and Mail*, July 10, 1935.

29 Maoz, "The Mutual Gaze," pp. 221-239; Schlebecker, "An Informal History of Hitchhiking," pp. 306, 314; Sheller and Urry, "The City and the Car," pp. 741, 748.

dramatized the violence perpetrated upon innocent motorists by hitchhiking ex-cons, wayward women, and teenaged gangs.[30] By the late 1960s, hitchhiking was associated with "drifters, deviants and escapees," and sociological theories regarded it as a quasi-deviant mode of escape for runaways, particularly teenage girls.[31] Nevertheless, oral history interviews show that Canadian girls and boys hitchhiked a lot. For many, it "seemed like the right way to travel."[32] An Ontario boy said hitchhiking "was not scary back then."[33] A girl from Edmonton said, "it was fun to see who might pick you up."[34] By the summer of 1967, the sight of thousands of young Canadians thumbing rides on the "summer roads" led many motorists to conclude that hitchhiking was a "craze" stemming from youth's performance of the 1960s counterculture that rejected middle-class values and lifestyles.[35]

In 1969, the Trudeau government responded to a barrage of complaints about "drop outs" and the drugs, dirtiness, and sexual diseases that "The Establishment" associated with the transient lifestyle by commissioning the *Transient Youth Inquiry*. The final draft of this Canadian Welfare Council report included submissions from a transatlantic network of professionals, semi-professionals, grassroots youth workers, and volunteers with social service agencies, urban planning councils, city hospitals, and charities. Notably represented were the Canadian Mental Health Association, Department of Youth and Education, Jewish Child and Family Services, Travelers' Aid Society, Canadian Youth Hostel Association, Children's Aid Society, RCMP, Catholic Family and Children's Services, University Settlement, Student Christian Movement, Parks and Recreation, Manpower Department, and the YMCA and YWCA. Youth experts' impressions of the transient youth problem were varied and contradictory. The most open-minded viewpoint was that young people on the road were "motivated by the wish to 'see and to know Canada' and hitchhiking afforded the opportunity."[36] The most conservative assessment was that transient youth were "social misfits" who had dropped out of society and "into a private world of rootlessness, drink, drugs and madness."[37] Intertwined within the general concern about the "new-style" of vagrancy was the "special problem" facing young women whose "whole chance

30 Don Wharton, "Thumbs Down on Hitchhikers! Too Many Rob and Kill," *Reader's Digest*, April 1950, pp. 21-25; *The Violent Years*, directed by William Morgan (Alpha Video, 1956, 2003); *The Night Holds Terror*, directed by Andrew Stone (Columbia Pictures, 1955). See Schlebecker, "An Informal History of Hitchhiking," pp. 315-316; Tim Cresswell, "Embodiment, Power and the Politics of Mobility: The Case of Female Tramps and Hobos," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1999), pp. 179-181; Richard K. Beardsley and Rosalie Hankey, "A History of the Vanishing Hitchhiker," *California Folklore Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 1 (January 1943), pp. 19-22; Ernest W. Baughman, "The Hitchhiking Ghost," *Hoosier Folklore*, vol. 6, no. 2 (June 1947), pp. 77-78; Packer, *Mobility without Mayhem*, pp. 84-87.

31 Chesters and Smith, "The Neglected Art of Hitch-Hiking," p. 4.1; Sørenson, "Backpacker Ethnography," p. 852.

32 Personal correspondence with #48, January 19, 2011.

33 Personal correspondence with #31, June 20, 2011.

34 Interview with #91, June 22, 2011.

35 Aronsen, *City of Love*, p. 18.

36 Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth*, p iii.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

of happiness" was being "destroyed."[38] To address the most pressing problems that young people on the road posed to the community, the task force recommended developing a temporary youth hostel programme that would ease the transition of transient youth back into mainstream society.

Youth mobility and travel patterns had long been a concern of civil society. In the eighteenth century, young aristocrats misbehaved on their Grand Tours of Europe; at the other end of the social spectrum, travelling apprentices clashed with the law over public drunkenness, lewd behaviour, and street brawling. In the nineteenth century, missionaries and social reformers described youth restlessness as *Wanderlust*. They worried that an "addiction to travel" could cause juvenile delinquency.[39] In the post WWII period, youth experts also used the concept of *Wanderlust* to explain why teenagers asserted a restless desire for independence and an intense yearning to get way from home and family and to be on their own or with peers.[40]

In the 1960s, a number of global, social, and demographic factors influenced the late baby-boom hitchhiking subculture. Canadian youth graduated from high school in unprecedented numbers, and new universities and colleges opened. Subsidized tuition and student loans gave young people from diverse backgrounds unparalleled opportunities for post-secondary education, which delayed their transition from school to full-time work and other adult responsibilities and wreaked havoc in the summer job market. The resulting youth movement expanded the generational consciousness of young people beyond that of their parents' generation and motivated them to seek "authentic experiences" such as travel and to "run" their own lives without schedules and obligations.[41] These social changes created an environment in which many radical and rebellious youth subcultures in Britain, Europe, and North America thrived.[42] In many ways, the transient youth subculture flourished among white middle-class youth the way other subcultures did: by borrowing values from the dominant culture and other subcultures and creating a unique constellation of symbolic behaviours and rituals that attracted new recruits.[43]

In North America, leisure activities, holidays, and travel were constructed through discourses of rest and relaxation following a period of hard work and discipline. For many impressionable teenagers, a hitchhiking trip promised

38 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

39 Judith Adler, "Youth on the Road: Reflections on the History of Tramping," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 12 (1985), pp. 341, 342.

40 Rolf E. Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence* (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 56-57.

41 Andres and Wyn, *The Making of a Generation*, p. 33. Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), argues that some late baby-boomers turned away from materialism and the conformity of suburban imagery (p. 9). Abigail J. Stewart and Cynthia M. Torges, "Social, Historical and Developmental Influences on the Psychology of the Baby Boomer at Midlife" in Susan Krauss Whitbourne and Sherry L. Willis, eds., *The Baby Boomers Grow Up: Contemporary Perspectives in Midlife* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), say that late baby-boomers were engaged and concerned observers of the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, but they were too young to have been active or mobilized like the early boomers (p. 32).

42 Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, p. 152.

