IN *The Last of the Southern Girls*, NOVELIST WILLIE MORRIS created a Washington dinner party that seated Arkansas-bred Carol Templeton Hollywell next to a famous midwesterner.

“Have you ever written about Washington?” [she asks amid the clatter of china and silver.]

“No,” [is the writer’s answer.] “Everybody’s too native to somewhere else.”

“Northerners consider it Southern and Southerners think it Northern.”

“That’s why it’s here.”

Morris’s version of Washington small talk is good journalism but weak history. The common uncertainty about the city’s regional identity in both local conversation and scholarly description is the result of historical development, not original intent.

When Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton struck their dinner-table bargain in 1790, they knew exactly what they were trading—federal assumption of largely northern state debts for a southern capital. The tidewater reaches of the Potomac River lay within the core of the colonial Chesapeake culture area. The new town took its early tone from the southern ports of Alexandria and Georgetown. The imprint of the colonial South was evident among Washington’s elite in a taste for race tracks and gambling, the prestige of lawyers and placeholders, attention to social caste, and other values of plantation society. The federal government also drew the new city southward. Southerners served as speaker of the House of Representatives for forty-one of the first fifty years that Washington was the seat of government, as president for forty-two, and as chief justice for fifty. To the tidy New England eye of young Henry Adams, the capital as late as the administration of Virginia-born Zachary Taylor was little more than a slovenly southern village. Since 1860, in contrast, Washington has grown from a regionally rooted community of 61,000 into an ambiguously situated metropolis of 3.5 million. Its growing role in national administration and international relations and the accompanying economic and demographic changes have created a city that is doubtful about its own character. Observers have commented time and again that

Research for this essay was assisted by the Center for Washington Area Studies, George Washington University. Howard Gillette, Jr., Dennis Gale, Brett Williams, and Robert Liebman offered valuable comments during the course of the research and writing.


the city “used to be southern until . . .” The cliché centers attention on the influx of outsiders and the influence of outside values that have supposedly changed the character of the city, but its timing is slippery. The turning point is sometimes put as far back as the Civil War or the Gilded Age. Others date the big change to World War I, or the New Deal, or World War II, or racial integration during the 1950s, or the New Frontier, or home rule in the 1970s. The residual southernness of metropolitan Washington remained a commonly invoked explanation of local behavior and politics through the 1980s. We are left, in popular imagery, with a city of uncertain regional allegiance that is caught in protracted transition from southern town to something else, whether northern city, modern metropolis, or world capital. In a phrase attributed to John F. Kennedy, it retains the ambiguity of a city with “southern efficiency and northern charm.”

In itself, the regional identity of Washington is a minor historical puzzle posed by the volume of commentary on the national capital. Washington has been a special case among American cities in terms of its economic base, local government, and land-use planning. Nevertheless, the exploration of regional relationships leads to conclusions that are not obvious from its role as the federal city. Washington as an everyday community has remained embedded in its regional environment. Despite frequent comments about its isolation from the American mainstream, its residents have maintained many old regional relationships while accommodating and constructing new claims and connections.

This essay poses two substantive questions: When have major changes occurred in the city’s regional orientation? What has been the character of such changes? The answers provide the opportunity to explore broader dynamics of regional change in the United States, for Washington has developed within the superimposed border zones of two distinct regional systems. As already noted, it lies along the historic boundary between the cultural North and cultural South. It has likewise grown within the shifting margin between the nation’s economic core and periphery.

The popular understanding of Washington’s gradually fading southernness is based on perceptions of change and stability in observable expressions of community values. Some of these expressions involve the realm of individual behavior revolving around family obligations and manners. Mississippian John Stennis, for example, is not the only observer who has pointed to the slow erosion in contemporary Watergate Washington of its traditionally “southern attitudes in the

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social realm—neighborliness, friendliness, conviviality." Expressions also include the domain of civic action. The enforcement or mitigation of racial segregation, for example, is taken as obvious evidence of allegiance to sets of values historically associated with the South or North.

Most commentators have found the source of behavioral and attitudinal changes in the emergence and expansion of a domineering economic core region within the northeastern quadrant of the United States. The centralization of industrial production, distribution networks, and control functions after the Civil War integrated the South and West into a single economic system. Because of the spatial congruity of the economic core and the northern cultural region, such national incorporation has been taken to imply northernization. In theoretical terms, the process is seen as an example of the unidirectional effects of modernization in a centralized nation state. In specific terms, the inclusion of the South within national developmental networks has been used to explain and forecast changes in social patterns and political behavior, as in C. Vann Woodward's famous discussion of the changes wrought by the "bulldozer revolution." Because of its proximity to the industrial core, the upper South has seemed particularly subject to such absorption within an expansive Middle Atlantic region.

The history of Washington can help to delineate the two regional dynamics. Its evolution can tell us something about the relative strengths of northern and southern values and also about the capacity of economic modernization to alter cultural affiliation. As communication centers and central places, border cities can reach into hinterlands and migration sheds on both sides of a regional boundary. Washington's problematic location therefore acts as a lens to focus the effects of regional contact and interaction and makes it a particularly useful case for testing alternative conceptions of regional change. Specifically, the changing character and connections of Washington may suggest ways to understand change and continuity in the larger South from which the city took its original character. Washington's experience also directs attention at other cities balanced in similar ways between South and Middle West or South and West. Washington, Cincinnati, Dallas, and other domestic border cities as a group may have roles and character significantly different from those of regionally centered, economic and cultural capitals such as Boston, Chicago, or Salt Lake City—a set of American Strasbourg and Triestes, perhaps, to contrast with the American equivalents of Paris and Rome.

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FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, every increase of eight civilian jobs in the federal
government has included one position in the Washington area. Through the
employment multiplier, new federal salaries have supported the growth of resi-
dentary employment in retailing, services, construction, finance, and local market
manufacturing. Expanding federal bureaus have attracted a complementary set of
private-sector "national capital functions" whose payrolls have also fed the local
multiplier. The first period of concentrated change began with the Civil War and
continued into the 1880s, with regional consequences emerging over the next forty
years. The second period spanned the Great Depression, World War II, and the
onset of the cold war, again followed by a full generation of regional readjustment.

I start with the assumption that cultural and economic models of regional
patterning are complementary rather than exclusive, since both types of pattern
are manifested by shared behaviors that structure the perceptions and orientations
of individuals. The essay focuses midway between individual Washingtonians and
the metropolitan community as a whole. The explicit commentary left by a minority
of residents and observers can be supplemented by an examination of patterns and
structures of social, economic, and political behavior that have conditioned or
impinged on the activities of everyday life. Such mediating structures have helped
to form Washingtonians' predispositions, orientations, and habits of mind and thus
influenced the ways in which they have understood and responded to the regional
colors of their city. I try to describe such structures by asking a series of
questions about individual perceptions, expectations, and experiences. What re-
gional terms have Washingtonians found in the names of local businesses? What
sorts of neighbors have residents been most likely to encounter? Where have local
entrepreneurs expected to find out-of-town customers? The answers help construct
a history of regional orientation in which incorporation in national systems
ironically has reinforced connectivity and identification with both the North and
the South.

