Kathryn Howes

September 10, 2011

4B

The colonies of colonial America have been classified into the Chesapeake (or Southern) and New England (or Northern) areas. This distinction is due not only to geographical features, but also to the two different societies. These developed due to several factors, including topography, demographics, and rationale.

The geographies of the northern versus southern colonies determined several things that went into shaping the societies. One such thing was agriculture. The New England colonies were in the Appalachian Mountains, or at least the foothills of them, so the ground was very rocky and not fertile enough to grow crops very successfully. In the Chesapeake region, however, it was the opposite: floodplains between the mountains and the ocean were very fertile, so agriculture was very successful. As such, there was more of an emphasis on working the farms to earn money that the New England colonies didn’t feel as much. Another effect that geography had was concerning the climate. The southern climate was much less healthy than in the north, so there was much more disease and therefore life expectancy was shorter.

Various demographic factors contributed to the development of these different societies. As briefly mentioned, life expectancy was much lower in the south than in the north. Also, due in the south settlers came more as individual laborers than families, and these individuals were usually men. Therefore families were not a big part of life in the south—there weren’t very many women, and the families that were there weren’t whole for very long, since people died of disease so often. In the north, however, people often came as families, which showed that family was important in the first place to these people. and people lived for so long that the family remained an important part of life in the northern colonies.

The people who settled the northern colonies had very different reasons than those of the south. Most of the northern colonies were settled by those seeking religious freedom, most notably the Puritans, who settled Massachusetts. The fact that they were searching for this freedom makes it obvious that the northern colonies would have a higher emphasis on religion and hold values that come along with the religion, such as family and (somewhat) education, which also became important in the northern colonies. In the south, however, people settled more for economic benefits, especially land. This land needed people to work it, so many people came as indentured servants to work and eventually get their own. These laborers usually came as individuals. Therefore the values in the south were very different than those in the north: money was the main focus, not religion or any related values.

There are various conditions and values that shape societies. The aforementioned, geography, demographics, and rationale, are some of these things. The ways that they were different in the northern and southern colonies, therefore, are the things that created the distinctness of the societies.