43 Cohen, "Nomads from Affluence," p. 93; Wearing, Stevenson, and Young, *Tourist Cultures*, p. 103; Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, p. 18.

freedom and personal growth and, in the dialect of the subculture, it was "cool."[44] Due to their middle-class status, liberal education, and dependence upon technology and consumer goods, notably automobiles and backpacks, hitchhikers shared many progressive middle-class tastes and values. Interviewees stated that, by the time they had reached adolescence, many had taken long-distance car trips with their families and internalized from their neighbourhoods and the media the link between automobility and the good life. A Peterborough teenager got the idea to hitchhike to Vancouver from some "hippie people" she met when she was twelve years old. They had "backpacks on their backs and she "fell in love with the way they looked." She plastered her bedroom with the pictures she drew of them dressed in their "bellbottoms and sandals, and long hair and beards and guitars and stuff.... It looked cool." She told her mother, "These are all the people I am going to meet when I go to Vancouver."[45] A seventeen-year-old Guelph girl "loved the hippies" too. She wanted to buy a pair of Huarache sandals, head to the West Coast, and "be cool."[46] A fifteen-year old boy thought it would be "cool" to hitchhike across the country like his older brothers.[47] A Vancouver Island teenager said everyone she "wanted to be like, was hitchhiking."[48] For them, hitchhiking was not like a traditional family vacation. In the jargon of the subculture, it was a "trip": a social status and a style of life motivated by the desire for an authentic experience.[49]

In addition to the desire to be cool, hitchhikers were motivated to travel for a variety of other reasons. For many, it marked a milestone such as completing a semester or graduating. Many "left for cross country trips the morning following graduation."[50] A college student thought that "hitchhiking from Colorado to Santa Fe" would be "a real adventure" and a well-deserved "break" from studying for her undergraduate degree.[51] A Vancouver tire plant employee saw his hitchhiking trip as an alternative form of labour. In 1967, he was 21-years-old and "the hippie thing was starting ... and there was a lot of questioning going on…Middle-age men" at the factory were "getting divorced" and he did not "want to become like them." His travelling friend told him "great stories" about hitchhiking. "One day [he] decided, that's it, I quit!"[52] Others saw travel as a solution to a personal crisis. One Ontarian said he "was doing poorly at school from having too much fun" and there were "difficulties with his parents and a girlfriend." He decided to thumb to Florida and "just hang out for a while."[53] These young people were not rejecting

44 Julie Wilson and Greg Richards, "Backpacker Icons: Influential Literary 'Nomads' in the Formation of Backpacker Identities" in Richards and Wilson, eds., *The Global Nomad*, pp. 123-125.
45 Interview with #87, June 15, 2011.
46 Interview with #80, June 27, 2011.
47 Interview with #82, March 1, 2012.
48 Interview with #22, June 22, 2011.
49 Andres and Wyn, *The Making of a Generation*, p. 33. Henderson says that this generation turned away from materialism and the conformity of suburban imagery by "seeking out an authentic experience after growing up in cookie cutter post-war suburbs" (*Making the Scene*, p. 9).
50 Personal correspondence with #45, January 1, 2012.
51 Interview with #56, June 23, 2011.
52 Interview with #63, February 23, 2012.
53 Personal correspondence with #25, January 19, 2012.

school, work, or responsibility, but embracing alternative learning experiences, personal growth, and self-fulfilment.

Hitchhiking personified the romantic tourist gaze and the desire for collective fun and adventure.[54] It was also a fully embodied gender performance. Subcultural style, fashion, and demeanour, whether punk, preppy, or hippie, advertise a constructed gender identity that conveys a subliminal intellectual and emotional message about the wearer's personality, values, and lifestyle.[55] To become hitchhikers, interviewees recalled self-consciously altering the symbolic elements of their dress and demeanour to achieve a more immediate and authentic experience. Some adopted the artistic style of the bohemians, the illegal drug use of the delinquents, the "cool" of the beatniks, and a mode of automobility (albeit alternative mobility) like the bikers and Hot-Rodders.[56] One teenager wore a pair of "John Lennon glasses and a belt made from beer can flip tops."[57] Another young man bought a coat like Leonard Cohen's and wore a flower in his hair, "just for something to do."[58] A teenage girl said, "I wore my hair in braids and had grannies glasses.... I was ready to fit in with the hippies as soon as I found them."[59] Some travellers became "Back-to-Landers" and prepared their bodies for a more natural experience by shunning commercial soaps, shampoos, and deodorants.[60] One traveller explained the relationship between natural bodies and the Back-to-the-Landers. She said, "It was just the way they felt they could be."[61] Such choices of fashion and demeanour enabled thumb-travellers to exchange the trapping of gendered social-class status for a new independent road status.

In 1969, the *Transient Youth Inquiry* showed that the majority of hitchhikers were young men. The case was the same in the United States. Mukerji observed that the male hitchhikers she interviewed in 1971 and 1972 were just "sowing their wild oats" and delighted in identifying themselves as "bums." They had abandoned their homes and were exploring "possibilities that were beyond their horizons in childhood."[62] The men interviewed in this research were aware that they were violating hegemonic notions of masculine respectability. Their post-protestant-ethic dress, hippie hair, and unemployed status transgressed traditional codes of successful manhood, including owning key material possessions such as a car. The son of a college vice-principal and a homemaker-bookkeeper always travelled with a knapsack and a "hammock so [he] wouldn't get picked up as a vagrant," even though technically he was one.[63] A British Columbian traveller said he never hitchhiked without money, because he was not really "a Dharma Bum."[64]

54 John Urry, "The Tourist Gaze 'Revisited'," *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 36, no. 2 (November 1992), p. 172.
55 Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, pp. 14, 18.
56 *Ibid.*, pp. 12-16.
57 Interview with #77, June 28, 2011.
58 Interview with #31, October 11, 2012.
59 Interview with #80, June 27, 2011
60 Macnaughton and Urry, eds., *Bodies of Nature*, p. 3.
61 Interview with #83, March 8, 2012.
62 Mukerji, "Bullshitting," p. 243.
63 Interview with #11, June 22, 2011.
64 Interview with #92, June 22, 2011.