ONE OF THE BASIC CONDITIONS OF AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT has been the early
establishment of a set of cultural regions arrayed from north to south along the
Atlantic coast and their consequent westward expansion along roughly parallel
corridors of settlement. The analysis of such cultural regions emphasizes long
continuities in the spatial distribution of values, customs, and other cultural
information. English, French, and Spanish settlers brought sets of values and
patterns of behavior to the New World. They responded to particular resource
endowments by adapting this cultural heritage to the limits set by the world
economy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the British continental
colonies, the result was distinct cultural areas around cores in New England, the

11 Washington has been the location for a remarkably consistent proportion of federal civilian jobs
since the Civil War. Since 1871, the decennial figures have ranged from 10 to 14.3 percent, with a mean
of 12.25 percent. Grouped in forty-year periods, the means were 5.7 percent for 1851-1861; 12.6
percent for 1871-1901; 12.5 percent for 1910-1940; and 11.1 for 1950-1980.

12 Council for Economic and Industry Research, Economic Base Survey for the General Development Plan,
National Capital Region (Washington, D.C., 1956); Hamer and Company, Associates, "Economic
Development in the Washington Area," staff study for the Joint Committee on Washington Metropo-
itan Problems, Congress of the United States, 1958; Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments,
An Economic Profile of the Washington Region (Washington, 1980).
Delaware Valley, the Chesapeake Tidewater, and South Carolina. Expansion of settlement during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries carried New England ways into the basin of the Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic society into the Ohio and central Mississippi valleys, and intensive plantation society across the Gulf states. The Chesapeake region contributed to the southwestward expansion of slave society and also interacted with Mid-Atlantic traditions to create an “upland South” or “southern Midlands” in Kentucky and Tennessee. Beyond the 96th meridian, the historic cultural regions have overlapped and mingled even more extensively with each other, with distinct Hispanic and Native American cultural areas, and with separately established Anglo-American settlement systems spreading from Utah and California.

The elucidation of cultural regions has been the province of a wide range of disciplines that emphasize the determining role of shared values. Important definitions of cultural regions have been offered by specialists in American studies, anthropology, architectural history, cultural geography, linguistics, material and folk culture, political history, and sociology. Such writers emphasize the early definition or spread of cultural regions, with secondary attention to current expressions of the heritage of early settlement in contemporary regional patterns. Their methods tend to center on the examination of homogeneity in the spatial distribution of traits and behaviors that express common heritage or values. The most detailed and influential descriptions of modern cultural regions by Wilbur Zelinsky and Raymond Gastil follow what Gastil has called the “doctrine of first effective settlement.” His work divides the United States into cultural regions defined by “variations in the cultures of the peoples that dominated the first settlement and . . . secondarily by variations in the cultures of peoples that dominated later settlements.”


The spread of popular culture studies in the last two decades has added twentieth-century examples to the extensive literature on folk culture in earlier centuries. Much of this work is summarized in the 387 maps published in This Remarkable Continent, a compilation organized by the Society for a North American Cultural Survey, an informal consortium of geographers, anthropologists, folklorists, and related specialists. Many of the newer expressions fit within the framework of traditional cultural regions. Country and western music has evolved and flourished within the upland South. Political support for environmental protection and participation in high school soccer have been concentrated within the northeastern core and its westward extension along the New England settlement corridor. Other cultural choices, such as membership in Christian Science churches, popularity of Americanized ethnic cuisines, and participation in high school football appear to reflect new regional dynamics that ignore traditional cultural boundaries.

Within nearly all of the older studies and many of the new, the South appears as a historically stable region rooted in its resource base and ethnic composition. An important trend in recent southern scholarship argues long continuities in regional traits. Titles like The Enduring South, Why the South Will Survive, The Lasting South, and Place over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness state the theme. Civil war, industrialization, urban growth, and national mass communication may have added new elements to the experience of the South, but its boundaries and essential character as defined by religion, language, rurality, and accommodation to racial variety have remained remarkably stable.

A number of writers on Washington have focused on these traditional “southern qualities” as expressed in the city’s everyday life and their survival or attenuation in the face of modernization. Frederick Gutheim’s volume The Potomac (1949), in the “Rivers of America” series, reveals his deep interest in cultural change. Gutheim described Washington’s gradual northerning during the nineteenth century and concluded that, by 1900, “those who came from the North continued to speak of its previously southern quality, but few Southerners did; to them it was the North.” Constance Green’s detailed history of Washington similarly emphasizes daily behavior and customs, public values, and race relations. “The relatively slow pace of life, deemed to be a southern quality born of the climate,” she argued in one

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18 John F. Rooney, Jr., Wilbur Zelinsky, and Dean R. Louder, eds., This Remarkable Continent: An Atlas of United States and Canadian Society and Cultures (College Station, Tex., 1982).
summary essay, "lingered until after World War II," when Washington began to emerge as a "world capital rather than a southern city." Raymond Gastil found that Washington's "southern quality" survived at least to the mid-1970s. In assigning the city to the South, he acknowledged its diverse population and cosmopolitan ties but found nevertheless that it retained a southern ambiance compounded of race, language, and climate.21

The early articulation of American cultural regions was followed in the nineteenth century by the emergence of a second inclusive regional pattern through the definition and development of a northeastern industrial core that centralized economic control over peripheral resource regions. The result is a dual regional patterning on a continental scale. The evolution of the American core includes four stages: the differential growth of the Atlantic ports and the emergence of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston as national economic centers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the attachment of a growing system of midwestern cities to these eastern centers between 1820 and 1870; the concentration of American industry in the core states through the reciprocal growth of markets and manufacturing between 1850 and 1920; and the twentieth-century concentration of control functions in the cities of the Northeast and Old Northwest.22 By 1950, the industrialized corridor that extended from Baltimore and Boston to Milwaukee and St. Louis contained 7 percent of the nation's land area but 43 percent of its population, 50 percent of its income, and 70 percent of its manufacturing employment. Flows of investment, trade, business and scientific information, and the expanding reach of national institutions have allowed the values and behaviors of the core to permeate the entire United States as its "national" culture.23 Within the same model, the American South and West have been relegated to the nation's economic periphery, albeit with bitter complaints about the plundered colonial status of the West, the rise of a self-conscious southern regionalism, and public attention to southern backwardness.24

Analysis of changing relations between core and periphery has been the province of scholars who stress the economic base of human activities and institutions. An older tradition of economic geography defines regions in terms of homogeneity of economic base and nodal organization of trade and communication. The descrip-


tion of the northeastern Megalopolis by French geographer Jean Gottmann is the climax of the traditional approach. The shared economic characteristic of the urbanized northeastern seaboard is the concentration of tertiary activities. At the same time, northeastern cities are the “hinges” that control and connect the resources of the United States to the Atlantic world. Megalopolis is thus an updated version of the “metropolitan thesis” with which Canadian historians have interpreted continental growth in terms of the interactions of successive resource regions and metropolitan gateways.

