

**SPEEDING TOWARD BABYLON: SUBCULTURAL DRUG USE IN TORONTO,
MONTREAL, AND VANCOUVER, 1960-1980**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the history of subcultural drug use in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, from 1960 to 1980. The primary method of investigation was oral interviewing, backed up with statistical analysis, NGO and government studies, and art, including music, novels, poetry, and comics produced in the era. Through this work, I have attempted to create a ground-up, “people’s history” of drug use in these three cities at this time.

Subcultural drug use became a recognized phenomenon in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with subculturalists like “jazz cats” and rock n rollers using drugs as varied as heroin, cannabis, and amphetamine. Following the “British Invasion” of 1964, subcultural drug use exploded and became much more common, especially under the banner of the “hippies,” a subculture so large it became a “counterculture.” Though there was plenty of darkness surrounding the hippies, the movement was overall an idealistic one, focused on peace, love, and having a good time. This reflected, and reflected upon, wider society, which saw massive economic expansion and a grand liberalization of society generally. With the economic downturn of the 1970s, the introduction of hard drugs, and the “death of the sixties dream,” the counterculture morphed into something more dystopian, finally reaching its apotheosis with punk.

The history of drug using subcultures in the 1960s and 1970s provides insights into several fields of Canadian history, beyond drug and subcultural studies. It reflects particularly on (1) the postwar growth of the Canadian economy and population; (2) the rise of the liberal welfare state and reaction to it; (3) the development of the teenager and extension of adolescence; (4) the spread of greater cultural tolerance, the politics around that tolerance, and reaction to it; and (5) the spread of communications, transportation, and pharmaceutical science

and technology. This study analyses the conflicts and contradictions of a time and place where millions of youth had more opportunity than ever before, while at the same time being classed as the largest law-breaking cohort in modern history.

DEDICATION

For my father,

Benjamin David Hazzan

1934-2023

“Use your brain!”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I. Virgil, Schmergil

I acknowledge that without Virgil,
Dante would have been lost in Inferno,
burnt like a spent bong bowl.

Marcel Martel is my Virgil
the mule trainer,
the lightkeeper at Desperation Inn,
the guide.

Marlene Shore was my St Peter,
Edward Jones-Imhotep my Minerva,
Kathryn McPherson the off-books lawyer.

I acknowledge that without them,
I would have produced a third-rate feature for *Rolling Stone*.

Mahalo!

II. The Winds of Shit

When the winds of shit blow,
I acknowledge you call Karen Dancy,
and she comes out with the scaffolding.

D'Arshy, Daniela, Anita, Lisa
every other office-jockey we hired,
thank you for your service.
Like Covid frontliners, you're all heroes,
because dealing with academics all day is a lot like nursing.

Every graduate student is his cohort, which is why I thank,
Bàrbara Molas, who calls me bastard;
Alan Corbiere, who says "fromage";
Jody Hodgins, who speaks with the animals;
Aaron Armstrong, who eats Spaghetti-O's;
Zachary Consitt, resplendent in traffic-cone orange;

and Alex Gagne – even if I am tired of losing to a man named Winner.
 Special mention to Matt Robertshaw,
 who is a Haiti's worth of kindness.

May the gods of Greece shine upon Mohammed Khimji,
 and Katherine Mc Pherson, Jennifer Bonnell, Anne Rubenstein, Janice Kim, Tom
 Hooper, Joseph Tohill, Gary Butler, d
 and the muses that inspired their teaching.

In academies otherwise,
 Catherine Carstairs graced me with patience,
 Dan Malleck gave me the origins,
 the ADHS and CHA kept me in lettered comfort,
 and Erika Dyck proved that all roads in drug history lead to Saskatoon.

III. Up on Chimneystack Road

I was drafted into the class war.
 Suddenly, I had to put my money where my mouth was.
 It was bitter right from the start.

No love, no foreplay,
 like skipping the Beatles and going straight to the Rolling Stones.
 But I loved my comrades in CUPE 3903
 and I acknowledge that without them,
 I would have been much poorer than I was.

IV. It's at 5:30 in the morning

drunk and disgraced,
 in an Uber to CAMH,
 you learn who your friends are fast.
 I acknowledge that Alex Gagne, Bàrbara Molas, and Virginia Grimaldi are my friends,
 and I would be lost without them.
(I'm fine now, thanks.)

Speaking of CAMH --

I acknowledge the gracious access you provided to your archives,
 and the \$1500 cheque you cut so I could use them.
 I'm sorry I never used them,
 but there was a disease going around.

I also thank the CHA for their help,
 the Ramsay Cook Award for its,
 and the aid given me by YUGSA, FGS, ADHS, MOE,
 and the rest of the alphabet soup of love and funding.
 Michel Duquet, you are a prince among the rabble.

And to a certain alliterative 12-Step organization,
 who ensured I could finish this work,
 within the century,
 outside the gutter,
 in some form of comprehensible English.
 I acknowledge that without them I would be lost.

My favourite drug is now a Group Of Drunks.

V. So when did you first use drugs, if you used drugs?

An oral historian requires subjects to solicit the history from.
 And to my interviewees, I grant the hardest thanks,
 for without you,
 I would have had nothing.
 At least until the CAMH archive reopened.

And to those who spoke with their names:
 Bruce K Alexander, Tommy Chong, Peter Edwards, Eric Fillion, Stuart
 Henderson, Nicholas Jennings, Sam Sutherland, and Jason Wilson.
 Thank you for your time and trust,
 and I hope I spoke for you accurately.

VI. Blessings heaped!

I have been blessed repeatedly with the warm whiskey of friendship,
 and to my friends all over the world,
 and in the next one,
 I say, "Kamsahamnida!" "Whakamihi!" "Merci!"
 (please translate accordingly to your preferred language)

My mother disagrees with the nuns on who created Adam.
 She disagrees with me on the meaning of Creole.
 But we all agree she created me.
 Thanks for that!

Joel! Eslin! Livy! Zeus!
And Dad too. His memory is a blessing.

VII. The Last Acknowledgment

After 28 years of living in the backwoods of heterosexual desire,
smashed ankle, smashed ego, smashed man,
Came Jo,
and I said,
reflecting on the last 20 years,
"I acknowledge there is no one more blessed than I!"

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Introduction

Introduction – Joel

In 1966, “Joel,” a young graduate student in southern California, ran out of United States Army draft deferments and fled to Canada, setting himself up as a leatherworker in Vancouver’s Kitsilano neighbourhood. By then, Kitsilano and the area around Fourth Avenue in West End Vancouver was already becoming known as a hippie community, Vancouver’s Haight-Ashbury or Greenwich Village. There, in Vancouver, Joel and his hippie friends consumed cannabis and LSD. They did not consider these to be drugs so much as “sacraments” they “shared”; dealers were not “dealers” but rather “brothers and sisters” who had obtained “the dope that most of us believed could change society, make it more benign, generous, sharing.”¹ Joel had faith that his generation, through its music, attitudes, but especially its drugs, could change the world, and he saw it in his friends and neighbours.

There were some magical examples of changes in recently-turned-on people; they became strong advocates for the selflessness for which we strived. It seemed self-evident that we had the power (in drugs) to remind those converts of their primitive, pre-capitalist generosity, and this extended naturally to sharing drugs.²

¹ “Joel,” Interview with Author, 3 June 2021. Per York Office of Ethics requirements, names of interviewees have been changed and revealing information has been anonymized or omitted.

² “Joel,” Interview. This quotation was provided in a follow-up email.

Though problems with the police and other Vancouver authorities were a constant in Kitsilano, one day, Joel figured, they, too, would come to understand a new way of life was being revealed through the “sacrament.”³

Ten years later, Joel is addicted to cocaine. Fourth Avenue by now was “not so genteel,” he said. Cocaine was “harsh, it felt like a free trip until you come down from it.” Though he did not use the word himself, when I suggested to Joel cocaine was a “selfish” drug, as opposed to cannabis and hallucinogenics, he quickly agreed. “It didn’t take long before I realized [cocaine] was not benign. [...] And I always felt like pot and the other drugs, acid, psilocybin mushrooms, were benign.” After six months of daily cocaine use, Joel found he had lost friends, was “unkind,” knew he was unkind, and “didn’t care if I was hurting people.” Joel argued that cocaine “contributed” to the death of the 1960s counterculture, and in 1977 he left Vancouver for Victoria, and then went back to California, to try and recapture at least some of the spirit they had lost in Kitsilano.⁴ Joel left town just as a new spectre was descending on Vancouver, not from Kitsilano, but from the suburbs of Burnaby and White Rock – the Spectre of Punk.

Thesis statement

This study is an historical analysis discussing the rise and fall of the hippie movement and the rise of punk; how good drugs went bad; and how Canadian subcultural drug use rose, fell, and rose again between 1960 and 1980, reflecting greater historical forces in Canadian cultural, subcultural, political, social, and economic history. People such as Joel, who were

³ “Joel,” Interview.

⁴ “Joel,” Interview.

involved in the drug-using subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s, provide grassroots insight into the wider changes affecting Canada at this time, through their attitudes, subcultural associations, and the drugs they used. The central question emanating here is why, from the perspective of users on the ground, did subcultural drug use “go bad” and come to represent dystopian narratives, and whether subcultural users were aware of this decline, and how did they adapt to it. The answer is that subcultural drug use went “bad” through the introduction of hard drugs and the more violent people who sold them; a “rediscovery” of alcohol by subcultural drug users; conservative and subcultural reactions to the hippie counterculture; and a stagnant economy and “loss of hope” in the future in the 1970s. Subculturalists seemed well aware of these changes as they were happening, and they usually adapted by dropping out of the subculture or changing their subcultural affiliations – for example, some hippies became punks, while others melted into the mainstream.

Why take drugs?

It is important in any work on drug use to look at the question of why people take drugs, and why drug use should be seen not as a problematic activity, but as something many people do, usually (certainly not always) without serious consequences. The answer is, people take drugs for all kinds of reasons. Psychopharmacologist Ronald K. Siegel argued the urge to intoxication is universal in humans and animals, a “fourth drive [...] like our drives of hunger, thirst, and sex.”⁵ Many of the most dedicated anti-drug advocates argue they are working to save us from

⁵ Ronald K. Siegel, *Intoxication: The Universal Drive for Mind-Altering Substances*, 2nd ed., Rochester VT: Park Street Press, 2005: vii.

ourselves, and often admit they would use drugs if it were not for prohibition.⁶ The urge to alter our own consciousness begins when we are children and we play games like twirling under stars to make ourselves dizzy. We also learn that our parents disapprove of such activities – thus the correlation between altered states of being and the forbidden becomes ingrained.⁷

The consumption of drugs is almost always accompanied with music, a vital ingredient to culture and subculture. This has almost always been the case. Shamans sang, the Greeks played the lyre, and the hippies listened to The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.⁸ Listening to music causes the brain's nucleus accumbens to release dopamine, just like when "drug addicts get their drug of choice, or when compulsive gamblers win a bet."⁹ The Iboga people of Gabon combine the drug ibogaine with polyrhythmic music in their initiation ceremonies.¹⁰ Thomas De Quincey saved his laudanum for when his favourite singer, Grassini, was at the opera.¹¹ At the turn-of-the-century, the new craze of dancing at the cabaret was associated with drink and cocaine.¹² Harold Becker's classic sociological work on deviance,

⁶ Bruce K. Alexander, *Peaceful Measures: Canada's Way Out of the 'War on Drugs,'* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990: 338.

⁷ Andrew Weil, *The Natural Mind: A Revolutionary Approach to the Drug Problem*, Revised ed., New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972, 2004: 17.

⁸ Jörg Fachner, "Music and Drug-Induced Altered States of Consciousness," in David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner, eds., *Music and Altered States: Consciousness, Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions*, London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006: 84, 86.

⁹ Daniel J. Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*, New York: Penguin, 2006: 121.

¹⁰ Uwe Maas and Süster Strubelt, "Polyrhythms Support a Pharmacotherapy: Music in Iboga Initiation Ceremony in Gabon," in Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States*, 102.

¹¹ Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Other Writings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013: 45.

¹² Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*, Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1981: 84.

Outsiders, studied marijuana users and musicians as a single cohort.¹³ One therapist wrote about her clients, “They cannot imagine going to a rock concert without taking – or drinking – something that will enhance their enjoyment of the music and enable them to feel part of the crowd.”¹⁴ Early psychedelic researchers R.E.L. Masters and Jean Houston found that LSD users could often “empathize” with music, more so than with other people,¹⁵ and music was employed in pre-prohibition LSD therapy.¹⁶ Even anti-drug warrior Emily Murphy noted that music students who used drugs tended to think more highly of their work.¹⁷ As Andrew Blake wrote,

From the role of the ‘reefer’ in early twentieth century jazz and blues, to the centrality of amphetamines and hallucinogens for dance music at the close of the century and beyond, there has been an intimate relationship between drug consumption and music. The relationship has been expressed through journalism, biography, and fiction, the lyrics of songs, the cultural practices of popular musicians and audiences, and through musical forms and performance styles.¹⁸

Music was key to why people took drugs, why they took the drugs they did, how, and with whom.

¹³ J. Bryan Page and Merrill Singer, *Comprehending Drug Use: Ethnographic Research at the Social Margins*, Piscataway NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 54.

¹⁴ Tsvia Horesh, “Dangerous Music: Working with the Destructive and Healing Powers of Popular Music in the Treatment of Substance Abusers,” in Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States*, 127.

¹⁵ R.E.L. Masters and Jean Houston, *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*, New York: Dell Publishing, 1966: 113.

¹⁶ Jesse Donaldson and Erika Dyck, *The Acid Room: The Psychedelic Trials and Tribulations of Hollywood Hospital*, Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2022: 60.

¹⁷ Emily Murphy, *The Black Candle*, Toronto: Thomas Allen Publisher, 1922: 63.

¹⁸ Andrew Blake, “Drugs and Popular Music in the Modern Age,” in Paul Manning, ed., *Drugs and Popular Culture: Drugs, Media, and Identity in Contemporary Society*, Cullompton, England: Willan Publishing, 2007: 103.

Primary findings and contribution to Canadian historiography

This study investigates drug use “on the ground” in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. To do this, I interviewed 73 subjects who were active in a 1960s or 1970s “scene” where drugs were present. My study takes a distinctive approach to Canadian drug history. Most of the literature focuses on policy, law enforcement, and other top-down perspectives. My project reverses the traditional story, creating a “people’s history” of drug use and how drug use reflects and modifies ideas of postwar wealth, culture, work, recreation, race, sexuality, and politics. There are five aspects of Canadian history this study discusses: (1) the postwar growth of the Canadian economy and population; (2) the rise of the liberal welfare state and reaction to it; (3) the development of the teenager and extension of adolescence; (4) the spread of greater cultural tolerance, the politics around that tolerance, and reaction to it; and (5) the spread of communications, transportation, and pharmaceutical science and technology. These five aspects were repeatedly referred to by my interviewees and other sources as vital to subcultural drug use in the 1960s and 1970s, though they may not have discussed it in those terms. For example, repeated references to using drugs in the basement while listening to the hi-fi may not have struck my interviewees as historically relevant, but it speaks to the importance of the wealth that generated houses with basements, and expensive stereo equipment hooked up to 24-hour electricity.

The widespread use of drugs in the 1960s and 1970s would not have been possible without the explosive economic growth that followed World War II. Between 1945 and 1973, GDP grew by 6.4 per cent per annum, facilitated by trade, international labour and capital flows,

and heavy investment in the Canadian economy.¹⁹ Unemployment was in the single digits throughout the era: 7.0 per cent in 1960; 3.9 per cent in 1965; 5.7 per cent in 1970; 6.9 per cent in 1975; and 7.5 per cent in 1980.²⁰ A strong economy gave young people the money to “drop out” and purchase drugs and other subcultural symbols, like records, clothes, and so on. The spread of car ownership and the spacious suburban home, for those who could afford them, gave young people new spaces to enjoy drugs away from prying adult eyes. Economic growth also encouraged utopianism, whether the hippies admitted it or not; at the same time, economic decline in the mid-1970s, where growth slowed to less than half the pre-1973 rate,²¹ helped fuel dystopianism, as not only the cultural but the economic promise of the 1960s evaporated for many working- and middle-class Canadians. While all classes saw an increase in their living standards through the era, poverty remained a persistent problem – in 1971, 21 per cent of the population lived in relative poverty, and another 14 per cent were in “near poverty”²² – and class affected subcultural drug use, including subcultural identity and drug choice. The baby boom, meanwhile, meant that the huge number of young people could make subcultural drug use common, forming a wider “counterculture.”²³ From 1941 to 1951, Canada’s population increased

¹⁹ Kenneth Norrie, Douglas Owsram, and J.C. Herbert Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 4th ed., Toronto: Thomson Canada Ltd., 2008: 371.

²⁰ Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Annual Averages*, Cat. No. 71-529; Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 71-22; Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Historical Review* (CD-Rom), Cat. No. 71-F0004-XCB. In Lance W. Roberts, Rodney A. Clifton, Barry Ferguson, Karen Kampen, and Simon Langlois, eds. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005: 180.

²¹ Norrie, et al., *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 371.

²² Ian Adams, William Cameron, Brian Hill, and Peter Penz, *The Real Poverty Report*, Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, Ltd., 1971: 15.

²³ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996, 2007: 203.

by 15.7 per cent; from 1951 to 1961, it was 25.2 per cent,²⁴ as the baby-boom hit full stride. In 1961, 34 per cent of Canadians were under the age of 14. In 1966, it was 32.9 per cent.²⁵ This was a moment for youth. Meanwhile, the population of Canada as a whole grew. In 1951, the Ninth Canadian Census showed a total population of 14,009,429, up from 11,506,655 in 1941.²⁶ Statistics Canada shows an increase to 16,081,000 in 1956; 18,238,000 in 1961; 20,015,000 in 1966; 21,568,00 in 1971; 22,993,000 in 1976; and 24,343,000 in 1981.²⁷

Concomitant with economic and population growth is the rise of the liberal welfare state and reaction to it. Many Canadians, including many of my interviewees, benefited from government support programs like the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), Opportunities for Youth (OFY), Canada Council grants, student grants, welfare, and other forms of government largesse. The work associated with make-work programs like the CYC and OFY were often derided as “a joke,” though young people were grateful for them anyway. Increased funding for secondary and post-secondary education allowed young subculturalists to delay entry into the work world, giving them more time to experiment with drugs and alternative lifestyles. More teenagers were in school than ever before, and that number was rising. In 1961, 66.4 per cent, nearly two-thirds, of 14 to 17-year-olds were enrolled full-time at school. This number continued

²⁴ Statistics Canada, accessed online at www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo03.htm, February 3, 2004. In Roberts, et al., *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*, 28.

²⁵ Statistics Canada, *Age, Sex and Marital Status*, Cat. No. 93-310. In Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*: 33.

²⁶ Canada Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Ninth Census of Canada, 1951*, Table 1, 23, Accessed 4 January 2023, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/statcan/CS98-1951-1.pdf

²⁷ Statistics Canada, “Visual Census: Population Canada,” Accessed 4 January 2023, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/fs-fi/index.cfm?LANG=ENG&VIEW=D&format=jpg&PRCODE=01&TOPIC_ID=3

to rise: in 1962, it was 72 per cent; 1963, 76.1; 1964, 78.8; 1965, 80.8; 1966, 83.8; and by 1967, 87.8 per cent of young teenagers were at school,²⁸ an incredible improvement, and one that points to a young cohort unencumbered by full-time work and put into the maelstrom of subcultures and cliques that form high school society.²⁹ University enrolment grew as well. In 1961, 113,864 Canadians were enrolled full-time at university. In 1967, it was 232,672 full-time and 85,814 part-time students.³⁰

This alleged government largesse fed a backlash among conservatives like Vancouver mayor Tom Campbell, who wanted the moneys reapportioned to more “deserving” youth.³¹ Programs were scaled back in the 1970s as the economy slowed.³² Still, this government largesse, combined with Pierre Trudeau’s ambiguous image as a hip bachelor,³³ marked an enormous difference between Canadian and American political cultures. The perception was that while the United States drafted its young people to fight in Southeast Asia or killed them in the ghettos, Canada provided them with government programs.³⁴ This also contributed to the

²⁸ Statistics Canada, *Education in Canada: A Statistical Review*, Cat. No 81-229. In Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*: 566.

²⁹ John Irwin, *Scenes*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977: 66.

³⁰ Statistics Canada, *Education in Canada: A Statistical Review*, Cat. No 81-229; Statistics Canada, “University enrolment, full-time and part-time, by sex” accessed online at www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/educ03a.htm, February 12, 2004. In Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*: 569.

³¹ Aaron Chapman, *The Last Gang in Town: The Epic Story of the Vancouver Police vs. the Clark Park Gang*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016: 55.

³² Norrie, et al., *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 401.

³³ Greg Marquis, *John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and the Year Canada Was Cool*, Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., Ltd., 2020: 24.

³⁴ Robert McGill, *War is Here: The Vietnam War and Canadian Literature*, Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017: 10, 12.

50,000 US draft resisters and their families who moved to Canada during the Vietnam War,³⁵ a development which also shaped subcultural drug use, as Americans brought their drug cultures with them north.³⁶ Though most of these differences were superficial – the US had plenty of government grants and Canada was complicit in fuelling the American invasion of Vietnam³⁷ – the perception of Canada as a shining star of northern liberalism deeply affected culture, and subcultural drug use, at the time.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of enormous change around the development of the “teenager” and the extension of adolescence in Canadian society. Though the concept of the teenager was concretized in the 1940s and popularized in the 1950s,³⁸ in the 1960s and 1970s it took on new, more subversive connotations, in large part due to subcultural drug use.³⁹ “Teenage hangouts” included the coffeeshop, the school dance, concerts and more informal “live shows,” suburban homes, parking lots and shopping malls, parks and playgrounds, “the street,” and – if they could get in – bars. Different drug-using subcultures occupied different spaces to use different drugs, and these spaces influenced the subcultures themselves, especially commercial ones, like bars and cafes. Another significant change in the 1960s and 1970s was the growth of the high school as a primary centre for drug use and distribution, which affected the high

³⁵ John Hagan, *Northern Passage: American Vietnam War Resisters in Canada*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001: 35.

³⁶ Hagan, *Northern Passage*, 71.

³⁷ Victor Levant, *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War*, Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986: 55.

³⁸ Cynthia R. Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of a Modern Canada, 1920-1950*, Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2006: 204, 214.

³⁹ Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 197. See also Sheila Gormely, *Drugs and the Canadian Scene*, Toronto: Pagurian Press, Ltd., 1970: 25.

school's institutional environment;⁴⁰ this was a major departure from the 1950s, when the RCMP found no evidence of alleged “drug rings” in high schools.⁴¹ Adolescence, meanwhile, was extended later into life, as more young people spent their late teens and early twenties traveling, extending their educations, and putting off marriage and domesticity, permitting for more drug use with fewer consequences. Though no longer “teenagers,” they were not adults in the sense of self-supporting individuals looking to begin a family.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, cultural mores loosened, and this affected and was affected by the drug culture.⁴² Notions around race, gender, and sexuality all changed in relation to drug use. Some parents came to accept⁴³ – or at least ignore – their children's drug use, while other families were torn apart, their children often running away.⁴⁴ The 1970s saw an explosion in, for lack of a better term, “sin and sleaze,”⁴⁵ part of which was facilitated by subcultural drug

⁴⁰ Gormely, *Drugs and the Canadian Scene*, xiii. See also, Reginald G. Smart, *Forbidden Highs: The Nature, Treatment, and Prevention of Illicit Drug Abuse*, Toronto: Addiction Research Foundation, 1983: 30; on RCMP undercover work in high schools, see Greg Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye: Policing Canada from 1867 to 9/11*, Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2015: 183.

⁴¹ P.J. Giffen, Shirley Endicott, and Sylvia Lambert, *Panic and Indifference: The Politics of Canada's Drug Laws. A Study in the Sociology of Law*, Ottawa: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 1991: 356.

⁴² See, for example, Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979, 1991, 2018: 20; see also, Susan Boyd, *Busted: An Illustrated History of Drug Prohibition in Canada*, Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017: 112.

⁴³ François Ricard, *The Lyric Generation: The Life and Times of the Baby Boomers*, Donald Winkler, trans., Toronto: Stoddart, 1994: 78.

⁴⁴ Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture*, Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009: 138.

⁴⁵ Allan Levine, *Toronto: Biography of a City*. Madeira Park BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2014: 236. See also, Aaron Chapman, *Vancouver After Dark: The Wild History of a City's Nightlife*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2019: 158, and Jean-Philippe Warren and Andrée Fortin, *Pratiques et discours de la contreculture au Québec*, Québec: Septentrion, 2015: 238.

use and led to further reaction against it, pushed by sensational media reports of, for example, the murder of 12-year-old Emanuel Jacques in 1977⁴⁶ and the federal government's ultimate refusal to legalize marijuana, despite the drug's "embourgeoisement."⁴⁷ (Though the government did lower maximum penalties and make cannabis possession a summary offence.⁴⁸) Greater cultural tolerance also caused the provinces to lower their drinking ages from 21 to 18, which caused an enormous shift in subcultural drug use patterns, as young people headed for the bar and the Beer Store.⁴⁹ This greater cultural tolerance, and the subcultural rebellion it permitted, led in large part to the creation of the punks,⁵⁰ and their alcohol-fueled subculture of "double-negation" – anti-mainstream *and* anti-hippie.⁵¹

The development and spread of postwar technology was instrumental to subcultural drug use and the forms it took. Pharmaceutical technology introduced new drugs, like LSD, MDA, amphetamine, methamphetamine, and literally thousands of others, into the white, grey, and black markets.⁵² One-way communication technology, particularly the television and the

⁴⁶ Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, 2nd rev. ed., Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987: 205.

⁴⁷ Clayton Mosher, *Imperialism, Irrationality, and Illegality: The First 90 Years of Canadian Drug Policy, 1908-1998*, Seattle: Canadian Studies Center, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, 1999: 28.

⁴⁸ Susan Boyd, Connie I. Carter, and Donald Macpherson, *More Harm than Good: Drug Policy in Canada*, Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016: 21.

⁴⁹ Greg Marquis, "From Beverage to Drug: Alcohol and Other Drugs in 1960s and 1970s Canada." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 39.2 (March 2005): 65.

⁵⁰ Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 305.

⁵¹ Stephen Colegrave and Chris Sullivan, *Punk: The Definitive Record of a Revolution*, New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2001: 14.

⁵² David Herzberg, *White Market Drugs: Big Pharma and the Hidden History of Addiction in America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020: 171. See also, David Herzberg, *Happy Pills in America: From Milltown to Prozac*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009: 3.

transistor radio,⁵³ facilitated the spread of subcultural values – though it may seem a cliché, many of my interviewees said their lives changed when they saw the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964, a British band playing an American stage, hundreds of miles from anywhere in Canada. Cheaper printing technology, air mail, and news wire services – including countercultural wires like the post-1965 Canadian University Press⁵⁴ – spread subcultural news. Airplanes provided cross-continental subcultural sharing and countercultural travel to places as varied as England, Morocco, and India, where Canadian subculturalists learned about different drugs and methods of drug use.⁵⁵ Sound amplification technology changed how music was heard and appreciated, whether on the home stereo, in a warehouse club, or at Maple Leaf Gardens.⁵⁶

Subculture

This project uses the concept of subculture as an organizing and argumentative principle. Most drug use – whether it is a group of hippies sharing a joint, a set of addicts shooting up in an alley, or a group of regulars lined up at the bar – is done in a group.⁵⁷ The composition of these

⁵³ Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008: 22. See also Irwin, *Scenes*, 57.

⁵⁴ Ron Verzuh, *Underground Times: Canada's Flower-Child Revolutionaries*, Toronto: Deneau, 1989: 20.

⁵⁵ Mark Abley, *Strange Bewildering Time: Istanbul to Kathmandu in the Last Year of the Hippie Trail*, Toronto: Anansi, 2023: 3.

⁵⁶ Christopher James Dahlie, Jos Mulder, Sergio Pisfil, and Nick Reeder, “Live Sound Matters,” in Chris Anderton and Sergio Pisfil, eds., *Researching Live Music: Gigs, Tours, Concerts, and Festivals*, London: Focal Press, 2021: 87.

⁵⁷ Jock Young, *The Drugtakers: The Social Meaning of Drug Use*, London: Paladin, 1972: 39. See also Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History*, Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003: 14 and Irwin, *Scenes*, 25.

groups, their attitudes and activities, and the drugs they consume, are determined culturally. Subcultures are spin-offs of the primary culture, are often made up of alienated individuals,⁵⁸ and have certain characteristics that cause them to be different.⁵⁹ They communicate semiotically and adopt symbols at variance with mainstream culture,⁶⁰ and as they criticize mainstream civil society, they act as counter-hegemonic forces.⁶¹ English Professor Ken Gelder, in his introduction to subcultural studies, defines subcultures as:

...groups of people that are in some way represented as non-normative and/or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do and where they do it. They may represent *themselves* in this way since subcultures are usually well aware of their differences, bemoaning them, relishing them, exploiting them, and so on. But they will also be represented like this by others, who in response can bring an entire apparatus of social classification and regulation to bear upon them.⁶²

Subcultures often begin as simple “cliques” in high school and similar settings, like summer camps, dance schools, and sports clubs. Adolescents, as part of their natural growth and identity formation, may adopt a variety of identities as they go through school.⁶³ I argue these identities – in the 1960s and 1970s they included jocks, preppies, hippies/heads, greasers, punks, and many more – are often a mix of self-identification and identities pushed on them by their

⁵⁸ Albert K. Cohen, “A General Theory of Subcultures (1955)” in Ken Gelder, ed., *The Subcultures Reader*, 2nd ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2005: 56.

⁵⁹ Sarah Thornton, “The Social Logic of Subcultural Capital (1995)” in Gelder, *The Subcultures Reader*, 185.

⁶⁰ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge, 1979: 3.

⁶¹ Roger Simon, *Gramsci’s Political Thought: An Introduction*, 3rd ed., London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2015: 12.

⁶² Ken Gelder, “Introduction: The Field of Subcultural Studies,” in Gelder, *The Subcultures Reader*, 1.

⁶³ How high schools help adolescents determine their identities is contested, but few argue it is not important. See M. Verhoeven, A.M.G. Poorthuis, and M. Volman, “The Role of School in Adolescents’ Identity Development. A Literature Review.” *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(2019): 35–63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-018-9457-3>.

peers, which forms an identity-forming dialectic. I am this; they say I am that; it is synthesized into something unique. These cliques are usually transitory and don't go beyond adopting certain subcultural "signifiers," like clothes and music. As adolescents age and discover who they are, they tend to socialize into mainstream society and go on their way, though they will likely retain an appreciation for their clique's signifiers.

A subculture is a clique made more solid and taken beyond the high school walls (though they exist in high schools, too). It also has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other social groupings, like a bridge club or an art appreciation circle. A subculture must be *oppositional* – it must, in some way, be at odds with the mainstream culture.⁶⁴ Though some subcultural members may disagree, all subcultures are political in that they advance a certain way of seeing the world that is different from what exists on television, newspapers, and other media that construct hegemony.⁶⁵ They may not take direct political action – most, as political scientist Irving Howe noted, do not⁶⁶ – but they still oppose mainstream culture for one reason or another. The "counterculture," meanwhile, refers in this study to a specific subculture, the hippies, who grew to such an extent they could no longer be considered "sub" anything. This happened through a combination of demographic, economic, political, and cultural change that

⁶⁴ John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, cultures and class (1975)" in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain*, 2nd ed., London and New York: Routledge, 1975, 1993, 2005: 53.

⁶⁵ Clarke, et al., "Subcultures, cultures and class," in Hall and Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals*, 30.

⁶⁶ Irving Howe, "New Styles in 'Leftism'" (1965) in *Selected Writings, 1950-1990*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990: 195.

will be examined. The phenomenon of the counterculture is well-explored in works by writers such as Theodore Roszak and Charles Reich.⁶⁷

This study divides subcultures into *utopian* and *dystopian*. As the titles suggest, a utopian subculture is one that sees subcultural work as a process of advancing a better world for all. The hippies, with their focus on peace, love, and understanding, are an example of a utopian subculture. A dystopian subculture posits a world that is getting worse for all, though that may not be the subculture's goal. The punks, with their focus on rage, anger, and disappointment, are dystopian. Individuals within these subcultures may display a range of utopian or dystopian attitudes, but the collectives trend in certain directions.

The subcultures under study here use *music* as a primary identifier. Music is often the most important subcultural signifier. It is acted out by, and acts upon, the subculture. There are few subcultures, at least since the invention of recorded music, that do not identify with music. Howard Becker, in his study of marijuana using subcultures, tied early marijuana use to the jazz musician,⁶⁸ who formed a subculture that (barely) survives today. Airi Mäki-Kumala, regarding the Finnish rockers she studied, argued the “basic element in the subculture was no doubt music – more specifically rock music. Many other elements of the group – its language, manners, its members’ cultural activities and creativity – were related to music and drew meaning from it.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1969: 22 and Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America*, New York: Bantam Books, 1970: 2.

⁶⁸ Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, New York: The Free Press, 1963: 85.

⁶⁹ Airi Mäki-Kumala, “Subculture, Rock Music, and Gender,” in Will Straw, Stacey Johnson, Rebecca Sullivan, and Paul Friedlander, eds., *Popular Music – Style and Identity: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Seventh international Conference on*

John Irwin argued amplified electric music was essential to the creation of the hippies. The music can be local or foreign, live or canned, though these might have different meanings. International music affected local music, but there were variables that led to local music having a local flavour, whether the artists wanted it or not – production facilities, local venues, and past taste can all form part of a local music scene.⁷⁰ The mass democratization of music that came with the transistor radio led directly to the creation of subcultural identities that use music as a primary signifier.⁷¹ Hippies, punks, mods, surfers, greasers, bikers, Rastafarians – music was intrinsic to all of these. There are other signifiers as well – clothes, shoes, jewellery, hairstyles, argot – but these are often subsumed under music.

The subcultures under study here also all use drugs. Different drugs encourage conviviality, break down barriers between members, and can also serve as a test of strength or a proving ground for subcultural members.⁷² A central tenet of this study is that the drugs subcultures use help define those subcultures. They deploy them as signifiers – nothing is more “hippie” than marijuana⁷³ – but they also influence that subculture’s development by producing certain highs that influence how the culture acts and the signifiers they produce.⁷⁴ All drugs are different, and a subculture – just like a person – that routinely uses cocaine and speed will act

Popular Music Studies, Montreal: The Centre for Research on Canadian Cultural Industries and Institutions, 1995: 205.

⁷⁰ John Street, “(Dis)located? Rhetoric, Politics, Meaning and the Locality,” in Straw, et al., eds., *Popular Music – Style and Identity*, 257.

⁷¹ DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged*, 22.

⁷² DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged*, 211-212.

⁷³ Paul E. Willis, “The Cultural Meaning of Drug Use,” in Hall and Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals*, 89.

⁷⁴ Irwin, *Scenes*, 89.

and produce art very differently from a subculture that routinely uses marijuana and LSD.⁷⁵ The common joke about the 1960s – you had to be on drugs to dress/act/listen to that – is only partly a joke. Drugs affected the art, and the art affected the subculture. Similarly, subcultural drug use takes on different signifiers depending on when and where it is consumed. Smoking a joint meant different things in 1962, 1967, 1972, and 1977, even if the end goal of getting high was the same.⁷⁶ I have chosen not to arrange my subcultures by their primary drugs – i.e. the “marijuana-using subculture” or the “speed-using subculture,” because they are in many cases incorrect, and don’t reflect the often multi-drug combinations people used.

Why should scholars study subcultures? The reason subcultures are worth studying is because they form easily identifiable microcosms in society, from which we can extrapolate larger themes and trends, and their oppositional quality reveals qualities about mainstream society that may not be otherwise obvious. This was the case long before the counterculture – for example, studying pacifist subcultures in the First World War may not paint a complete picture of what happened from 1914 to 1918, but it fills in a lot more of the colour and detail.⁷⁷ Similarly, studying the hippie-to-punk transformation may not tell us everything about the 1960s and 1970s, but it fills in important themes and details.⁷⁸ Because subcultures communicate outside the mainstream, it can also provide what Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé call “history from below,” where there is no “ready-made body of material” as there may be in more traditional

⁷⁵ Terence McKenna, *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge*, New York: Bantam Books, 1992: 166, 208. See also Hebdige, *Subculture*, 30.

⁷⁶ Martin A. Lee, *Smoke Signals: A Social History of Marijuana – Medical, Recreational, and Scientific*, New York: Scribner, 2012: 78, 109, 149, 156

⁷⁷ See, for example, John Derksen, “A Costly But Influential Counterculture: A Review of Four Works of Wartime Pacifism,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 25 (2007): 161-170.

⁷⁸ Kevin Mattson, “Leather Jackets for Flowers: The Death of Hippie and the Birth of Punk in the Long, Late 1960s,” *The Sixties*, 12.1 (2019): 2.

histories.⁷⁹ Subculture addresses what political scientist James Scott called history's "hidden transcript," the words and actions that "represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant."⁸⁰ Subcultural testimony provides that transcript.

Subcultures are semiotic – they display their affinities using symbols.⁸¹ Most of these are attached to the person and can be classified as fashion: clothes, jewellery, hair, tattoos, makeup, shoes. Other symbols include vehicles, music, and drugs. The point is these items represent something else besides their utilitarian value.⁸² Any parent who has ever asked a teenager, "Why would you rip up a perfectly good pair of jeans?" likely knows the answer already – for the symbolic value of having ripped jeans. They let in the weather and shorten the life of the garment, but they also display a rebellious attitude. Ferdinand Saussure labelled these as the "signifiers" and the "signified," and the science of it as "semiotics."⁸³ He was referring to language, but there is a whole range of semiotic behaviour, including how you dress.

Most subcultural symbols either fade away in time, or are appropriated by capitalism, as political scientist Thomas Frank has demonstrated.⁸⁴ Subcultural symbols – whether shoes, hairstyles, or music – become consumer items people purchase to be associated with a certain

⁷⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, "History from Below – Some Reflections," in George Rudé and Frederick Krantz, eds., *History from Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology*, Montreal: Concordia University Press, 1985: 16.

⁸⁰ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1990: xii.

⁸¹ Phil Cohen, "Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community (1972)" in Gelder, *The Subcultures Reader*, 90.

⁸² Hebdige, *Subculture*, 2.

⁸³ J. Patrick Williams, *Subcultural Theory: Traditions and Concepts*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011: 27.

⁸⁴ Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997: 26.

way of thinking that began subculturally.⁸⁵ This is a built-in feature of our economic system – if something can make money, it usually will.⁸⁶ As the counterculture grew, capitalism followed in lockstep, making sure nothing escaped its insatiable need for profit.⁸⁷ Frank wrote that business had “dogged” the counterculture from the beginning, profiting off its “every move.”⁸⁸ The same followed punk – Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren opened their London boutique, *Sex*, featuring fashions based on New York punk Richard Hell’s cutup wardrobe.⁸⁹ The effect this has on the consumer is beyond the scope of this study, but commentators such as Kalle Lasn⁹⁰ and Christopher Lasch⁹¹ wrote that it created an emptiness in individuals, as they tried to fill their psychic, social, and political needs with *stuff*.

Symbols are essential but not enough – a subculture must also perform action beyond just displaying symbols.⁹² People who only display symbols without taking on the subcultural “work” are usually derided as “poseurs,” (sometimes “posers”) defined by Aronsen in relation to the hippies as, “weekend hippies, poseurs who adopted the appearance of the counter-culture rebels, including love beads, headbands, and colourful clothing, but were not considered true

⁸⁵ Thornton, “The Social Logic of Subcultural Capital,” 191.

⁸⁶ Derek Hall, “‘Commodification of everything’ arguments in the social sciences: Variants, specification, evaluation, critique,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 55.3 (May 2023): 528.

⁸⁷ Jim McGuigan, “From Cultural Populism to Cool Capitalism,” *Art and the Public Sphere*, 1.1 (2011): 11.

⁸⁸ Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 7.

⁸⁹ Shannon Price, “Vivienne Westwood and the Postmodern Legacy of Punk Style,” in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/vivw/hd_vivw.htm

⁹⁰ Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America*, New York: Eagle Brook, 1999.

⁹¹ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 91.

⁹² Williams, *Subcultural Theory*, 169.

believers.”⁹³ I argue that actions may be political, like organizing or attending a demonstration, or they may be social, like going to punk shows – acceptable levels of commitment change from place to place and subculture to subculture. But there must be some sort of action, or the subculture simply becomes a *style*.⁹⁴

Subcultural symbolism and choice of drug

People choose which drugs they use for an endless variety of reasons, not least personal taste. But for the purposes of this study, three reasons stand out: availability, suitability, and symbolism. All three are important and support each other in a troika, with different reasons carrying more or less weight depending on circumstance.

The most important variable for drug use is availability.⁹⁵ There are several reasons cocaine has always been more popular in North America than khat, but the most important is there are no distribution networks for khat as there are for cocaine.⁹⁶ Before my interviewees could take what drugs they wanted, they took what drugs were available. My research shows that before the mid-1960s, this usually meant alcohol, and sometimes marijuana, heroin, and amphetamines; from the mid-1960s to the late-1960s, marijuana and LSD predominated; from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and LSD all became common; and in the late 1970s, cocaine became popular while a heroin drought caused a drop in

⁹³ Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties*, Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010: 17.

⁹⁴ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 2.

⁹⁵ David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001: 39.

⁹⁶ Courtwright, *Forces of Habit*, 3.

use. Different cities often had different drugs more readily available – heroin was more common in Vancouver, methamphetamine in Toronto.⁹⁷

Beyond availability, the second reason subcultures favour certain drugs over others is *suitability* – does this drug go well with other subcultural symbols? Does it affect the subculture and its members in a way the subculture encourages? Alcohol provides an illuminating perspective here. In the early 1960s, rock n roll was played in bars and associated with liquor and beer, sometimes surreptitiously supplemented with amphetamines and cannabis.⁹⁸ This made sense in the world of rock n roll. Alcohol and speed are conducive to (though not necessarily required for) raucous, loud partying, tough guy posturing, fighting, and sexual expression.⁹⁹ Rock n roll, especially in its early days, was about all these things, influencing the way the drugs were consumed and in turn being influenced by it – for example, rock n roll had to be loud enough to be heard over a loud bar. Meanwhile, the folk scene was usually accompanied by coffee and cannabis.¹⁰⁰ Folk is a quieter form of music, where the lyrics are often more important than the melody, and it is expected that the crowd will pay attention to and often join in with the performer, or at least remain respectfully quiet. Cannabis and coffee suited folk music well, since these drugs encouraged intellectuality, reflection, and (in coffee's case, at least) concentration.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 17, 77.

⁹⁸ Nicholas Jennings, Interview with author, 20 May 2020.

⁹⁹ Heron, *Booze*, 42 and Nicolas Rasmussen, *On Speed: The Many Lives of Amphetamine*, New York: New York University Press, 2008: 225.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Jennings, *Before the Gold Rush: Flashbacks to the Dawn of the Canadian Sound*, Toronto: Penguin Groups Canada, 1997: 63.

¹⁰¹ Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 188.

Meanwhile, jazz's laid-back style was deemed appropriate for liquor and heroin, which suited the "mellowness" and cool detachment jazz encouraged.¹⁰²

With the creation of the hippies, who melded folk and rock,¹⁰³ LSD, mescaline, MDA, and other hallucinogens came to complement cannabis, and this affected the art and music. LSD influenced artists like the Beatles; the Beatles' music affected listeners; listeners internalized this change and expressed it in their own art; and so on. Sociologist John Irwin wrote drugs led to "experimentation in new forms of art. Both in writing and in graphics, but particularly in the latter, the new drug experience pushed the beat artists into a search for more intense, abstract forms."¹⁰⁴ At the same time as drugs worked on the producers of art, they worked on the consumers to "open up unused areas of the mind and allow[...] hitherto unexperienced levels of awareness and consciousness."¹⁰⁵

Once punk came around in the late 1970s, the circle was closed again. The overwhelming drug of choice for punks was alcohol, especially beer.¹⁰⁶ Part of this had to do with availability (the lowering of the drinking age) and with symbolism (to be anti-hippie),¹⁰⁷ but it was also an issue of suitability – as with the early rock n roll punk drew from, alcohol and speed were the

¹⁰² Harry Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man: The Story of Drugs and Popular Music*, London: Quartet Books, 1988: 65.

¹⁰³ Irwin, *Scenes*, 88.

¹⁰⁴ Irwin, *Scenes*, 89.

¹⁰⁵ Irwin, *Scenes*, 89.

¹⁰⁶ Sam Sutherland, Interview with Author, 27 January 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Liz Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt: An Oral History of Punk in Toronto and Beyond, 1977-1981*, Montreal: Bongo Beat Books, 2009: 239.

dominant drugs of the punks.¹⁰⁸ Cannabis and LSD do not complement loud, fast music, aggressive posturing, and a nihilistic outlook on life as do alcohol and speed.

Apart from influencing the art, drugs mediated the interactions between subcultural members. Marijuana, when used alone, rarely causes aggression the way alcohol does.¹⁰⁹ As a result, hippies who used marijuana tended to fight less and commune more than “greasers” who used alcohol and amphetamines.¹¹⁰ David Clayton-Thomas, who would go on to sing for the band Blood, Sweat, and Tears, wrote about how the aggressive attitude that helped him survive on booze-soaked Yonge Street only got him ostracized in pot-filled Yorkville. “The hair-trigger temper that was my survival mechanism in prison and in the brawling bars on Yonge Street were completely unacceptable here,” he wrote.¹¹¹ Similarly, when methamphetamine became common in Yorkville, the scene changed again to become more aggressive, a tendency methamphetamine encouraged.¹¹²

Finally, drugs are powerful subcultural symbols which can be *symbolically* deployed. Birmingham School sociologist Paul Willis wrote, “the importance of drugs [for subcultures] did not lie in their direct physical effects, but in the way they facilitated passing through a great symbolic barrier erected over against ‘straight’ society.”¹¹³ The “head” – a hippie who has used a lot of drugs – is “defined not simply by drug use, but by his *existential presence* on the other side

¹⁰⁸ Sutherland, Interview.

¹⁰⁹ Martin Booth, *Cannabis: A History*, London: Bantam Books, 30.

¹¹⁰ Reginald G. Smart and David Jackson with Gopala Alampur, *The Yorkville Subculture: A Study of the Life Styles and Interactions of Hippies and Non-Hippies*, Toronto: Addiction Research Foundation, 1969: 26.

¹¹¹ David Clayton-Thomas, *Blood, Sweat and Tears*, Toronto: Viking Canada, 2010: 52.

¹¹² Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011: 263.

¹¹³ Willis, “The Cultural Meaning of Drug Use,” 89.

of this symbolic barrier. It was *symbolic* and *not actual*, so that individuals with a ‘beyond the barrier consciousness’ could be ‘real’ ‘heads,’ even though they did not take drugs.”¹¹⁴ Willis distinguished between someone who used drugs simply for the pleasure of it versus someone who did it for cultural reasons, to deploy as a symbol, usually one among many. “Drugs symbolized a fundamental ontological change from the sense of feeling oneself as an autonomous determining agent, to feeling oneself, in part, as a determined variable in the world,” Willis wrote. “And that sense for the *cultural* drug user was not confined to drug experience only.”¹¹⁵ Since they are illegal, the ability to obtain drugs from dealers can signify high subcultural involvement, or as Sarah Thornton called it, “subcultural capital.”¹¹⁶

Again, alcohol provides a good example of deploying subcultural symbolism. The hippies in the 1960s painted themselves as non-drinkers, identifying liquor as a drink for old squares and aggressive “juicers.”¹¹⁷ Thomas Frank wrote, “alcohol was not only not the preferred drug of the counterculture but a basic marker (martinis especially) of the generation gap.”¹¹⁸ But ten years later, punks readopted liquor as their primary drug. As discussed above, this was partly attributable to availability and suitability, but it was also symbolic, a metaphorical middle finger to the hippies the punks could not abide.¹¹⁹ For the same reasons, many punks avoided cannabis, not wanting to be tainted with the brush of hippie-dom.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Willis, “The Cultural Meaning of Drug Use,” 89.

¹¹⁵ Willis, “The Cultural Meaning of Drug Use,” 90.

¹¹⁶ Thornton, “The Social Logic of Subcultural Capital,” 187.

¹¹⁷ Martin Torgoff, *Can't Find My Way Home: America in the Great Stoned Age, 1945-2000*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004: 134.

¹¹⁸ Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 135.

¹¹⁹ Colegrave and Sullivan, *Punk*, 14.

¹²⁰ Colin Brunton and Kyle Papputs, dirs. *The Last Pogo Jumps Again: Punk's Last Waltz*. Toronto: National Film Board of Canada, 2013. DVD.

Drugs can take on symbolic meanings based on their legality. This is not only that illicit substances carry a whiff of “illicit lifestyle” with them; it is also that corporations cannot market cocaine, heroin, and meth the way they can (or could) Labatt’s, duMaurier, or Starbucks. Impressions we have of those legal psychoactive drugs will be shaped, at least in part, on the way a drug is marketed. Take Tim Horton’s coffee – in the 1970s it was associated with a dingy shop full of men smoking;¹²¹ today, it has associated itself with Canadian nationalism, through the work of its advertising department.¹²² Illegal drugs do not have advertising departments, and so they are imbued with symbolism differently from legal drugs.¹²³

Marijuana has represented a whole range of signs in the past century – “assassin of youth,” hippie-dippie drop-out drug, symbol of lethargy, medicine for the ill, publicly-traded commodity.¹²⁴ Though the high may be similar, using marijuana in all these different contexts gives it a different cultural meaning. Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda reminded us “street drugs” cause more moral panic than legal drugs, even though legal drugs kill and injure far more people than illegal ones do.¹²⁵ (Or they did, before Fentanyl.)

¹²¹ Steven Penfold, *The Donut: A Canadian History*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008: 83-84.

¹²² Yasmeen Abu-Laban, “Donut Nation: Tim Hortons and Canadian Identity,” in Tim Nieguth, ed., *Nationalism and Popular Culture*, London: Routledge, 2020: 20.

¹²³ Ole Bjerg, “Drug Addiction and Capitalism: Too Close to the Body,” *Body & Society*, 14.1 (2008): 6. DOI: [10.1177/1357034X08090695](https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X08090695).

¹²⁴ Isaac Campos, “Reefer Madness Past and Present: Dr. Leopoldo Salazar Viniegra, Mexico, and the United States, ca. 1938-2018,” in Lucas Richert and James H. Mills, eds., *Cannabis: Global Histories*, Cambridge MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2021: 157.

¹²⁵ Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*, 2nd ed., Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2009: 45-46.

Subcultural studies has its critics. Sociologists Gary Fine and Sherryl Kleinman argue the concept has four chief problems.

(1) Subculture has often been treated as synonymous with the population comprising the subsociety. (2) Subculture has been examined without sufficient concern for delineating the group of individuals serving as its referent. (3) The subcultural system is pictured as homogenous, static, and closed. (4) The subculture is depicted as consisting in its entirety of values, norms, and central themes.¹²⁶

The first, second, and fourth criticisms can be broken down to the same root problem – subcultures are studied as though they were made up of ants rather than people with free will. But this is a superficial criticism. Subcultures are comprised of individuals, each of whom have their own views, tastes, upbringings, and ways of seeing the world.¹²⁷ But individuals are social animals and, in any society, it is normal they would subsume at least part of their identities into collectives – it is the rare hermit who does not.¹²⁸ Subcultures are normalizing and peer pressure can flatten out differences, but that is a general sociological problem, and is not unique to subcultural studies.¹²⁹ It is also a common problem when dealing with young people, who, as Erik Erikson argued, are still forming their identities.¹³⁰ Through individual interviewing and by dealing with subcultures historically, both the interviewee and I can separate the individual from the collective, since it has usually been many decades since they were participants in the

¹²⁶ Gary Alan Fine and Sherryl Kleinman, “Rethinking Subculture: An Interactionist Analysis,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 85.1 (July 1979): 2.

¹²⁷ Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd ed., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005: 87. Lukes is referencing Spinoza’s theories of the individual. See also Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, R.F.C. Hull, trans., New York: Signet, 2006: 12.

¹²⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds. and trans., New York: International Publishers, 1971. See also Clarke, et al., “Subcultures, cultures and class,” 4.

¹²⁹ See, for example, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology: A New Abridgement*, Tom Whyman, ed. London: Repeater, 2022: 42.

¹³⁰ Bruce K. Alexander, Interview with Author, 1 December 2020.

subculture. Hindsight allows the individuals to parse their “real selves” from their “subcultural selves” more easily than, say, ethnography.¹³¹

Regarding criticism three, that subcultures are viewed as sealed off from the rest of society, nothing is further from the truth – subcultures act on and are acted on by society at large continuously. Subcultures are formed out of the pressures of regular society. They *cannot* be closed to the outside world. Many tried, by going “back to the land” or by transplanting themselves somewhere remote. These experiments almost always fail, because global culture (and global commerce) is so totalizing, at least since the Second World War. Subcultures are always at work in the wider world. As Williams wrote, subcultures work on a continuum, looking at the individual’s own relationship to the mainstream.¹³² There are other criticisms of subculture, but they are peripheral to this study.

Historiography/Literature Review

Canadian drug history of the 1960s and 1970s has largely focused on policy, whereas this study focuses on the bottom-up experiences of drug users in the era.

Of the essays collected in Edgar-André Montingny’s *The Real Dope* (2011) only one, Marcel Martel’s “Setting Boundaries,” is relevant to our time and place, as it looks at glue sniffing and LSD use among young people in Ontario. However, it is focused on public reaction

¹³¹ Compare, for example, Gary M. O’Bireck, *Gettin’ Tall: Cocaine Use Within a Subculture of Canadian Professional Musicians: An Ethnographic Inquiry*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 1993 with Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*.

¹³² Williams, *Subcultural Theory*, 12.

to use of these drugs, rather than the experiences of users themselves.¹³³ Catherine Carstairs's *Jailed for Possession* (2006) studies heroin users from 1920 to 1961, the "classical" period of drug regulation in Canada, providing a base to work from, but before our timeline.¹³⁴ Martel's *Not This Time* (2006) examines a similar time-frame to mine, but he looks at questions of policy, especially around the LeDain Commission and reactions to it, rather than users.¹³⁵ Legal scholar Nathan Ruston explores the relationship between subcultural drug users and the Le Dain Commission in "'There Are People of All Walks of Life Using This Substance'" (2021), and features the voices of users who spoke to the commission. But its perspective is limited to statements made before the commission itself.¹³⁶ Martel's "'They Smell Bad, Have Diseases, and Are Lazy,'" (2009) is an important contribution to how the police see subcultural drug users, but not how subcultural drug users see themselves.¹³⁷ P.J. Giffen, Shirley Endicott, and Sylvia Lambert's *Panic and Indifference* (1991) is a long survey of Canadian drug policy, covering most of post-Confederation history, but it is about policy.¹³⁸ Clayton Mosher's *Imperialism, Irrationality, and Illegality* (1999) is about Canadian drug law, from the Opium Act of 1908 to

¹³³ Marcel Martel, "Setting Boundaries: LSD Use and Glue Sniffing in Ontario in the 1960s," in Edgar-André Montigny, ed., *The Real Dope: Social, Legal, and Historical Perspectives on the Regulation of Drugs in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011: 197-218.

¹³⁴ Catherine Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession: Illegal Drug Use, Regulation, and Power in Canada, 1921-1961*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

¹³⁵ Marcel Martel, *Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy, and the Marijuana Question, 1961-1975*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

¹³⁶ Nathan Ruston, "'There Are People in All Walks of Life Who Are Using This Substance': Drugs, Discourse, and the Student Counterculture and the Le Dain Commission, 1969-70," *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, 35.1 (Spring 2021): 33-64.

¹³⁷ Marcel Martel, "'They Smell Bad, Have Diseases, and are Lazy': RCMP Officers Reporting on Hippies in the Late Sixties," *Canadian Historical Review*, 90:2 (June 2009): 215-245.

¹³⁸ Giffen, Endicott, and Lambert, *Panic and Indifference*.

the legalization of medicinal cannabis in 1998, and not about subcultural users.¹³⁹ Dan Malleck and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh's collection *Pleasure and Panic* (2022) spans a range of Canadian and international issues, and features two essays that deal with the same time and place as I do – Eric Fillion's, "Youth Drugs, and Surveillance at Manseau's Woodstock Pop Festival" and Greg Marquis's "John Lennon, the Le Dain Commission and the Rise of the Celebrity Activist."