A hitchhiker from Edmonton knew that a man who did not drive his own car fell short of normative masculine expectations. As a hitchhiker, he nevertheless did not want to be perceived as "a guy who did not have it together enough to own a car." He asserted his middle-class status through his body language. He explained, "I don't wear a hat, you can't see the face.... You don't stand with your hands in your pockets. Always use the thumb ... stand straight up."[65] Some travellers used social-class inflected gimmicks, like the hitchhiker who "always wore a tweed jacket with blue jeans; kind of my uniform." Motorists told him that he looked "more interesting."[66] A Winnipeg hitchhiker wore a "striped shirt and tie" and smoked a "pretentious looking pipe ... to overcome the deficit of a beard and lots of hair."[67] Other travellers subverted hegemonic gender ideals through the use of humour to conceal anxiety about how they looked. To counter the dirty hippie stereotype, a Montreal teenager carried a sign that said, "I Just Took a Bath."[68]

The material artefact of the travelling identity that male and female interviewees remembered most clearly was the backpack. The physical and social affordance of the backpack enabled thumb-travellers to display their true selves and magically transcend mundane daily life and rigid class-gender expectations.[69] In the 1920s and 1930s, hitchhiking was called road begging; it was the mode of transportation for vagrants, hobos, and the down-and-out. By the 1970s, hitchhiking was largely a white middle-class activity. Similar to the "mundane technology" of a hiking boot, the backpack, rucksack, or haversack was the equipment of respectable patriotic occupations such as mountaineer, explorer, and soldier. For men, the backpack symbolized a rugged masculine individualist and not the "square" travelling salesmen who picked them up. Hitchhikers hoped their backpacks would afford them direct and meaningful encounters, but, in many cases, a backpack did not help them pass the formal legitimacy test of nomadic status. When an American customs officer at Detroit interrogated a Canadian hitchhiker "wearing a ski jacket, long curly hair and a scruffy beard," neither the hiker's nomadic image nor the "cans of food, plenty of matches, and a big hunting knife and sleeping bag he was packing" impressed the boarder guard. He told the hitchhiker that, if he did not "come back with a round-trip bus ticket, he would be put in jail."[70]

Women hitchhikers were fewer in number than their male counterparts. From a feminist perspective, the very notion of "nomadism" reveals the ambiguous place that women have on the road.[71] However, interviewees revealed that they were

65 Interview with #85, June 29, 2011.
66 Interview with #92, June 22, 2011.
67 Interview with former *Winnipeg Free Press* journalist Duncan McMongle, Winnipeg, August 24, 2012.
68 Press interview with 15-year-old Montreal boy on his way to Niagara Falls, *Montreal Gazette*, August 7, 1971.
69 On a hitchhiking trip, backpacks, hippie clothes, physical demeanour and argot are affordances. The concept of "affordance" is used in tourism research to animate the role that material objects and artefacts play in transforming the "places and landscapes" the traveller encounters. According to Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday: Consuming the Orient* (London: Routledge, 2009), "a variety of prosthetic objects and technologies…afford increased bodily capabilities, and as such, they expand the affordances that nature permits the otherwise 'pure' [naked] body" (p.6); Ateljevic and Doorne, "Theoretical Encounters," p. 60; Tiyce and Wilson, "Wandering Australia," p. 117.
70 Personal correspondence with #25, January 19, 2012.
71 Ateljevic and Doorne, "Theoretical Encounters," p. 72. Feminist studies of women on the road include

also seeking identities outside school, work, and domesticity. A Guelph hitcher put it clearly: she did not want to "go to university, and get married and be miserable like everybody else." When she left for Vancouver, she only packed her "hippie clothes."[72] The "coolest thing about hitchhiking," women travellers said, "was that total sense of freedom ... you could literally just walk onto the road and get yourself anywhere in North America that you wanted to go."[73]

By the late 1960s, the women's liberation movement offered emancipation to women who wanted to defy patriarchal rules. To broadcast their rejection of patriarchal baggage, female thumb-travellers bought backpacks, clothing, and jewellery to assert an emancipated identity.[74] "I had long straight hair," a Saskatchewan traveller recalled. Some women wore "beads, amulets and crosses and stuff." She preferred a bohemian style and wore "flowery, colorful clothes, and sewed inserts into [her] jeans to flare them out big and wide."[75] Adopting the style of the flower child or women's libber entailed rejecting conventional make-up and beauty products, and some women went braless. A Montreal hitchhiker described her "long dark hair ... elephant pants and probably a see-through shirt or little cotton gauzy top, a backpack, and a bag of weed to share."[76] One hitchhiker said her travelling companion got them many rides because she was "voluptuous and a real hippie."[77] A nursing student did not wear a bra, but she "still covered up ... relatively modestly" and did not let herself get "really dirty" when she was on the road.[78]

Women travellers expected their backpacks, demeanour, and wardrobes to symbolize their resistance to a number of sexist stereotypes about women and mobility, including *Barbie* with her pink plastic luggage, the sexually submissive stewardesses in the *Coffee, Tea, or Me* (1969) books, and the hetero-privileged upward mobility of the *Stepford Wives* (1972). However, the reality of hitchhiking for women was that their bodies were a form of currency on the patriarchal highways. Even women who dressed androgynously, like the 20-year-olds who bought "overalls and T-shirts" or the Moose Jaw woman who wore "unisex" Kibbutz pants and jacket, discovered that some motorists assumed that giving a woman a lift was proxy for consent to sex.[79] In a rare contemporary study

Carol Sanger, "Girls and the Getaway: Cars, Culture, and the Predicament of Gendered Space," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, vol. 144, no. 2 (December 1995); Alexandra Ganser, "On the Asphalt Frontier: American Women's Road Narratives, Spatiality, and Transgression," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4 (May 2006).

72 Interview with #80, June 27, 2011. The Canadian Welfare Council noted that the young women they surveyed were ambivalent about marriage (*Transient Youth*, p. 105).

73 Interview with #81a and #81b, June 23, 2011.

74 James R. Greenley and David G. Rice, "Female Hitchhiking: Strain, Control, and Subcultural Approaches," *Sociological Focus*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Winter 1973-1974), p. 98. Typical non-feminist studies are Robert W. Johnson and James H. Johnson, "A Cross Validation of the *Sn* Scale on the Psychological Screening Inventory with Female Hitchhikers," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 2 (April 1978), p. 366-367; Nicholas Guéguen, "Bust Size and Hitchhiking: A Field Study," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, vol. 105, no. 3 (December 2007), p. 1295.

