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ABSTRACT

This study explores the travel experiences and fantasies of economically disadvantaged urban black youths in Boston. Responses of the subjects (12 to 17 year old boys) to questions in an interview served as data. The findings indicate that a wide range of places were visited, in terms of number and distance from the subjects' residences. There is also considerable variability in the places to which the subjects said they would choose to travel given an opportunity. Patterns of travel and travel interests are held to be not immediately evident in these data. But an examination of the fantasies about desirable and undesirable places is considered to lead to the postulate that there are at least two attitudinal styles with regard to travel; the first is place-oriented, and the other, personalistic. Although this study deals with some of the more superficial aspects of travel experiences of a relatively small sample of urban black youths, it is considered to stimulate several problems for future research. (Author/JW)

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TRAVELS, AND TRAVELS IN FANTASY OF *
BLACK YOUTHS FROM LOW-INCOME BACKGROUNDS

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In an age when technological events are forcing man to expand his conceptions of space and travel and to consider his own spatial and geographic positions in relation to the accounts of astronauts who have journeyed to "outer space", it seems ironic that we have little or no systematic knowledge of the psychological significance of travel and the nature of attitudes toward a variety of places. Except for anecdotal material, we have little information on how travel interests and experiences are influenced by personal factors such as national or regional background, social class, or race. I mention these factors because they are of particular relevance to this study which inquired into the travels and travel fantasies of sixty black youths from low-income backgrounds.

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The subjects of the study, males ranging in age from 12 to 17 years at the time of their selection (January, 1967), were residents of the Roxbury-North Dorchester section of Boston and were attending a predominantly black junior high school in that area. They were from an extreme group of economically deprived students attending the school, a factor which was the prime criterion for selection. Most of the subjects were

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northern born; the few southern born subjects had moved to the North in their early years and had attended northern urban schools since second grade or earlier.

The data used in this study collected in 1967, are derived from the subjects' responses to some of the questions in an interview schedule called "Neighborhood, House and Travel." As a part of a comprehensive study of factors influencing personal identity, it was the last in a series of four or five interviews held with each subject. The interviews, tape recorded in individual sessions, were conducted by three black males trained as interviewers. After responding to questions about their neighborhoods and housing, each subject was asked the following questions pertaining to travel:

Have you ever been to any cities or towns near Boston?

Have you been to some places outside of Massachusetts?

If you won a free trip to any place in the world, where would you like to go?

Can you think of some places where you would never want to live or even visit?

This report is based on subjects' responses to these questions.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It has been assumed by some educators and planners that the travel experiences of poor urban black children and youths are extremely limited. It is thought that many of the children of Watts have never seen the Pacific Ocean and that many of the children of Harlem have not seen the Atlantic. Some have expressed the view that the environmental experiences of these children and their families are largely restricted to their own

neighborhoods. We think--and our findings support our notion--that there is probably a considerable amount of variation in the travels of the population in question.

Occasionally cited in this connection is Hoggart's (1961) report of travels of English working-class males who only take occasional train trips to the funeral or wedding of some member of the family, forty or fifty miles away. "The speed and the extent of his travel are not much different from what they would have been thirty years ago. The car has not reduced distance for him . . . he will usually travel by bus if he has to travel, but the point is that he normally has to undertake very little travel except within a mile or two." However incomparable this report is to our study, in terms of its referring to a different country and culture with vastly different transportation and highway systems, different economic conditions, to a different age group, and so forth, Hoggart's findings seem worth mentioning.

TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

Forty-eight of our 60 subjects responded to the question "Have you ever been to any cities or towns near Boston?" with the names of neighboring suburbs, distant cities and towns within Massachusetts and resort areas on Cape Cod. Twelve subjects reported that they had not visited any places near Boston. It is important to note, however, that all 12 of these subjects had visited other states.

While some of the subjects had visited only one or two suburbs, a few had been to as many as eight or nine places in the Commonwealth. The array of cities and towns in the Boston area visited by our subjects includes

several of the less affluent suburbs: Chelsea, Medford, Everett, Brockton, Charlestown, Cambridge and Quincy; it includes a few upper-middle class suburbs such as Concord, Wellesley and Belmont, historical sites in Plymouth and Lexington, recreation and resort areas including seven references to Cape Cod. Their travels to the blue-collar suburbs were occasioned by visits to the homes of friends and relatives, participation in or attendance at scholastic athletic events, or commercial activities such as working or shopping. The few subjects who had been to the more affluent suburbs went as participants in educational enrichment programs or they went to visit relatives at work in suburban homes or to work there themselves. Unfortunately, we did not ask about their impressions of the settings in which they found themselves. It is important to find out what those visits contributed to their awareness of environmental alternatives and to their understanding of their relative socioeconomic and residential status and position. The recreational excursions to Cape Cod and state beaches were usually family-arranged events. We did not attempt to elicit their reactions to recreational settings, another line of inquiry which would have enriched our knowledge of environmental features salient for our subjects.