Fillion's essay, however, is focused on police and media reaction to the hippie event, and not the hippies themselves.¹⁴⁰ Marquis's essay sheds light on the celebrity drug-user, an important contributor to subcultural drug use, since hero-worship and emulation of celebrity drug use is an important factor in drug use and choice – but again, it is not about the drug users themselves, except for John and Yoko.¹⁴¹ Erika Dyck's *Psychedelic Psychiatry* (2008) examines the origins of LSD therapy in Saskatchewan, and while this provides an important origin story for LSD-using subcultures, it does not delve deeply into them.¹⁴² Dyck is also the editor of Fannie Kahan's *Culture's Catalyst* (2016), which examines the peyote-using Native American Church in Canada, a relatively understudied movement which influenced the hippies, but is not about them.¹⁴³ Susan Boyd's work, including *Busted* (2017) and *Heroin* (2022) are also surveys, and though Boyd is an academic, the texts themselves are general interest and do not provide any important revelations about the users beyond some general demographic information, such as

¹³⁹ Mosher, *Imperialism, Irrationality, and Illegality*.

¹⁴⁰ Eric Fillion, "Youth, Drugs, and Surveillance at Manseau's Woodstock Pop Festival," in Dan Malleck and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, eds., *Pleasure and Panic: New Essays on the History of Alcohol and Drugs*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022: 77-105.

¹⁴¹ Greg Marquis, "John Lennon, the Le Dain Commission and the Rise of the Celebrity Activist," in Malleck and Warsh, eds., *Pleasure and Panic*, 106-128.

¹⁴² Erika Dyck, *Psychiatric Psychiatry: LSD from Clinic to Campus*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

¹⁴³ Fannie Kahan, *A Culture's Catalyst: Historical Encounters with Peyote and the Native American Church in Canada*, Erika Dyck, ed., Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016.

age, class, gender, and race.¹⁴⁴ Neil Boyd's *High Society* (1991) provides an excellent overview of Canadian drug use leading up to the 1990s, including interviews with users; but it is also general interest and leaves the movement untheorized.¹⁴⁵

Many historical works in Canada have examined the social and cultural side of the 1960s and 1970s, but the focus has not been on drugs. The best known and most important is likely Doug Owram's *Born at the Right Time* (2007) an invaluable survey which traces the baby boom generation from its child-centred roots through to its drug-infested adolescence and early adulthood. But Owram's theorizing on drugs is largely superficial, whereas I dig deeper into this aspect of subculture and counterculture.¹⁴⁶ Earlier works, like Myrna Kostash's *Long Way From Home* (1980) and Ron Verzuh's *Underground Times* (1989) are important introductory works to the counterculture, and Verzuh is a template for looking at alternative media as a source; but they, too, take a superficial view of drugs, working them into general narratives about the counterculture.¹⁴⁷ Two edited collections on the 1960s, M. Athena Palaeologu's *The Sixties in Canada* (2009) and Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey's *Debating Dissent* (2012) only have one essay between them, Dyck's "The Psychedelic Sixties in North America," that deals directly with subcultural drug use. But it focuses uniquely on LSD and does not feature the voices of drug users directly.¹⁴⁸ Linda Mahood has explored the countercultural

¹⁴⁴ Boyd, *Busted* and Susan Boyd, *Heroin: An Illustrated History*, Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2022.

¹⁴⁵ Neil Boyd, *High Society: Legal and Illegal Drugs in Canada*, Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1991.

¹⁴⁶ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*.

¹⁴⁷ Myrna Kostash, *Long Way From Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada*, Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1980 and Verzuh, *Underground Times*.

¹⁴⁸ M. Athena Palaeologu, ed., *The Sixties in Canada: A Turbulent and Creative Decade*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2009 and Erika Dyck, "The Psychedelic Sixties in North America:

world of hitchhiking through the 1960s and 1970s in *Thumbing a Ride* (2018), not least on the importance of, and contradictions within, a welfare state that bans drugs but sets up a drug-saturated hostelling system – but it is not a treatise on drug use generally.¹⁴⁹ Ian Milligan’s *Rebel Youth* (2014) offers some insights into drugs in the working class world of the 1960s and 1970s; however, his PhD Dissertation on which it is based, also entitled “Rebel Youth,” offers much more information and analysis about the relationship between blue collar workers, the generation gap, and drugs. But it is limited – reasonably, since it is so understudied – to young blue collar workers, whereas I deal with a larger, cross-class cohort.¹⁵⁰ The large influence played by American draft resisters in the 1960s and 1970s is well-documented by John Hagan (2001), Frank Kusch (2001), and David S. Churchill (2020),¹⁵¹ along with many popular accounts, such as Alan Haig-Brown’s oral history, *Hell No, We Won’t Go* (1996), but again, drugs are peripheral to these studies.¹⁵² On Canada’s history with alcohol, Craig Heron’s *Booze* (2003) is the most important book, though it only looks tangentially at the 1960s and 1970s and is not interested in

Drugs and Identity,” in Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey, eds., *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012: 46-63.

¹⁴⁹ Linda Mahood, *Thumbing a Ride: Hitchhikers, Hostels, and Counterculture in Canada*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018.

¹⁵⁰ Ian Milligan, *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014 and Ian Milligan, “Rebel Youth: Young Workers, New Leftists, and Labour in English Canada, 1964-1973,” PhD. Diss., Toronto: York University, 2011.

¹⁵¹ John Hagan, *Northern Passage: American Vietnam War Resisters in Canada*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001; Frank Kusch, *All American Boys: Draft Dodgers in Canada from the Vietnam War*, Westport CT: Praeger, 2001; and David S. Churchill, “American Expatriates and the Building of Alternative Social Space in Toronto, 1965-1975,” *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine*. 39.1 (Fall 2020): 31-44.

¹⁵² Alan Haig-Brown, *Hell No We Won’t Go: Vietnam Draft Resisters in Canada*, Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1996.

subculture or counterculture.¹⁵³ More directly influential is Marquis’s article, “From Beverage to Drug” (2005), which discusses alcohol’s relationship with other mind-altering substances in the 1960s and 1970s, but does not consider the views of subculturalists themselves.¹⁵⁴

There are also several city-specific studies that discuss subcultural drug use in Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. For Vancouver, Lawrence Aronsen’s *City of Love and Revolution* (2010) is an invaluable resource to the Kitsilano scene in the 1960s, but it is limited to that time and place, where I adopt a more expansive view of Vancouver and Canada.¹⁵⁵ The most important book about Toronto counterculture is Stuart Henderson’s *Making the Scene* (2011), dealing with Yorkville in the 1960s, but like Aronsen, it is limited temporally and geographically.¹⁵⁶ It is the same for Jean-Philippe Warren and Andrée Fortin’s *Pratiques et discours de la contreculture au Québec* (2015) which provides an overview of the 1960s counterculture in Quebec *tout court*, whereas my work takes a more in-depth look at Montreal, alone and in tandem with Toronto and Vancouver.¹⁵⁷

Methodology

This study relies primarily on oral interviews, supplemented by published memoirs, studies from organizations like the Addiction Research Foundation (ARF – Ontario), the Narcotics Addiction Foundation (NAF – British Columbia), and the Office pour le Traitement de l’Alcoolisme et des autres Toxicomanies (OPTAT – Quebec), government studies, statistics, and art, including music,

¹⁵³ Heron, *Booze*.

¹⁵⁴ Marquis, “From Beverage to Drug.”

¹⁵⁵ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*.

¹⁵⁶ Henderson, *Making the Scene*.

¹⁵⁷ Warren and Fortin, *Pratiques et discours de la contreculture au Québec*.

novels, poetry, and comics. From this research, I analyse drug use in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s from the perspective of users.

The original plan for this study was to also include travel to Montreal and Vancouver; reading alternative media; and examining archival sources, especially at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Archive. Covid-19 changed that, and I had to shift focus away from archives and toward interviewing and reading published books. Zoom and flat-rate long-distance telephoning made interviewing remotely much easier than in the past. The Toronto Public Library's internet catalogue and interlibrary loan system made getting autobiographies and memoirs (and hundreds of other books) relatively simple. Meanwhile, archive work was impossible – after two trips to the CAMH archive, it closed because of the pandemic. (It reopened in January, 2023.) However, the discovery of Reginald Smart's *Forbidden Highs: The Nature, Treatment, and Prevention of Illicit Drug Abuse*¹⁵⁸ may have negated any further need to visit the CAMH archive. In this volume, Smart, a researcher with CAMH's predecessor, the Addiction Research Foundation (ARF), collected and summarized most of the known illicit drug research in Canada, from the 1950s to its publication in 1983, covering my entire period – a fortuitous find. Plans to read the alternative media of the age (i.e. *The Georgia Straight*, *Guerilla* [sic], *Mainmise*) were also abandoned, since their files are not digitized and the libraries that housed them were closed. Transcripts of court proceedings seemed unlikely to provide the subcultural angle I was focusing on in this dissertation.

Therefore, interviews became the crux of my project. I had planned on doing about 30 interviews. In the end, I did 81; eight with named experts, and 73 with anonymous subjects who

¹⁵⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*.

had been part of the drug culture of the 1960s and 1970s. My Bibliography lists the 73 sources and eight named experts.

Per York Ethics regulations, *all source interviews had to be anonymous*. This was not a request; I would have preferred to interview “on the record,” using full names, where it is much easier to keep answers honest. But York insisted on anonymity, so anonymity was insisted on. Every interviewee was given an alias. Some chose their own – the more outré names, like “Calypso,” “Jupiter,” “Booty,” “Uncle,” “Peppermint,” “Ismael,” and some others were chosen by the participants themselves. Others, like “Chris,” “Joel,” “Victor,” and so on, were chosen by me and agreed upon by the participants.

The exceptions to this anonymity were my eight named “experts” – these are individuals who were interviewed not for their experiences in the 1960s and 1970s, but for their professional expertise. In some cases, there was some overlap; for example, Nicholas Jennings and Bruce K. Alexander spoke both of their expertise and their experiences at the time, and they sometimes overlapped. Others, like Eric Fillion, Stuart Henderson, Sam Sutherland, and Jason Wilson, were too young to have been part of any subcultural scene in the 1960s and 1970s, and were speaking strictly to their professional expertise. The exception is Tommy Chong – Chong’s agent insisted he use his real name, and given Chong’s enormous celebrity (and wealth), he did not want to sign any documents or be anonymous. I chose to interview Chong on the record, using his real name, and filing him as “an expert.” I encountered no objections to this, and felt Chong’s testimony filled in important gaps in understanding Vancouver in the 1960s.

My preference is always to interview in person when possible. It is sitting across from a table with someone that you can get the real flavour of who they are and what they are saying. Their mannerisms, their facial tics, how and what they order, the ways their eyes light up or

darken when reflecting on a memory – these can often say as much as their words. The second-best option is Zoom or a similar video-communication program, where you can at least see the subject. The third is telephone, which is limited because it is strictly aural. In the end, I was only able to conduct four in-person interviews before the pandemic made that impossible. I did all other interviews by Zoom or telephone. I cancelled plans to travel to British Columbia and Quebec.

In the same way that Michel-Rolph Trouillot observed four “silences” that keep historians from learning everything from the archive,¹⁵⁹ a series of “silences” operate in oral history. I have to learn of the person’s existence; that person must be alive; that person must be able to speak English or French; that person must have accurate and available contact information; that person must have the technological know-how and access to speak with me; that person must want to speak to me; and that person must trust me. With all these filters, the result cannot be said to be representative of everyone who used drugs in the 1960s and 1970s. But it is a large cross-section.

I generally used a snowball method to find my interviewees. I focused on two groups to begin with – musicians from the era and personalities from the literature. For example, while watching the documentary film, *The Last Pogo Jumps Again*,¹⁶⁰ about Toronto punk, I wrote down the names of those subjects who seemed to me most relevant and accessible. I then sought them out on Google. I reached out via whatever contact information I could find: email, Facebook Direct Messaging, and occasionally by telephone. Some people had agents, others had places of work or former places of work that forwarded messages. Once I reached someone and

¹⁵⁹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995: 26.

¹⁶⁰ Brunton and Papputs, *The Last Pogo Jumps Again*.

conducted an interview with them, I asked them to recommend others – and thus the snowball grows. I worked on many snowballs at once, and some individuals were “isolates” with no one to recommend. I also posted on several Facebook groups that focused on music or past “scenes,” like Yorkville. Plans to physically visit bars, cafes, record shops, and other locations were cancelled by the pandemic – all the hunting was done virtually.

One of the most obvious “silences” when dealing with drug users from the past is that you are talking to those who survived. The heaviest, most reckless, or most unfortunate drug users are mostly dead. Interviewees reported how they wished I could speak to dozens of individuals who long ago succumbed to overdoses, AIDS, heart attacks, or some other condition brought upon by years of drug abuse in a world that prohibits drugs.¹⁶¹ I would have loved to speak to legends like Franky Venom or Freddy Pompeii, but they live on only through their art. Others died of natural causes, with the oldest baby-boomers now approaching 80.

Among the living, the biggest silence was whether I could reach someone. Some elderly people do not have email, never mind a social media presence, so I could only reach them when someone who was online passed along a phone number. Some people were simply unobtainable –repeated emails to agents, managers, colleagues, and others went unanswered. A few said they found my project distasteful, accusing me of glorifying drug use. A tiny number were out-and-out hostile, accusing me of being a police officer or government agent, or of being incompetent because I did not know something they did. Others were polite but concerned that my promises

¹⁶¹ The process of drug illegalization, and the vast harm it has caused, is beyond the scope of this study. But I feel it necessary to state it is rarely “drugs” that kills anyone, but rather the conditions imposed on drug users by prohibition. See Boyd, Carter, and Macpherson, *More Harm than Good* and Alexander, *Peaceful Measures*.

of anonymity were not genuine. Some had the opposite problem, and demanded I use their real names. Some were too busy.

As per York University's Ethics stipulations, every interviewee had to sign an Informed Consent Form (ICF) Some interviewees received it from me by email, printed it, signed it, scanned it, and returned it to me electronically. Others opted to accept it by Canada Post, signed the hard copy, and returned it to me in a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope (SASE). And some refused to sign at all, concerned about putting their names and signatures to paper; sadly, there was nothing I could do about this, and had to decline those interviews.

Of the 73 individuals who did agree to speak with me, the median birth year was 1950, and the median age of first drug use was 16. The group skewed male, white, Anglo, and Toronto-centric. All spoke English. Eighteen had experience in Montreal, 22 in Vancouver, and 45 in Toronto. (Totals equal more than 73 because some people were in multiple cities.) Twenty-one self-identified as having lower class origins, 45 as middle class, and seven as upper class.¹⁶² Sixteen were women, 56 were men, and one was non-binary, but identified as a woman in the past. Notably, everyone was white, except for two – a South Asian man and a Black woman, and both of them were mixed-race.

¹⁶² I used “lower/middle/upper class” as a stand-in for “poor/middle class/rich.” I provided the categories and let the interviewees self-define – if they self-defined as something else, like working class, lower-middle, etc., we talked about where they might fit. It was the best way to categorize my interviewees, based on their wealth and/or access to the postwar good life. A bourgeois/petty-bourgeois/working class analysis would not have affected subcultural choice the way rich/middle/poor did, and I felt it would be too tied to their parents' role in the workplace, rather than how much money the family had or made. This is, of course, contested, especially by subcultural theorists like Stuart Hall.

There are several interpretations for why my sample skewed the way it did. I posted to French Facebook groups and sent exploratory emails in French, but in the end, all my interviews took place in English, even with Francophone individuals. It was simply that their English was better than my French. Regarding the Toronto-centricity, this was likely because I physically live in Toronto, and people are more trusting and more willing to work with someone local. Even if I was not able to meet them personally, there is an implicit connection when you live in the same city. Toronto was also Anglo-Canada's cultural Ground Zero, with many writers and musicians choosing to live here. It is also simply bigger, containing a larger pool of interviewees.

As to why the group skewed so heavily male – part of it must be because I am male, and many women simply feel more comfortable talking to other women than to men. There is also vast sociological research that argues women are pathologized for their drug use more than men are, even though men use more illicit drugs.¹⁶³ Women users can appear to be more of a threat to society than male users, since their use seems to imply “‘destability’ in the family,”¹⁶⁴ and therefore would be less willing to share their stories. We live within a patriarchal culture, and women do not need to be sociologists to be aware their drug use has different implications than that of men – ergo, fewer women would want to talk about it.

Regarding race, most drug users in Canada are and were white, a reflection of wider demographic realities in Canada at the time. The hippie and punk scenes were *very* white – this

¹⁶³ Susan C. Boyd, *Mothers and Illicit Drugs: Transcending the Myths*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999: 6. See also, Marsha Rosenbaum, *Women on Heroin*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981: 13 and Cynthia Palmer and Michael Horwitz, eds., *Shaman Woman, Mainline Lady: Women's Writings on the Drug Experience*, New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1982: 11.

¹⁶⁴ Elizabeth Ettore, *Women and Substance Use*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992: 27.

becomes obvious just looking at pictures of Canadian Be-ins or punk shows. Censuses from the era show that Canada was very white overall. In the 1961 Census, only 3.2 per cent of respondents identified, through their fathers, as an ethnicity other than European.¹⁶⁵ In 1971 it was 3.7 per cent¹⁶⁶ and in 1981 it was approximately 8.0 per cent, but now mothers' origins were included as well.¹⁶⁷ Most of my interviewees did not know any non-whites in their social circles. Some counterculture celebrities – Tommy Chong, Robbie Robertson, Rick James – were non-white, but they were the exception, and often noted it. In the literature, the LeDain commission found that very few Vancouver heroin addicts were non-white, and no addicts in Toronto were.¹⁶⁸ A 1969 study of psychedelic users in Vancouver discovered them to be overwhelmingly white.¹⁶⁹ Smart summarized, “We are aware that in some countries, especially the United States, narcotic addicts are drawn mainly from the ghettos of large cities and from dispossessed racial minorities. This is not the situation among Canadian addicts. *Almost all are white.*”¹⁷⁰ Certain drug-using subcultures, like reggae, were majority Black, but these were small and generally did not get

¹⁶⁵ Statistics Canada, “Ethnic groups = Groupes ethniques,” *1961 Census of Canada*, Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1962, Call Number 92-545, 1-2

<https://archive.org/details/1961925451962engfra/page/n1/mode/1up>

¹⁶⁶ Statistics Canada, “Population: Ethnic Groups.” *1971 Census of Canada*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1973. Call Number: 92-723, 2.

<https://archive.org/details/1971927231973engfra/mode/2up>

¹⁶⁷ Statistics Canada, “Population: Ethnic Origin.” *1981 Census of Canada*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1984. Call Number: 92-911, Table 1.

<https://archive.org/details/1981929111984engfra/mode/1up>

¹⁶⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 170.

¹⁶⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 102.

¹⁷⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 58. Italics mine. Though Canada had (and has) its own “ghettoes,” like Cabbagetown in Toronto or the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, these are much more class-delineated than in the US, and much whiter.

going until the late 1970s.¹⁷¹ As for Indigenous people, some of my interviewees claimed some Indigenous heritage, but not enough for them to be considered “non-white.” Though the hippies appropriated plenty of First Nations, South Asian, and Black slang, fashions, hair, and philosophies, they most did it without their progenitors, at least in Canada. Despite the lack of Jim Crow laws, Canada was (and is) a segregated society – whites almost only introduced me to other whites, and I could not break out of that paradigm with the time and resources I had.

I began each interview by explaining my project, choosing an alias, getting permission to record the interview, and noting the interviewee’s demographic and personal information (i.e. age, race, class, etc.). After this, I would ask my first question: “When did you first use drugs, if you used drugs?” From there, the questions were free-flowing, using a conversational interview style I developed as a journalist. No interviews were exactly the same, but in each one, I made sure to cover all the “reporter’s questions” (what, when, where, why, who, how) regarding their drug use, focusing on subcultural experiences.

Non-interview methodology

The most important sources beyond oral interviews were studies by the ARC, NAF, and OPTAT, as outlined above. These studies trace the highs and lows of drug use in the three provinces. Though they provide useful quantitative data – for example, that adolescent heroin users in

¹⁷¹ Jason Wilson, *King Alpha’s Song in a Strange Land: The Roots and Routes of Canadian Reggae*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020: 132.

Toronto in 1979 are more likely to live in families where the father is self-employed¹⁷² – it is by using that data to supplement the oral interviewing I am best able to reconstruct the subcultural drug scene in the 1960s and 1970s in a qualitative way. Government studies, especially by Health Canada and its predecessors, were also valuable. Other numbers, especially from Roberts et al.'s *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000* (2005) and F.H. Leacy's *Historical Statistics of Canada* (1983) provided economic and demographic information important to this study.¹⁷³

Published memoirs, autobiographies, and “authorized” biographies were also an important primary source. Autobiographies by such varied personalities as David Clayton-Thomas,¹⁷⁴ Rick James,¹⁷⁵ Carole Pope,¹⁷⁶ Tommy Chong,¹⁷⁷ John Armstrong,¹⁷⁸ George Fetherling,¹⁷⁹ Norman Finkelstein,¹⁸⁰ John L'Ecuyer,¹⁸¹ Al Neil,¹⁸² Murray McLauchlan,¹⁸³

¹⁷² Reginald Smart, Michael S. Goodstadt, Margaret A. Sheppard, and Carolyn B. Liban, *Alcohol and Other Drug Use Among Ontario Students: A Continuing Study*, Toronto: Addiction Research Foundation, 1980: 22.

¹⁷³ Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*; F.H. Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, 2nd ed., Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983.

¹⁷⁴ Clayton-Thomas, *Blood, Sweat and Tears*.

¹⁷⁵ Rick James with David Ritz, *Glow: The Autobiography of Rick James*, New York: Atria Books, 2014.

¹⁷⁶ Carole Pope, *Anti-Diva: An Autobiography*, Toronto: Random House Canada, 2000.

¹⁷⁷ Tommy Chong, *Cheech & Chong: The Unauthorized Biography*, New York: Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2008.

¹⁷⁸ John Armstrong, *Guilty of Everything*, Vancouver: New Star Books, 2001.

¹⁷⁹ George Fetherling, *Travel By Night: A Memoir*, 20th Anniversary ed., Toronto: Quattro Books, 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Bernie Finkelstein, *True North: A Life in the Music Business*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2012.

¹⁸¹ John L'Ecuyer, *Use Once and Destroy: A Novel in Stories*, Toronto: Gutter Press, 1998.

¹⁸² Al Neil, *Changes*, London ON: Nightwood Editions, 1970, 1975, 1989.

¹⁸³ Murray McLauchlan, *Getting Out of Here Alive: The Ballad of Murray McLauchlan*, Toronto: Viking, 1998.

Margaret Trudeau,¹⁸⁴ Cheri DiNovo,¹⁸⁵ and many more provided an important window into subcultural drug use at the time.

Finally, the culture produced in the era – that which I could access – was an important source. Canadian artists did not write much about drug use directly, and when they did it was usually negatively: The Guess Who’s “She’s Come Undone,”¹⁸⁶ Streeheart’s “Drugstore Dancer,”¹⁸⁷ and The Band’s “Forbidden Fruit”¹⁸⁸ are all examples. But there is some allusion to drug enjoyment in the subcultural sound, and songs about psychedelic love by Kensington Market¹⁸⁹ can be juxtaposed with songs about teenagers getting drunk by Teenage Head,¹⁹⁰ two bands about 10 years apart. The literary output of the time is not particularly drug-focused either, though novels by authors like Juan Butler¹⁹¹ and poetry by bill bissett¹⁹² do reflect attitudes at the time. The underground comic *Harry Hedd* provided insight (and laughs) into the Vancouver counterculture.¹⁹³ Canadian film from the time also did not focus much on drug use – rebellious classics like Doug Owen’s *Nobody Waved Goodbye* (1964)¹⁹⁴ and Donald Shebib’s *Goin’ Down*

¹⁸⁴ Margaret Trudeau, *Beyond Reason*, New York and London: Paddington Press, Ltd., 1979.

¹⁸⁵ Cheri DiNovo, *The Queer Evangelist: A Socialist Clergy’s Radically Honest Tale*, Waterloo: Sir Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2021.

¹⁸⁶ The Guess Who, “She’s Come Undone,” in *Canned Wheat*, RCA, 1969.

¹⁸⁷ Streeheart, “Drugstore Dancer,” in *Drugstore Dancer*, Capitol, 1980.

¹⁸⁸ The Band, “Forbidden Fruit,” in *Northern Lights-Southern Cross*, Capitol, 1975.

¹⁸⁹ Kensington Market, “Colour Her Sunshine,” in *Avenue Road*, Warner Bros., 1968.

¹⁹⁰ Teenage Head, “Teenage Beer Drinking Party,” in *Some Kinda Fun*, MCA, 1982.

¹⁹¹ Juan Butler, *Cabbagetown Diary: A Documentary*, Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, Ltd., 1970.

¹⁹² bill bissett, “that great shootin gallery in th sky,” in bill bissett, *Even Faithful Legends: Selected Poems*, Vancouver: Talon Books, 1980: 111.

¹⁹³ *The Collected Adventures of Harold Hedd, No. 1*, Berkeley CA: Last Gasp Eco-Funnies, 1973.

¹⁹⁴ Don Owen, dir., *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, Montreal: National Film Board, 1964, DVD.

the Road (1970)¹⁹⁵ are free of illicit drugs – though some underground films like Larry Kent’s *High*¹⁹⁶ did have characters smoking marijuana or using hallucinogens. These cultural sources were not – and could not – be the focus of this study. But they do provide it with colour.

Structure

This study is structured into four chapters, not including an introduction and conclusion, named for the books of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.¹⁹⁷ This is in part to describe the prevalent feelings of the time, but reversed – they descended to Heaven, Purgatory, and finally Hell, the reverse direction Virgil took Dante, making this a divine tragedy rather than comedy. It is also a nod to Aleister Crowley’s *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, which influenced me to study drug culture as an undergraduate student, and used the section titles “Paradiso,” “Inferno,” and “Purgatorio,” in that order.¹⁹⁸

Chapter 1 “Paradiso: La Cominciare” (1960-1966) analyses subcultural drug use in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver from 1960, when subcultural drug use was still very “sub,” to 1966, with the beginnings of the hippie counterculture. It begins with an overview of each city’s drug-using reputation entering 1960; discusses the pre-hippie drug using subcultures; charts the consolidation of the hippies; and ends with the unique situation unfolding in Vancouver, where class divisions made it Canada’s “Hippie Capital” and “Heroin Capital” at the same time.

¹⁹⁵ Donald Shebib, dir., *Goin’ Down the Road*, Toronto: Seville, 1970, DVD.

¹⁹⁶ Larry Kent, dir., *Larry Kent’s High*, Montreal: Larry Kent Film, 1967, DVD.

¹⁹⁷ Dante Alighieri, *The Portable Dante*, Mark Musa, trans., ed., New York: Penguin, 1995.

¹⁹⁸ Aleister Crowley, *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, New York: Ordo Templi Orientis, 1922, 2010.

Though they would later merge as the counterculture became more dystopian, at this point, in the mid-1960s they remained separate and suspicious of each other.

Chapter 2 “Paradiso: La Fine” (1966-1971) sees the hippies consolidate, and then develop from a subculture into a larger “counterculture,” enabled by economic, social, and technological developments, and challenging Canadian notions of “liberal values.” This chapter will examine three phenomena as it relates to the hippies and drug use in the late 1960s – the place of race and racism in the hippie subculture; the power of police intimidation, especially in Vancouver; and the relationship between hippies and organized crime in Montreal. Race, police repression, and a rise in organized crime all contribute to the contested space of “liberal values” in late 1960s Canada.

Chapter 3 (1968-1972) “Purgatorio” overlaps temporally with Chapter 2, and examines the hippie dream as it crests and begins to disintegrate. It covers three areas specifically: methamphetamine and the “downfall” of the hippies; class, hippies, and the welfare state; and high school’s new role as a centre for drug use and distribution from the late 1960s. In Vancouver, heroin and hippie subcultures begin to mix, as the two subcultures venture into each other’s geography.

Chapter 4 “Inferno” (1973-1978) examines the punk movement as a reaction to the hippies and mainstream society, through their drugs. Essentially, the drug culture completed its transformation, begun in the late 1960s, from utopianism to nihilism. This was facilitated by drugs like cocaine, heroin, speed, and alcohol. Like speed, cocaine helped kill the counterculture, and encouraged the selfishness of the 1970s. Alcohol encouraged a rougher, more exuberant, but more violent subcultural drug experience. Heroin use declined overall in North America through the mid-to-late-1970s, but punks and other subculturalists still used it as a signifier of rebellion

and decadence. Cocaine became mainstreamed, and the final split between harder, “skid row” drug users and softer, subcultural users is (at least publicly) eliminated in Vancouver.

Chapter 1: Paradiso: La Cominciare, 1960-1966

Introduction – Gaz

“Gaz” was born in 1945, to a middle-class Jewish family in Toronto. He first used drugs around 1960, when he smoked marijuana with his school friends. He noted in our interview that this drug use was *rare* for someone his age. There were no dealers in his high school, no one offering it to them on street corners. Nobody knew what he and his friends were doing. Cannabis was so unfamiliar at the time, they could walk around downtown Toronto smoking it, and people assumed they were smoking cigarettes. They would smoke in front of his high school. “I don’t even think people realized the smell was different,”¹⁹⁹ Gaz said. He cannot remember where he bought the marijuana, but he remembers it accompanied his love of music. “So I was listening to jazz and beatniks and folk music and stuff. So it was around the scene, as you call it,” Gaz said.²⁰⁰ Gaz, too young to visit the bars on Yonge Street, would visit the coffeeshops and record shops in and around Yorkville. “I went there as a music lover,” he said. “It was a destination to go to an art gallery or a music club, whether it be rock or folk or jazz. And the Book Cellar bookstore was in Yorkville, I used to hang out there.”²⁰¹ Though he could not have known it at the time, Gaz was part of a vanguard. In five years, almost everyone would know what marijuana was. But in 1960, drug-using subcultures were still very “sub.” He was not, Gaz said, “like 98 per cent of the people I went to school with.”²⁰²

199 “Gaz,” Interview with Author, 27 April 2020.

200 “Gaz,” Interview.

201 “Gaz,” Interview.

202 “Gaz,” Interview.

This chapter analyses the world of subcultural drug use in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. It begins in 1960, when illicit drugs were still restricted to a small group of subculturalists (and addicts), to 1966, when the hippies began to have a cultural impact. It begins with an overview of each city's drug-using reputation entering 1960; discusses the pre-hippie drug using subcultures; charts the consolidation of the hippies; and ends with the unique situation unfolding in Vancouver, where class divisions made it Canada's "Hippie Capital" and "Heroin Capital" at the same time. Though they would later merge as the counterculture became more dystopian, at this point, in the mid-1960s they remained separate and suspicious of each other.

Before 1960

Toronto the Good

In 1897, author Christopher St. George Clark labeled Toronto with the sobriquet *Toronto the Good*,²⁰³ and it stuck – at least until 1960. The city saw itself as a place of law-abiding Christians, who banned hockey, liquor, and public transport on Sundays before 1914.²⁰⁴

Journalist Robert Fulford wrote about the mid-century city:

Toronto was a city of silence, a private city, where all the best meals were eaten at home and no one noticed the absence of street life and public spaces. Sidewalk cafes were illegal, and there were no festivals. The idea of public art was still exotic and alien. The 1907 Lord's Day Act, which forbade almost all public activity on Sunday except churchgoing, was obeyed with a dedication that visitors thought excessive. Many

²⁰³ Christopher St. George Clark, *Of Toronto the Good: A Social Study. The Queen City of Canada as It Is*, Montreal: Toronto Publishing Company, 1898.

²⁰⁴ Gene Howard Homel, "Sliders and Backsliders: Toronto's Sunday Tobogganing Controversy of 1912," *Urban History Review* 10.2 (October 1981): 25.

accomplished and admirable people lived in Toronto, scrupulously minding their own business, but the city itself denied that it had an identity worth exhibiting.²⁰⁵

In 1947, when Ontario Premier George Drew made Toronto the first Canadian city to permit stand-up cocktail lounges, “the various righteous defenders of Toronto the Good denounced the proposal as a sinful capitulation to the evil liquor interests.”²⁰⁶ But they need not have worried. “The irony was that the regulations governing cocktail lounges were so rigid that there were only a handful open and serving customers in 1948.”²⁰⁷

According to criminologist Stephen Schneider, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Ontario had less of a drug-trafficking problem than Quebec or British Columbia, probably because it had no seaports.²⁰⁸ Catherine Carstairs argued that the first drug panic hit Toronto around 1923, when “large meetings of prominent citizens were held at the Loew’s Roof Garden Theatre” to discuss the alleged spread of opium.²⁰⁹ From then on, Toronto’s puritans would be fighting a rearguard battle to keep the city “good,” though there was plenty of underground drinking in Toronto, as there was throughout the rest of Canada.²¹⁰

From 1946 to 1961, 24 per cent of all drug convictions in Canada were in Toronto,²¹¹ and 100 to 150 heroin addicts congregated around Jarvis and Dundas.²¹² In the late 1940s, New

²⁰⁵ Robert Fulford, *Accidental City: The Transformation of Toronto*, Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter & Ross, 1995: 1.

²⁰⁶ Allan Levine, *Toronto: Biography of a City*, Madeira Park BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2014: 186.

²⁰⁷ Levine, *Toronto*, 186.

²⁰⁸ Stephen Schneider, *Iced: The Story of Organized Crime in Canada*, Mississauga: Wiley, 2009: 171.

²⁰⁹ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 31.

²¹⁰ Heron, *Booze*, 252.

²¹¹ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 67.

²¹² Lloyd G. Hanley, “Functions of Argot Among Heroin Addicts,” in W.E. Mann, ed. *The Underside of Toronto*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1970: 294-307, 296.

York jazz critic Moe Koffman called Toronto, ““this new and thriving jazz town by the lake.””²¹³ By the late 1950s, a drinking culture had established itself downtown, and a bohemian culture was developing around Gerard Street, Yorkville, and the University of Toronto. According to ethnomusicologist Mike Daley, the first coffeeshop in (or near) Yorkville was “Concerto’s” at 89 Bloor, which opened in 1955 and where folk singer, Greg Curtis, played from 1955 to 1965.²¹⁴ Downtown, the “Yonge Street Strip” had just started to rage. Arkansas transplant “Rompin’” Ronnie Hawkins described the scene just before 1960, “Through the combined efforts of the morality squad and the provincial Liquor Control Board, Toronto always maintained just the right balance of intimidation and repression to make going out at night really exciting.”²¹⁵ By 1960, Toronto was finally becoming a bit “bad,” though it had a ways to go before it met the reputations of “Party Capital” Montreal or “Drug Capital” Vancouver.

“Goodbye Broadway, hello Montreal!”

Fitting with Montreal’s reputation as Canada’s party capital,²¹⁶ an underground drug-culture was part and parcel of Montreal bohemian life. The literature describes a scene of sleaze and graft

²¹³ Mark Miller, *Such Melodious Racket: The Lost History of Jazz in Canada, 1914-1949*, Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997: 232.

²¹⁴ Mike Daley, “Yorkville Walking Tour,” 5 October 2021.

²¹⁵ Ronnie Hawkins and Peter Goddard, *Ronnie Hawkins: Last of the Good Ol’ Boys*, Toronto: Stoddart, 1989: 97.

²¹⁶ See, for example, Maryse Bédard, Catherine Charlebois, Mathieu Lapointe, et Jean-François Leclerc, *Scandale! Le Montréal Illicite, 1940-1960*, Montréal : Les Éditions Cardinal Inc., 2016 : 9; Magaly Brodeur, *Vice et corruption à Montréal, 1892-1970*, Québec : Presses de l’Université du Québec, 2011 : 1; and Marquis, *John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and the Year Canada Was Cool*, 30.

that dates back at least to the late nineteenth century.²¹⁷ Labour Minister Mackenzie King wrote in 1911 that cocaine was, “among other things, popular among young black men” in Montreal.²¹⁸ Lucien Cannon’s 1944 Royal Commission report of an investigation into the Quebec Provincial Police discovered that Montreal had made 50,000 vice arrests between 1900 and 1944, though these were mostly related to prostitution.²¹⁹ Carstairs wrote that Montreal was the “biggest centre of white drug use in the 1920s.”²²⁰ Jazz writer John Gilmore argued that narcotics consumption was also on the rise in the city through the 1950s.²²¹

Montreal held its first anti-drug meeting at the Mount Royal Hotel in 1923.²²² Montreal’s reputation for vice was a pressing issue throughout the century, culminating in the 1950s, when Jean Drapeau was elected mayor – and then re-elected repeatedly – to wipe it out.²²³ Despite this panic, heroin and other drugs were mostly concentrated in the jazz community, and most of my interviewees describe drugs, including cannabis, as difficult to get before 1965.

Although popular lore had it that Vancouver was Canada’s prime heroin importer, until the early 1970s, it was Montreal. From the end of World War II to the early 1970s, the majority of North America’s heroin and hashish came from the “French Connection,” a Cosa Nostra

²¹⁷ Brodeur, *Vice et corruption à Montréal, 1892-1970* : 40.

²¹⁸ Boyd, *High Society*, 8.

²¹⁹ Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye*, 93; Canadian Press, “Montreal’s Few Convictions Amaze Judge,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 July 1944: 9.

<https://ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/montreal-s-few-convictions-amaze-judge/docview/1325899010/se-2?accountid=15182>

²²⁰ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 49.

²²¹ John Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montreal*, Montreal: Ellipse Editions, 1988, 2011: 30.

²²² Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 31.

²²³ Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye*, 93.

operation that processed Turkish and Lebanese opium into heroin in Marseilles, and then shipped it across the Atlantic to North American ports, especially Montreal.²²⁴ In 1963, the US Senate argued that Montreal had been North America's major heroin importation point since the early 1950s, and accused Marseille's Corsican gangsters of supplying, "'the drugs to their French-speaking Canadian confederates for smuggling into the United States.'"²²⁵ In the late 1950s, the Bonanno crime family in Montreal became much more active in the business, "which significantly increased Montreal's role as a North American access point for European-processed heroin."²²⁶ Organized crime would come to affect the subcultural scene in Montreal in ways it visibly did not in Toronto and Vancouver.

Montreal had another claim to drug history fame – it was where the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conducted one of its famous LSD experiments in the 1950s. As described by historian Anne Collins, Dr. Ewan Cameron of Douglas Hospital conducted "Sub-project 68," one of the 149 known MK-ULTRA brainwashing projects the CIA engaged in. These LSD experiments ran from 1957 to 1960.²²⁷ One of my interviewees, "Rivka," said she first smoked pot with one of Cameron's LSD subjects, so the experiments had some impact outside the hospital and on subcultural Montreal life.²²⁸

²²⁴ Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, Revised ed., Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003: 39, 48.

²²⁵ Schneider, *Iced*, 231.

²²⁶ Schneider, *Iced*, 233.

²²⁷ Anne Collins, *In the Sleep Room: The Story of the CIA Brainwashing Experiments in Canada*, Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, Ltd., 1988: 138.

²²⁸ "Rivka," Interview with author, 1 July 2021.

“What Is It with Vancouver and Drugs?”

At every stage of the twentieth century, Vancouver retained its title as Canada’s Drug Capital. Vancouver’s drug-using reputation began with early Chinese opium users and moved to mostly white users on skid row, and Black users in Hogan’s Alley, a now demolished Eastside neighbourhood.²²⁹ From 1922 to 1961, “British Columbia had less than 10% of Canada’s population, but 47% of all the convictions under the Opium and Narcotic Drugs Act.”²³⁰ Between 1946 and 1961, over 50 per cent of narcotic convictions were in Vancouver.²³¹ Addictions Research Foundation [ARF] investigator Reg Smart noted that in the early 1950s, “60% of all Canadian street addicts resided in British Columbia, with most in the Vancouver area.” In 1956, while the rate of addiction for the rest of Canada was 11 per 100,000, in British Columbia it was 156 per 100,000.²³² The first major Canadian study of narcotics addiction was G.H. Stevenson, et al.’s *Drug Addiction in British Columbia*, published in 1956, which led “indirectly” to the creation of the Narcotic Addiction Foundation of British Columbia.²³³

Hallucinogens came to Vancouver early. In 1958, when Timothy Leary’s primary drug was still whiskey, there was “Captain” Al Hubbard, an eccentric American millionaire who saw LSD as a panacea for the world’s ills. With Dr. Ross McLean, Hubbard opened an LSD clinic at New Westminster’s Hollywood Hospital, the first private Canadian clinic to use LSD therapy.²³⁴

²²⁹ Norman Wiles, in Jo-Ann Canning-Dew, ed. *Hastings and Main: Stories from an Inner City Neighbourhood*, Interviewer and compiler: Laurel Kimbley, Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987: 40.

²³⁰ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 11.

²³¹ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 67.

²³² Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 17.

²³³ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 20.

²³⁴ Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream*, New York: Grove Press, 1987: 175. See also Donaldson and Dyck, *The Acid Room*.

The “Hubbard Room” featured a stereo playing Bach and “vaguely spiritual pictures,” so patients could trip and learn about themselves.²³⁵ Hubbard also converted Reverend J.E. Brown, a Catholic priest at Vancouver’s Cathedral of the Holy Rosary.²³⁶ There is some indication Hubbard and Rev. Brown’s ministrations had an effect on wider Vancouver society – my interviewee “Brent” described taking Sandoz-brand LSD smuggled out of Hollywood Hospital around 1966.²³⁷

Marijuana use, meanwhile, was rare as far as official statistics go, with only six arrests in British Columbia between 1946 and 1961.²³⁸ The term “BC Bud” was decades away. According to Peter Trower, who worked in the logging camps near Vancouver through the 1950s and 1960s, marijuana in Vancouver dates back at least to the late 1950s, when he heard, “rumours of black porters on the Great Northern trains bringing supplies in from Seattle.”²³⁹ Musician and comedian Tommy Chong confirmed he used marijuana in the Downtown Eastside in the late 1950s.²⁴⁰ In the early 1960s, Vancouver criminals established a supply-route from Mexico.²⁴¹

Drugs in 1960 – Rock n roll, jazz, and folk

²³⁵ Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 176.

²³⁶ Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain, *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties, and Beyond*, New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1985: 51.

²³⁷ “Brent,” Interview with Author, 29 July 2021. Though I was sceptical of Brent’s claim, Erika Dyck confirmed by email that the timeframe fit, and the claim is plausible. Erika Dyck, Email to Author, 25 October 2022.

²³⁸ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 68.

²³⁹ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 91.

²⁴⁰ Tommy Chong, Interview with Author, 21 October 2020.

²⁴¹ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 91.

At the time Gaz was young, the “teenager” did not carry as many negative connotations as it would in 10 years, and the high school was not a place where people typically bought and sold drugs. The post-war moral panic over juvenile delinquency was what conservative writer Owen Carrigan called “old-fashioned delinquency,”²⁴² exemplified in Hollywood films like *Rebel Without a Cause*,²⁴³ *Blackboard Jungle*,²⁴⁴ and *The Wild One*,²⁴⁵ and had little to do with illicit drugs. (Though they featured plenty of drinking and smoking.) Cannabis was confined to those who knew what it was and where to get it. Some young people at this time had heard about the drug, but they likely did not have access to it unless they were involved in some kind of subculture where it was in use, especially among musicians and people who travelled. Otherwise, it was the stuff of legend. “Quinn”, as a teenager in Montreal trying to rebel, thought “tea” – a common slang term for cannabis – was literally tea, and he and his friends wasted an afternoon attempting to roll and smoke tea leaves.²⁴⁶

Cannabis was most associated at the time with “Beatniks,” a term, sometimes disparaging, used to describe the “Beat” generation, a group of writers of the World War II generation, centred around Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs. Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, and their devotees rebelled against the post-war consensus and created a

²⁴² Owen Carrigan, *Juvenile Delinquency in Canada: A History*, Concord ON: Irwin Publishing, 1998: 153.

²⁴³ Nicholas Ray, dir., *Rebel Without a Cause*, 1955, Burbank CA: Warner Bros., 2013. DVD.

²⁴⁴ Richard Brooks, dir., *Blackboard Jungle*, 1955, Los Angeles: Turner/MGM WB, on Criterion-on-Demand, <https://media3-criterionpic-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/htbin/wwform/006?t=M55210>.

²⁴⁵ Laslo Benedek, dir., 1953, *The Wild One*, Culver City CA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2007. DVD.

²⁴⁶ “Quinn,” Interview with Author, 24 May 2021.

world of artistic dissent situated around sex, drugs, jazz, and a sad, resigned bearing, as though, despite their young years, they had seen it all – they were “beat”. Norman Mailer, in his classic 1957 essay “The White Negro” described them as “hipsters.”²⁴⁷ Drugs were an important part of their rebellion and their art. As Sadie Plant wrote, “For the Beat writers, cannabis held the utopian promise of escape from white America, just as use of the drug by mid-nineteenth-century French writers held out the promise of escaping from bourgeois Paris.”²⁴⁸

Cannabis came to Canada from the US. Dr. Reginald Smart of the Toronto-based Addiction Research Foundation, one of the earliest and most thorough researchers on drug use in Canada, wrote, “Outposts of a Canadian ‘beat generation’ (really a part-generation) could be seen in some cities, such as Toronto and Vancouver. Cannabis use among [a few] middle-class people in Canada began in the mid-1950s largely in response to the movement in the United States.”²⁴⁹ Like all subculture labels, “Beats” was imprecise and could include any number of young people who rebelled against the postwar status quo. Though the movement was mostly literary, music played an important part in their rebellion, especially jazz.²⁵⁰

By 1960, heroin use had become almost a cliché among jazz musicians, especially after the rise of “bop,” the hipsters’ favourite form of jazz.²⁵¹ Use was real and signified a badge of belonging for many musicians. Heroin’s sedating effects suited jazz’s mellow sounds. Toronto’s

²⁴⁷ Norman Mailer, “The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster,” in Glenn O’Brien, ed., *The Cool School: Writing from America’s Hip Underground*, New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 2013: 157-181.

²⁴⁸ Marcus Boon, *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002: 160.

²⁴⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 30.

²⁵⁰ O’wram, *Born at the Right Time*, 188.

²⁵¹ Miller, *Such Melodious Racket*, 219.

jazz scene was centred on downtown, and heroin was present, as evidenced by the trail of police raids, arrests, and overdoses. Police raided the TNT after-hours club in 1958, and arrested 76 people as “found-ins” on drug and alcohol charges.²⁵² Jazzman Sonny Greenwich came under extra suspicion because he was carrying a bottle of codeine cough syrup.²⁵³ Pianist Al Haig was arrested in 1956 for narcotics possession, “after he was found face down on the floor of a washroom at the CBC, needle and spoon nearby.”²⁵⁴ Jazz saxophonist Ron Park left Edmonton in 1963 with a lust for all sorts of drugs, and in Toronto he found them – which would lead to his death in 1969 from a methadone and Valium overdose.²⁵⁵ Sonny Greenwich, inspired by his predecessors, tried heroin, but did not take to it.²⁵⁶ “Howard,” my only interviewee to have any experience in the early Toronto jazz scene, was still a teenager when he visited the First Floor Club, a jazz club, in either 1959 or 1960. “There was no booze, [but] there was certainly pot, and you know, a few other things,” Howard said. He wasn’t sure what the “few other things” were yet, but he said there was cocaine around, though he did not use it, at least not yet.²⁵⁷

In Vancouver, the Cellar jazz club was a classic club for bohemians and beatniks.

According to poet Jamie Reid, it was

the centre for people who wanted to listen to jazz, and the people who wanted to listen to jazz were, let’s say, a bohemian minority, as it were. They’d read Jack Kerouac and

²⁵² Mark Miller, *Of Stars and Strings: A Biography of Sonny Greenwich*, Victoria BC: Tellwell Talent, 2020: 39.

²⁵³ Miller, *Of Stars and Strings*, 39.

²⁵⁴ Miller, *Of Stars and Strings*, 40.

²⁵⁵ Mark Miller, *Jazz in Canada: Fourteen Lives*, Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1988: 228.

²⁵⁶ Miller, *Of Stars and Strings*, 88.

²⁵⁷ “Howard,” Interview with author, 10 December 2020. Cocaine was still very rare at this time, though it was known. It is rare in the literature and “Howard” is my only interviewee to have any contact with it before the late 1960s.

they'd read Allen Ginsberg and jazz was the hip thing to listen to, and then they took it up seriously and learned something about it.²⁵⁸

They produced avant garde plays,²⁵⁹ but the real scene was the music. The musicians drank heavily, especially gin, which they would “sip like water.”²⁶⁰ If anyone wanted heroin, it was provided. Poet Bill Bissett [sic] and an anonymous Cellar regular said, “I knew everyone was shooting up. I mean a lot of people, and I was dabbling a bit. Because it seemed very cool.”²⁶¹ Dealers hung out regularly at the Cellar, “including two who made a habit of shadowing out-of-town players and became known by Cellar insiders as the ‘two horsemen.’”²⁶² (Horse being slang for heroin.) Al Neil, a jazz drummer, artist, and novelist, wrote about the bohemian heroin scene in his autobiographical novel, *Changes*, describing a world of underground junkies, turning on with American jazzmen.²⁶³ “Jupiter” was born to an upper-class white family in Ontario in 1947, and moved to Vancouver as an infant. By 1964 he was playing jazz. He didn't know what “grass” was yet – he thought it literally meant the grass on someone's lawn – but he knew what heroin and speed were.

Heroin was the main drug at that time. There was a little pot around there somewhere, but nobody, there was nowhere you could [go] about getting it, unless you knew somebody I

²⁵⁸ Marian Jago, *Live at the Cellar: Vancouver's Iconic Jazz Club and the Canadian Co-operative Jazz Scene in the 1950s and '60s*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018: 112.

²⁵⁹ Al Neil, *Origins*, Vancouver: Western Front Publications, 1989: 12.

²⁶⁰ Aaron Chapman, *Liquor, Lust, and the Law: The Story of Vancouver's Legendary Penthouse Nightclub*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2012: 37.

²⁶¹ Jago, *Live at the Cellar*, 151.

²⁶² Jago, *Live at the Cellar*, 146.

²⁶³ Neil, *Changes*, 11.

guess. I wasn't aware of it then. So, the other one was diet pills, speed. [...] And there was all kinds of stuff – Dexedrine,²⁶⁴ bennies²⁶⁵ and reds.²⁶⁶

The Cellar was closed by this point, but Jupiter played at the Flat 5 on West Broadway, and clubs like the Blue Horn, the Cave, and Isy's Supper Club. He didn't try heroin until later. He says it never really left the jazz scene, though the jazz scene shrank.²⁶⁷ In the dining lounges, some musicians smoked pot, going back to Sammy Davis, Jr. and Frank Sinatra.²⁶⁸ At the 24-hour Chilli Bar, heroin addict John Turvey heard Mahlia Jackson for the first time. "You could sit there all night: listen to the music, wheel and deal and score, go out and work and trick, and basically do whatever you were into."²⁶⁹

Montreal was famous for its jazz scene going back to the 1920s, when Warren, Rose, and Dixon penned, "Goodbye Broadway, Hello Montreal."²⁷⁰ According to jazz writer Mark Miller, Montreal was a city you could listen to jazz 24 hours a day, through the mid-1960s.²⁷¹ In 1950, three jazz musicians were pulled over on their way from Ottawa to Montreal and charged with possession of three joints, and a fourth was arrested at his home with more marijuana and a pipe.²⁷² The defence lawyer argued that the men needed the reefer to play; the judge

²⁶⁴ Dextroamphetamine, an amphetamine. Paul Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs: A Complete Guide to Their History, Chemistry, Use, and Abuse*, New York: Plume, 2004: 204. I will provide descriptions of the more obscure drugs, using Gahlinger or other reference sources.

²⁶⁵ Bensedrine, one of the earliest amphetamines. Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 206.

²⁶⁶ Secobarbital, a barbiturate. "Secobarbital," Drugs.com, <https://www.drugs.com/mtm/secobarbital.html> Accessed 13 April 2022; "Jupiter," Interview with Author, 16 June 2021.

²⁶⁷ "Jupiter," Interview.

²⁶⁸ Chapman, *Liquor, Lust, and the Law*, 51.

²⁶⁹ John Turvey, in Canning-Dew, *Hastings and Main*: 151.

²⁷⁰ Harry Warren, Billy Rose, and Mort Dixon, "Hello Montreal," New York: Irving Berlin, Inc., 1928, <http://hdl.handle.net/10315/28516>.

²⁷¹ Miller, *Jazz in Canada*, 116.

²⁷² Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 136.

recommended they smoke cigars instead.²⁷³ Montreal jazz piano virtuoso Steep Wade was refused from the military for smoking marijuana, and died in 1953 from a heroin overdose.²⁷⁴ Jazzman Wilkie Wilkerson remembers scoring heroin in Montreal in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He said, “jazz and dope were completely synonymous for me” and he had to quit jazz to quit heroin.²⁷⁵ Jazzman and heroin addict Peter Leitch described the area around Stanley Street, south of Ste-Catherine, as “kind of ‘beat’ scene” with coffee houses that featured jazz music.²⁷⁶ An after-hours club called L’Enfer, located in a warehouse behind Bleury Street, did not serve liquor, but people smoked marijuana inside it, until the police closed it in 1963.²⁷⁷ Leitch was introduced to heroin by a bass player known as “F.T.,” with whom Leitch played and smoked pot. “So many of my musical heroes had done this,” Leitch said.²⁷⁸ Leitch’s reference to his musical heroes is a theme that comes up again and again in the research – young people who did drugs because their heroes did drugs. Leitch also claimed, like so many others, that heroin made the music sound better.²⁷⁹

Among those who listened to the new rock n roll and rockabilly, the central fact was they drank, and following the repeal of Prohibition in the 1920s, the drinking age was fixed at 21.²⁸⁰ Teenagers listened at home, at school dances, in their cars, or wherever they could – but they generally did not listen to it in bars. Enforcement varied in different places and at different times, and there were some who got away with attending shows under-age, like 15-year-old guitarist

²⁷³ Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 137.

²⁷⁴ Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 145, 154.

²⁷⁵ Gilmore, *Swinging in Paradise*, 159.

²⁷⁶ Peter Leitch, *Off the Books: A Jazz Life*, Montreal: Véhicule Press, 2013: 21.

²⁷⁷ Leitch, *Off the Books*, 30-31.

²⁷⁸ Leitch, *Off the Books*, 39.

²⁷⁹ Leitch, *Off the Books*, 39.

²⁸⁰ Dan Malleck, Email Message to Author, 5 January 2023.

Robbie Robertson.²⁸¹ But generally, in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, it was not common for people under 21 to go to bars, where most of the rock n roll took place.²⁸²

Toronto was Canada's centre for rock n roll in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the northern terminus of the "Chitlin' Circuit."²⁸³ "Rompin'" Ronnie Hawkins and Levon Helm, both musicians from Arkansas, ruled the Yonge Street "Strip," a line of live bars around Yonge and Dundas Streets.²⁸⁴ Hawkins wrote in his memoirs, "There were so many of those damn baby-boom kids coming along right after the war, and they wanted to do things. They wanted to get out and *do something*. And the place they were doing it was mainly on or near Toronto's Yonge Street."²⁸⁵ Except Hawkins has his generations confused – when the Hawks "ruled the Strip" in 1960, the youngest legal bar patrons were born in 1939, before the first Boomers. Again, some could fake it, but the literature is rich with stories of those who could not, who had to settle for all ages matinees,²⁸⁶ or go to the alcohol-free folk clubs sprouting up in Yorkville.²⁸⁷ Beer and liquor reigned on The Strip, as did stimulants, which circulated through the bars. "Uppers" came in a variety of shapes, brands, colours, names, and chemical compositions, though they all keep you awake. For Hawkins's band The Hawks, it was the "orange heart" diet

²⁸¹ Robbie Robertson, *Testament*, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016: 81.

²⁸² Jennings, Interview.

²⁸³ Johnny Dovercourt, *Any Night of the Week: A D.I.Y. History of Toronto Music, 1957-2001*, Toronto: Coach House Books, 2020: 14.

²⁸⁴ Hawkins, *Ronnie Hawkins*, 97 and Levon Helm and Stephen Davis, *This Wheel's On Fire: Levon Helm and the Story of The Band*, Updated ed., Chicago: A Capella Books, 1993, 2000, 2013: 51.

²⁸⁵ Hawkins, *Ronnie Hawkins*, 95. Emphasis in original.

²⁸⁶ Sandra B. Tooze, *Levon: From Down in the Delta to the Birth of The Band and Beyond*, New York: Diversion Publishing Corp., 2020: 81.