75 Interview with #83, March 8, 2012.

76 Interview with #96, June 22, 2011.

77 Interview with # 48.

78 Interview with #83, March 8, 2012.

79 Interview with #91, June 22, 2011; Interview with #76, June 29, 2011. Analysis of the role of cars in rape

of hitchhiking, sociologists J. P. Greeley and D. G. Rice argued that feminism was responsible for a reduction in the fear of rape among contemporary female undergraduates and high school girls. They argued that Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1971) led "younger liberated co-eds" to believe that they had the same prerogatives as men, namely, "the right to take a walk at night, to thumb a ride, to have freedom of access and movement at any time and in any place." Greeley and Rice concluded that the more positive hitchhiking experiences a female traveller had, the more strongly she believed that she could handle a dangerous situation.[80]

Following Urry and Foucault, Darya Maoz constructs the tourist gaze as a two-sided picture wherein hosts and visitors see each other as "the mad behind bars."[81] This kaleidoscopic gaze embodies a mental perception comprising stereotypes and assumptions about modes of travel, and it shapes how hosts treat alternative tourists, especially hitchhikers, who generally contribute nothing to the local economy and are therefore less welcome than wealthy tourists.[82] Historically, youth cultures that became social problems were the ones that appeared to be hedonistic, irresponsible, and threatening to collectively shared social values.[83] Due to the tune-in-turn-on values of rock music lyrics, which seemed to denounce "The Establishment" and promote drug experimentation and sexual freedom, it was difficult for many older Canadians to understand where fashion trends stopped and true rebellion began. Some adults could not see "any difference between the long-haired lazy and rebellious bums who live[d] off welfare and the sincere traveling student intent upon seeing Canada."[84] Unlike the unemployed people who took to the open road or the rails in search of work during the dark days of the Depression, these "kids set out only to enjoy themselves."[85] Conservative youth also took the view that drifting around was "reckless." An Ontario teenager said, "Grandparents had not allowed moms and dads to 'race off to Toronto'." He pointed out that "young people have obligations like adults.... We have school to attend, jobs in the summer, friends, a place in the community.... Drifters are frowned upon everywhere; a person is considered to be of good character if he goes to church regularly, holds a job in the community, or gets high marks in school or is an athlete."[86] To flesh out what hitchhiking meant to the restless teenagers and twenty-somethings, we must focus on how the transient youth subculture was perceived in the community.

On the individual level, the values of church, conformity, and community were at the heart of traditional family life following World War II, and the announcement

cases suggests the "law assumes that a woman who gets into a man's car or gives him a lift in her's also gives a proxy for consent to sex." (Sanger, "Girls and the Getaway," p. 711).

80 Greenley and Rice, "Female Hitchhiking," p. 99.

81 Maoz, "The Mutual Gaze," pp. 222, 225.

82 *Ibid.*

83 Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, p.18.

84 Glenbow Museum, Canadian Youth Hostel Association, news clipping from *Penticton Herald*, May 21, 1971.

85 For many, the Mecca of their journey was "Canada's Los Angeles, the almost always sunny city of Vancouver" (*Globe and Mail*, August 10, 1970).

86 Press interview with teenager from Aurora, Ontario, Richard Needham, "Something to Do, Nothing to Do," *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1966.

of the hitchhiking trip meant a tough negotiation between would-be thumb-travellers and their anxious parents. Adolescent psychologists and Dr. Benjamin Spock told parents that adolescence was a time of storm and stress, so a little restlessness, impulsiveness, and grumpiness was normal. However, media reports of youth unrest in the United States, France, and Britain alerted many Canadian parents to the troublesome consequences of too many idle and defiant youth hanging around street corners.[87] Early signs of teenage rebellion such as goofing off or drifting around, as well as the trend toward permissive parenting in the post-war period, could cause failure in adulthood.[88] Naturally, parental reaction to transient youth ranged from worry, to expressions of disappointment, to anger. In 1969, a 15-year-old boy said his parents would not give him permission to hitchhike from Banff to Vancouver. He complained: "They wouldn't even let me go on the train."[89] A university student said, "you'd have thought somebody died, in my Jewish family, quitting school was a big deal."[90] After graduation, a Toronto teenager and his 16-year-old girlfriend decided to hitchhike out west for the summer. He said, "We lied through our teeth.... We said we're taking the bus and ... [I had] relatives to stay with."[91] A Saskatoon teenager got his mother's permission to go to Victoria after grade 11 by promising to register with local branches of the RCMP along the way, but "of course we didn't."[92] Two women from northern British Columbia wanted to thumb in Quebec because India "was too expensive." One said: "I didn't tell my mother.... It was just our generation ... you kept your mouth shut."[93] Four 16-year-olds from Winnipeg decided to hitchhike to Vancouver together. One said,

> We bolted ... I can't remember whose idea was.... We were safe in the sense that we had the boys with us.... We snuck out early. I lived in a very creaky house. I went down the stairs really slowly. It did not take them long to realize that we were together. They called the police. In fact, we were in Saskatchewan and the police stopped the car because the person was driving too fast. He looked in the car and saw these young people and started getting suspicious and got us out.[94]

She confessed that she had a hard time hurting her parents, but she was "just tired of being controlled by a strict Catholic family."[95] A traveller from Vancouver Island said, "I don't think I negotiated with my parents." She just "announced" that she was hitchhiking to the Maritimes. "They were just so glad I was leaving."

87 Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence*, pp. 16-17; Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth*, p. 1; Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920 to 1950* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), pp. 20, 31.
88 Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth*, p. 67; Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, p. 141.
89 Interview with #92, June 22, 2011.
90 Interview with #56, June 23, 2011.
91 Interview with #82, March 1, 2012
92 Interview with #82a and #82b, February 22, 2012.
93 Interview with #81a and #81b, June 23, 2011.
94 Interview with #86, March 4, 2012.
95 *Ibid.*

She qualified this by saying that she was almost twenty and "so obnoxious ... they thought, at least she'll smarten up.... They were at their wit's end."[96]

It must be noted that, since the late 1960s, family norms in the middle class were changing; some parents saw the value of "doing your own thing" and encouraged their children to take chances.[97] A traveller from a large family remembered his mother driving his older brothers "to the edge of town to hitch a ride to a faraway destination."[98] In 1966, the mother of a 17-year-old boy confessed that she was upset when her son went hitchhiking and was robbed, but she decided "it was a valuable educational experience for him."[99] A Vancouver girl suspected that her "Dad wanted to be a hippie, but he was a dentist so he used to pick up a lot of hippies and squeeze them into our car with the whole family.... Part of him really related to it."[100]

There is no way of knowing how many young people hitchhiked across North America. In the summer months from 1970 to 1975, media sources claimed that between 50,000 and 100,000 hitchhikers would pass through Winnipeg every summer. Readers of Canadian national and local newspapers were kept aware of the "Summer Army of Hitchhikers" marching "Across this Land."[101] Under the headline, "Canada's Great Trek: 40,000 Transients Will Walk this Summer," the *Vancouver Province* proclaimed, "Hitchhiking has become a National Phenomenon."[102] The *Globe and Mail* predicted, "The roads will look like a re-enactment of the Children's Crusade."[103] In 1970, the *Montreal Gazette* said, "Thousands of youngsters will be on the road this summer."[104] In 1971, the *Vancouver Sun* announced, "50,000 transients only the beginning."[105] The *Calgary Herald* told "taxpayers" to brace for transients because 50,000 hitchhikers "passed through in '71.[106] In June 1972, the *Globe and Mail* claimed that an "Army of Hitch-Hikers [was] Already on the March."[107] Many diverse segments of the Canadian adult establishment began to wonder what was wrong with Canadian young people.