With regard to travels outside of Massachusetts, six subjects indicated that they had never traveled to other states. (Table 1a). Twenty-four of the subjects had visited only one or two states outside Massachusetts, while another thirty subjects had visited between three and a dozen places. Three of the subjects in the latter group mentioned Canada among the places they had visited. The single subject not yet accounted for had visited 19 states including Hawaii and three other Pacific Islands, Guam, Wake and

Midway Islands. His relatively extensive travels occurred when his family moved from place to place with his stepfather, a career man in the U. S. Navy.

Of the places visited outside of Massachusetts, New York was by far mentioned most frequently; thirty of the sixty youths reported that they had visited New York. Other states visited in order of frequency, as indicated in Table 1b, are Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and so on. Other references (mentioned by six subjects or fewer) were distributed among the remaining states and the District of Columbia, except for 16 states not visited by any of our subjects. Those 16 states are given in a footnote to Table 1b.

Most of the trips to other states were for the purpose of visiting relatives and family friends. A few subjects were taken to New York by a teacher to visit the United Nations site. The visitors to Canada went to Expo or in one instance to visit relatives in Canada. Those who went to Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont were there for summer camp sessions.

We have uneven data on the following: modes of transportation used, whether subjects were accompanied or unaccompanied on their journeys, and the length of their visits. The evidence we have suggests that most of the subjects traveled by car or bus; a few mentioned traveling by train. It seems that they usually traveled with family members. Visits varied in length from over night stays to spending an entire summer in one or two places. There is also a great deal of variability in subjects' ages at the time of their trips. In a more detailed study of travel, age at the time of travel should be examined in relation to the nature of the experience and recollections of places visited.

TRAVEL FANTASIES

The question, "If you won a free trip to any place in the world, where would you like to go?", yielded the mention of 44 places within continental United States and 59 places abroad (Table 2). Included among the "abroad responses" are citations of Hawaii and an "around the world" response. Although most subjects answered with only one or two places, one subject cited as many as six. Combinations varied. The responses of some subjects encompassed places which seem provincial along with more exotic places. For example, one subject responded with Westminster, Maryland, on the one hand, and Paris on the other. Others chose places with characteristics in common: Tahiti and Jamaica appealed to one subject who described them both as pleasant, tropical sites.

The appeal of Hawaii must be attributed to its climate and its being regarded as a place where you "have fun". Subjects remarked that it is "warm and sunny there all the time", that "you don't have to worry about the weather", it has "nice weather", "it's tropical". "It seems like it would be a lot of fun", said one boy. More specifically, one added that he likes the water and another said that he would like "surfing and boating" there. A reason given by another subject is that there are "lots of pretty girls" in Hawaii.

Of the 59 citations of foreign places, 21 are European. Of those, France is most popular with our subjects, four of whom mentioned Paris and two others who simply listed France. There were three references to Italy and one to Rome. Other places mentioned are London, Spain, Portugal and Norway. Two subjects said simply that they would like to go to Europe while another replied "any place in Europe".

Their reasons for wanting to go to the places specified often reveal some of the factors which have influenced their choices. France is appealing to one youth who wants to "go talk to women" there. Another subject would like to go to Paris "to see what it's like". And another, perhaps influenced by the popular song, said "they say it's all right in the Spring and Fall". Still another wished to go "to Paris to see that building they have there that tips: (Did he mean the Eiffel Tower in a gale? Or perhaps the "leaning tower" of Pisa? This is an example of confusion of geographic detail.) Rome is attractive to one youth for the "monuments they have found and dug up of the Roman times" and to another who wants to see the "statues and things" that are there. Italy was mentioned for its food, its people, and its countryside. One youth would like to see how they make shoes in Italy. A subject said he would like to see Spain because he had studied about Columbus. He would take pictures "through Spain . . . see the people and talk to them, (see) how they're living and stuff". Another would choose Norway "cause they got fishing and that's where the Vikings come from and I guess I'd like to go and see how they live and stuff like that" and Portugal because "I've never been there". London is of interest to a subject who had heard that there are a lot of singers there like the Beattles. He added that he would like to see the famous towers and "stuff like that", too. London was chosen by another subject who said, "I always wanted to see what the Mother Country of America was like".

