

THE DAUGHTERS OF COLONIAL AMERICA

APPRENTICE GIRLS, GENDER, CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY IN URBAN MID-ATLANTIC SOCIETY, 1700-1799

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Abigail R. Chew

Seminar Advisor: Rebecca Kobrin

Second Reader: Christopher Brown

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– Abigail R. Chew

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Introduction

On a cold winter's day in 1739, the City of New York's town officials met at City Hall to discuss how to deal with an "Object of Charity": an orphaned three-year old infant girl named Anne.¹ These officials, who were responsible for managing the city's funds, were regularly concerned about destitute children like Anne who had no means of supporting themselves.² Although Anne was living with Elizabeth Bagley, Bagley could not take care of Anne in the long term. The officials agreed that Anne should be "put out [as an] [a]pprentice [a]s soon as possible."³ In the meantime, church wardens took Anne to live in the poorhouse while they sorted out her indenture to be apprenticed to a working member of the city.⁴ This poorhouse was filled with many destitute young orphans and fatherless children, many of whom were waiting to be placed into apprenticeship like Anne.⁵

Historian Lawrence Towner defines apprenticeship as "an educational institution in which a master imparted his skill or knowledge to a trainee in exchange for labor."⁶ Some historians define this as craft apprenticeship.⁷ Historians Sharon Salinger and Samuel McKee also note that apprenticeship placed poor, destitute children with various households in urban colonial American society.⁸ This practice has been known as pauper apprenticeship since its establishment.⁹

¹ *Meeting minutes of the Justices, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of the City of New York*, 425.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The poorhouse was a center run by the overseers of the poor found in early American cities to house the most destitute and impoverished persons. The poorhouse provided three hot meals a day, shelter and clothing. For more information on the various provisions, see Box 50, "Church Wardens New York City."

⁵ This was a period when the family household was nearly entirely dependent on the male head for their livelihood. The death of the father usually meant destitution for most eighteenth-century families.

⁶ Lawrence W. Towner, *A Good Master Well Served: A Social History of Servitude in Massachusetts, 1620-1750*. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 23.

⁷ Joyce Goodfriend discusses the significance of craft apprenticeship for "young lads" in New York. Goodfriend shows that craft apprenticeship in New York was heavily associated with strong ties of kinship between the families of apprentice lads and their masters. Joyce Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 101-103.

⁸ Sharon V. Salinger, *"To Serve Well and Faithfully": Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 6-8. Samuel McKee, *Labor in Colonial New York, 1664-1776* (Port Washington: I.J. Friedman, 1965).

Economic historian John McCusker defines apprenticeship vaguely as the practice of binding out children to learn trades or to work as servants.¹⁰ “Binding out” usually involved indentures, which were formal contracts between apprentices, their guardians and their masters.¹¹ Whether termed as craft or pauper apprenticeship, this institution was a form of bondage in colonial America. As a result, historians define apprenticeship as a form of “unfree labor,” along with indentured servitude and slavery.¹²

Though crucial for more than tens of thousands of children in colonial America, apprenticeship has not received the scholarly attention it deserves.¹³ The majority of discussions on unfree labor focus on slaves and indentured servants.¹⁴ Sharon Salinger, in her discussion on indentured servitude, merely notes that apprenticeship was different from indentured servitude in several ways, including the importance of kinship and learning a trade.¹⁵ Most of those who do discuss apprenticeship hardly scratch the surface. Both Towner and McKee describe the general characteristics of apprenticeship in detail, but their descriptions are solely limited to the legal stipulations dictated by indenture.

Ruth Herndon and John Murray, who co-wrote *Children Bound to Labor*, are so far the only scholars to provide a comprehensive analysis of pauper apprenticeship in colonial America.¹⁶

Herndon and Murray show that apprenticeship took on varied forms depending on the laws and

⁹ The term pauper apprenticeship was originally coined by the English. In 1601, the Elizabethan Poor Laws were passed as a means to deal with England’s rising numbers of poor and destitute. These laws state that those children who could not be supported by their parents or had no parents had to be placed into apprenticeship. For an excellent introduction to English apprenticeship, see Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

¹⁰ John J. McCusker, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 244.

¹¹ I go into detail regarding the practice of indentures and the system of bondage for apprentices in Chapter I.

¹² Indentured servitude began in the early years of North American colonization when Europeans signed a contract to gain passage to the New World in exchange for a duration of servitude, with “freedom dues” specified at the end of the term. This contract became synonymous with the term “indenture.” David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3.

¹³ Scholars Ruth Herndon and John Murray found more than eighteen thousand apprenticeship indentures for their book on pauper apprenticeship. Ruth Herndon and John Murray, *Children Bound to Labor: The Pauper Apprentice System in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 2.

¹⁴ McCusker, *The Economy of British America*, 244.

¹⁵ Salinger, “To Serve Well and Faithfully,” 6-8.

¹⁶ Ruth Herndon and John Murray show that pauper apprenticeship was widely used in North America from the time of colonial settlement right into the 1800s. Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 2.

civil institutions that governed each colony and played out in very different ways depending on the child and the master in question.¹⁷ In addition, they argue that apprenticeship was an important form of labor and provided social stability in society. While Herndon and Murray provide a comprehensive quantitative analysis of apprenticeship and explain how apprenticeship functioned within various societies, they neglect the lived experiences of those who went through apprenticeship. Reviewer Darcy Fryer critiques, “the children’s presence [is] most elusive.”¹⁸ While Fryer does not explain her definition of the “children’s presence,” her words suggest that the daily realities of apprentices are underrepresented in Herndon and Murray’s work. In other words, apprentices such as little orphaned Anne disappear from the narrative soon after the binding out process is complete.

Therefore, this paper intends to fill this historical gap by using gender as a crucial analytical category to inform the colonial American apprentice’s experience. While Herndon and Murray make great strides in illuminating the history of colonial American apprenticeship, they have largely ignored apprentice girls. This is because Herndon and Murray rely on apprenticeship contracts, and girls had fewer contracts than boys. Moreover, Herndon and Murray note that apprenticeship was probably just as pervasive for girls as it was for boys. Apprentice girls simply had more informal arrangements with their masters.¹⁹ While we do not know why, this points to some level of vulnerability that apprentice girls lived with, which will be an important theme in this thesis. If apprentice girls were just as common as apprentice boys in early America, then the experiences of apprentice girls are just as worthy of study as those of apprentice boys.

Additionally, apprenticeship, gender and labor in eighteenth-century America were irrevocably intertwined. Gender was an incredibly crucial factor in dictating one’s form of work during

¹⁷ Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 5. Pauper apprentices, if favored by their masters, could learn a trade, while craft apprentices could end up bound in servitude for the majority of their time. Apprenticeship in Boston looked very different from apprenticeship in Montreal and South Carolina.

¹⁸ Darcy R. Fryer, "Children Bound to Labor: The Pauper Apprentice System in Early America," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3, no. 3 (2010): 432-434, Accessed March 1, 2016, <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/859324526?accountid=10226>.

¹⁹ Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 6.

apprenticeship.²⁰ Apprenticeship then prepared children to become the future generation of workers in society. Apprentice girls as much as boys were crucial to this system of labor. Finally, apprenticeship was an important social mechanism through which tens of thousands of children in colonial America were integrated into societies. This means that girls like Anne who were everywhere in colonial urban America are currently virtually nowhere to be found in historical scholarship. We cannot hope to gain a complete picture of eighteenth-century urban society without placing apprentice girls at the heart of colonial life.

Familiarity is a central concept in this study, which investigates the apprentice girl's socioeconomic roles and relationships beyond the private walls of her master's household and within the complex public environment that defined colonial Mid-Atlantic American towns and port cities.²¹ Colonial American society operated primarily on the social currency of familiarity. Eighteenth-century American townships and cities, even bustling port cities, were small in size. Historian Gary Nash notes, "nor would anybody long be a stranger in a town whose boundaries could be traversed on foot in a brisk thirty-minute walk."²² Apprentice girls who lived in such small towns and cities would have inevitably known and been known by virtually everyone within the area. Personal relationships were the social standard in colonial America, and the foundation upon which colonial America thrived.

Rather than solely relying on apprenticeship indentures, a wide variety of sources, particularly newspapers, will be employed in this study to investigate the relationships that defined the apprentice girl's experience. Apprentice girls left no diaries, no letters and no personal writings, so their lives are enormously difficult to reconstruct. However, newspaper articles, runaway advertisements, laws and court orders provide substantial detail regarding the lives of apprentice girls in early America. Newspapers are an excellent source for studying American social history,

²⁰ I prove this in Chapter 1.

²¹ I focus mostly on Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey, with particular emphasis on the urban centres of Philadelphia and the city of New York. This is because the apprentice laws for Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey are largely the same.

²² Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 4.

since they “were concurrently ephemeral and collectible and were discussed and debated as much in churches or in formal government meetings as in more relaxed, informal, and friendly venues such as coffeehouses or private homes.”²³ Newspapers were engaging, thought-provoking and an important part of everyday early American social life. Through these sources, the historically elusive apprentice girls become less obscure.

The larger historical debate concerning the public and private sphere in eighteenth-century America is a central one that this thesis engages with. According to one side of the debate, which historian Mary Beth Norton argues, the private was defined by the realm of the domestic household and the public was defined by the eighteenth-century newspaper print culture that was dominated by political and governmental activity. Following this line of argument, women were dependent on their patriarchal heads of households and their sphere of influence was completely limited to the *feminine private*.²⁴ In this way, men dominated the public sphere of colonial America, hence the term *masculine public*.²⁵ This is compatible with the current historical view of apprentice girls. So far, historians have generally established that apprentice girls took up traditionally feminine forms of work within the household: spinning, needlework and household chores.²⁶

This thesis argues that apprentice girls were not just domestic servants who operated exclusively within the private realm of the household but individual members who actively engaged and contributed to the public world. In reality, apprentice girls experienced different types of apprenticeship. And all these different types indicate that apprentice girls lived, worked and

²³ Stacy Erickson, “Review,” *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 5, no. 1 (2013): 92, Accessed February 18 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/reception.5.1.0091>.