Trudeaumania played a role in the transient youth movement.[108] Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau was cognizant of how to appeal to young people with his

96 Interview with #48.

97 Parents are also caught in the social trends that regulate parenting practices. In the early 1970s, American popular culture mocked the "square" family man and the oppressed housewife. Naomi Wolf argues that the rising divorce rate eroded the emotional family-centric "contract" between parents and children. Parents were doing "their own thing" too, and the "modern 'kid,' whom no one paid attention to was born." Naomi Wolf, *Promiscuities: The Secret Struggle for Womanhood* (New York: Random House, 1997), pp. 21-22.

98 Personal correspondence with #45, January 1, 2012.

99 Richard Needham, "Something to Do, Nothing to Do," *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1966.

100 Interview with #78, June 27, 2011.

101 "Youth Going Nowhere in Search of Adventure," *Globe and Mail*, July 18, 1970.

102 Glenbow Museum, Canadian Youth Hostel Association Archive, "Canada's Great Trek: 40,000 Transients Will Walk this Summer," *Vancouver Province*, April 6, 1971.

103 Martin Dorrell, "Going Down the Road: A Really Big Bedroom," *Globe and Mail*, June 14, 1971.

104 "Thousands of Youngsters Will be on the Road this Summer," *Montreal Gazette*, August 25, 1970.

105 "50,000 Transients Only the Beginning," *Vancouver Sun*, February 5, 1971.

106 Glenbow Museum, Canadian Youth Hostel Association Archives, "City Braced for Transients," *Calgary Herald*, May 17, 1972.

107 "Army of Hitch-Hikers Already on the March," *Globe and Mail*, June 22, 1972.

108 Liberal leadership convention polls showed that young Canadians overwhelmingly preferred Trudeau. A

gunslinger style and rhetoric, and he spoke of his own hitchhiking travels in Europe and the Middle East. In 1968, he dropped in at the opening of a youth hostel in Jasper National Park and encouraged the hostellers to follow in his footsteps and learn about "Canada and the world," through national and international travel.[109] The *Transient Youth Inquiry* was a small part of the Liberals' attempt to maintain their pre-election appeal to youth, as well as adult voters. In response to public complaints about hitchhikers' panhandling, shoplifting, sleeping in parks and ditches, rock music, venereal disease, drug trafficking, and indecent sexual activity, and with an eye on American youth unrest in the summer of 1968, the federal government adopted a subcultural approach to the problem of youth in Canada. The expert opinion cited in the *Transient Youth Inquiry* concluded that the transient lifestyle was a form of deviance sustained by the media and peer pressure from weekend hippies, teenyboppers, draft dodgers, black leather jacket types, and student radicals.[110] However, the majority of hitchhikers were harmless high school and university students and young workers on a "carefree holiday."[111] It was easier to see hitchhiking as a rite of passage for restless young men than for girls, who appeared to have transgressed further from respectable feminine behaviours. A social worker stated, "boys, when they wish to do so, can return to a settled and ordinary life but in many cases a girl's whole chance of happiness is destroyed."[112]

The *Transient Youth Inquiry*'s solution to the gendered youth problem was not prohibition, but practical surveillance by way of a network of sex-segregated youth hostels that would be chaste, clean, and cheap. In June of 1970, federal Secretary of State Gerard Pelletier committed $200,000 to fund a temporary hostel programme and ordered that eleven armouries across Canada be converted as temporary summer youth hostels. The following summer the Secretary of State's Opportunities for Youth programme was established, and funds were channelled directly to local community groups so that they could set up their own youth hostels.[113] These hostels were run by a new breed of long-haired civil servants and hip youth workers who could refer hostellers to job banks, education programmes, family counselling, VD clinics, psychiatric centres, and the police. By the summer of 1973, 120 youth hostels were funded through the Secretary of State's hostel programme. The ultimate goal of these "receiving centers" was to

youth said, Trudeau was "the most exciting single thing that could happen to this country" (Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, p. 201).

109 Glenbow Museum, Canadian Youth Hostel Association Archives, Letter from Pierre Elliot Trudeau to Members of the Canadian Youth Hostel Association, *Pathfinder*, September 1968; Canadian Youth Hostel Association 1986-1969 Annual Report.

110 The taskforce report includes a scholarly bibliography that is 12-pages long. Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth*, pp. 5-7; Greeley and Rice, "Female Hitchhikers," p. 98.

111 Contemporary sociologists argued that youth alienation and deviance increased as social class increased. Most hippies were middle class and became deviant as a consequence of their alienation from social institutions (religion, school, or work), whereas working class delinquents became alienated (isolated and stigmatized) as a consequence of their law-breaking behaviour. Byles, *Alienation, Deviance and Social Control,* p. 11; Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth,* p. 60.

112 Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth,* pp. 9, 105.

113 "Military Building Opened for Hitchhiking Youths," *Globe and Mail*, July 9, 1970.

ease the transition of "all youth" back into society when they were ready to leave the road.[114]

The Liberal government's temporary hostel programme was baffling to many older Canadians, who regarded holidays, relaxation, and leisure as rewards for hard work. Penticton residents were "Up in Arms about Ottawa's idea."[115] A crowd of 200 onlookers watched a group of Charlottetown women put up a blockade to prevent the federal government from establishing a hostel in East Royalty.[116] The *New York Times* ran the baffling headline: "Canadian Youths Take to the Road with Government's Blessing."[117] A sceptical youth delegate of the *Transient Youth Inquiry* was afraid "that a lot of the 'older' participants left with the impression that a few hostels across the country would ... keep the kids quiet." The hostel programme reminded him of "the way the average North American father attempts to solve a conflict with his son by offering the car or tuition for yet another year of university."[118] In 1972, a Calgary youth worker agreed that perhaps "society" had gone "overboard helping out the kids on the road because everyone thought the kids must be screwed up."[119]

Trudeau faced his critics with the argument that "national unity is a product of national understanding and national pride.... Never in our history has there been the same opportunity for mobility for young people as now exists. With or without help, young people will be traveling.... We should help make their experiences worthwhile."[120] In 1972, the Department of National Health and Welfare produced a 32-page "colourfully" illustrated guide called "On the Road." The pamphlet, with maps to hostels and VD clinics, nutrition advice, and a summary of Canada's narcotics laws, explained how to hitchhike across the country. Critics called the pamphlet "the apple ... [and] Ottawa has handed out almost a million of them."[121] A full-blown moral panic was, pre-empted, however, because many long-haired young journalists and freelancers hitched along with the kids and filed articles in national newspapers, assuring readers that hitchhikers were not roving gangs of hippie anarchists and sex fiends. For example, after a long day of "Singin' the Espanola Blues," Martin Dorrell, a 24-year-old journalist for the *Globe and Mail*, described the "good feeling" among the hitchhikers at the YMCA. "English talk to French, guys from the United States talk to Canadian girls about everything. Drugs, sex, the state of the world, card games, hitchhiking techniques. You name

114 Canadian Welfare Council, *Transient Youth*, pp. 5, 9-10.

115 Glenbow Museum, Canadian Youth Hostel Association Archive, Clipping File, *Penticton Herald*, June 8, 1971, and *Calgary Herald*, May 10, 1971.