Their attraction to Europe can be explained primarily through the emphasis on European geography and history presented in the public schools they have attended. One wonders if it has the personal significance for

them as it has for American students visibly of European extraction. The subjects' positive sentiments toward Europe were summarized by one boy who said he wants to go to Europe "just cuz everybody said it's so nice".

In contrast to the marked preference for Europe, only six subjects said that they would like to go to Africa. (It should be remembered that the interviews were conducted in 1967; at that time an awareness of black nationalism and explorations of African origins were less prominent for the subjects than they are now.) References were to the continent rather than to specific countries in Africa. One 12-year old boy explained that he would like to see how people live in Africa. He added that "No white people try to run you over or nothing, they don't have a lot of white people living there" and that "they have a colored President". This is the sole instance of a subject's explicitly basing his attraction to a place on racial grounds.

Canada was chosen by four boys because of Expo '67. Another would go to Canada for this reason: "If you don't have enough food you can go and catch something like a deer", an advantage which may not have occurred to a boy from a more affluent background. Scattered references to other foreign places include Australia ("Just for the country. Just the way the country is--not too many people living there"; "there's a lot of animals and stuff there, wild stuff"), Jamaica ("It's tropical" and "warm"), the Bahamas ("one of my friends went down and he brought back a lot of pictures, you know. He said it's the best place you could go for a vacation.") and China ("to see the geisha girls"--another example of confusion of detail.)

While their reasons for selecting certain foreign places pertain to historical and cultural features, their reasons for choosing places in the United States are determined more often by personal preferences. This suggests that their sources of information about various places differ. It appears that their ideas about Europe and other foreign places are based on textbook information and formal instruction, while information about the United States is derived from mass media, their personal travel experience and travel experiences of people they know.

Among the places in the United States to which some would like a free trip, California is the most popular and Florida ranks second. California is appealing in part because of the climate ("It's hot there"; "It never snows there"; "I want to see how it is in the cities where it never gets cold") and, in part, because of the film industry ("I'd like to see a lot o' movie stars." Another said he would "probably hang around some of the studios, you know, and get me a shine box . . . there's lots of business around there.") Like California, Florida is attractive to these Boston youths because of its warm climate and recreational features. ("They don't have snow down there and you can go swimming.") Nevada particularly Las Vegas, offers the possibility of gambling. ("I'd like to win some money. I saw pictures in a book, you know, what Las Vegas was like . . . like it's a gambling city.") Four subjects wished to win a trip to New Hampshire; all but one of them had visited New Hampshire and liked it. ("Because it's quiet and you can go fishing and hunting there.") Another example of a subject who would like a free trip to a place he has visited is the youth who enjoyed a week of parties in the homes of relatives and friends in Westminster, Maryland. If he won a free trip he would like to revisit

Westminister. Other references to places in the United States were distributed among cities and states in the North East, Mid-west, South West, the West Coast, and the South. Those who would choose southern places other than Florida stated that they wanted to visit relatives living there.

Among the areas in the United States subjects designated as places they would "never want to live or even visit", southern states appeared most frequently (Table 3). Alabama and Mississippi lead the list. Their reasons pertain primarily to the treatment of blacks ("whites kill people down there") and to inter-racial conflict ("Cause actually they have so much riots going on down there it's worse than up here. I think that right up here is bad, but that is even worse . . . I don't like it up here so I know I wouldn't like it down there"). A few subjects referring to weather conditions said that places in the South are "too hot." Other places in the United States which were cited as undesirable are Detroit, California, East Boston ("Lots of people get killed there.") and Boston ("I have to live here but I don't like it").

Included among the foreign places the youths would not want to visit are Russia, Viet Nam, China and Africa. Reasons for not wanting to visit Russia concerned restricted freedom, ("No freedom over there I hear."); material scarcity, ("I just want to see what them people are missing over there."); and work with little reward, ("I've heard all they do is work there; they don't do anything else,"; "The things they do seem all bad . . . you work for people and they give you what they think you deserve.") Explanations for not wanting to visit China concerned its population ("Half the world's population is over there. It's crowded." "All those people there".), stereotypes of customs ("I wouldn't want to sit on the floor all

the time."), Sino-American relations ("They don't like Americans and they shoot you."), and food shortage ("You be hungry all the time over there."). Our subjects' statements about Russia and China echo the phraseology and content of propaganda about those countries which have reached them through the mass media all their lives.

The war, of course, was the major reason for preferring not to visit Viet Nam. A typical statement was, "There's a war going on and I'd probably end up getting killed". More succinctly, another respondent described Viet Nam as being "too deadly".