²⁴ The terms *feminine private* and *masculine public* are italicized as Mary Beth Norton italicizes them in her book, *Separated by Their Sex*. Norton studies elite Anglo-American women and finds that seventeenth-century women were defined more by their rank and status rather than their gender. This changes in eighteenth-century America, when these women are completely barred from the *masculine public*. Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 7-8.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Family historians James and Dorothy Volo argue that girls mostly helped out with mending and making clothing. James and Dorothy Volo, *Family Life in 17th and 18th-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 262. McKee also states that apprentice girls worked according to the social norms of women’s work within the household at the time. McKee, *Labor in Colonial New York*, 74. Herndon and Murray note that girls generally did housework since the early American “community’s culture of work was inevitably gendered and hierarchical.” Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 8.

played beyond the walls of their masters' households in one way or another. Some mediated and initiated commercial transactions, others remained in regular contact with their separated kin, many spent their leisure time among other children and youths. These activities beyond the household made the image of apprentice girls a standard and integral part of colonial Mid-Atlantic American print culture. As such, apprentice girls, in their different ways, were not only crucial to the daily operations of highly interconnected urban society. They were also integral to the way colonial Americans envisioned their society. In other words, apprentice girls did not just live a private existence. They enjoyed a far-reaching public presence in eighteenth-century American society.

As such, this thesis is compatible with the arguments against the *feminine private* and the *masculine public*. Such arguments include those of historians Lisa Cody and Kirsten Sword, who argue that the domestic private and the political public were interconnected in various ways.²⁷ Also, Terri Synder convincingly argues that there were multiple publics that constituted early American society, other kinds of shared spaces that were not just defined by the political or by the print culture of the time.²⁸ Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor gives an example of one such public sphere: eighteenth-century American marketplaces.²⁹ Hartigan-O'Connor argues that women participated regularly in commercial transactions.³⁰ These arguments can be applied to apprentice girls, who were much further down on the socioeconomic scale than most of the women these authors discuss.

Apprentice girls show that the private cannot be solely defined within the domestic sphere and that the public print culture was not purely political. Throughout my paper, I use the term "private" in two ways: the first to illustrate the domestic realm of an apprentice's household, which

²⁷ Terri Synder, "Refiguring Women in Early American History," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, No. 3 (2012): 424, Accessed January 20 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.69.3.0421>. Cody argues that the household and politics were in "dynamic dialogue with one another." Sword argues that wives' "critiques of marriage" were crucial to the "public political rhetoric" of Revolution.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 444.

²⁹ Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

is the traditional historiographical definition, and the second to illustrate the immediate social networks available to apprentice girls through the household, which I define in Chapter 1. I also use the term “public” in two ways: the first as the traditional historiographical definition of the wider newspaper print culture, and the second to refer to the general populous found in the average town or city in Mid-Atlantic America. For apprentice girls, the eighteenth-century public and private were not just discrete, physical spaces but also fluid and interdependent social networks. These networks did not see gender or occupation as legitimate reasons to exclude apprentice girls from participation, interaction and engagement.

Therefore, the history of apprenticeship cannot be understood solely within the history of unfree labor in colonial and Revolutionary America. While some apprentices were indeed laborers, many apprentice girls also took on a wide variety of identities and gained experiences outside of their work. For the merchants, shopkeepers and sellers they worked with, apprentice girls were economic agents. For the other youths and children they played with, apprentice girls were friends. For the various households and families they stayed with, apprentice girls were daughters. If apprentice girls took part in many different public spaces and networks in early America, then surely apprenticeship needs to be understood not only as a labor institution but also as an important foundation for social and commercial relations in eighteenth-century American society.

“Society” is defined as the various social and economic connections, groups and networks that intertwined and linked together to form a larger community in eighteenth-century urban Mid-Atlantic America. This definition relies heavily on Nash’s definition of “class consciousness” in early America, where “urban people gradually came to think of themselves as belonging to economic groups that did not share common goals, began to behave in class-specific ways in response to events that impinged upon their well-being, and manifested ideological points of view and cultural characteristics peculiar to their rank.”³¹ Nash notes that class did not exist in early

³¹ Nash, *Urban Crucible*, x.

America in the way we think of it today, hence the term “class consciousness” is a more useful one.

This investigation of female apprenticeship is bounded by the categories of race, geography and time. This thesis only applies to apprentice girls who possessed European ancestry and were locally born. Many apprenticeship indentures show that apprenticeship was a practice dominated by children of European ancestry.³² Furthermore, these girls were not subject to the societal standards that belonged to one who was of either African or Indian descent. Apprentices who were of African descent had to continually assert their identity as free negro men or women.³³ 1799 was chosen as the end date since this marks a turning point when apprenticeship was no longer an experience largely for children of European descent. The law of 1799 in New York required all slave children to enter into apprenticeship in order to gain freedom after a period of service.³⁴ My definition of apprenticeship is also an urban one located in the Mid-Atlantic region of North America. The Mid-Atlantic region shared fundamental institutional characteristics of apprenticeship.³⁵ In urban areas, pauper apprenticeship was particularly prevalent, and so my discussion focuses on apprentices who came from a relatively poor socioeconomic background.

Apprenticeship was a highly varied life experience through which apprentice girls, as young children, gained several different opportunities for access to social and economic relationships beyond their domestic domains. Chapter 1 sets up the foundational characteristics of apprenticeship as an institution and maps out the private sphere of the apprentice girl. The apprentice girl’s private realm was a complex, multi-faceted one which included immediate connections to various groups within the socioeconomic milieu of colonial America. Chapter 2 looks at how runaway apprentice girls moved between the physical private and public spaces of

³² “Indentures of Apprentices, 1718-1727,” *Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1909* (New York: The John Watts de Peyster Publication Fund Series). Out of all the female apprentices recorded, only one was of African descent.

³³ We see this particularly in the few apprenticeship indentures recorded, where such parents had to ensure that their apprenticeship indenture stated this information.

³⁴ Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 44.

³⁵ The poor laws that governed the institution for New York was applied to Philadelphia and New Jersey in the eighteenth-century.

colonial America. The apprentice girl's private realm was highly connected to the public realm and allowed room for negotiation, manipulation and mobility. This thesis would be a weak and unconvincing one without also thinking about the colonial American public print culture which some historians believe solely classified apprentice girls as labor commodities. Chapter 3 reconstructs the various images of apprentice girls in the public sphere of American society to show that apprentice girls, in different ways, were legitimate members of a highly engaging and provoking public newspaper print culture. Apprenticeship was undoubtedly one of the fundamental social structures that defined Mid-Atlantic colonial America as a society.

Chapter 1

The Private Realm of Apprentice Girls

In the year 1723 in colonial New York, a young Philadelphian woman named Elizabeth Brown handed her infant daughter over to local innholder Joost Sooye.³⁶ Brown's daughter, two-year-old Arjetta Davis, remained silent throughout this proceeding.³⁷ Brown signed an indenture of apprenticeship that bound her infant daughter to Sooye as his apprentice for a period of sixteen years.³⁸ In exchange, Sooye promised to provide Arjetta with food, drink, shelter, two articles of clothing and to "teach said Apprentice to read, write & sew" by the end of her bondage.³⁹ This indenture was witnessed and acknowledged in writing by the Mayor of the city of New York at the time, Robert Walters.⁴⁰ The infant child Arjetta was now officially known as the "Apprentice Girl" in Mid-Atlantic colonial American society.

Indentures were a fundamental characteristic of apprenticeship. Under colonial law, an apprentice had to be bound by indenture.⁴¹ This was a formal, legal agreement between a master, parent and child. This agreement was usually witnessed by the appropriate governing authorities. The child did not possess any right to dictate the terms of indenture. Parents negotiated the legal terms for their children, while the overseers of the poor negotiated on behalf of orphans. Once the indenture was signed, apprentices belonged to their masters for the duration stipulated in their

³⁶ "Indentures of Apprentices, 1718-1727," 180. This one source alone records hundreds of parents who signed their own children into apprenticeship.

³⁷ Children had no say whatsoever over the terms of apprenticeship.

³⁸ "Indentures of Apprentices," 180.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. All indentures were witnessed and acknowledged either by a mayor, alderman or justice of the court in the particular province.

⁴¹ *The Conductor generalis: or, The office, duty and authority of justices of the peace, high-sheriffs, under-sheriffs, coroners, constables, gaolers, jury-men, and overseers of the poor. As also, the office of clerks of assize, and of the peace, &c. Compiled chiefly from Burn's Justice, and the several other books, on those subjects, by James Parker; late one of the justices of the peace for Middlesex County, in New-Jersey; and now revised and adapted to the United States of America, by a gentleman of the law. The whole alphabetically digested under the several titles; with a table directing to the ready finding out the proper matter under those titles* (Albany: Printed by Charles R. & George Webster, on the west corner of State and Pearl-Streets, near the English Church, and opposite the City-Tavern, 1794: and sold at their office, and the book-stores of Webster & Steel, Thomas Spencer and Abraham Ellison, Albany; by Mr. Wands, Lansingburgh, and Mr. Stoddard, Hudson; and, in the city of Philadelphia, at the book-stores of Mr. Mathew Carey, and Mr. William Young, 1794), 32, Accessed October 7 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/Evans/eaidoc/EAIX/0F30199DCA121C18/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

contracts. Any violation of the terms of indenture was a violation of the laws that maintained civil order in colonial America.

At the same time, colonial American apprenticeship was not always practiced under such rigid legal terms. This chapter is split into two parts to explain the various characteristics of apprenticeship that defined the apprentice girls' private sphere. The first explains the "negative" characteristics of apprenticeship that included poor relief, servitude and domestic life. These features mostly depict the theoretical aspects of apprenticeship. The second explains the "positives" of apprenticeship by laying out all the different benefits that apprenticeship gave apprentice girls in reality. While the apprentice girls' private sphere probably did include the domestic household, their private realm also gave them access to a myriad of relationships and networks in colonial American society. Through these varied connections and relationships, apprentice girls were able to exert influence and participate outside of their households. Therefore, this chapter lays out essential groundwork for chapters 2 and 3, which deal with apprentice girls who were visible in the levels of society beyond the private.

