



CHC Season 2 - Episode 6: Transnational Youth

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The Conversation with Richard Ivan Jobs is available [online](#)

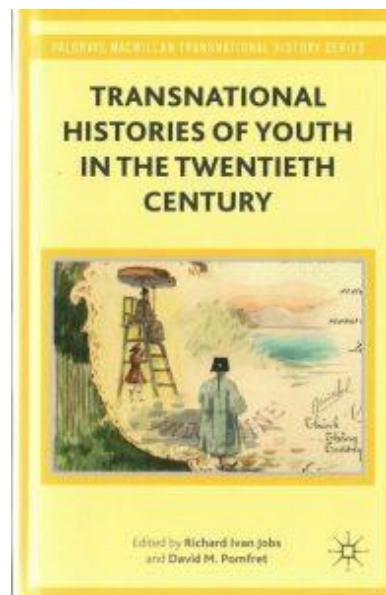
CHILDHOOD: History and Critique (CHC) is a series of interviews, commentary, and happenings in the historical studies of childhood by Dr. Patrick J. Ryan, Kings University College at Western University, Canada

When Rick Jobs first learned about the upheavals in Europe during 1968 as an undergraduate student, he thought, “Wow, look at these ... young people articulating their aspirations...” Youth culture and activism provided a compelling window on the past for him. Later, he decided to continue with graduate studies in history while backpacking around Europe. His parents may have hoped he’d pursue the law, but he had other dreams. “I’ll get my Ph.D., and it will enable me to come back here.”

He fulfilled those hopes in the years that followed, and they seem to have served as initial seed for his forthcoming book *Backpack Ambassadors: How Youth Travel Integrated Europe*. The book explores how the transnational mobility of young people in the second-half of the twentieth-century fostered European integration. It is not a history of the European Union, as such, but takes a wider view of the cultural integration of Europe after the destruction of the Second World War. Some of the things we will learn about include transitions in youth hosteling, youth circulation between sites of protest in 1968, state-sponsored programs for youth to travel together, the Franco-German Youth

Office, the development of Eurorail passes, and the rise youth back-packing.

In our conversation, Rick highlighted that by the 1970’s one million American youth annually traveled around Europe. “The more and more that they travel, the dense network of their circularity begins to expand outward.” As they expanded from northwest Europe into Spain, North Africa, and the Eastern Bloc, the ideas, practices, and sensibilities of youth popular culture spread. He hopes the book will find an audience with both advanced scholarly and undergraduate readers.





We discussed the concept of transnational youth at-length. Rick argued that we are missing something “pretty huge” in the history of childhood and youth, if we don’t confront its “profound transnationality.” I agreed that national histories of childhood had limitations, but I also wondered about the seeming progressive narrative underpinning the work I had read in this area. In his recent keynote address at the [“Horrible Histories Conference”](#) that launched the [Children’s History Society](#), David Pomfret argued that “childhood functions as a space where empires can be collapsed.” I asked Rick if the opposite wasn’t also true. Doesn’t the history of imperialism (programs such as Canada’s Indian Residential Schools – [CHC S2 Ep5](#) – to name only one example) demonstrate repeatedly that empires have been erected on the politics of childhood and youth? I was thinking of a recent article written by Toby Rollo, “Feral Children: settler colonialism, progress, and the figure of the child,” in *Settler Colonial Studies* (June 2016). Rick agreed that age categories are full of paradoxes, but he emphasized that the general significance of childhood and youth deserved greater recognition by scholars if we were to sort through these difficulties. We could, he said, “think about ‘collapsed’ in another way...the totality of imperialism itself can be enfolded within... childhood [and youth].”

Select Works by Richard Ivan Jobs:

Backpack Ambassadors: How Youth Travel Integrated Europe (University of Chicago Press, in press, forthcoming 2017).

Transnational Histories of Youth in the Twentieth Century, co-edited with David M. Pomfret, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

“Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 114, No. 2 (April 2009): 376-404.

Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France After the Second World War (Stanford University, Press, 2007).



About [Richard Jobs](#)

Richard Ivan Jobs is Professor of History at Pacific University, and served as the Chair of the department there from 2008-2014. He earned his doctorate from Rutgers University in 2002, and since this date has authored or edited three books. He is a cultural historian of modern European youth with an emphasis on France.



About [Patrick J. Ryan](#)

Dr. Patrick J. Ryan is Program Coordinator of Childhood & Social Institutions at Kings University College at Western University – Canada. He is VP and President-Elect of the Society for the History of Children and Youth, the long-time managing editor of *H-Childhood* (est. 1998), and the author of scores of publications in the history of childhood and youth, including *Master-Servant Childhood: a history of the idea of childhood in Medieval English Culture* (Palgrave, 2013).