Africa is unappealing to subjects who dread the possibility of exposure to physical danger there. ("Lions might attack you and there might be some cannibals there to eat you up." "There's lots of wild animals there and you can get killed just by walking and looking at the scenery.") One youth expanded on his view of Africa: "There is one place I wouldn't like to go. That's Africa . . . where they have all them lions and them snakes and stuff running around . . . The upper, the civilized part of Africa I would like to go to, but not down there where it's not that much civilized yet."

Other places which are unattractive are Alaska, the North Pole and Antarctica which are all thought to be too cold. Hong Kong, Japan, Asia, Germany, Yugoslavia and Cuba were included among the unappealing places, also.

Several subjects were unable to name places that they would rather not visit. They simply said that they could not think of any places in that category. This may reflect a willingness on the part of some subjects to go almost anywhere--at least once; or it may reflect a reluctance to make negative choices.

DISCUSSION

It was suggested that the travel experiences of poor urban black youths are extremely limited. Our findings, on the contrary, indicate a wide range of places visited in terms of number and distance from subjects' residences. There is also considerable variability in the places to which these subjects say they would choose to travel given an opportunity.

Patterns of travel and travel interests are not immediately evident in these data. For example, some subjects who had never traveled in the Greater Boston area had visited other states. Nor is there a clear-cut relationship between actual travels and travel fantasies. I had expected to find that when compared with subjects who had not traveled outside Massachusetts, those who had visited several states would fantasy about trips to distant and exotic lands. Indeed, the converse of that hypothesis seems equally valid. That is to say, one might have expected subjects with histories of little or no travel to fantasy about more remote lands. Neither is the case; there is little evidence of such a simplistic relationship. Other factors must be sought to account for fantasies about far away places and the wish to see them.

An examination of the fantasies about both desirable and undesirable places leads one to postulate that there are at least two attitudinal styles with regard to travel. Craik (1970) has characterized one style as place-oriented and the other as personalistic. The first type according to Craik, responds primarily to the physical and cultural aspects of a place; the focus is on the place, its scenic qualities, social atmosphere and so forth. The latter, a personalistic attitude, is expressed by those

who seek places with a bearing upon their own identity or places where friends and relatives reside or have visited. An interest in the personalistic element in our subjects' fantasies drew our attention to the findings pertaining to Africa. That, in 1967, there were six subjects who said they would like a trip to Africa and four who said that they never want to go there is of considerable interest when viewed in terms of race, origins and identity.

It is expected that the continent Africa and specific countries in Africa will be mentioned more frequently among places they would like to visit when we reinterview the same group of subjects (now three years older) during 1970-71. By now, more of them may have been exposed to the precepts of black nationalism and are aware of the relevance of Africa to their own lives and culture. The relationship between opinions of Africa and a sense of racial identity among these subjects will be explored in subsequent analyses.

"Travel broadens" is a cliché that persists. What types of travel experiences expand one's sense of self? In subsequent studies we should attempt to understand the ways in which travel experiences in varied settings are broadening. What roles and behaviors do individuals adopt in new places? With regard to our sample, what does it mean to visit places in which people are better off than they? Worse off? What do they learn about themselves in new places? Undoubtedly, travels to other neighborhoods and cities contribute to an understanding of one's relative socioeconomic position. The experience also increases one's psychological self-perspective and views of others. Data addressed to these issues are needed.

Generally speaking, the findings raise questions about the sources of the subjects' information about places, the development of geographic stereotypes and values which contribute to a positive or a negative view of a place. We have inferred that our subjects probably gained information about preferred foreign places from formal sources such as textbooks, while their notions about preferred places in the United States were probably formed by their personal experience, the experiences of relatives and friends and the mass media. Unfortunately, we did not inquire sufficiently into sources of information about each place mentioned. More information is needed about the media and materials these adolescents use as sources of information. Just what do they learn about geography and geopolitics through the mass media? In instances of inaccurate information about cultural and physical aspects of places (e.g., that Georgia and other southern states are within the boundaries of Massachusetts) it would be worthwhile to determine how the notions were acquired. What information is acquired through social studies curricula, family and peer "folklore"? Knowledge of their sources of geographic information would contribute to our understanding the process of learning elementary geography and ethnography and perhaps suggest some channels through which more accurate information might be conveyed, at least to youths similar in background to the group we are studying.

Of interest also are the places which the subjects did not mention either as desirable or undesirable. For instance, a number of states in the Midwest and North West seem unnoticed. It is worth noting that there was no reference at all to a city or country in Central or South America, a reflection of our North American hyperopia. There are only two referenees

places in the Middle East. There is no evidence of knowledge of specific black African nations and for a few subjects Europe and Asia also may be undifferentiated. Examples of confusion of geographic detail or inappropriate associations have been cited. Such errors and deficits in their knowledge provoke further questions about the teaching of geography and social studies in the United States and elsewhere.