I: Apprentice Girls as Poor, Domestic Servants

Young children put out into apprenticeship became a temporary form of property. The clauses in apprenticeship indentures demanded an apprentice's total obedience to his or her master, making apprenticeship strikingly similar to indentured servitude and slavery. According to the city of New York's apprenticeship indentures, an apprentice girl was to "faithfully serve his [master's] secrets keep, his [l]awful commands [g]ladly everywhere obey...she shall not absent herself from her Master's service day nor night without his leave."⁴² Herndon and Murray argue that apprentices, like servants and slaves, "belonged" to their parents and then "belonged" to their masters.⁴³ Servants, both male and female, were left to the whim of their masters' every need

⁴² "Indentures of Apprentices," 167.

⁴³ Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 14.

within the home.⁴⁴ The only difference was that these apprentices were specifically bonded to their masters until the end of their childhood years – eighteen for girls and twenty-one for boys.⁴⁵

Masters could sell their apprentices' service to other masters according to the remaining number of years of service specified on their indentures.⁴⁶ Slaves and indentured servants could also be sold in a similar way.

Furthermore, apprentices shared the same social restrictions with servants and slaves under colonial law. In the city of New York, apprentices, children, servants and slaves suffered the same penalty for breaking the no-labor rule on the Sabbath: two days in the House of Correction unless their masters bailed them out with six shillings.⁴⁷ Apprentices, servants and slaves were not allowed into taverns and were given curfews.⁴⁸ Any apprentice, servant, slave or “Youths under the age of Twenty one Years” were not allowed to play games in any house or apartment.⁴⁹ Under some laws, even children who were not apprentices were subjected to the same legal restrictions as apprentices, servants and slaves. For the most part however, apprentices were more commonly grouped together with servants and slaves under colonial law compared to children. The bottom rank of society was defined not just by labor but also by age, and apprentices qualified under both. Why then, would parents choose to subject their daughters and sons to a rank that directly associated them with indentured servants and slaves?

⁴⁴ Sharon V. Salinger, ““Send No More Women”: Female Servants in Eighteenth-century Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (1983): 32, Accessed January 15 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20091738>.

⁴⁵ Herndon and Murray, “Markets for Children in Early America,” *The Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 2 (June 2002): 358, Accessed October 7 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2698184>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The House of Correction was a place meant to house and reform the vagrants and vagabonds of society by setting them to menial work. This allowed the city to make productive workers out of persons guilty of minor crimes.

Laws, statutes, ordinances, and constitutions, ordained, made and established, by the mayor, recorder, aldermen, and assistants, of the city of New-York, convened in Common-Council, for the good rule and government of the inhabitants and residents of the said city. Published the twenty-seventh day of January, and the first day of February, in the twenty second year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith &c. anno Domini 1748. And in the mayorality of Edward Holland, Esq; To which is added, an appendix, containing extracts of sundry acts of the General Assembly of the colony of New-York, immediately relating to the good government of the said city and corporation (New York: Printed and sold by J. Parker, at the new printing office, in Beaver Street, 1749), 5, Accessed October 7 2015, http://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_dat=document_id%3Aimage%252Fv2%253A0F2B1FCB879B099B%2540EAIX-0F3014ABDC7F8C28%25406388%25401&rft_id=info%3Aid%2Finfoweb.newsbank.com&rft_val_format=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&svc_dat=ARDX&req_dat=0E82C294E3C464B7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 75.

Poverty was a significantly compelling reason. Mid-Atlantic apprenticeship was primarily a formal response to all forms of material hardship faced by families in society. As such, children who became apprentices were not only unfree but also devastatingly poor. While craft apprenticeship did exist in the Mid-Atlantic colonies, pauper apprenticeship was just as, if not more, prevalent.⁵⁰ The poor laws that governed New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey stated clearly: “the children of such parents as are not able to maintain them, may be put out apprentices, and the parents refusing to suffer them, may be bound over to the sessions.”⁵¹ In addition to those who were physically or financially incapable of parenthood, parents who chose not to take on parenthood, hence “refusing to suffer them,” could hand their children over to the overseers of the city.⁵² The overseers of the poor and justices of the court had ultimate control over the children and final say over their parents’ ability to provide for them: “the law hath made [the justices and overseers] judges of the disability of the parents: and one justice may compel any person meet to be bound.”⁵³ Pauper apprenticeship was not just an institution for orphans. Parents who decided that their child would be better off as an apprentice could also bind their children into apprenticeship. This was very likely the reason why Elizabeth Brown chose to place her two-year-old infant Arjetta into the institution of apprenticeship.

As such, servitude was a necessary component of apprenticeship as it provided an alternative form of payment for those who took in poor children. The city of New York’s officials had to find some way to encourage individuals in their community to care for the city’s poor children, since the city’s resources were in limited supply. Officials “ordered that the church wardens put out apprentices, or otherwise, all such poor children as are a charge and expence [sic]

⁵⁰ Historian Carl Bridenbaugh argues that the poor was not an uncommon sight in urban early American spaces, since various colonial cities suffered from a swell in its pauper population in the early eighteenth century. While Philadelphia had a larger pauper population compared to New York, the *meeting minutes of the Justices, Church Wardens and Vestrymen of the City of New York* show that the church wardens were struggling to provide for every person in need of charity. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1955), 235-236.

⁵¹ *The Conductor generalis*, 32. While this was published late in the eighteenth century, earlier publications show nearly exact terms of apprenticeship for the various places in question.

⁵² The overseers were usually prominent officials who held important positions in the city’s council. They were in charge of the funds reserved for the poor in the city as well as running the poorhouse.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

to this City and Parish.”⁵⁴ Because of the overwhelming number of destitute persons in colonial cities, the city’s officials had to be judicious in using their resources, and sometimes, these resources could not provide for every orphaned child. Those who could not be bound out as apprentices faced most certain death.⁵⁵ As apprentices, these children served their masters in return for the material provisions and lodging they received. In other words, the children indirectly paid for their own care with no reliance on the city’s resources. From the perspective of the overseers of the poor, an apprentice’s servanthood incentivized households to take in children as apprentices and reduced the financial burden on the city’s resources.

Also, apprenticeship was an important way through which colonial town governments ensured a future generation of productive and relevant workers. The apprenticeship system was a way to carry out what the state defined as a “successful childhood,” a childhood that equipped each child with the appropriate skills according to gender and socioeconomic rank.⁵⁶ Masters were obligated by indenture to impart some type of skill to their apprentice. “Education,” for nearly all of the population except for the elite in early America, was specifically defined as work skills.⁵⁷ Masters functioned as “substitute magistrates, carrying out the aims of good town government within their own households.”⁵⁸ By teaching their apprentices about the socially acceptable kinds of work that they would be doing in the future, masters prepared the young generation to become workers who embraced their proper places in society.

Accordingly, apprentice girls were generally taught the various ways of running the domestic household. Both apprentice girls and boys were taken up by a wide variety of craftsmen and shopkeepers but only boys took up their master's trades. From this perspective, the work that an apprentice girl could do was sorely limited compared to that of an apprentice boy. Girls were

⁵⁴ *Meeting minutes of the Justices, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of the City of New York*, 231.

⁵⁵ Each yearly account of the Church Wardens that recorded the provisions given to the poor in New York City show a long list of funerals for unnamed children. Box 50, “Church Wardens New York City.”

⁵⁶ Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

taught housewifery, needlework and, on occasion, reading usually by their master's wives.⁵⁹ Eight-year-old Sarah Cracraft was placed with Wiggmaker James Brown to "be taught the Art or Mystery of a Housewife" in exchange for her complete obedience.⁶⁰ Elizabeth Van Vlecq was promised "the art & mystery of a linen or woolen seamstress."⁶¹ Advertisements also highlighted domestic skills: "To be sold, the unexpired time of an apprentice girl, who is in the business of a family, wash and Iron and tend to children."⁶²

In this way, apprentice girls were exposed early to the colonial social norms that conferred inferior authority and power to women. According to historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, a woman's primary sphere of influence was that of the household: "defined by a space (a house and its surrounding yards), a set of tasks (cooking, washing, sewing...) and a limited area of authority (the internal economy of a family)."⁶³ According to Ulrich's definition, apprentice girls, equipped with the work skills to become domestic housewives and mothers, possessed a much more limited sphere of authority and power.⁶⁴ Men dominated the public sphere in early America. Carole Shammas argues strongly that the Anglo-American household, with a white male at its head, remained the legal and institutional governing authority even beyond the American Revolution.⁶⁵ Boys were the ones who would grow up to be the breadwinners in their families, and thus the ones in need of profitable work skills. In this way, women in colonial America were subordinate to men. While it is unlikely that apprentice girls recognized the true implications of such inferiority as

⁵⁹ Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 47. If the apprentice's master's wives died, the young apprentice girls would generally be taken from the home since no one would be able to take care of them.

⁶⁰ "Indentures of Apprentices," 187.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶² *Daily Advertiser*, November 27, 1795, 3, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10D9A20EB769E9C0/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

⁶³ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 9.

⁶⁴ "Indentures of Apprentices," 174, 178-179. The terms of education in the indentures for apprentice boys were much more detailed and expansive compared to girls.

⁶⁵ Carole Shammas, "Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1995): 143-144, Accessed January 4 2016, doi:10.2307/2946890.

Shammas' discussion of the household's perpetuated importance as a fundamental unit of society throughout the eighteenth century further supports the idea that apprenticeship as a labor institution supported the concept of the traditional household governing unit, the basic social unit in early colonial America.

young children, the institution of apprenticeship certainly prepared them to accept this status when they became young women.