More recently, writers working within the fields of historical sociology, regional planning, and political economy have approached the core in terms of the changing international division of labor and its impact on regional functioning over the last two decades. They draw on world-systems theory in which the “metropolis” is expanded from a commercial capital to a dominant economic macro-region controlled by one or several nations. Regional patterning is seen as an expression of economic power or control-dependency relations. National regions nest within and frequently repeat the structures of a bifurcated world economy whose division between core and periphery explains the spatial unevenness of economic development and its exploitative consequences. The historical experience of the northeastern United States illustrates the evolution of a European colonial periphery into a new core region with its own periphery, followed by the rise of competing cores in the American Southwest and western Pacific.

Even more than cultural analysts, these specialists are satisfied with the specific categories of information that are privileged by their theories. Because of the timing of economic differentiation, the writers show substantial interest in tracing developments over the last 125 years, but some also tend to utilize historical data for illustrating rather than testing a priori theories. Practitioners in this tradition may recognize cultural regions but tend to diminish their importance. Ann Markusen, for example, offered an explicitly economic definition in which “what distinguishes regions and subregions from each other are the relatively unique sectoral configurations of their local economies.” Richard Bensil stated a similar position: “[A]lthough expressed in cultural or religious terms at times, the historical alignment of sectional competition in America is primarily a product of the relationship of the separate regional economies to the national political economy and the world system.”

Economically based studies of Washington have usually described a unitary process of incorporation into the core. Calvin Beale and Donald Bogue's standard inventory of Economic Areas of the United States included Washington as an emerging component of the "Atlantic metropolitan belt." Gottmann's Megalopolis used data on population density and communication to trace the coalescence of an urbanized region around the organizing center of New York. He placed the northern incorporation of Washington to the years between 1915 and 1930, as a product of changing employment base and the resulting intensification of information exchange with the core. In what might be called "the view from New York," southern traits are curious survivals rather than viable alternatives to the ways of the national core.  

The analysis of regional change in Washington begins with the Civil War. The war tilted the balance of federal employment toward the capital. An increase of 4,000 government jobs during the 1860s doubled Washington's share of the national total. The city's federal establishment continued to grow with the evolution of the administrative state through such watersheds as the Pendleton Civil Service Act (1884) and the creation of the Interstate Commerce Commission (1887). The ratio of federal jobs to local employment doubled between 1861 and 1881, when 13,124 federal employees represented 20 percent of all District of Columbia workers (see Table 1). The number of new federal jobs for each decade as a proportion of civilian employment in the District at the start of the decade was higher for the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s than for any succeeding decade except the 1910s, 1930s, and 1940s (see Table 2).  

The war also altered the private city. Substantial capital flowed south in 1861, opening the way for new wealth. Merchants with long-range business faced interrupted access to many of their usual southern customers but found new markets within a booming city and federal establishment. A rapidly rotating population of soldiers and war contractors raised the District of Columbia from 75,000 to 132,000 residents. The end of the war brought 23,000 new black residents from tidewater Maryland and eastern Virginia. A local census in 1867 found that more than two-thirds of black Washingtonians and half of all white residents had arrived since 1860.  

Many of the new white Washingtonians were part of a "carpetbagger generation" of northerners looking for opportunities in a changing southern city. Political appointments were in the gift of a Republican party with its base in the North. Entrepreneurs arrived from the North during the 1860s and 1870s with an eye to

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Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880–1980 (Madison, Wis., 1984). 6. In another essay, "Regionalism and the Capitalist State," in Pierre Clavel, John Forester, and William W. Goldsmith, eds., Urban and Regional Planning in an Age of Austerity (New York, 1980), 39. Markussen stated that "there is no major cultural content to contemporary U.S. regionalism. While cultural and ethnic ties may be extremely important at the family and neighborhood levels, they have been largely eliminated on the regional level by capitalist mobility and cultural control." Also see Ann Markussen, Regions: The Economics and Politics of Territory (Totowa, N.J., 1987).


TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Employment</th>
<th>Federal Civilian Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860/61*</td>
<td>24,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870/71</td>
<td>49,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880/81</td>
<td>66,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890/91</td>
<td>101,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900/01</td>
<td>126,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>157,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>236,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>243,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>319,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>620,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>791,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,178,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,530,954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1850–1940: District of Columbia
1950–1980: Metropolitan Area
*Through 1900/01, the total employment figures represent the first year and the federal employment figures the second year.


opportunities in a rapidly changing economy. The result of these changes was to set in motion a dynamic of "reconstruction" and "redemption" that left Washington in the early twentieth century a persistently southern city with new northern connections.

Regional tensions were seen first in the career of Alexander Shepherd, a Washington-born businessman who tried to lead a restructuring of economy and politics after the model of northeastern cities. Shepherd helped organize a short-lived board of trade (1865–1871) that hoped to secure Washington’s commercial future with direct rail links to New York and the Middle West.31 He also dominated Washington’s three-year experiment with territorial government as president of the Board of Public Works (1871–1873) and governor (1873–1874). His program of public investment on roads, bridges, sewers, and water lines was intended to give Washington an up-to-date infrastructure comparable to New York’s or Philadelphia’s. The goal was clear to supporter George Townsend, who described the value of the public works projects and complained that Washington before Shepherd "had always been a Southernized city, little intent upon things of general value, and immethodical and slovenly as to its police, sanitary, and scientific regulations."32

As historian William Maury has detailed, the program of creating a modern, business-oriented city took a middle path between radical Republicans who saw Washington as a testing ground for racial progress and wealthy, southern-oriented


32 Townsend, New Washington, 7.
TABLE 2
Washington: Growth of Federal Civilian Employment in Relation to Total Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Change in Federal Jobs</th>
<th>Change as Percent Beginning Total Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861–71</td>
<td>4,023</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871–81</td>
<td>6,902</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881–91</td>
<td>7,710</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891–1901</td>
<td>7,760</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901–10</td>
<td>10,867</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910–20</td>
<td>55,199</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920–30</td>
<td>–21,078</td>
<td>–8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930–40</td>
<td>66,738</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940–50</td>
<td>83,542</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950–60</td>
<td>16,561</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–70</td>
<td>87,496</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970–80</td>
<td>18,631</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the first five decades, the beginning total employment is taken from the decennial census year. These base figures through 1940 are for the District of Columbia; for 1950–70 for the Washington Metropolitan Area.