Because our subjects are Bostonians, we were reminded of Cleveland Amory's description of the Proper Bostonian's provinciality ("basically he remains adamant in his lack of geographical curiosity outside the suburbs of Boston") and Daniel K. Wallingford's map of a "Bostonian's Idea of the United States" which, as described by Amory (1957), shows the Great Lakes "noted as fresh water" and under a large blank area marked "Western Prairies" appear the names of several Midwestern cities. We have wondered what our subjects and subjects from other populations would produce if asked to draw a map of the United States and what their maps of the world might reveal about their knowledge of the reality of the physical relationships between countries and cities as well as their mental arrangements of various places and distances separating them.

In conclusion, I wish to mention some areas for future study suggested by this research. The development of concepts of geographic areas should be studied more thoroughly. The extent to which occupation, income, education and race differentially influence where individuals actually travel and wish to travel should be examined. How are travels and migration patterns related? The social and psychological consequences of travel or lack of travel for individuals should be explored. In addition to these

issues, Wohwill (1970) has identified a number of environmental factors which should be studied in relation to vacationing, tourism and other forms of travel.

Although this study has dealt with some of the more superficial aspects of the travel experiences of a relatively small sample of urban black youths, it has stimulated several problems for future research. We look forward to the studies which will deal with these and other issues relevant to psychological aspects of travel.

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Table 1a

SUBJECTS' TRIPS OUTSIDE MASSACHUSETTS

(N=60)

<u>No. of Places Visited</u>	<u>f</u>
0	5
1-2	24
3-4	18
5-6	7
7-8	22
9-10	2
11-12	1
.	
.	
.	
21-22	1

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Table 1b*

PLACES VISITED (N=60)

	f		f
New York	30	Illinois	4
Pennsylvania	16	California	3
New Jersey	15	Canada	3
Rhode Island	13	Tennessee	3
New Hampshire	13	Virginia	3
Maine	11	Washington, D.C.	3
Connecticut	10	Kentucky	2
North Carolina	10	Arizona	1
Georgia	9	Arkansas	1
Alabama	7	Colorado	1
Florida	6	Kansas	1
Maryland	6	Louisiana	1
Michigan	6	New Mexico	1
Ohio	5	North Dakota	1
South Carolina	5	Texas	1
		West Virginia	1
		Gwam	1
		Hawaii	1
		Midway	1
		Wake	1

*Alaska, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming were not mentioned as places visited.

TABLE 2

RESPONSES TO "IF YOU WON A FREE TRIP
TO ANY PLACE IN THE WORLD,
WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO?"

DOMESTIC PREFERENCES (CONTINENTAL U.S.A.)

<u>North East</u>	<u>f</u>
New Hampshire	4
New York	3
Philadelphia	1
Cape Cod	1

<u>South East</u>	
Florida	6
North Carolina	1
Virginia	1
Westminster, Maryland	1
Savannah, Georgia	1
"Down South"	1

<u>South West</u>	
Las Vegas	4
Nevada	1
Texas	1
"Ranch in a place like Arizona"	1
"Out West"	1

<u>Midwest</u>	
Cleveland	1
Detroit	1
Illinois	1

<u>West Coast</u>	
California	12
Los Angeles	1

PREFERENCES FOR PLACES ABROAD

Europe	3
France	2
Paris	4
Italy	4
Rome	2
Spain	2
Portugal	1
England	1
London	1
Norway	1

TABLE 2 (continued)

PREFERENCES FOR PLACES ABROAD

Canada	$\frac{F}{3}$
Montreal	2
Africa	6
Egypt	1
Jerusalem	1
Hawaii	12
China	1
Japan	1
Australia	2
Tahiti	1
Jamaica	2
Bahamas	1
Expo '67 or World's Fair	4
"Around the World"	1

Don't know	2

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TABLE 3

PLACES SUBJECTS "NEVER WANT TO VISIT" (N=60)

<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>FOREIGN</u>	<u>f</u>
Alabama*	6	Russia	13
Mississippi	5	Viet Nam	10
Florida	2	China*	7
Tennessee	1	Africa	7
"Down South"	1	Alaska	4
California	1	Germany	3
Detroit	1	Cuba	2
Harlem	1	Japan	2
Boston	1	North Pole	2
East Boston	1	Antarctica	1
-----		Arctic	1
Don't know or no		Asia	1
response	13	Australia	1
		Hong Kong	1
		Yugoslavia	1

*One subject specified Birmingham

*Two subjects specified "Red China"