Perhaps the only practical implication apparent to apprentice girls was that apprentice boys were promised a great deal more than girls in their indentures. William Dobe, who was apprenticed to a Joshua Quereau, a blacksmith, was given “a small parcel of tools” at the end of his apprenticeship.⁶⁶ Bassett Hughes, who was apprenticed to a shipwright, was promised “a set of working tools and apparel...”⁶⁷ Boys sometimes even received proper schooling in addition to learning their master’s craft: Andrew Larong was promised “two quarters Schooling in the winter Evenings each year [for] the first two years of the term...”⁶⁸ Apprentice boys were equipped in a manner that was compatible with their positions as the future patriarchs of colonial society. Girls were never as well equipped. All apprentice girls who were, in the contract, promised the skill of a seamstress were not given a single tool to aid them in needlework or cloth mending.

An implication that would probably be less apparent, but just as disadvantageous, would be the limited range of opportunities available to girls to leave apprenticeship compared to boys. Theoretically, masters and apprentices were allowed the freedom to leave each other as long as there was mutual consent.⁶⁹ However, in reality, a master’s consent was typically bought. “1757 July 12. Agreement between Henry Stricklin and [Hartshorne] White to free White from his apprenticeship upon receipt of two third of all prize money received by White on a privateering course under Capt. Shoo. Randall.”⁷⁰ Privateering was predominantly a male profession. An apprentice girl skilled in domestic work could hardly win the price money that White used to free himself from apprenticeship. Thus, such agreements between apprentice girls and their masters were much less common than for boys. Hypothetically, since girls had more informal apprenticeship arrangements than boys, it is possible that their agreements to end apprenticeship

⁶⁶ “Indentures of Apprentices,” 144.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁰ George E. Stillwell, “Calender, ETC”, Envelope, Box 7, *Stillwell Papers*, 53.

in a similar manner were simply never recorded. Nevertheless, the fact that the female apprentice's skill set was much less profitable than that of the male apprentice cannot be denied.

The "educational" factor of apprenticeship that potentially elevated an apprenticeship's worth for a young child seemed only to be further proof that apprentice girls were disadvantaged domestic servants in eighteenth-century America. The "educational" component of apprenticeship that seemed to benefit apprentice boys evidently brought fewer benefits to apprentice girls. Girls were relegated to tasks that further limited them to private, domestic work with few opportunities for redemption. On the other hand, while domestic servitude was probably the price that many apprentice girls had to pay, there were certainly some incentives that made it worthwhile to become an apprentice in colonial society. These included a myriad of opportunities to create and maintain a wide, complex socioeconomic network as productive members of society.

II: Apprentice Girls as Members of Colonial American Communities

Apprenticeship allowed destitute children to escape the social stigma and discrimination that urban poverty brought. This was particularly true for the children in the city of New York, whose officials regularly "ordered that the Church Wardens of this city do not relieve or support any Poor within the same but such as shall have a Badge publickly on the sleeve of the right shoulder...made of Red Penniston or Red Bays and that they do from hence forward suspend abridge and withdraw their relief from any poor who shall refuse to wear the same."⁷¹ The poor's red badge was a physical mark of difference. Poor children put out as apprentices escaped this branding as an "other" particularly in cities where the poor were seen as those who were unable to work and therefore frowned upon as the "idlers" of society.⁷² Apprenticeship was the formal means through which poor children could escape this social branding as an unproductive "idler." This was especially important for women and girls, since poverty in early America was a

⁷¹ *Meeting minutes of the Justices, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of the City of New York*, 145-146. This order was regularly repeated in other meetings.

⁷² Gary Nash, *Down and Out in Early America*, ed. Billy Smith (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 16-17. Nash notes that in eighteenth-century Philadelphia, the notion that the poor were so because of their own decision to lead idle lives was a popular one. This was a kind of "self-created poverty."

particularly feminine phenomenon.⁷³ Although colonial society probably saw women as less likely to be able to work and therefore more likely to be poor compared to men, the stigma of living on the streets probably also applied to women all the same. Thus, apprenticeship transformed destitute, deserving girls into socially accepted individuals who contributed to and formed part of the productive, interdependent networks that defined early America.

Additionally, apprenticeship built upon and solidified existing relationships between apprentice girls and members of their communities in Mid-Atlantic American society. Members of American towns frequently took destitute infants and children into their households without a formal apprenticeship indenture. Sometimes, overseers paid members of townships for their care of needy children: “ordered that the church wardens pay Elizabeth Lowns widow three shillings weekly till further order for the support of Mary Sewell an infant.”⁷⁴ Some members of society only requested money for certain provisions: “ordered that the church wardens pay Mrs Stoaks thirty shillings...towards the cloathing [sic] of Mary Yearsly.”⁷⁵ Ebenezer and Schabod Cooper of Middleton, New Jersey, signed a contract with the overseers in 1752, “promising to help illegitimate daughter of Ann Brown by Ebenezer Cooper from becoming a public charge.”⁷⁶ Herndon and Murray note that apprenticeship “depended on pre-existing community networks and forged new ones.”⁷⁷

Apprenticeship can also be associated with the volunteerism that characterized colonial American communities. Historian Jessica Roney argues that civic engagement was the societal norm, and the overseers of the poor was one group among many institutions that encouraged such engagement in colonial society.⁷⁸ In this way, apprenticeship was one of the means through which

⁷³ Karin Wulf, *Down and Out in Early America*, 172.

⁷⁴ *Meeting minutes of the Justices, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of the City of New York*, 263.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁷⁶ George E. Stillwell, “Calender, ETC”, 46.

⁷⁷ Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 73.

⁷⁸ Jessica Roney, *Governed by a Spirit of Opposition: The Origins of American Political Practice in Colonial Philadelphia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 5, Accessed November 15 2015, <http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781421415284/>.

colonial society could exercise their civic responsibilities and volunteer their resources for the common good. Apprentices, both boys and girls, were the beneficiaries of this social practice.

Furthermore, apprenticeship was particularly beneficial for girls whose masters possessed a working and congenial relationship with their parents. In a letter to David Naughty, Samuel Andrew discussed the terms of the indenture and provided Naughty with an update on how Margaret was doing as an apprentice: “as to the learning [of] Margaret Naughty to write, it hath not been customary with us to enter into such obligations to females, yet we shall not be wanting in that matter, if she prove desirous of it and willing to it; she hath been with us for some time, and appears very well contented to live with us, and freely gives her consent to it...”⁷⁹ Samuel Andrew was quick to express the importance of Margaret’s desire to learn how to write, and also notes that Margaret “freely gives her consent” to staying with the Andrews. According to this letter, Andrew did not treat Margaret as a domestic servant or as a form of property. He was a master who treated Margaret as an apprentice with the right to consent and the right to learn skills that were not necessarily feminine in nature. For other apprentice girls who lived with such masters, apprenticeship offered opportunities for them to learn skills and knowledge beyond those prescribed in their indentures.

These advantages of apprenticeship suggest that servitude cannot fully describe and account for the diversity of experiences that were borne out of the institution of apprenticeship. On one hand, apprenticeship, according to the terms of indenture, portrayed the apprentice as a completely obedient servant. On the other hand, apprenticeship represented the colonial town community’s voluntary initiative to care for and educate its less fortunate young. While the overseers of the poor did pay some individuals to take care of the poor children, it is not immediately clear that these individuals took these children in with the intention of earning some money. Although some masters probably did treat their apprentices as servants, it is just as plausible that many others who took apprentices in treated them as young children in need of a

⁷⁹ Samuel Andrew, “Samuel Andrew, letter to David Naughty,” March 27 1732, Single File.

stable home. In this way, the term “unfree labor” does not describe apprenticeship in its entirety since the practice of apprenticeship in reality was much more between the lines of free and unfree.

The term “unfree labor” remains useful in understanding how apprentices viewed themselves as a group, particularly since apprentices and slaves socialized among their own ranks. Apprentices and slaves, particularly in urban areas where large groups could congregate, came together regularly in their spare time to form a lively community of leisure and enjoyment. An order filed in New York’s *Minutes of the Common Council* suggests that such gatherings became particularly rowdy at times:

For the better preservation of the Peace & the preventing [...] disorders and Other Mischiefs that commonly happen within this City on [...] Tuesday by great numbers of [y]outh [a]pprentices & [s]laves that assemble together in throwing at Cocks, and for supposing that cruel wage and custom It is ordered by the Court that there be no throwing at Cocks within this City on that day...⁸⁰

The phrase “great numbers of [y]outh Apprentices & [s]laves” suggests that the community of slaves and apprentices was a significant and prominent one in the city of New York. Even private houses were places of meeting for apprentices and servants. Any apprentice, servant, slave or “[y]ouths under the age of [t]wenty one [y]ears” caught playing a game of dice or cards in any house or apartment would be fined three pounds.⁸¹ Apprentices, servants and slaves, while different in their length and extent of bondage, most likely bonded under the similar circumstances of having masters that ruled over them. Spending time with this community was undoubtedly a significant part of an apprentice’s daily life.

Older apprentice girls and boys also engaged in social networks that included other apprentices and adolescents. Runaway apprentice girl Margaret Hazelton and her fellow apprentice Joseph supposedly “lurked about” in the city of Philadelphia.⁸² Apprentice girl Margaret Rogers spent a great deal of her free time with two other Dutch girls who were the same age as her.⁸³

Historian Joseph Illick discusses the concept of an “adolescent culture” in early America, which he

⁸⁰ “*New York (City) Court of Quarter Sessions Minutes May 3, 1715 - February 1, 1721*,” entry dated 4 February 1719.

⁸¹ *Laws, statutes, ordinances*, 75.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1118C0C3D3BAB478/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

defines as a network of various social relations and friendships forged among those who were neither adult nor child.⁸⁴ Older apprentices were certainly part of that culture, in which they socialized with others who did not belong to their household but were of a similar age. In this way, the adolescent period for apprentice girls, though isolating and limiting in some ways, was also socially rewarding in others. Apprentice girls, along with their fellow adolescents and apprentices, formed a part of urban America's incredibly diverse and complex social fabric.