members of Washington's antebellum business community. By offering very specific benefits to politicians and investors from the North, however, Shepherd's administration opened itself to damaging congressional investigations. In 1874, an increasingly conservative Congress abolished territorial government and substituted a system in which a three-member commission appointed by the president supervised the expenditure of carefully guarded congressional appropriations. Maury's conclusions summarize the conflicting regional policies at issue in the early 1870s:

Isolated from the left of their own party, and rebuffed by potent old-line Washingtonians, the Republicans, many of whom were relatively new to the city, sought to solidify their control. They used the techniques of northern machine politics, but like Republicans in other southern cities they were opposed by ante-bellum Democrats. The city government became an island of Grant Republicanism set about by a boiling sea of opposition. As the early shoots of Bourbon recovery were coming up in other parts of the South, its full flower became visible in Washington. By mid-1874, reconstruction in Washington had ended.33

The failures of Shepherd's efforts to make Washington a part of the emerging national core prefigured the regional dynamic that operated over the longer period from the 1880s to 1920s. Indeed, the 1880s marked a high tide of incorporation into the world of the northeastern social elite. With an eye to leisureed society, one journalist in 1881 declared Washington to be an annex of New York, its "winter end . . . as Newport is the summer extension of the metropolis."34 The attenuation of these same social connections, however, was anticipated in Henry Adams's

Democracy (1880). Madeleine Lee of New York, the novel's protagonist and perceptual filter, is a visitor who descends on Washington out of boredom and leaves after a few social seasons. One of the rivals for her attention is John Carrington, a lawyer from southside Virginia transplanted to Washington to repair his fortunes after the war. Carrington arrives in Washington before Madeleine Lee, fits in more easily with local manners, and stays after she has departed. Similarly, the most striking characteristic of Washington from the 1890s through the 1920s is the reassertion of southern connections. Despite the continued presence of successive political generations of northerners and the expansion of national institutions, Washington in the Coolidge years was as closely tied to the South as in the years of Rutherford B. Hayes and Madeleine Lee's fictionalized social whirl.

Census figures on the place of birth of District of Columbia residents are available for each decade through 1930. Native-born whites can be divided among those born in the North and West; those born in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Delaware; and those born in the remainder of the South. Between 1870 and 1930, the percentage of residents born in the District, Maryland, and Delaware declined from greater than two-thirds to just over one-half (see Table 3). The proportion of southerners more than doubled, but that of northerners grew by only 28 percent. The ratio of northern-born to southern-born whites declined from a high of 1.91 in 1870 to 1.20 in 1930.

The composition of the white elite reflected the same fading influence of the "carpetbagger" generation. The founders of the Washington Board of Trade included the publishers of the Star and Post, prominent retailers, manufacturers, bankers, and attorneys. Washingtonians soon accepted that the Board of Trade spoke for the civic elite on issues of economic development, government, and public services. Half of its founding directors in 1889 were northerners, whose median arrival date in Washington was 1872 (see Table 4). In the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, however, native Washingtonians and southerners held an increasing edge as Board of Trade directors. The Chamber of Commerce (1908–1934) defined its goals more narrowly as a "Greater Commercial Washington." Its membership overlapped the Board of Trade but had a heavier representation of smaller retailers and wholesalers. By the 1920s, its leadership too was weighted toward the South.

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37 Information on the origins of leaders for the Washington Board of Trade and Washington Chamber of Commerce to 1940 was drawn from the obituary and biography files, Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, D.C., and from the following biographical sources: John P. Coffin, Washington: Historical Sketches of the Capital City of Our Country (Washington, 1877); Leading Merchants and Manufacturers of the City of Washington: A Resume of Trade, Enterprise, and Development (New York, 1887); Eminent and Representative Men of Virginia and the District of Columbia of the Nineteenth Century (Madison, Wis., 1895); A. K. Parris and W. A. Means, eds., Investor's Handbook of Washington Securities (Washington, 1901); Allan B. Slauson, ed., History of the City of Washington: Its Men and Institutions (Washington, 1903); District of Columbia: Concise Biographies of Its Prominent and Representative Contemporary Citizens and Valuable Statistical Data (Washington, 1908); Albert D. Miller, Distinguished Residents of Washington, D.C.: Science-Art-Industry (Washington, 1916); Prominent
### TABLE 3
Place of Birth of District of Columbia Residents: 1870–1930

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Dist of Columbia</th>
<th>Md-Del</th>
<th>Va-W. Va</th>
<th>Other South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>72,091</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>101,024</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>134,836</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>175,040</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>209,289</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>295,299</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>320,940</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Native Whites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Dist of Columbia</th>
<th>Md-Del</th>
<th>Va-W. Va</th>
<th>Other South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>43,324</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>59,478</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>74,883</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>86,446</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>93,517</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>108,879</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>130,450</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Native Blacks


Washington’s changing business leadership showed a special interest in a southern economic strategy between 1895 and 1915. Turning away from the northern markets of the Shepherd years, Washingtonians echoed the rhetoric of the New South, arguing that their city would grow in step with “the progress of the rejuvenated South.” Newspapers in the early twentieth century cited lists of Washington entrepreneurs whose trade extended into Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, and points beyond. The Southern Railway emitted a stream of regional booster literature from its Washington headquarters. A “trade-getting train” chartered by the Washington Star in 1906 hauled a contingent of entrepreneurs along with two exhibit cars through Lynchburg, Roanoke, Raleigh, and other South Atlantic towns.38

### TABLE 4
Place of Birth of Washington Business Leaders: 1890–1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Overseas</th>
<th>Not Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board of Trade Directors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board of Trade Directors and Committee Chairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chamber of Commerce Directors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: See note 37.

Advocates phrased the southern strategy in the language of geographic destiny. The city was the natural "Gateway to the South" for northern trade and travel. It needed only to develop its wholesaling and banking services to intercept southern customers who might otherwise travel to Baltimore or New York. In addition, Washington was presumably the most convenient point of assembly and processing for the coal, cotton, lumber, iron, and tobacco of the South. Its factories could turn these raw materials into finished goods and sell them back to southern customers through a developed commercial network. Articulated early in the century, these themes remained standard in public discussion through the 1920s.39

Washington's intellectual life also retained a strong southern orientation. Efforts during the later nineteenth century to make Washington a national center for science, education, and the arts are well known. Elements include the founding of "national" Roman Catholic and Methodist universities, the expansion of federal science agencies, and the coalescence of self-conscious scientific and literary circles.40 Balancing these efforts, however, were more narrowly regional endeavors.