116 Glenbow Museum, Canadian Youth Hostel Association Archive, Prince Edward Island Association Photo Album, "Women Hold Position Along Hostel Barrier," *The Guardian* [Charlottetown], June 8, 1971.

117 "A Communal Pilgrimage – Along Canada's Highways," *New York Times*, June 20, 1971; "They Use Their Thumbs to Roam the Land," *New York Times*, August 8, 1971; "Youth in Canada: Drifting Around with the Government's Blessing, *New York Times*, April 22, 1973.

118 Canadian Welfare Council, *More About Transient Youth*, p. 31.

119 Glenbow Museum, Canadian Youth Hostel Association Archive, Clipping File, "Poll Changes Transient 'Pauper Image'," *Calgary Herald*, September 6, 1972; "Hitchers On the Road a Blind Alley Withdrawn," *Montreal Gazette*, June 20, 1972.

120 "Youth in Canada: Drifting Around with the Government's Blessing," *New York Times*, April 22, 1973.

121 600,000 copies were printed. See Michael Moore, "The New Ottawa Booklet That's Bound to Lead Youth Astray," *Globe and Mail*, June 17, 1972.

it. The noise drops to a murmur and then only the hissing of the oil heater disturbs the silence of total exhaustion."[122]

In contrast with today, when civil society regards a gap year, alternative travel, and international volunteering as a "secular rite of passage" that assists youth in developing a global consciousness and self-enhancement through personal growth,[123] in the 1970s, many civil society groups worried that transient youth were deliberately ruining their futures. With hindsight, we can see that the youth transition theories of the 1960s and 1970s that predicted which young people were "at-risk" reveal more about the "taken-for-granted prerequisites for adult achievement" and how a successful "imaginary adult" should behave than about the real lived experience of adolescence. Rather than the negative youth-at-risk discourse, Peter Kelly uses the concept "the entrepreneurial self," which is a productive, positive way for youth workers to see how young people participate in their own socialization and identity construction.[124] The road narratives used in this research demonstrate how, at the time of their travels, hitchhikers did not see themselves as dropping out of society; rather, they saw themselves as opting in—by embracing experience, personal growth, and self-awareness. For them, hitchhiking was not a deviant career, but an optimistic participatory physical experience that would improve the unity of mind and body and create a union of peers across the country.

In the 1970s, and today, more romanticism than rebellion features in the vivid descriptions interviewees gave of the people and places they encountered across North America. Their road stories contain similar tropes and accounts of sleeping in ditches, fields, and "Trudeau-hostels," which some said were "like jails" but others described as "great if you weren't looking for the Taj Mahal."[125] On the road, travellers performed the rituals of traditional Canadian tourism with a new twist.[126] Some hitchhikers were "not attracted to drugs,"[127] while others smoked pot and panned for gold in the Fraser River Valley, ate magic mushrooms in Pacific Rim National Park, and dropped LSD on the Plains of Abraham. A female hitchhiker said, "We never worried about taking stuff from a stranger. We just thought WOW! A new friend."[128]

These road stories reveal how thumb-travellers made sense of regions and landscapes within the framework of their own social class, regional, and cultural gazes. Maoz's mutual gaze is illustrated by hitchhiker's use of 1960s and 1970s hegemonic and derogatory language to describe hosts and host communities. Many

122 Martin Dorrell, "Going Down the Road: Singin' the Espanola Blues," *Globe and Mail*, June 10, 1971.
123 Ateljevic and Doorne, "Theoretical Encounters," p. 64.
124 Peter Kelly, "The Entrepreneurial Self, and 'Youth-At-Risk': Exploring the Horizons of Identity in the Twenty-first Century," *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (February 2006), p. 17; Johanna Wyn and Peter Dwyer, "New Directions in Research on Youth in Transition," *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1999), pp. 9, 16. Adolescence is an historical construct but it is very real to the individual experiencing it. See Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, pp. viii, 216.
125 Interview with #63, February 23, 2012; Interview with #29, March 23, 2013; Interview with Patrick Esmonde White, National Coordinator of Temporary Youth, Hostel Task Force (1970), December 5, 2012.
126 Crouch and Desforges, "The Sensuous in the Tourist Encounter," p. 6.
127 Interviews with #80, June 27, 2011, and with #63, February 23, 2012.
128 Interview with #81a and #81b, June 23, 2011.

interviewees used terms such as Newfie, Redneck, Indians, freak-haters, drunks, pill-poppers, truckers, bikers, weirdoes, creepy guys, and perverts and commented on cowboy hats, slimy teeth, and BO, but they also appreciated the generosity of the waitresses at the *Husky* truck-stops who gave them chips and gravy for free. The hitchhikers' travel gaze reflected the post World War II cultural prejudices of class, gender, and generation, but the gaze also reveals their resistance to prejudice and stereotypes through their keenness embrace intimate cross-class encounters.

Today, interviewees believe that, by travelling at this time in their lives, they became more confident, trusting, and tolerant adults. They remembered how they taught each other the code of the road. For example, one day on Route 66, a motorist let a British Columbian hitchhiker out on a roundabout. There were already about 60 hitchers standing there, and he thought, "We're in trouble, here man! ... [N]obody's got water or anything.... I held a meeting of hitchhikers and I made sure everybody came. We've got to get more people off this corner. If somebody stops, ask them, 'Can you take another person?' So, in about three hours we had the corner cleared.... I thought organizing the hitchhikers was a good job for that day."[129]

The first hitchhiking experience for two southern Ontario teenage girls was in the Alberta Rockies, around Maligne Lake, and they were nervous until they met Gus. He drove them to a former WWII internment camp that had become the Jasper Free Camp. It was "this giant hippie camp" and Gus was "like the mayor." He introduced them around, helped them set up their tent, and showed them how to clap sticks together to frighten away bears.[130] During their transnational roadside encounters hitchhikers told each other where to go, what to see, and where to stay. The psychological experience of "dwelling in mobility"[131] enabled hitchhikers to feel at home in strange towns and cities, with motorists in cars, and among the strangers with whom they shared tents, beds and ditches, musical instruments for busking and rations from panhandling, details about good and bad drug trips, sex, and love.