Even though the law grouped apprentices with slaves and servants, the law recognized younger apprentices as children and gave them leeway concerning some crimes and punishments. This meant that apprentices could enjoy the social benefits of being laborers and the legal benefits of being children. Persons stealing at least 40 shillings worth of goods would be guilty of felony, but this is “not to extend to apprentices under fifteen years of age.”⁸⁵ Apprentices below fifteen years of age could not be arrested.⁸⁶ The 1794 laws for New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania even recognized a child's ability to consent: “persons above the age of 10 years, by their own consent and agreement, may be bound apprentices.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, masters were not able to discharge their apprentices if they had been wounded during service. A John Parks appealed to the court to discharge his apprentice, who had gone lame and was no longer able to fulfil his duties as stipulated in the contract. But the court answered that the statutes empowered “the justices to discharge for misbehavior and not for sickness.”⁸⁸ Masters were responsible for their apprentices “for better for worse, in sickness and in health.”⁸⁹ The law recognized that some fundamental

⁸⁴ Joseph E. Illick, “Childhood in Three Cultures in Early America,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 64 (1997): 313, Accessed February 12 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27774065>.

⁸⁵ The *Conductor generalis*, 35.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 214. Holly Brewer has investigated what legal “consent” meant for children in revolutionary America. Brewer contends that children were “the only group completely excluded from equality” during the revolutionary age where the shift from status to “contractual relations” were bringing about a (legally) more equal society. Brewer quotes John Locke's ideas about the age of reason and Enlightenment and points out that children, because of their age, lacked reason and therefore lacked the ability to consent and also to be held responsible for their crimes. This is a paradigmatic shift from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where status was more closely associated with legal authority. Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6-7.

⁸⁸ The *Conductor generalis*, 214.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

individual rights belonged to apprentices. At the same time, it is important to note that it was probably easier for boys to obtain protection from governing authorities since they usually had formal contracts.⁹⁰ Girls were certainly more vulnerable to abuse under their masters' households.

Traditional gender norms that situated female authority and work within the household did not however, preclude apprentice girls from participating in commercial exchange. The commercial clause written in the apprenticeship indenture meant that all apprentices were theoretically given this opportunity to participate. Both girls and boys were able to work in urban marketplaces and public spaces. The following was printed as part of the apprenticeship contract for Sarah Cracraft, apprentice to "Wiggmaker [sic]" James Brown: "she shall not waste her Master's goods nor lend them unlawfully to any," she "shall not play whereby her Master may have Damage with her own goods or the goods of others...she shall neither buy nor sell [any of her master's goods]."⁹¹ All apprentices were responsible for their master's goods and were most likely able to sell them if left to their own devices. Such activities probably happened in public marketplaces, not in their master's dwellings. Furthermore, particularly for urban spaces like the city of New York, historians have successfully argued that women were particularly important economic agents in urban marketplaces.⁹²

Through their commercial activities as intermediaries, the social world of apprentice girls spanned rank and position. According to Hartigan-O'Connor, commercial intermediaries participated in everyday transactions of their master's goods with individuals who were not necessarily of similar socioeconomic background. Apprentice girls very likely dealt with individuals from all levels of society, from the "wealthiest merchant to the humblest servant" on a regular basis, depending on their masters' commercial needs.⁹³ Nash coins the term "vertical consciousness" to describe early American society as a place "where movement up and down the

⁹⁰ Herndon and Murray, *Children Bound to Labor*, 15. Even though informal contracts showed a higher percentage of boys compared to girls, girls did not work less than boys as apprentices - it just meant that they worked without the protection of a contract.

⁹¹ "Indentures of Apprentices," 167.

⁹² Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 131.

social ladder never stopped and where the natural tendency of economic networks was to create a common interest among, for example, the merchant, shipbuilder, and mariner.”⁹⁴ In this way, apprentice girls were part of this “vertical consciousness” and shared similar economic goals with others of different socioeconomic rank. The number of experiences and opportunities that apprentice girls possessed through their commercial exchanges were potentially limitless.

The apprentice girl’s private sphere was made up of an incredibly complex network of relationships that offered various kinds of opportunities to form affiliations and connections with individuals and groups who belonged to colonial American society. The circumstances that defined each apprenticeship was also very different for each young girl who became an apprentice. As such, the reality of an apprentice girl’s private sphere was certainly much more complicated than what the boundaries of the household suggest. Through their own personal relationships, apprentice girls made their own unique impacts and created their own experiences within their different urban communities.

⁹⁴ Nash, *Urban Crucible*, x.

Chapter 2

Apprentice Girls Who Bridged the Gap between the Public and the Private

...thinking my apprenticeship very tedious, I was continually wishing for some opportunity of shortening it, which at length offered in a manner unexpected.⁹⁵
- Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*

Margaret Rogers found an opportunity to escape her apprenticeship in Philadelphia on October 16th 1752. Fourteen year-old Margaret was a vivacious, attractive young American girl: tall, slender, fair and utterly talkative.⁹⁶ For a young girl who left her household's protection and safety, Margaret was especially well organized and well resourced. This was not her first departure. Margaret had played out this scenario several times before, changing her name for good measure every time. Armed with her mistress' goods, a bundle of clothes and the company of two friends, she headed to Newport to find her mother, an indentured servant working for a cooper.⁹⁷ Otherwise, Margaret hoped to reach Ogle's Town, a small municipality within Pennsylvania, on Dutch wagons. Either way, she aimed to get as far away from her mistress in Philadelphia as humanly possible.

Throughout the eighteenth century, many apprentice girls attempted to escape their masters by managing their abilities, connections and relationships with individuals and communities beyond their households. With the help of various members and groups in society, in addition to possessing a certain degree of sophistication and wit, apprentice girls moved between the physical space of their households and the various public spaces in colonial America. The first section of this chapter provides an idea of how individual apprentice girls escaped. The second section explores the various kinds of relationships that apprentice girls utilized to escape. The third looks at how greater communal and public support aided apprentice girls in their departure from their masters' households.

⁹⁵ Benjamin Franklin, *Project Gutenberg's Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Frank Woodworth Pine, December 2006, Accessed February 24 2016, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20203/20203-h/20203-h.htm>.

⁹⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7.

⁹⁷ A cooper was one who made barrels and casks, a common craftsman in early America.

I: Apprentice Girls with Distinctive Abilities, Sophistication and Disguise

Runaway or not, adolescent apprentice girls walked and conversed freely in public urban spaces. An adolescent European apprentice girl travelling on the streets on her own was not an unusual sight. Sixteen-year-old English apprentice Ann Carrowle, who had arrived from London with a Captain William Keais in 1769, was “seen strolling on the Lancaster and Gulf roads, on pretence of going to service at Esquire Moore’s, and the Bull Tavern, and then at Carlisle” in Philadelphia.⁹⁸ The Lancaster and Gulf roads were the roads out of the city. People on the streets would have assumed that Ann Carrowle, who pretended to go to “service at Esquire Moore’s,” was merely another working woman in Philadelphia. Carole Shamas points out that in 1775, urban Philadelphia had a significant population of poor, single widows or women who came to Philadelphia looking for work.⁹⁹ Shamas relies on evidence from elite European ladies to argue that women certainly did not loiter about in the streets unless they were accompanied by a male companion.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, Ann Carrowle’s account (as told by her master) suggests that it was indeed a social norm for common, free laboring women to travel on their own.

Runaway apprentice girls, like many other runaways, used disguises to look even less conspicuous. Sixteen-year-old runaway Hannah Mindoe wore and took an assortment of gowns, petticoats, cloaks, aprons and stockings, “like she may pass for a stay maker.”¹⁰¹ For some apprentice girls, this was an opportunity to participate in the world of women’s fashion.¹⁰² Ann Carrowle was dressed in a “green silk bonnet, a red, black and white India calicoe long gown, a blue half-thick and striped linsey petticoat, and new leather shoes.”¹⁰³ Social and labor historians

⁹⁸ *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, April 25, 1774, 4, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10E0D2F991FE1C10/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

⁹⁹ Carole Shamas, “The Female Social Structure of Philadelphia in 1775,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (1983): 82, Accessed February 19 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20091740>.

¹⁰⁰ Shamas deduces from this that women in general “did not socialize much in public places...unless they were travelling.” Shamas, “The Female Social Structure of Philadelphia in 1775”, 78.

¹⁰¹ *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 28, 1777, 471, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/13BE2D0A1DDBE4FD/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

A stay maker was an “artisan who created boned women’s undergarments designed to shape and hold the body.” Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 18.

¹⁰² Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 203.

¹⁰³ *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, April 25, 1774, 4.

have been concerned with “imaginative self-fashioning” among runaway servants and slaves in Mid-Atlantic advertisements.¹⁰⁴ While apprentices who wore fashionable imitations were not transformed into upper class socialites, they proved that there were “suggestive possibilities of dress for social fluidity.”¹⁰⁵ Through the use of clothes, apprentice girls disguised themselves as women of respectable trades. While this is more unlikely, it is possible that some runaway apprentice girls tried to dress as individuals far above their social rank. “Social fluidity” for apprentice girls was the possibility of masquerading as individuals who were more than young, working female servants in urban American public spaces.

Apprentice girls were probably not mistaken for wealthy ladies due to the fact that they had limited access to luxurious clothing. After all, the majority of their masters belonged to the common laboring class. Most of the clothes that apprentice girls wore consisted of some form of cheap “linsey” material, made of coarsely combined linen and wool.¹⁰⁶ Fourteen year old Mary Moore ran away in “common linsey cloathing.”¹⁰⁷ Margaret Rogers ran away in a “brown linsey-woolsey short gown,” Hannah Mindoe a blue linsey short gown.¹⁰⁸ Short gowns also indicated female working class status.¹⁰⁹ Nineteen-year-old Mary Patterson was seen wearing an “old calico blue and yellow sprig gown,” along with two other apprentice girls wearing old calico gowns.¹¹⁰ Calico, an indian cotton textile, probably never had a distinctive social meaning, since it was worn by women of all backgrounds and was particularly popular in early British America.¹¹¹ It is

¹⁰⁴ Barry Levy, “Levelers and Fugitives: Runaway Advertisements and the Contrasting Political Economies of Mid-Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 78, no. 2 (2011): 19, Accessed October 24 2015, DOI: 0.5325/pennhistory.78.1.0001.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ “Linsey-woolsey” was a cheap and common material found across colonial American cities and was particularly important due to the scarcity of wool across the Atlantic. Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Association with Yale University Press, 2002), 96.