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Southern Railway Building, Pennsylvania Avenue and 13th Street NW, Washington, D.C. Formed in 1894, the Southern Railway Company consolidated several smaller railroad lines that tied Washington to the southeastern states. The new company took over the downtown Washington offices previously used by the Richmond and Danville Railroad, one of its component lines. After enlargement in 1899, the Southern Railway headquarters building was a landmark along Pennsylvania Avenue and gave visible expression to Washington's commercial ambitions in the South. This view dates from the 1910s. Courtesy of the Norfolk Southern Corporation archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

Post-bellum Washington was especially prominent as a cultural and intellectual center for black Americans. Republican presidents through William Howard Taft reserved a number of federal appointments for blacks and maintained the federal civil service as an available career route. Howard University was explicitly national in scope but drew approximately two-thirds of its students from the Washington area or points south. For black intellectuals around the turn of the century, an appointment to the Howard faculty was often the climax of a career that included previous positions within the system of all-black southern colleges.\footnote{Rayford Logan, \textit{Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867–1967} (New York, 1969); Carroll D. Wright, "The Economic Development of Washington," \textit{Proceedings of the Washington Academy of Sciences}, 1 (1899): 183; Constance McLaughlin Green, \textit{The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital} (Princeton, N.J., 1967), 207–10; Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., "Aristocrats of Color: South and North, the Black Elite, 1880–1920," \textit{Journal of Southern History}, 54 (February 1988): 3–20.} Literary circles such as the Saturday Nighters, who met at the home of Georgia Douglas Johnson, brought together native Washingtonians with aspiring writers from the South and Southwest.\footnote{Ronald M. Johnson, "Those Who Stayed: Washington's Black Writers of the 1920s," \textit{Records of the Columbia Historical Society}, 50 (1980): 484–99.}

The origins of the broader business and professional leadership of black Washington can be analyzed from biographical compendia published in 1915, 1928, and 1950.\footnote{Comments on career tracks are based on biographical sketches in Frank Lincoln Mather, \textit{Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent} (Chicago, 1915); Thomas Yesner, \textit{Who's Who in Colored America} (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1928); and G. James Fleming and Christian E. Burckel, eds., \textit{Who's Who in Colored America, 1930} (Yonkers-on-Hudson, N.Y., 1950).} Through the first half of the twentieth century, community leaders remained overwhelmingly local or southern in birth. The proportion of prominent civil servants, educators, clergymen, physicians, real estate dealers, and other business proprietors born in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia held at a steady 36 to 37 percent between 1915 and 1950; the proportion from the rest of the South ranged between 40 and 46 percent; and northerners constituted a stable minority of 15 to 17 percent.

Although turn-of-the-century Washington remained an arena of opportunity for black professionals from the North, the black community in aggregate was transformed by a rapid increase in the migrants from the South Atlantic states after 1910. From 1880 to 1930, approximately 40 percent of the District’s black residents were born within its boundaries (Table 3). The deeper South replaced Virginia and Maryland, however, as the source area for new residents after the Civil War displacement. Net black migration from the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida was three times that from the North in the 1910s and more than ten times during the 1920s. The ratio of northern-born blacks to those born south of Virginia dropped from .68 in 1870 to .19 in 1930.

What many of Washington's new black migrants found was no longer the
Dimensions of Regional Change in Washington, D.C.

relatively open and “northern” community of the 1870s and 1880s. Instead, the city joined the developing southern system of race relations after 1900. De facto segregation appeared in most public facilities during the early 1900s, at the same time that southern congressmen began to press for formal segregation. The initially integrated Board of Trade became all white. Woodrow Wilson curtailed the customary appointments of black officials in the federal service after 1913 and formally segregated federal offices. By the 1920s, racial relations reached what Constance Green called the “new nadir,” when “the national government took the tone of the Deep South, and white people as private persons now looked upon Negroes scarcely as citizens at all.”

The imposition of Jim Crow manifested a southern character already noted by many observers. As Henry James remarked after a journey southward in 1906, Washington lay in that zone where “the North ceases to insist, [and] the South may begin to presume.” To many northerners, turn-of-the-century Washington remained part of the South. It was on the list of historic southern towns in one book, was called “a Southern city geographically” in another. Even a Chicago-based banking magazine agreed that “the people of Washington are largely Southern by birth and training. Indeed the Capital may well be accounted a Southern City.”

This evidence on business orientation, population, public values, and public image suggests that Washington’s surge of economic growth and social change during and after the Civil War triggered a two-way process of regional change. Descriptions of metropolitan regions often emphasize their role as importers of culture and information, which is presumed to diffuse outward from a center of origin and move down the urban hierarchy. Because post-bellum Washington was located near the edge of a culturally assertive North and an expanding economic core, it provided a gateway through which new ideas and people entered the South. Many assumed that Washington’s national institutions would in fact represent the values of the successful North and the interests of the national core. Washington’s southern commercial strategy remained dependent on capital from the larger northeastern cities. The District of Columbia also experienced a slow but persistent shift toward a northern-born population between 1850 and 1930.

Gateways allow travel in two directions, however. Although Washington represented and transmitted a dominant northern culture and interest, it had the reciprocal function of attracting and concentrating southerners and centralizing institutions already oriented to the South. The assembly of small railroad companies into the Southern, Atlantic Coast Line, and Seaboard Air Line rail systems during the 1890s, for example, may have opened southern markets to penetration by northern manufacturers, but the railroads also made Washington an easy destination for southerners looking for urban opportunities. Networks for professional recruitment and the dissemination of ideas spread south as well as north. The same economic processes that tied the city to the North thus stabilized its southern cultural affiliations. The city in 1930 was linked to national networks

48 Northern-born residents constituted 7 percent of all District of Columbians in 1850, 14 percent in 1870, 15 percent in 1890, 17 percent in 1910, and 20 percent in 1930.
focused on the Northeast, but it was equally attached to the South in the character of everyday life. It was restructured but not reconstructed.

The equilibrium of early twentieth-century Washington survived the Great War but not the Great Depression. Mobilization in 1917 and 1918 tripled the federal civilian work force in the District of Columbia and increased the number of northerners there by 40,000 between 1910 and 1920, but the new factors faded from the Washington scene nearly as fast as they had appeared. The impact of World War I is invisible in employment and population series that skip from 1916 to 1925. Permanent expansion of the federal establishment waited until the 1930s. The net growth in federal jobs for the 1930s equaled 27.4 percent of the District employment at the start of the decade (Table 3). The "pencil-sharpener revolution" made Washington one of the few American cities to experience housing price inflation and rapid suburbanization during the depression decade. Mobilization in 1940 and 1941 brought more of the same. Like San Diego, Mobile, or Norfolk, Washington was a wartime boom town where soldiers, sailors, and defense workers crowded available housing, jammed restaurants and theaters, and wandered the streets on hot summer nights. Over the full twenty years, federal civilian employment tripled to 223,000 (Table 1).