Being young backpackers enabled them to cross over geographical barriers and enter communities outside the "tourism bubble."[132] Doug Owram says the early baby-boomers grew up in the shadow of "*Barbie* and the World Series."[133] Indeed, all across Canada, the influence of American popular culture was strong. "California was the nexus for all that was happening in our little world," a prairie teenager said. He and a friend "wanted to go down and check it out."[134] Quebec teenagers were also listening to pop songs like *California Dreamin'* by The Mamas & The Papas, which inspired two sisters from Montreal to hitchhike the

129 Interview with #83, March 8, 2012.

130 Interview with #80, June 27, 2011; Annalee Grant, "History of the Point: The Jasper Internment Camp, *The Fitzhugh: Jasper's Independent Newspaper*, February 3, 2011.

131 "Dwelling in mobility" is a psychological process that enables travellers to feel at home in environments that are transient, unfamiliar and strange. David Crouch and Luke Desforges, "The Sensuous in the Tourist Encounter," *Tourist Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (April 2003), p. 9.

132 *Ibid.,* p. 18.

133 Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, p. 14; "Canadian Seek to Spur National Consciousness, *New York Times*, May 11, 1975.

134 Personal correspondence with #11.

California coastline. One said, "We spoke zero English ... we don't know so much about the world at that time ... but we know the song about 'California Dreams,' so we went to see if you can dream a lot in that place."[135]

Owram argues that late-boomers were more sensitive to the deterioration of the image of the United States than early boom cohorts.[136] A Toronto teenager on his way to Florida ended up in Fort Lauderdale. At one point in Florida, he said,

> ... [he] walked out to where the highway starts and there's a circular ramp to get onto it. Above it there's this huge billboard with a picture of a guy all slumped over in his car and there's a hoodlum running off in the distance. Underneath it says: "Don't Pick Up Hitchhikers." I'm looking at the sign wondering if I'm ever going to get a ride.... This in a place were people have guns in the back of their trucks and bumper stickers that say: "God, Guns and Guts made America Free. Keep all three and Free we'll be."[137]

In 1979, two young women from Edmonton made it all the way to the Haight Ashbury neighbourhood of San Francisco before they realized that the hippie heyday had ended there in the 1960s.

> We got there and it's really depressing, windows boarded up and everything. We were really naive.... We had cameras and were taking pictures ... in an area that is all blacks and pretty rough and then this little girl comes up and looks us right in the eye and says, "White Motherfuckas." She couldn't have been more than 10.... We just kept walking. She really freaked us out and we realized how stupid we were.[138]

While the intention of hitchhiking was to celebrate anti-materialism and independence, the apparent freedom had its own frightening constraints. The sexual politics of hitchhiking meant that would-be thumb-travellers encountered unequal power relations, ambiguous gazes, conflicting stereotypes, physical obstacles, and danger. There was a dark side to hitchhiking for young men and women. The open road was a contested spatial and temporal terrain where hitchhiking bodies were paraded before drivers. From the perspective of guest-host relations, the reaction to young men with long hair reveals that lifestyle choice can lead to conflict. Hitchhiking with long hair in the United States, especially after the Vietnam draft, was dangerous for Canadian men who were mistaken for "draft-dodgers." Some tried sewing Canadian flags onto their backpacks, but it did not prevent them from being harassed.[139]

Hitchhikers ride on the contradiction between the freedom of the road and the confinement of a car, specifically a stranger's car. Male and female interviewees were aware that their bodies on the patriarchal state's motorway were a form of currency and therefore at risk. On the road, hitchhikers learned that fear is as natural

135 Personal correspondence with #27, June 28, 2011.
136 Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, p. 14; "Canadian Seek to Spur National Consciousness," *New York Times*, May 11, 1975.
137 Interview with #79, June 22, 2011.
138 Interview with #91, June 22, 2011
139 Interview with #63, February 23, 2012.

a part of travel as broadening one's horizons.[140] An Albertan said he was "stuck" in Kamloops: "it was cold out, then this trucker stopped, I was really tired.... He was drinking Scotch and popping [Benzedrine].... Anyway, I kept nodding off and every time I did, he'd jerk the steering wheel. He said, 'I didn't pick you up so you could sleep; I picked you up so you could keep me company.'"[141] When a northern British Columbian hitchhiker thumbed alone, she tried to make it clear that she did not want to "screw around ... I babbled like a little brook.... My brother this and my brother that. Maybe you know him?" She thought that "it was good to let them know that someone knew me, so don't try anything.... There will be retaliation."[142]

All hitchhikers reported the false assumption made by some drivers that, by consenting to a ride, the hitchers would not strongly object to a sexual encounter. A man said, "You have to keep an eye on the conversation. They wait to see what your interest in sex is ... you can tell him you aren't interested, but they still keep feeling you out."[143] A woman from northern British Columbia said that a "young guy in a red car" drove her to a bridge near some railway tracks, parked, and then got out. "I remember sitting frozen, knowing that my life was in his hands." She never hitchhiked again after that.[144] Hegemonic patriarchy and sexism influenced how the cult of heteronormativity constructed relations between riders and drivers on the road.[145] One dominant truth of hitchhiking was that the safest and fastest way to travel was in small groups and with other hitchhikers. On busy highways, boys hid in ditches while girls thumbed the ride. Once, two boys from Edmonton and three girls from Cold Lake made it all the way to Kenora as a group of five, but their luck ran out at 2:00 a.m. at a truck stop. "This was the plan, we put all the bags in the ditch and my buddy and I would lay in the ditch while the girls hitched."[146] A teenager from Ottawa confirmed that it helped to have a gimmick, "but it still isn't as good as being a girl ... they are the ones that always seem to get the rides."[147] All interviewees talked openly about "bad rides." Some victims of assault reported the motorist to the police, but others kept silent, blaming their poor hitchhiking radar. According to one: "We thought we were invincible ... a guy was supposed to be able to take care of himself."[148] Years after a Montreal woman gave up hitchhiking, she took a Women's Studies course at Simon Fraser University, and it dawned upon her that "there had been a double standard."[149] Thinking back on their rides nearly four decades later, three women described the pleasures and dangers of hitchhiking: "You never knew what ever sort of vehicle

140 Cresswell, "Embodiment, Power and the Politics of Mobility," p. 186; Ganser, "On the Asphalt Frontier," pp. 160-161; Sanger, "Girls and the Getaway," pp. 715, 737-734. Macnaughton and Urry argue, "Affordances do not cause behavior, but constrain it along certain possibilities" (*Bodies of Nature*, pp. 2, 9).