¹⁰⁷ *Carlisle Gazette*, June 18, 1794, 4, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10A48034054C00B8/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁰⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7 and *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 28, 1777, 471.

¹⁰⁹ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 96.

¹¹⁰ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, August 31, 1775, 389, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/109F0527F963FC70/0E82C294E3C464B7>,

¹¹¹ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 32-35. Calico was first discovered by Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama, who brought it to France. The British discovered calico by raiding Spanish ships. Calico was popular with the British, who thought it added an exotic feel when British floral patterns were added unto the cloth. Calico was highly demanded

therefore more likely that apprentice girls assimilated into the larger group of free laboring women in colonial America rather than the group of wealthy aristocratic ladies. In other words, “social fluidity” for apprentice girls certainly had its limits.

For runaway apprentice girls of African ancestry, social integration in public spaces was far more limited. A runaway “negro apprentice girl, about fourteen years of age” was the only apprentice girl to be described solely with the name “Maria.”¹¹² This was consistent with the way masters described their slaves in advertisements. Above the runaway advertisement for Sarah Allen, a runaway slave advertisement was put out for a “Wan,” an Indian slave of about thirty years of age.¹¹³ Maria was referred to as “said negro” rather than “said girl” or “said apprentice,” which was more commonly used in the runaway apprentice advertisements for European girls. To the eighteenth-century Mid-Atlantic American public, the apprentice girl Maria was first and foremost a “negro” before she was a girl or an apprentice. Negro and slave were synonymous in colonial America. The Philadelphia grand jury regularly complained about slaves who congregated in public spaces to socialize, calling them “the great multitude of Negroes.”¹¹⁴ As such, “negro” apprentice girls on the streets could very well be runaway slaves. Apprentice girls who were of African descent were probably subjected to a greater level of public scrutiny and suspicion when seen alone on the streets.

Other runaway apprentice girls knew how to capitalize on the clothes that were available to them. Hannah Mindoe’s bounty included two short gowns, a brown quilt, a pair of shoes with plated buckles, tow aprons and shirts, handkerchiefs and a short red cloak.¹¹⁵ Margaret Rogers took with her pairs of stockings, three or four aprons, “several caps of different patterns,” and two

particularly among the wealthy in the British colonial port cities and quickly filtered down to the lower classes of society.

¹¹² *Philadelphia Gazette*, July 25, 1795, 1, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10E0DD049FEE2DD8/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹¹³ *New-York Mercury*, May 30, 1757, 3, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10DEF00791BE6F48/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹¹⁴ Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 14. While the living standards of Northern urban slaves were comparatively better than their Southern plantation counterparts, the same discrimination and abuse was present.

¹¹⁵ *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 28, 1777, 3, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/13BE2D0A1DDBE4FD/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

pairs of shoes.¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Philips took with her “a large bundle of clothes.”¹¹⁷ Kate Haulman points out that clothing in early America was both “economic capital” and “social capital.”¹¹⁸ Clothing was considered a valuable commodity that could be exchanged for other goods, just as it was considered a marker of social status and wealth. Alice Dodd notes that her apprentice girl, Margaret Rogers, “stole from her mistress, money, tea, sugar, and sundry other things, too tedious to mention.” To deal in clothes was one thing, tea and sugar were highly tradable imported commodities in eighteenth-century colonial America, particularly in Philadelphia.¹¹⁹ Runaway apprentice girls definitely understood that different kinds of assets could be sold in the commercial marketplace to escape their apprenticeship for good. This suggests that apprentice girls were intelligent enough to know how to use the clothes that they stole to barter for goods that they needed to run away.

These apprentice girls were not only commercially adept but also skilled in handling relationships. In order to sell their clothes, apprentice girls had to manipulate the existing commercial relationships she had built while working for her master. The clothes runaway apprentice girls possessed were not necessarily her master’s goods - most apprentice girls’ masters were not cloth makers or seamstresses. Assuming that these girls took these clothes for economic gain, these advertisements provide evidence apprentice girls could sell, barter and trade in goods that were not their traditional forms of exchange as apprentices acting on behalf of their master. As intermediaries for their masters, apprentice girls were the faces that clients recognized on a regular basis. Apprentice girls therefore capitalized on the social currency of familiarity already established as their masters’ commercial intermediaries to pursue their own commercial endeavors.

¹¹⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), October 12 1752, 7, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnppdoc/EANX/1118C0C3D3BAB478/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹¹⁷ *Pennsylvania Packet*, October 4, 1781, 3, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnppdoc/EANX/10E686C300AB8240/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹¹⁸ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 29.

¹¹⁹ Philadelphia, by the time of the American Revolution, was the economic and political stronghold of the region. It was not only “intellectually rich” but also led the American continent to the forefront of economic development and capitalism. For more on Philadelphia and the changing notions of gender, sexuality and power, see Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7.

Sometimes, apprentice girls who shared a common language with other members of society were able to forge a working relationship with them. Margaret Roger's ability to speak Dutch certainly helped her to move freely across early American townships. She could "talk any sort of Dutch; and is supposed to be gone with two Dutch girls, towards Newport...or else in some form of the Dutch waggons [sic] to Ogle's Town."¹²⁰ Wagons, though a humbler form of transport compared to horse-drawn carriages, were at least superior to the alternative option available – walking.¹²¹ Margaret's competency at speaking "any sort of Dutch" most likely helped her secure a seat on "Dutch waggons," presumably owned by farmers of Dutch ancestry.¹²² In other words, she was identified not as an apprentice but as a Dutch girl worthy of assistance by the large Dutch-speaking community in Philadelphia.¹²³ Margaret's language abilities were not exceptional among apprentice girls: nineteen-year-old Jane Fontena who ran to Newport spoke fluent French.¹²⁴

II: Apprentice Girls and Their Networks and Communities for Escape

Other apprentice girls were more dependent on their personal relationships to escape from their masters. Some relied upon their fellow apprentices and other girls their age to escape apprenticeship. Margaret Rogers was friends with two other Dutch girls of "about the same age, bold and impudent" who traveled with her when she ran away.¹²⁵ Fifteen-year-old Margaret Hazelton also escaped from her master with sixteen-year-old apprentice boy Joseph Stewart, who was "by trade a shoemaker."¹²⁶ Margaret Hazelton and Joseph did not craft out an intelligent plan

¹²⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7. Ogle's Town was a municipality located in Pennsylvania.

¹²¹ "Transportation." *American Eras. Vol. 2: The Colonial Era, 1600-1754* (Detroit: Gale, 1997), 103-104, Accessed February 12 2016,

<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2536600239&v=2.1&u=columbia&it=r&p=GVRI&sw=w&asid=25cc4cb8dd64d4c87b882ed5a3454564>.

¹²² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7.

¹²³ The Dutch, along with the Swedes and English, have lived in Pennsylvania since the early 1670s, having originally settled in the Delaware region for trading purposes. Joseph E. Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania: A History*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 29-30.

¹²⁴ *Newport Mercury*, October 31, 1774, 3, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1070281E0CEC1718/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹²⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7.

¹²⁶ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, July 11, 1778, 3, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/109C6083041739D8/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

to leave the city like Margaret Rogers and her friends – they simply “lurked about the city.”¹²⁷

Nevertheless, they escaped together and remained together - a trust and reliance that went beyond any leisurely friendship. Assuming that these apprentice girls had a part to play in planning their joint escapes, these escapes show that apprentice girls were sophisticated enough to plan such an escape.

One particular apprentice girl tapped on the presence of the military community during the 1750s to ensure her successful departure. Richard Iverson placed an advertisement for seventeen-year-old Sarah Allen more than a year after her departure in 1757: “Twas imagined she went away with the army, and since returned to Brunswick in March last....”¹²⁸ Though we do not know what Sarah Allen’s work was in the army, Iverson’s words suggest that Sarah was probably part of the “Continental Community” for a time, which is what Historian Holly Mayer coins as the military community formed by the soldiers, their military leaders and the various “camp followers,” the people who were not soldiers but nevertheless lived and worked with the army.¹²⁹ These “camp followers” included women, servants, children and volunteers.¹³⁰ Even apprentice girls were accepted as part of the community. Mayer notes that some of these women who formed part of the “Continental Community” labored “outside the purely domestic sphere” by serving as merchants or even prostitutes.¹³¹

For other apprentice girls, family connections were crucial to their escape. Thirteen-year-old Jane Baldrige was “stolen by her mother...a middle sized woman, fair complexion, large grey eyes...whoever informs where the girl can be found, and the mother brought to justice, shall have EIGHT DOLLARS reward.”¹³² Margaret Rogers used her knowledge of Newport and her mother’s whereabouts to run away, suggesting that she continued contact with her birth mother

¹²⁷ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, July 11, 1778, 3.

¹²⁸ *New-York Mercury*, May 30, 1757, 3.

¹²⁹ Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996). 3-5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³² *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, September 9, 1777, 471, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/109F04DEDF46C660/0E82C294E3C464B7>

even as an apprentice in Philadelphia. For many apprentice girls, their birth mothers remained connected to their lives despite belonging to a different household. This was particularly true for Hannah Mindoe, whose mother and sister “belonged to John Fox.”¹³³ Extended blood relations were also considered family. Nine-year-old Charlotte Katiemen’s master “expected she may be found among some of her relations, perhaps among the Medwell family.”¹³⁴ While some historians have considered households to be core familial units in early American life, apprentice girls show that familial units sometimes extended beyond the physical household. As Gary Nash notes, “no less familial in form was the wider network that bound together individual households.”¹³⁵ Their mothers and their masters’ households, their extended relations and their households formed a complicated familial-kinship network of which apprentice girls were at the nucleus.