²⁸⁷ Henderson, *Making the Scene*, 39.

pills²⁸⁸ which could be purchased over the counter and kept the band playing until morning.²⁸⁹ Music journalist Nicholas Jennings says that though speed was more common, there was some marijuana in the scene;²⁹⁰ The Hawks began using it around late 1960 or 1961.²⁹¹

In other cities, pre-Beatles rock n roll was less established. In Vancouver, cannabis appeared to be more common among musicians than in Toronto, at least according to musician Tommy Chong, later of the comedy duo Cheech and Chong.²⁹² Liquor was even more heavily regulated in Vancouver than Toronto. Until the mid-1960s, working class people drank in “beer halls,” some of which had become “monstrous, with 450 chairs in barn-size rooms.”²⁹³ In Montreal, the only major North American city where it was legal to buy a cocktail in 1921,²⁹⁴ rock n roll was still developing, and jazz and folk ruled bohemian circles.²⁹⁵

Rock n roll and jazz were two of the important musical subcultures of the time; the third was folk, mostly concentrated around coffeeshops and university campuses. The “folk music” of the era was not quite folk music as it is traditionally defined – music that is passed down orally from generation to generation – which led to splits between purists and the more

²⁸⁸ Likely Preludin, also known as “pink hearts”, 25 mg doses of Phendimetrazine, “amphetamine-like weight loss drugs” that “do not appear to have the psychoactive or addictive characteristics of amphetamine.” Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 210.

²⁸⁹ Jennings, *Before the Gold Rush*, 44.

²⁹⁰ Jennings, Interview.

²⁹¹ Robertson, *Testament*, 97.

²⁹² Chong, Interview.

²⁹³ Robert A. Campbell, *Demon Rum or Easy Money: Government Control of Liquor in British Columbia from Prohibition to Privatization*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991: 125.

²⁹⁴ Heron, *Booze*, 270.

²⁹⁵ Carmel Dumas, *Montréal chaud/show : chronique libre d'une explosion culturelle*, Montréal : Fides, 2008 : 194; see also Richard Bailargeon et Christian Coté, *Destination Ragou : Une histoire de la Musique Populaire au Québec*, Montréal : Triptyque, 1991 : 40.

accommodating. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, traditional folk was mixed with a type of singer-songwriter material that used acoustic instruments and played in a folk tradition. Music historian Dick Weissman describes it as a sort of “pop folk” mixed with traditional folk, defined by artists like Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Ian and Sylvia, Peter, Paul & Mary, and Simon and Garfunkel.²⁹⁶ In French Quebec, *chansonniers* like Félix Leclerc were emblematic of the sound.²⁹⁷ Politics were often – but not always – part of the music, as evidenced by songs like Buffy Ste-Marie’s “Universal Soldier” or Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changin’.” The drugs associated with folkies were mostly cannabis, when they could get it, and coffee, though there were exceptions – American banjo player Bob Gibson went to prison in Canada several times for heroin possession in the early 1960s,²⁹⁸ and the Mariposa Folk Festival of 1963, in Orillia, Ontario, descended into a drunken riot.²⁹⁹ Coffee and cannabis led to a more mellow vibe, much less violent, more focused on creativity and kindness, and – most importantly – open to those under 21. “Charlie” was 20 when he started playing guitar at Yorkville’s Halfbeat Restaurant in 1964. Because he did not smoke cigarettes, Charlie was reluctant to try marijuana, despite living in a Yorkville apartment “where everyone was smoking [marijuana].” He said, “everybody seemed to be selling drugs when it came to being a folksinger; you got to meet a lot of different people back then. The drug culture was very much alive.” Bernie Finkelstein would become one of Canada’s most important record producers, but in the early 1960s, he was just another kid looking for kicks. It was in Yorkville around 1962 he smoked his first joint. “I was

²⁹⁶ Dick Weissman, *A New History of American and Canadian Folk Music*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020: 76.

²⁹⁷ Scott Piroth, “Popular Music and Identity in Quebec,” *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, 38.2 (Summer 2008): 147.

²⁹⁸ Weissman, *A New History of American and Canadian Folk Music*, 83.

²⁹⁹ Michael Hill, *The Mariposa Folk Festival: A History*, Toronto: Dundurn, 2017: 32.

already a big smoker of regular cigarettes but this was something different. It put a different spin, both literally and figuratively, on everything.”³⁰⁰ But the biggest drug remained coffee, as singer-songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie said to Nicholas Jennings. It led to wild conversation and smart ideas, rather than fists, being thrown around. “It was all talk, talk, talk and listen, listen, listen. It was really about exchanging ideas. People always participated in what was going on on-stage.”³⁰¹ The term “hippie speedball” had likely not been coined yet, but this is what Sainte-Marie and Finkelstein are talking about – the combination of caffeine and marijuana that leads to endless conversations about life, the universe, and everything.³⁰² It was in the basement of the Purple Onion Sainte-Marie wrote her antiwar song, “Universal Soldier.”³⁰³

Travel and University

In 1961, the economy had recovered from its late-1950s slump and took a “significant turn for the better.”³⁰⁴ This permitted some early baby boomers to seize the moment and travel, sometimes trying drugs while abroad. In 1946, 445,800 Canadians flew on Canadian commercial aviation; in 1956 it was 2,115,600; and in 1961, it was 3,304,300, and it goes up from there.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁰ Finkelstein, *True North*, 31.

³⁰¹ Jennings, *Before the Goldrush*, 63.

³⁰² Reilly Capps, “Cannabis and Coffee: The Hippie Speedball Has Been Perfected,” *The Rooster*, 15 October 2018, Web. <https://therooster.com/blog/cannabis-and-coffee-hippie-speedball-has-been-perfected>

³⁰³ Andrea Warner, *Buffy Sainte-Marie: The Authorized Biography*, Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2018: 50.

³⁰⁴ Norrie, Owram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 380.

³⁰⁵ Statistics Canada, “Series T199-205. Canadian commercial aviation, domestic revenue traffic, scheduled services, 1946 to 1975,” in Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, T195-205. (T195-205 is the page number.)

“Auntie” was born in Toronto in 1943, but spent most of his life in Vancouver. It was this new middle-class wealth, and the increasing availability of cross-oceanic travel, that allowed him to study art in England. There, a friend traveling in Morocco sent him an envelope full of “kief,” a local form of marijuana, which he smoked from a pipe. They met in Belgium and brought a kilo of the kief back across the Atlantic, into the US and finally to Vancouver. “I wouldn’t say we introduced smoking marijuana to Vancouver, but we were probably close to the contenders,” Auntie said.³⁰⁶ Auntie said he could never thank his mother enough for that trip to England, arguing it was “the most educational experience of my life”³⁰⁷ – and something a person of his background could not have afforded 20 years earlier. “Quinn,” born in Montreal in 1942, first used marijuana while studying art in Paris in 1964.³⁰⁸ “Howard”, born in 1943 in Toronto, spent a year in London when he was 15, and though he did not use any illicit drugs, it introduced him to a larger musical culture, which would then lead him to drugs in Canada.³⁰⁹ The luxury of middle class travel opened these early eyes to a wider subcultural world.

Greater postwar wealth allowed for more middle-class young people to extend their adolescences and attend university, and enrolment grew. In 1951, 68,595 Canadians were enrolled at university; in 1961 it was 128,630; in 1966, 230,337.³¹⁰ “Stanley,” who was born in

³⁰⁶ “Auntie,” Interview with Author, 7 June 2021.

³⁰⁷ “Auntie,” Interview.

³⁰⁸ “Quinn,” Interview.

³⁰⁹ “Howard,” Interview.

³¹⁰ Statistics Canada, “Series W340-438. Full-time university employment, by sex, Canada and by province, selected years, 1920 to 1975,” in Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, W340-357. In 1951, this meant 0.5 per cent of all Canadians were attending university, or 6.3 per cent of Canadians aged 20 to 24. In 1961, 0.7 per cent of Canadians were attending university, or 10.8 per cent of Canadians aged 20 to 24. In 1966, 1.1 per cent of Canadians were attending university, or 15.8 per cent of Canadians aged 20 to 24. Author’s calculations, based on Series

Montreal but grew up in Vancouver, started at the University of British Columbia in 1961. Though drugs were still relatively unknown in high schools, at UBC “there was an emergent drug culture amongst students,” Stanley said, focused especially on a place called the Jazz Hut or Jazz Club (he is not sure which), in a wartime shed on campus.³¹¹ He said if you showed up at the Jazz Hut, you were likely to be offered marijuana at some point, though it was still used “surreptitiously,” with the knowledge it could get you into a lot of trouble. Stanley studied creative writing, and many of the stories students wrote in 1962-1963 involved drug use, though it was hard to tell if the authors had used drugs themselves or were imitating their Beat heroes.³¹² Another student, Howard, studied music at the University of Toronto in the early 1960s. As mentioned earlier, he and his friends would troll jazz clubs in the city, like the First Floor Club.³¹³ “Rivka” was born in 1945 in Montreal and went to McGill, where she smoked hash in and around the city’s folk clubs. She attended McGill from 1962 to 1966 when “a lot changed”; in the early, pre-Beatles days, “it was only those of us who had contact with the musicians that used to come in from out of town” who could get drugs.³¹⁴ “Wayne,” also from Montreal, did not smoke marijuana until 1964, when he was studying at McGill, though he would have liked to have tried it earlier. “It was super mysterious,” he said.³¹⁵

For those who did not go to university, to access drugs in the early 1960s meant accessing the jazz, folk, or rock scenes. “Dennis,” who was born in 1948 and grew up very poor in

W340-438 and A78-93, “Population, by age and sex, census dates, 1851 to 1976,” in Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, A78-93.

³¹¹ “Stanley,” Interview with Author, 26 July 2021.

³¹² “Stanley,” Interview.

³¹³ “Howard,” Interview.

³¹⁴ “Rivka,” Interview.

³¹⁵ “Wayne,” Interview with Author, 5 January 2021.

Winnipeg, was by the age of 13 hanging out at the coffeeshops in Vancouver, where people passed joints around.³¹⁶ But overall, there was no drug culture off-campus or beyond the coffeeshops. “Johannes,” born in 1940,³¹⁷ “Chris,” born in 1942,³¹⁸ and “Brent,” born in 1946,³¹⁹ worked blue collar jobs in the early 1960s and had no introduction to illicit drugs. Ian Milligan, in his PhD thesis “Rebel Youth,” noted that the drug culture did not enter blue collar spaces until the late 1960s,³²⁰ around the same time it came to the high schools.

Drug technologies were changing, with pharmaceutical companies developing all sorts of new painkillers, stimulants, depressants, and other chemicals meant to make modern life more tolerable. American drug historian David Herzberg described them as another part of the postwar good life, “like suburban houses, new cars, and washing machines.”³²¹ Many young people were introduced to drugs through their doctors. This is not subcultural drug use, but for some users it did lay the foundations for later subcultural use. “DJ”, born in 1948, became hooked on codeine when she was 14, after a foot injury. She continued to use it after the physical pain ended, as a means of “escape.” Later she would proceed to cannabis.³²² “Fred,” born in 1946 in Toronto, was given Dexamyl, an amphetamine, for depression in 1962. In 1969, he moved into Rochdale.³²³ Journalist Barbara Amiel also became hooked on codeine as a teenager. Like DJ, she took them for physical pain but came to enjoy the high.³²⁴ A few years later, she was visiting the heroin-

³¹⁶ “Dennis,” Interview with Author, 21 September 2020.

³¹⁷ “Johannes,” Interview with Author, 29 May 2021.

³¹⁸ “Chris,” Interview with Author, 28 October 2020.

³¹⁹ “Brent,” Interview.

³²⁰ Milligan, “Rebel Youth,” 57.

³²¹ Herzberg, *Happy Pills in America*, 4.

³²² “DJ,” Interview with Author, 28 May 2021.

³²³ “Fred,” Interview with Author, 2 June 2021.

³²⁴ Barbara Amiel, *Friend and Enemies: A Memoir*, Toronto: Signal, 2020: 32.

saturated apartments of Robert Hershorn, a well-known Montreal socialite and drug addict (though she did not use heroin there).³²⁵

In general, though, the early 1960s remained a conservative time. Though the roots of wider subcultural drug use were being sown in the coffeeshops, jazz clubs, and bars, they were just sprouting. Universities were still fiercely traditional, there was virtually no cannabis in the high schools, and federal and provincial governments had not yet begun their grant-giving sprees. All this changed in 1964 – the year the Beatles launched the “British Invasion” of North America.

The Birth of the Hippies

There is no single event that heralds the arrival of the hippies. Certainly, by 1966, the phenomenon was known, and by 1967, it saturated the media. Stuart Henderson puts the change in Toronto’s Yorkville at 1965, when the media started paying attention to the neighbourhood, especially its drugs.³²⁶ Lawrence Aronsen says it arrived in West End Vancouver in January 1966, “when a man [on LSD] was arrested near Kitsilano Beach while deliriously screaming that ‘he was God.’”³²⁷ Warren and Fortin put its arrival in Montreal even later, in 1967,³²⁸ though my interviews indicate that Anglo Montreal, at least, felt the change around the same time as Toronto and Vancouver. If there is a single event that announced a break with the old and arrival of the new, it would likely be the Beatles’ first appearances on Canadian radio in 1963, which began a

³²⁵ Amiel, *Friend and Enemies*, 29.

³²⁶ Henderson, *Making the Scene*, 55.

³²⁷ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 18.

³²⁸ Warren and Fortin, *Pratiques et discours de la contreculture au Québec*, 11.

quick process of reputation-building, culminating with the band's appearance on the American *Ed Sullivan Show* on February 9, 1964.³²⁹

Though the Beatles were not defined as hippies at the time, their long(ish) hair, irreverent attitudes, youthful energy – and of course, their new take on American music – spawned a shift in the culture, especially towards the dominance of rock n roll. According to music scholar John Schneider, the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* was “the moment that brought electric rock and roll back into prominence, and folkies started trading in their acoustic guitars in droves.”³³⁰ “Harry” said it was seeing the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* that fateful February night that changed the course of his musical life. “I’m playing violin, and along come the Beatles when 1964 hits, the *Ed Sullivan Show*. I said fuck this violin, I want to do *that*.”³³¹ Out in Oshawa, “Simon” was not an immediate convert to the Beatles, but he did see them on *Ed Sullivan* and it began to penetrate his thinking, moving his tastes away from orchestral movements to rock n roll.³³² “Aldous” saw the same episode when he was eight or nine and asked his parents for a guitar, so he could be like John Lennon.³³³

Economic growth, population growth, a liberal welfare state, the extension of adolescence, and technological spread all contributed to this music-led phenomenon. Rock n roll had been in the doldrums since 1958, when Elvis Presley went into the army, Buddy Holly,

³²⁹ Nick Krewen, “How the Beatles Got Their Start in Canada,” *Toronto Star*, 18 February 2013.

https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/music/2013/02/18/how_the_beatles_got_their_start_in_canada.html. Accessed 9 February 2023.

³³⁰ John Schneider, *Whispering Pines: The Northern Roots of American Music...From Hank Snow to The Band*, Toronto: ECW Press, 2009: 111.

³³¹ “Harry,” Interview with Author, 3 July 2021.

³³² “Simon,” Interview with Author, 9 March 2020.

³³³ “Aldous,” Interview with Author, 9 December 2020.

Richie Valens, and the Big Bopper were dead in a plane crash, Chuck Berry went to jail for transporting a minor across state lines for “immoral purposes,” and Jerry Lee Lewis was hounded from the spotlight for marrying his 13-year-old cousin.³³⁴ The Beatles injected a new energy, and from the most unlikely place – Liverpool, England, an industrial port which only 20 years ago had been laid waste by the Luftwaffe, and was still associated with working class English misery. The British Invasion was unexpected, but it was not unexplained. Airplanes, transistor radio, LP records, and of course, television – made a “British Invasion” of North America possible. The other great change to rock n roll was the merging of folk sensibilities into an electric sound, beginning with Bob Dylan’s “electric turn” in 1965 and speeding off from there.³³⁵ This made rock more mature, taking it from its innocent (if rambunctious) childhood into its stormy adolescence.

The transistor radio was vital to the rise of the counterculture. If rock n roll was the baby boom’s fuel, the transistor radio was its vehicle. Transistor radios made music portable for the first time. No longer did the whole family have to sit around a heavy, wood-paneled radio set, being charmed by Bing Crosby or terrified by Orson Welles. Now, teenagers could have their own radios, to bring to their own bedrooms or basements, to listen to whatever they liked. According to American historian Gerard DeGroot, “The transistor was perfectly suited to the rock invasion, since it allowed the individual to listen in private. For parents, it provided a solution to the great problem of rock and roll.”³³⁶ This, in turn, allowed for a diversity of radio stations that could cater to niche markets, like teenagers. Rock radio emerged, funded by

³³⁴ Weissman, *A New History of American and Canadian Folk Music*, 181.

³³⁵ Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 95. See also Irwin, *Scenes*, 97-98.

³³⁶ DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged*, 22.

advertisements for products teenagers wanted.³³⁷ These products then became subcultural signifiers, like records, leather jackets, and hair pomade.³³⁸

The effect of rock radio on the baby boomers cannot be overstated. Young person after young person tells the story of hearing their first rock n roll song on the radio, and how it changed their lives. Rock n roll also introduced millions to the world of drug hedonism. The music sounded better on drugs, as interviewee after interviewee told me. As writer George Case put it, “Music, already a special arrangement of sound and (when sung) language designed to produce emotional results, is to the altered mind a revelation.”³³⁹

Gaz said it was when he first heard “Not Fade Away” by the Rolling Stones on CHUM 1050 that he was converted to rock and roll. The song,

just blew the top off my head. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. And you know with folk music I got interested in blues and jug band music and that kind of thing, because that was all part of the folk genre, but hearing “Not Fade Away” and hearing the Rolling Stones just slayed me.³⁴⁰

Anglo radio in Montreal shaped “Jim’s” taste in rock³⁴¹; same with “Jack,” listening to CHOM-FM.³⁴² In Toronto, Harry would listen and, “Week after week there’d be somebody new on the radio that was like, ‘Wow, who the hell is that?’”³⁴³ This led *directly* to experimenting with drugs. “The question for me, and some of my friends, is where is this guy [the singer] coming

³³⁷ De Groot, *The Sixties Unplugged*, 23.

³³⁸ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 2.

³³⁹ George Case, *Out of Our Heads: Rock ‘n’ Roll Before the Drugs Wore Off*, New York: Backbeat Books, 2010: 38.

³⁴⁰ “Gaz,” Interview.

³⁴¹ “Jim,” Interview with Author, 12 May 2020.

³⁴² “Jack,” Interview with Author, 30 April 2020.

³⁴³ “Harry,” Interview.

from? I gotta know. Was it just a lucky break that he wrote a song like that, or does this guy really have something that I need to know? *Well, we did acid to try and find out, you know?*³⁴⁴

Drugs followed the Beatles. In Canada, cannabis appeared to be more common in 1964, though drug arrest statistics remained low until 1965, when 377 Canadians were convicted of drug offences.³⁴⁵ It grew in popularity every year after, up to the 1970s. For many of my interviewees, if they did not do drugs in 1964, they at least became aware of them then. “Chris” was born in 1942, so by 1964 he was old enough to drink, and he did, mostly at the Pilot Tavern in Yorkville. In 1964 he was introduced to marijuana for the first time in the neighbourhood.³⁴⁶ “Paul,” as a young musician in Montreal, first smoked hash around 1964, and got enough of a regular supply that he could offer it to bands touring from England and America.³⁴⁷ Wayne was a second-year student at McGill in 1964 when he got it.³⁴⁸ “Ethan” was barely in high school when he smoked with his older brother, in Yorkville and around the biker clubhouse near his home.³⁴⁹ In 1965, another nine of my interviewees – “Oscar,” “Brent,” “Jim,” “Betty,” “Murray,” “Dipper,” “Quinn,” “Calypso,” and “Steve” – were introduced to drugs, overwhelmingly cannabis.³⁵⁰ Hallucinogens, primarily LSD but also peyote and its derivative, mescaline, also began appearing around 1966. Interest was fuelled by American intellectuals like Carlos

³⁴⁴ “Harry,” Interview. Emphasis mine.

³⁴⁵ Statistics Canada, “Statistics of Criminal and Other Offences, Cat. 85 – 201,” in Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 16. This is down from 565 in 1959, not an era famous for its drug use.

³⁴⁶ “Chris,” Interview.

³⁴⁷ “Paul,” Interview with Author, 2 November 2020.

³⁴⁸ “Wayne,” Interview.

³⁴⁹ “Ethan,” Interview with Author, 6 November 2020.

³⁵⁰ “Oscar,” Interview with Author, 6 June 2021; “Brent,” Interview; “Jim,” Interview; “Betty,” Interview with Author, 25 June 2021; “Murray,” Interview with Author, 11 December 2020; “Dipper,” Interview with Author, 24 January 2020; “Quinn,” Interview; “Calypso,” Interview with Author, 19 July 2021; and “Steve,” Interview with Author, 1 December 2020.

Castaneda and Timothy Leary, whose ideas and works were becoming popular among the subcultural set in Canada. Wayne and Jupiter's lives were changed reading Castaneda's *The Teachings of Don Juan*;³⁵¹ "Dipper" and "Joan" spoke about how Timothy Leary and Aldous Huxley fuelled countercultural perception.³⁵² But it would be another few years before my interviewees read these books more commonly.

Drug use at this time was still confined to adults and older teens. Except for Dennis, Calypso, and Ethan, everyone I spoke to was at least 15 when they first used, and many were in their twenties, if their first use was before 1966. (DJ and Timmy were also under 15, but were not using drugs subculturally – DJ was addicted to codeine and Timmy was experimenting with alcohol and cigarettes.) You often still needed to know somebody – preferably an American, a musician, or best yet, an American musician – to get drugs. Or you needed to be in a hippie neighbourhood – Yorkville in Toronto, Kitsilano/West Fourth in Vancouver, and the McGill Ghetto and Carré St-Louis in Montreal.

Charlie took LSD in 1966, before he had even smoked a joint, an experience he describes as "mind-altering," a positive experience that is "very, very hard for me to describe. I think it had

³⁵¹ "Wayne," Interview; "Jupiter," Interview. Carlos Castaneda wrote a series of books about the Yaqui people of Mexico, where he allegedly apprenticed as a sorcerer with a shaman named Don Juan, and used great quantities of peyote, which contains mescaline. See Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1968. Today, the books are widely regarded as fiction. Robert Marshall, "The Dark Legacy of Carlos Castaneda," *Salon*, 12 April 2007. Web. salon.com/2007/04/12/castaneda/

³⁵² "Dipper," Interview; "Joan" Interview with Author, 19 May 2021; No one spoke to a specific work by Timothy Leary, but his basic tenets as an "acid guru" can be found in Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert, *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, New York: Citadel Press Books, 1964, 1992. British novelist Aldous Huxley's writings on hallucinogens are gathered in Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception/Heaven and Hell (1955/1956)*, Glasgow: Omnia Books, 1994.

an effect on my life in the sense I experienced life in a different way than I ever had before.”³⁵³ Charlie picked up a taste for hashish, but he never became a heavy user. Partly, it came out of a desire to not conform to any “culture” (including subculture) and remain an iconoclast, which is why he also avoided alcohol, even though he was of age. Charlie refused to describe himself as a hippie, even though he had long hair, preferring “biker,” even though he was not part of any motorcycle gang.³⁵⁴

“Marijuana was really the main thing,” Chris said. “Nobody used cocaine. And acid wasn’t out really until ’67.” In 1966, he discovered Preludin, the first indications of speed in the neighbourhood, and likely the same drug The Hawks were taking five years earlier downtown. “It was a light speed,” Chris said, “and you’re out partying and smoking and drinking, and at one o’clock in the morning, you could pop one of those and you were good for another four hours. They were fantastic. I wish I had some now!” He bought them from a “Mr. Norman” who owned a menswear shop on Yonge. “I was supplying them to all my artist friends. And we loved those, we had those for three or four years, before they became illegal.”³⁵⁵

“Brie” visited Yorkville when she was a teenager, and around 1966 got a room on Huron St. In the early 1960s, Brie had seen kids use drugs at school in Vancouver – hard drugs, she thinks it was likely heroin – but she cannot be sure what it was. “I was really horrified by drugs at first,” Brie said, “but then I started smoking weed. I lived in a rooming house and started smoking weed, and that’s pretty much all we did all day. [Laughs.]”³⁵⁶ Brie described a Yorkville life that was centred around doing a lot of nothing – hanging out, seeing shows, and using drugs.

³⁵³ “Charlie,” Interview with Author, 8 June 2020.

³⁵⁴ “Charlie,” Interview.

³⁵⁵ “Chris,” Interview.

³⁵⁶ “Brie,” Interview with Author, 12 March 2021.

LSD came after marijuana, around 1966. “I loved it. Especially the hallucinations I would have, especially on the hardwood floors.” She described the acid as “pretty pure,” likely from Sandoz or California über-dealer Owsley Stanley.³⁵⁷ (Charlie, Rivka, Elliot, and George also took, or believe they took, Owsley acid at some point, which points to either an effective LSD distribution network from California to Canada, or the rapid spread of countercultural myth.³⁵⁸) Above all, LSD made music fantastic. “I think it’s an amazing drug because it really opened up my perceptions of art and life and music, and...I mean music just sounded incredible on acid.”³⁵⁹

Not every Torontonians had their first tokes in Yorkville – it was slowly creeping into the quieter neighbourhoods too, beginning with working-class areas. In 1964, “Ethan” was 13 years old and smoking his first hash and marijuana outside the Black Diamond Motorcycle Club’s clubhouse near Finch and Bathurst. His brother was five years older and would take him to visit Yorkville. “And I was just looking at all the longhairs and going, ‘Holy shit!’ They just weren’t around St. James.”³⁶⁰

Montreal’s hippie scene developed in the area around McGill University for the English, and Carré St-Louis, “le ghetto McGill francophone”³⁶¹ for the French. But they were not exclusive – many francophones hung around the McGill “ghetto,” because of its Englishness. The rock n roll they listened to, after all, was mostly from the US and England. Though there was some French rock, like “yé-yé,” it was less common among the hippie set. As musician

³⁵⁷ Augustus Owsley Stanley III was a California chemist who produced vast quantities of LSD in the mid-to-late-1960s. See Lee and Shlain, *Acid Dreams*, 146-147.

³⁵⁸ “Charlie,” Interview; “Rivka,” Interview; “Elliot,” Interview with Author, 14 June 2021; “George,” Interview with Author, 11 June 2021.

³⁵⁹ “Brie,” Interview.

³⁶⁰ “Ethan,” Interview.

³⁶¹ Warren and Fortin, *Pratiques et discours de la contreculture au Québec*, 34.

Claude Harel said, “‘Chanter en français, pour un Québécois, c’est québécois.’”³⁶² The hippie movement came late to the French Québécois, but once it arrived, in 1967, Quebec developed into what Marshall McLuhan called “un peuple de ‘hippies.’”³⁶³

While there were tensions between French and English, Montreal was not (and is not) Belfast. Beyond the sporadic, semi-organized terrorism of the FLQ, and the occasional rumbles between hoodlum youth, relations between the two communities were cordial, if cool. Many bilingual Anglophones visited Carré St-Louis, and many bilingual Francophones would hang out in “the Ghetto.” Historian Sean Mills wrote about how radical French, English, and others would meet in the area below Sherbrooke St. in the early 1960s, and would mix throughout the decade, sharing the same convictions, if not the same language.³⁶⁴ Their worlds “overlapped and intersected,” though activists did generally work apart from one another.³⁶⁵

By 1965, Wayne was writing about marijuana for the underground press “at a time when nobody really knew about it.”³⁶⁶ Wayne soon sold marijuana that a colleague brought up from the US Rockies. “That’s the thing, you make money. You get laid, excuse me. And you hear great music. And meet musicians in ways other people are never going to do.” Wayne met several famous bluesmen by offering to smoke them up. “I would go to the club because I also knew the owner of the club and I got into the club free. So, getting into the club free, I also got to meet the musicians all the time. And meeting them, and talking, and ‘Oh, there’s dope around!’ ‘Sure, let’s

³⁶² Pierre Harel, *Harel : Rock ma vie*, Montréal : Éditions Libre Expression, 2005: 22.

³⁶³ Warren and Fortin, *Pratiques et discours de la contreculture au Québec*, 11.

³⁶⁴ Sean Mills, “Democracy, Dissent, and the City: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Sixties Montreal,” in Palaeologu, ed., *The Sixties in Canada*, 153.

³⁶⁵ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010: 8.

³⁶⁶ “Wayne,” Interview.

go.” Wayne became immensely popular for his supply, a huge source of subcultural capital.

“Folk musicians and blues musicians, they all did dope.”³⁶⁷

Wayne’s friend Steve was introduced to marijuana in 1965, when he was 19 or 20. He went to see a well-known folk musician who brought it up in his sock from New York. “I was intrigued and interested in that whole idea,” he said.³⁶⁸ Steve’s father was a horticulturalist and Steve could not understand how some plants were illegal and some were not. “The idea that a plant, the dry leaves of a plant, could be illegal, was bizarre. It still strikes me as bizarre. There’s a million plants on Earth and they can take this one and this one and say, you’re not allowed to have these.³⁶⁹ Like Wayne (and millions of others), Steve did not get high the first time he smoked. But later that year, another folk musician came up from Pennsylvania with marijuana in his pocket, and they smoked it and got high. “And I liked it,” Steve said.³⁷⁰

The coffeehouses around Stanley Street and Ste-Catherine’s – The Fifth Dimension, the New Penelope, and jazz houses like The Op (later the Image) – gave Montreal kids a window into a wider world, an American world of peace, civil rights, music, and drug use. Steve remembers mostly older Black American men. “And that was a really important thing,” Steve said, “because here we were, white suburban kids in Canada being exposed to something that was really different. It was very exciting to see these guys and very unusual. We thought we were – and we were – connecting with another world.”³⁷¹ Despite all this fame coming in, marijuana and hash were still hard to find. You needed a connection, someone like Wayne.

367 “Wayne,” Interview.

368 “Wayne,” Interview.

369 “Steve,” Interview.

370 “Steve,” Interview.

371 “Steve,” Interview.

Paul, born in Montreal in 1948, tried hash for the first time in 1965, when he was 15 or 16, arguing it was “very difficult to get grass in Canada, at least for us.” Paul and his teenage rock band took over a small, former National Film Board studio to rehearse and get high. Once he started studying at Sir George Williams University, Paul discovered that hash helped both his musical and his poetic visions, and made him more creative.

My English teacher also got a buzz, we would hang out, and a lot of us became fans of the poets, the romantic poets, you know. Keats, etc. So I fell into that. And when you smoke, you dig into a lot of the deeper meanings of some of these poems. And then we started writing. So I would say the hash sort of inspired us to write music on our own. There’s no question that’s what it did. The cover bands in those days didn’t get high. You got high to just get out there and try to find some meaning on a lot of levels, whether it was sex, whether it was, you know, whatever. But yes, I think it was a very positive influence is what I’m saying. At the time.³⁷²

Like Wayne, Paul also had – from time to time – hash to share, which made him very popular. “I wouldn’t say [I was a] supplier, but the English guys, the Stones and those kinds of guys, would say, ‘Hey, is there anything to get high on?’[...] But their thing in those days was grass. And again, it was pretty innocent in the mid-sixties.”³⁷³

“Victor” was born and raised in the Maritimes to a South Asian father and a white mother, and came to Montreal in 1965. He got a job and began hanging out with some of the hippies around Park Avenue, Prince Arthur, Jeanne Mance, and Ste-Famille. As a child, Victor read about psychology and how people thought, and this, combined with his brown skin, made him something of a “quasi-guru type” to the hippies. “I guess I wanted to see people, see people freaking out and getting out of control. And I would give them a gentle hypnotic suggestion to stabilize. I would bring people down when they were out of control, which is why I [hadn’t tried

³⁷² “Paul,” Interview.

³⁷³ “Paul,” Interview. I think he means the Rolling Stones as a hypothetical.

marijuana], I was observing how it worked.” Victor held off smoking for nearly two years, until 1967. “It was a very pleasant experience, and I slowly made it part of my lifestyle.” They hung around a French-Canadian jazz place, which Victor would take over in 1968.³⁷⁴

In 1965 or 1966, when she was 17, DJ first smoked pot with her younger brother, who was 15. She enjoyed it, and said her brother “introduced me to actually a lot of stuff. But my favourite was always pot. It was lovely, didn’t make me sick.”³⁷⁵ They sold marijuana out of the apartment. DJ never found out where her brother got the drugs they sold, but for a couple years, their apartment near McGill was a magnet for local heads. Both DJ and her brother had jobs, and the dealing paid for their drugs. “There weren’t a lot of people that were selling. It was also really dangerous. I actually met a young man who had been in jail for dealing. So he was terrified of being around us. It was, you had to be really low key. And I mean, the Montreal police were not always sensitive.”³⁷⁶

“Calypso” was born to an upper-middle class Black family in rural Quebec. In 1965 she went to Montreal to meet friends, where she was introduced to LSD.³⁷⁷ Calypso hung out in a “little coffee scene” around Rue de la Montagne, Bishop Street, and Ste-Catherine’s. Her friend from France regularly came with LSD, and on weekends they ate it and hung out at friends’ houses and listened to music. Calypso did not like cannabis and had a hard time, as a non-smoker, inhaling it. But she later lived with a boyfriend who imported hashish from Afghanistan

³⁷⁴ “Victor,” Interview with Author, 12 January 2021.

³⁷⁵ “DJ,” Interview.

³⁷⁶ “DJ,” Interview.

³⁷⁷ “Calypso,” Interview.

– she literally moved out the day he was busted, in 1967 or 1968. (She is not sure of the year.)

Calypso said LSD,

opened up our generation. We were getting away from what our parents were doing and going through the normal, I guess what you'd say, just following the path of a more traditional role of just going to school and getting university educated. And we turned more towards spiritual things. And so, all of us of those acid years all turned into spiritual, meditation, yoga, eastern philosophies.³⁷⁸

Calypso's mother already practiced yoga, and advised her daughter to try that instead of drugs.

After 1967, that is exactly what she did, quitting all drugs and diving into eastern mysticism.³⁷⁹

Vancouver and the East-West Split

Vancouver is a puzzling city, embodying several paradoxes which make it unique in Canada, and in Canadian drug history. One is the contrast between blue-collar resource town and “Lotus Land,” a place Canadians often “escape to” from points east. Oral and written sources describe Vancouver alternately as a boring logging town with a terrible drink and drug problem, and as a vibrant centre for arts, culture, and positive weirdness. The concept of “Terminal City” – last line on the CPR and the Trans-Canada Highway – affects both these views of the city. Last line for those looking to work and spend their wages; last line for those seeking an alternative way of life; last line for those with nowhere else to go. SFU Psychologist Bruce Alexander refers to this as the “Terminal City Hypothesis”:

Vancouver provides an excellent case study of the spread of addiction on a globalising planet. It is a thoroughly modern city that was not founded until the late 19th century. It came into existence to fill a niche in the global economic system then maintained by the

³⁷⁸ “Calypso,” Interview.

³⁷⁹ “Calypso,” Interview.

British Empire – the precursor of today’s globalising civilisation. There was little shared culture in early Vancouver to smooth the hard edges of its raw economic function.

Despite its beauty, civility, and prosperity, Vancouver soon became known as the city with the biggest drug-addiction problem in Canada.³⁸⁰

Alexander elaborated in an interview: “It’s Terminal City. Everybody comes from somewhere else, right?”³⁸¹

Vancouver can be geographically split in half into Eastside and Westside, using Cambie Street as the dividing line. The line is necessarily fuzzy, and there is no definitive “border” between the two. Some people use Main Street, four blocks east. But generally, the further west you go from Cambie, the more likely it is you will encounter wealth and status; to the east, it was almost immediately poverty and decrepitude, though conditions improved as you moved further east. Before the hippies arrived, most Vancouver users were centred on the notorious Downtown Eastside, a desperately poor neighbourhood whose heartland was (and is) the corner of East Hastings and Main streets. Neglected by every part of government except law enforcement, Vancouver’s Association to Tackle Adverse Situations noted in 1972, “there exist [in the Downtown Eastside] no libraries for public use, unsatisfactory libraries for school use, no community recreation centre, no headquarters for health clinics, and no day-care centres.”³⁸²

³⁸⁰ Bruce K. Alexander, *The Globalisation of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008: 3.

³⁸¹ Alexander, Interview.

³⁸² The Association to Tackle Adverse Situations, “The Definition is a Personal One (1969),” in Timothy E. Reid, ed., *Canada’s Poor: Are they Always to be with Us?* Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1972: 11.

What it did have was bars, pawn shops, single occupancy hotels, itinerant resource workers, and street addicts.³⁸³ The primary illicit drug there was heroin, though other drugs were available.³⁸⁴

By 1965, Vancouver was both Canada's Drug Capital and Canada's Hippie Capital – and they were not the same thing. After 1960, a cannabis- and psychedelic-based hippie culture began in the west side of the city, focused on the neighbourhoods of Kitsilano and Fourth Avenue/Arbutus, and strongly influenced by cultural and subcultural developments in California. A National Gallery retrospective put it: “Vancouver became Canada's California [...] A heady mix of drugs, oriental philosophy and new communications technologies helped create a vibrant, exciting milieu.”³⁸⁵ Writer and novelist Douglas Coupland, thinking back to his childhood, remembered how, “Vancouver was Canada's San Francisco-style alternative destination, with much of the scene centred along West 4th Avenue.”³⁸⁶ This Westside scene was mostly middle class, and rejected the heroin and liquor that defined the Eastside. Coupland also wrote about the Downtown Eastside, as a separate phenomenon: “This is a part of the city that is in chronic pain. [...] The amount of drug paraphernalia littering the place is outstanding.”³⁸⁷

According to the RCMP, and contrary to many users' and interviewees' views, Vancouver's heavy heroin use before 1970 had little to do with it being a port town, since most of the heroin until the early 1970s came from Europe, via east coast ports, via the French

³⁸³ Jo-Ann Canning-Dew, “Introduction,” in Canning-Dew, ed., *Hastings and Main*, 14. See also, Campbell, *Demon Rum or Easy Money*, 156.

³⁸⁴ Ingeborg Paulus, *Psychedelic Drug Use in Vancouver: Notes on the New Drug Scene*, Vancouver: Narcotic Addiction Foundation of British Columbia, August 1967, 61.

³⁸⁵ Denise Leclerc and Pierre Dessureault, *The 60s in Canada*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2005: 52.

³⁸⁶ Douglas Coupland, *City of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver*, Revised ed., Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009: 14.

³⁸⁷ Coupland, *City of Glass*, 87.

Connection.³⁸⁸ The Burns Brothers – Eddie, Kenny, and Tommy – distributed millions of dollars worth of heroin in Vancouver in the late 1950s and early 1960s, through their connection with Vic Coroni and the Montreal mob, though Eddie did make trips to India to buy there.³⁸⁹ Some heroin from Southeast Asia’s “Golden Triangle” also came through.³⁹⁰

After moving from Calgary to Vancouver in the late 1950s, musician Tommy Chong mostly smoked hash, but stayed far away from heroin, because “[in Vancouver,] you see the junkies all over the place. And if that’s the end result of heroin, then forget it.”³⁹¹ Folk singer Ian Tyson, also from Alberta, remembered the Downtown Eastside as a dismal place full of sad heroin addicts, which he racialized, describing, ““strippers and the black hookers and Indian junkies.””³⁹² It was a world away from Yorkville, where he would soon move, meet his partner Sylvia Frick, and allegedly introduce marijuana to Bob Dylan.³⁹³ Before the hippies, some bohemian types did go into the Eastside, but they were mostly slumming. Gabor Maté, a doctor in the Downtown Eastside and former 1960s radical, said in the 1950s, “university students seeking some slumming fun mixed with alcoholics, pickpockets, shoppers and Friday night bible preachers” in the neighbourhood.³⁹⁴

The story of Stephen Reid provides a good introduction to Downtown Eastside heroin culture in 1964. Reid would go on to become one of Canada’s most notorious bank robbers,

³⁸⁸ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 68.

³⁸⁹ Boyd, *High Society*, 24.

³⁹⁰ Schneider, *Iced*, 353.

³⁹¹ Chong, Interview.

³⁹² John Einarson with Ian Tyson and Sylvia Tyson. *Four Strong Winds: Ian & Sylvia*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2011: 16.

³⁹³ Einarson, *Four Strong Winds*, 100.

³⁹⁴ Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*, Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2008, 10.

heroin addicts, and – much later – west coast literary stars. But in 1964 he was a poor, runaway 14-year-old from north Ontario, already an addict thanks to a doctor who traded the boy morphine for sexual favours. “I landed on the West Coast three years too early for the Summer of Love. In the dark heart of downtown Vancouver I had instead my first summer of heroin. In those few short months I would learn ninety-nine names for junk and lose the one for love.”³⁹⁵ The Plaza Café, where Reid hung out with his junkie friends, had holes drilled into the bottoms of the teaspoons to stop users from cooking up, and the police “kicked the toilet doors off their hinges on a regular basis.”³⁹⁶ Reid “entered the world of Hastings Street with all the zest of a kid joining the carnny.”³⁹⁷ He found a “prostitute girlfriend,” took up at the sleazy Balmoral Hotel, and engaged in a series of pranks and short cons to pay for their habits.³⁹⁸ At the end of the summer, Reid was arrested and sent back east.³⁹⁹

The Westside was different. According to one BC Narcotics Addiction Foundation study from 1967,

[Ingeborg Paulus, a drugs researcher] found that the [psychedelic drug] users were typically white Anglo-Saxons aged 19 to 27. Most had a Grade 12 education or better and were technically single, from middle- or upper-middle-class backgrounds, and unemployed at the time of the interview. Few had been convicted of delinquent acts or breaches of the Narcotic Control Act. *These characteristics set them apart from the narcotic addicts so well known in Vancouver.* Narcotic [heroin] addicts were older and more often married. They had less education (Grade 11 and under). Most came from lower-class backgrounds and had convictions for delinquency and drug-related offences.

³⁹⁵ Stephen Reid, “Junkie,” in Lorna Crozier and Patrick Lane, eds., *Addicted: Notes from the Belly of the Beast*, 3rd ed., Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2016: 263.

³⁹⁶ Reid, “Junkie,” in Crozier and Lane, eds., *Addicted*, 263.

³⁹⁷ Reid, “Junkie,” in Crozier and Lane, eds., *Addicted*, 265.

³⁹⁸ Reid, “Junkie,” in Crozier and Lane, eds., *Addicted*, 265.

³⁹⁹ Reid, “Junkie,” in Crozier and Lane, eds., *Addicted*, 271.

The narcotic addicts were, in fact, rather conventional in comparison with the psychedelic drug users, most of whom were residents of Vancouver's hippie quarter.⁴⁰⁰

Paulus identified two primary subcultures – the heroin users at Hastings and Main, and the hippies at Fourth Avenue and Arbutus. “There are two true subcultures of drug users – each with its own identification marks, way of life, and area of drug use activity,” she wrote.⁴⁰¹ In time, the two worlds would collide, but up until the very late 1960s, they kept apart.

Of my interviewees, “Murray,” “Ishmael,” “Quinn,” “Brent,” “Joel,” “Elliot,” “Jupiter,” “Dennis,” and “Auntie” all lived in or regularly frequented Hippie Kitsilano.⁴⁰² All of them were middle or upper class except for Murray, who grew up in the East End and visited Fourth Avenue to enjoy the “extremely psychedelic” atmosphere,⁴⁰³ and Dennis, mentioned above. “Auntie” said the hippie scene concentrated in the Westend was “middle class, not going through the kind of difficult and challenging things which life in the East End of the city was all about.”⁴⁰⁴ He made sure to stay on the west side of Main Street, saying the Eastside “just seemed so run-down and poverty-stricken and violent and drug-addled, you know it was the kind of place where you could find [trouble?].”⁴⁰⁵ Jupiter echoed these comments: “Nobody wanted to live on the

⁴⁰⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 102. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁰¹ Paulus, *Psychedelic Drug Use in Vancouver*, 115.

⁴⁰² “Murray,” Interview; “Ishmael,” Interview with Author, 6 May 2021; “Quinn,” Interview; “Brent,” Interview; “Joel,” Interview; “Elliot,” Interview; “Jupiter,” Interview; “Dennis,” Interview; and “Auntie,” Interview.

⁴⁰³ “Murray,” Interview.

⁴⁰⁴ “Auntie,” Interview.

⁴⁰⁵ “Auntie,” Interview.

Eastside. Though it was cheaper.”⁴⁰⁶ Echoing anti-heroin, pro-psychedelic, hippie thinkers like Richard Alpert⁴⁰⁷ and Terrence McKenna,⁴⁰⁸ Brent said that among his Fourth Avenue friends,

we looked down on junkies. We looked down on people who used heroin, we thought that wasn't a good thing. [...] The same way we looked down on people who drank, right? Didn't like juicers, didn't like junkies. Because we were expanding our consciousness. And they were just getting loaded.⁴⁰⁹

In turn, he said that people with long hair were “thought to be perverted. Especially by the blue-collar people.” He said my distinction of two separate scenes, a hard drug one in the east and a softer drug, hippie one in the west, was “essentially correct.”⁴¹⁰ Quinn, an aspiring poet and artist from an upper-class Anglo-Montreal background, got off the bus in the Downtown Eastside, to a scene he described as “ugly, ugly, ugly,” filled with homeless people and hard drug addicts. But soon enough, he moved to the Westend and hooked up with a literary scene there. “Vancouver at that time presented an exciting web of new ideas about poetry and art, about how to be an artist, how to be a person in this world,” he said. He and his friends looked back on the great poets of the past, the drugs they had used, and imitated them.⁴¹¹

Vancouver was also a popular destination for young Americans escaping the draft. Studies reveal most American draft resisters who came to Canada were middle or upper class, “a fact,” according to historian Frank Kusch, “supported by all scholarships to date. Their parents were three times as likely to be professionals, executives, managers and business owners than the

⁴⁰⁶ “Jupiter,” Interview.

⁴⁰⁷ Richards Alpert (a.k.a. Baba Ram Dass), *Be Here Now*, San Cristobal NM: Lama Foundation, 1978: 93.

⁴⁰⁸ Terrence McKenna, *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge*, New York: Bantam Books, 1992: 208.

⁴⁰⁹ “Brent,” Interview.

⁴¹⁰ “Brent,” Interview.

⁴¹¹ “Quinn,” Interview.

average rate of the U.S. population.”⁴¹² These men, and the women who came with them, contributed heavily to the counterculture of all three cities, but especially Vancouver, which the Flying Burrito Brothers immortalized in the song “My Uncle” as a place to take refuge from the draft board.⁴¹³

“Ishmael” was a draft resister from California, and he felt it was the Americans who gave Kitsilano/Fourth Avenue its countercultural essence. “God, in 1966, [Vancouver] was just a logging town basically,” he said. But an American capitalist spirit changed everything.

All of a sudden, little pleasure domes started to appear. Coffee shops, head shops, all this stuff that these – and they were capitalists basically, entrepreneurs, [unclear]. But they were doing their thing, they were bringing that sort of lively culture from outside Vancouver and planting it here. And that really opened things up.⁴¹⁴

“Joel” was one of these entrepreneurs, another draft resister from California, who opened a stall in the “Psychedelic Shop” on Fourth Avenue. He described the scene bucolically, as a

netherworld of drugs and other draft dodgers, so that was a subculture of people who were there as, as lawbreakers. [...] When I moved to Vancouver in 1966 our part of town looked like the Haight-Ashbury and Sausalito I’d left behind: longhairs were out in the streets, sharing the sacrament [cannabis], comparing highs, looking for sources for grass and LSD. [...] ‘Dealers’ were not common; it was so much more in context to refer to each other as ‘brother’ and ‘sister,’ and to help spread around the dope that most of us believed could change society, make it more benign, generous, sharing. I can attest to the

⁴¹² Frank Kusch, *All American Boys: Draft Dodgers in Canada from the Vietnam War*, Westport CT: Praeger, 2001: 3.

⁴¹³ The Flying Burrito Brothers, “My Uncle,” in *The Gilded Palace of Sin*, A&M, 1969. The chorus goes,

“So I'm headed for the nearest foreign border
Vancouver may be just my kind of town
'Cause they don't need the kind of law and order
That tends to keep a good man underground”

⁴¹⁴ “Ishmael,” Interview.

power of psychedelics and marijuana to encourage this attitude. We were conscious of the tribal nature we were attempting to reawaken in everyone we met.⁴¹⁵

These sentiments are a world away from the desperation people encountered in the Eastend. It also conforms to Paulus's findings, that cannabis dealers were "ordinary users,' who distribute marijuana, sometimes for a small profit, but more often without profit to others whom they personally know or trust."⁴¹⁶

Like Ethan in Toronto, some middle-class kids got their drugs from outside the hippie enclave. "Murray" was introduced to marijuana in his East Vancouver neighbourhood; he would smoke with his friends and attend shows at the Pacific National Coliseum. Murray would visit the westend to hang out with the hippies, in an environment he said was, "extremely psychedelic. I mean, there was one little café you might call it, but also a performance area, The Last Chance Saloon, where you [...] went up to the window and you could buy a bag of 100 hits of acid or whatever." West Fourth Avenue was especially about the LSD, Murray said. "Every day practically there would be a new shipment coming in from San Francisco, and we'd all have to try it." On the other hand, there was very little alcohol on West Fourth. "It wasn't the chosen drug," Murray said.⁴¹⁷

Conclusion

⁴¹⁵ "Joel," Interview.

⁴¹⁶ Paulus, *Psychedelic Drug Use in Vancouver*, 54. See also, regarding the more mellow nature of cannabis dealers generally, Frederick J. Desroches, *The Crime that Pays: Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime in Canada*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press Inc., 2005: 149.

⁴¹⁷ "Murray," Interview.

In 1960, subcultural drug use was an underground phenomenon, involving those who were “in the know” and associated with a musical subculture like jazz, folk, or rock. It was in 1964 the change began, with the British Invasion signifying a new direction for music and subcultural life. Cannabis became more popular, and psychedelic drugs like LSD started making inroads, especially in hippie communities like Yorkville, Kitsilano, and the McGill Ghetto/Carré St-Louis. These neighbourhoods differed from other “drug neighbourhoods,” like the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, by their middle-class residents, the types of drugs they used, their youth, and their bucolic view of the world they were building. But illicit drug use was not yet common, and most young people remained out of the loop when it came to drugs. That would change with the late 1960s, when the subculture became a counterculture.

Chapter 2: Paradiso: La Fine: 1966-1971

Introduction – Victor

“Victor” moved to Montreal from Halifax when he was 20 years old, in 1965. A bookish child who read widely in psychology, he became something of a “guru” to the hippies around the McGill Ghetto. Partly this was because of his reading in psychology, and his ability to put “gentle hypnotic suggestions,” as he put it, in the minds of drug users losing control of their trips. But it was also in part because he was of South Asian heritage, and therefore fit a racial stereotype of the “Indian guru,” men like Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whom the Beatles famously visited in 1966.⁴¹⁸ Though racism did affect Victor’s life – especially when trying to find a family to adopt his daughter – he had very little to say about it, beyond that it made him somewhat exotic. In 1968, Victor would open a coffeeshop near Rue Jeanne-Mance, dedicated to the counterculture. It would be raided repeatedly by police, a major nuisance. But what caused him to shut it down completely is when organized crime moved in and tried to take it over.⁴¹⁹ Trouble with the police was rarely deadly; trouble with the mafia often was.

From 1966 to 1969, the hippies consolidated into a single, though not monolithic, “counterculture,” which would stretch Canada’s definition of “liberal values,” and whether it included peace, race equality, social justice, and especially, drug use. The peak year was 1967, the “Summer of Love”; that year, it was impossible to not have heard of the new hippie

⁴¹⁸ Jane Naomi Iwamura, “News Coverage and Popular Press Reports of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the 1960s,” in Diane Winston, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the American News Media*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012: 260.

⁴¹⁹ “Victor,” Interview.

phenomenon, or the drugs that accompanied it.⁴²⁰ The hippies were well-established in the Canadian mediascape, enough so that they could no longer accurately be called a subculture, even if their actions were performed subculturally. By this, I mean the hippies continued to act in opposition to prevailing cultural and social mores, which they called, among other epithets, the “square” world. As the phenomenon grew, panic over their lifestyles came to the fore in the media and among “squares” in the general population. Police repression heightened in all three cities, but especially in Vancouver. Organized crime also began muscling into the drug trade, a phenomenon that was most evident in Montreal.

Of all the hippies’ infractions of “liberal values,” it was drug use that was the most alarming to the general population. There was nothing illegal about rock n roll, peaceful political dissent, or sex, provided it was heterosexual.⁴²¹ But drugs *were* illegal, and the widespread use of illegal drugs made the situation intolerable to many adults who would otherwise have dismissed the phenomenon as youthful folly. As Doug Ogram put it, “Nothing divided official society from the emergent counterculture more than drugs.”⁴²²

This chapter will examine three phenomena as it relates to the hippies and drug use in the late 1960s – the place of race and racism in the hippie subculture; the power of police intimidation, especially in Vancouver; and the relationship between hippies and organized crime in Montreal. Race, police repression, and a rise in organized crime all contribute to the contested space of “liberal values” in late 1960s Canada.

⁴²⁰ Pierre Berton, *1967: The Last Good Year*, Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1997.

⁴²¹ Homosexuality remained illegal in Canada until 1969. The impact of the 1969 Omnibus Bill C-150 on subcultural drug use will be examined below.

⁴²² Ogram, *Born at the Right Time*, 197.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of contested liberal values, and subcultural drug use both reflected and affected those contested values. As Dan Malleck wrote, drugs have been a space for contesting liberal values since at least the mid-19th century, with politicians arguing that liquor was both good for liberalism, in that it promoted individual freedom and commerce, and bad for it, in that drunkenness impeded the individual from acting rationally.⁴²³ These debates raged in the 1960s and 1970s, around the place of cannabis, alcohol, and other drugs in Canadian society. In the case of alcohol, governments adopted a more libertarian framework – they dropped the drinking age to 18 or 19, loosened laws around licensing, hours, and food service, and generally made drinking a more respectable habit.⁴²⁴ On the other hand, illicit drugs remained a criminal offence – most notably cannabis. While the LeDain Commission recommended penalties for cannabis use be eased, it rejected legalization outright.⁴²⁵ Pierre Trudeau may have claimed he did not judge drinkers and cannabis-users any differently, but his government did, and he made little to no effort to change that.⁴²⁶ Governments also reclassified “white” and “grey” market drugs, like amphetamines, making them prescription-only, and for a very limited number of medical conditions.⁴²⁷ The expanded federal state of the 1960s and 1970s was more concerned with keeping certain drugs off the market than any notions of freedom to use – that freedom was reserved for alcohol.

Race, police repression, and a rise in organized crime all contribute to the contested space of “liberal values” in late 1960s Canada, especially when combined with drug use. Bryan Palmer

⁴²³ Dan Malleck, *Liquor and the Liberal State: Drink and Order Before Prohibition*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022: 6, 11.

⁴²⁴ Heron, *Booze*, 335.

⁴²⁵ Martel, *Not This Time*, 149-150.

⁴²⁶ David Sharpe, *Rochdale: The Runaway College*, Toronto: Anansi, 1987: 187.

⁴²⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 65.

wrote how Canada in the 1960s was shedding the last of its image as a conservative, British dominion and emerging instead “only with uncertainty” as a national image.⁴²⁸ By the late 1960s, it was unclear what a Canadian was, and what Canada’s values were. The country was on the move toward more acceptance, inclusivity, and equity, in part fuelled by subcultural phenomena, and in part by politicians like Pierre Trudeau and his “just society,” as well as his general sex appeal, which resonated in the era of the miniskirt and Rolling Stones.⁴²⁹ Greg Marquis wrote about how “the expansion of individual rights and due process” made policing more “rule-bound,” especially when faced with increasing critical commentary in the media.⁴³⁰ Vagrancy laws were abolished in 1972, as “the general consensus on the part of all three parties [...] was that being jobless and able-bodied should no longer be considered an offence.”⁴³¹ In Quebec, the conservative, clerical state had been replaced *tout court* by a liberal interventionist one in the Quiet Revolution.⁴³²

Canada was becoming more tolerant, and compared with the United States – whose 1960s included assassinations, race riots, and an infernal war in Indochina – the country seemed much more peaceful and progressive, especially as it welcomed tens of thousands of American draft resisters and their families.⁴³³ Palmer points to Canada’s “seeming liberal tolerance” to Mohammed Ali’s visit to Toronto in 1966, at a time when liberal and conservative Americans were pillorying him for converting to the Nation of Islam and refusing to serve in the armed

⁴²⁸ Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009: 5.

⁴²⁹ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 78.

⁴³⁰ Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye*, 177.

⁴³¹ Todd Gordon, *Cops, Crime, and Capitalism: The Law-and-Order Agenda in Canada*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2006: 81.

⁴³² Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 161.