The result was a city of increased social complexity in which New Dealers, civil servants, and lobbyists brought new ideas about the right way to do things and counterbalanced the established families who had set the city's social tone. Gore Vidal's Washington, D.C. (1967) offers a version of the contrast between old and new when his fictional society columnist remarks that "our lovely, gracious Southern city has been engulfed by all these...[she casts around for a tactful phrase]...charmin' people who've opened our poor eyes to so many things undreamed of in our philosophy." The black community mirrored some of the tensions among white Washingtonians. A growing salaried class of blacks with steady jobs in the lower levels of the federal service challenged the older District elite. The accumulating proletariat of poorly paid service workers and underemployed laborers tended to push both groups into the background. Regional affiliation since the war has therefore involved the overlapping claims of multiple Washingtons—old and new white, old and new black.

Recent Washington has alternated decades of slower growth in the 1950s and 1970s with further expansion during the 1960s and 1980s. The addition of 88,000 federal jobs in the 1960s stands out in the postwar decades, but the increase had relatively less impact than the civil service boom of 1930–1950. Activities ancillary to the national government rather than direct employment fueled renewed growth in the 1980s. Examples include tourism, federally funded research and development, expanding sales and engineering staffs for defense contractors, and more than 2,000 trade and professional associations. Aggregate metropolitan popula-


tion, as measured by a geographically expanding metropolitan district (1930–1940) or metropolitan area (1950–1985) grew from 621,000 in 1930 to 1,464,000 in 1950, 2,861,000 in 1970, and 3,496,000 in 1985.

This exploding metropolis has been increasingly tied into the dense communication network of the northeastern seaboard. Gottmann's *Megalopolis* (1961) cited data on the density of telephone calls, newspaper circulation, air traffic, and other flows of people and ideas. A decade later, Delbert Miller tested Gottmann's thesis by analyzing networks among local and national elites in the American Northeast. His data described a New York–Washington axis for the interaction of metropolitan leaders and the circulation of an elite concerned with regional and national decisions, although he presented little evidence of Megalopolis as a single regional community.52 Black leadership by the 1980s had also begun to tilt northward. Persons born outside the South accounted for 28 percent of entries for the Washington metropolitan area in the 1985 edition of *Who's Who in Black America.*53

The origins of students in Washington area colleges and universities have reflected the same connection. Net migration of students into the District of Columbia jumped from 10,000 before World War II to 23,000 by 1951, stabilized in the 1950s, and jumped again to 37,000 after 1958, making higher education one of Washington’s major exports.54 A simple gravity model of spatial interaction allows the allocation of total migration for a given year on the assumption that the number of students coming to Washington from each state will be directly proportional to the state's population and inversely proportional to its distance from Washington.55 Comparison of predicted and actual values consistently shows the over-representation of New Yorkers, New Englanders, Floridians, and students from west of the Mississippi at District of Columbia colleges and the under-representation of Pennsylvanians, the Middle West, and most of the South. The unexpected numbers of students from the West presumably testify to the perceived advantages of education in the national capital. The unexpected numbers of northeasters, in contrast, suggest that Washington has become part of an educational network that may be an important carrier of northern values.56

The most obvious regional impact of Washington's mid-century transformation was a rapid revision of the terms of debate on key public issues. Organized pressure for

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56 The proportion of Howard University students from the Northeast has gradually but steadily risen from 16 percent in 1945 to 25 percent in 1985, reflecting the participation of northern blacks in the same regional network (data furnished by Howard University registrar, March 5, 1987). Compare the discussion of the backgrounds of Washington's black elite in John J. Harrigan, *Negro Leadership in Washington, D.C.* (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1971).
changes in the city's strict codes of racial segregation appeared in 1947–1948 with an executive order barring racial discrimination in federal employment, reports from the President's Committee on Civil Rights, and findings by the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital. Catholic schools desegregated in 1950, most private restaurants and theaters in the District between 1951 and 1953, and public schools and parks in 1954. Suburban Maryland counties implemented freedom-of-choice plans for their public schools in 1955, and northern Virginia school systems integrated after the collapse of massive resistance in 1959.57

The sense of Washington as part of a distinct southern economy also lessened. The leaders of the Board of Trade since 1950 have included fewer southerners and more northerners, along with a core of second-generation or third-generation Washingtonians. Many of the northerners have been professional managers with national careers and cosmopolitan allegiances.58 They have provided a receptive audience for the restatement of the southern commercial strategy in nonregional terms. In particular, key planning documents in 1958 shifted local economic discussion from the language of geographic imperialism to the spatially neutral industrial categories of modern economic analysis.59

Incorporation of northern values and connections within Washington's public institutions of government, education, and commercial promotion has been balanced

57 The lag between the Maryland and Virginia responses reflects an internal gradient within Washington's suburban ring between Montgomery County, Maryland, and Arlington and Fairfax counties, Virginia. Montgomery County has accommodated much of the Jewish population of the metropolitan area, and its residents tend to maintain close ties to the Northeast. Montgomery County consumers are the most New York-focused and fashion-conscious among suburban Washingtonians. The Virginia suburbs, in contrast, retained residual traces of segregatist values, such as a racially closed housing market, through the 1960s. The presence of the Pentagon has tended to attract migrants (including military retirees) with previous experience of Sunbelt military bases and defense contractors. If Montgomery County reproduces the suburbs of Philadelphia or New York, Fairfax County reproduces the up-to-date urban South of northside Atlanta or north Dallas with an emphasis on the pleasures of unregulated entrepreneurship. Prince Georges County, Maryland, has followed a third path in which the rural South has adapted to the economic and political empowerment of blacks. Historically part of the corn and tobacco-farming Tidewater region, the county saw the most entrenched opposition to racial desegregation. The arrival of middle-class blacks seeking a suburban alternative to the District of Columbia, however, has made it a mixed society in which both races share political power. The differences among the three suburban sectors have been maintained by the limited scale of inter-county migration, especially between Maryland and Virginia. The most thorough studies of intra-suburban differences are Howard Gillette, Jr., "A National Workshop for Urban Policy: The Metropolitanization of Washington, 1946–68," Public Historian, 7 (1985): 6–27; and Dennis Gale, Washington, D.C.: Inner City Revitalization and Minority Suburbanization (Philadelphia, 1987), 11–49, 184–95. Demographics are treated in Stanley K. Bigman, The Jewish Population of Greater Washington in 1956 (Washington, 1957); and Eunice Grier and George Grier, "The Sorting Out of Washingtonians: Patterns of Residential Movement in the Metropolitan Area," in Atlee E. Shidler, ed., Greater Washington in 1980 (Washington, 1980), 49–68. A perceptive popular treatment of social and behavioral differences is Barbara Palmer, "Maryland vs. Virginia," Washingtonian, 16 (April 1981): 126–33. Desegregation is treated in Green, Secret City, 274–312; Sam P. Wiggins, The Desegregation Era in Higher Education (Berkeley, Calif., 1966), 5–6, 18–19; Benjamin Muse, Virginia's Massive Resistance (Bloomington, Ind., 1961), 3, 73, 139, 142, 159; George H. Gallicott, Maryland and America, 1940 to 1980 (Baltimore, Md., 1985), 152–54, 244; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, A Long Day's Journey into Light: School Desegregation in Prince George's County (Washington, 1976), 69–148.