141 Interview with #85, June 29, 2011

142 Interview with #81a and #81b, June 23, 2011.

143 Interview with #89, June 22, 2011.

144 Interview with #49, June 25, 2011.

145 Tim Cresswell and Tanu Priya Uteng, "Gendered Mobilities: Towards an Holistic Understanding" in Cresswell and Priya Uteng, eds., *Gendered Mobilities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) pp. 3, 5.

146 Interview with #85, June 29, 2011.

147 His sign said, "Keep B.C. Clean, Take Me to Seattle." See "Gimmick," Winnipeg Free Press, August 1, 1973.

148 Interview with #88, June 22, 2011.

149 Interview with #96, June 23, 2011.

or driver was going to drive up. It could be some beater truck, or a hot car, or Mercedes, or it could be some bloody pervert.... Hmmmm [in chorus] ... You just never knew!"[150]

On the road, hitchhikers learned that each new ride was an encounter with a new person. Their ride stories, both good and bad, reveal the excitement many felt when they first discovered unfamiliar regions of North America.[151] Two sisters travelled together the "summer when there were youth hostels running all across the country, and you could get a bed for 50 cents and maybe breakfast or supper for free or another 50 cents." The interviewee said, "The best parts were the times we walked between rides along the Trans-Canada Highway."[152] Somewhere between the Alberta and Saskatchewan border, a traveller from Surrey witnessed the "magic" of prairie thunderstorms. He said, "We were stuck on the edge of town and I remember the bald prairie. There were seven or eight of us. We sent up our tents ... no one wanted to sleep.... You could smell the rain coming."[153] Hitchhikers told "horror stories" about being marooned in Wawa, Ontario, and an urban legend about a guy who was stuck there for so long he married a local girl.[154] Young travellers discovered what they had in common with people from other provinces. A dairy farmer's daughter hitchhiked around Newfoundland. She "loved being by the ocean in Conche ... and came to respect the fishermen," who were just like the farmers in Ontario, "generally honest, hard-working and quiet natured."[155] One Christmas Eve in Brockville, two hitchhikers went to the "County Jail and asked for a place to sleep.... The cops put us in the women's section ... we spent the night reading the lipstick messages."[156] Interviewees recall that most rides were with "decent folks, just trying to help someone out." They could tell that adult motorists were "worried about young kids hitchhiking, so they'd stop."[157] One night in Deep River, Ontario, 30 or 40 hitchhikers were preparing for a night in the ditch with the black flies.

> Suddenly, a long row of cars came rolling out of the town of Deep River to where we were situated on the Trans-Canada Highway. We, of course, had visions of *Easy Rider* in our minds and weren't sure what was coming. Well, much to our surprise, the convoy of cars was filled with townspeople ... they'd come out to see if we needed a place to sleep and a hot meal.... I asked a guy why they would pick up such a scruffy, dirty bunch of longhaired kids. He said, "We have kids of our own out on the road ... and we'd like to know that someone's treating them decently as well."[158]

150 Interview with #81a, #81b and #90, June 22, 2011.
151 Mitch Rose, "Landscapes and Labyrinths," *Geoforum*, vol. 33, no. 4 (November 2002), argues that landscapes become significant within a network of meanings and relations. Its "ongoing presence in the world is contingent upon what it initiates, activates and inspires elsewhere" (pp. 456-457).
152 Personal correspondence with #18, December 21, 2011.
153 Interview with #63, February 23, 2012.
154 Interview with #30, October 11, 2012; Interview with Duff Sigurdson, Peachland, BC, August 22, 2012.
155 Personal communication with #16, January 26, 2012.
156 Personal communication with #25. January 19, 2012.
157 *Ibid.*
158 Personal communication with #48, January 19, 2012.

Hitchhiking was a rite of passage for many restless teenagers and twenty-somethings who thumbed along the Trans-Canada Highway to points unknown. Youth cultures tend to be temporary solutions to issues that develop when adolescents encounter "gaps" between what is happening in their lives and "what they have been led to believe would happen."[159] While on the road, hitchhikers took pride in the unpredictability and risks; however, once they were ready to leave the road, the temporal gaze and spatial topography became less clear. After a year on the road, a teenager later remembered this dissonant moment clearly. "It was the Thursday before Thanksgiving.... We were sitting on the curb in Gastown, reading *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and getting really inspired by the book. I started thinking how nice it would be back in Ontario.... All the kids got together up at the cottage for Thanksgiving weekend.... I said: 'Why don't we just go home?'" His tourist gaze shifted from the romance and freedom he coveted back to the "familiar, convenience and guidance" of family and friends.[160]

Canada's youth hitchhiking "craze" declined in the mid-1970s because anti-hitchhiking groups put pressure on the police and RCMP to levy fines and enforce restrictions on highways, and some local municipalities succeeded in enacting by-laws banning hitchhiking in towns and cities. The media publicized the link between hitchhiking and a number of murders. The commercial tourism sector increased the number of cheap alternatives for young passengers through student discounts and stand-by tickets on Greyhound coaches, CN/VIA railway, and airlines. In the early 1970s, funding and monitoring the activities in youth hostels, especially in the aftermath of the FLQ kidnappings, was an opportunity for the federal government to maintain their popularity with young people and keep the student movement under surveillance. In 1977, the Secretary of State established Katimavik, which offered youth the opportunity to travel and volunteer in different parts of the country. Under the supervision of bilingual group leaders, Katimavik's original three rules were no sex, no drugs, and no hitchhiking.[161]

In the 1970s, thousands of young Canadians became tourists, drifters, and wanderers in their own regions and provinces as well as across the continent. By resisting, subverting, and improvising hegemonic class and gender expectations, they put a new twist on the rituals associated with traditional Canadian tourism. Then as now, their road stories highlight biographical moments when their understandings of landscapes and citizenship were formed. By self-consciously adorning themselves with beads, feathers, Canada flags, and long bushy hair, or by flipping a peace sign to oncoming traffic, they performed embodied rituals of a romantic subculture. In 1967, a Wawa boy and a neighbour girl hitchhiked all the way to Montreal for Expo '67, but did not go in because they "didn't give a damn!"[162] It was the trip, not the destination, that defined the experience.

159 Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, p. 21.

160 Desforges, "Traveling the World," p. 938; Vogt, "Wandering," p. 39; Cohen, "Toward a Sociology," pp. 176-177.

161 Michaell Sherraden and Donald J. Eberly, "Reflection on Katimavik, an Innovative Canadian Youth Program," *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1986), p. 290.

162 Interview with #30.