⁴³³ Kusch, *All American Boys*, 138f3.

forces.⁴³⁴ “Compared with Americans, it seemed, Canadians were an enlightened nationality,” Palmer wrote.⁴³⁵ Canadian “Red Tory” conservative nationalists like George Grant aligned themselves with Canadian New Leftists against Americanization and the Vietnam War, giving the peace movement a nationalist, pro-Canada veneer.⁴³⁶

But there were many who sought to drive Canada in another, more conservative, direction, like Vancouver Mayor Tom Campbell, who detested hippies.⁴³⁷ Though the infamous “fruit machine” that sought out homosexuals in the civil service had been retired in the early 1960s,⁴³⁸ and homosexuality under strict limits was legalized in 1969, it was also, as Tom Hooper has argued, a “recriminalization” of homosexuality in Canada after 1969, as police went after homosexual activity “outside the rigid definition of private.”⁴³⁹ The October Crisis and War Measures Act significantly impacted Trudeau, and much of Canada’s, new reputation for liberalism and tolerance, “as the liberal state and its leader reacted to threats against individual liberty with suspensions of that very same individual liberty.”⁴⁴⁰ The new liberties were mourned by many as the end of civility, like when conservative writer Owen Carrigan wrote, “The gross

⁴³⁴ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 131.

⁴³⁵ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 131.

⁴³⁶ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 290. The contradictions of “Red Tory” nationalism aligning with anti-American radicalism are probably best explored in Scott Symons, *Combat Journal for Place d’Armes: A Personal Narrative*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967.

⁴³⁷ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 93.

⁴³⁸ Gary Kinsman and Patricia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010: 41.

⁴³⁹ Tom Hooper, “Queering ’69: The Recriminalization of Homosexuality in Canada,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, 100.2 (June 2019): 258, 263.

⁴⁴⁰ Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 177.

language, indifference to dress, and rough manners set the stage for a noticeable regression in the way people treated each other.”⁴⁴¹

Race and the Hippies

“Calypso” was born in Montreal in 1951, to an Afro-Caribbean father and a mother of Scottish descent. Her father was a professional⁴⁴² and they were solidly upper-middle class. She described herself as “culturally French-Canadian” because she was raised mostly in rural Quebec, though they spoke English at home. She would travel frequently to Montreal, taking LSD there for the first time when she was 14, in 1965. From 1965 to 1969 she used LSD and mescaline regularly with her friends, listening to the Beatles and hanging out in coffeeshops. Calypso said very little distinguished her from the white hippies she hung out with, giving the impression that her race was just not important to her and her white friends. She brought Montreal’s linguistic divide into the race matrix, saying,

the French and English [division] was a huge factor for me growing up, because I was dark-skinned, but I spoke French, and therefore I always felt accepted as a person in the French community [...] [I]t’s not that I didn’t feel accepted in the English community, but there was just like a very warm welcoming in all the French communities and families I would visit with my friends. And it wasn’t, I didn’t feel that way with the English, with the few English friends that I had.⁴⁴³

Because Calypso spoke English at home but French everywhere else, she felt she had a good understanding of both communities. And she felt it was easier to integrate with the French

⁴⁴¹ Carrigan, *Juvenile Delinquency in Canada*, 157.

⁴⁴² For reasons of anonymity, I cannot reveal what kind of professional he was, but he made a good salary and had high standing in his community.

⁴⁴³ “Calypso,” Interview.

community. It was not that the French hippies were less racist than the English ones, she said, it was that the French “hated the English” and their prejudices were pointed in that direction rather than at people of colour. “In Montreal, [...] race was really nothing. It was French-Canadians, we just had a blast, we had a really good time.”⁴⁴⁴

There is no hard data on drug users and race in Canada – authorities simply did not gather those numbers. However, by using census information, government and NGO studies, witness observation, and secondary sources, we can conclude that in the 1960s and 1970s, the overwhelming majority of drug users in Canada were white.

Only two of my 73 interviewees self-identified as non-white: “Calypso,” who is Black, and “Victor,” who is South Asian. Otherwise, while some dropped references to having some Indigenous or other non-European heritage, everyone else self-identified as white or as a white ethnicity (i.e., Jewish, Italian, French-Canadian). This was an issue for me as a researcher – I asked my interviewees repeatedly, could you recommend anyone to me who is not white, so I can get their perspectives? I asked on social media and put the word out to my previous interviewees and their networks. But the same answer kept coming back: “We were almost all white.” As “Ethan,” one of my interviewees put it (with no doubt some exaggeration), “Toronto was the whitest place on the planet at that point.”⁴⁴⁵ It was similar in Montreal, though the situation is somewhat more complicated in Vancouver, which had a more significant Asian population.

444 “Calypso,” Interview.

445 “Ethan,” Interview.

Of course, not “everyone was white,” as Ethan claims. A review of the literature, both contemporary and from the era, reveals a more complex picture. Many Canadian social studies from the past avoided research into race and racism, casting them as “American problems” Canadians did not need to deal with. Bruno and Csiernik (2018), while noting that Canadian drug use surveys do portray most drug users in the 1960s and 1970s as white, wrote, “Under the guise of trying to avoid racism and discriminatory treatment toward minority groups, the Canadian tradition has been to ignore or intentionally exclude ethnicity and race in social research.”⁴⁴⁶ The police, meanwhile, did not collect information about race, and studies by the ARF, NAC, and OPTAT did not ask respondents about their race.

The ARF noted one possible exception to this overwhelming whiteness – Indigenous people on and off reserve, though Smart is not sure if their numbers are higher or lower than the general (mostly white) population’s.⁴⁴⁷ Smart refers to one study, Liban and Smart (1982) which studied “Native Indian” adolescents in Ontario in 1979.⁴⁴⁸ Liban and Smart found that First Nations and non-First Nations adolescents “use alcohol and drugs in a manner similar to that of their peers in the same geographical locale and socio-economic background.”⁴⁴⁹ Another study Smart references, published in *Canada’s Mental Health*, Stephenson and Pollay (1974), found that 6.0 per cent of adolescents in Vancouver child and family welfare agencies were heroin users, “almost all of them girls and many of them native Indian or part-Indian.”⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ Tara L. Bruno and Rick Csiernik, *The Drug Paradox: An Introduction to the Sociology of Psychoactive Substances in Canada*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2018: 165.

⁴⁴⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 217.

⁴⁴⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 51.

⁴⁴⁹ Carolyn B. Liban and Reginald G. Smart, “Drinking and Drug Use Among Ontario Indian Students,” *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 9 (1982): 161.

⁴⁵⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 59.

My research, discussed below, reveals there were Asian and Black users, importers, and dealers in all three cities. Chinese restaurants and Black-focused clubs were popular places to use drugs, and two subcultures in particular – jazz and reggae – were Black-focused, though reggae would not emerge in Canada until the mid-1970s. Racial stigma around drug use is real and it is pervasive – drug use by Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour is often characterized as more violent, more debauched, and more likely to cause harm both individually and socially, than drug use by whites.⁴⁵¹ This stigma may have prevented more users of colour from speaking to me. But overall, and considering all the evidence, we can conclude that the vast majority of drug users in Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto in the 1960s and 1970s were white.

The first reason for this overwhelming whiteness is most obvious – the demographic population of Canada at the time was simply very white, reinforced by racist immigration policies⁴⁵² and an apartheid system for Indigenous people.⁴⁵³ In the 1961 Census, only 3.2 per cent of respondents identified, through their fathers, as an ethnicity other than European.⁴⁵⁴ In

⁴⁵¹ See, for example, Akwatu Kenti, “The Canadian War on Drugs: Structural Violence and Unequal Treatment of Black Canadians,” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 25 (2014): 190-195; Colleen Anne Dell and Jennifer M Kilty, “The Creation of the Expected Aboriginal Woman Drug Offender in Canada: Exploring Relations Between Victimization, Punishment, and Cultural Identity,” *International Review of Victimology*, 19.1 (2012): 51-68; Boyd, Carter, and Macpherson, *More Harm than Good*, 2.

⁴⁵² Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2015*, 4th ed., Toronto: Dundurn, 2016: 187.

⁴⁵³ John S. Saul, “Two fronts of anti-apartheid struggle: South Africa and Canada,” *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 74 (2010): 135.

⁴⁵⁴ Statistics Canada, “Ethnic groups = Groupes ethniques,” *1961 Census of Canada*, Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1962, Call Number 92-545, 1-2
<https://archive.org/details/1961925451962engfra/page/n1/mode/lup>

1971 it was 3.7 per cent⁴⁵⁵ and in 1981 it was approximately eight per cent, but now mothers' origins were included as well.⁴⁵⁶ (See Figure 1, below.)

City breakdowns offer a similar “overwhelming whiteness,” though census categories create significant ambiguities – especially the large categories of “Other.” In 1961, Metro Toronto was 4.2 per cent *likely* non-white,” Metro Montreal was 1.2 per cent likely non-white, and Metro Vancouver was 5.5 per cent likely non-white.⁴⁵⁷ The non-white population for 1971 is harder to discern, since the category “Other European” was not included; instead the category “Other or Unknown” was, covering both Europeans and non-Europeans. Using these categories, Metro Vancouver was 12.7 per cent *potentially* non-white, but was more likely closer to 5.5 per cent. Metro Toronto was 13.8 per cent potentially non-white, but more likely closer to 3.0 per cent. Metro Montreal was 6.2 per cent potentially non-white, but more likely closer to 1.5 per cent.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Statistics Canada, “Population: Ethnic Groups.” *1971 Census of Canada*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1973. Call Number: 92-723, 2.

<https://archive.org/details/1971927231973engfra/mode/2up>

⁴⁵⁶ Statistics Canada, “Population: Ethnic Origin.” *1981 Census of Canada*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1984. Call Number: 92-911, Table 1.

<https://archive.org/details/1981929111984engfra/mode/1up>

⁴⁵⁷ Statistics Canada, “Ethnic groups = Groupes ethniques,” *1961 Census of Canada*, Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1962, “Table 39: Population by specified ethnic groups, for census metropolitan areas and component parts, 1961”: 39-2, 39-5, 39-6. With the 1961 census, I calculated the “likely” non-white population by adding the categories “Asiatic” and “Other or Unknown,” and dividing by total population. Note that in 1961, there was a separate category for “Other European,” meaning most “Other and Unknown” would be non-European, and therefore likely (but not certainly) non-white.

⁴⁵⁸ Statistics Canada, “Population: Ethnic Groups.” *1971 Census of Canada*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1973, “Table 7: Population by Ethnic Group and Sex, for Census Metropolitan areas with Components, 1971,” 7-4, 7-18, 7-20. With the 1971 census, I calculated the “potentially” non-white population by adding the categories “Asian Groups” and “Other or

In 1981, the situation is again complicated by large categories of “Other,” who could be almost any race or ethnicity. Split by ethnic origin, Toronto had 89,590 people of Chinese origin, 587,420 “Other,” and 211,700 “Multiple Origins,” for a total population of 29.9 per cent potentially non-white – all the other ethnic categories were European. However, given the “Other” category is so large, including dozens of European countries, and likely many white Africans, Asians, and others, it might be also helpful to look at Place of Birth. There, the census reveals 1,132,640 Torontonians were born outside Canada. Of those, 49,855 were born in the Americas outside of the U.S., 30,730 were born in Africa, 175,215 were born in Asia, and 96,275 were born in “Other.” If this total is divided by total population, we have a likely non-white population of 11.8 per cent in Toronto. In Vancouver, out of a total population of 1,250,605, there are 83,845 claiming Chinese ancestry, 201,725 claiming “Other,” and 131,010 claiming multiple origins, for a total of 33.3 per cent. However, when broken down by place of birth, we have 5930 born in the Americas outside of Canada and the U.S., 10,805 born in Africa, 103,970 in Asia, and 4405 “Other,” for a total of 125,110 Vancouverites, or 10 per cent, potentially non-white. In Montreal, out of a total population of 2,798,040, 17,200 listed as Chinese, 235,200 as “Other” and 85,200 as mixed origins, for a total of 12 per cent. When Place of Birth is considered, 14,685 were born in the Americas outside the United States and Canada, 30,210 were from Africa, 56,330 from Asia, and 43,070 from “Other,” for a total of 144,295, or 5.2 per cent of the population.⁴⁵⁹

Unknown,” and dividing by total population. For the “likely” non-white population, I counted only “Asian Groups” and rounded the results up to the nearest 0.5 per cent.

⁴⁵⁹ Statistics Canada, “Data Tables: 1981 Census: Profile of Census Metropolitan Areas/Census Agglomerations - Part B (414)” Catalogue no. 97-570-X1981003.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/English/census81/data/tables/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=1&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=1&GC=0&GID=0&GK>

In 1960, the top five countries of origin for immigrants were all predominantly white – Italy, Britain, USA, Germany, and the Netherlands. In 1962, Canada began dismantling its racist immigration policies, and more non-whites came to Canada.⁴⁶⁰ By 1970, the West Indies was the first non-white “country” to enter the table, coming in at third behind Britain and the USA. But it would not be until the Indochinese “Boat People Crisis” of the late 1970s that a non-white country, Vietnam, would be the number one “sending nation” to Canada.⁴⁶¹ Racial diversity increased over the 1970s, but in 1981 Canada was still overwhelmingly white.

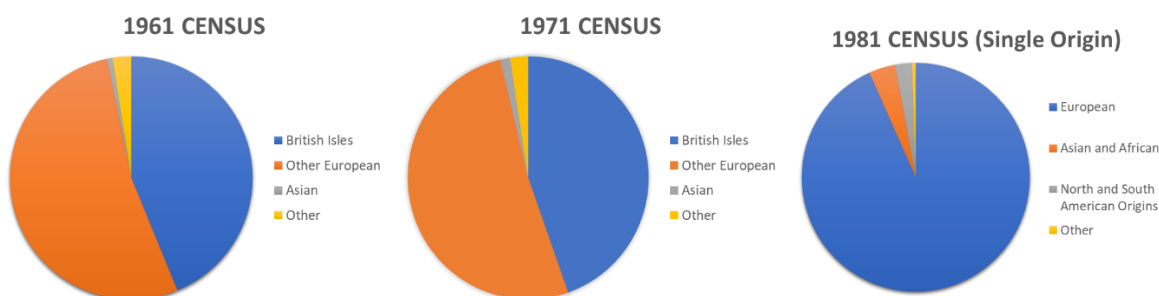


Figure 1: Census demographics of Canada

The LeDain Commission on Non-Medical Drug Use found that though “there is a wide variety of visible racial minorities [in Canada] the available data [from treatment centres] shows that members of racial minorities rarely become heroin addicts.” They wrote that very few Vancouver heroin addicts were non-white, and no addicts in Toronto were.⁴⁶² (Note that these

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⁴⁶⁰ Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates*, 187.

⁴⁶¹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Top five countries of immigrants, selected years, 1960-2000,” Citizenship and Immigration Statistics, Cat. MP22-1/1996, in Roberts, et al., *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*, 594. On the “Boat People” in Canada, see Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates*, 216.

⁴⁶² Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 170.

studies refer to addicts in treatment – treatment options may not have been as accessible to users of colour.) A 1969 study of psychedelic users in Vancouver discovered them to be overwhelmingly white.⁴⁶³ Researcher Reg Smart summarized,

We are aware that in some countries, especially the United States, narcotic addicts are drawn mainly from the ghettos of large cities and from dispossessed racial minorities. This is not the situation among Canadian addicts. Almost all are white. There are a very few Chinese and native Indian addicts in British Columbia, but fewer than would be expected in proportion to the numbers of these groups in the population.⁴⁶⁴

Despite this “overwhelming whiteness” among Canadian drug users in the 1960s, Canada has a long and ignoble history of associating drug abuse with people of colour. Whites were long portrayed as unwitting victims of ethnic minority “pushers”. Canada’s first anti-drug law, the 1908 *Opium Act*, was passed after Deputy Labour Minister Mackenzie King investigated the anti-Asiatic Riots in Vancouver the previous year. His *Report on the Need for the Suppression of the Opium Traffic in Canada* (1908) argued that more white men and women were becoming addicted to opium by Chinese peddlers, and therefore “recommended prohibition of opium importation, manufacture, and sale,” which is exactly what the government did.⁴⁶⁵ In 1920, the *Vancouver Sun* published Hilda Glynn Ward’s novel, *The Writing on the Wall*, about wealthy white Vancouverites who become addicted to opium and agree to aid their Chinese dealers in their quest to dominate Canada.⁴⁶⁶ In 1922, Emily Murphy, the first female magistrate in the British Empire, published *The Black Candle* under the pseudonym “Janey Canuck,” based on a series of articles she wrote for *Maclean’s*. It argued non-white drug pushers were forcing their products on white Canadians, as part of “an international conspiracy of yellow and black drug

⁴⁶³ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 102.

⁴⁶⁴ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 58.

⁴⁶⁵ Mosher, *Imperialism, Irrationality, and Illegality*, 6.

⁴⁶⁶ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 25.

pushers whose ultimate goal was the domination of the ‘bright-browed races of the world.’”⁴⁶⁷ Though Catherine Carstairs has argued that Murphy’s importance has been overstated “both by herself and by subsequent drug scholars,” Carstairs agreed that Murphy’s *Maclean’s* articles represented a turning point in bringing the drug-panic to Canadian audiences.⁴⁶⁸ Dan Malleck has also argued that racism was only one of several reasons drugs were made illegal, and that drug illegalization was part of the wider social reform movement.⁴⁶⁹ But it was a social reform movement where racism was a very powerful driver.⁴⁷⁰ By 1929, most drugs we think of today as illicit – particularly cocaine, cannabis, and opioids – were banned.⁴⁷¹ This was not because of their deleterious effects, real or imagined, since they were never debated in parliament.⁴⁷² It was because of racism.

Regarding Canada’s First Nations, they did not have the same relationship to hallucinogenic drugs that some American and Latin American peoples did; that said, when the Cree, Blood, and Chippewa began using peyote in the 1930s as part of Native American Church ceremonies, it was cast by the government as “a habit-forming drug or a narcotic, conjuring up tales and evoking visions of orgies and addiction.”⁴⁷³ Some politicians, Indian Agents, and the RCMP pressured the government to illegalize peyote, using “racialized discourses” to conjure up

⁴⁶⁷ Moshier, *Imperialism, Irrationality, and Illegality*, 11. See also Murphy, *The Black Candle*.

⁴⁶⁸ Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 21.

⁴⁶⁹ Dan Malleck, *When Good Drugs Go Bad: Opium, Medicine, and the Origins of Canada’s Drug Laws*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015: 248.

⁴⁷⁰ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, 2nd ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008: 104.

⁴⁷¹ Giffen, Endicott, and Lambert, *Panic and Indifference*, 2.

⁴⁷² Moshier, *Imperialism, Irrationality, and Illegality*, 8.

⁴⁷³ Kahan, *A Culture’s Catalyst*, 29.

a “peyote scare.”⁴⁷⁴ In 1953, though there was no law forbidding peyote in Canada, the Stony-Sarcee Indian Agent Superintendent wrote, ““This cult continues to flourish among Sunchild Cree Indians in spite of determined efforts by RCMP to discourage it. Although the supply was choked off at the International Boundary the Indians continue to obtain it.””⁴⁷⁵

Black Canadians and others of African origin were also painted with the brush of drug abuse, despite having very low numbers in the country. Mackenzie King wrote in 1911 that cocaine was “among other things, popular among young black men” in Montreal.⁴⁷⁶ Eyewitness reports argue that some Blacks did use and sell drugs, usually in an atmosphere of dire poverty and informal segregation. A contemporary local described Hogan’s Alley, a now demolished majority-Black neighbourhood in Vancouver, as full of “dope fiends.”⁴⁷⁷ Canada’s jazz musicians were both white and Black, and some of them did drugs, including heroin, cannabis, and cocaine, as described in Chapter 1. Employed in one of the few jobs open to Black Canadians, Black Pullman porters who worked Canada’s trains had the opportunity to move drugs (and liquor) across the border, and it seems some did, to supplement their meagre salaries. But it is impossible to say how widespread the practice was. Emily Murphy argued in 1922 that Black Pullman car porters were bringing drugs into Canada, but her evidence was a single individual in prison.⁴⁷⁸ Police raids on railroad porter rooming houses, looking for evidence of drug trafficking, were common.⁴⁷⁹ The Black-majority and jazz-heavy Montreal neighbourhood of

⁴⁷⁴ Boyd, *Busted*, 79.

⁴⁷⁵ Kahan, *A Culture’s Catalyst*, 41.

⁴⁷⁶ Boyd, *High Society*, 8.

⁴⁷⁷ “Norman Wiles” in Canning-Dew ed., *Hastings and Main*, 40.

⁴⁷⁸ Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955*, Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011: 164.

⁴⁷⁹ Mathieu, *North of the Color Line*, 174.

Little Burgundy was strategically located underneath the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks,⁴⁸⁰ from which jazzmen⁴⁸¹ and drugs⁴⁸² came up from New York to Canada. (Montreal jazz legend Oscar Peterson's father was a Pullman porter.)

Though race was considered less a factor in subcultural drug use in Canada, and witnesses there at the time argued the scenes were overwhelmingly white, other first-person accounts pointed to some Blacks, Asians, and Indigenous people using and selling drugs in all three cities. Of the three cities studied, race was most important in Vancouver – not only for its large Asian population, but also for its Black and Indigenous residents. The hippie community of Kitsilano/West Fourth Avenue was built in part on the “surrendered” Kitsilano Indian Reserve.⁴⁸³ Chinatown was an important place to buy, sell, and use drugs, even if there were fewer Chinese users than white ones. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Stephen Reid described a Chinese restaurant, the Plaza Café, that drilled holes in spoons to stop addicts from using them to cook their product.⁴⁸⁴ Vancouver addict John Turvey remembered a woman in the 1960s they called “Wing Ding,” a Chinese woman addict, something he said was “very unusual.”⁴⁸⁵ He also said, “Most of the kids working the streets down here [in 1987] are Native, where back then [the 1960s] the majority were white.”⁴⁸⁶ Al Neil, a white jazz musician addicted to heroin, said in early 1960s Chinatown, “[on] one block there are three Chinese restaurants in which one can score at any

⁴⁸⁰ Leitch, *Off the Books*, 34.

⁴⁸¹ Dumas, *Montréal chaud*, 49.

⁴⁸² Pierre De Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé à Montréal de 1900 à 1980*, Montréal : Éditions de l'Homme, 2014 : 61.

⁴⁸³ Daniel Ross, “Panic on Love Street: Citizens and Local Government Respond to Vancouver's Hippie Problem, 1967-68,” *BC Studies* 180. (Winter 2013-2014): n.p.

⁴⁸⁴ Reid, “Junkie,” in Crozier and Lane, eds., *Addicted*, 263.

⁴⁸⁵ “John Turvey,” in Canning-Dew, ed., *Hastings and Main*, 154.

⁴⁸⁶ “John Turvey,” in Canning-Dew, ed., *Hastings and Main*, 157.

time of the day or night unless there is a panic on,” and “ancient Chinese junkies used to sit, stoned, watching the passing parade from the wide steps of the [Vancouver Art] Museum.”⁴⁸⁷

A Chinese-Canadian jazz musician named Raymond Ma introduced comedian Tommy Chong to marijuana in 1957, when he was still a teenager in Calgary. Chong owned a Vancouver after-hours club, the Elegant Parlour, which was mostly Black, and he said he bought many of his drugs from Black pimps.⁴⁸⁸ Chong’s future partner, Cheech Marin, described it, “You could drive through Vancouver all day and not see one black person, then go to the Parlour and see three hundred.”⁴⁸⁹ In the *Georgia Straight* alternative newspaper, writer Stan Persky described the Downtown Eastside as a place where, “fat drunk Indian women with bashed-up faces eat frosted doughnuts for dinner.”⁴⁹⁰ Irish musician Bob Geldof, while working for the *Georgia Straight* in the early 1970s, described Downtown Eastside-adjacent Gastown as “where the Indians hung out, the hopeless and the dispossessed, the kids always with their heads in plastic bags sniffing glue, the adults always drunk and often in trouble, hustling for drugs, pissing where they stood, slumped on the sidewalks.”⁴⁹¹

One of the best published sources we have on Black countercultural life in 1960s Toronto is American funk legend Rick James’s posthumously published memoir, *Glow*. In 1965, James

⁴⁸⁷ Neil, *Changes*, 105.

⁴⁸⁸ Chong, Interview.

⁴⁸⁹ Cheech Marin and John Hassan, *Cheech Is Not My Real Name...But Don't Call Me Chong!* New York: Hachette, 2017: 81.

⁴⁹⁰ Stan Persky, “Almost Anonymous,” September 13-19, 1968, in Charles Campbell and Naomi Pauls, eds., *The Georgia Straight: What the Hell Happened?* Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997: 23-24.

⁴⁹¹ Bob Geldof, *Is That It? The Autobiography*, New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986: 89.

went AWOL from the US Navy and took a bus from Buffalo to Toronto.⁴⁹² “I felt like I was on another planet,” he wrote. “Canada was way more chilled out than the uptight USA. Folks were friendlier. Whites seemed less leery of blacks.”⁴⁹³ His first night in the city, musicians Pat McGraw, Levon Helm, and Garth Hudson rescued him from some racist bullies, and he and McGraw smoked marijuana together at the back of the El Patio coffeehouse.⁴⁹⁴ James formed the Mynah Birds with Neil Young, and with fame came more drugs. “We were feeling big-time ourselves, selling out clubs all over town and making four hundred bucks a night. The hash was plentiful and so was the amyl nitrate [sic – nitrite]. We were smoking and sniffing nearly every night.”⁴⁹⁵ He soon “[fell] in love with speed” and stayed awake for days.⁴⁹⁶ James felt he was different from everyone else in Yorkville, because there were simply so few Black people there. “As the black lead singer of the white Mynah Birds, I stood out. Ever since I’d been in Toronto – going on two years now – I’d stood out. I was an authentic R & B singer living in a city where white musicians were striving to play authentic R & B.”⁴⁹⁷ But there was racism, like when the Toronto police arrested and viciously beat James, accusing him of trying to seduce white Canadian women.⁴⁹⁸

On Yonge Street in the early 1960s, Robbie Robertson said the “the jazz cats always knew where to find a hookup” for marijuana⁴⁹⁹ – jazz cats generally meaning Black musicians. When The Band were arrested for marijuana use in Toronto in 1965, Rick Danko thought the

⁴⁹² James, *Glow*, 60.

⁴⁹³ James, *Glow*, 61.

⁴⁹⁴ James, *Glow*, 63.

⁴⁹⁵ James, *Glow*, 65.

⁴⁹⁶ James, *Glow*, 81.

⁴⁹⁷ James, *Glow*, 67.

⁴⁹⁸ James, *Glow*, 111.

⁴⁹⁹ Robertson, *Testament*, 97.

best lie was to tell the arresting officer they had bought it from “this black guy named King,” figuring racism would help five white-passing North Americans avoid trouble.⁵⁰⁰ In 1967-68, Indian-born sociologist Gopala Alampur, while working for the Addiction Research Foundation, became a “guru” to many Yorkville residents, who asked him for lessons in Zen Buddhism, assuming his race and nationality made him an expert on eastern religions.⁵⁰¹ “Howard” went to his first jazz club in the very early 1960s, brought by two Black friends, where they used what he thinks was cocaine.⁵⁰² Other Black American musicians in Yorkville, however, like Jackie Shane, Lonnie Johnson, and Calvin Miller, left no indication they used drugs.⁵⁰³

Most drug using subcultures described themselves as progressive and anti-racist, at least in North America. (The UK is more mixed, with its skinheads, mods, and other working-class subcultures that tend toward racism.) This is an extension of the utopianism inherent in hippie ideology. David Moore, while criticizing subculture as an organizing principle in drug studies, argued that “Bohemians” – including hippies and other artistic types who use drugs – were united by an “opposition to racism, sexism, and homophobia.”⁵⁰⁴ Historian Stuart Henderson noted that “‘Playing at Indian-ness’ enabled Euro-Canadian youth to ‘transcend and distance themselves from their own colonial Euro-Canadian heritage and privileged status.’”⁵⁰⁵ A

⁵⁰⁰ Helm, *This Wheel’s On Fire*, 127.

⁵⁰¹ Smart, Jackson, and Alampur, *The Yorkville Subculture*, 3.

⁵⁰² “Howard,” Interview.

⁵⁰³ CBC Radio, “The late Jackie Shane in her own words: A rare interview with the pioneering musician,” *CBC Radio*, 21 June 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/friday-feb-8-2019-david-foster-jackie-shane-and-more-1.5009904/the-late-jackie-shane-in-her-own-words-a-rare-interview-with-the-pioneering-musician-1.5010217> and Mark Miller, *Way Down That Lonesome Road: Lonnie Johnson in Toronto, 1965-1970*, Toronto: Mercury Press / Teksteditons, 2011: 17.

⁵⁰⁴ David Moore, “Beyond ‘Subculture’ in the Ethnography of Illicit Drug Use,” *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 31 (Summer 2004): 198.

⁵⁰⁵ Henderson, *Making the Scene*, 48. Quoted in Mahood, *Thumbing a Ride*, 83.

contemporary pamphlet on marijuana use in Salt Lake City warned parents that “an excessive preoccupation” with “race relations” could be a sign of marijuana use,⁵⁰⁶ proof the stereotype endures. Racism was part of the hegemonic order that subcultures subverted, and many of my white interviewees displayed anti-racist sentiments and recalled anti-racist actions, without any prompting from me.

In Toronto, “Dipper” attended the March on Washington in 1963, and rode a freedom bus into Clarksdale, Mississippi in 1964, despite warnings from the organizers at the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that some freedom riders had been murdered in the state earlier that year.⁵⁰⁷ Most hippies and other subcultural members were less dedicated than Dipper, but they espoused anti-racist sentiments. “Harry,” who was born to a very poor white family in Toronto in 1952 and used LSD “hundreds” of times in Yorkville, said “I was a pretty aware little emotional timebomb from the minute I was born” thanks in large part to watching American race riots on television.⁵⁰⁸ “Charlie,” born in 1944 to a middle-class Jewish family, remembered being beaten up as a child and called a “dirty Jew pig,” an experience that stuck with him, including when he was playing guitar and using hashish and LSD in Yorkville. He said all his early musical idols were Black, and he performed with Black musicians in Yorkville, with whom he “identified strongly.” Later, he co-founded a major anti-racist art organization. “I’ve stood very strongly against people who are hate-mongers,” Charlie said, though he was against

⁵⁰⁶ Jacob Sullum, *Saying Yes: In Defence of Drug Use*, New York: Putnam, 2003: 110.

⁵⁰⁷ “Dipper,” Interview.

⁵⁰⁸ “Harry,” Interview.

the idea he was part of any subculture.⁵⁰⁹ Music writer Nicholas Jennings, who was born in 1953 and used drugs in the 1960s,⁵¹⁰ formed the Canadian chapter of Rock Against Racism in 1980.⁵¹¹

In Vancouver, “Auntie,” who was born in 1943 to a middle-class family in Toronto, was part of the hippie scene around Fourth Avenue. He described Canada as a racist society and the Vancouver Police Department in the 1960s and 1970s (and today) as “very, very, very vicious.” “The systemic racism in this country is just disgusting, and the denial of it is twice as disgusting,” he said.⁵¹² “Ishmael” was born in the US in 1946, came up to Canada a draft resister, and was part of Vancouver’s Fourth Avenue counterculture. He was also part of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), which was led by a Sikh and close to the radical South Asian population, where they fought “Paki-bashing,” the practice of beating up South Asians.⁵¹³

In Montreal, “Jim,” born in 1950 in Europe to a working-class family, used drugs heavily in Montreal and Vancouver. He was arrested during the George Williams Computer Centre Incident of 1969, while protesting racism at the university.⁵¹⁴ Wayne went to teach in East Africa as a “Friend of SNCC,” where he met several American and African civil rights leaders.⁵¹⁵

The two key exceptions to this subcultural racial tolerance and anti-racist activism were the motorcycle gangs (bikers) and racist punks. Sometimes called “the noble savages of the

⁵⁰⁹ “Charlie,” Interview.

⁵¹⁰ Jennings, Interview.

⁵¹¹ Nicholas Jennings, “Blog Post: We Don’t Need This Fascist Groove Thang,” *Nicholasjennings.com*, 14 August 2017, <https://www.nicholasjennings.com/blog-post-rock>.

⁵¹² “Auntie,” Interview.

⁵¹³ “Ishmael,” Interview.

⁵¹⁴ “Jim,” Interview.

⁵¹⁵ “Wayne,” Interview.

1960s counterculture,”⁵¹⁶ bikers sold many of the drugs in Yorkville, Fourth Avenue, and the McGill Ghetto and Carré St-Louis. *Toronto Star* crime writer Peter Edwards, who has written histories of Canadian bikers, said it was extremely rare to see non-white bikers, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. He confirmed that Sonny Barger, who founded the Hells [sic] Angels in California, was a vicious racist who would never allow anyone non-white to join the organization. Edwards also said bikers’ devotion to the Harley Davidsons was evidence of Anti-Asian bias, since the Japanese produced better motorcycles, but the bikers refused to ride them. Multi-ethnic gangs, like the Wolfpack Alliance or UN Club, came after the 1970s.⁵¹⁷ Meanwhile, a racist strand was developing in punk. Though it would blossom in the 1980s, with white power bands like Skrewdriver and Rahowa, as early as 1978, drug-using bands like Hamilton’s Forgotten Rebels were singing about refugees, “Bomb the Boats and Feed the Fish.”⁵¹⁸ Warren Kinsella reports seeing neo-Nazis at Calgary punk shows in 1980.⁵¹⁹ Still, it is a debate how seriously many of these bands took their lyrics – Mickey DeSadist, singer for Forgotten Rebels, argued they were being ironic.⁵²⁰

“Calypso” and “Victor” were my only two interviewees who identified as people of colour, and they had very little to say about race. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Victor was born in Nova Scotia in 1945, to a white mother and an Indo-Caribbean father. “I would say I’m a visible minority,” he said. After moving to Montreal in 1965, he and a girlfriend

⁵¹⁶ Peter Edwards, *Unrepentant: The Strange and (Sometimes) Terrible Life of Lorne Campbell, Satan’s Choice and Hells Angels Biker*, Toronto: Random House Canada, 2013: 30.

⁵¹⁷ Peter Edwards, Interview with Author, 10 April 2021.

⁵¹⁸ Krishna Rau, “Try Not to Think,” *Broken Pencil*, 19 April 2012.

<https://brokenpencil.com/features/try-not-to-think/>

⁵¹⁹ Warren Kinsella, *Web of Hate: Inside Canada’s Far Right Network*, Rev. ed., Toronto: HarperCollins, 2001: 3-4.

⁵²⁰ Rau, “Try Not to Think.”

put their baby up for adoption, but they had difficulty finding adoptive parents for a mixed-race baby, a situation he described as “a nightmare.” (A Jewish family finally adopted the girl.) “People saw me as this quasi-guru type,” he said, in part because he had read about psychology and was attuned to how to calm people down, but also because of his South Asian background. “They were very interested in what I had to say. Maybe I do have a way of looking at things and being able to reflect thoughts back to them so they can [unclear – give advice, reflect their thoughts back at them].” Beyond this, Victor gave no indication his race affected his life in the counterculture.⁵²¹ Calypso also lived and acted in a very race-neutral milieu, as described at the beginning of this section.⁵²²

Victor and Calypso’s experiences of near race-blindness in Montreal is probably influenced by their class backgrounds – as Sean Mills has demonstrated, race was an issue in 1960s Montreal.⁵²³ As Victor was middle class and Calypso upper class, they would not have faced the negative intersections of race and class that can doom poorer people of colour to worse discrimination. Calypso said she spent her time mostly with other upper-class people and, combined with her fluent French and with her father a well-placed professional, this blunted any racism she would have faced. Without the stigma of poverty, being middle- or upper-class made it easier for people of colour to integrate into predominantly white drug-using subcultures.

Police Trouble

⁵²¹ “Victor,” Interview.

⁵²² “Calypso,” Interview.

⁵²³ Mills, *The Empire Within*, 7.

That police in Canada have historically been racist is well-documented in the historical literature.⁵²⁴ But for hippies and other young subcultural members, the police – and the authorities who gave their orders and paid their salaries – seemed focused less on race and more on age. The problem, it seemed, was not with racial minorities, but with the young.⁵²⁵

An analysis of arrest statistics for drug offences would seem to argue that up until 1966, the police were either uninterested in the new cannabis phenomenon, or had not cottoned on to it yet. Despite media reports of cannabis use increasing that year, only 447 Canadians were convicted of drug offences, up slightly from 390 in 1965, and down from 585 in 1958, when cannabis was still relatively unknown. But in 1967, convictions started to rise, with 995 for the year; in 1968, it was 1779; in 1969, 3338; and in 1970, 6745.⁵²⁶ Also noteworthy is the number of police in Canada rose throughout the postwar period, going from 26,189 officers, or 1.4 cops for every 1000 people in 1961, to 37,044 officers, or 1.8 cops for every 1000 people in 1968.⁵²⁷ There were more police, arresting more drug offenders, though the numbers would not peak until the mid-1970s.⁵²⁸

Authorities in Toronto hated the hippies, but they hated them with a softer edge than their compatriots in Vancouver and Montreal. The target of most of their ire was on Yorkville. The

⁵²⁴ See, for example, Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017; Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye*; and Gordon, *Cops, Crime, and Capitalism*.

⁵²⁵ Martel, *Not This Time*, 14.

⁵²⁶ Statistics Canada, “Series Z167. Convictions for drug-related offences, Canada, 1921 to 1974,” in Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Z167.

⁵²⁷ Statistics Canada, “Series Z63-65. Police strength in Canada, 1920 to 1975,” in Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Z63-65.

⁵²⁸ Statistics Canada, “Series Z167. Convictions for drug-related offences, Canada, 1921 to 1974,” in Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Z167.

city's mayors at the time feature little in the literature or in my interviews, but City Councillor Alan Lamport made it his mission to take on the counterculture, a battle the hippies seemed to relish and enjoy⁵²⁹ – as opposed to the situations in Montreal and Vancouver, which were much more serious and violent. Though hippies like David Depoe (also an activist and the son of well-known CBC journalist Norman Depoe) and Robert 'Pops' Gilgou would occasionally find themselves in jail,⁵³⁰ it seems there was more to fear in Toronto from the bikers than the police.

In Toronto, "Sid" said police trouble happened when drug dealers started making more money, like he did in the late 1960s. He had many problems with the Toronto drug squad, including one notorious officer who put a gun to his friend's head and was later jailed for murdering his wife.⁵³¹ "Utterly corrupt," Sid said. "And he wasn't the only or the first. You know, when there's that much money around, and things are that wide open, bad shit happens, and even to good people."⁵³² Sid said when they were first hassled by police and had nothing but a headful of acid, the police would let them go, figuring they had no reason to hold them. But "they learned how to treat people like us" by the 1970s – "treat" meaning harass, arrest, and control.⁵³³

"Tony" described how the police in Toronto would sometimes harass those going in and out of Rochdale College, after the "alternative school," situated close to the University of

⁵²⁹ Ooram, *Born at the Right Time*, 211, 213.

⁵³⁰ Berton, *1967*, 171.

⁵³¹ Likely RCMP officer Patrick Kelly. *Toronto Star*, "Full parole for RCMP officer who threw wife from Toronto balcony," 27 May 2010, https://www.thestar.com/news/crime/2010/05/27/full_parole_for_rcmp_officer_who_threw_wife_from_toronto_balcony.html?utm_source=share-bar&utm_medium=user&utm_campaign=user-share.

⁵³² "Sid," Interview with Author, 5 July 2021.

⁵³³ "Sid," Interview.

Toronto, opened its doors in 1968. One night, two police officers harassed him and two friends while “we were completely, absolutely gone on acid.”⁵³⁴ They pushed them in the back of the squad car and interrogated them for an hour. At first, Tony was frightened, especially after an officer “tried to punch one of us.”⁵³⁵ But then he said the officers got bored and “eventually they let us go, after threatening to take us to Cherry Beach and all the usual bullshit.”⁵³⁶ Rochdale Free College, Tony said, was constantly being raided by the police, a fact backed up by author David Sharpe.⁵³⁷ An 18-story twin-tower block on Bloor St. and Huron St., Rochdale was conceived by its founders as a utopian “free college.”⁵³⁸ Rochdale was not just a commune like any other – it was a lawless “free zone,” similar to Hakim Bey’s *Temporary Autonomous Zone*,⁵³⁹ or the neighbourhood of Christiania in Copenhagen.⁵⁴⁰ Nowhere else in the western world (that I know of) was a “free zone” like Rochdale allowed to exist as long as it did, selling drugs, housing fugitives, and thumbing its nose at the Toronto Establishment. Raids would result in the fire alarms being tripped, and the residents throwing garbage and other debris down on the police.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁴ “Tony,” Interview with Author, 11 December 2020.

⁵³⁵ “Tony,” Interview.

⁵³⁶ “Tony,” Interview. Cherry Beach had a reputation as a place where Toronto police beat up suspects. See Gordon, *Cops, Crime, and Capitalism*, 19.

⁵³⁷ “Tony,” Interview. See also Sharpe, *Rochdale*, 112.

⁵³⁸ Sharpe, *Rochdale*, 16.

⁵³⁹ Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, New York: Autonomedia, 1985, 1990. https://hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont.

⁵⁴⁰ Alessandro Coppola and Alberto Vanolo, “Normalising Autonomous Spaces: Ongoing Transformations in Christiania, Copenhagen,” *Urban Studies* 52.6 (May 2015): 1152. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098014532852>.

⁵⁴¹ “Tony,” Interview.

Beyond Rochdale, “Reg” described going to a high school dance and passing around a hashpipe in the car. The police surrounded their car and demanded the hashish and the pipe. “They took it, they told us we were once a bunch of assholes, they said you should go down into the valley there and smoke.”⁵⁴² But the police let them go without taking any names or information. “Tzania,” who had come up from US with her brother to escape the draft in 1970, described the police in Toronto as much kinder than the ones back in California.⁵⁴³

In Montreal, Mayor Jean Drapeau was no friend of the hippies or the thousands of draft resisters who came up to the city. In preparation for Expo 67, Drapeau embarked on one of his regular clean-up campaigns against the city’s nightlife, which, according to Eric Fillion, ruined its nightlife, especially as it related to jazz.⁵⁴⁴ Drapeau charged the underground magazines *Sexus* and *Logos* with obscenity,⁵⁴⁵ despite the American pornographic magazines sold on the city’s newsstands. The mayor’s office was concerned about rumours 50,000 hippies were planning to invade the city in 1967, declaring them *persona non grata*. Police raided coffee houses and crashpads.⁵⁴⁶

Overall though, my interviewees did not have a lot of trouble with the Montreal police. “DJ” said the police were “not always sensitive,” and remembered being accosted on the street during the October Crisis by police with rifles.⁵⁴⁷ “They were pretty brutish,” she said, but

⁵⁴² “Reg,” Interview with Author, 10 July 2021.

⁵⁴³ “Tzania” Interview with Author, 28 May 2021.

⁵⁴⁴ Eric Fillion, *Jazz Libre et la révolution québécoise : Musique-action, 1967-1975*, St-Joseph-du-lac QC : M Éditeur, 2019 : 43.

⁵⁴⁵ Verzuh, *Underground Times*, 79.

⁵⁴⁶ Verzuh, *Underground Times*, 84.

⁵⁴⁷ “DJ,” Interview.

offered no other specific examples.⁵⁴⁸ “Victor,” who ran a hippie-focused café in 1968 and had trouble with organized crime (see below), says he was often harassed by the police, who would stage impromptu raids and fine him for minor infractions.⁵⁴⁹ Everyone else had little to say about the police, which would not be the case in Vancouver.

Vancouver was the outlier, and it appears police repression was much worse in Vancouver than Montreal or Toronto. Interviewees and first-person sources pointed to occasional trouble with Montreal and Toronto authorities, but *regular* trouble with Vancouver’s. Police in Vancouver seemed to be much less tolerant of the new hippie phenomenon, and much more vicious toward drug users than in other cities. There is no single answer as to why police in Vancouver were particularly bad. Part of it was a tradition of corruption, dating back decades.⁵⁵⁰ Daniel Ross pointed to a conservative mould in both the city’s residents and in its police, led by Chief Constable Ralph Booth, a man with “strict views on youth and support for strict enforcement in the expanding war against drugs.”⁵⁵¹ Ross wrote about regular “sweeps” through Fourth Avenue/Kitsilano, with the aim of, in the words of Police Constable Booth, “to frustrate the activities of these young people through strict law enforcement.”⁵⁵² But again, I think we should refer to Bruce K. Alexander’s “Terminal City Hypothesis,” discussed in Chapter 1, as the key reason cops were more brutal and intolerant in Vancouver than elsewhere in Canada. Vancouver was the last stop for vagrants, artists, bohemians, and all sorts of subcultural types. It seems only fitting that authorities would be keen to keep a lid on cultural dissent in the city.

548 “DJ,” Interview.

549 “Victor,” Interview.

550 Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye*, 76.

551 Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” 24.

552 Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” 26.

One commonality between Vancouver's east and West End drug cultures was police harassment – both got it constantly, though the police were much more violent toward Eastside users, who could not afford lawyers. Vancouver was a corrupt city where police chiefs, according to Greg Marquis, “tended to serve short terms before falling victim to corruption scandals and other controversies.”⁵⁵³ Eastside musician and heroin addict Al Neil wrote that the police were always a problem. “The fuzz is very alert in Vancouver” and “the narcotic detail in this city is the best in the world.”⁵⁵⁴ The Vancouver Police Department delivered ““some terrible, terrible beatings”” to Eastside dealer Kenny Burns, according to his brother Eddie.⁵⁵⁵ John Turvey said there “were good street beat cops and bad street beat cops. But they were all tough.”⁵⁵⁶ They could arrest you for vagrancy, called a “vag,” or they could try to catch you with possession, strangling you so you couldn't swallow the heroin in your mouth.

Jumping you was basically their thing. They would strangle you so that you wouldn't swallow the junk, then beat you up, kick you in the ribs until you vomited. That was common, really common. If you were a junkie you had no rights at all. It was really hectic for the whole time because you weren't protected by anything. They had all the discretion, and they hated addicts. But the worst were the narcs, they were just fucking brutal.⁵⁵⁷

Circus performer Marcel “The Human Flamethrower” Horne described the police as “narrow-skulled motherfuckers” who beat him in jail, “pounding the shit out of me – all four of them at the same time, kicking, punching, belting.”⁵⁵⁸ The police also went after the Eastend cannabis

⁵⁵³ Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye*, 76.

⁵⁵⁴ Neil, *Changes*, 15, 33.

⁵⁵⁵ Boyd, *High Society*, 25.

⁵⁵⁶ John Turvey, in Canning-Dew, *Hastings and Main*, 155.

⁵⁵⁷ Turvey, in Canning-Dew, *Hastings and Main*, 155.

⁵⁵⁸ Marcel Horne, *Annals of the Firebreather*, Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, Ltd., 1973: 124.

users. Tommy Chong described the “narcs” in Vancouver as “chickenshit, they’d go after the potheads, the fish in the barrel,” rather than the “huge, huge [heroin] problem.”⁵⁵⁹ Police also went after the bottle clubs, looking for illegal drinking.⁵⁶⁰ The Penthouse nightclub would be raided two or three times a week, a process one VPD officer described as “‘a waste of time.’”⁵⁶¹

More than anyone else in Canada, Vancouver Mayor Tom Campbell embodied the hippies’ Establishment Enemy. Campbell began as an alderman and was elected mayor in 1966, on a conservative, pro-business platform.⁵⁶² He also had properties in Kitsilano, giving him a personal stake in kicking out the counterculture.⁵⁶³ Though he was only 39, to the hippies he was walking proof no one should trust anyone over 30. Campbell “declared war on marijuana and LSD” and urged police action against hippies in Kitsilano and downtown.⁵⁶⁴ His most notorious henchman was Narcotics Officer Abe Snidanko, lampooned by Cheech and Chong in their film, *Up In Smoke*, as “Sgt. Stedenko,”⁵⁶⁵ and referred to by my interviewees Brent, Joel, Lou, and Ishmael. Police conducted large Westend drug raids in 1965 and 1966.⁵⁶⁶ In the 1966 raid, they arrested 29-year-old Larry Anders, the “kingpin of LSD in Vancouver.” He was sentenced to three months in jail and a \$500 fine, making him the first person to be charged and convicted of

⁵⁵⁹ Chong, Interview.

⁵⁶⁰ Campbell, *Demon Rum or Easy Money*, 127.

⁵⁶¹ Chapman, *Liquor, Lust, and the Law*, 56.

⁵⁶² Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” 32.

⁵⁶³ Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” 32.

⁵⁶⁴ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 93.

⁵⁶⁵ Lou Adler, dir., *Cheech & Chong’s Up in Smoke*, 1978; Hollywood CA: Paramount Home Entertainment, 2007, DVD. See also, “Tommy Chong remembers Vancouver drug squad officer Abe Snidanko, the ‘narc of the narcs,’” *As it Happens*, *CBC Radio*, 10 August 2017, [cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-thursday-edition-1.4241899/tommy-chong-remembers-vancouver-drug-squad-officer-abe-snidanko-the-narc-of-the-narcs-1.4241904](https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-thursday-edition-1.4241899/tommy-chong-remembers-vancouver-drug-squad-officer-abe-snidanko-the-narc-of-the-narcs-1.4241904). Accessed 27 October 2022.

⁵⁶⁶ Chapman, *Vancouver Vice*, 24.

selling LSD in Canada.⁵⁶⁷ As Terry David Mulligan wrote, “We were going through the same thing together, dealing with a political climate in which we were all seen as the enemy.”⁵⁶⁸

Campbell’s favourite target was the *Georgia Straight*, an underground newspaper founded in 1967, “as a direct response to a ‘campaign against the youth culture’ mounted by Vancouver’s two daily newspapers.”⁵⁶⁹ “Drugs were involved” from the beginning⁵⁷⁰ and the newspaper was fundamental to the drug culture in Vancouver. It brought in well-known editors and contributors, like poets Milton Acorn and Bill Bissett. It had strong writing and carried underground cartoons, like *Harry Hedd*, which mocked Tom Campbell, the Vancouver establishment, and bigger fish like Pierre Trudeau and Richard Nixon.⁵⁷¹ It advocated for the drug user, including instructions on how to grow your own cannabis, a novel idea in BC at the time, and one that landed them in court.⁵⁷² It serialized Al Neil’s drug-soaked novel *Changes*.⁵⁷³ And it was constantly harassed by the police.⁵⁷⁴ By 1969, the paper faced as many as 12 obscenity charges.⁵⁷⁵ Other cities had alternative presses like the *Georgia Straight* – Toronto had *Guerilla* [sic] and *Harbinger*, Montreal had *Sexus* and *Logos*. Though they faced harassment, and in the case of Montreal, obscenity charges, it did not approach the level in Vancouver.

⁵⁶⁷ Chapman, *Vancouver Vice*, 24.

⁵⁶⁸ Terry David Mulligan with Glen Schaefer, *Mulligan’s Stew: My Life...So Far*, Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary: Heritage House Publishing Company, 2011: 55.

⁵⁶⁹ Campbell and Pauls, *The Georgia Straight*, 2.

⁵⁷⁰ Campbell and Pauls, *The Georgia Straight*, 3.

⁵⁷¹ *The Collected Adventures of Harold Hedd, No. 1*, Berkeley CA: Last Gasp Eco-Funnies, 1973: 8.

⁵⁷² Campbell and Pauls, *The Georgia Straight*, 3.

⁵⁷³ Neil, *Changes*, 167.

⁵⁷⁴ Marquis, *John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and the Year Canada Was Cool*, 144.

⁵⁷⁵ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 71.

Several of my interviewees worked at the *Georgia Straight* and testified to their police problems. “Lou” was born lower-middle class in 1946 in New Westminster. He wrote for the *Georgia Straight* in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He said, “they [the City] must have sued the *Straight* a hundred times. Thankfully, we had a pretty heavy-duty lawyer who managed to deflect all this stuff.” Lou said Mayor Campbell, “was a bastard. And his chief cop, Abe Snidanko, was even worse.”⁵⁷⁶ “Oscar” was born in Halifax in 1944 to a middle-class Jewish family, grew up in Montreal, moved to Vancouver, and worked for the *Straight*. He remembered the constant harassment, and the police charging them with all kinds of petty infractions, like parking without turning the wheels to face the curb. “And they seemed to come up with a few others like this that were equally insignificant. But we decided to fight it in court. And have that forum.” The “forum” was such that it got them onto the front pages of newspapers across Canada.⁵⁷⁷ Local anarchist Jim Gambone, wrote, “The *Georgia Straight* had its business license revoked and faced false charges on a dozen different occasions. *Straight* publisher Dan McLeod was in and out of jail so often they must have installed a revolving door for him.”⁵⁷⁸

Part of the *Straight*'s remit was to cover the Kitsilano scene, which had become famous enough by August, 1967 that *Maclean's* ran a feature on it.⁵⁷⁹ Several businesses deliberately kept hippies out, like White Spot,⁵⁸⁰ the Arbutus Café, and the Hudson's Bay Company cafeteria.⁵⁸¹ (Tim Horton, meanwhile, made the rule clear in his growing chain of donut shops –

⁵⁷⁶ “Lou,” Interview with Author, 9 June 2021.

⁵⁷⁷ “Oscar,” Interview.

⁵⁷⁸ Larry Gambone, *No Regrets: Counter-Culture and Anarchism in Vancouver*, Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2014: 92.

⁵⁷⁹ Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” n.p.

⁵⁸⁰ “Oscar,” Interview.

⁵⁸¹ Campbell and Pauls, *The Georgia Straight*, 11.

“No hippies!”)⁵⁸² Police attacked alternative coffee shops like the Advance Mattress.⁵⁸³ The Kitsilano Ratepayers’ Association (KRA), Lower Kitsilano Ratepayer’s Association, and Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce campaigned against the hippies, beginning in 1966 but exploding in 1967. They formed an “Action Committee,” commissioned informal drug patrols, and accused the hippies of feeding drugs, including heroin, to children. The police rolled up and down Fourth Avenue, ticketing hippies, and in some cases, even going undercover as hippies themselves. Vagrancy laws were especially useful, as they “allowed the police to stop and question nearly anyone frequenting Love Street, detaining those they chose, with the exception of adults who could prove means of support.”⁵⁸⁴ Pierre Berton wrote about one typical case,

Thus, on May 3, a seventeen-year-old girl was arrested for ‘hanging posters.’ When the police discovered that she was actually licensed to hang posters, they changed the charge to vagrancy. She was jailed for five days before the case was heard. The charge was dropped, but nonetheless she was ordered to get out of town and return to Toronto, an extralegal bit of magisterial justice reminiscent of the Old West but used more than once in Vancouver.⁵⁸⁵

Vagrancy law repeal in 1972 was a blow to overzealous police officers, who in one interpretation were less concerned with the poor than the “contemporary indigent”.⁵⁸⁶

Around 1965, “Murray” started smoking pot and attending shows at the Pacific National Coliseum, near his home in East Vancouver. He went to court after the police raided his home and, “took a bunch of paraphernalia that we borrowed from the science lab to make a hookah out of.” (He said someone with a police relative had “tapped” his basement.) This “gave me my first

582 Penfold, *The Donut*, 92.

583 Berton, *1967*, 189.

584 Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” n.p.

585 Berton, *1967*, 190.

586 Gordon, *Cops, Crime, and Capitalism*, 70, 74.

impression of the police force, that they're people you don't want to obey all the time. This is about marijuana back then, [and] I was totally convinced this is not hurting me."⁵⁸⁷

If Toronto got Digger House, Vancouver got Cool-Aid, a drop-in centre that opened originally on East Hastings, then moved to 1822 West Seventh Avenue, in the hippie area.⁵⁸⁸ It was a place where kids could come down from bad trips and try to get themselves together. Unlike Digger House, police raided Cool-Aid 92 times. An anonymous interviewee of Kostash's said,

I'd get woken up at two in the morning as the lawyer and chairman of the board to go down because there were two paddy wagons, police dogs, cops with shotguns, looking for dope dealers and runaway kids. I'd see a policeman with his gun drawn and ready to kick in the door and I'd say, 'Excuse me, officer, this is a door and it has a doorknob. It's a new invention and if you turn it like this, it'll open real nice.'⁵⁸⁹

Gormley wrote how "Cool Aid's 19-year-old director Clyde Wilkinson says that at first the cops raided the house every second day, but now everybody gets along." There could be anywhere from 30 to 40 kids staying there per night, and up to 100 in the summer, looking for beds, food, and medical attention.⁵⁹⁰ Aronsen wrote that by 1969, Cool-Aid provided, "counselling to more than 1200 local youth each month, as well as providing services ranging from legal advice to food, clothing, and housing to over 12,800 visitors."⁵⁹¹ Similarly, the Vancouver Police raided the American Deserters' home "five, six" times, "ransacking files and copying down names."⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁷ "Murray," Interview.

⁵⁸⁸ Michael Kluckner, *Vancouver Remembered*, Vancouver: Whitecap Books, Ltd, 2006: 184.

⁵⁸⁹ Kostash, *Long Way From Home*, 124.