by the persistence of southern characteristics and connections in private values and behavior. Even in recent versions of the “big change,” Washington commentators of both races have agreed that southern styles of social behavior lasted at least into the 1970s before yielding to Manhattanization. More people in the Washington area read *Southern Living* than *New York*. In complementary fashion, residents of the South Atlantic states (and the West) are more likely to keep up on developments in the capital by subscribing to *The Washingtonian* than are northerners and midwesterners. The conscious decision of owner George Preston Marshall to market the Washington Redskins of the National Football League as an all-white standard bearer for the South during the 1940s and 1950s is an extreme case of the assumption of southern values by a Washington organization.61

Washington’s role in the propagation of indigenous South Atlantic musical traditions also illustrates the intensification of southern cultural ties. The migrations of the 1930s and 1940s brought the evolving bluegrass music of the eastern Appalachians to Washington. As the most accessible and “southern” of the major eastern markets, greater Washington has supported specialized clubs and radio stations since the 1950s, summer festivals and publications since the 1960s. A number of practitioners of the South Atlantic blues style similarly moved to Washington as the first stop “up the road” to the North. Blues artists in the Washington area display styles distinctive of the Virginia and Carolina Piedmont. Gospel ensembles in Washington keep open an active, creative exchange by hosting choirs and quartets from the Carolinas and Georgia and by making their own annual visits to particular South Atlantic churches.62

Professional and amateur musicians are one specialized subgroup within a much larger migration stream that has continued to reinforce Washington’s southern character. Aggregate migration data for 1935–1940, 1955–1960, and 1975–1980 show a consistent over-representation from the South Atlantic states. Southwest, and Far West compared with the numbers predicted by a gravity model. Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, the Ohio Valley, and the Great Lakes states have been under-represented (Figure 1). In the aggregate, the South exclusive of Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia accounted for 32 percent of migrants to the District of Columbia in the later 1930s, for 34 percent of migrants to the larger metropolitan area in the later 1950s, and for 30 percent in the later 1970s.63

Migrants with paychecks from the Department of Defense are especially likely to have had southern connections, for the growth of military administration in Washington has meant the expansion of an institution historically dominated by southerners. Despite declines after both world wars, the postwar American officer corps continued to draw disproportionately from people of southern birth and education. As late as 1980, the South supplied more than its per capita share of all

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Even military men and women with northern backgrounds are likely to have had the experience of southern living through service at southern bases, which accounted for 48 percent of all military postings in 1980. Since the early years of the century, many military personnel have tended to stay in or return to the Washington area after retirement. More than one out of every hundred


residents of the District of Columbia and Virginia are military retirees (the Virginia figures reflect concentrations in both the Washington and Hampton Roads areas).66

A substantially larger portion of Washington's new southerners have been blacks from the Carolinas and Georgia who have maintained both folk culture and family connections. Anthropologist Brett Williams has documented aspects of surviving southern folkways dealing with food, fishing, gardening, and healing. If the airline shuttles are the armatures that support a Washington-Northeast communications network, Interstate 95 from Washington to Savannah provides the basis for an equally active Washington-Southeast social network. Black colleges in the Carolinas have alumni groups in Washington. Black churches in Washington are likely to hold "Carolina Days," and social clubs for migrants from specific South Atlantic communities have survived for decades. Family members visit between Washington and the Carolinas, attend annual reunions, and shift residence back and forth between the South and the city. Many Washington families regularly send their children or grandchildren south for the summer, keeping alive a sense that the South is home as much as the city up the road.67

Travel patterns facilitated by postwar highway building have also intensified Washington's connections with nearby rural districts where historic southern culture survived into the later twentieth century in relative isolation from the industrial growth of the New South. Chesapeake Bay and its tidal rivers have long been a local migration field and an economic resource for fishing boats operating out of the lower Potomac. The northern counties of Virginia and the upper Potomac basin similarly looked to Washington as the communication and retail center.68 Particularly since the 1960s, recreational choices have brought contemporary Washingtonians into contact with the same areas. Census data on "homes held for occasional use," first available for 1980, identify concentrations of recreational activity in the mountain counties of the upper Potomac drainage, on the Tidewater Virginia peninsulas, the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay, and the Atlantic coasts of Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina. Annapolis, Fredericksburg, and Culpeper were incorporated into the Washington exurbs during the 1970s. Speaking for characters with jobs in Washington and Baltimore, novelist John Barth recently commented that "the purpose of Maryland's mainland, where one lives and works, is to yearn toward its Eastern Shore, where one plays and dreams." The yearning seems to include the Sunday edition of the Washington Post, which has a 5 percent sales penetration as far to the southeast as Nags Head.69

Local opinion leaders have searched in recent years for the right phrase to capture the sense of an emerging subregion. There was brief interest during the 1970s in the idea of Washington as a Sunbelt city as a way to define its independence from the aging Northeast core. Considerably more attention has been given to the promotion of more localized ideas such as a Washington–Baltimore Common Market, a functionally consolidated supermetropolis that can outshine Philadelphia and match Chicago or

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Los Angeles. Somewhat more inclusive is the idea of a Chesapeake "Crescent" arcing from Norfolk to Baltimore with Washington as its organizing midpoint.⁷⁰

Regional consciousness can also be traced through the choice of regional terminology in the names of businesses and organizations.⁷¹ City directories for the District of Columbia for 1912 through 1970 and combined city and suburban telephone directories for 1970 and 1986 have been examined for the use of three sets of regional terms as the initial word in business and organizational names. As Figure 2 indicates, "North" and its variations have been also-rans from the start. More interesting are a complex of "middle" terms. "East" may imply connection to the northeastern seaboard. It may also group with "Atlantic" and "middle" as a set of neutral names that avoid identification with either North or South. Taken in aggregate, these three regional identifiers passed southern terms in popularity soon after World War II and surged further ahead after 1970.⁷²

In a sense, Washington is constructing a new regional identity by selective borrowing from both models of its regional character. As "the most important city in the world," in a phrase common around town, Washington is defined as a key location for control functions in the national and international economies, and a location that is separate rather than subordinate to New York and the Northeast.⁷³ At the same time, it retains strong connections to the multiple Souths of tidewater towns, Carolina farms, and Texas military bases. The articulation of a contemporary consumption region around this emergent control center incorporates direct links to the traditional South but filters them through the needs of an information-era metropolis.