Such kinship networks typically spanned the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond. Not all apprentice girls worked in the same locale as their family. Margaret Roger’s mistress, who lived in Philadelphia, knew that Margaret’s mother worked in Newport and could name who she lived with.¹³⁶ Hannah Mindoe who lived in Southwark, Pennsylvania, ran to her mother in Upper Providence.¹³⁷ Runaway apprentice Mary Hawks who lived in Wilmington, ran to be with her mother Jane Hawks who originally lived in West New Jersey but brought her daughter to Philadelphia.¹³⁸ Apprentice girls in this way, were the intermediaries who connected households within and between cities and urban centres throughout the American Mid-Atlantic. Family was not just local for many apprentice girls – it was also a regional affair.

As much as some apprentice girls brought different households closer together, other apprentice girls brought individuals who were heavily invested in their lives in contest with one

¹³³ *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 28, 1777, 471.

¹³⁴ *Federal Intelligencer*, September 9, 1795, 4, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1089D75807151C40/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹³⁵ Gary Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 4-5.

¹³⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7.

¹³⁷ *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 28, 1777, 471.

¹³⁸ *Pennsylvania Journal*, September 20, 1770, 3, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/13BE2F000888BCA8/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

another. Jane Baldrige was allegedly stolen by her mother from her master, Cornelius Hillman.¹³⁹ While the reasons for Baldrige's mother stealing her are not stated, it is possible that Jane was being mistreated by Hillman. It is also possible that Baldrige's mother, in a turn of fortunes, was suddenly able to provide for Jane and no longer required Hillman's care, and Hillman would not give the consent required to release Jane to her mother. Since Jane's master could describe her mother in great detail, it is highly unlikely that Jane Baldrige's mother and her master were not on speaking terms. According to Hillman, "[the mother] says she lives within five miles of Bristol; she is a middle sized woman, fair complexion, large grey eyes, fair hair..."¹⁴⁰ According to Jessica Roney, "power diffused widely among various bodies that operated independently – or sometimes in outright opposition – of one another. These institutions had overlapping, sometimes competing, and even conflicting responsibilities, objectives, and tactics."¹⁴¹ While Roney here refers to different institutions, Roney's ideas can certainly be applied to individuals with competing interests, like an apprentice's mother and her master. Both master and mother could technically argue that the apprentice girl belonged to him or her, though under the law, the master possessed the advantage.

III: Apprentice Girls and Public Protection in Colonial Society

The greater populace that constituted colonial American society was also highly invested in their apprentice girls. If we assume that individuals in colonial American society were faithful, law-abiding citizens in every respect, then society probably treated apprentice girls according to what the law stipulated. The general population was governed by the laws set by the municipal government, and this included laws that attempted to prevent apprentices from running away. Apprentice girls, like servants and slaves who ran away, found themselves categorized as persons who violated the law and order of early American society. "Any departing from his [master's] Service whatsoever, refusing to do any reasonable Service, is a Departure in Law...an Apprentice

¹³⁹ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, September 9, 1777, 471.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Roney, *Governed by a Spirit of Opposition*, 3.

departing without a Testimonial shall be whipped as a Vagabond.”¹⁴² According to the law, runaway apprentice girls were criminals and needed to be caught and punished for their crimes.

But colonial governing authorities did not even have the resources to punish runaway apprentices, let alone assist masters in their search. As such, the punishment of a severe whipping was probably never enforced by early American judicial systems. The criminal justice system, even in the highly developed port city of Philadelphia, was no efficient and well-funded organization for the most part. The court had no full time police officers until about 1750 and “could not afford to imprison minor offenders.”¹⁴³ In the 1770s, there were a total of twenty-five constables hired to enforce order in Philadelphia.¹⁴⁴ Public hangings were a usual sight in colonial and revolutionary Pennsylvania, but such punishments were limited to capital offenses.¹⁴⁵ Such offenses certainly did not include departing from a master’s service.

As such, the general public had to be responsible for the capture and punishment of runaway apprentices. When Philip Fullan from Market Street in Philadelphia appealed to the public concerning his runaway apprentice girl, he assumed that individuals among the public would capture his apprentice girl if they happened to spot her somewhere in the city: “whoever apprehends the above apprentice, and secures her in any of his Majesty’s jails so that her master may have her again, shall receive the above reward and no charges.”¹⁴⁶ Gerrald Forrester had similar ideas when his sixteen-year-old apprentice Elizabeth Philips ran away: “whoever apprehends the said girl and brings her home, or secures her in the Workhouse, shall have one dollar reward.”¹⁴⁷ Both Fullan and Forrester show that members of the public were responsible for placing their runaway apprentices in “His Majesty’s jail” and the workhouse, an institution adapted

¹⁴² *The Conductor generalis*, 32.

¹⁴³ Paul Lermack, “Peace Bonds and Criminal Justice in Colonial Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 100, no. 2 (1976): 179, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20091052>.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 21. Michael Meranze charts the transformation of punishment in Pennsylvania from the 1780s to the 1830s as a result of the rise of discipline as an increasingly important role in criminal reform.

¹⁴⁶ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, August 31, 1775, 389.

¹⁴⁷ *Pennsylvania Packet*, October 4, 1781, 3.

from the English for the destitute to work for a living. At least from the perspective of masters who lost their apprentices, the public possessed an inherent civic responsibility that compelled them to enforce order when the governing authorities could not.¹⁴⁸ In this case, colonial society operated as their own governing body.

At the same time, most runaway advertisements suggest that the public did not aid the capture of these girls but rather facilitated their escape. This makes sense, since civic responsibility was not only a communal responsibility but also an individual responsibility in eighteenth-century America.¹⁴⁹ This meant that the individual possessed the power to decide whether to turn in or to aid a runaway apprentice. Judging from most masters' rhetoric, the most common decision was the latter. Most advertisements came with a stern warning to the public. Samuel Williams from Fourth Street, Philadelphia, stated clearly: "All persons are cautioned not to entertain, harbour, or conceal her, at their peril."¹⁵⁰ A total of nineteen masters, out of thirty-five advertisements, used the same or similar cautionary language. One particular master, John Robins, used particularly strong language concerning his apprentice Jane Johnson: "Notice is hereby given to all persons, that they do not harbour her, as I am determined to prosecute any person so doing, upon conviction."¹⁵¹ It is particularly striking that this warning was not given to the apprentice's immediate relatives or people who knew the apprentice girls. Rather, this warning was for all persons. Even though the early American public knew of their responsibility to turn apprentices in, many of them did not. This says something about the rule of government in early American society – the general public decided which laws they would uphold and which they would thwart. For runaway apprentice girls, the latter was the more common choice.

¹⁴⁸ Jessica Roney explains the "bottom-up approach" to political and civic engagement in colonial and Revolutionary Philadelphia: "residents empowered themselves to act on their own Church, not only through intermediaries, representatives, or elites. By the same token, they did not act only or even usually through the state." Roney, *Governed by a Spirit of Oppression*, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, April 25, 1774, 4.

¹⁵¹ *New Jersey State Gazette*, July 21, 1795, 4, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1274FF0581864A10/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

Runaway apprentice girls fared better than other unfree laborers in this respect. Such public support and protection was not available for persons under indentured servitude or slavery. The advertisements for most runaway slaves and servants would read “all masters of vessels are forbidden to carry them off at their own peril” with no mention of harboring them.¹⁵² This by no means suggests that no single person harboured runaway slaves and servants. Rather, harboring slaves and servants was probably a much less common phenomenon compared to harboring apprentice girls. Furthermore, while various laws explicitly forbade harboring slaves, there were no laws that forbade harboring runaway apprentices.¹⁵³

At the same time, not all individuals in society agreed with helping apprentice girls escape their masters. Historian Clare Lyons discusses what she calls a “bifurcation of sexuality” in eighteenth-century Philadelphia, where the elite and middle class white women were conferred a “normative sexuality” and the lower class, poor women a “deviant, oversexed sexuality.”¹⁵⁴ In this way, Lyons argues, Philadelphians cemented class and racial difference between the poorer whites (and Afro-Americans) and the upper and middle class white women in the city. Lyons puts it this way: “if only the women of the rabble were purposefully licentious, and their children legitimate, then their communities themselves must be responsible for their own hardships and failures.”¹⁵⁵ Lyons’s argument suggests that some upper class members of society might have seen apprentice girls as poor young women and therefore responsible for their own problems and undeserving of society’s help. On the whole however, it is safe to assume that society was generally on the side of aiding runaway apprentice girls, since the majority of society was not upper class but common laborers and craftsmen. The idea that there was a substantial level of public support for the larger group of apprentice girls in colonial America is a plausible one.

¹⁵² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12 1752, 7. This was not only found on this page - other advertisements featuring runaway slaves and convict servants mentioned the same.

¹⁵³ While it was theoretically against the law for an apprentice to run away, this law applied only to apprentices that had come to “full age.” Apprenticeship laws were not explicit about the consequences of running away.

¹⁵⁴ Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble*, 392.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Apprentice girls continually engaged, made use of and contributed to the different groups and facets of early American Mid-Atlantic society. They established working relationships with individuals, various communities as well as the larger society. While they were probably not as comfortable as free young girls and other free men in society, they were far better off compared to slaves. Therefore, their position in colonial society was a particularly unique one. With the general support of the public, their families, and various communities throughout the Mid-Atlantic, apprentice girls found their own place within the larger public network of colonial society.

Chapter 3

Apprentice Girls Within the American Public Imagination

Three ships loaded with sugar, indigo and coffee were bound for Bordeaux, a seaport in France. Races on Long Island were to be postponed till the 6th of June. A new book recounting the infamous Trial of Vice-Admiral Byng, who commanded His Majesty's Fleet in the Mediterranean, was to be sold at the Bible and Crown in Hanover Square. Seventeen-year-old apprentice Sarah Allen, hailing from Maidenhead, New Jersey remained missing from her master's service. Current prices for brown bread and beef were fourteen and forty shillings respectively.¹⁵⁶ These were some of the reports found in the *New-York Mercury* on May 30th, 1757, published by New Yorkers and avidly read by New Yorkers. The eighteenth-century newspaper was an eclectic and dynamic source of information for all who participated in the activities that characterized colonial society.