⁵⁹⁰ Gormely, *Drugs and the Canadian Scene*, 174.

⁵⁹¹ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 31.

⁵⁹² Kostash, *Long Way From Home*, 64.

“The politics and the police around drugs in the 1960s was terrifying, really,” said Auntie. “Really, really scary.” Auntie was occasionally stopped on the sidewalk and searched for drugs, without warrant or cause. “That kind of thing was commonplace, just people on the street, walking or standing or whatever. Police car pulls up, police officers get out, and want to search you. They’ve got no warrant, they’ve got nothing. [...] That’s why I call it a police state.” He described the police as “very cruel people,” though he admitted they were crueller to the heroin addicts on the Eastside, whom they would force to vomit, in case they had swallowed evidence.⁵⁹³ Auntie traced the police’s cruelty back to colonialism, saying it all tied into, for example, the mass graves that had been (at the time of our interview) recently found at the site of Kamloops Indian Residential School.⁵⁹⁴

Murray described the harassment in the westside scene as “pretty major.” He described a process of “catch and release,” where police picked up hippies on suspicion of drug possession or vagrancy, held them for a few hours, and then let them go, provided they did not have drugs on them. He remembered,

once, we were sitting down on the hillside at Fourth and Arbutus, on the grassy hill, and that was like, where a lot of deals would go on. And then these undercover policemen pulled up in a Jeep-type vehicle, went across the street to a little coffeehouse thing where bands always played, went inside, and the people on the hillside chopped open their tires. And then all these police cars came and surrounded it. And then so around there, they were really constantly harassing people. I got arrested once there for nothing, just because they were [arresting my] friends. They were these big heavy looking guys, but

⁵⁹³ “Auntie,” Interview.

⁵⁹⁴ “Auntie,” Interview. On the Kamloops mass graves, see Ian Austen, “‘Horrible History’: Mass Grave of Indigenous Children Reported in Canada,” *New York Times*, 28 May 2021. Web. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/28/world/canada/kamloops-mass-grave-residential-schools.html> Accessed 7 April 2023.

undercover. And just by standing there and saying what are you doing, they arrested me too. I eventually got off with no charges.⁵⁹⁵

Murray felt it was easier for Vancouver police to harass hippies than others because they were so visible and because marijuana has a distinct smell. “Try smelling a hit of heroin,” Murray said.⁵⁹⁶ “Dennis,” who ran a coffee shop and dancehall in Kitsilano, said he was set up by Abe Snidanko, whom Dennis described as “quite notorious.”⁵⁹⁷ He admitted he was often carrying drugs around his dancehall, but there was no trouble and nobody used drugs (including alcohol) inside. But two arrests caused him to get an 18-month sentence for drug possession, and the dancehall closed.⁵⁹⁸ “Brent” was also busted by Snidanko, for methedrine possession, though his lawyer got the charges dropped.⁵⁹⁹

Police repression in Vancouver would feature in the nation’s headlines in August, 1971, when 28 mounted police and 36 reinforcements attacked a “Smoke-In” in Gastown.⁶⁰⁰ The event, organized by a Vancouver branch of the “Yippies,” was intended as a gesture of mass civil disobedience against Canada’s drug laws and Vancouver’s over-zealous enforcement of them.⁶⁰¹ Between 1500 and 2000 people showed up for the Smoke-In, which was predominantly peaceful

⁵⁹⁵ “Murray,” Interview.

⁵⁹⁶ “Murray,” Interview.

⁵⁹⁷ “Dennis,” Interview.

⁵⁹⁸ “Dennis,” Interview.

⁵⁹⁹ “Brent,” Interview.

⁶⁰⁰ Michael Boudreau, “I am totally shocked that something of this sort could happen in Canada’: Vancouver’s Gastown Riot Fifty Years Later,” *Active History*, 21 May 2021, <https://activehistory.ca/2021/05/gastown2021/>

⁶⁰¹ Michael Boudreau, “Hippies, Yippies, the Counterculture, and the Gastown Riot in Vancouver, 1968-1971,” *BC Studies*, 197 (Spring 2018): 39.

and happy (if loud), until the police attacked.⁶⁰² A Commission of Inquiry labelled the event a “police riot,” but blamed agitators for the violence.⁶⁰³

On the other hand, some people were lucky and had no trouble with the police. “Joel” even said he “followed Abe Snidanko around at an Easter Be-In for a long time. [Laughs.] Giving him a bad time. [Laughs.]”⁶⁰⁴

Montreal and Organized Crime

The counterculture in Montreal flowered in 1967. It came late but it came with force. Expo 67 brought the world to Montreal, including thousands of American hippies and draft resisters, many of whom stayed. According to Warren and Fortin, Quebec hippies were more creative, happier, and participated more in countercultural activities than their English counterparts.⁶⁰⁵ Artistic spaces spread throughout the city, as “factories, garages, banks, post offices and fire stations – were recycled as centres for cultural creation, exhibitions and performances.”⁶⁰⁶ John Lennon and Yoko Ono chose Montreal rather than Toronto to have their celebrated 1969 “Bed-In” for peace, feeling Toronto was too “straight.”⁶⁰⁷ (They would visit the city later.)⁶⁰⁸ French Québécois.es took to Anglo rock n roll and made it their own, with artists like Robert Charlebois

⁶⁰² Boudreau, “Hippies, Yippies, the Counterculture, and the Gastown Riot in Vancouver, 1968-1971,” 55-56.

⁶⁰³ Marquis, *The Vigilant Eye*, 130.

⁶⁰⁴ “Joel,” Interview.

⁶⁰⁵ Warren and Fortin, *Pratiques et discours de la contreculture au Québec*, 11.

⁶⁰⁶ Paul-André Linteau, *Sainte-Catherine Street: At the Heart of Montreal Life*, Barbara Sandilands, trans., Montreal: Les éditions de l’homme, 2010: 186.

⁶⁰⁷ Marquis, *John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and the Year Canada Was Cool*, 30.

⁶⁰⁸ Marquis, *John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and the Year Canada Was Cool*, 114.

merging the chansonnier tradition with sixties rock.⁶⁰⁹ Poets like Denis Vanier captured the zeitgeist,⁶¹⁰ and underground publications like *Mainmise*⁶¹¹ and *Logos*⁶¹² documented it. *Saturday Night* argued that hippie-dom in Montreal was “over” by 1969.⁶¹³ It was not. It was just getting started.

Organized crime appeared to be much more present in the lives of subcultural drug users in Montreal than in other cities. Montreal’s Europe-facing port and its proximity to New York City meant gangsters of all types, but especially the Italian mafia, found the city valuable as an importation site. According to the US Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), by 1959, 80 per cent of heroin imports to the United States were coming through the Cotroni family in Montreal.⁶¹⁴ By the end of the 1950s, Montreal was Canada’s “armed robbery capital,” and there were typically two armed robberies a week in the city.⁶¹⁵ The situation continued through the 1960s, with drugs being aggressively sold by the city’s various ethnic gangs.⁶¹⁶ Between 1966 and 1970, the city’s homicide rate doubled.⁶¹⁷ Though most hippies and other drug users avoided

⁶⁰⁹ Piroth, “Popular Music and Identity in Quebec,” 147.

⁶¹⁰ See, for example, Denis Vanier, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, Tome 1, Montréal : VLB éditeur/parti pris, 1980.

⁶¹¹ Camille St-Cerny-Gosselin, “*Mainmise*, *Québec Presse* et les revues de bande dessinée,” in Karim Larose and Frédéric Rondeau, eds., *La contre-culture au Québec*, Montréal: Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2016 : 363.

⁶¹² Verzuh, *Underground Times*, 23.

⁶¹³ Bryan D. Palmer, “New Left Liberations: The Poetics, Praxis and Politics of Youth Radicalism,” in Palaeologu, ed., *The Sixties in Canada*, 65.

⁶¹⁴ De Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé à Montréal de 1900 à 1980*, 175.

⁶¹⁵ De Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé à Montréal de 1900 à 1980*, 202. Montreal is the “capitale du vol à main armée” in the original.

⁶¹⁶ De Champlain, *Histoire du crime organisé à Montréal de 1900 à 1980*, 385.

⁶¹⁷ Jean-Philippe Warren, *Une Douce Anarchie : Les Années 68 au Québec*, Montréal : Les Éditions du Boréal, 2008 : 182.

organized crime, sometimes, as will be discussed below, organized crime could (or would) not avoid them.

Though not every subcultural drug user was plugged in to these developments, they affected the milieu the drug users lived in – that Montreal was more unstable than the rest of the country. There was a perception, common among my interviewees, that organized crime was more visible and more brutal in Montreal, and this affected the temper of the drug trade. Whereas most of the dealers I spoke to in Toronto and Vancouver were left alone by organized crime, in Montreal, there were several instances of the mob muscling in on their (small) businesses. Bikers had a reputation for being much more violent in Montreal than elsewhere in Canada.⁶¹⁸ Peter Edwards said it has to do with geography. “The way that was explained to me by a police officer is that Montreal is something like 385 miles to New York City, and New York City is the ultimate market.” He said the bikers, almost all French, “just took it as more violent. I can’t think of any instances where Ontario bikers went to Quebec and pushed them around, but I can think of cases where Quebec bikers came to Ontario and pushed around.”⁶¹⁹ One criminal source told Frederick Desroches that bikers in Montreal were ““very serious and very violent. They have wars in Montreal. Bikers are not as serious in Ontario.””⁶²⁰ Between 1963 and 1969, 110 Montreal murders were linked to organized crime, 70 of them in the last two years. There were battles between different drug-dealing gangs, including “the Italian mafia, French-Canadian mobsters, Irish criminal gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs.”⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸ Desroches, *The Crime that Pays*, 155.

⁶¹⁹ Edwards, Interview.

⁶²⁰ Desroches, *The Crime that Pays*, 155.

⁶²¹ Schneider, *Iced*, 270.

It was at the end of 1967 that Wayne started to see methamphetamine and bikers come around Montreal, in coffeehouses where people used drugs, like The Image and the New Penelope. He said up until the end of 1967, it was mostly marijuana and LSD, though he did have the chance to use mescaline.⁶²² By 1968, Wayne was selling marijuana from a “terrific contact.” “I was selling for \$125 per pound, which was like unheard of, it was probably a quarter of what grass was going for at that time.”⁶²³ But then he got a visit from someone who called himself “Donny the Syrian,” who was associated with “probably” the Satan’s Choice motorcycle gang. Donny, “basically warned me to get out of the business. So I took Donny seriously. That was it, I’m not getting guns to defend the territory and stuff.”⁶²⁴ Wayne got out of the business – it wasn’t hippies providing for their neighbours, it was gangsters angling for territory.⁶²⁵

Victor decided that the hippie scene in Montreal needed a focus, a place where they could go without fear of being harassed. He opened a coffeeshop with a girlfriend, paying himself 25 cents a day so he could live off rice and vegetables. It was primarily English-speaking, though he had some French clients. There was no alcohol, and Victor had a strict no dealing or using drugs on the premises rule – but outside was a different matter, and crowds of hippies would hang out there and smoke pot.⁶²⁶ Despite Victor’s best efforts, police harassment was regular. But police harassment was much less of a worry than the biker gangs, who used force and intimidation to control bars⁶²⁷ – and apparently, coffeeshops. The biker gangs became interested in Victor’s business, and demanded to be able to sell drugs in the coffeeshop. They installed someone to be

⁶²² “Wayne,” Interview.

⁶²³ “Wayne,” Interview.

⁶²⁴ “Wayne,” Interview.

⁶²⁵ “Wayne,” Interview.

⁶²⁶ “Victor,” Interview.

⁶²⁷ Desroches, *The Crime that Pays*, 158.

Victor's "security," whether Victor wanted it or not. Someone blew the back of a chair out with a sawed-off shotgun, spraying Victor's legs with shards from the floor, and causing a panic as customers ran for the exits. Finally, Victor closed after finding out that gangsters – likely Satan's Choice bikers – were planning to kill him and take over the business. He told everyone the city had ordered him to close (they had not) and he gave up the business. The "security guard" they had installed was later found garrotted. Victor went back to working odd jobs, unaffiliated with the counterculture.⁶²⁸

In 1967, on Rue des Commissaires in Old Montreal, Rivka moved into a house with several friends. She and her friends smoked marijuana, occasionally dropped acid, and stayed up late making music. It was a big house, and a whole number of strange people – from America, Britain, Ireland, and locally – came to crash. There were a lot of Jews and "Red-Diaper Babies," mostly Jewish children whose parents had been in the Communist Party of Canada [CPC]. It was due to Rivka's father's connections with the CPC that the RCMP knew who she was, and had the foresight to tell her father that the mafia had moved into the building and were selling LSD there. Rivka's parents sent her to Paris.⁶²⁹ Again, this was a far cry from the "brothers and sisters" passing around "the sacrament," Joel described in Vancouver.⁶³⁰ Though biker gangs would become powerful in Toronto and Vancouver, they were already a major force in Montreal by the late 1960s, and were determined to make money off the hippie phenomenon.

⁶²⁸ "Victor," Interview.

⁶²⁹ "Rivka," Interview.

⁶³⁰ "Joel," Interview.

Conclusion

The period 1966 to 1972 saw a flourishing of the counterculture through all three cities. But this countercultural growth tested the limits of what Canadian society would tolerate, as Canadians and the wider world debated the direction liberal values were moving in. Though the counterculture was racially tolerant, it was overwhelmingly white. Police repression against the counterculture was a feature of all three cities, but it was especially prevalent in the Great Outlier, Vancouver. And though organized crime would present problems for the counterculture in Toronto and Vancouver, it was in Montreal where it was most present in the lives of countercultural users. Soon, darkening economic clouds, the spread of methamphetamine, and growing subcultural cynicism would test the resilience of the counterculture and the patience of mainstream Canada, dragging subcultural drug use into Purgatorio.

Chapter 3: Purgatorio (1968-1972)

Introduction – Sally

“Sally” was born in 1955 to a middle-class family in Toronto. Her parents were heavy drinkers and pill users, and by the time she turned 10, she too was sneaking drinks to deal with abuse at home and alienation at school. When she was 13, in 1969, she entered high school a year early and, “I was immediately attracted to the people in my high school that did drugs. [...] I knew right off the bat, that’s who I wanted to be.”⁶³¹ The kids at her high school who used drugs were “antithetical to the world that I had grown up with” and Sally felt safer with them than with anyone else there. “We were all kind of misfits, [...] and they were the people who were doing the most fun things. That was ’69, right? So it was, you know, the hippie[s] [...]. I had no aspirations for any of the conventional cliques” like “jocks and nerds and religious [types].”⁶³² They used marijuana and LSD together, but never alcohol, because “we hated the alcoholics, or the people who drank, we thought they were stupid and sloppy and like our parents, and obnoxious.”⁶³³

Sally felt safe with her high school friends, but the subcultural world around her was changing, and the hippie life was becoming increasingly dangerous. When she was 16, she moved to Yorkville, which “had seriously degenerated into this hard drug thing,” she said.⁶³⁴ It was there she started to inject methamphetamine, a habit she brought home with her when she returned to do Grade 12. Though she did not do it every day – an impossibility with

⁶³¹ “Sally,” Interview with Author, 18 May 2020.

⁶³² “Sally,” Interview.

⁶³³ “Sally,” Interview.

⁶³⁴ “Sally,” Interview.

methamphetamine, she said, because “you need to recoup, because you really seriously run yourself into the ground” – but she did it often enough to consider herself addicted. There were “seven or eight” of them at her high school who did meth, and after graduating, she remained addicted, for a total of seven years. She moved into Rochdale, Toronto’s notorious “free college,” but was thrown out for using needle drugs, forbidden by the administration. She became a Vagabond biker’s “old lady” who kept house as he imported 18-pound “blocks of pot” from East Ontario. Eventually, Sally left him to go to a small town in southern Ontario.⁶³⁵

In the late 1960s, the subcultural drug scenes around Yorkville, Kitsilano, and the McGill Ghetto/Carré St-Louis became, in the words of my interviewee “Serge,” “bad.”⁶³⁶ Serge, born into a French family in Montreal in 1953, said it was around 1969 or 1970 that the subculture became “really lost, a lost generation because it’s obvious we weren’t going to save the world by then. We were too materialistic and shit, too narcissistic.”⁶³⁷ At the same time, drugs became more common in the place adolescents spent most of their time – high school. This led to a redefinition of the high school experience, to include the new phenomenon of teen drug use. Meanwhile, the federal government set up a series of social programs to, among other things, find employment for the masses of young people now coming of age. This created a special relationship between young people, including many subcultural drug users, and the federal government, one which was very different from that in the United States, or at any other time in Canadian history.

⁶³⁵ “Sally,” Interview.

⁶³⁶ “Serge,” Interview with Author, 7 January 2021. Serge was referring to McGill/Carré St-Louis, but the sentiment was shared by residents of all cities.

⁶³⁷ “Serge,” Interview.

This chapter will be divided into four sections: first, we will discuss the “downfall” of the hippies, as methamphetamine spread through hippie neighbourhoods and caused a change in hippie attitudes; next, we will look at class, hippies, and the welfare state; then we will look at high school’s new role as a centre for drug use and distribution from the late 1960s; and finally, we will end by examining the shifting geographies of subcultural drug use in Vancouver, as the hippies and Downtown Eastsiders became emmeshed in each other’s worlds.

Methamphetamine and the Disintegration of the Hippie Dream

As the hippies became front page news, the counterculture was morphing, and becoming what the establishment always feared it was – corrupt, violent, and addicted to “hard” drugs, like cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. If 1967 was the year Haight-Ashbury went to pot, then 1968 was the year Canada’s hippies got their first taste of reality. While Canada had once been seen as more conservative than the United States, this narrative flipped in the late 1960s, largely because of the U.S. war in Vietnam and opposition to it.⁶³⁸ But the clouds were greying. Heroin, cocaine, but especially methamphetamine came for Canada’s hippies, mostly brought on the backs of hog-riding motorcyclists. Users got younger and Yorkville, Kitsilano, and the McGill Ghetto/Carré St-Louis became crowded with young runaways. The needle became a more common way to get high. And the federal government, wondering what was going on, launched the Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs, better known as the Le Dain Commission, after its chief commissioner, Gerald Le Dain. According to Reg Smart, the early-to-

⁶³⁸ McGill, *War is Here*, 10-11.

mid-1970s represented the peak of illegal drug use in Canada.⁶³⁹ As drug researcher Mel Green said to the Le Dain Commission in 1971, “drug deviance had become a social movement.”⁶⁴⁰ It was not all bad – for many young people, life continued to be a world of psychedelic exploration and happiness. But it was happening in a changed mood.

The story of how 1960s subcultural idealism became 1970s subcultural cynicism is, in large part, the story of methamphetamine – “speed.” Methamphetamine came to Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver – but especially Toronto – like a tidal wave in the late 1960s, ensnaring young countercultural members and causing a rise in “speed freaks,” a derogatory term for people who became addicted to speed and manifested its worst symptoms. Speed was described by my interviewees as hepatitis-spreading,⁶⁴¹ “extremely dangerous,”⁶⁴² and an “enemy drug.”⁶⁴³ Significantly, when it came to subcultural values, speed was described as being “without community values,”⁶⁴⁴ and without “any philosophical attributes,”⁶⁴⁵ as opposed to cannabis and LSD, which were regarded as “sacraments”⁶⁴⁶ and “friendly drugs.”⁶⁴⁷ Cocaine and heroin, the two other drugs most often credited with “killing the sixties dream” will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁶³⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 218. Cannabis, cocaine, and LSD are the exceptions – their use continued to rise through the decade.

⁶⁴⁰ Greg Marquis, “Constructing an Urban Drug Ecology in 1970s Canada,” *Urban History Review*, 42:1 (Fall 2013): 27-40: 27.

⁶⁴¹ “Ethan,” Interview.

⁶⁴² “Auntie,” Interview.

⁶⁴³ “Wayne,” Interview.

⁶⁴⁴ “Auntie,” Interview.

⁶⁴⁵ “Tony,” Interview.

⁶⁴⁶ “Joel,” Interview.

⁶⁴⁷ “Wayne,” Interview.

Speed is a slang term which refers to any amphetamine-based, or amphetamine-like, drug. In the late 19th century, scientists discovered that norepinephrine, a major stimulating brain neurotransmitter, was similar to ephedrine, a natural stimulant from the ephedra plant that had been used for millennia in Chinese medicine.⁶⁴⁸ In 1929, American scientist Gordon Alles synthesized beta-phenyl-isopropylamine – amphetamine⁶⁴⁹ – and in 1940 it became the first drug marketed specifically for mood disorders.⁶⁵⁰ Since then, a whole host of derivatives and similar drugs have been developed, including methamphetamine, dextroamphetamine, dextromethamphetamine, fenethylline, fenfluramine, methylaminorex, methylphenidate, pemoline, phendimetrazine, phentermine,⁶⁵¹ and hundreds more.⁶⁵² Though they all have different chemical combinations, they do the same thing – stimulate the central nervous system,⁶⁵³ which causes “a sense of energy, alertness, talkativeness, and well-being that users find pleasurable.”⁶⁵⁴ It can also cause aggression in users, a phenomenon well documented in the social and medical literature.⁶⁵⁵

Amphetamine also works as a decongestant, which is how Benzedrine inhalers were first marketed in 1934 by Smith, Kline & French (SK&F).⁶⁵⁶ By 1938 they were dealing with a panic

⁶⁴⁸ Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 151.

⁶⁴⁹ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 6.

⁶⁵⁰ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 3.

⁶⁵¹ Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 204.

⁶⁵² Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 152.

⁶⁵³ Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 151.

⁶⁵⁴ Cynthia Kuhn, Scott Swartzwelder, and Wilkie Wilson, *Buzzed: The Straight Facts About the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy*, 4th ed., New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2014: 266.

⁶⁵⁵ Sam Wright and Hilary Klee, “Violent Crime, Aggression and Amphetamine: What Are the Implications for Drug Treatment Services?” *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 8.1 (2001): 74.

⁶⁵⁶ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 22.

over reports of addiction to the inhaler.⁶⁵⁷ In 1943, Canadian authorities complained to SK&F that users in British Columbia were cracking open the Benzedrine inhalers and injecting the drug, sometimes mixed with morphine.⁶⁵⁸ During and following World War II, doctors across North America prescribed speed (and tranquilizers) to deal with the “pains of existence” in a fast-paced and changing world.⁶⁵⁹ In an agglomeration of Canadian studies from 1973, Addiction Research Foundation (ARF) researcher Oriana Josseau Kalant argued,

Of 93 cases in which the original reason for taking amphetamines is stated, 30 took it for weight-reducing purposes, 20 for depression, 16 as a substitute for alcohol or other drugs of addiction, 9 to combat feelings of fatigue, 7 to perform extra work, 7 to study, and 4 for narcolepsy. Thus, about a third of the patients originally took the drug for the control of obesity, and of these the majority were women.⁶⁶⁰

In 1966 and 1972, laws around prescribing amphetamine and methamphetamine were tightened significantly, limiting their use to “narcolepsy, hyperkinetic disorders in children, minimal brain dysfunction, epilepsy, or hypotensive states associated with anesthesia.”⁶⁶¹ By the late 1960s, black market methamphetamine, usually in crystal form which could be smoked or injected, was the most common form of speed on Canada’s streets.⁶⁶²

In the United States, as early as the mid-1960s, a panic was erupting over speed use in the counterculture. According to Kalant, only alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana were more common among American youth.⁶⁶³ By the late 1960s, speed users had infiltrated American

⁶⁵⁷ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 22.

⁶⁵⁸ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 99.

⁶⁵⁹ Herzberg, *White Market Drugs*, 135.

⁶⁶⁰ Oriana Josseau Kalant, *The Amphetamines: Toxicity and Addiction*, 2nd ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press for the Addiction Research Foundation, 1973: 66.

⁶⁶¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 133.

⁶⁶² Kalant, *The Amphetamines*, 160.

⁶⁶³ Kalant, *The Amphetamines*, 141.

countercultural hotspots like Greenwich Village and Haight-Ashbury, and “Speed Kills” buttons were distributed by the counterculture itself to dissuade kids from using it.⁶⁶⁴ Though mortality rates among speed users were not any higher than other cohorts of the population – speed, in fact, rarely kills – the campaign may have had a positive effect on dissuading young Canadians from using it.⁶⁶⁵ Certainly they were aware of it; my interviewees “Nicholas,”⁶⁶⁶ “Robert,”⁶⁶⁷ and “Larry”⁶⁶⁸ all referred to the “Speed Kills” campaign without prompting.

Speed convictions peaked in 1973, with 287 people convicted for methamphetamine and eight for amphetamine under the Food and Drug Act. The numbers then stabilized, but remained near that level, much higher than in the 1960s, when the drug was less tightly controlled.⁶⁶⁹ Methamphetamine seizures by the police peaked in 1974-75 with 119.9 pounds of illegal meth seized, but dropped to 5.8 pounds in 1976-77.⁶⁷⁰ However, these are police figures, and as Smart notes, “The number of laboratories operating and the amount of speed produced are difficult to determine.”⁶⁷¹ Studies by ARF and others show that the peak year for speed use appears to be 1970, with use highest in Ontario and Quebec.⁶⁷²

As discussed in Chapter 1, in 1960, rocker subculture centred on alcohol and oral stimulants. These drugs influenced rocker society to make it hard-nosed, brassy, and loud. When

⁶⁶⁴ Ryan Grim, *This Is Your Country on Drugs: The Secret History of Getting High in America*, Hoboken NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009: 62.

⁶⁶⁵ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 69.

⁶⁶⁶ “Nicholas,” Interview with Author, 23 May 2021.

⁶⁶⁷ “Robert,” Interview with Author, 3 December 2021.

⁶⁶⁸ “Larry,” Interview with Author, 21 May 2021.

⁶⁶⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 75.

⁶⁷⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 66.

⁶⁷¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 66.

⁶⁷² Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 73.

people drink, they tend to raise their voices, particularly in a majority-male, macho environment like the bars around Yonge and Dundas Streets. Amphetamines tend to sober drinkers up, allowing them to continue drinking through the night. Musicians also like it for its ability to keep you playing through the night and driving through the day. Because of the cross-over from the rocker subculture to the hippie subculture, it was always likely that some speed would sneak into hippie life.

In 1966, “Chris” discovered Preludin, the first indications of speed in Yorkville from my interviews, and likely the same drug The Hawks were taking five years earlier downtown (see Chapter 1). “It was a light speed,” Chris said, “and you’re out partying and smoking and drinking, and at one o’clock in the morning, you could pop one of those and you were good for another four hours. They were fantastic.”⁶⁷³ He bought them from the same “Mr. Norman” he bought his cannabis from. “I was supplying them to all my artist friends. And we loved those, we had those for three or four years, before they became illegal.”⁶⁷⁴ In the mid-1960s, Rick James “[fell] in love with speed” and stayed awake for days in Yorkville,⁶⁷⁵ like the rounders on the Strip.

In 1967, Yorkville began seeing new figures – working-class “greasers” looking for fights, and motorcycle gangs. Though motorcycle gangs and hippies shared a countercultural outlook, reinforced by films like *Easy Rider*,⁶⁷⁶ they were very different. Crime writer Frederick Desroches described biker gangs as “tight-knit, regimented organizations that demand a high

⁶⁷³ “Chris,” Interview.

⁶⁷⁴ “Chris,” Interview.

⁶⁷⁵ James, *Glow*, 81.

⁶⁷⁶ Dennis Hopper, dir., *Easy Rider*, 1969, New York: Criterion Collection, 2016, DVD.

degree of conformity to norms and exert strong control over individual members”⁶⁷⁷ – a description few would apply to hippies.

Peter Edwards has been covering organized crime for the *Toronto Star* since the late 1980s, and his research has taken him to the origins of the “one percenter” bikers – bikers who consider themselves part of the “one per cent” that are involved in crime. He said Canada’s first one per cent bikers were likely the Black Diamond Riders, led by Johnny Sombrero, but they never became big. The first to become significant were Satan’s Choice, in the mid-1960s.⁶⁷⁸

The bikers in Yorkville were mostly Vagabonds and Satan’s Choice, looking for good times and girls – and if they could make some money on the side, all the better.⁶⁷⁹ But they were not the major criminal organizations they would become in the mid-1970s. Edwards said that if they had drugs, they sold them, but it was not yet a major enterprise. They were there for the good times, even if they didn’t “play the bongo drums with the hippies.”⁶⁸⁰ But some people were making good money. One Satan’s Choice biker in particular, Frank Hobson, kept Yorkville supplied with LSD and marijuana. He acquired the nickname Hippy [sic], and drove “kilos of marijuana and thousands of hits of LSD” from Detroit up to Toronto.⁶⁸¹

At some point, Satan’s Choice members started producing ‘Canadian Blue’ methamphetamine, and selling that, not just in Toronto, but throughout North America, according to Edwards.⁶⁸² Methamphetamine in Toronto was often called methedrine, a trade name from

⁶⁷⁷ Desroches, *The Crime that Pays*, 7.

⁶⁷⁸ Edwards, Interview.

⁶⁷⁹ Edwards, Interview.

⁶⁸⁰ Edwards, Interview.

⁶⁸¹ Peter Edwards, *Hard Road: Bernie Guindon and the Reign of the Satan’s Choice Motorcycle Club*, Toronto: Random House Canada, 2017: 53.

⁶⁸² Edwards, *Hard Road*, 128.

British firm Burroughs-Wellcome.⁶⁸³ Smart's figures showed that most of the speed in Toronto and the rest of Canada was methamphetamine rather than amphetamine, both before and after 1966 and 1972, when federal regulations around amphetamines were tightened.⁶⁸⁴ Several of my interviewees described Toronto as the "North American capital of methedrine," and several writers described it as a "speed capital of Canada,"⁶⁸⁵ as did *Time* magazine in 1970.⁶⁸⁶ Musician John Hamilton said in *Treat Me Like Dirt*, an oral history of punk in Toronto,

Toronto was the speed capital of the world in 1969; you can't *believe* how much methedrine there was in this city. It was unbelievable, unbelievable. We were shipping it into the United States; like I knew dealers and stuff like that. Everybody was doing speed and shooting it up. We were all crazy.⁶⁸⁷

Whether that is an exaggeration or not, speed's centrality to Toronto subcultural life was repeated often, and methedrine appeared to be a common drug. Twenty of my interviewees said they used "street-based" speed, and 26 used pharmaceutical speed, which was rarely purchased legally; of those who used "street-based" speed, 13 lived in Toronto. The Le Dain Commission said methedrine was manufactured mostly in domestic factories, "many" of which were in and around Toronto.⁶⁸⁸ In Ontario, during 1972-73, there were 26 amphetamine-related deaths, 16 due to accident, suicide, or homicide, two from heart attacks, two hepatitis-related, and the rest mixed-drug overdoses.⁶⁸⁹ Arrest statistics show over 80 to 90 per cent of arrests for speed were

⁶⁸³ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 61.

⁶⁸⁴ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 133.

⁶⁸⁵ Sharpe, *Rochdale*, 48.

⁶⁸⁶ Marquis, "Constructing an Urban Drug Ecology," 35.

⁶⁸⁷ Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 11.

⁶⁸⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 66.

⁶⁸⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 69.

in Ontario in the 1970s, a *big difference* from heroin and cocaine, where British Columbia led the country.⁶⁹⁰ Attempting to account for the prevalence of speed users in Ontario, Smart wrote,

It could be accidental, in that a few enterprising street chemists decided to establish their laboratories and distribution networks in Ontario. It could also relate to features of the lifestyle in Ontario as compared to other provinces. Speed users seem to epitomize the fast-moving business-oriented lifestyle of the large city. They are ever active, excited, and confident as they rush eagerly from one activity to another, doing business (in their case drug related) all the time. The emphasis on hustling is certainly typical of the large cities in Ontario which became the speed centres of the 1970s.⁶⁹¹

Possibly. It is also possible that Toronto was farther from heroin supply lines in Montreal and Vancouver, and speed was an easily manufactured replacement. McCoy noted that in the United States, as heroin imports dried up in the mid to late 1970s, speed production ramped up to replace it.⁶⁹²

ARF surveys in both schools and among the general population provide some insight into speed use in all three cities studied, though the results are contradictory and hard to analyse. Smart and Fejer define “speed” narrowly as “injectable methamphetamine,” relegating amphetamine, Ritalin, and other stimulants to the category “Other Stimulants.”⁶⁹³ Using this dichotomy, school surveys revealed use of injectable methamphetamine in Toronto high schools peaking in 1970. That year, 4.5 per cent of Toronto high school students had used “speed” in the last six months; in 1972 it was 3.3 per cent, and in 1974, 2.7 per cent.⁶⁹⁴ Smart and Fejer also found a peak among adults in 1971 – 3.6 per cent of adults in Toronto used speed in 1971, but

⁶⁹⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 76.

⁶⁹¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 77.

⁶⁹² McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 397.

⁶⁹³ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 65.

⁶⁹⁴ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70. See Table 7, 70-73 for a comprehensive list of stimulant studies. More on high school below.

later studies would show rates under one per cent for use within the previous 12 months.⁶⁹⁵ Other Toronto-based studies conducted in the early 1970s revealed most users to be young, middle-class, anxious, uninvolved in school or work, users of other drugs, and from homes where parents use prescription drugs like tranquilizers and amphetamines.⁶⁹⁶ For “Other Stimulants,” Smart and Fejer note the highest rate in 1968, where 7.3 per cent had used in the previous six months. After that, it was 6.7 per cent in 1970, 6.4 per cent in 1972, and 5.8 per cent in 1974.⁶⁹⁷ In the general category of adults in Toronto, 3.6 per cent had used a stimulant that was not injectable methamphetamine in the previous six months in 1971,⁶⁹⁸ but it is hard to interpret these results, since we do not know if these drugs were obtained legally, were diverted from the legal market, or were manufactured illegally. The obvious correlation here is that as amphetamine became more controlled and methamphetamine became more available, students switched to the illicit methamphetamine (“Speed”) supply from the legal (or diverted) amphetamine (“Other Stimulant”) category. As use of “Other Stimulants” fell among high school students, methamphetamine use grew, at least until 1971.

Outside of Toronto, results are mixed. Eleven per cent of Montreal CEGEP students were found by Bilodeau (1971) to have used speed in the previous six months, an enormous number, especially since the category, again, only included injectable methamphetamine.⁶⁹⁹ Russell & Hollander (1974) found in 1974 that 3.5 per cent of students in Vancouver had ever used speed and 6.7 per cent of Vancouver high school students in 1970 had ever used amphetamines

⁶⁹⁵ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 74.

⁶⁹⁶ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 76.

⁶⁹⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 72.

⁶⁹⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 71.

⁶⁹⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70.

specifically; in 1974, that number was 11.4 per cent.⁷⁰⁰ Bilodeau (1971) found that 5.9 per cent of CEGEP students in Montreal had used “other stimulants” in the previous six months in 1969; in 1971 that number rose to 8.1 per cent.⁷⁰¹

At first glance, these numbers would seem to refute the idea that Toronto had more speed than other cities. But unfortunately, the numbers do not compare well. Bilodeau’s CEGEP study, for instance, asks about students who have *ever* done methamphetamine, whereas Smart and Fejer’s high school students are only answering for the previous six months. The same problem occurs with Russell and Hollander’s studies of Vancouver high school students – Vancouver students were asked if they *ever* did a certain drug; Smart and Fejer asked about the previous six months, making it impossible to compare the results.

Sheila Gormley’s 1970 account of the Canadian drug scene is saturated with speed, especially methedrine, and especially in her reports on Toronto. In her introduction, she described “cults of maniacally [sic?] depressed ‘speed freaks.’”⁷⁰² She wrote that they formed their own subculture, not far different from that of skid-row winos.⁷⁰³ Gormely described a teenage girl in Yorkville, “Michelle,” who believed LSD caused a “100 per cent improvement” to her personality, becoming kinder and more empathetic. But soon, she got “hooked on shooting Methedrine every day. ‘I never freaked out on meth. It was a nice feeling but the withdrawal was bad. It’s addictive, no doubt about it.’”⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 72. The survey asked about “amphetamines” specifically.

⁷⁰¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 71.

⁷⁰² Gormely, *Drugs and the Canadian Scene*, xv.

⁷⁰³ Gormely, *Drugs and the Canadian Scene*, 113.

⁷⁰⁴ Gormely, *Drugs and the Canadian Scene*, 20.

Long before she became a minister in the United Church, Cheri DiNovo's main use for a bible was for hiding LSD. As a teenager, she sold it in and around Yorkville, and got high with her friends on it "almost every day," listening to music and "read[ing] voraciously."⁷⁰⁵ Then she graduated to speed.

...the hallucinations of LSD became tiresome and softer drugs no longer sufficed. A new drug hit our streets, made and sold by our local bike gang. It was methedrine and it changed my life. I realized it was everything I liked about LSD without any of the negatives. No troubling 'crazy' moments. Methedrine, or methamphetamine, was just the euphoria and the ability to go without sleep or food. It was cheaper than cocaine and more direct. Like a poster child for a slogan about gateway drugs, I moved from acid to meth.⁷⁰⁶

Her cousin, a morphine user, taught DiNovo to mainline. "With a needle there was no waiting for anything. Bang. Stoned."⁷⁰⁷

"Dipper" remembered 1967 as the year everything changed in Yorkville, including where they got their drugs. Rather than buying from other hippies, they now bought from the Vagabonds. "Speed," Dipper said. "We had a couple people who got hooked on speed, and we called them 'speed freaks' because they were jittery all the time."⁷⁰⁸ Dipper remembered kids getting hooked on methedrine, which by 1968 was "everywhere" in Yorkville. He would run them down to the Emergency Room, or to "The Trailer," a street clinic social workers had set up in Yorkville. "Because the underage kids you know, they were too young and naïve and would get exploited by the Vagabonds."⁷⁰⁹ Dipper said the bikers would sell meth cheap to get people

⁷⁰⁵ DiNovo, *The Queer Evangelist*, 20.

⁷⁰⁶ DiNovo, *The Queer Evangelist*, 22.

⁷⁰⁷ Di Novo, *The Queer Evangelist*, 23.

⁷⁰⁸ "Dipper," Interview.

⁷⁰⁹ "Dipper," Interview.

hooked, and then jack up the price. “And [...] people started to get scared to go to Yorkville.”⁷¹⁰ Chris, who had enjoyed Preludins so much, was no longer able to get the pills in Toronto. He switched to methamphetamine, which he bought from the Vagabonds. (Interestingly, he was able to get Preludins again when he was sent to Guelph Reformatory in 1967 for cannabis possession.⁷¹¹)

Around 1968, “Ethan” started scoring methedrine downtown, “brown rock or purple rock speed for \$25 a quarter ounce.”⁷¹² At first, he snorted it, but then moved on to shooting it. He got hepatitis from a needle, part of what he described as an “epidemic” that ended Yorkville. “I was really sick and it killed a dozen people. It ended Yorkville. Ended it. Because there was an epidemic going on.” When I suggested the hepatitis epidemic was overblown, Ethan said, “It wasn’t to the people who died.” He continued,

I’m not saying a dozen people died [he did, though he may have misspoken], a dozen people got it and were sick for years from it. [...] It wasn’t overstated because people are paranoid. It’s like saying coronavirus was overstated because you don’t know anyone who got it. Well, if 10,000 people are dead, and 300,000 are dead in the States, well, I didn’t know any of those people, but they’re dead! Somebody died. And the people who died here, their family knew them. And just the idea of getting it ended Yorkville.⁷¹³

Ethan admitted Yorkville was already dying by the time hepatitis came around, but that the disease put the final nail in the coffin. “The hepatitis thing wasn’t just a scare, you could get it

⁷¹⁰ “Dipper,” Interview. The practice of selling cheap to “get customers hooked” is often referred to in the literature as an urban myth. See, for example, Ross Coomber, *Pusher Myths: Re-Situating the Drug Dealer*, London: Free Association Books, 2006: 35. It might have been true in this case or Dipper may have his facts wrong; in either case, it was clear the bikers sold for gain, not to “turn on” their friends, as described in Chapter 1.

⁷¹¹ “Chris,” interview. For more on the availability of drugs in prison, see Boyd, *High Society*, 158.

⁷¹² “Ethan,” Interview.

⁷¹³ “Ethan,” Interview.

and die, like coronavirus,” Ethan said. “And that ended it. There wasn’t any government interference or prevention, other than warning people there was an epidemic, and that cleared it.”⁷¹⁴ Roy, another of my interviewees, also contracted hepatitis, though he did not mention the Yorkville epidemic. On the other hand, Dipper said the epidemic was no epidemic at all – it was a media invention. “There were four cases of hepatitis from people using contaminated needles, and that became ‘an epidemic,’” Dipper said.⁷¹⁵ Record producer and Yorkville regular Norman Finkelstein also argued it was a hoax, concocted to clear Yorkville of hippies.⁷¹⁶

Social services sprouted up, to help the new generation of kids in Yorkville, a lot of whom were addicted to methedrine. Dipper was part of the collective that set up Digger House, a drop-in centre and a place where wandering street kids could come and find a bed and some food. And they warned the kids off speed. “We tried to get people off hard drugs, the bad ones. We warned people about stuff and tried to help them in any way we could.”⁷¹⁷

Methamphetamine showed up in Montreal and Vancouver as well, but it was not as ubiquitous as in Toronto. In Vancouver, reports are contradictory – by 1970, it was either “very big time” according to Jupiter,⁷¹⁸ or confined to the “biker world,” according to Timmy.⁷¹⁹ “Dennis,” from Vancouver, did not see speed until he visited Toronto, where he ground up pills and shot them with his friends. (He is not sure what kind of pills they were, beyond “methedrine.”)⁷²⁰ “Jupiter” was also from Vancouver and also visited Toronto in 1969 and was

714 “Ethan,” Interview.

715 “Dipper,” Interview.

716 Finkelstein, *True North*, 112.

717 “Dipper,” Interview.

718 “Jupiter,” Interview.

719 “Timmy,” Interview with Author, 15 January 2021.

720 “Dennis,” Interview.

bowled over by the prevalence of speed. “Spadina was like speed row, it was called. It was all these houses they were dealing speed out of.”⁷²¹ “Joel” said speed was not a big feature of the Kitsilano scene, though there were some hippies they dubbed “pillheads.” They would take both uppers and downers, which the hippies looked down upon because they were not “organic enhancers,” meaning they were created in a laboratory rather than in nature.⁷²²

In Vancouver, “Auntie” used amphetamines only to get work done, describing it as “an extremely dangerous drug. Though they are extremely useful.”⁷²³ He described methedrine in Vancouver as being “really low quality.” Unlike with cannabis and hallucinogens, “there weren’t any community values associated with [methedrine].”⁷²⁴ “Brent” remembered seeing methedrine as early as 1966 in Vancouver, but injecting seemed like it was for “perverts, beyond the pale.”⁷²⁵ But then he and a friend met “two girls, these very strange, sex fiend girls. So, and they were speed freaks.”⁷²⁶ He shot methedrine with them because “we said shit, we’ve got to try that. Can’t let these girls be hipper than us and more outré than we are.”⁷²⁷ He continued for six or seven months, before being arrested by Sgt. Snidanko and giving it up for good.⁷²⁸ He said methedrine came almost naturally into the Kitsilano scene. “You have pot and you have acid, and then flower power time and peace and love. And that whole lifestyle bit. And then coming into

721 “Jupiter,” Interview.

722 “Joel,” Interview.

723 “Auntie,” Interview.

724 “Auntie,” Interview.

725 “Brent,” Interview.

726 “Brent,” Interview.

727 “Brent,” Interview.

728 “Brent,” Interview.

that were much, much harder drugs. And also needles. The notion of injecting methamphetamine suddenly was around.”⁷²⁹

Speed appeared to be less popular in Montreal than Toronto in the late 1960s and early 1970s, though Bilodeau (1971) makes it clear it was around and available to older teens. In 1970, “Serge” shot crystal meth, his first time using a needle. He hated the drug and only did it once. “I almost committed suicide on the down, it was terrible. I had to smoke like a quarter ounce of hash or something just to...it was really awful, so I never did it again.”⁷³⁰ Though his friends did meth, “Vance” was afraid to, and just ate it in caplets. He said with the meth, he and his friends would do “all kinds of crazy, obsessive-compulsive things. Like some people would take apart clock radios, or clocks. Me, what I’d do, is I made charts of when I bought my records.”⁷³¹ But like Serge, Vance says the speed hangovers were appalling, especially if he had to go to school the next day. He agreed it did not contribute to any sort of subcultural feeling, unlike pot or acid.⁷³² “Calypso” said “there was speed going around [Montreal] at the time,” but the only time she used it was on a visit to San Francisco.⁷³³ “Arthur” also described speed as being “around,” but he only ever did it a few times, swallowing (likely diverted) Benzedrine tablets.⁷³⁴ “Paul,” who had a problem with heroin and alcohol, only did amphetamines to complete university coursework. He described speed as much more of a “New York” drug.⁷³⁵ “Tony” liked taking Benzedrine and Desoxyn in the late 1960s, but it never became a big part of his life, and “it

729 “Brent,” Interview.

730 “Serge,” Interview.

731 “Vance,” Interview with Author, 15 July 2021.

732 “Vance,” Interview.

733 “Calypso,” Interview.

734 “Arthur,” Interview with Author, 27 June 2021.

735 “Paul,” Interview.

didn't have any philosophical attributes to do it."⁷³⁶ Speed was around Montreal in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it certainly played an important role in some people's lives. But it was not as ubiquitous as in Toronto.

Class, Hippies, and the Welfare State

Government programs in the late 1960s and early 1970s made "dropping out" into the hippie subculture less stressful and less confrontational than in the United States. The Pearson and Trudeau governments seemed, on the surface at least, to be "listening" to young people, something few would credit the American administrations of Lyndon Johnson⁷³⁷ or Richard Nixon⁷³⁸ of doing. The first of these programs was the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), an agency for young people to do good works in disadvantaged communities, but which was soon embroiled in controversy over its political activities, especially in Quebec.⁷³⁹ In 1970 and 1971, several more programs were initiated. Opportunities for Youth (OFY) provided summer jobs and opportunities for students, some of which "display[ed] an exploratory behavior not generally reinforced by industrial society," like creating a children's environment called "The Land of Mu."⁷⁴⁰ The Local Initiatives Program (LIP), something of a companion to the OFY, was meant to deal with high winter unemployment, and contribute to "community betterment" and

⁷³⁶ "Tony," Interview.

⁷³⁷ Haig-Brown, *Hell No We Won't Go*, 17.

⁷³⁸ Lee, *Smoke Signals*, 119.

⁷³⁹ Ian Hamilton, *The Children's Crusade: The Story of the Company of Young Canadians*, Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, Ltd., 1970: 137.

⁷⁴⁰ W.R. Clement, "Opportunities for Youth: Culture Design for an Unknown Culture," Human Behaviour Research Group Ltd., 1974. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED088790>

municipal projects, but it was attacked by conservatives for “‘spending funds on the mindless, and even dangerous schemes of young people.’”⁷⁴¹ Transient Youth Services (TYS) ran youth hostels across the country, which were reputed to be more tolerant of drug use than the private Canada Youth Hostel Association (CYHA).⁷⁴² This created work for all kinds of young people, including hippies. Though the programs were not created directly for subcultural drug users, many took them. The programs seemed to created jobs for them *on their own terms* – hippies could remain hippies while doing OFY work, which might not have been the case in an office. They could work, agitate for a better world, and use drugs. Canada Council grants helped artists of all stripes, including subcultural artists and their journals, theatres, and gallery shows.⁷⁴³ By spending this money, the federal government was, in essence, “creating hope,” and contributing to the utopian dreams of the hippies, beyond the 1960s and into the mid-1970s. Though the government did not legalize drugs, it appeared to many subcultural drug users that they soon would – after all, federal Health Minister John Munro had said as much on television in 1970,⁷⁴⁴ the same year Trudeau himself told a group of high school students, “‘people who do it [smoke marijuana], I don’t judge any more than I judge the person who takes alcohol.’”⁷⁴⁵ By 1975, the dream of legalized marijuana appeared to be dashed,⁷⁴⁶ another step from subcultural utopianism to nihilism.

⁷⁴¹ Donald E. Blake, “LIP and Partisanship: An Analysis of the Local Initiatives Program,” *Canadian Public Policy – Analyse de Politiques* 11.1 (Winter 1976): 19.

⁷⁴² Mahood, *Thumbing a Ride*, 144, 147.

⁷⁴³ Monica Gattinger, *The Roots of Culture, the Power of Art: The First Sixty Years of the Canada Council for the Arts*, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017: 8.

⁷⁴⁴ Martel, *Not This Time*, 3.

⁷⁴⁵ Sharpe, *Rochdale*, 187.

⁷⁴⁶ Martel, *Not This Time*, 156.

The ready availability of government moneys to subcultural drug users marked a major difference between the Canadian and American countercultures, and their relationships to their respective governments. In America, the federal government was Public Enemy Number One to the hippies, what with repression in the ghettos, Nixon's "War on Drugs," and a seemingly endless war in Indochina.⁷⁴⁷ In Canada, relationships with the federal government were more ambiguous. While some hippies professed a clear "us vs. them" mentality⁷⁴⁸ when it came to Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau's Liberal administrations, for others, it was a good government that provided for their young people. "We had a great government back in those days!" said "Dorothy," who received an Opportunities For Youth (OFY) grant. "They sort of believed in giving us all that we wanted! Changed rather a lot now."⁷⁴⁹

The hippies were part of the wealthiest generation in Canadian history until then, and so even if Canada had adopted a smaller, less comprehensive welfare state, many baby boomers would likely have had the time and resources to rebel anyway. (Many more would not have.) Doug Oram wrote of the baby boom generation in Canada, "Few generations grew up in such prosperous times."⁷⁵⁰ As one history of the Canadian economy summarized it:

The period from the end of the war to the early 1970s ranks as one of the most prosperous in Canada's economic history. The nation was well placed to benefit from the economic changes sweeping the world. The liberalization of trade opened markets for Canadian goods and services and provided lower cost imports. The resumption of international capital and labour flows expanded the capacity of the Canadian economy to meet the demands for the products. Added to these stimuli were other more internal factors, such as growing population and income, rising labour force participation rates, new

⁷⁴⁷ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, New York: Bantam Books, 1987:

4.

⁷⁴⁸ "Simon," Interview.

⁷⁴⁹ "Dorothy," Interview with Author, 12 May 2021.

⁷⁵⁰ Oram, *Born at the Right Time*, x.

infrastructure developments, more education and training, the reallocation of activity from slow-growth to rapid-growth sectors, and new resource discoveries.⁷⁵¹

Families bought houses, mostly in the suburbs, and suburban living required cars,⁷⁵² which by 1965 were available to everyone “except the very poor.”⁷⁵³ Industrial manufacturing was a major source of good, unionized jobs, and though manufacturing peaked in the mid-1950s,⁷⁵⁴ Canada in the 1960s and 1970s was spared most of the layoffs and shutdowns that ran through the US rust belt.⁷⁵⁵ More households could spend on large appliances, as credit was normalized in the 1960s and considered a good investment.⁷⁵⁶ School attendance at all levels was the highest in history – by the end of the 1950s, 3.8 million Canadians were in elementary or secondary school, double the number from 15 years earlier.⁷⁵⁷ Unemployment varied but stayed in the single digits.⁷⁵⁸

Buoyed by increases in revenue, the federal government, in partnership with the provinces, introduced comprehensive, national social welfare programs in 1965, “ranging from public assistance to those without means or work to assistance for the disabled and severely distressed,” most of it direct cash payments.⁷⁵⁹ The Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) of 1966 expanded and funded social assistance programs.⁷⁶⁰ By 1972, total social welfare expenditures in

⁷⁵¹ Norrie, Owram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 371.

⁷⁵² Norrie, Owram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 376.

⁷⁵³ Norrie, Owram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 383.

⁷⁵⁴ Norrie, Owram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 362.

⁷⁵⁵ Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003: 6.

⁷⁵⁶ Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999: 113.

⁷⁵⁷ Norrie, Owram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 387.

⁷⁵⁸ Norrie, Owram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 380.

⁷⁵⁹ Barry Ferguson, “Welfare System,” in Roberts, et al., eds., *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*, 326.

⁷⁶⁰ Dennis Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 3rd ed., Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997: 145.

Canada were \$8,405,000,000, representing 7.36 per cent of GDP, or 20.79 per cent of total government spending.⁷⁶¹ The state became large, intervening, and managerial, and “set new standards” of what it could achieve in guaranteeing a decent standard of living for all.⁷⁶²

But poverty remained endemic following the Second World War, and many subcultural drug users were quite poor. In 1970, as the most prosperous era in global history reached its culmination, 4.5 million Canadians lived in relative poverty, classified as “fifty per cent of the average standard of living.”⁷⁶³ A “Near Poverty Line” put another 14 per cent of the population in poverty, making 35 per cent of Canadians “poor”.⁷⁶⁴ (Note that these, and all poverty “lines,” are contentious, with different analysts finding them too generous or too miserly, depending on their definition of poverty.⁷⁶⁵) Minimum wage in Ontario in 1969 was \$1.65, but 10 per cent of workers earned no more than \$1.50.⁷⁶⁶ As for Canada’s social programs, they barely kept up. Alvin Finkel notes that though Canada was described at the time as a “welfare state,” its welfare provisions were always balanced by a desire not to step on the toes of “organized business and other conservative groups.”⁷⁶⁷ Unemployment Insurance paid between \$53 and \$100 maximum

⁷⁶¹ Canada, *HRDC, Expenditure Analyses of Social Security Programs*, in Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*, 331.

⁷⁶² E.A. Heaman, *A Short History of the State in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015: 180.

⁷⁶³ Adams, et al., *The Real Poverty Report*, 15.

⁷⁶⁴ Adams, et al., *The Real Poverty Report*, 16.

⁷⁶⁵ Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History*, Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006: 152. For a conservative rebuttal to standard poverty lines, see Christopher A. Sarlo, *Poverty in Canada*, Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 1992: 3.

⁷⁶⁶ Adams, et al., *The Real Poverty Report*, 28.

⁷⁶⁷ Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*, 149.

per week, for a maximum of 26 weeks.⁷⁶⁸ The authors of *The Real Poverty Report*, a dissident report by former staff members of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty,⁷⁶⁹ wrote in 1971,

Canada's network of categorical programs – Old-Age Security, the Canada Pension Plan, Family and Youth Allowances, Unemployment Insurance and Workmen's Compensation – emerges as a frayed, ungenerous and contradictory patchwork of inadequacies. Those reduced to dependence on them are steadily falling behind the standard of living that prevails for other Canadians.⁷⁷⁰

Welfare in Ontario paid \$1380 per year to a single person living alone; a family of five received \$3540.⁷⁷¹ After the economic downturn of 1973, the number of people on welfare under 65 *decreased*, from 7.2 per cent in 1971 to 6.0 per cent in 1980.⁷⁷² Applying for and living on welfare was a humiliating and stigmatizing affair, subject to “legal declarations of penury and snap inspections by welfare officials, for example” to “eliminate the layabouts.”⁷⁷³ Often, the poor paid enough in taxes to finance “their own welfare cheques” and “The Economic Council [of Canada] notes simply that [in 1971] there has been hardly any change in the distribution of family income in Canada over the last 15 years.”⁷⁷⁴ Poor neighbourhoods had little infrastructure for education, culture, or recreation, and those that existed were “enormously overtaxed, most frequently inadequate, and often nonexistent to suffice the greater need.”⁷⁷⁵ For

⁷⁶⁸ Adams, et al., *The Real Poverty Report*, 167.

⁷⁶⁹ Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 154.

⁷⁷⁰ Adams, et al., *The Real Poverty Report*, 167.

⁷⁷¹ Adams, et al., *The Real Poverty Report*, 178.

⁷⁷² Health and Welfare Canada, “Table 4: Number of social security beneficiaries and number of households, and percentage of population aged 0-64 years on social welfare, 1971-2002,” in Lance W. Roberts, et al., eds., *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*, 624.

⁷⁷³ Adams, et al., *The Real Poverty Report*, 169. See also, See also Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 147.

⁷⁷⁴ Timothy Reid, “Violence: The Only Weapon? (1969)” in Reid, ed., *Canada's Poor*, 37.

⁷⁷⁵ The Association to Tackle Adverse Situations, “The Definition is a Personal One (1969),” in Reid, ed., *Canada's Poor*, 11.

young people breaking the law, historian Joan Sangster wrote that though juvenile delinquency in the age was defined as “classless,” in reality, “children from Rosedale were seldom found sitting on the benches of the Toronto Juvenile Court, where reformers presumed they were more likely to encounter children from the city’s East End.”⁷⁷⁶ Despite all this, government aid helped. Though the distance between rich and poor stayed wide,⁷⁷⁷ indicators of absolute poverty declined through the era.⁷⁷⁸

Many of my interviewees described lives of economic struggle beyond having to use the welfare system. “Johannes” spent his childhood moving from town to town in the prairies as the family avoided bill collectors.⁷⁷⁹ “Red” was born “very poor” to a teenage single mother in Cape Breton.⁷⁸⁰ “Dennis” grew up in a “shack” in Vancouver.⁷⁸¹ “John’s” father had a full-time job in the civil service, but it paid poorly and his father drank most of the money away.⁷⁸² The poor remained a significant part of Canadian society, and the fact they lived among such plenty made it that much more galling.