It is sometimes argued that contemporary Washington has lost all regional character. To a self-defined outsider like President Jimmy Carter, it was an "island" with few bridges to the American mainland. Its communities of bureaucrats and lobbyists are thought to make the city "inside the Beltway" into an aberration that lacks the regional identification and loyalties found in more normal cities. "It's fine for spies and newspapermen," says one of the characters in Larry McMurtry's Cadillac Jack, "but it ain't everybody's cup of tea. Maybe you oughta move to Minnesota."⁷⁴

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⁷² The tallies omit two types of regional usage that might confuse the data: first, "northwest," "northeast," "southeast," and "southwest" when they clearly referred to the location of Washington businesses within one of the city's standard street address quadrants; and second, regional terms that were obviously part of the name of national organizations located in Washington because of the presence of the federal government.


This analysis offers a different conclusion. Since the city's founding decades, two periods of particularly rapid expansion in permanent federal employment have triggered economic and demographic multipliers. Each era of change attracted new businesses to serve the federal government and its workers or to capitalize on
the expanded economic base and increased prominence of the city. Because of Washington’s unique role as a national center, new residents have come from both an adjacent hinterland and a national pool of specialized workers. Between 1860 and 1930, the result was a relatively simple pattern in which an influx of northern businessmen and politicians failed to prevent a slow revitalization of southern characteristics. Changes since 1930 have involved a more complex balance of increased interaction with the North and maintenance of southern connections in ways facilitated by expanding roles within national systems.

Two other sets of American border cities offer possible comparisons for Washington. Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis developed as nineteenth-century trading hinges between the growing Middle West and the central South. Although usually included in the industrial core, they also lie along the westward extension of the cultural boundary between North and South. Cincinnati’s role as focus for white Appalachian migrants, for one example, may parallel that of Washington for black Carolinians. Analysis of evolving regional affiliation and connections along this historic steamboat frontier should further clarify the directions of regional change for the twentieth-century South.75

Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Dallas, Fort Worth (“where the West begins”), Austin, and San Antonio are similarly located on the margin between South and West as both natural and cultural regions. Daniel Elazar’s mapping of political culture puts all but Oklahoma City in the zone of overlap between Greater South and Greater West. Wilbur Zelinsky splits Texas and Oklahoma down the middle but also notes that each may be emerging as a smaller but separate region. Donald Meinig and others have seen the emergence of a “greater Texas” that mediates between South, West, and Middle West.76 In ways parallel to Washington, other transactional centers such as Dallas or Austin may face tensions between the construction of new regional patterns and absorption into nonregionalized national and international systems.77

The specific findings for Washington call into question not only the idea of a deracinated metropolis but also the common theoretical assumption of regional hegemony and unidirectional change in which an economically dominant and culturally aggressive core region absorbs peripheral areas and supplants their traditional cultures. Regional change in Washington has not operated in parallel in the public spheres of business and politics and the private realms of personal behavior and allegiance. Washington at the end of the twentieth century has experienced substantial and almost certainly permanent accommodation to the public values of the North and has been integrated into the communication networks of the northeastern core. At the same time, improvements in transportation and communication have enhanced its role as a metropolitan focus for southern culture. Its border location has worked as much to concentrate and


77 Reed, “Heart of Dixie,” 938, noted that Dallas began to shift from a southern to a western self-identification with the economic boom in the Sunbelt during the early 1970s. Melville Branch, Regional Planning: Introduction and Explanation (New York, 1988), 69, cited data on the recognition of northern Texas and Oklahoma as a distinct consumer product market.
reconfirm southern connections as to facilitate northern incorporation. Such southern ties are not "relict cultural slopes," in the phrase of Wilbur Zelinsky, but rather an updating of connections as a southern destination point and staging ground for return contact. The endurance of Washington's southern character despite strong cosmopolitan influences supports the larger argument for an enduring South that can modernize without northernizing. "New" has meant northern and megalopolitan, but it has also meant southern and Chesapeake.

In theoretical terms, the study finds little support for the argument that contemporary regional culture is a form of resistance to the homogenizing and hegemonic forces of a globalized economy and its detached elites. This interpretation has been proposed by sociologists and regional planners such as Manuel Castells and Philip Cooke, particularly on the basis of national separatist movements in Europe. Pierre Clavel's study of "opposition planning" in Appalachia applies it to the United States. Clavel finds that regional identity itself becomes a tool of socio-political resistance against economic and political exploitation. In Washington, however, the evidence suggests that regional orientation is largely a private choice not intended to convey a political message. Regional identity and connections provide many black Washingtonians with a separate sphere that supplements big-city life. For middle and upper-status residents of both races, they offer alternative arenas of consumption within the reach of an affluent metropolis. I find that the work of John S. Reed rather than the ideas of Castells and Clavel holds a greater similarity to the results of the Washington study. He has argued that the members of the new middle class in southern cities make self-conscious choices to incorporate traditional "southern" values and behaviors into their nontraditional lives. Whether raised inside or outside the region, such inhabitants of the new urban South construct behavior patterns that define distinctiveness within a larger modernizing society.

In the same way, the regional rootedness of blacks and the voluntary regionalism of whites are means of self-definition within a mobile society. Southernness in Washington survived the changes of the later nineteenth century largely intact and adapted to the further changes of the middle twentieth century. The city is substantially more northern now than in 1865, but it is also southern in new as well as old ways.

78 Zelinsky, Cultural Geography, 117.
79 Manuel Castells, "Space and Society: Managing the New Historical Relationships," in Michael Peter Smith, Cities in Transformation: Class, Capital and the State (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1984), 241–45; and Philip Cooke, Theories of Planning and Spatial Development (London, 1983), 161. Pierre Clavel, Opposition Planning, 68, asserted that "cultural differentiation also can reinforce local capacity. Resistance to external control, whether the resistance is organized by the local bourgeoisie or by some other group (such as the antigrowth coalition), requires a positive motivation and a set of symbols around which to develop a program."
80 John Shelton Reed, Southerners: The Social-Psychology of Sectionalism; and One South: An Ethnic Approach to Regional Culture (Baton Rouge, La., 1982), 119–26.