The creation of a welfare state led to sniping among conservatives that the government was encouraging freeloaders, especially among subcultural drug users like hippies. The concept of the “freeloader” – someone who acts as a parasite and gets something for nothing – is endemic

⁷⁷⁶ Joan Sangster, “Creating Social and Moral Citizens: Defining and Treating Delinquent Boys and Girls in English Canada, 1920-65,” in Robert Adamoski, Dorothy E. Chunn, and Robert Menzies, eds., *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings*, Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, Ltd., 2002: 342.

⁷⁷⁷ Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 155.

⁷⁷⁸ Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*, 270.

⁷⁷⁹ “Johannes,” Interview.

⁷⁸⁰ “Red,” Interview with Author, 2 August 2021.

⁷⁸¹ “Dennis,” Interview.

⁷⁸² “John,” Interview with Author, 14 May 2020.

in all societies, but especially those that provide some modicum of government help. Even as he railed against a bourgeoisie that lived off the labours of the working class, Karl Marx criticized lower-class lumpenproletariat for failing to contribute to society.⁷⁸³ In Raymond Breton et al.'s evaluation of Canada's social fabric, they argued,

Freeloaders are seen as a great threat to the strength of the social fabric. Time after time, Canadians from small towns and large cities noted that what makes things worse for society and its institutions is 'people who take advantage of the system' or 'people who have that "you owe me attitude,"' or 'people who bleed the system.' Mutual obligation is considered a key factor in the structure of the social fabric.⁷⁸⁴

At the same time, Breton et al. noted that if society does not provide "a place" for someone, they will tend to "separate," "withdraw," or "rebel in one way or another" an outcome that can "undermine the social fabric."⁷⁸⁵ Ken Goffman and Dan Joy described a "Western culture that's paranoid about beggars, bums, welfare recipients, drifters, and losers," who form subcultures of mutual recognition and aid.⁷⁸⁶ If hippies using drugs was intolerable to the "square" world, then what was even worse was that it appeared, to the square world at least, that these hippies were using drugs *on the taxpayer's dime*. The perception was that money meant for the "deserving" poor – those who were poor through no fault of their own – was being diverted to the very undeserving poor, especially middle-class hippies who were not poor at all, but had found a way to "stick it to the Man" while collecting welfare. To reactionaries like Vancouver Mayor Tom

⁷⁸³ Gelder, "Introduction," in Gelder, ed., *The Subcultures Reader*, 3.

⁷⁸⁴ Raymond Breton, Norman J. Hartmann, Jos L. Lennards, and Paul Reed, *A Fragile Social Fabric? Fairness, Trust, and Commitment in Canada*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004: 22-23.

⁷⁸⁵ Breton, et al., *A Fragile Social Fabric?*, 33.

⁷⁸⁶ Ken Goffman (a.k.a. R.U. Sirius) and Dan Joy, *Counterculture Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House*, New York: Villard, 2004: 83.

Campbell, government support of the counterculture was worse than wasted – it was encouraging illegal drug use. In 1968, a year after his election, Campbell said on the public courthouse steps,

We've got a major problem facing the city of Vancouver [...] We've got a 'scum' community who are organized... These people don't deserve any support. I think the support should go to our good youth, our Boy Scouts, the organizations in town – the church, the decent children.⁷⁸⁷

That Canada Council grants were going to counterculturalists, such as Kim Foikis, who received a \$3500 grant to play Vancouver's "Town Fool," was intolerable. "An old-age pensioner, who's worked all his life for his country, gets \$1200 a year," Campbell fumed. "Here's a fellow who refused to work and they give him a \$3500 young-age pension. Couldn't we use it for public housing for senior citizens, retarded children, pensioners, deserving students?"⁷⁸⁸ Some conservatives were successful in their lobbying. The *Georgia Straight* alternative newspaper, an advocate for subcultural drug users in Vancouver, had a \$15,000 OFY grant rescinded in 1971, after pressure from the BC Liberal caucus.⁷⁸⁹

The Kitsilano Ratepayers' Association (KRA), which agitated against hippies in the West End Vancouver neighbourhood, accused them of being "a drain on society" supported by "abuse of the welfare state."⁷⁹⁰ The *Penticton Herald* complained that drivers on the Trans-Canada Highway could not tell if hitchhikers were, "long-haired lazy and rebellious bums who live off welfare,' young people looking for jobs, [or] student travellers out enjoying themselves."⁷⁹¹ Greg Marquis quoted one Vancouver social worker complaining that "easy welfare regulations" were

⁷⁸⁷ Chapman, *The Last Gang in Town*, 55.

⁷⁸⁸ Jesse Donaldson, *Fool's Gold: The Life and Legacy of Vancouver's Official Town Fool*, Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2020: 13.

⁷⁸⁹ Campbell and Pauls, eds., *The Georgia Straight*, 72.

⁷⁹⁰ Ross, "Panic on Love Street," N.p.

⁷⁹¹ Mahood, *Thumbing a Ride*, 12.

to blame for bringing hippies out west.⁷⁹² Even Timothy Leary urged his disciples not to “go on welfare or go around with a begging bowl”⁷⁹³ and former drug users disparaged current ones for being freeloaders. Heroin addict Eddie Burns told journalist Neil Boyd it was better to be a criminal than a freeloader.

Heroin users, at one time, were respected people. They weren’t the trash they are today. They were qualified thieves, safecrackers, wheelmen, all guys with talent. They all had ways of making money. None of them were bums or beggars. They were well dressed, they were articulate.⁷⁹⁴

Although many of my interviewees would likely have been on welfare at some point in their lives, few confessed to it – mostly they said they worked, whether in the licit or illicit economy. “Red” went on student welfare at 15, which allowed him to escape a very uncomfortable living arrangement with his mother and biker stepfather.⁷⁹⁵ “Nicholas” was one of the few students at his Vancouver West End High School whose family was “on welfare.”⁷⁹⁶ “Chris” was almost sheepish when he admitted going on welfare in early middle age.⁷⁹⁷ “Zach” went straight on welfare after getting out of prison in 1980.⁷⁹⁸ Because “Murray” was on welfare in Vancouver, the government paid for him to go to trade school in the Interior.⁷⁹⁹

Instead of welfare, many of my interviewees received grants and other forms of aid, and these carried little, if any, stigma. All who grew up in Canada received Family Allowance

⁷⁹² Marquis, “Constructing an Urban Drug Ecology in 1970s Canada,” 37.

⁷⁹³ Timothy Leary, *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out*, Berkeley CA: Ronin Publishing, Inc., 1999: 139.

⁷⁹⁴ Boyd, *High Society*, 26.

⁷⁹⁵ “Red,” Interview.

⁷⁹⁶ “Nicholas,” Interview.

⁷⁹⁷ “Chris,” Interview.

⁷⁹⁸ “Zach,” Interview with Author, 11 January 2021.

⁷⁹⁹ “Murray,” Interview.

cheques from the federal government, since the program was universal.⁸⁰⁰ Their educations – the best Canadians had ever known – were paid for by the government.⁸⁰¹ The technological infrastructure that brought the Beatles, Timothy Leary, and *Laugh-In* into Canadian homes was largely government-subsidized,⁸⁰² as was the new Trans-Canada Highway the hippies hitchhiked down.⁸⁰³ The national Medicare program was being set up.⁸⁰⁴

Canada Council grants were an important source of revenue for young subcultural artists. Some of the money went, as conservatives feared, to drugs, but it also went to studio space and art supplies. Conspicuously, it also went to travel, as many young people took their Canada Council money and left Canada to see the world. Jupiter, a jazz musician and artist born in 1947 to an upper-class white family, went to Europe in 1970 to tour an avant-garde show.

I got a Canada Council grant, went to Europe, set up a big touring group show with government support all the way down the line, all the places that would totally never deal with me now were giving me money to do this outrageous concept show. [...] I was in Paris with my girlfriend, and there was always some hash around there, scoring from [a Canadian in Paris]. It was wild. He'd been on [a government commission] this guy, he ran the [...] in Paris and he'd been on [a government commission]. It was a lot of weird overlaps you know.⁸⁰⁵

By noting that his drug dealer was on a government commission, Jupiter is doubling down on claims the Canadian government was sympathetic to young drug users – they got the grants and

⁸⁰⁰ Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 135.

⁸⁰¹ Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 26.

⁸⁰² Dorotea Gucciardo, “The Powered Generation: Canadians, Electricity, and Everyday Life,” PhD. Diss., University of Western Ontario, 2011: 14.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2699692865?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>

⁸⁰³ Transport Canada, “Trans-Canada Highway: Background,” *Government of Canada*, 24 September 2020. Web. Accessed 31 January 2023. <https://tc.canada.ca/en/corporate-services/policies/trans-canada-highway-background>

⁸⁰⁴ Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 151.

⁸⁰⁵ “Jupiter,” Interview.

the commissioners were made up of hashish dealers. (Jupiter could be exaggerating or incorrect in his assessment, but it reveals how he felt about the program, feelings he argued other subcultural drug users felt.) Grants also subsidized the arts show Jupiter was a part of in Vancouver, and alluded to receiving other government grants as well, at one point referring to them as “Canada Drug Grants.”⁸⁰⁶ He said it reached a point where everyone was competing for grants, and it became a competition to game the grant system. “The grant system in Canada, you know, we all benefitted from it for a while,” Jupiter said. “And then it got so cronyistic that...we had a saying, ‘While you’re out, get me a grant.’”⁸⁰⁷

Not everyone was as cynical about it. Joel, who had come up to Vancouver as a draft resister from California, lauded the Canada Council for contributing to the counterculture in Kitsilano.

The Canada Council grants produced some rapid cultural growth, as formerly poverty-stricken artists, poets, dancers and other creative people had a chance to pursue their dreams. They also had the time and wherewithal to be out among their peers, spawning cultural events like the Easter Be-Ins, poetry readings & the music and crafts festivals that [redacted] put on.⁸⁰⁸

Whether the artists were really “poverty-stricken,” or simply slumming will be explored below – but it was clear to Joel that these grants were a major catalyst for the counterculture in Vancouver. Canada Council grants also enabled “Oscar” and his wife to hop a freighter from New York to Tangier, a hotspot on the drug-heavy “hippie trail.”⁸⁰⁹

806 “Jupiter,” Interview.

807 “Jupiter,” Interview.

808 “Joel,” Interview. This quote came from an email he sent following our conversation.

809 “Oscar,” Interview. On the “hippie trail,” see Lee, *Smoke Signals*, 117.

For those who were not artists, there were other programs, like the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), Opportunities for Youth (OFY), and Local Initiatives Program (LIP). Of these, the CYC was the most controversial, as radicals like “Dipper” did their best to take over what was meant to be an agency for middle-class youth to help impoverished Canadians. But it was given wide latitude, and became notorious as a centre for youth radicalism (if not necessarily drug use) – for example, organizing anti-government demonstrations in Montreal, and furnishing the offices and subsidizing the distribution of the radical Toronto newspaper *Harbinger*.⁸¹⁰ “Dipper,” one of the older hippies in Yorkville, vowed to “infiltrate” the CYC, and used its money to help set up social work agencies in the neighbourhood, to help out the flocks of young people coming to the neighbourhood.⁸¹¹ “[Prime Minister Lester B.] Mike Pearson decided to put up the Company of Young Canadians to do good work, clean up parks or whatever, but we decided to make it about community organizing,” Dipper said. “We decided we were going to use the government’s money to do what we were always going to do.”⁸¹²

“Dorothy,” came over from England in 1968, and moved to “The Hall” at 19 Huron Street, which became a popular drop-in centre for hippies and American refuseniks, and hosted groups like Toronto Gay Action and the Toronto Women’s Collective.⁸¹³ It was also a place, Dorothy said, where they used copious amounts of cannabis, psilocybin mushrooms, and LSD.⁸¹⁴ It is unclear whether the Hall itself was run on government grants, but many of those who lived there, like Dorothy, worked for programs like Opportunities for Youth. In Dorothy’s case, she

⁸¹⁰ Hamilton, *The Children’s Crusade*, 137, 236.

⁸¹¹ “Dipper,” Interview.

⁸¹² “Dipper,” Interview.

⁸¹³ Churchill, “American Expatriates and the Building of Alternative Social Space in Toronto, 1965-1975,” 37.

⁸¹⁴ “Dorothy,” Interview.

was an OFY coordinator, and the government gave her a car so she “could drive around to the various projects that people were putting together.”⁸¹⁵ She also used the car to ferry draft resisters up to Canada. Dorothy was also part of an alternative theatre renaissance which was developing in Toronto, again funded with government grants.⁸¹⁶

“Tony” was born in 1952 and grew up in Montreal in a white, middle-class family. He moved to Toronto in 1970 and lived for six months in Rochdale College. Tony benefited from the Local Initiatives Program, a federal program that funded creative initiatives by young people aimed at community betterment.⁸¹⁷ Tony worked for the “North York Birth Control Information Centre,” after a friend brought him on board as staff.

Someone I knew said hey, Do you want to be in this? And I started getting paid! There were like six people, and we would sit in this office, they rented a space on Bathurst Street in North York, and then you would sit and wait for the phone to ring in case someone wanted to know something about birth control.⁸¹⁸

Though he appreciated the work, he thought the program was a bit outlandish. “OK, I’m pretty left wing and I’m pretty into a mixed economy, the government being involved in the economy. I’m Canadian, you know. But this was crazy. They were shovelling money out to kids to waste. I don’t know, it was just the temper of the times.”⁸¹⁹

Economic growth gave more middle- and upper-class youth the chance to “play at poverty” or practice “slumming,” the act of spending time at a lower social level than your own. Slumming is not a new phenomenon – history is full of wealthy people choosing to live with the

⁸¹⁵ “Dorothy,” Interview.

⁸¹⁶ Denis W. Johnston, *Up the Mainstream: The Rise of Toronto’s Alternative Theatres*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991: 7.

⁸¹⁷ Blake, “LIP and Partisanship,” 19.

⁸¹⁸ “Tony,” Interview.

⁸¹⁹ “Tony,” Interview.

poor, either out of curiosity, charity, or for spiritual reasons. Siddhartha (the Buddha), a popular figure among hippies, was a wealthy prince in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE before embracing poverty for spiritual awareness.⁸²⁰ Theodore Roszak compared the hippies slumming in Morocco and India to the third-century CE Christians fleeing the “corruptions of Hellenistic society.”⁸²¹ William James noted that everywhere, some in the upper-classes became poor “Hindu fakirs, Buddhist monks, and Mohammedan dervishes [who] unite with Jesuits and Franciscans” in poverty as a sign of godliness.⁸²² Beat writers like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs came from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, only to drop out and adopt voluntary poverty to pursue their art and attempt to lead more authentic lives.⁸²³ They in turn influenced the hippies who, with their enormous numbers and rejection of middle-class materialism, would create one of the greatest slumming experiences in the world – until most of them tired of it and returned to wealth and comfort.

Margaret Sinclair, who as Margaret Trudeau would bring marijuana into the inner sanctum of 24 Sussex Drive, captured the feelings of many of the high upper class when she wrote,

If there was one thing that shone out it was that never, under any circumstances, would I join the despicable bourgeois world of bridge clubs and whiskies before dinner. I would never fall to that level of ‘respectability.’ I felt ashamed and saddened for my friends who had forsaken their true path for such misguided values.⁸²⁴

⁸²⁰ John S. Strong, *Buddhisms: An Introduction*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2015: 104.

⁸²¹ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969: 34.

⁸²² William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, New York: The Modern Library, 2002: 348.

⁸²³ Mailer, “The White Negro,” in O’Brien, ed., *The Cool School*, 159.

⁸²⁴ Trudeau, *Beyond Reason*, 15.

Sinclair backpacked through the Morocco hippie trail, lived off brown rice and “a few vegetables,” and shed all her “bourgeois belongings and came home with nothing but a small knapsack containing two pairs of jeans, and a collection of [...] cotton shirts.” It was a “search for mysticism and freedom,” one that involved shedding the trappings of upper-class life⁸²⁵ – until she found she wanted those trappings after all and returned to a life of big houses and shopping sprees.⁸²⁶

This temporary slumming experience was well-noticed by the genuinely lower-class, who often disdained the hippies both for giving up what the lower classes aspired to, and using up limited social services the actually poor needed more than the transitory poor. Lemke-Santangelo wrote that in the US, “The counterculture’s voluntary poverty held even fewer attractions for economically disadvantaged minorities. Indeed, the hippie presence in [poor] ethnic enclaves often bred hostility.”⁸²⁷ Middle- and upper-class use of social services meant for the genuinely poor also bred a conservative “backlash against federal antipoverty programs – a backlash that ultimately injured the truly needy.”⁸²⁸ In Smart, Jackson, and Alampur’s study of Yorkville, they found working-class “greasers”, “resent the hippies as drop-outs and lazy ne’er-do-wells. As one greaser said: ‘rich people can afford to be bums. Poor people have no choice.’”⁸²⁹

At the same time, not every middle-class or upper-class young person who descended the class ladder did it out of choice. For many middle- and upper-class drug users, “slumming” was less a choice than a stage of life that had to be endured. “Middle class” is an imprecise term, and

⁸²⁵ Trudeau, *Beyond Reason*, 13.

⁸²⁶ Trudeau, *Beyond Reason*, 40.

⁸²⁷ Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius*, 35.

⁸²⁸ Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius*, 96.

⁸²⁹ Smart, Jackson, and Alampur, *The Yorkville Subculture*, 25.

many middle-class families could not support their children when they went away to university or tried to set themselves up independently of their parents. Just because parents had money did not mean the children did, as any indebted university student knows. It *did*, however, provide a safety cushion the very poor did not have.

Many subcultural drug users found the decision to stay at home impossible, either because of abuse, or intolerance toward their subcultural lifestyles. “Booty,” “Sally,” and “Tzania” all fled from abuse in upper- or middle-class homes, to spend time on the streets or in poverty.⁸³⁰ June Callwood of Digger House, which cared for sick and indigent adolescents, many of whom identified as hippies, said, ““They’d be thrown out of school for having long hair and they certainly couldn’t get welfare of any kind.””⁸³¹ (But in another essay, Callwood also described hippies as “deliberate bums.”⁸³²) “Peppermint,” who worked at the Digger House drop-in centre in 1968-69, saw abuse cases from across Canada, from all classes, who migrated to Yorkville.⁸³³ According to Smart, Jackson, and Alampur, for many hippies, “the family is remembered as an unhappy environment from which the hippie felt he must escape.”⁸³⁴

Many of my interviewees practiced “slumming”: Booty, DJ, Jupiter, and Timmy were all upper-class, and they all hitchhiked, lived in communal housing, frequented insalubrious bars or cafes, or moved to rough neighbourhoods. “Quinn,” who was upper-class, remembered many in the Kitsilano area who, “as part of the ‘revolution’ were rejecting materialism and economic

⁸³⁰ “Booty,” Interview with Author, 7 July 2021 and 5 August 2021; “Sally,” Interview; “Tzania,” Interview.

⁸³¹ Berton, *1967*, 164.

⁸³² June Callwood, “Digger House,” in Mann, ed., *The Underside of Toronto*, 124.

⁸³³ “Peppermint,” Interview with Author, 20 May 2020.

⁸³⁴ Reginald G. Smart and David Jackson, “Yorkville Subculture,” in Mann, ed. *The Underside of Toronto* 115.

upward mobility, and therefore lived on precarious incomes. As [Beat poet Lawrence] Ferlinghetti said in one of his poems, ‘high society is low society, I’m a social climber.’”⁸³⁵ Jupiter, also upper-class, was deeply critical of the counterculture, saying it was an invention of the media led by “pseudo-Marxist professors” and kids who had little to complain about. At the same time, he chose a life of near poverty. “I never had anything until I got together with my wife, which was ‘84. Living pretty close to the bone, touring, doing music, all that stuff.”⁸³⁶ “Booty” got married at 18 to escape her family, who were sending her to a “predatory” psychiatrist who raped and abused her. She spent years living in Yorkville and downtown Toronto, working full-time while also being a single mother and spending money on drugs.⁸³⁷ “DJ” moved out of her parents’ home with her brother and got an apartment in the McGill Ghetto, where they dealt cannabis. After hitchhiking across Canada, she and her husband lived off unemployment and part-time jobs, in a “house full of bedbugs and cockroaches. I’d never seen either of them [before].” Eventually she couldn’t deal with it any longer and she moved back in with her parents, who had relocated to Ontario.⁸³⁸ “Timmy,” who came from affluent West Vancouver, would hang out and buy drugs at seedy bars in Gastown like the Dominion Hotel.⁸³⁹

There is no evidence the hippies, and other subcultural drug users, made use of government programs at a greater rate than any other segment of the population. Pensions were

835 “Quinn,” Interview.

836 “Jupiter,” Interview.

837 “Booty,” Interview.

838 “DJ,” Interview.

839 “Timmy,” Interview.

supporting the elderly and mothers had been collecting Family Allowance cheques since 1945.⁸⁴⁰ What pensioners and mothers did with those cheques was presumed to be their own business. But young people were more often chastised for taking government aid. Though it is impossible to quantify, it is likely most hippies did not collect welfare *per se* – as in money from the province provided by the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP)⁸⁴¹ – but they did benefit from government spending, just like the rest of the population. Though hippies did use government programs, and did spend some of this government money on drugs, they did not benefit any more or less from “handouts” than the general population.

High School High

“Mike,” born in 1952 and raised working-class, made good money selling drugs, first in his high school and later more widely. He first smoked pot when he was 15, at his part-time job, an experience he called “wonderful, great.”⁸⁴² He introduced marijuana to his friends at school, where “there was a wonderful wave of rebellion going through the school system.”⁸⁴³ Mike started hanging out in Yorkville, which he “loved.” He met some older hippies, and then he and a friend got into selling marijuana, then LSD, at his high school. He figured there were six or seven of them selling pot and acid to their friends, or anyone who was interested. After Yorkville,

⁸⁴⁰ Brigitte Kitchen, “Wartime Social Reform: The Introduction of Family Allowances,” *Canadian Journal of Social Work Education / Revue Canadienne d’éducation en Service Social* 7.1 (1981): 30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23458245>

⁸⁴¹ Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 147. Martel notes RCMP internal communications argue that *some* hippies were on welfare, but not all. Martel, “‘They Smell Bad, Have Diseases, and are Lazy’,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 234.

⁸⁴² “Mike,” Interview with Author, 21 May 2020.

⁸⁴³ “Mike,” Interview.

he got his acid from Rochdale. Because Mike was bigger than most kids, he could get past the biker security at Rochdale without any trouble. He would buy the pills by the thousands, for 35 cents apiece, and sell them to other dealers for a dollar each. “Very, very lucrative,” he said.⁸⁴⁴

High school dealers were not the evil “pushers” of urban legend,⁸⁴⁵ and few high school dealers made the kind of money Mike did. Most of them, like “Jerry,” made just enough to support their own use, and maybe buy a guitar and some records. Jerry was born in 1953 to middle-class immigrant parents in Toronto. Like many young people, he smoked his first joint in a car, his friend’s Corvair, in 1967 when he was 14. “It [cannabis] was just one of those things that expanded your brain instantly, and then we laughed for about 20 minutes or so.”⁸⁴⁶ When he was 15 or 16, he took his first acid, “strawberry double-barrels,” which came in a small, pink pill about an eighth of an inch long. “Nice electric kind of psychedelic drug,” Steve said.⁸⁴⁷ He would hide them in the tubes of his sneakers and sell them to his friends.

I would get a couple bucks, and you could buy 10 or 12 tabs for \$2.50 each, and then you’d sell them for \$3.50 each. Make a couple bucks, then next week you buy 15 tabs and then you sell them, next week you buy 20 tabs, and it just goes like that. Until you get sick of it all. I went on like that for about a year I guess.⁸⁴⁸

It was a similar story for “Red,” who would smoke pot on the way to school every day, and sell it to his friends and classmates. He hid it in “an old Japanese transistor radio that I ripped the guts out of [...], and I had my little quarters, half-ounces, and ounces inside the radio.”⁸⁴⁹ But he was

844 “Mike,” Interview.

845 For more on the “pusher” stereotype, see Coomber, *Pusher Myths*, 35.

846 “Jerry,” Interview with Author, 4 August 2021.

847 “Jerry,” Interview.

848 “Jerry,” Interview.

849 “Red,” Interview.

“strictly small time,” never “pushing it,” in a world where pot meant “camaraderie.”⁸⁵⁰ “We were having fun socializing, and you know, trying to stay alive,” Red said.⁸⁵¹

Again and again, my interviews pointed back to high school as *the* formative experience in developing subcultural taste and style. Those for whom high school was less important were older – like Johannes,⁸⁵² Chris,⁸⁵³ Quinn,⁸⁵⁴ and Dipper⁸⁵⁵ – often born before 1949, when drugs were less common in high schools, there was a measure of post-war austerity still in the air, and rules – for example, around hair length for boys – were more rigidly enforced.⁸⁵⁶ Some, like “Timmy,” never did much in the way of drugs at school, but found a stoned-out solace in Vancouver’s Gastown.⁸⁵⁷ But for most kids, it was at high school you learned about getting high.

American educator John Dewey thought high school provided “a peculiar kind of ‘experience.’ At once real life in a school peer culture, schools provide academic preparation for a very different future outside the classroom, while separating young people from their parents without giving them a sense of competence” creating a “poor substitute for real life. The seeming independence of young people in high school is a mirage,” so long as students continue to live

850 “Red,” Interview.

851 “Red,” Interview.

852 “Johannes,” Interview.

853 “Chris,” Interview.

854 “Quinn,” Interview.

855 “Dipper,” Interview.

856 Pierre Berton, *The Smug Minority*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968: 34.

857 “Timmy,” Interview.

with their parents, accept their direction, and otherwise be influenced by peers.⁸⁵⁸ Nor was high school cut off from the wider social forces around them. In the United States,

According to a 1969 survey by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 59 percent of high schools and 56 percent of junior high schools had recently experienced some form of unrest. As historian Gael Graham contends, ‘Many high school activists were extremely critical of public schools, and they expressed their dissatisfaction through lawsuits, underground newspapers, strikes, and demonstrations. They attacked not only dress and hair codes but also other seemingly pointless regulations and restrictions on free speech, press, and assembly.... Rejecting their status as children, they argued that students should have a greater voice in the running of the schools.’⁸⁵⁹

Using Michel Foucault’s theories on power, especially as outlined in *Discipline and Punish*, we can see high school as a disciplining institution, an “*enclosure*,” a “protected place of disciplinary monotony,” like the workshop or military barracks.⁸⁶⁰ High schools employ the time-table, once a tool of monastic communities, to regulate student lives.⁸⁶¹ But they also allow leisure time – lunch hour, breaks between classes, before and after school, as well as skipping classes – and it is during this time my interviewees most often “got into trouble,” including buying, selling, and using drugs. Foucault overstated the power of the panopticon to discipline society – it was a theoretical, not a practical idea⁸⁶² – and though high school was intended to have “eyes potentially everywhere,” many students knew when they were being watched, or didn’t care.

⁸⁵⁸ Paula S. Fass, “The Child Centred Family? New Rules in Postwar America,” in Paula S. Fass, and Michael Grossberg, eds., *Reinventing Childhood After World War II*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012: 7.

⁸⁵⁹ Michael Grossberg, “Liberation and Caretaking: Fighting over Children’s Rights in Postwar America,” in Fass and Grossberg, eds., *Reinventing Childhood After World War II*, 26.

⁸⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage, 1977, 1995: 141. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁶¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 149.

⁸⁶² Lukes, *Power*, 93.

High school changed dramatically following the First World War, and then again following the Second. By the 1920s, more adolescents attended high school than did not.⁸⁶³ By the early 1960s, three out of four adolescents were in high school.⁸⁶⁴ It was only with the baby boom generation that families felt secure enough, and work became specialized enough, to keep most of their children in school through to Grade 12 or 13. By 1963, every Canadian province and territory legislated mandatory schooling until either 15 or 16.⁸⁶⁵ In 1968, 86.1 per cent of 14- to-17-year-olds were enrolled full-time at school; in 1969 it was 90.8 per cent; 1970, 93.9; 1971, 97.8; 1972, 98.4; 1973, 98.8. In 1974, it decreased for the first time, but only very marginally, to 98.1 per cent. And in 1975, it was back up to 99 per cent, meaning almost full enrolment for young teens.⁸⁶⁶ As Doug Owram wrote, “Adolescence increasingly had its own particular institution – the high school – with all the social and educational implications that entailed.”⁸⁶⁷ Public education was a major component of government spending, and following the baby boom, provincial and federal governments poured billions into new public schools, high schools, colleges, and universities.⁸⁶⁸ High school became a centre of teen drug use and drug selling because that is where teenagers *were*.

⁸⁶³ Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 100.

⁸⁶⁴ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 140.

⁸⁶⁵ Philip Oreopoulos, “Canadian Compulsory School Laws and their Impact on Educational Attainment and Future Earnings,” Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2005: 11. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2005251-eng.pdf>

⁸⁶⁶ Statistics Canada, *Education in Canada: A Statistical Review*, Cat. No 81-229. In Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*: 566.

⁸⁶⁷ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 140.

⁸⁶⁸ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 111.

As early as 1922, Emily Murphy insisted drugs were being peddled inside Canadian high schools, despite only offering (unconvincing) evidence from the United States.⁸⁶⁹ In 1923, Vancouver South MP H.H. Stevens told parliament that drug dealers were selling in both high and elementary schools, but provided no evidence for his argument.⁸⁷⁰ Lurid American paperbacks in the 1950s portrayed high schoolers as out-of-control “dope fiends,” despite police arguing “dope” in schools was “utter nonsense.”⁸⁷¹ The truth was, according to Reginald Smart of the ARF, there was “almost no use” of cannabis among high school students before the mid- to late-1960s, with the first indications of high school use in Toronto in 1966 and 1967.⁸⁷² This corresponds to my own research – for those born in 1949 and earlier, the average age of first drug use was 19.6 years old. For those born after 1949, it was 15.1. Exceptions, like Gaz, Howard, Dennis, and DJ were influenced to use drugs by people outside of school, in the rising subcultural milieus of Yorkville, Kitsilano, and McGill Ghetto/Carré St-Louis.⁸⁷³ But by 1970, only the most isolated communities did not have at least a few drug users in their schools. The trendline on **Table 3-1**⁸⁷⁴ below shows the later your date of birth, the earlier you were likely to first touch drugs.

⁸⁶⁹ Murphy, *The Black Candle*, 125-126.

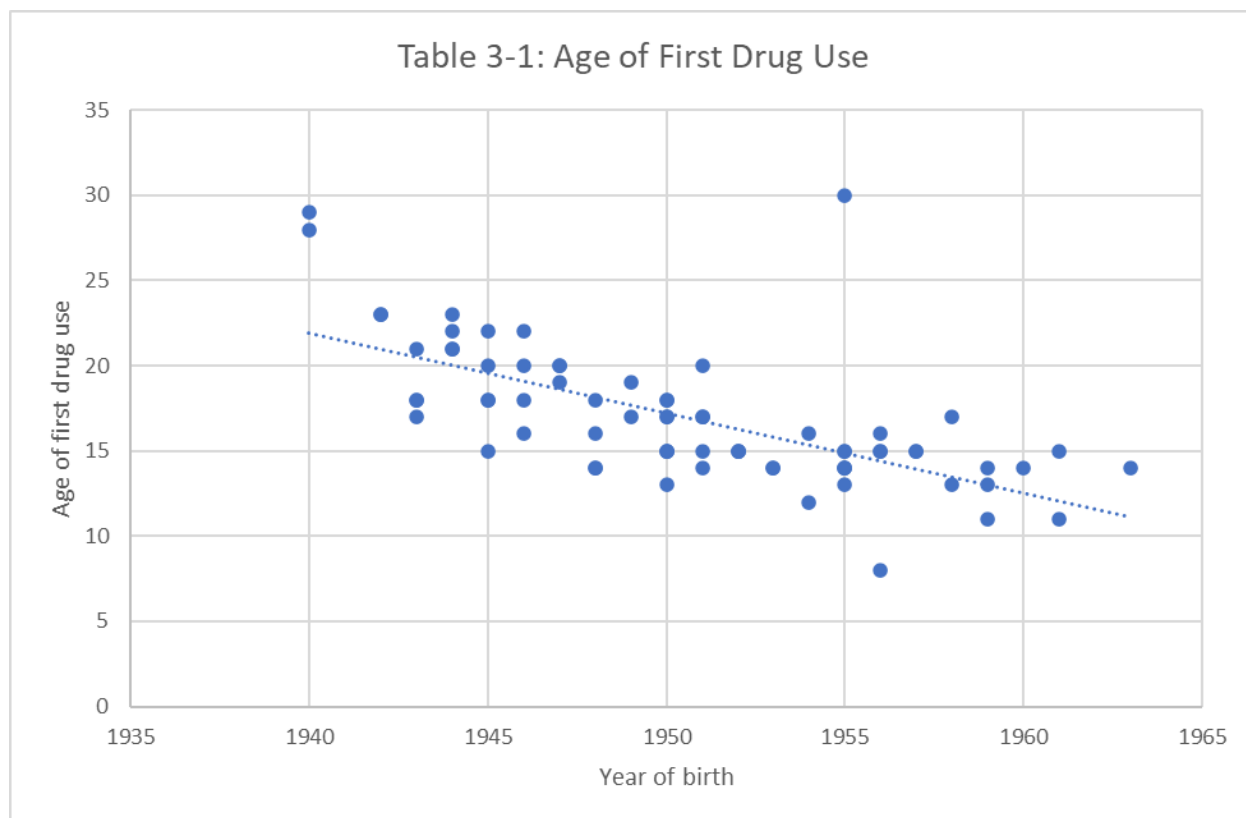
⁸⁷⁰ Catherine Carstairs, “‘Hop Heads’ and ‘Hypes’: Drug Use, Regulation and Resistance in Canada, 1921-1961,” PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 2000: 35.

⁸⁷¹ Stephen J. Gertz, *Dope Menace: The Sensational World of Drug Paperbacks, 1900-1970*, Port Townsend WA: Feral House, 2008: 14.

⁸⁷² Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 30.

⁸⁷³ “Gaz,” Interview; “Howard,” Interview; “Dennis,” Interview; “DJ,” Interview.

⁸⁷⁴ Based on interviewee responses.



There was also no significant gender difference – both men and women, boys and girls, started doing drugs at the same time. From high school, they brought drugs both to university and blue-collar work, where there was “a general shift toward marijuana and away from alcohol.”⁸⁷⁵

For most young people in the twentieth century, it was high school that introduced them to subculture, through cliques. Historian Cynthia Comacchio has argued that high schools in Canada “not only organized peer groups [cliques], but also introduced them to age-based activities outside of school”⁸⁷⁶ – activities that would (later) include using drugs. In the 1950s, cliques became more solidified, as teenagers gelled into jocks, squares, preppies, greasers, mods,

⁸⁷⁵ Milligan, *Rebel Youth*, 22.

⁸⁷⁶ Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 7.

and rockers – and later, hippies and punks. In 1968, Toronto criminologist Edmund Vaz argued high school became “the great levelling ground where differences become largely neutralized, students homogenized” into cliques.⁸⁷⁷ “Once a boy enters high school he becomes quickly absorbed with the interests and attitudes of peers and teachers from all social strata,” Vaz wrote, “and peers expect enthusiastic participation in their activities.”⁸⁷⁸ Regarding girls, American sociologist Marsha Rosenbaum wrote, “Whether high school provided the setting for the social world or the impetus for dropping out and finding it elsewhere, the high school social system stands out as central in the formation of teenage social worlds.”⁸⁷⁹ Even at boarding school, “Arthur” spoke of different groups, “like the nerds and the jocks, and we were the stoners, right? The rockers and stoners basically.”⁸⁸⁰ Because it happens at such a young age, and represents such a disruptive shift in life patterns – like getting married or starting your first job – high school “may provide the core of the emerging adult life story that we carry around with us, largely unchanged, for the remainder of our adult lives.”⁸⁸¹ The cliques we participated in, and the drugs we may have done with those cliques, become part of our identity, whether or not we continue to use drugs or identify subculturally.

As drugs became more available in high schools, Yorkville, Kitsilano, the McGill Ghetto/Carré St-Louis, and other countercultural milieus became less, for lack of a better word,

⁸⁷⁷ Edmund W. Vaz, “Delinquency and the Youth Culture: Upper and Middle-Class Boys,” in W.E. Mann, ed., *Social Deviance in Canada*, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1971: 28.

⁸⁷⁸ Vaz, “Delinquency and the Youth Culture,” in Mann, ed. *Social Deviance in Canada*, 28.

⁸⁷⁹ Rosenbaum, *Women on Heroin*, 20.

⁸⁸⁰ “Arthur,” Interview.

⁸⁸¹ Daniel J. Schachter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past*, New York: Basic Books, 1996: 299.

“necessary.” Many teenagers went to these areas after school and on the weekends, like the “so-called teeny-boppers and screamies” Paulus interviewed in 1967.⁸⁸² But many did not, sticking to their own corner of the city. Which is why, by 1967, Mayor Tom Campbell thought cracking down on Fourth Avenue/Kitsilano was not enough, and wanted high school students across the city regularly frisked.⁸⁸³

Cannabis and hallucinogens like LSD were the most common drugs in 1966-67, but methamphetamine and other “harder” drugs also came around after 1969, though less commonly. Most interviewees I spoke to either bought their drugs from their friends, or were dealers who purchased wholesale and sold them at school.

ARF studies show a rise in cannabis use among high school students through the late 1960s and 1970s. Smart and Fejer (1975) discovered that in 1968, 6.7 per cent of Toronto high schoolers had used cannabis in the previous six months. By 1970, that number had risen to 18.3 per cent; in 1972 it was 20.9 per cent; and in 1974, the final year of the study, 22.9 per cent.⁸⁸⁴ Clearly, Toronto high school students were using more marijuana through the late 1960s and early 1970s. They were also using more than the general adult population – a household survey by Smart and Fejer (1971) revealed 12.2 per cent of men and 5.5 per cent of women had used cannabis in the last month.⁸⁸⁵ Regarding hallucinogens like LSD, Smart and Fejer note 2.6 per cent of Toronto high schoolers had used LSD, and 2 per cent had used another hallucinogen, in the previous six months in 1968. In 1970, it was 8.5 per cent for LSD and 6.7 per cent for other

⁸⁸² Paulus, *Psychedelic Drug Use in Vancouver*, 28.

⁸⁸³ Simma Holt, *Sex and the Teen-Age Revolution*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1967: 70.

⁸⁸⁴ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 32. See Table 2, 32-34.

⁸⁸⁵ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 33.

hallucinogens; in 1972 6.4 per cent for LSD and 7.2 per cent other hallucinogens; and in 1974, 4.1 per cent for LSD and 5.7 per cent for other hallucinogens.⁸⁸⁶ Hallucinogen use appeared to peak in 1970, but kids were still using it going into the late 1970s.

In Montreal, Bilodeau (1971) surveyed secondary school and CEGEP students, and discovered that in 1969, 8.6 per cent of students had used cannabis in the previous 12 months; in 1971, that number nearly tripled to 23 per cent.⁸⁸⁷ These are roughly comparative to Smart and Fejer's Toronto numbers, though it must be noted Bilodeau asked about the previous 12 months, whereas Smart and Fejer asked about the previous six. Regarding hallucinogens, Bilodeau (1971) discovered that in 1969, 3.0 per cent of students had used LSD in the previous six months, and 2.5 per cent had used some other hallucinogen in the previous six months.⁸⁸⁸ In 1971, this grew to 8.1 per cent of students using LSD in the previous six months, and 7.7 per cent another hallucinogen.⁸⁸⁹ This roughly corresponds to Smart and Fejer's Toronto numbers.

Drugs appeared to have been much more common among Vancouver high school students, though comparisons are inexact due to differences in survey methodology. Russell & Hollander (1974) found that in 1970, 38.9 per cent of Vancouver high school students had used cannabis in the previous 12 months; in 1974, it was 41.5 per cent.⁸⁹⁰ This is double, or nearly double, the rates we see in Montreal and Toronto. Experience with hallucinogens among Vancouver high school students seems to have also been much higher than in Toronto or Montreal, with Russell & Hollander (1974) discovering that in 1970, 21.2 per cent of high school

⁸⁸⁶ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 96. See Table 11, 95-99.

⁸⁸⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 32.

⁸⁸⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 95.

⁸⁸⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 95.

⁸⁹⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 32.

students had ever used LSD. In 1974, that number dropped to 13.7 per cent, but now “other hallucinogens” was counted as a category, and 18.4 per cent of students had used those.⁸⁹¹ Though Vancouver’s high school hallucinogen use appears to be much higher than Toronto’s, differences in methodology make it difficult to compare them – in 1970, Russell & Hollander asked if students had *ever* used these drugs; Smart and Fejer asked about the previous six months. In 1974, Russell & Hollander altered their questionnaire, and discovered that 9.7 per cent of students had used hallucinogens over the previous six months,⁸⁹² still significantly higher than Toronto students. It also bears noting that in every survey, *the number of non-drug users outnumbers the number of drug users in high school*. It is important not to exaggerate the extent to which high schools became centres for drug use – it was still much more normal to not use drugs than to use them.

“George,” who was born in 1950 to a middle-class Toronto family, first smoked pot on summer vacation in 1967, and then moved on to the high school bathroom across from the principal’s office. He said,

the teachers, they, they didn’t know anything about it. We must have stunk the place up. In retrospect. But no one said anything to us. I don’t think they knew what it was. It took them a while to catch on. And they were, I think, the staff generally speaking was kind of blindsided by the general youth thing anyway.⁸⁹³

“Roy,” also born in 1950 to lower class parents in Toronto, spoke of drugs in high school being taken to the nth degree. Though he is likely exaggerating, it gave the tenor of the times when he said, “Kids in high school were walking around with 8½ x 11 inch hunks of hash an inch thick

⁸⁹¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 96.

⁸⁹² Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 96.

⁸⁹³ “George,” Interview.

in their binders that they were dealing at school, or had kilos of weed at home.”⁸⁹⁴ “Sid” was born in 1951 to a white, working-class family in a small-town in Ontario. He smoked his first joint around 1968 in high school, because others were doing it. “You know, people at school had started smoking, and so I got a nickel bag. And yeah, we somehow rolled a joint up, and there was much hilarity and yahoo and away we went.” From there, he “never stopped” smoking cannabis.⁸⁹⁵ “John” was born into a poor white family in 1954, and grew up in Ottawa until 1969, when he moved to Toronto. Before leaving Ottawa at 15, he had smoked marijuana and hash, sniffed glue (which he did not like) and dropped LSD once, which he enjoyed “greatly.” At his new junior high school in Toronto, he found a group of sympathetic friends right away. “We were tail end of the hippie movement but we liked to consider ourselves hippies. But throughout the most part, it was just four or five of us that would hang together a lot.”⁸⁹⁶ John and his friends would smoke about “four times a week” and drop acid and Quaaludes, which were becoming popular in the counterculture.⁸⁹⁷ By 16, he was “probably doing LSD every weekend.”⁸⁹⁸ Reggae singer JuLion King said “ganja” changed the atmosphere at his high school in North York, saying it made youth more accepting of each other.⁸⁹⁹

⁸⁹⁴ “Roy,” Interview with Author, 21 May 2020. Roy declined to do a live interview by phone or Zoom, preferring instead to answer questions “on paper.” He is the only interviewee who chose this option. Quotes are cut and pasted from his written responses.

⁸⁹⁵ “Sid,” Interview.

⁸⁹⁶ “John,” Interview.

⁸⁹⁷ See, for example, Boon, *The Road of Excess*, 117 and Aaron Chapman, *Vancouver Vice: Crime and Spectacle in the City’s West End*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2021: 82. Fourteen of my interviewees used it.

⁸⁹⁸ “John,” Interview.

⁸⁹⁹ Wilson, *King Alpha’s Song in a Strange Land*, 168.

Changing Drug Geographies in Vancouver

In Vancouver, the hippie scene migrated east, to the Downtown Eastside most hippies had so studiously avoided. (Toronto and Montreal will be discussed in Chapter 4.) As the 1960s turned to the 1970s, Vancouver still had its terrible problem with heroin, and it became worse as Chinese gangs replaced the French Connection as the major heroin importers west of Montreal. High-quality “China White,” cultivated in the Golden Triangle, processed in Hong Kong and South Vietnam, and trafficked mostly by couriers on commercial airliners, gained market share.⁹⁰⁰ After the early 1970s, Vancouver became import port number one.⁹⁰¹ Meanwhile, heroin continued to be more popular in Vancouver than anywhere else in Canada. In 1973, there were 38 narcotics-related deaths in Vancouver, compared to only 14 in the rest of Canada.⁹⁰² Over half of registered methadone users – generally people trying to get off heroin – were in British Columbia, and most of them would have been in Vancouver.⁹⁰³

“Quinn” had finished his degree at UBC, and watched the Kitsilano scene disintegrate in front of him. The younger kids who were moving into the neighbourhood “had different motivations for doing drugs. For some it was an end in itself. Just to get high.”⁹⁰⁴ And for others, “it was power and control over others, something cultish, dark and evil,” the sort of thing that evoked Charles Manson.⁹⁰⁵ As a father with young children, watching stoned parents neglect their kids was particularly difficult for Quinn, though he also admitted that much of this was

⁹⁰⁰ Schneider, *Iced*, 353.

⁹⁰¹ Schneider, *Iced*, 482.

⁹⁰² Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 61.

⁹⁰³ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, Table 17, 202.

⁹⁰⁴ “Quinn,” Interview.

⁹⁰⁵ “Quinn,” Interview.

new, people did not know what they were doing, and money was tight. “Many in the ‘community,’ as part of the ‘revolution’ were rejecting materialism and economic upward mobility, and therefore lived on precarious incomes. As [Beat poet Lawrence] Ferlinghetti said in one of his poems, ‘high society is low society, I’m a social climber.’”⁹⁰⁶

Through the late 1960s, the hippies moved into the rest of the city. North Vancouver became something of a hippie hangout. The city was less developed than it is now, and several hippies saw it as an escape into the country, though it was only a short drive across Burrard Inlet from downtown Vancouver. Tommy Chong described a woman named Helen, an “Earth Mother” type who sold Tommy his first acid in 1966. She had “a house on stilts” in the “Mud Flats,” where “the toilet was just a hole to the ground below.”⁹⁰⁷ Though Chong did not specify, the “mud flats” he was talking about were likely the shacks at Dollarton, a community on Indian Arm, near Cates Park, east of North Vancouver. There, a series of squatter shacks had existed since World War II; their most famous resident was British writer Malcolm Lowry, who lived there from the beginning until 1954.⁹⁰⁸ Residents, who by the late 1960s were mostly hippies and other countercultural types, managed to hold off demolition until 1971.⁹⁰⁹ Al Neil had “a beached floathouse two hundred tree-draped feet off the Dollarton highway.”⁹¹⁰ The hippies in Dollarton were “some of the furthest out, hard-core, anti-establishment counterculture hippy types in the Lower Mainland,” Quinn said.⁹¹¹ “Elliot,” who had come over from England to Vancouver in 1965, set up a commune just across Indian Arm from Dollarton, in Belcarra. There they

⁹⁰⁶ “Quinn,” Interview.

⁹⁰⁷ Chong, Interview. He also told the story in Chong, *Cheech & Chong*, 49.

⁹⁰⁸ Norman Ravvin, *Canada: An Intimate Travelogue*, Calgary: Red Deer Press, 2001: 57.

⁹⁰⁹ Ravvin, *Canada*, 57.

⁹¹⁰ Alex Varty, “Accretionary Logic,” in Neil, *Origins*, 42.

⁹¹¹ “Quinn,” Interview.

meditated, cooked organic foods, and did what drugs they had, though drugs were not the main purpose of the commune, Elliot insisted.⁹¹² Joel, Elliot, and Quinn also mentioned North Vancouver neighbourhoods Lonsdale and Lynn Valley. Lynn Valley, according to Quinn, was “a harder drug scene. And that involved cocaine and heroin, and not only snorting and smoking, but also injecting.”⁹¹³

In downtown Vancouver, the Gastown neighbourhood also had a countercultural aspect to it. Located around Water, Alexander, Powell, and Carrall streets,⁹¹⁴ Gastown formed a liminal space between the corporate-dominated downtown core, and the heroin-addled Downtown Eastside. It also formed a mixing ground for hippies and skid row addicts. Part of the neighbourhood catered to middle-class tourists and locals, but much of it was still run-down, and featured sleazy bars and shabby single-occupancy hotels, where some hippies stayed. The *Georgia Straight* was also headquartered there. Though the neighbourhood had always housed addicts and street people, by 1970, there were “the acid freaks and the anarchists who adopted Gastown as their own.”⁹¹⁵ It is here we see bars enter as part of Vancouver’s counterculture, if not as a place to drink, then as a place to score. As Myrna Kostash wrote, Gastown had “‘freak’ bars, the Gastown Inn, the Dominion, the Alcazar, comfortable places in which to drink and rub shoulders with old winos, to deal and to score. ‘Dealers walked among the tables like street vendors: Hash anyone? Acid, grass, MDA?’”⁹¹⁶

⁹¹² “Elliot,” Interview.

⁹¹³ “Quinn,” Interview.

⁹¹⁴ Boudreau, “Hippies, Yippies, the Counterculture, and the Gastown Riot in Vancouver, 1968-71,” n.p.

⁹¹⁵ Boudreau, “Hippies, Yippies, the Counterculture, and the Gastown Riot in Vancouver, 1968-71,” n.p.

⁹¹⁶ Kostash, *Long Way From Home*, 123.

“Lou” was born in 1946 in Vancouver and wrote for the underground press. He said bands like the United Empire Loyalists and Papa Bear played in Gastown, and he would go there to write about them. He said Gastown was still mostly made up of alcoholics in the early 1970s, despite its changing reputation.⁹¹⁷ “Murray” described Gastown as more “alcohol-oriented” as opposed to Kitsilano, where liquor “wasn’t the chosen drug.”⁹¹⁸ “Timmy” was born in 1956 to upper class parents in West Vancouver, and started drinking and smoking when he was just eight years old. “My mother was busy and we weren’t well supervised,” he said.⁹¹⁹ By 12, he was interested in the hippie movement. There were coffeehouses in West Vancouver,⁹²⁰ where he would see bands, and he would try to buy marijuana, though he was twice ripped off and sold something else – maybe oregano, he thinks. Then he started buying from friends at school, and “that sort of very quickly progressed to finding it in Gastown.”⁹²¹ Even though he was only 15 or so by this point, he could get into bars like the Dominion Hotel, and buy the hash and LSD they would hide under the table covers. Timmy became such a cannabis connoisseur, he opened a safe deposit box at the bank, and would keep “half a dozen” or so different varieties of marijuana and hashish in it.⁹²²

The counterculture spread into the rest of downtown. Several interviewees spoke of a house on Hamilton Street near the Central Post Office, where people would crash and all sorts of

⁹¹⁷ “Lou,” Interview.

⁹¹⁸ “Murray,” Interview.

⁹¹⁹ “Timmy,” Interview.

⁹²⁰ West Vancouver should not be confused with Vancouver’s West End. West Vancouver, or “West Van,” is a mostly upper-class city-suburb on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, next to North Vancouver. The West End is the western part of Vancouver proper, including Kitsilano, Point Grey, UBC, etc.

⁹²¹ “Timmy,” Interview.

⁹²² “Timmy,” Interview. This seems like a tall tale, but I will take Timmy at his word for it.

drug-fuelled shenanigans took place. “Oscar” lived there for a while.⁹²³ Performer Marcel “The Human Flamethrower” Horne also lived there, and though he said it was no good for his mental health, it seemed all right sexually. “Life at the Hamilton Street House was becoming impossible, always full of crashers and people who were on different mental levels than I was. Sometimes I felt so old. During one short period I was going to bed with three girls at a time.”⁹²⁴ He once performed next to a very quiet Leonard Cohen, as Oscar described it.⁹²⁵ Al Neil hung around, as did Kim Foikis, the “official town fool.”⁹²⁶ Quinn was also at the house on Hamilton, which he described as a “countercultural hub,” though he avoided discussing details for matters of privacy. “So many stories!” he teased.⁹²⁷

Chinatown, firmly on the Eastside of town, was a source of cheap meals and housing. “The Doors” were three restaurants so named because nobody could remember their real names, but everyone remembered their colourful doors. They served five cent bowls of rice, and one had 25 cent barbecue pork. “Thus you could keep yourself going for a base rate of only thirty cents per diem,” according to memoirist Douglas Fetherling.⁹²⁸ “Johannes” was born in 1940 to a poor Manitoba family, so he was older than most of the hippies he met in Vancouver. He lived in a “collective” house on the outskirts of Chinatown. “I was in a house that was in the subculture, as you could call it,” Johannes said.⁹²⁹ He would go to Stanley Park, especially to the “Be-ins,” where he likely (he is not sure) took LSD for the first time.⁹³⁰ Several of my interviewees

⁹²³ “Oscar,” Interview.

⁹²⁴ Horne, *Annals of the Firebreather*, 143.

⁹²⁵ “Oscar,” Interview.

⁹²⁶ “Oscar,” Interview. For more on Foikis, see Donaldson, *Fool’s Gold*.

⁹²⁷ “Quinn,” Interview.

⁹²⁸ Fetherling, *Travel By Night*, 123.

⁹²⁹ “Johannes,” Interview.

⁹³⁰ “Johannes,” Interview.

mentioned Stanley Park as a hub of countercultural activity, especially the “Be-ins,” where thousands of hippies would gather in the park to “just be.” “Often at Be-Ins, someone would show up with a bag, and five or six people would roll it, and it would just get passed out,” Joel said.⁹³¹

Simon Fraser University (SFU) opened at the top of Burnaby Mountain in 1966. Immediately it became a countercultural hub, a place where hippies and New Leftists battled a new administration that had no idea what it was in for. Margaret Trudeau wrote that student activism was “born” there.⁹³² Lou helped found SFU’s newspaper *The Peak*. He was a member of Students for a Democratic University (SDU) and described his politics at the time as “radical naïve.” And they were all smoking cannabis, and occasionally using LSD and mescaline.⁹³³ Psychologist Bruce Alexander, who would go on to work with addicts and write about addiction and the war on drugs, came to work at SFU in 1970. He said, “Everything was new, everything was experimental, there was plenty of drugs, but it was mostly marijuana and LSD.”⁹³⁴

By 1970, most of Vancouver was, to some extent, a countercultural area. From Jericho Beach to Simon Fraser University; to the tony suburbs of West Vancouver to the dilapidated streets of the Downtown Eastside; and up through the North Shore, from Lonsdale to Indian Arm; the counterculture had, despite the city administration’s best efforts, infested the city. The Eastside became mixed enough that “Cheech and Chong” became counterculture and drug-

⁹³¹ “Joel,” Interview.

⁹³² Trudeau, *Beyond Reason*, 25. The Student Movement, as it came to be defined, did not begin at SFU, but more likely Berkeley in 1964. Bryan Palmer notes that the student movement in Canada “peaked” at SFU in 1968. Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 288.

⁹³³ “Lou,” Interview.

⁹³⁴ Alexander, Interview.

culture icons without ever going to Kitsilano. When they began their comedy careers, Tommy Chong, a musician from Calgary, and Richard “Cheech” Marin, a draft resister from Los Angeles, “never went west of Davie Street.”⁹³⁵ (Chong likely means he never went west of Thurlow or Burrard Streets, which intersect Davie and are in the centre of the city. Davie is an east-west corridor.) Marin wrote in his memoirs, “I loved the hippie days; anything was possible. [My girlfriend] didn’t blink when I said we were going to Skid Row to see naked improv theatre. There was a thin line between the hippies and the homeless, and we moved in and out of each other’s worlds effortlessly.”⁹³⁶

Conclusion

A more intervening Canadian state changed the lives of subcultural drug users, shaping their experiences through education spending, arts grants, make-work programs, and income supports like welfare. It caused many subcultural users to consider the federal government a friend of the hippies, which enraged conservatives like Tom Campbell, and created a major cultural difference between Canada and the United States, where the federal government was much more antagonistic to the counterculture and subcultural drug use. Meanwhile, the counterculture’s Canadian “hot spots” – especially Yorkville – became centres for heavy methamphetamine use, which affected the subculture, making it less idealistic and more violent than before. This would pave the way for new subcultures to develop with more nihilistic messages – like the beer- and speed-swilling punks we will discuss in Chapter 4. High school

⁹³⁵ Chong, Interview.

⁹³⁶ Marin, *Cheech Is Not My Real Name...But Don't Call Me Chong!*, 83.

became more common than ever, meaning it became *the* formative experience of young people's lives, and it was there that many young people began experimenting with both drugs and alternative ways of looking at the world in subculture. Finally, Vancouver's unique human geography changed, as hippies spread throughout the city, including the heroin-addled Downtown Eastside.

Chapter 4: Inferno (1973-1980)

Introduction – Graham

“Graham” was born in 1961 to a middle-class white family in Toronto, the fourth youngest of my interviewees. He first smoked marijuana in Grade 9, when he was in a band with some older kids at his school. “If you were in a rock band, and you had some [...] notoriety within your high school, [then] drugs were just sort of available if you wanted them,” Graham said. “I never had to buy them, nor would I have wanted to buy them.”⁹³⁷ He did not use LSD because older friends and relatives kept reminding him that he had lost the generational lottery when it came to drug use, and that LSD in 1977 was not the same as in 1967. “I remember saying to older brothers and sisters of my friends, and asking, ‘Should I try acid?’” Graham remembered. “And they’d say, ‘No, not now. You missed the boat.’”⁹³⁸ He described his high school as a “drug school, not a drinking school,” so when he joined his first punk band and he saw them drink twenty⁹³⁹ beers each, he was flabbergasted, and totally unable to keep up. Drugs and alcohol had lost some of their symbolic connotations, as rebellion for love and peace descended into mischief for its own sake. Graham elaborated, in a statement worth quoting at length,

I think the late seventies was the worst period in modern history for bad behaviour. And the reason I say that is because the ideals of the hippie movement had died, there was all this kind of open sexuality which started with the hippie thing but was much more concentrated and wild during the seventies, especially the late seventies. There was no AIDS. People didn’t use condoms. So there was tons of this free open sex happening all the time. Drugs were everywhere, all kinds of different drugs. Things like drunk driving,

⁹³⁷ “Graham,” Interview with Author, 4 June 2020.

⁹³⁸ “Graham,” Interview.

⁹³⁹ Likely an exaggeration, but I take the point – his punk friends drank much more than he did or could.

if you talked to people honestly from that era, people used to basically say, ‘Stay in the right-hand lane, go slow, and just don’t get caught.’ We didn’t talk about the possibility you were going to kill other people or kill yourself. No, it was tons of drunk driving. Underage girls, look up Lori Maddox [an underage groupie] with Bowie and [Led Zeppelin drummer John] Bonham and [Who drummer] Keith Moon. The thing with underage girls was, ‘Stop talking about it. It’s OK.’ If they know what they’re doing, it’s OK. It was a terrible era. Oh, and by the way, political correctness, there was no such thing, and people would call each other names, and bully each other. The gay community was harassed and bullied. [...] If you take 1975 to 1980, and sort of think about it in the context of today, it’s outrageous. And part of that is related to the drug thing. But it’s also just general behaviour. It was very, very bad during that period. And people think it’s funny, you know when you talk to younger people about it, they think it’s funny, until you start telling them exactly what you’re talking about and how it worked, and then they get sort of horrified.⁹⁴⁰

This culture, horrifying or not, was punk rock’s fertilizer. It also contributed to the return of heavy drinking as a subcultural act; to a resurgence of speed, through punk; the consolidation of heroin as a subcultural drug, despite its decreasing availability in the late 1970s; the rise of “the selfish drug,” cocaine; contrasting symbolisms around cannabis; and the end of Vancouver’s east-west subcultural split.

This chapter documents the replacement of one drug culture, the hippie counterculture, with another, the punks. The drug culture completed its transformation, begun in the late 1960s, from utopianism to nihilism. This was facilitated by drugs like cocaine, heroin, speed, and alcohol, which act very differently on the body, and represent different symbols, than cannabis and hallucinogens. Like speed, cocaine helped kill the counterculture, and encouraged the selfishness of the 1970s. Alcohol encouraged a rougher, more exuberant, but more violent subcultural drug experience. Heroin use declined overall in North America through the mid-to-late-1970s, but punks and other subculturalists still used it as a signifier of rebellion and

⁹⁴⁰ “Graham,” Interview.

decadence. (Though this is complicated by the fact they often hid it.) This would reach its apogee with characters like Toronto punk Stephen “Nazi Dog” Leckie, who would deliberately (and publicly) try to get as intoxicated as possible on an assortment of drugs, in as self-destructive a manner as possible, mostly to shock.

The period from 1973 to 1980 is usually portrayed as a period of decline, an era marked by a constriction in economic opportunity and hope for the future. The oil shocks of 1973 created what Norrie, Owsram, and Emery described as a time of “economic challenge,” where Canada faced the twin obstacles of poor macroeconomic performance – especially high unemployment and inflation – and slower growth.⁹⁴¹ The crime rate leapt from 5772.9 incidents per 100,000 people in 1973, to 6582.4 in 1975, to 8343.1 incidents in 1980.⁹⁴² Every year had more crime than the last, until 1988, when it began to reverse,⁹⁴³ and urban crime became a greater preoccupation in the media.⁹⁴⁴ People who lost hope and took their own lives also increased, and the suicide rate reached a high of 14.48 per 100,000 people in 1978, compared to only 7.49 in 1961 and 11.33 in 1971.⁹⁴⁵ A series of Gallup poll pointed to failing hope and a rising pessimism in the country through the late 1970s.⁹⁴⁶ All of this contributed to the late-1970s nihilism that

⁹⁴¹ Norrie, Owsram, and Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 401.

⁹⁴² Statistics Canada, CANSIM Matrix No. 2200, in Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*: 603.

⁹⁴³ Statistics Canada, CANSIM Matrix No. 2200. In Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*: 603.

⁹⁴⁴ Levine, *Toronto*, 236.

⁹⁴⁵ Canadian Centre for Health Information, CANSIM Matrices H500484, H500523, H500562, H500601, H500640, and H501018; Statistics Canada, accessed online at www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/health01/htm, February 1, 2004. In Roberts, et al. *Recent Social Trends in Canada, 1960-2000*: 615.

⁹⁴⁶ Gallup Canada, *The Gallup Report*, in Roberts, et al., *Recent Social Trends in Canada: 1960-2000*: 645, 632, 646, 638.

gave rise to punk and more self-destructive drug use. As Owsram wrote, “Faith in the future and the limitless potential for change had collapsed, replaced by a more modest sense of limits, or by an even more restrictive cynicism.”⁹⁴⁷ This floundering economy aided the transition into punk rock cynicism, as we will explore below.

Drugs, Punk, and Subcultural Nihilism

When combined with economic and social factors, certain drugs facilitated the transition from subcultural utopianism to nihilism – especially cocaine, heroin, speed, and alcohol. I will discuss each in turn, but all four represented a shift away from “softer,” more “mind expanding” drugs like cannabis and the hallucinogens, to “bad” or “enemy” drugs. As discussed in this dissertation’s introduction, a person (or subculture)’s choice of drugs is predicated on three factors: availability, suitability, and symbolism. In the case of alcohol, availability increased, as Canada’s provinces and territories dropped their drinking ages from 21 to 18 and made other restrictions less strict; but suitability and symbolism were also important, as punks took to liquor in a similar way to their rock-n-roll progenitors on Yonge Street 20 years earlier. Cocaine’s increased popularity also began with availability, as cartels set up supply networks from the Andes to North America. Cocaine had a very different effect on subcultural users than marijuana or hallucinogens did, inflating egos and encouraging selfishness in users. Heroin, meanwhile, is more complicated. Unlike cocaine and alcohol, there was a reduction in heroin’s availability in the late 1970s, thanks to international police interdiction efforts and a series of poor Southeast Asian poppy crops. Yet it became popular in punk rock, even as users hid it from each other,

⁹⁴⁷ Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 312.

forming, in essence, a “subculture-within-a-subculture” of heroin-using punks. Speed, which had contributed so much to destroying the counterculture, especially in Toronto, became a punk staple as well, both in its pharmaceutical and “street” forms.

Before punk rock, the word “punk” was a pejorative used to describe a hoodlum or otherwise ne’er-do-well, especially in film noir.⁹⁴⁸ William Burroughs, to put it delicately, thought a punk was someone who received anal sex.⁹⁴⁹ There is no agreement on who the first “punk” artists were – some argue the Velvet Underground, others Iggy Pop and the Stooges, others the New York Dolls.⁹⁵⁰ Author and editor Legs McNeil was likely the first person to use the word “punk” to describe the music and subculture we now associate with it, in his magazine, *Punk*, which he put out in New York City in 1975. Said McNeil: “‘The word “punk” seemed to sum up the thread that connected everything we liked – drunk, obnoxious, smart but not pretentious, absurd, funny, ironic, and things that appealed to the darker side.’”⁹⁵¹ The centre of punk was the Lower East Side of Manhattan, then a den of vice and crime, and particularly the club CBGB’s, where bands like the Ramones, Talking Heads, Blondie, and others got their start.⁹⁵² Punk was both a reaction against mainstream western values and the hippie counterculture – it despised them both. They also hated what had happened to mainstream rock n roll, with its focus on grand stadium shows, God-like rock n rollers, and overblown theatrics.⁹⁵³

⁹⁴⁸ Colegrave and Sullivan, *Punk*, 13.

⁹⁴⁹ Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, eds., *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*, New York: Penguin Books, 1997: 260.

⁹⁵⁰ See McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, Parts One and Two for a more in-depth discussion of punk’s roots. See also Mattson, “Leather Jackets for Flowers.”

⁹⁵¹ McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, 254.

⁹⁵² McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, 209-210.

⁹⁵³ Mattson, “Leather Jackets for Flowers,” 35.

Like the hippies, punk was heavily influenced by literature, much of it created on drugs,⁹⁵⁴ including the Beat writers, especially the heroin-addled William Burroughs.⁹⁵⁵

A major reason subcultural drug use was able to expand in the postwar era was the extension of adolescence, as young people stayed in school longer and put off jobs, families, and mortgages until their middle or even late twenties. Adolescence continued to change through the 1970s and reflected the mood of the age. As long hair, flower-print clothes, and cannabis became less shocking, the most rebellious adolescents looked for other ways to upset their parents and other adult authorities. Punk delivered that opportunity in spades, as some teenagers shaved their hair, tore their clothes, and adopted such extreme symbols as the Nazi swastika – not to identify as Nazis, but to be as outrageous as possible.⁹⁵⁶ Historian Jason Reid noted how some (American) teens started putting “erotica” up in their bedrooms, a movement that “serves to remind us that the middle-brow aesthetic that was popular during earlier eras of American history had been supplanted by a much cruder, pop culture-inspired model that oftentimes reflected many of the culture wars that arose during the late twentieth century.”⁹⁵⁷ Christopher Lasch felt that by the late 1970s, “middle-class families were beset by ‘warlike conditions’” between

⁹⁵⁴ Eryk Martin, “The Blurred Boundaries of Anarchism and Punk in Vancouver, 1970-1983,” *Labour/Le Travail* 75 (Spring 2015): 34.

⁹⁵⁵ Mattson, “Leather Jackets for Flowers,” 5. See also Martin, “The Blurred Boundaries of Anarchism and Punk in Vancouver, 1970-1983,” 35; and McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, where he is referenced throughout.

⁹⁵⁶ David Collier with Gary Topp, *Topp: Promoter Gary Topp Brought Us the World*, Wolfville NS: Conundrum Press, 2020: n.p.

⁹⁵⁷ Jason Reid, *Get Out of My Room: A History of Teen Bedrooms in America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017: 127. Though Reid (and Fass, below) are writing about the United States, I think their analyses are pertinent to Canada, since so much of their pop-culture was shared. There are no Canadian historical studies specifically about adolescence in the 1960s and 1970s.

American teenagers and their parents, because of confused and changing family and adolescent roles.⁹⁵⁸

It is important not to exaggerate punk's feelings of despair and nihilism – a lot of punks were perfectly well-adjusted and simply out for a good time. “Sue,” a heroin-addict who played in the Toronto punk scene, said, “I was just having a lot of fun. And I kind of didn't give a shit.”⁹⁵⁹ The other major centres of punk – America and England – were in much worse shape than Canada, economically and socially, and the punk movements there were much more active, violent, and into hard drugs.⁹⁶⁰ As artist Amerigo Marras put it to Philip Monk,

the punk rock scene in Toronto is considerably different from that in Britain, where the youth are victims of working class conditions. The Canadians, instead, exist on the edge of a capitalist surplus, having grown up in homogenous suburban settings. The wall-to-wall carpet environment at mom's and dad's doesn't have the glamour and the punch of what one sees on TV.⁹⁶¹

Of course, not all Canadian punks lived in capitalist surplus, and some were quite poor – but the general feeling in Canada was still better than it was in Blackout London and Bankrupt New York. Toronto punk “Roy” said Toronto punks were “spoiled,” compared to the “hard” New York

⁹⁵⁸ Paula S. Fass, “The Child Centred Family? New Rules in Postwar America,” in Paula S. Fass and Michael Grossberg, eds., *Reinventing Childhood After World War II*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012: 2.

⁹⁵⁹ “Sue,” Interview with Author, 4 May 2020.

⁹⁶⁰ In the case of the United States, and particularly the bankruptcy of New York, see McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, 256. In the case of the United Kingdom, see Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: The Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*, London: Faber & Faber, 1991, 2021: 108, 323.

⁹⁶¹ Philip Monk, *Is Toronto Burning? Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene*, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016: 200. Internal quotes by Amerigo Marras, *CEAC magazine*, *Art Communication Edition*.

types and the angry English. “They’d been ‘The British Empire,’ but now they were a washed-up race of has-beens with rotten teeth living on the dole in crappy government housing.”⁹⁶²

Like the hippies, not every punk did drugs – “Aldous,” born in 1955 to a middle-class suburban Toronto family, was deep into the Toronto punk subculture, but did not use drugs until the mid-1980s, after the movement had crested.⁹⁶³ Others, like “Larry,” who was born in 1951 to a middle-class Toronto family, did some drugs in the scene, but the focus was on the music.⁹⁶⁴ But for many, drugs and punk rock were deeply intertwined, impossible to imagine one without the other.

Heavy Drinking as Subcultural Drug Use

Because subculture is so tightly tied to music, music venues are instrumental to subculture formation and maintenance. For hippies, many of whom were under 21, this was the unlicensed coffee shop, since bars were normally out-of-bounds. As explored in Chapter 1, this influenced the music of the hippies, who created a sound that was better suited to cannabis, hallucinogens, and caffeine, then to liquor and the drugs that traditionally accompany it, speed and cocaine.

In 1970, every province and territory dropped its drinking age to 18, raising it to 19 several years later in British Columbia and Ontario⁹⁶⁵ – but it was no longer the firm 21 it had

⁹⁶² “Roy,” Interview.

⁹⁶³ “Aldous,” Interview.

⁹⁶⁴ “Larry,” Interview.

⁹⁶⁵ Heron, *Booze*, 333.

been in the 1960s. According to Craig Heron's research, more than 80 per cent of those 18 to 21 drank;⁹⁶⁶ Greg Marquis confirmed it.⁹⁶⁷ Though it is only three years, these three years are critical in the development of young people's subcultural personalities, as they exit high school and move into the world of work or higher education. It also goes beyond turning 18 – if you can be served legally at 18, then it is much easier to be served illegally at 17, 16, and so on, then when the drinking age was 21. The postwar coffee shop gave young people a place to go, but once the drinking age dropped to 18, it was the end of the coffeehouse as a gathering place for many subcultural members. Hip neighbourhoods like Yorkville in Toronto, Fourth Avenue/Kitsilano in Vancouver, and the McGill Ghetto in Montreal existed in part because of their coffee shops, and their coffee shops existed because bars would not serve anyone under 21. Except for drinking, all the things we associate with bars – music, sociability, sexual intrigue, the chance to meet strangers – happened at the coffee house. And while it is true that hippies often disdained “juicers” – people who drank – part of that might have been sour grapes at not being able to drink themselves. Once the bars opened to young people, young people flocked to them, sounding the death knell for the coffeehouses. As music journalist Nicholas Jennings noted, “the drinking age in Ontario was lowered and so it was no longer the case that young people needed to go into these coffeehouses to hear live music. They were now old enough to go into the bars on Yonge St., or any other bars in Toronto and enjoy live music there.”⁹⁶⁸ That changed the music, shifting it to a more straightforward rock and blues, the kind it is easy to listen to in bars.

⁹⁶⁶ Heron, *Booze*, 333.

⁹⁶⁷ Marquis, “From Beverage to Drug,” 63.

⁹⁶⁸ Jennings, Interview.

And it also changed the illicit drugs, because some drugs go better with alcohol than others, depending on your tastes – especially stimulants like speed and cocaine.

Of course, many teenagers were able to get alcohol before the drop in drinking age. “Ethan” would steal his dad’s Crown Royal as a teen⁹⁶⁹; “Timmy” was stealing his parents’ liquor by the age of eight, and said he could get into some Vancouver dive bars, like The Dominion in Gastown, from about 15.⁹⁷⁰ “Arthur” said he was able to drink at 15 in Montreal bars, since “they didn’t check ID back then.”⁹⁷¹ “Peter” enjoyed the thrill of underage drinking when he was eighteen.⁹⁷² “John” said it was “easy, easy” to drink at some dive bars in Toronto, like the Wallace House, even though “we looked like we were about 10 years old.”⁹⁷³ However, John said the closer you got to downtown, the stricter the ID checks were, and the LCBO and Beer Store were still off-limits if you were underage – so they sent their older friends to buy.⁹⁷⁴

The lowered drinking age allowed for punk to flourish as a drinker’s scene. Alcohol was available, and it was conceptually and suitably appropriate for punk. Suitably, because alcohol encourages a raucous good time, loud music, sexual intrigue, and violence – punk was full of all of these. Conceptually, alcohol allowed the punks to provoke the hippies, and their disdain for “juicers.”

“Tony” went from hippie to punk. He had a visceral reaction when I asked about alcohol. “Drinking, oh my God,” he said. “Drinking in the sixties was not big, and then all of a sudden it

⁹⁶⁹ “Ethan,” Interview.

⁹⁷⁰ “Timmy,” Interview.

⁹⁷¹ “Arthur,” Interview.

⁹⁷² “Peter,” Interview with Author, 22 April 2020.

⁹⁷³ “John,” Interview.

⁹⁷⁴ “John,” Interview.

was acceptable. [...] But up to that point you were a Juice Head. You know, you didn't want to be a Juice Head, you didn't want to be a Juicer."⁹⁷⁵ But in punk rock, it was not just drinking, it was excessive, ridiculous amounts of drinking. "That was the main thing with the punks was just drinking. It was like seriously, serious binge drinking and seriously drunken people everywhere. I was always dealing with drunks."⁹⁷⁶ He said beers at punk shows would often be as little as 50 cents apiece, and people were getting "absolutely paralytic" on it, "One hundred, 120 people elbow to elbow and completely shitfaced. [Alcohol] was big."⁹⁷⁷ "Serge," who also transitioned from a hippie to a punk in Montreal, remembered the change in drinking age causing all kinds of trouble. "And people, my friends, people started drinking beer and alcohol, because they all turned 17 or 18, they got to an age where they could go in bars. [...] This is where it got really ugly," he said.⁹⁷⁸ They started hanging around Old Montreal and Place Jacques-Cartier, "and this is where everybody would get drunk and do Mandrax⁹⁷⁹ and shit."⁹⁸⁰ When I asked Montreal punk "Frank" about heavy drinking, he replied, "That sounds right. We all drank."⁹⁸¹ Dorothy, who also transitioned from hippie to punk, said for most punks, "I think if they could get their hands on a Black Label [beer], they were happy."⁹⁸²

Some of the most draconian liquor laws in North America were finally repealed by the BC provincial government in 1974, allowing for "the 'debarbarization' of liquor control," in an

⁹⁷⁵ "Tony," Interview.

⁹⁷⁶ "Tony," Interview.

⁹⁷⁷ "Tony," Interview.

⁹⁷⁸ "Serge," Interview.

⁹⁷⁹ Another name for methaqualone, or Quaaludes.

⁹⁸⁰ "Serge," Interview.

⁹⁸¹ "Frank," Interview with Author, 14 December 2020.

⁹⁸² "Dorothy," Interview.

effort they hoped would increase moderation.⁹⁸³ There is little evidence it worked.⁹⁸⁴ In 1977, the British Columbia “Alcohol and Drug Commission reported that teenagers had turned back from other drugs to liquor, and in Vancouver the average age of alcoholics continued to drop.”⁹⁸⁵ That said, “Red,” who moved to Vancouver from Toronto when he was 18, found it nearly impossible to be served in even the sleaziest Vancouver bars until he was nineteen.⁹⁸⁶ Despite the liquor law changes, most pubs were still confined to the Downtown Eastside,⁹⁸⁷ where the city’s punk movement would consolidate. Vancouver’s early shows were not at bars but event halls, like the Japanese Hall or the Fourth Avenue Legion, but they still drank copious amounts of beer there.⁹⁸⁸ “People loved to drink beer and we found all kinds of interesting ways of acquiring beer,” Timmy said, while stressing the music was what was most important.⁹⁸⁹ When I asked Vancouver punk Nicholas what drugs were most common at punk shows, he answered, “Lots of alcohol.”⁹⁹⁰

In Toronto, “Bob” described an enormous amount of drinking in the punk scene, though he said some bands were more professional than others.

Original punks, like first wave punks, yes, there was a lot of drinking. There was beer everywhere. And weed, and of course, people did their speed pills or speed. But that was pretty much it, and yeah, people got drunk, but we got, first we caught a buzz before we went on, and then we drank during the gig, so by the time we came off, we were feeling excellent.⁹⁹¹

983 Campbell, *Demon Rum or Easy Money*, 152.

984 Campbell, *Demon Rum or Easy Money*, 156.

985 Campbell, *Demon Rum or Easy Money*, 164.

986 “Red,” Interview with Author, 2 August 2021.

987 Campbell, *Demon Rum or Easy Money*, 156.

988 “Timmy,” Interview.

989 “Timmy,” Interview.

990 “Nicholas,” Interview.

991 “Bob,” Interview with Author, 23 April 2020.

After the gigs, they would get drunk and go to warehouse parties, which would last into the early morning and serve cheap beer.⁹⁹² “Gerald” started drinking as a touring musician before punk, and confirmed the punks drank a great deal.⁹⁹³ “Graham,” as mentioned in the introduction, did not drink much at his high school, where illicit drugs were more popular. But when he joined his first punk band, he saw how “they fucking drank like motherfuckers.”⁹⁹⁴ Punk shows involved “a ton of drinking,” Graham said.⁹⁹⁵ “Jack,” who ran punk shows in Toronto through the late 1970s, said, “I daresay, drinking is much more of an issue with bands [than] with the pot and the drugs and all that other stuff.”⁹⁹⁶ “Sue” agreed the punk scene was, “A lot of drinking. We drank a lot, mostly beer because it was cheaper.”⁹⁹⁷ “Mary,” a musician who would have breakout success in the 1980s, remembered, “It was much more about drinking, definitely. [...] The beer, they drank so much those guys.”⁹⁹⁸

Speed as Subcultural Activity

As discussed in Chapter 3, speed, both pharmaceutical and “street,” contributed to ending the hippie counterculture. The drug would go on to play a large part in the punk scene as well – the very name “speed” seems appropriate, given the fast tempos the punks played and danced to. In

⁹⁹² “Bob,” Interview.

⁹⁹³ “Gerald,” Interview with Author, 29 April 2020.

⁹⁹⁴ “Graham,” Interview.

⁹⁹⁵ “Graham,” Interview.

⁹⁹⁶ “Jack,” Interview.

⁹⁹⁷ “Sue,” Interview.

⁹⁹⁸ “Mary,” Interview with Author, 16 December 2020.

the troika of drug choice – availability, symbolism, and suitability – speed hit every category for the punks.

Speed use was actually on the decline when punk became ascendant. The peak year for amphetamine and methamphetamine police seizures was 1974-75, with 119.3 pounds of methamphetamine and amphetamine seized. By 1976-77, it was only 5.8 pounds.⁹⁹⁹ As discussed in Chapter 3, the Addiction Research Foundation defined “speed” narrowly as “injectable methamphetamine,” relegating amphetamine, Ritalin, and other stimulants to the category “Other Stimulants.”¹⁰⁰⁰ As a result, there are two sets of separate results, one for injectable methamphetamine, and another for “other stimulants.” Regarding injectable methamphetamine, studies collected by the ARF showed peak usage in the early to mid-1970s, depending on location. Russell & Hollander (1974) discovered that 3.5 per cent of Vancouver high school students had injected methamphetamine that year.¹⁰⁰¹ Smart & Fejer (1975) found that injectable methamphetamine use was highest among Ontario high school students in 1970, when 4.5 per cent had used in the previous six months.¹⁰⁰² In 1972, this number fell to 3.3 per cent, and by 1974, it was 2.7 per cent.¹⁰⁰³ Toronto’s “speed epidemic” seemed to have softened following its peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But Smart’s (1981) next set of school surveys would show an upswing in the late 1970s. In 1977, 2.7 per cent of Ontario students had used injectable methamphetamine in the previous 12 months.¹⁰⁰⁴ But by 1979, that number had jumped to 3.6

⁹⁹⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 66.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 65.

¹⁰⁰¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70.

¹⁰⁰² Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70.

¹⁰⁰³ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70.

per cent, settling at 3.0 per cent in 1981.¹⁰⁰⁵ It is impossible to say if punk was the reason for this upswing, and it is likely influenced by the fact the 1981 study looks at the previous 12 months, while the 1975 study looked at the previous six months. But by the end of the decade, it seems more young people in Ontario were taking speed than in the middle of the decade.

In the category of “Other Stimulants,” two results seem prescient – that Vancouver high school students’ stimulant use rose substantially in the early 1970s while Ontario students’ dropped, and that Ontario students’ use increased again with the late 1970s. Russell & Hollander (1974) found that in 1970, only 6.7 per cent of Vancouver high school students had ever taken stimulants. By 1974, it rose significantly to 11.7 per cent.¹⁰⁰⁶ Smart and Fejer (1975) saw the opposite results in Ontario. In 1968, 7.3 per cent of Ontario high school students had used “other stimulants” in the previous six months. That number dropped with each administration of the survey, until 1974, when it was 5.8 per cent.¹⁰⁰⁷ Smart et al.’s (1981) follow-up of Ontario students divided “other stimulant” use into two categories, prescription and non-prescription. In 1977, 6.6 per cent of Ontario high school students had used prescription stimulants in the previous 12 months; 7.2 per cent used non-prescription stimulants.¹⁰⁰⁸ Results from 1979 and 1981 show slight declines in prescription stimulant use (5.9 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively), but more significant increases in non-prescription use (10.6 per cent and 12.1 per cent respectively).¹⁰⁰⁹ It is unclear from the questionnaire whether “prescription amphetamine” means the drugs were directly prescribed to the subject, or whether they were prescribed to

¹⁰⁰⁵ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 72.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 72.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 73.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 73.

someone and then diverted; but in any event, it is clear that overall stimulant use swung upward in the late 1970s among Ontario students. Unfortunately, there are no surveys of Quebec students or residents, for “speed” or “other stimulants,” following Bilodeau (1971),¹⁰¹⁰ which we discussed in Chapter 3. The results of these surveys appear to show an upswing in speed use in the late 1970s. Though punk was still rather marginal in the late 1970s, it seems impossible that, given the high rates of speed use in punk, it did not influence these results.

Author Daniel Jones, in his autobiographical novel *1978*, described a punk lifestyle of booze and pills in Toronto. “We drank all the time and we never slept. If I tried to sleep, I was too high on Benzedrine [speed] and only stared at the ceiling. Then I would be sitting somewhere – in a club, a diner, whatever – and suddenly I would be out cold for several hours.”¹⁰¹¹ Daniel Richler’s *Kicking Tomorrow* and Alain Cliche’s *Normal!*, though written in different languages and published decades apart, are both novels of disaffected Montreal punks in the late 1970s, wallowing in insolence, loud music, and copious amounts of drugs and alcohol.¹⁰¹² Speed (along with alcohol, cocaine, cannabis, PCP, and other drugs) features heavily, as the novels’ anti-heroes wander the city and province, jaded and seething with boredom, desperate to connect with anyone like them.¹⁰¹³

Though regulation had made it harder to get pharmaceutical speed, particularly after 1972,¹⁰¹⁴ methedrine, “Canadian Blue,” and other forms of illegal or diverted speed were, as we

¹⁰¹⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 70.

¹⁰¹¹ Daniel Jones, *1978: A Novel*, Toronto: Rush Hour Revisions, 1998: 40.

¹⁰¹² Daniel Richler, *Kicking Tomorrow*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992 and Alain Cliche, *Normal!* Trois-Pistoles, QC: Éditions Trois-Pistoles, 2009. Note it is Cliche, not Cliché.

¹⁰¹³ Richler, *Kicking Tomorrow*, and Cliche, *Normal!*.

¹⁰¹⁴ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 65.

will see below, easy enough to get. In Montreal, Frank occasionally used Benzedrine, Dexedrine, and other pills in high school and with his band, and recalled one experience where he ended up in the hospital. “I remember going on a bit of a bender, [...] I can remember collapsing at a gig because I’d been going too many days, and I couldn’t stand. I had a seizure or something. They brought me to the hospital and that was it. Didn’t have to finish the gig! [Laughs.]”¹⁰¹⁵ Graham said he saw “things like Benzedrine, bennies, small tablets of speed. People would do those.”¹⁰¹⁶ “Sue” said that in Toronto, they would use yellowjackets¹⁰¹⁷ at the bars, and sometimes buy homemade “purple wax” speed from the bikers.¹⁰¹⁸ Nicholas described people in the Vancouver scene snorting and shooting speed, though he said it became more popular in the 1980s, along with cocaine, as Vancouver punk consolidated.¹⁰¹⁹

Speed was eminently “suitable” to punk. Speed was first of all functional, in that it worked at sobering drunk punks up to play and keep the party going all night. As author Nicolas Rasmussen argued, “Speed goes well with hard drinking, allowing the user to party longer, with hard erections and rough sex, and with fighting.”¹⁰²⁰ Sam Sutherland, who wrote *Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk*, said in an interview that punks largely got drunk on beer, and then took amphetamines so they could play shows.

You have people who are heavy, heavy drinkers. And then I think, the immediate step is the amphetamines to counter the down of the alcohol. And so, you have bands like the Viletones, who would talk openly about mixing those substances to find the right

¹⁰¹⁵ “Frank,” Interview.

¹⁰¹⁶ “Graham,” Interview.

¹⁰¹⁷ Pentobarbital, a form of barbiturate, not speed. Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 225. Sue may have yellowjackets confused with a type of speed, or she may have misunderstood my question about using speed.

¹⁰¹⁸ “Sue,” Interview.

¹⁰¹⁹ “Nicholas,” Interview.

¹⁰²⁰ Rasmussen, *On Speed*, 225.

alchemy for staying awake, but also finding the right alchemy to get where you need to get to for these particularly unhinged and destructive performances.¹⁰²¹

Bob insisted that even if they drank heavily, they did not need speed to play, and that sobering up with pills was a trick later bands would use, in the 1980s. At the same time, he described a variety of speed pills he used in high school and after, and spoke about how at punk warehouse parties “you can’t just drink and stay up all night, you need other shit [drugs] too, or you’re going to pass out from the booze.”¹⁰²² Roy described an evening of punk involving “beer and ‘pep pills’ at the ’77 Crash ‘n Burn, like the Beatles in Hamburg. Just enough to get you loose and give you a bit of a boost to play those fast tempos.”¹⁰²³

Finally, speed also acted as a symbol, a punk riposte to the hippies who were perceived to be anti-speed, as represented in the 1960s rhetoric of the “Speed Kills” campaign;¹⁰²⁴ however, this was spoken of much less commonly than speed’s suitability and availability. Punk, Graham said, “was more about speedy stuff, things that would energize you not to make you dopey and slow.”¹⁰²⁵ Peter did not see any correlation between “fashion and speed,” but he admitted “people like their bennies and stuff like that.”¹⁰²⁶ He said some of his friends took speed, “but they’d take it in pills. But even that scared me and my buddies.”¹⁰²⁷ Gerald thought speed was worse than the heroin he was shooting, and he avoided it.

I didn’t really mess around with speed because it was just too much craziness on your psyche. When you think of all the nutty things that happened, and this is just through people’s distorted imagination of what they think happened, but had no concrete element

¹⁰²¹ Sam Sutherland, Interview with Author, 27 January 2020.

¹⁰²² “Bob,” Interview.

¹⁰²³ “Roy,” Interview.

¹⁰²⁴ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 69.

¹⁰²⁵ “Graham,” Interview.

¹⁰²⁶ “Peter,” Interview.

¹⁰²⁷ “Peter,” Interview.

as far as reality was concerned. So you'd watch your fucking speed freak fucking lose it man, and holy moly, I mean I'm glad it wasn't my cup of tea. At least with my thing [heroin], once you got yourself squared away it was peaceful, you know. But with those guys it was 24/7 bouncing off the walls, hearing things at the door, looking for people [indecipherable] nutty and I'm glad I wasn't involved in that.¹⁰²⁸

“Robert,” also in the Toronto scene, avoided speed because of the negative images associated with it, and the “Speed kills” campaigns that ran when he was young.¹⁰²⁹ Nicholas saw the damage speed did, and noted that the hippies had already learned to stay away from the drug, a habit the punks would have done well to follow.

I wasn't a big fan of speed. And I saw it do some real damage to people, especially once they started...well, however they did it. Injecting it could be pretty rough, but it also...because people would stop eating. And they'd stop sleeping. And the hippies knew this. I remember the *Furry Freak Brothers* comics had posters available, that said, Fat Freddy holding a handful of amphetamine pills, and trying to say, “Speed kills,” and not doing it very functionally. So yeah, it was well known as one of the worst. It was considered by many people I knew as one of the worst drugs. But it was also cheap, and it was still done by...it was cheap for how high you got for how long. It was a little bit like acid, but it did a lot more damage.¹⁰³⁰

Nicholas said some of the speed might be diverted pharmaceuticals, but many of his friends were also manufacturing “bathtub speed” at home.¹⁰³¹ Like Gerald, he also felt heroin was less harmful than speed, and even encouraged a friend to switch from speed to heroin for the sake of her health.¹⁰³² Vancouver punk Timmy shot speed a few times in the mid-1970s, and by the time punk rolled around, speed “started up and it never really slowed down.”¹⁰³³ Timmy said speed made people unpredictable and difficult to control. “Once speed got into the game, there was an

1028 “Gerald,” Interview.

1029 “Robert,” Interview.

1030 “Nicholas,” Interview.

1031 “Nicholas,” Interview.

1032 “Nicholas,” Interview.

1033 “Timmy,” Interview.

unpredictability factor,” Timmy said. “People really go nuts on that stuff and you don’t know how an individual is going to react. It’s not like liquor, it’s not like heroin.”¹⁰³⁴ Unpredictability and danger were hallmarks of late 1970s punks; they were never a hallmark of the hippie movement.

Not every punk took speed. “Larry” was around the punk scene in Toronto through the late 1970s, but he did not “know anybody who was doing speed.”¹⁰³⁵ Roy said that by 1975 in Toronto, “the big speed scene seemed to be gone.”¹⁰³⁶ The speed was still there, but Toronto was no longer “Canada’s Speed Capital.”

Heroin and Punk

Heroin became the third drug of punk rock, after alcohol and speed, and had strong symbolic associations, as a drug for degenerates and those who were willing to do anything. There is no way to account for heroin’s popularity in punk circles except by looking at punk heroin use as a cultural and symbolic decision. Using it a few times may just be crimes of opportunity, but using it regularly in the late 1970s was difficult and the drug had to be sought out. Why would punks seek out heroin when it was, as we will see below, hard to find and of notoriously poor quality? For some, it was because they became addicted when heroin was more available, like “Gerald.”¹⁰³⁷ For others, it might simply have been they enjoyed the high, like “Serge.”¹⁰³⁸ But

1034 “Timmy,” Interview. See also Boyd, *High Society*, 129 on speed and unpredictability.

1035 “Larry,” Interview.

1036 “Roy,” Interview.

1037 “Gerald,” Interview.

1038 “Serge,” Interview.

for many others, I think the answer is because heroin had a nihilist cachet other drugs did not. And though it is a matter of taste, it is hard to argue that a “mellow” drug like heroin, once so popular among jazz musicians, is “suitable” to punk rock. Speed, cocaine, and alcohol suited punk, since they encourage high energy and aggression. But heroin does not – it is a “downer” that tends to cause drowsiness and mental dullness instead,¹⁰³⁹ what Graham called a “dopey” drug.¹⁰⁴⁰ This leaves only symbolism as a contributing factor.

Heroin was less available in North America in the mid-to-late-1970s than it had been in the early 1970s. The French Connection, which had provided most of North America’s heroin from Turkey through Marseilles to the east coast, was disrupted by the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and French and Turkish authorities.¹⁰⁴¹ Corsican gangsters soon found other ways to get the product to North American markets, and Mexican “brown” and Southeast Asian “white” heroin tried to fill the void. But interdiction efforts, the fall of South Vietnam and the Kingdom of Laos, and a drought in Southeast Asia in the 1970s, caused instability in these markets as well. (In 1985, the *British Journal of Addiction* argued that a rise in heroin exports from Iran in the late 1970s fed the heroin market in the UK,¹⁰⁴² but there is no mention of this Iranian heroin in the North American literature; it appears to have mostly gone to Europe.) Heroin declined in purity and availability and increased in price,¹⁰⁴³ making cocaine and amphetamines an attractive alternative for those seeking chemical escape.¹⁰⁴⁴ Heroin convictions

¹⁰³⁹ Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 376.

¹⁰⁴⁰ “Graham,” Interview.

¹⁰⁴¹ Schneider, *Iced*, 233.

¹⁰⁴² Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 494.

¹⁰⁴³ Betty L. Davis, *Trends in Heroin Use*, Technical Report Series A-81-1, Vancouver: Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Health, Alcohol and Drug Programs, July 1981: v.

¹⁰⁴⁴ McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 397.

in Canada reached a peak of 1290 in 1973 and declined from there, with 600 convictions in 1977 and 223 in 1980.¹⁰⁴⁵ Analysing Bureau of Dangerous Drugs statistics on “known users” of narcotics, Smart noted the number of new users added to the index every year was “relatively small in the late 1970s and highest in the early and mid-1970s. Since 1977, the number of new cases added has been declining greatly: by 1979 it was down to the level of the late 1960s.”¹⁰⁴⁶ Heroin use was rare among young people, so much so that it was often left off drug use surveys.¹⁰⁴⁷ A Vancouver study, Russell & Hollander (1974), concluded that in 1970, 1.7 per cent of high school students reported ever having used heroin. In 1974, it was 1.3 per cent. The same survey also showed that 18 per cent of students in Vancouver and 10 per cent outside of Vancouver had been offered heroin.¹⁰⁴⁸ However, Smart noted, “There is also some doubt about the validity of students’ responses to questions about heroin use”¹⁰⁴⁹ a concern echoed by author Jacob Sullum.¹⁰⁵⁰ Fewer people in general were using heroin, and the heroin they were using was more diluted, sometimes containing no heroin at all.¹⁰⁵¹ Nicholas said “people were using all sorts of drugs anyway, and the quality of the heroin made it one of the safer drugs to use.”¹⁰⁵²

Heroin was highly stigmatized even among other drug users. Historian David Courtwright wrote that in 1930s America, “opium smokers universally regarded heroin users as

¹⁰⁴⁵ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, Table 6, 56.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 55.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 50.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 50.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 53.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Sullum, *Saying Yes*, 3.

¹⁰⁵¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 46.

¹⁰⁵² “Nicholas,” Interview.

an inferior caste.”¹⁰⁵³ The term “junkie” – from addicts searching through industrial dumps for saleable metal – came to signify this lower-class stigma.¹⁰⁵⁴ Psychologist Stanley Peele noted at the beginning of the twentieth century, “heroin ‘came to be seen in American society as the nonpareil drug of addiction – as leading inescapably from even the most casual contact to an intractable dependence, withdrawal from which was traumatic and unthinkable for the addict.’”¹⁰⁵⁵ Heroin’s signifiers were *very* different from cannabis, hallucinogens, or cocaine. Cannabis and hallucinogens were seen as “mind-opening” drugs by most subcultural users prior to the punks; cocaine was a symbol of wealth and high living (see below). Heroin, on the other hand, was viewed as a dead-end, the drug of the desperate and depraved, like the punks. As American sociologist Barry Spunt wrote, “In contrast to other hard drugs such as cocaine, using heroin is typically seen not just as ‘deviant’ but as *dramatically* deviant.”¹⁰⁵⁶ Historian Doug Ogram wrote that, though methamphetamine infiltrated the hippies, “heroin always remained on the fringes.”¹⁰⁵⁷ John Armstrong, a.k.a. Buck Cherry of Vancouver punk band the Modernettes, wrote in his autobiography,

Opium, cocaine, freebase, barbiturates, amphetamines, cough syrup, Pam and nail-polish remover were all acceptable for getting fucked-up depending on the circumstances, but I drew the line at heroin, which is pretty much the last place you can draw it. What’s left? – I won’t do fissionable materials? I stay well clear of drain cleaner?¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵³ David T. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001: 83.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Courtwright, *Dark Paradise*, 110.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Sullum, *Saying Yes*, 223.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Barry Spunt, *Heroin and Music in New York City*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014: 173. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ogram, *Born at the Right Time*, 202.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Armstrong, *Guilty of Everything*, 104.

An oft-repeated argument against the legalization of cannabis was that it was a “gateway” to heroin use (even if studies disproved the link).¹⁰⁵⁹ In their ethnography of Yorkville, Smart, Jackson, and Alampur noted the neighbourhoods’ denizens would take almost any drug, except heroin or morphine. They wrote, “hippies, weekenders, and motorcyclists” would “never take [heroin or morphine] willingly, although some greasers are heroin addicts.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Motorcyclists avoided heroin because of organizational discipline, at least in the case of Satan’s Choice, where members caught using needles were beaten with a baseball bat.¹⁰⁶¹

Part of heroin’s reputation is deserved – heroin addiction is very hard to break, though it does take several weeks of constant use to become physically addicted.¹⁰⁶² In 2007, the *Lancet* ranked heroin as the most harmful illicit drug in the UK.¹⁰⁶³ On the other hand, heroin – like the morphine doctors use to control pain in hospital – is a very safe drug if you know the contents of what you are using. Overdoses result from being sold products with inconsistent quality – one day a user may buy something that is 10 per cent pure, another day it can be 90 per cent pure, but they have no way of knowing, and as a result, they use too much and overdose.¹⁰⁶⁴ Someone with a steady supply of unadulterated heroin, maintained with a medical expert, can live a long –

¹⁰⁵⁹ Martel, *Not This Time*, 32.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Smart, Jackson, and Alampur, *The Yorkville Subculture*, 61.

¹⁰⁶¹ Edwards, *Unrepentant*, 45.

¹⁰⁶² Kuhn, Schwartzwelder, and Wilson, *Buzzed*, 234.

¹⁰⁶³ Victoria Berridge, *Demons: Our Changing Attitudes to Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013: 2.

¹⁰⁶⁴ An important note: the overdose crisis today is the result of adulteration with powerful synthetic opiates, especially fentanyl. This was not an issue in the 1960s and 1970s, and overdose rates were *much* lower than they are now. See Benjamin Perrin, *Overdose: Heartbreak and Hope in Canada’s Opioid Crisis*, Toronto: Viking, 2020.

albeit addicted – life, a point regularly made by the harm reduction movement.¹⁰⁶⁵ Sociologist Jock Young wrote in 1972,

Heroin is usually billed as an exceedingly lethal drug whose continued use leads inevitably to the early death of his victim. There is little evidence that heroin *per se* is in fact such a dangerous drug. Rather it is the particular circumstances of administration, lifestyle and market which explain the exceedingly high mortality rate of certain groups of addicts.¹⁰⁶⁶

My interviewee “Howard” felt similarly. “Heroin I think is very manageable and I don’t see it as being the great evil that is portrayed in our society,” he said. “It’s not nearly as bad for your body as say alcohol or tobacco. You just get this really nice, loose high [...]. But now you can’t take it [because of fentanyl].”¹⁰⁶⁷

Symbolically, heroin can signify rebellion; as Spunt put it, “What better drug to express rebellion? Heroin was the ultimate rebellion.”¹⁰⁶⁸ However, this argument is complicated by the fact many punks kept their heroin use quiet and did not advertise their habits to either their friends in punk or the public. This brings up theoretical issues around deviance and its purpose. American sociologist Robert Merton described two types of deviance,

non-conforming and aberrant behaviour. The person who engages in the first type of deviance [non-conforming] announces his dissent publicly, challenges the legitimacy of the norms, and tries to change them. In the second case [aberrant], the deviant tries to hide his behaviour and does not challenge the norms.¹⁰⁶⁹

¹⁰⁶⁵ Maia Szalavitz, *Undoing Drugs: The Untold Story of Harm Reduction and the Future of Addiction*, New York: Hachette, 2021: 207.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Young, *The Drugtakers*, 30.

¹⁰⁶⁷ “Howard,” Interview.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Spunt, *Heroin and Music in New York City*, 99.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Giffen, Endicott, and Lambert, *Panic and Indifference*, 492.

Using this frame of analysis, more punk heroin users were “aberrant” than “non-conforming.” Heroin use was kept “close to the vest,” as Gaz described it,¹⁰⁷⁰ something that was done among close friends and confidants. This despite the fact punk’s other subcultural signifiers – music, dress, accessories, attitude, alcohol, other drugs – were displayed openly and would count as “non-conforming.” Heroin users became a subculture-within-a-subculture, often detaching themselves from their friends and bandmates as they scored and used.¹⁰⁷¹ Margaret Barnes-DelColle said in Liz Worth’s oral history of punk in Toronto,

I always made a connection between Anne Rice’s vampire books and doing heroin. Like a secret kind of underground night-time culture; like being a vampire. It was like a secret club, and you had an attitude about it. Psychologically you just convinced yourself that you were truly hip now, and nobody else knew how to really be hip. Then it was reinforced by Johnny Thunders. I used to sell drugs to Johnny Thunders when he would come to town. I sold drugs to Wayne Kramer from the MC5 when he came to town. I sold drugs to Willy DeVille. All these people are from the States, and they have records and they’re famous, so you become part of that circle. Meanwhile, you’re all sinking fast, but you certainly don’t think about that. You think you’re really, really hip and you belong to a special club, and that’s how you convince yourself. And then slowly, of course, you can’t work your job and you can’t pay your bills and one day you’re just like, ‘Maybe this isn’t so hip.’ Or you die.¹⁰⁷²

Heroin use in punk was a mix of impressing some people while hiding it from others. Nicholas said heroin use was always kept quiet among Vancouver punks. “Well, it was kept quite in part because of the enormous stigma. The cops would look past a group of people snorting cocaine easy [...] But you know, if they heard about a user injecting heroin they would beat the crap out

¹⁰⁷⁰ “Gaz,” Interview.

¹⁰⁷¹ This trend has been noted in other subcultures as well, like in David Moore’s ethnography of “Players” and “Bohemians” in 1990s Perth, Australia, where heroin users tended to be private with their drug use, as opposed to users of other drugs. Moore, “Beyond ‘Subculture’ in the Ethnography of Illicit Drug Use,” 189.

¹⁰⁷² Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 241.

of them and charge them with whatever.”¹⁰⁷³ Gerald became a professional touring musician after high school, and around 1974, he first mainlined the heroin that his roadies were dealing. Gerald said that unlike smoking marijuana or drinking beer, shooting heroin “wasn’t something you bragged about.”¹⁰⁷⁴ But at the same time, very quickly, he came to know other users in the Toronto punk scene, and reputations spread, sometimes across borders. When notorious New York heroin addict Johnny Thunders¹⁰⁷⁵ visited Toronto, Gerald, echoing Barnes-DelColle, said Thunders would often call him and his bandmates first, knowing they were part of a heroin scene.

In 1976, Sue formed her first punk band in Toronto, and in 1977 started using heroin. Along with a few other punks from the scene, she shot up in a house behind the New Rose punk shop on Power Street. Sue said none of this was anything you advertised – you did heroin in a private home, with friends, not in public. “I had a very small circle that I did the drugs with,” Sue said. “I mean, drinking, partying, I’d go out, but [with heroin] it was mostly, it was [...] contained.”¹⁰⁷⁶ “Vance” said the Montreal scene had a small cohort of heroin users, including one of the musicians in his band. French Montrealers, he argued, came to heroin later than the English. “In the late seventies it was mainly the anglophone punks who did heroin. And there was [...] lots of bands, all of them were junkies.”¹⁰⁷⁷ But Montreal users kept their habits hidden as well, using only among themselves “like a little hidden sect,” Vance said.¹⁰⁷⁸ Despite being in

¹⁰⁷³ “Nicholas,” Interview.

¹⁰⁷⁴ “Gerald,” Interview.

¹⁰⁷⁵ See Nina Antonia, *The New York Dolls: Too Much Too Soon*, Rev. ed. London: Omnibus, 2003.

¹⁰⁷⁶ “Sue,” Interview.

¹⁰⁷⁷ “Vance,” Interview.

¹⁰⁷⁸ “Vance,” Interview.

a band where drugs were common, “Grant,” born in the mid-1950s to an Anglo Montreal family, said he never did harder drugs, and was leery about my project, concerned I was sensationalizing a scene that was about music more than anything else. “I believe people who were doing drugs were a little more discrete,” Grant said. “I don’t recall any flagrant, open drug use. I’m sure everybody was high, but they didn’t get on stage to do it. They got high in the bathroom or somewhere.”¹⁰⁷⁹ There were some who advertised their use – Montreal band the Chromosomes’ logo was a bat impaled with hypodermic needles;¹⁰⁸⁰ Stephen Leckie of the Viletones would sometimes pretend to shoot himself up on stage.¹⁰⁸¹ But even here, there is an element of “posing” – some of the Chromosomes were certainly heroin users,¹⁰⁸² but Leckie was (almost certainly) not.¹⁰⁸³

The question of whether heroin-using punks were aberrant or non-conforming is further complicated by the proposition that some punks were following their role models, and trying to establish a “junkie cool” image for themselves, based on characters like Keith Richards, Lou Reed, Johnny Thunders, and even Billie Holiday.¹⁰⁸⁴ Johnny Thunders, of the New York Dolls and the Heartbreakers, was particularly popular, and I was surprised how often Thunders’s name came up among my Toronto interviewees. Don Pyle wrote in his photographic history of Toronto punk, “Thunders was exciting to watch, the embodiment of the most beautiful excessive archetypes of rock and roll stardom: great hair, preposterous outfits, totally cool-looking in every

¹⁰⁷⁹ “Grant,” Interview.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Sam Sutherland, *Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk*, Toronto: ECW Press, 2012: 87.

¹⁰⁸¹ “Robert,” Interview.

¹⁰⁸² Sutherland, *Perfect Youth*, 87.

¹⁰⁸³ Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 152. Other interviewees confirmed to me Leckie did not, to their knowledge, use heroin.

¹⁰⁸⁴ L’Ecuyer, *Use Once and Destroy*, 56.

way and a fantastic guitar player. If he was a junkie, he didn't do it in a way that looked unappealing."¹⁰⁸⁵ Being a heroin user, or even an addict, was a seductive proposition for many punks, because of its image of decadence and decay. *What stands out here, however, is that all the punks who identified heroin-use with this image were not heroin users themselves, or had only used it a few times and then stopped. Among those who used heroin regularly, the issue of looking "junkie cool" did not come up.*

Roy tried heroin a few times, but did not like it, nor did he like the symbolic baggage it came with. "I didn't dig the whole junky 'cool' lifestyle either that was attached to [heroin]. The junkie secret society. Code words and signs. The slow junkie mumbled drawl and rap."¹⁰⁸⁶ In Montreal, Vance only did heroin once and did not like it, agreeing "all the romanticizing of Keith Richard being a junkie. Johnny Thunders and Richard Hell. You know, the New York junkie thing [...] They felt obliged, they thought it went with the territory to be a junkie, you know. Fuck you."¹⁰⁸⁷ Peter, who had never done heroin, said there was a certain one-upmanship with some heroin users. They would say, "'Oh, you think you're so cool, smoking pot and doing bennies, well I'm fucking shooting heroin. Then I'm shooting heroin.' And then it's like, 'oh fuck, I'm a heroin addict.'"¹⁰⁸⁸ Timmy pointed to first wave Vancouver punk, and notorious heroin addict, Art Bergmann as an example of how "junkie cool" could affect young people.

[Heroin] contributes some of the creative aspect, the voice, from having made free by using drugs. And this becomes the mystique that young people look at that, and they

¹⁰⁸⁵ Don Pyle, *Trouble in the Camera Club: A Photographic Narrative of Toronto's Punk History, 1976-1980*, Toronto: ECW Press, 2011: 162.

¹⁰⁸⁶ "Roy," Interview.

¹⁰⁸⁷ "Vance," Interview. See also Sutherland, *Perfect Youth*, 87.

¹⁰⁸⁸ "Peter," Interview.

think, if I want to be as good as Art Bergmann, then I'm going to start using heroin. And that's a terrible, terrible thing. Young people are really impressionable¹⁰⁸⁹

But it is important, again, to note that these were the attitudes of people who did not use heroin themselves, but were adjacent to it.

Class was also an important factor in punk heroin use. In Toronto, this was exhibited in the split between the more middle-class punks who were students at the Ontario College of Art (OCA), and the working-class, often harder drug-using punks who were part of what one interviewee called "hoodlum rock."¹⁰⁹⁰ Gerald said the hoodlum rockers were more into heroin; the OCA crowd, not so much.¹⁰⁹¹ In his own "hoodlum rock" band, half the members were addicted to heroin, and the other half used something else – pills, marijuana, or alcohol.¹⁰⁹² But they would meet at punk venues to share their experiences, music, and drugs. As Anna Bourque said in Worth, "The Crash 'n' Burn was these arty types mixed with these thugs; it was a real coming together."¹⁰⁹³

Ultimately, heroin contributed to the decline of punk. In Montreal, Frank did heroin when he was 17 or 18, because of "a series of soundmen who were junkies." But once the soundmen left, the heroin left too, and Frank stopped using. "It seemed like an ugly thing that I did not want to become my fate."¹⁰⁹⁴ Robert felt heroin destroyed what (violent and sexist) fun there was in punk.

When it was just alcohol, it was just getting drunk and getting into fights and fucking girls. That was punk rock. And then it became a desperate bid to get your fix in this sort

1089 "Timmy," Interview.

1090 "Gerald," Interview.

1091 "Gerald," Interview.

1092 "Gerald," Interview.

1093 Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 87.

1094 "Frank," Interview.

of nihilistic side of things, that Sid Vicious-y side of things. You know, it changed really fast, and I think it was because the drugs changed from alcohol to harder drugs.¹⁰⁹⁵

Robert remembered walking downstairs at the Horseshoe Club, and seeing punks “fixing up,” preparing heroin. Robert himself would develop a terrible heroin habit which destroyed his career, but would not begin until the 1980s.¹⁰⁹⁶ And Grant pushed back on the idea that drugs – as well as violence, alcohol, and attitude – were the most important part of punk in Montreal. “It wasn’t a bunch of people getting together and doing drugs and bashing each other over the head with beer bottles. Sounds like a couple of your people there are making it sound like it was.”¹⁰⁹⁷ Drugs may have existed, Grant said, but “it wasn’t why we were there. It wasn’t why I was there.”¹⁰⁹⁸

In general, punks used heroin for two reasons. The first was to feel good (or at least feel less bad), which is valid but beyond the scope of this dissertation. The other was symbolic, to emulate heroes, signify nihilism, and commune with fellow users, which formed a subculture within a subculture. Heroin was not easy to get in the late 1970s and was not terribly suitable to the speed and excitement of punk – but it was popular nonetheless.

Cocaine, the end of the hippies, and punk

The late 1970s and 1980s was the era of cocaine. Cocaine would completely rearrange subcultural relationships, encouraging selfishness, ego, and greed, as opposed to traditional

¹⁰⁹⁵ “Robert,” Interview.

¹⁰⁹⁶ “Robert,” Interview.

¹⁰⁹⁷ “Grant,” Interview.

¹⁰⁹⁸ “Grant,” Interview.

countercultural values like selflessness, sharing, and collectivity, which were enhanced by cannabis and hallucinogens. Cocaine is very similar to speed, except for one key difference – it is much more expensive, retailing at the time for between \$100 and \$300 a gram.¹⁰⁹⁹ The cost of cocaine provided cachet.¹¹⁰⁰ As opposed to the speed user (and especially the “speed freak”) the cocaine user carried a badge of wealth and exclusivity by being able to source, fund, and provide coke. Gary O’Bireck, in his ethnography of Canadian professional musicians using cocaine, said that cocaine was a ritual part of music creation and production.¹¹⁰¹ O’Bireck found, “A feeling of specialty akin to membership in an exclusive club seems to pervade the demeanour of cocaine users when questioned about their habits.”¹¹⁰² But above all, cocaine was fitted to what American writer Tom Wolfe called the “Me Decade,”¹¹⁰³ a drug that created, according to Boyd, “an entrepreneurial high, giving energy, endurance, and appetite suppression. In an era of ‘lean and mean’ individualism, the drug seems a logical choice.”¹¹⁰⁴

In 1969, there was one conviction for cocaine in Canada. In 1980, there were 642.¹¹⁰⁵ (Note this is far below the 31,738 cannabis convictions in 1979.)¹¹⁰⁶ Of the few studies gathered by the Alcohol Research Foundation on cocaine before 1982, only two are relevant to this study. Smart et al.’s 1981 survey of alcohol and drug use among Ontario high school students showed 4.8 per cent of respondents had used cocaine in 1981, up from 1977, when 3.8 per cent reported

¹⁰⁹⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 80; “Bob,” Interview.

¹¹⁰⁰ Boyd, *High Society*, 57.

¹¹⁰¹ O’Bireck, *Getting’ Tall*, 1.

¹¹⁰² O’Bireck, *Getting’ Tall*, 29.

¹¹⁰³ Tom Wolfe, “The ‘Me’ Decade and the Third Great Awakening,” *New York Magazine*, 23 August 1976. Reprinted online 8 April 2008, <https://nymag.com/news/features/45938/>.

¹¹⁰⁴ Boyd, *High Society*, 49.

¹¹⁰⁵ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 84.

¹¹⁰⁶ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 42. No numbers are available for cannabis arrests in 1980.

having used it, usually only once or twice a year.¹¹⁰⁷ In a study of adult users in the Durham Region, Smart et al. (1978) found cocaine was mostly used by users of other drugs (including alcohol), were mostly men, did more poorly at school, and significantly, data provided “no support for the idea that cocaine is the ‘rich man’s drug.’”¹¹⁰⁸ All social classes used it – you just needed to be a drug user generally. That said, regardless of who used it, cocaine had the *reputation* of a rich man’s drug.

Cocaine had never been popular in Canada before the 1970s. This is largely because of supply issues – major supply lines had not been set up yet. The earliest evidence of coca use in Canada was around 1876, when a doctor gave the Toronto Lacrosse Team coca leaves before a game, which “sustained them beautifully.”¹¹⁰⁹ Montreal police officers in 1911 said cocaine’s use among Black citizens was “a problem,”¹¹¹⁰ and it was criminalized that year in the Opium and Narcotic Act.¹¹¹¹ Scandal erupted in Britain in 1916, when the British government accused Canadian troops of using cocaine to seduce virtuous English women, which resulted in Britain banning the drug.¹¹¹² In *The Black Candle*, Emily Murphy lumped it in with heroin as drugs that induce violence.¹¹¹³ In the 1930s, cocaine use in North America declined with the easier availability of alcohol, heroin, and especially, the invention of amphetamines, which work in

¹¹⁰⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 82.

¹¹⁰⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 85.

¹¹⁰⁹ Dominic Streatfield, *Cocaine: An Unauthorized Biography*, New York: Picador, 2001: 63.

¹¹¹⁰ Boyd, *High Society*, 8.

¹¹¹¹ Marcel Martel, *Canada the Good: A Short History of Vice Since 1500*, Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014: 82.

¹¹¹² Streatfield, *Cocaine*, 155.

¹¹¹³ Giffen, Endicott, and Lambert, *Panic and Indifference*, 531.

much the same way as cocaine.¹¹¹⁴ In 1970, Sheila Gormley wrote that cocaine “appears to be of little significance” among Canadian drug users.¹¹¹⁵ “Howard” was my only interviewee who saw cocaine before 1969, at the First Floor jazz Club in 1960, and he is not positive it was cocaine he saw.¹¹¹⁶ “Dipper” also said jazz players – the “jazz guys” – had cocaine throughout the 1960s, though he did not use it with them.¹¹¹⁷

In the late 1960s, cocaine staged a comeback in America. Cuban-American exiles in Florida smuggled it in from South America until 1975, and distributed it to American cities.¹¹¹⁸ Rock musicians took to it, the film *Superfly* sympathetically portrayed a Harlem cocaine dealer, the novel *Dealer* came out, and *The Gourmet Cokebook* was released, “which instructed users on everything from purity testing to how to flush your nose with water to avoid mucous-membrane damage.”¹¹¹⁹ Rock stars appropriated the Black pimp mythology of turn-of-the-century New Orleans and post-World War I Paris, including its cocaine use.¹¹²⁰ Colombian cartels started selling in Canada in the mid-1970s, through intermediaries including biker gangs, the Italian mafia, Montreal’s West End Gang, Jamaican gangs, and Asian criminal groups.¹¹²¹ Stephen Schneider said the cocaine trade completely reorganized organized crime in Canada:

Beginning in the mid-1970s, the criminal underworld in North America began undergoing significant changes as the popularity of cocaine skyrocketed. The drug was

¹¹¹⁴ David Farber, *Crack: Rock Cocaine, Street Capitalism, and the Decade of Greed*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2019: 27.

¹¹¹⁵ Gormely, *Drugs and the Canadian Scene*, 75.

¹¹¹⁶ “Howard,” Interview.

¹¹¹⁷ “Dipper,” Interview.

¹¹¹⁸ Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998: 27.

¹¹¹⁹ Streatfield, *Cocaine*, 208.

¹¹²⁰ Boon, *The Road to Excess*, 211.

¹¹²¹ Schneider, *Iced*, 354.

no longer associated with deviants and desperate drug addicts, but with the affluent glitterati. Except for the spike in popularity of marijuana in the 1960s, never before has any illegal drug enjoyed such a mercurial demand in such a short period as cocaine did in North America during the late 1970s and 1980s.¹¹²²

Cocaine's stupendously high price would not decline until the 1980s, and it was then that the drug became normalized in Canadian drug culture. Though its roots were planted in the 1970s, and many people began using and became addicted in the 1970s, it was not until the 1980s that Canadians *really* got into cocaine. Because my study ends in 1980, many of my interviewees thought I was ending just as the real cocaine story was beginning.¹¹²³ "Our worst times were yet to come," said Vancouver punk Timmy.¹¹²⁴

Cocaine works much like speed, and much like speed, it contributed to killing the counterculture. Cocaine, my interviewees repeated again and again, is a "selfish" drug, the antithesis of cannabis and LSD. It is for this reason, as well as its price, that it is often associated with upper-class use; cocaine makes you act in a selfish and self-centred manner, characteristics classically attributed to people with lots of money. The hippies, with their anti-material ethos, collectivism, and voluntary poverty, were the opposite of the sort of person associated with cocaine use. Once cocaine entered hippie communities, it helped ruin them, just like speed. Lawrence Aronsen wrote about cocaine destroying the hippie ethos in Vancouver: "What was particularly disturbing for those seeking collectivism through chemistry was the reported

¹¹²² Schneider, *Iced*, 498.

¹¹²³ "Frank," Interview; "Serge," Interview; "Dorothy," Interview; "Bob," Interview; "Nicholas," Interview; "Jupiter," Interview.

¹¹²⁴ "Timmy," Interview.

increase in cocaine use, as cocaine was seen as a drug that enhances the ego, in contrast to the ego-undermining effects of LSD.”¹¹²⁵

As mentioned above, jazz musicians were reported to have used cocaine in Yorkville as early as 1960¹¹²⁶ (and likely before then). The counterculture began noticing it in the late 1960s. “Chris” was one of the earliest users of cocaine. He bought cocaine at “\$25 a spoonful” in the late 1960s, from a connection who brought it from New York. He said nobody was very interested in cocaine in 1967-68, but by 1969-70, “it was all over the place.”¹¹²⁷ “Charlie,” who played folk in Yorkville in the 1960s, saw cocaine become “big time” in the early 1970s.¹¹²⁸ He did not think the drug was terribly bad, unless you became addicted, but he admitted it encouraged “conformity” among subcultural members. “You run into people who have drug problems, that’s where they become probably addicts, they become so involved with the culture,” Charlie said. “It’s a conformist thing, drugs are a conformist thing, like alcohol.”¹¹²⁹ “Dipper” also saw cocaine show up in Yorkville around 1969, when he was offered a line at the back of the House of Hamburgers.¹¹³⁰ After snorting it, he thought, “No, this is bad. I didn’t want it, it made you...I didn’t like the feeling,” Dipper said.¹¹³¹ Most of my Toronto interviewees, however, did not see cocaine, at least with any regularity, until the late 1970s.

¹¹²⁵ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 100.

¹¹²⁶ “Howard,” Interview.

¹¹²⁷ “Chris,” Interview.

¹¹²⁸ “Charlie,” Interview.

¹¹²⁹ “Charlie,” Interview.

¹¹³⁰ “Dipper,” Interview

¹¹³¹ “Dipper,” Interview.

“Sid” first did cocaine in the mid-1970s, and described it, like Aronsen, as “the opposite of LSD.”¹¹³² He said he liked it “well enough” but he “didn’t like what it did to people. Opposite of LSD, it would inflate your ego. And I don’t have much use for egotistical people.”¹¹³³ Dorothy said, “You know, again, people didn’t share that drug like they would marijuana because it was so expensive.”¹¹³⁴ Jim, who worked as a band promoter, sometimes supplied his musicians with cocaine. He said, “I mean, cocaine’s a funny drug. It’s the only drug where people will go, ‘Yeah, well it’s such a social drug.’ Yeah everything *but* social! I mean, you sit there at the table, and everybody’s worried about who is going to hork whose line. That’s not social.”¹¹³⁵ Jim described cocaine as “an ego drug, it distorts your sense of reality, it distorts your value system.”¹¹³⁶ Brent and a friend would buy cocaine from a house in Kitsilano, a place he described as a “fucking zoo. There’d be all these little kids, right. You know, 17- and 18-year-old girls, and it was just like, I just thought it was fucked up.”¹¹³⁷

“Joel” saw cocaine, not speed or heroin, as the dividing line between the “good” and “bad” drug cultures in Kitsilano. “For the most part [Kitsilano] was a benign society,” Joel said. “Loving and supportive. Toward the end of my stay though, when cocaine [...] played a bigger role [...] Fourth Avenue was not so genteel.”¹¹³⁸ He first saw cocaine in 1974, when he was working for the Christmas Pleasure Fair at the Pacific National Exhibition, an event he said was “powered” by cocaine. Joel used cocaine daily for about six months, a time when he lost a lot of

1132 “Sid,” Interview.

1133 “Sid,” Interview.

1134 “Dorothy,” Interview.

1135 “Jim,” Interview.

1136 “Jim,” Interview.

1137 “Brent,” Interview.

1138 “Joel,” Interview.

friends and “I was unkind, and I knew I was being unkind, [but I] didn’t care if I was hurting people.”¹¹³⁹ The hippie culture was dying, and fewer people were going back to the land, choosing instead to hang out in the streets and use harder drugs.¹¹⁴⁰

“Jupiter” first saw cocaine in Vancouver in the early 1970s, “probably” in 1971.¹¹⁴¹ “A bunch of us had a little bit and we shared it, and we ended up playing Chopsticks on every canister in the kitchen for about half an hour. So, that was nothing [...] like the first experiences of marijuana,” he said. But it was still an odd substance to see around, and you generally needed connections. “It wasn’t that prevalent except that I had some inside connections with coke. But you know, it wasn’t quite as big a feature as it became later. It was sort of a party favour, you know. It was tangential, somewhat. It wasn’t the mainstay it would become later.”¹¹⁴² Jupiter said cocaine became a mainstay in the late 1970s, and then exploded in the 1980s, fitting the era.

It was certainly as important to us in the music scene here as was cannabis. But it didn’t have a particularly good effect. I just saw the Grateful Dead’s original drummer talking about that, and how when the coke came in the music was never as good, because everybody was just on their own trip. This whole thing, do your own thing, which came out of that, those years, the counterculture, that’s why we’ve got the society we have now, man. Everybody did their own thing, and there was no sense of real social commitment.¹¹⁴³

1139 “Joel,” Interview.

1140 “Joel,” Interview.

1141 “Jupiter,” Interview.

1142 “Jupiter,” Interview.

1143 “Jupiter,” Interview.

In 1980, Jupiter started freebasing cocaine,¹¹⁴⁴ a technique he wished he had “never learned.”¹¹⁴⁵ He became addicted to it in the 1980s. “With freebasing, you’re pulling \$10 out of your pocket as you exhaled, for the next one,” Jupiter said. “All you can do is want more with coke.”¹¹⁴⁶

In Montreal, Arthur developed a taste for cocaine in 1978, which he bought from a motorcycle gang, likely the Popeyes. “Cocaine is a very ‘me’ drug. Absolutely,” Arthur said. “Pot and hash were very mellow, introspective drugs, where cocaine was very extrovert. And it’s all about yourself, you know.”¹¹⁴⁷ Montreal punk Frank had a girlfriend with family in the Italian mafia, and she used to get cocaine for them. It also floated around the punk scene he was in. “Once in a while someone would have some, at a gig or whatever, but it was nowhere near as ubiquitous as it would become [in the 1980s].” He said at the time it was a drug that rich people did, yet, “It was there, but at least within my group, it wasn’t a huge thing. Yet.”¹¹⁴⁸

Cocaine was an important drug for some punks, but it appears its use was more related to availability than anything else. Since cocaine works much like speed, it fit all the suitability requirements of punk rock (see “Speed,” above). If speed was unavailable, cocaine served as an appropriate, if expensive, substitute; Bruce Alexander argues that the banning of amphetamine and methamphetamine in the 1970s likely helped cocaine’s growth,¹¹⁴⁹ though he admitted he

¹¹⁴⁴ Freebasing is a form of smoking cocaine developed “around 1976” whose effects are “faster and more potent, making freebase more highly addictive than powder cocaine.” Freebase should not be confused with crack cocaine, which is prepared differently, and did not exist yet. Gahlinger, *Illegal Drugs*, 244.

¹¹⁴⁵ “Jupiter,” Interview.

¹¹⁴⁶ “Jupiter,” Interview.

¹¹⁴⁷ “Arthur,” Interview.

¹¹⁴⁸ “Frank,” Interview.

¹¹⁴⁹ Alexander, *Peaceful Measures*, 54.

could not prove any causation.¹¹⁵⁰ Cocaine's symbols seemed anathema to punks, but few punks spoke about it, beyond the drug being expensive.

For "Larry," cocaine was the only drug he ever bought. "I did it, like once every six months or something. Mr. Moderation here. I was, I would do it because I liked it."¹¹⁵¹ Sue said she occasionally did speedballs, with heroin in one needle and cocaine in another, one into each arm.¹¹⁵² But unlike heroin, cocaine was more social, and was done at parties. "I saw a fair amount. Yeah, for sure. At parties. That was more of a party drug. Or social, like if you went to a place, people would offer you a bump or whatever, you know what I mean?"¹¹⁵³ But like most of my interviewees, Sue's worst cocaine years were ahead of her, in the 1980s, especially after she discovered freebasing.¹¹⁵⁴ Roy also noted that cocaine (and heroin) "really started pouring in" only around 1980.¹¹⁵⁵ Like speed, Roy said cocaine had a utilitarian function. "I didn't like coke much either, too edgy, but when you had to get up and play and perform, and you were really tired from travelling 500 miles in some old beater van, or whatever, it came in handy. I mostly snorted it but did a few joy bangs that blew my head off. Too powerful."¹¹⁵⁶ Robert felt that though cocaine and speed were similar drugs, the perception was that "speed kills" while cocaine is respectable.¹¹⁵⁷ "Jack," who was a punk promoter and drank a bottle of vodka a day, said he "had an affair" with cocaine for about a year in 1980, but the downside was not worth it. "I saw too many people get into it and just completely lose their family, the home, everything, go

1150 Alexander, Interview.

1151 "Larry," Interview.

1152 "Sue," Interview.

1153 "Sue," Interview.

1154 "Sue," Interview.

1155 "Roy," Interview.

1156 "Roy," Interview.

1157 "Robert," Interview.

completely, and they just get consumed by it.”¹¹⁵⁸ Gaz, who had moved on to punk production by this point, said cocaine was the only “hard” drug he ever had a problem with.

Yeah, the only thing, when we were at The Edge [club], the only thing kind of drug that I indulged in for a couple months was coke, like in the early eighties, late ‘79, because that was going around, people were bringing it in, and people liked it, blah-blah-blah. Just when you were locking the door a guy would come in and put like a mile-length line on the table. Between bands and between sets and stuff. After a while, I didn’t like it. I liked it, but I realized it’s only really doing two things for me. It’s keeping me out all night. And it’s making me shit. [...] You’d get home at five in the morning and I’d be up at nine, it was killing me, working all day and going back at night. I mean, fuck this. A lot of people kept doing it, but I thought it was stupid.¹¹⁵⁹

Ethan sold cocaine in several punk-focused bars and clubs, including the Edge. “The whole time, everybody was doing coke,” Ethan said. “Coke, coke, coke, coke, coke. The Edge, every band, they bought coke. [...] And we did tons of coke, it was a coke bar basically.”¹¹⁶⁰ He also sold out of the Rivoli and Horseshoe, when they functioned as punk bars.¹¹⁶¹ Graham said that it was in punk that he “saw coke for the first time. And there was quite a bit of it.”¹¹⁶²

Punk and the Cannabis Question

Nothing demonstrates the symbolic importance of drugs to a subculture than punk’s relationship to cannabis. Cannabis was popular and easy to get in the late 1970s, particularly for young people, as revealed in the studies below. But for many punks, it was incompatible

1158 “Jack,” Interview.

1159 “Gaz,” Interview.

1160 “Ethan,” Interview. Though Ethan is (again) likely exaggerating, it seems clear many people did cocaine at The Edge.

1161 “Ethan,” Interview.

1162 “Graham,” Interview.

symbolically and suitably with their movement; for others, it was a welcome addition to the beer and Benzedrine. Some punks, like Graham, said that at any punk show, there was “no marijuana whatsoever or marijuana-related products. Zero.” On the other hand, Bob, reacting to a similar claim in the documentary *The Last Pogo Jumps Again*,¹¹⁶³ said,

A lot of punks will also deny that a lot of punks didn't smoke dope because of the hippies. That's a complete out-and-out fucking lie. I don't know where the fuck, who came up with that stupid idea. Every goddam day I was at the Crash N Burn [punk club] and everybody was smoking weed.¹¹⁶⁴

That the two men had such completely different recollections of the same place and time is not in itself extraordinary – memory can fail anyone, which is why researchers fact check. What is extraordinary is that this drug evoked such strong emotions in Graham and Bob. Graham noted marijuana was symbolically and practically unsuited to punk – it was associated with hippies and made you “dopey.”¹¹⁶⁵ Bob said people just wanted to “get fucked up,” no matter what the drug's associations.¹¹⁶⁶ And it appears, as we will examine below, that there was some cannabis use – certainly not “zero” – in the Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver punk scenes. But it was not a central drug, most people did not use it in the scene, and some people were actively antagonistic to it because of its hippie pretensions. Cannabis in punk demonstrates how drugs were used symbolically by some subcultural members as a symbol of what *not* to do; not because the drug was illegal and dangerous, but because it was associated with a despised, rival subculture.

No matter how many punks used or did not use the drug, cannabis rates continued to grow throughout the 1970s. Police statistics show cannabis convictions peaking in 1978, with an

¹¹⁶³ Brunton and Papputs, dirs., *The Last Pogo Jumps Again*.

¹¹⁶⁴ “Bob,” Interview.

¹¹⁶⁵ “Graham,” Interview.

¹¹⁶⁶ “Bob,” Interview.

incredible 52,233 individuals charged with cannabis offences, and 37,812 convicted, most for simple possession.¹¹⁶⁷ Studies of high school students proliferated in the 1970s, revealing an increased normalcy for high school cannabis use. Rates were particular high in Vancouver, where Russell & Hollander (1974) note that in 1970, 38.9 per cent of high school students had used cannabis in the previous 12 months; in 1974, that rose to 41.5 per cent.¹¹⁶⁸ Among Ontario high school students, Smart & Fejer (1975) discovered that in 1974, 22.9 per cent of Ontario high school students had used cannabis in the previous six months.¹¹⁶⁹ Smart et al. (1981) followed up with Ontario high school students, noting a rise to 25.1 per cent use in the previous 12 months in 1977; 31.7 per cent in 1979; and 29.9 per cent in 1981.¹¹⁷⁰ Although a majority of students did not use cannabis in the late 1970s, nearly a third did, which would make the habit as popular as any sanctioned sport or social club. Among adults, Smart & Goodstadt (1977) discovered 5.8 per cent of Ontarians had used cannabis in 1977. Rootman (1979) found 20.2 per cent of Canadian men and 13.8 per cent of women had ever used cannabis in 1979.¹¹⁷¹ Though cannabis was becoming more common among adults, most users were still young.

No one is arguing that punks did not use cannabis at school or in their day-to-day lives. The only self-described member of the punk movement I interviewed who did *not* use cannabis before 1980 was Aldous, who did not use any drugs at all, including alcohol or tobacco.¹¹⁷² Otherwise, every punk I spoke to used cannabis; the question was *where* they used it. Graham, who so vehemently insisted there was no cannabis in the punk movement, still used it at school –

¹¹⁶⁷ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 42.

¹¹⁶⁸ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 32.

¹¹⁶⁹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 32.

¹¹⁷⁰ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 32.

¹¹⁷¹ Smart, *Forbidden Highs*, 33.

¹¹⁷² “Aldous,” Interview.

it was only when he joined his first band that he saw friends get drunk instead of high.¹¹⁷³ When I asked Sue if she smoked cannabis at punk shows in Toronto, she said, “Not that much, because it was kind of considered hippie [...] So it wasn’t really that cool, you know.”¹¹⁷⁴ But outside the scene, there was “a lot of pot. Lot of hash back then. Hash and hash oil.”¹¹⁷⁵ Roy smoked marijuana through the 1970s, but once it got “the hippie taint on it,” most punks had stopped smoking it.¹¹⁷⁶ In Montreal, Serge said the punk scene was mostly about “booze and hash,” but with an emphasis on the alcohol.¹¹⁷⁷ In Vancouver, Timmy also preferred marijuana to alcohol, but again, the movement was mostly about beer.¹¹⁷⁸ Sometimes people would light a joint at shows, Timmy said, “but in a small bar, you know, that would have been kiboshed pretty quickly.”¹¹⁷⁹

For those who did not smoke pot, punk provided something of a relief from a youth culture otherwise saturated with it. In Montreal, Frank said he did not enjoy pot very much, but he found the punk cannabis argument amusing. “People, you know, I guess they were looking for identity, and so punks shouldn’t smoke pot! OK, good to know! Pot’s for hippies! [Laughter.] You would see that.”¹¹⁸⁰ Peter said plenty of punks smoked pot, and it was proof of how cliques existed within cliques. “[Someone said] no one smoked pot because if you smoke pot you’re a hippie,” Peter said. “Well it wasn’t really true. That just shows you how many cliques there were within cliques, because all of the bands I hung out with and knew [...] a lot of the local bands,

1173 “Graham,” Interview.

1174 “Sue,” Interview.

1175 “Sue,” Interview.

1176 “Roy,” Interview.

1177 “Serge,” Interview.

1178 “Timmy,” Interview.

1179 “Timmy,” Interview.

1180 “Frank,” Interview.

they all smoked pot.”¹¹⁸¹ Robert found the punk scene unreceptive to cannabis. “You know, you could make friends with the punks. Because we were all outsiders you know. But it’s funny, I lit up a joint and everybody looked at me funny and I realized, oh OK, marijuana’s not cool here, this is a drinking thing.”¹¹⁸² When I asked Robert about the contradiction, he said it could be different from group to group, “but some people were more strident.”¹¹⁸³ He then added, with a healthy dose of punk cynicism, “Also, you know, let’s face it, the punks were humans, and humans are fucking liars man.”¹¹⁸⁴ Margaret Barnes-Del Colle said in Worth, ““The pot thing, there were some people that saw that more as a hippie thing and so they didn’t want to have any part of that. So it was heavy drinking and a lot of people would pop pills, too.””¹¹⁸⁵

Punk’s anti-hippie credentials were also tested by the fact many of their older members had been hippies themselves, like Dorothy, Tony, Serge, and Larry. Regarding the anti-hippie label, Dorothy said, “I suppose they had to have some label didn’t they? [...] But I’m not sure it really was true. [...] A lot of people had just gently transferred from one to the other, you know. [...] By whatever route, we had moved from the hippie-dom to the punk-dom. Very seamlessly.”¹¹⁸⁶ If there was any hostility expressed towards her for her previous subcultural background, Dorothy was unaware of it.¹¹⁸⁷ Larry and Graham argued it was these older hippie-punks who had brought cannabis into the scene, and the younger punks were trying to kick it

1181 “Peter,” Interview.

1182 “Robert,” Interview.

1183 “Robert,” Interview.

1184 “Robert,” Interview.

1185 Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 239.

1186 “Dorothy,” Interview.

1187 “Dorothy,” Interview.

out.¹¹⁸⁸ Larry had smoked marijuana in high school, when he believed in hippie values, but he stopped enjoying it and liked that punk looked down on the practice.

Well I was never that into pot, and to me, the hippie thing, which I sort of believed in when I was 16, 17, 18, seemed like a failed experiment to me. [...] I didn't smoke pot anyway, but it seemed like a hippie thing to do. But some people were already potheads that got into it, some older guys. So yes, they just...yeah. I can think of some people off hand that just [did it]. But to me it just seemed a little out of place or something to see punk rockers passing a joint around, you know.¹¹⁸⁹

The Original 99 Cent Roxy Theatre, where many punks first started hanging out, was “famous as the place where you could smoke dope in Toronto.”¹¹⁹⁰ But the Roxy was only open until 1975, before punk had consolidated and defined itself; its successor, the New Yorker, survived another year and was able to host the Ramones, but closed in 1977.¹¹⁹¹ “So, the New Yorker [club] and the Roxy, if you're talking to people [who went there], was 100 per cent, high all the time, smoking all the time. And what I'm talking about is a little bit later than that,” Graham said. “Those guys were still hippies.”¹¹⁹² But Graham is only two years younger than Bob; age alone does not explain the discrepancy between those who smoked and those who would not, or the antagonisms it bred. What it does show is there was a plurality of views within punk rock, which fitted to a subculture that was, at least in theory, for everyone.

New Drugs and New Drug Scenes

1188 “Larry,” Interview; “Graham,” Interview.

1189 “Larry,” Interview.

1190 “Peter,” Interview. See also, Collier, *Topp*, n.p. and Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 15.

1191 “Gaz,” Interview.

1192 “Graham,” Interview.

Punk gathered in new locations, not traditionally associated with the counterculture but within the vicinity of event spaces, especially bars. In Montreal, it was the Old City, described by my interviewee Rivka as, “the time before Old Montreal became very chic and was renovated. It was still not so much a tourist trap.”¹¹⁹³ Punks hung out especially at 364 St. Paul Street, where a nameless club – usually simply referred to as “the 364” – hosted a series of bands.¹¹⁹⁴ Once the 364 closed, The Hotel Nelson Grill and Station 10 followed.¹¹⁹⁵ “Serge” began hanging out in Old Montreal around 1970, when the drinking age dropped, and stayed for the punk era.¹¹⁹⁶ Tony and Frank spoke of playing at 364 St. Paul without prompting.¹¹⁹⁷ That said, there is no indication Old Montreal took on either the significance or the community spirit that Queen Street West did in Toronto.

In Toronto, changed alcohol laws and the “sleazification” of Yonge Street – which had become overrun with sex shops, “body rub” parlours, and other sexual services – made Queen Street West the new hub of subcultural music.¹¹⁹⁸ Dorothy, who moved from hippie to punk in the mid-1970s, described Queen West as “home.”¹¹⁹⁹ Queen Street West “was kind of a different vibe entirely, but had the same comforting feeling as the hippie days, in that you knew these people. You knew they had your back, you know what I mean? You were basically part of a community.”¹²⁰⁰ “Chris” moved from Yorkville to Queen West, where he opened a boozecan on

1193 “Rivka,” Interview.

1194 “Tony,” Interview. See also Sutherland, *Perfect Youth*, 82-83.

1195 Alan Lord, *High Friends in Low Places*, Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2022: 21.

1196 “Serge,” Interview.

1197 “Tony,” Interview; “Frank,” Interview.

1198 Jennings, Interview.

1199 “Dorothy,” Interview.

1200 “Dorothy,” Interview.

Bathurst and Queen, catering mostly to musicians.¹²⁰¹ “Betty,” on the other hand, found Queen Street West was “a bit like when you buy a really irritable puppy.”¹²⁰² “George” argued that the music scene moved from Yorkville to Queen West, “if you play rock music à la Beatles.” But, “there was a pile of other scenes in Toronto as you know.”¹²⁰³

Vancouver continued to go through enormous change in the mid-1970s. While some neighbourhoods, like Gastown, gentrified, others, like the West End, became sleazier, as drug-dealing and prostitution became more open. Hippies left Kitsilano and the neighbourhood began to resemble the Eastside. One former patron remembered how at the West End after-hours club The Dance Machine,

There were more drugs around there than you could shake a huge stick at. I remember a guy who came into the club who was selling whole ounce of MDMA there. But the whole city was different. Back in those days you could walk down [West End] Davie Street and buy everything from speed to coke, Mandrax, and MDMA.¹²⁰⁴

In Gastown, bar/hotels like the Columbia Hotel Pub (303 Columbia St.), Broadway Hotel (101 East Hastings St.), Balmoral, New Dodson, and Anchor Hotel sold drugs.¹²⁰⁵ Across the street, fancy boutiques opened and rents climbed.¹²⁰⁶ On Granville south of Nelson, the Chick and Bull, Plaza Café, and Blue Eagle Café all became common junkie hangouts.¹²⁰⁷ West End Davie Street increasingly became the “gaybourhood,”¹²⁰⁸ and gay hangouts like Playpen South were full of marijuana and amyl nitrite, though cocaine was not popular there until the 1980s – “the nightlife

1201 “Chris,” Interview.

1202 “Betty,” Interview.

1203 “George,” Interview.

1204 Chapman, *Vancouver Vice*, 82.

1205 Chapman, *Vancouver Vice*, 48, 51.

1206 Kluckner, *Vancouver Remembered*, 48.

1207 Chapman, *Vancouver Vice*, 48, 51.

1208 Kluckner, *Vancouver Remembered*, 128.

was frenetic enough.”¹²⁰⁹ Fourth “Love” Avenue fell apart, blamed in part on the death of the California scene. “‘We were really connected to the California scene,’ says [DJ ‘Jolly’ John] Tanner. ‘So when things like Altamont and Charles Manson happened, it threw a pall over everything. Free love was over, the trust was gone, and the drugs really did get bad.’”¹²¹⁰ As Soft Rock Café owner Sola Fielder said in an interview with author Aaron Chapman, “‘Kits was dead in the mid-seventies,’ a neighbourhood of “‘boarded up storefronts and hardly any restaurants. All the hippies were gone.’”¹²¹¹ In the mid-1970s, Murray moved on from hanging out in Kitsilano to hanging out in Gastown, which he described as “more artsy,” “more trendy,” than in earlier days. In the Downtown Eastside itself, “I remember all the buildings were open and there were a lot of art studios and more music” than there is now.¹²¹² At the same time, he could see drug deals happening in Pigeon Park and other parts of the neighbourhood.¹²¹³

Still, some noted a division remained between the East and West Sides. In 1975, “Simon,” from Oshawa, moved to Vancouver and lived in a cheap hotel on Granville Street, downtown but culturally on the Eastside. “I stayed there for [nine] months, it was a horrendous experience for a middle-class kid,” Simon said.¹²¹⁴ “I mean, I had a heroin addict on the room to my left and a prostitute to the room on my right. It was really a wild place.”¹²¹⁵ While living downtown he worked at a health food store in Kitsilano. Years after Yorkville died, Simon

¹²⁰⁹ Chapman, *Vancouver Vice*, 62, 63.

¹²¹⁰ Grant Lawrence, “Positively 4th Avenue: the rise and fall of Canada’s hippie mecca.” *Vancouver Is Awesome*. 19 October 2016: n.p. <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/courier-archive/news/positively-4th-avenue-the-rise-and-fall-of-canadas-hippie-mecca-3040755>.

¹²¹¹ Chapman, *Vancouver After Dark*, 144.

¹²¹² “Murray,” Interview.

¹²¹³ “Murray,” Interview.

¹²¹⁴ “Simon,” Interview.

¹²¹⁵ “Simon,” Interview.

described Kitsilano as “another kind of Yorkville,” a place “where the occult and new age bookstores were, and where all the counterculture businesses were, and it was where all the hippies lived.”¹²¹⁶ On the other hand, he said downtown was still frightening. “It was really rough,” Simon said.¹²¹⁷

Punk rock burned the final division between subcultural hippie and skid row drug use, blending Vancouver’s division between east and west.¹²¹⁸ Suburban kids, like punk icons John Armstrong and Art Bergmann, came to the Eastside from White Rock,¹²¹⁹ and another icon, Joe Keithley, came from Burnaby.¹²²⁰ Early shows were often at community halls or other non-commercial spaces in the Eastend, like Japanese Hall, where anarchist Larry Gambone saw the Dishrags and the Furies in June, 1977, one of the city’s first punk shows.¹²²¹ A week later, the Ramones played the Eastside Commodore Ballroom – famous for its “springy” floors – a venue which would later see a host of punk superstars, like Patti Smith, Blondie, Talking Heads, and the Clash.¹²²² The Smilin’ Buddha Cabaret, once famous as a boozier for loggers and transients,¹²²³ was resurrected as a punk club.¹²²⁴

¹²¹⁶ “Simon,” Interview.

¹²¹⁷ “Simon,” Interview.

¹²¹⁸ That division has since reopened and widened, and the Downtown Eastside has become a heroin-using “pariah” neighbourhood in a massively gentrified Vancouver. But this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹²¹⁹ Armstrong, *Guilty of Everything*, 53.

¹²²⁰ Joe Keithley, *I, Shithead: A Life in Punk*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004: 48.

¹²²¹ Gambone, *No Regrets*, 138.

¹²²² Aaron Chapman, *Live at the Commodore: The Story of Vancouver’s Historic Commodore Ballroom*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014: 83, 95, 101, 105.

¹²²³ Kluckner, *Vancouver Remembered*, 44.

¹²²⁴ Chapman, *Vancouver After Dark*, 159.

Timmy played in several Vancouver punk bands, and most of the shows took place in the Downtown Eastside. He described it as a rough patch of skid row life, but one where the new punks fit in. “We were kids, and we were doing our punk rock thing, that’s all there really [was] down there, [...] winos and junkies. And from that demographic, you know exactly what to expect.”¹²²⁵ Influenced by “that demographic” – as well as by their heroes from New York – alcohol and heroin became the drugs of choice for Vancouver punks. Nicholas was born working class in 1963, but spent most of his early life in the Westend of Vancouver, where he was one of the very few “people on welfare” in his upper-class high school. In the Eastend, he described the division between skid-row junkies and the punk scene as “pretty porous.”¹²²⁶ He said punks would rent the cheap houses the addicts also lived in. “There [were] various places, cheap places, rundown places, cheap buildings that could be rented out,” Nicholas said, including by middle-class kids like the members of DOA.¹²²⁷ By the end of 1980, the Eastside and Westside were no longer separate enclaves – they had merged into a single, subcultural, drug-using city.

Conclusion: The Punk-Drugs Extravaganza

Steven Leckie, lead singer for the Viletones, was “Toronto’s first fully formed punk iconoclast.”¹²²⁸ Leckie’s vitriol extended beyond the Yorkville hippies, straight to the former

¹²²⁵ “Timmy,” Interview.

¹²²⁶ “Nicholas,” Interview.

¹²²⁷ “Nicholas,” Interview.

¹²²⁸ Geoff Pevere, *Gods of the Hammer: The Teenage Head Story*, Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014: 13.

chitlin' circuit and the scene this dissertation opened with – the Yonge Street Strip of the late 1950s. As Leckie said to Worth,

Pre-punk there was a violence, an organized fight against the American government. Mine was just pushing the memory of Ronnie Hawkins out of your fuckin' mind forever. Ronnie was *the* man on Yonge Street for twelve years, and really was. I wanted to make sure those motherfuckers up there knew the future was coming their way and there was nothing they could do about it.¹²²⁹

Leckie was not just going after the Yorkville subculture, he was going after the subculture that preceded and ran alongside it, the rockers on Yonge Street, who could now play to 18 (or 19) year-old punters. While Ronnie Hawkins was a consummate professional who would fine his band for smoking marijuana or missing practice,¹²³⁰ Leckie positioned himself as not just unprofessional but *anti*-professional, a kid who performed like a Tasmanian Devil, pumped full of rage, drugs, and fast music. The impetus was to destroy – history, society, yourself, and sometimes the venue you played in. Leckie cut himself up on stage with razor blades;¹²³¹ kicked over tables while “chatting up’ girls”;¹²³² put out cigarettes on his arms;¹²³³ stole liquor from bars;¹²³⁴ robbed gas stations (or claimed to);¹²³⁵ and shot speed on-stage.¹²³⁶ Leckie and his friend Frankie Venom, another notoriously self-destructive figure, had a contest to see who could *drink* the most “Rush,” an amyl nitrite.¹²³⁷ That the substance is meant to be sniffed not drunk was the point; this way, they figured they could cause optimum shock and damage. Though

¹²²⁹ Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 129.

¹²³⁰ Hawkins, *Ronnie Hawkins*, 127.

¹²³¹ Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 54.

¹²³² Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 49.

¹²³³ Pevere, *Gods of the Hammer*, 46.

¹²³⁴ Pope, *Anti-Diva*, 72.

¹²³⁵ “Robert,” Interview.

¹²³⁶ “Robert,” Interview.

¹²³⁷ Worth, *Treat Me Like Dirt*, 283.

Leckie claimed to never use heroin,¹²³⁸ it seems clear he used almost everything else – or claimed to.

By 1980, the hippie counterculture had been largely supplanted by the punk subculture. This subculture resisted both the “straight,” mainstream world and the hippies who had been so dominant 10 years earlier. Punk represented the opposite of hippie “peace and love” utopianism. The hippies thrived at a time of economic expansion and general hopefulness for the future; the punks thrived in a time of economic recession and general pessimism about the future. This was reflected in their contrasting outlooks on the world, and in the drugs they did. Punks adopted what hippies called “enemy” drugs – alcohol, speed, cocaine, and heroin, while (often) disdaining cannabis, the drug most representative of hippie culture. Especially in Vancouver, punk’s melding of drug-using classes led a certain “subcultural unity” to the city, as drug users all over it mixed in a way they would not have in 1965.

¹²³⁸ “Gerald,” Interview.

Conclusion

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, subcultural drug use in Canada went through a period of massive expansion and change. In 1960, subcultural drug use was a minor phenomenon centred on small groups of dissident artists, writers, and musicians. By 1980, according to Toronto band promoter “Jack,” “everyone was into drugs [...] You’d be hard-pressed to find [a musician] who didn’t [use drugs], frankly.”¹²³⁹ Although the statement is not literally true, drugs certainly *seemed* to be everywhere by the late 1970s, especially if you were involved in music, or a music-based subculture. In the mid-1960s, subcultural drug use bloomed with the hippies into a largely utopian, joyful experience, before descending into a largely nihilistic practice, epitomized by the punks. The history of subcultural drug use in Canada teaches us about the social, cultural, political, and technological changes engulfing Canadian society at this time.

This study contributes to Canadian history and drug studies by situating the drug user as an historical actor involved in a subculture. Not all subculturalists did drugs; not all drug users were subculturalists. But many were, and the primary route most young people took toward drugs in the 1960s and 1970s was through subculture, especially those related to music. By analysing drug use subculturally, we can illuminate several dark corners of Canadian history, such as police violence, poverty, and hard-drug addiction, while exploring larger themes such as the growing economy and population, rise of the welfare state, the development of the teenager, the spread of greater cultural tolerance, and technological development. By interviewing drug users from the 1960s and 1970s, locating their drug use within a subculture, and tracing that

¹²³⁹ “Jack,” Interview.

subculture's development, we get a ground-level "transcript" of what subcultural drug users were thinking and doing at the time. Combined with historical analysis, we can form a picture of subcultural drug users previously unavailable in the historical scholarship.

Before 1960, illicit drug use was mostly confined to certain subcultures, for example, Beats, rockers, and folkies, who lived a relatively "underground" existence, mostly in the big cities. In 1964, a variety of factors led to the explosion of subcultural drug use among young people, which would lead to a general hippie "counterculture," influenced by (and often including) Beats, rockers, and folkies. The Beatles, brought to America by airplane and disseminated through TV, transistor radio, and LP records, paved the way for a "cultural revolution" in youth attitudes, styles, and politics. Though the first bands of the British invasion did not initially advertise their drug use, they did later, as did other bands in the psychedelic era, "mainstreaming" drug use for the subculturalists of the late 1960s and 1970s. Their primary drugs were cannabis and hallucinogens like LSD, which were characterized by introspection, ego-dissolution, and mind expansion. These subculturalists hung out in a variety of places, but the coffeeshop was one of the most important, a place where they could gather, use drugs (even if they had to go outside), socialize, and listen to and perform live music. These drugs, cannabis and the hallucinogens, contributed to a utopian, free-spirited hippie experiment, which flourished especially in areas like Vancouver's Kitsilano, Toronto's Yorkville, and Montreal's McGill Ghetto and Carré St-Louis. Alcohol, meanwhile, remained the preserve of the older generation, both culturally and legally. The drinking age was 21 and most hippies were younger than that, and alcohol use was associated with the older generation.

By 1967, the hippie counterculture existed throughout Canada, straining ideas of tolerance and liberal values. While some older Canadian elites, such as Pierre Trudeau, seemed

sympathetic to the counterculture, many were not. Vancouver mayor Tom Campbell, for example, did everything he could to clean Vancouver of its “scum community.”¹²⁴⁰ Tens of thousands of American draft resisters, who tended to be educated and middle class, streamed into Canada, many of them joining the subculture, giving it an American “edge” – capitalistic, cultural, and drug related – that was lacking in Canada. This contributed to the weakening of Canada’s reputation as a conservative backwater of the United States, emerging instead as a more liberal, more tolerant, less brutal alternative to the US.

This was visible in part through issues of race. The hippie community was overwhelmingly white, because the Canadian population was overwhelmingly white. Subculturalists at the time tended to have progressive views on race, and some, like “Dipper,” were avid and active anti-racists.¹²⁴¹ This correlates with the idea that cannabis and hallucinogen-using subcultures were, in the main, progressive, and several interviewees expressed how these drugs contributed to their open-mindedness – as did a general expansion of liberal values, a progressive shift in government, and communications technology, which beamed (American) racial strife into their homes daily.

The limits to cultural tolerance were best expressed in the municipal, provincial, and federal police forces entrusted with enforcing drug law. Testimonies to the LeDain Commission revealed an antipathy to drug users on the part of police chiefs and other policing superordinates,¹²⁴² and actions on the ground revealed the same attitudes among the ranks. Police, often with the support of local politicians, ratepayers, and the otherwise “square” world,

¹²⁴⁰ Chapman, *The Last Gang in Town*, 55.

¹²⁴¹ “Dipper,” Interview.

¹²⁴² Martel, *Not This Time*, 136-137.

sought to disrupt subcultural activities as they were happening. This often involved the zealous application of drug laws, but could also mean extra-legal harassment, intimidation, and even physical abuse and beatings. This tendency was most notable in Vancouver, where police played a much more intimate part in users' lives than in Toronto or Montreal, raiding shops and homes, breaking up gatherings of hippies, and launching a campaign of harassment against countercultural institutions like the Cool-Aid Drop-In Centre and the *Georgia Straight* newspaper.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Montreal was the primary receiving port for most drugs entering Canada. Though some drugs did come through Vancouver from Asia and Mexico, most heroin and hashish came through Europe to Montreal. This created a heightened sense of danger in the Montreal counterculture, as biker gangs and other violent criminals sought to monopolize the drug trade. The difference was most notable in the cannabis trade. In Toronto and Vancouver, organized crime tended to leave cannabis alone, at least at the street level, where dealing was usually done by friends, for friends, in a community. In Montreal, however, organized crime made it clear that you could either sell the drugs for them, or not sell them at all. Organized crime muscled in on coffeeshops and bars where subculturalists hung out, sometimes causing violence. This, combined with the linguistic, class, and racial turpitude engulfing Montreal, made it, if not more dangerous, than at least "edgier," than other Canadian cities with a more engulfing feeling of doom.

The "end of the sixties dream" came with the Four Horsemen of Hard Drugs: Cocaine, Alcohol, Heroin, and Speed, especially methamphetamine. Except for alcohol, these were drugs created by chemists within the last 150 years, whose original purpose was for medicating the ill and injured. However, their recreational uses soon surpassed their medicinal ones, and amateur

chemists could create their own products. This was especially the case for methamphetamine. By 1970, Toronto was known as the “Speed Capital of Canada,” as bikers muscled into Yorkville, Rochdale College, and other countercultural places and started selling – pushing, some argued – the drug. It could be smoked or injected, and shared needles precipitated a Hepatitis-C scare, which contributed in part to shutting down the Yorkville counterculture. Some argued that the Hep scare was manufactured; others that it was very real, their own illnesses proof of it. Whereas cannabis and hallucinogens had, among the counterculture at least, positive cultural and symbolic associations, speed did not have “any philosophical attributes.”¹²⁴³ It just wound users up, made them want more, and often encouraged aggressive behaviour, especially when combined with alcohol. Speed use would decline through the 1970s, but enjoyed a resurgence during punk rock, which suited punk’s fast music and aggressive attitudes, and served a practical function of sobering up drunk punks so they could play.

It was a common slur that the hippies were “slumming” in the 1960s and early 1970s, on the assumption that they were middle class kids who were taking advantage of Canada’s new, supposedly generous, welfare system. These included not only “welfare” per se (the Canada Assistance Plan, or CAP), but also programs such as Canada Council grants for artists, and programs for youth, including the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), Local Initiatives Project (LIP), Opportunities for Youth (OFY), and more. Funded by taxes on a rapidly growing economy, these programs provided direct cash payments to many subcultural youngsters, reducing youth poverty and unemployment, and allowing young people to continue to live subculturally while still earning a paycheque. It also contributed to the perceived differences between the United States and Canada; while the Canadian government was seen to be

¹²⁴³ “Tony,” Interview.

supporting its young people with jobs and grants, the American government was seen to be getting them killed in the ghettos and in Vietnam. This was in part perception – poverty remained a terrible, systemic problem in Canada, and the United States had plenty of programs to help youth. But the distinction solidified, with the concepts of a “more liberal” Canada vs. a more conservative United States becoming culturally ingrained.

An expanding economy and the public moneys it provided meant more young Canadians were staying in school longer, their attendance monitored by truancy officers and their labour under the age of 15 banned.¹²⁴⁴ Almost all young people in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver attended high school for at least some of their lives, and record numbers were graduating, many of them going on to college or university, where they could extend their “adolescences” before setting down to job and family. As a result, the high school became the primary distribution centre for drugs in the late 1960s and 1970s, as teenage dealers made their pocket money selling cannabis and hallucinogens to their classmates. Though it is important to note that most high school students did not use drugs, significant numbers did, as drugs became a common rite of passage for young people forming their personal, including subcultural, identities. Though the state had never intended it that way, free, compulsory schooling for teenagers gave those young people interested in drugs a place to learn about them, and participate in the rituals of getting high.

By the mid-1970s, the counterculture had been absorbed into the capitalist mainstream, and marijuana, though still illegal, became more common. Though there had always been some cocaine in Canada since the drug’s earliest days, in the late 1960s there was a resurgence in

¹²⁴⁴ Philip Oreopoulos, “The Compelling Effects of Compulsory Schooling: Evidence from Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d’économique*, 39 (2006): 25-27.

Canada's big cities, though it was mostly confined to subcultural neighbourhoods like Yorkville. By the late 1970s, cocaine was much more common, though its heyday was still a few years away. Like methamphetamine, cocaine is a stimulant that encourages the ego and can, in the words of many of my interviewees, make you "selfish." Unlike methamphetamine, cocaine had very definite "philosophical" attributes – it was the drug for the wealthy, even if middle-class and poor Canadians used it. Cocaine's popularity in Canada was a direct result of improvements in technology and trade, as more flights opened from Andean countries to North America, and cartels set up a distribution network throughout North America.

Heroin was another drug whose cachet altered through the 1960s and 1970s. Considered by most (not all) users as the worst of the worst drugs, heroin in the 1950s was a drug that was strictly for greasers, junkies, and jazz musicians. The hippies were unambiguously opposed to the drug; it was the one thing they (generally) would not touch. But as the counterculture disintegrated in the 1970s, some young people took to heroin as a form of escape and as a double middle-finger, pointed at both the hippies and mainstream society. In punk rock, heroin became something of a "subculture-within-a-subculture," as users both hid their habits from other punks, but enthusiastically shared their experiences with other "junkies," communing with such heroes as Johnny Thunders and Lou Reed.

The primary drug of punk rock was alcohol. Just like during Yonge Street's wild days 20 years earlier, the musicians and punters at punk shows consumed astronomical amounts of beer, sometimes reinforced with speed. Beer was more available thanks to the relaxed drinking laws of the early 1970s, it was suitable for loud and raucous partying, and it worked as a riposte to the hippie aversion to alcohol. In the case of cannabis, it was available but was less suitable or

culturally fitted to punk. (Though cannabis remained popular outside of punk circles throughout the period.)

This study limits itself to Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Of these three cities, Vancouver stood out repeatedly as the outlier. Vancouver, despite its smaller population, had more alcoholics, more heroin users, and more cannabis users than anywhere else in the country. There are several theories about why Vancouver became so saturated with drugs, but I think the most effective is Bruce K. Alexander's "Terminal City Thesis," which argued that Vancouver's troubles come from its location at the end of the continent, a magnet for dislocated peoples of all backgrounds, people who are more likely to use drugs and alcohol than people who have deep community roots.¹²⁴⁵ By 1965, there were two primary drug-using communities in Vancouver – the Skid Row "junkies," who had been around since at least the 1920s and centred on the Downtown Eastside; and the hippies, centred on Kitsilano and Fourth Avenue in the West End. Though they had little in common with each other at first and generally stayed apart, they began to mix in the late 1960s, thanks to a combination of subcultural change and police repression. By 1980, the subcultures had morphed into a single (if highly varied) drug-using subculture.

Vancouver remained an outlier for other reasons as well. Toronto and Montreal saw serious conflict between its municipal governments and the hippies. But Vancouver was particularly bad. It had the most vicious and corrupt police in the country, and the most reactionary municipal government, epitomised in Mayor Tom "Terrific" Campbell and RCMP Narcotics Officer Abe Snidanko. For example, whereas Montreal's Mayor Drapeau tried to shut down the underground newspapers *Sexus* and *Logos* once,¹²⁴⁶ Vancouver's Mayor Campbell

¹²⁴⁵ Alexander, *The Globalisation of Addiction*, 3.

¹²⁴⁶ Verzuh, *Underground Times*, 79.

charged the *Georgia Straight* editors with obscenity at least 12 times.¹²⁴⁷ They represented a different frontier attitude than did the hippies, one focused on establishing law and order and prioritizing profit and private property, represented by groups such as the Kitsilano Ratepayers Association.¹²⁴⁸ Race was also a more significant factor in Vancouver than elsewhere. The movement in Canada to prohibit recreational drugs began on the west coast, especially (not exclusively) as a reaction to anti-Asian racism. Despite this, the drug users of Vancouver were, like the rest of Canada, mostly white.

Toronto was the centre for English-Canadian arts, music, and literature, including those awash in drug-use. The old saw of “Toronto the Good” came crumbling down with the establishment of the hippie community in Yorkville, and later Rochdale College. The city Robert Fulford called “a great place to mind your own business”¹²⁴⁹ and that banned poetry readings in parks,¹²⁵⁰ had to contend with a flowering counterculture they did not expect and did not understand. The city’s size made it a subcultural hotspot – “Frank” from Montreal described the punk scene in Toronto as, “heaven,”¹²⁵¹ because it had the population to support a roaring punk scene. Montreal and Vancouver did not (yet). There was another significant difference between Toronto and Montreal and Vancouver – Toronto had a smaller port than Montreal and Vancouver, which unloaded fewer tons of overseas freight every day, a good portion of it smuggled

¹²⁴⁷ Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 72.

¹²⁴⁸ Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” n.p.

¹²⁴⁹ Fulford, *Accidental City*, 1.

¹²⁵⁰ Chris Gudgeon, *Out of This World: The Natural History of Milton Acorn*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1996: 104.

¹²⁵¹ “Frank,” Interview.

drugs.¹²⁵² The primary hard drug in Toronto from the late 1960s on was methamphetamine, which unlike cocaine, heroin, or cannabis, is inorganic and can be manufactured entirely in a laboratory with household ingredients. No one is sure exactly why methamphetamine became so predominant in Toronto in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but the relative smallness of the Port of Toronto compared with the Ports of Montreal and Vancouver may have meant it was easier to manufacture drugs than to import them.

Montreal kept its reputation as Sin City, and subcultural drug use in the city went as far back as the 1920s, with its rollicking jazz scene and American punters fleeing the Eighteenth Amendment. Anglo Montreal would grasp the subcultural drug craze first, but French Montreal would catch up and even surpass the English in the development of “hippie-dom” in the city. As discussed above, Montreal also had a more visible organized crime presence in the subcultures.

I chose to confine this study to the three largest cities in Canada: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. This was an issue of both time and practicality – by focusing on the three cities, I was able to take a macroscopic look at subcultural drug use in the three cities that were on the vanguard of it. But most Canadians do not live in these three cities, and a significant number do not live in cities at all, but small towns, with permanent populations of less than 20,000 people. Though I was not able to examine drug use in smaller centres, a look at the development of subcultural drug use in small towns would well complement this study. Smaller centres had their own trajectories when it came to subcultural drug use, which I was only able to glimpse at. Of particular interest would be the entry of subcultural drug use on Indian Reserves and other small,

¹²⁵² For example, in 1975, Montreal unloaded 3,755,000 tons of international cargo and Vancouver unloaded 3,106,000 tons of international cargo. Toronto only unloaded 1,158,000 tons of international cargo. Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, T126-141.

majority-Indigenous communities; and in small, conservative towns, which tended to be more resistant to cultural change. Such a study would answer questions like, Was drug use in small towns and Indian Reserves subcultural? Did subcultures take root in these places, and if so, were their symbols and practices similar to those in the cities? It appears historically that the cities influenced the small towns, but the reverse could also have occurred, as small-town residents moved to the big city. This would question the traditional idea that small towns are more culturally homogenous than big city neighbourhoods, and that cultural vanguards are shaped primarily by big cities and not smaller centres.

Today, Indigenous people make up a large percentage of urban Skid Row residents. Scholars have analysed (and continue to analyse) the roles colonialism and genocide had in creating the Indigenous “Skid Row Junkie.” What has not been less looked at is subcultural factors, whether their origins are in traditional Indigenous beliefs, Canadian settler society, or somewhere else. The Native American Church of Canada, and its use of peyote as a sacrament,¹²⁵³ blurs several lines between subculture, traditional belief, and incorporating the beliefs of others. (Peyote is not native to Canada.) But while historians have some record of early peyote ceremonies in Canada, no study has been done on any long-term effects the religion has had. Beyond peyote, it would be interesting to see how Indigenous communities incorporated the new drugs into traditional beliefs, rather than focusing solely on the damage drugs have done to individuals and community. (Real as that damage is.)

A study of subcultural drug use in small towns might better explain both the differences and the similarities between the “square world” and the world of the subcultural drug user. Small

¹²⁵³ Kahan, *A Culture's Catalyst*, xii.

towns tend to be more conservative, and anecdotally at least, long hair and rebellious attitudes seemed much less welcome in small towns than larger cities in the 1960s and 1970s. However, affective ties between family generations, neighbours, and friends tend to be stronger in small towns, which would affect subculture and subcultural drug use. The question is how. Some small cities, such as Nelson, BC, seemed to be almost “taken over” by hippies in the late 1960s, changing the character of these towns forever.¹²⁵⁴ We have some understanding of what adults thought of these strange, long-haired Americans coming to live in their communities; it would be interesting to know what young people thought of them too, and how they reacted to these changes.

¹²⁵⁴ Mary Ann Steggles, “The Vietnam Era Resisters Who Shaped Canada’s Ceramic Heritage,” in Linda M. Morra and Sarah Henzi, eds., *On the Other Side(s) of 150: Untold Stories and Critical Approaches to History, Literature, and Identity in Canada*, Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2021: 173.

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