Apprentice girls enjoyed a varied and extensive presence across colonial and revolutionary society's public domain.¹⁵⁷ This chapter reconstructs the apprentice girls' image in order to position them within the context of the eighteenth-century print culture. The first section shows that apprentice girls were not solely imagined as labor commodities. The second section argues that apprentice girls were quite commonly perceived as vulnerable members of society who possessed public support and sympathy. The third section chronicles the strategic placement of apprentice girl advertisements in newspapers throughout the end of the eighteenth century to argue that the pervasive presence of apprentice girls in the public sphere cannot be denied.

Newspaper advertisements were just as fundamental to the operations of colonial society as articles that reported political or commercial information. Some historians have argued that the colonial American public saw newspapers mostly as an "instrument of public and economic

¹⁵⁶ *New-York Mercury*, May 30, 1757, 3.

¹⁵⁷ Here, I assume that all advertisements and articles surrounding apprentice girls contributed to popular opinion in early America. I rely on Lawrence Leder's argument that early American newspapers are the best source of information for public opinion in eighteenth-century America. Lawrence H. Leder, "The Role of Newspapers in Early America "in Defense of Their Own Liberty"" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 30 no. 1 (1966): 1, Accessed February 19 2016, doi:10.2307/3816757.

affairs.”¹⁵⁸ According to this argument then, advertisements were the least important news in the newspaper and were “invariably placed at the end.”¹⁵⁹ As such, to the modern reader, these advertisements may seem like unimportant additions simply used to fund publishing. But advertisements were the sole medium, other than word of mouth, that ensured information reached the public. The “eighteenth-century newspaper world was inhabited by town and country, male and female, high and low participants.”¹⁶⁰ People would gather in taverns, churches and public spaces to discuss the current events and local gossip after reading the newspapers.¹⁶¹ Newspapers were not just instruments of public and economic affairs, they were instruments of social affairs.

I: Apprentice Girls as Commodities and as Persons

Advertisements for sale portrayed apprentice girls as commodities within the colonial economy. When Mid-Atlantic newspapers advertised an apprentice girl’s labor for sale, the advertisement would read: “TO BE DISPOSED OF, an Apprentice Girl’s Time, who has near four years to serve, and is fit for either town or country business...”¹⁶² Such language, used in 1771, was the exact same in an advertisement for a slave girl in 1749.¹⁶³ The only obvious difference was that an apprentice girl’s labor had a time limit of four years. David Waldstreicher, who writes extensively on runaway Mid-Atlantic slaves, argues that Pennsylvanians treated slaves and servants as “interchangeable labor forces, to be bought and sold, for cash or credit, as profit dictated-and it dictated often.”¹⁶⁴ Historians who have studied servant, slave and apprentice advertisements in newspapers have generally come to the consensus that these advertisements

¹⁵⁸ Charles E. Clark and Charles Wetherell, “The Measure of Maturity: The Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1765” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 46 no. 2 (1989): 302, Accessed February 15 2016, doi:10.2307/1920255.

¹⁵⁹ Clark and Wetherell, “The Measure of Maturity: The Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1765,” 284.

¹⁶⁰ Uriel Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Public and Press in 18th Century Britain and America* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012), 3.

¹⁶¹ Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Public and Press in 18th Century Britain and America*, 21. Heyd notes that indentured servants as well as their masters read newspapers.

¹⁶² *Pennsylvania Journal*, January 3 1771, 4, Accessed February 3 2016, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/13BCDEE3507AB47C/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁶³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 9 1749, 6.

¹⁶⁴ David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic”. *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1999): 251, doi:10.2307/2674119. 251. Waldstreicher notes that slavery in the Mid-Atlantic was comparatively different from that in the Southern states.

were part of a larger labor economy. This argument can be applied not just to the world of labor but also to the diverse realm of commodities available for sale in the eighteenth century. William Lake placed an advertisement in the *Freeman's Journal* to sell his apprentice girl: "TO BE SOLD, the time of a likely, smart, young Apprentice Girl, who has upwards of five years to serve...she is perfectly honest, and extremely tractable."¹⁶⁵ On the same page, James Smith advertised his house: "TO BE SOLD, A two storey brick HOUSE, kitchen and Lot of Ground, situate in Water-street...capable of great additional improvements."¹⁶⁶ Masters used these attributes to market apprentice girls in the same way that Smith noted that his house was "capable of great additional improvements." In other words, "smart" and "honest" were ornaments that embellished the product.

While current prices were never included in such advertisements for sale, the colonial public probably recognized that apprentice girls were lowly valued laborers. The monetary rewards for apprentice girls in runaway advertisements remained consistently lower than those of servants, slaves and even apprentice boys throughout the eighteenth century. On August 31 1775, the title for the advertisement featuring runaway apprentice girl Mary Patterson read clearly in bold, "SIX PENCE REWARD."¹⁶⁷ On the same page, Patterson's advertisement was published alongside advertisements for a negro woman named Rachel, whose mistress provided thirty shillings for her return, an Irish servant lad named John Fitzgerald, whose return was worth ten dollars, and two English convicts Robert Bowles and John Wilkes, whose return, with the two horses they stole, were worth a total of twelve pounds.¹⁶⁸ This difference in monetary rewards becomes even more significant across the eighteenth century. In 1798, the reward for apprentice girl Polly Van North's return was six cents, while that for a mulatto man slave and a forty-five-year-old negro man was

¹⁶⁵ *Freeman's Journal, or The North-American Intelligencer*, January 18, 1786, 1, Accessed November 25 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10DEE156194E12B8/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, August 31, 1775, 389.

I compare the monetary values of rewards between advertisements found on the same page and on the same day.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

twenty and twenty-five dollars respectively.¹⁶⁹ If this monetary reward served as a reflection of the financial worth of an apprentice girl's labor within early America's complex system of unfree labor, this substantial monetary difference suggests that an apprentice girl's labor was not valued as much as other forms of unfree labor in early America.

Yet apprentice girls were not just imagined as commodities – runaway advertisements invariably depicted apprentice girls as people. Masters took real effort to ensure that their apprentice girls were described in great physical detail in their runaway advertisements. Out of thirty-five runaway advertisements published, nine of them scattered throughout the eighteenth-century described the girls as having particularly dark and unattractive characteristics. Fifteen-year-old Polly Van North was described to have a “dark complexion, sour look.”¹⁷⁰ Sixteen-year-old Elizabeth Philips was described as short and having a “dark complexion.”¹⁷¹ Sarah Allen had a “swarthy complexion, hollow-eyed and down-look.”¹⁷² One way to interpret this is using Waldstreicher's argument that darker skin color was associated with servitude and slavery in eighteenth-century America.¹⁷³ Following this line of argument, masters meant to emphasize their identity as unfree laborers in order to justify their loss. But another equally plausible explanation is that masters were simply accurately describing their apprentice girl's true physicality. After all, it is safe to assume that masters who published advertisements in newspapers were genuinely motivated (to some extent) to find their runaways. Furthermore, physical descriptions in slave runaway advertisements never included complexion.¹⁷⁴

Therefore, in this case, I argue that masters did not use physical descriptions to impose some form of moral judgement on their apprentice girls. Waldstreicher's analysis concerns runaway slaves, and slaves certainly did not possess the same kind of position that apprentice girls

¹⁶⁹ *Albany Gazette*, August 27, 1798, 3, Accessed October 24 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/13F0EC0480052028/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁷⁰ *Carlisle Gazette*, June 15, 1791, 1, Accessed November 25 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10A47D37ED8EF2D8/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁷¹ *Pennsylvania Packet*, October 4, 1781, 3.

¹⁷² *New-York Mercury*, May 30, 1757, 3.

¹⁷³ Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” 258.

¹⁷⁴ Most slave runaway advertisements simply used the term “negro” to describe their runaways.

had in society.¹⁷⁵ Firstly, we know that apprentice girls were not just seen as laborers in their immediate urban locale - they developed different kinds of relationships with people of various socioeconomic rank in their towns and cities. Secondly, we know that some apprentice girls even had connections that spanned cities and townships. Thirdly, people in society frequently voluntarily sheltered apprentice girls. It was certainly not the societal norm for society to shelter slaves. Some mothers even stole their daughters from their masters.¹⁷⁶ Most importantly, the majority of apprentice girls were of European descent, while slaves were not. As such, masters were probably aware that their runaway girls would be well recognized in the newspapers by members of the public. Even though advertisements for sale presented some girls as commodities, such advertisements kept these girls anonymous to the public. An overwhelming majority of runaway advertisements named their girls and gave many personal details. While colonial American society read newspapers knowing that some apprentice girls were nameless figures, many others were real and familiar members within their own social network.

It was probably mere coincidence that some runaway apprentice girls were just a lot more physically outstanding compared to their runaway counterparts. After all, nearly all of these girls were at the peak of their youth. The majority of runaway apprentice girls (as seen by their advertisements) generally ranged from fourteen to eighteen years old, the prime age just before marriage. Many of the runaway advertisements described apprentice girls as light-skinned and attractive young girls. These were published alongside other advertisements that portrayed much more unsavory-looking characters. Margaret Rogers was described by her mistress to be “tall and slender, of a fair complexion,” alongside an English servant with a “sickly complexion,” a “pockmarked” Dutchman, a drunken servant and a mulatto slave “approaching very near the Negro [sic] complexion.”¹⁷⁷ Thirteen-year-old Jane Baldrige, who was “stolen by her mother,”

¹⁷⁵ Particularly after the slave uprising in 1741 in New York, the urban American public was particularly hostile and suspicious towards slaves. See Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* (New York: Knopf, 2005).

¹⁷⁶ Jane Baldrige was allegedly “stolen by her mother.” *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, September 9, 1777, 471.

¹⁷⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12, 1752.

was “smooth faced, [had] grey eyes and dark hair,” alongside dark complexioned and pockmarked Thomas McCully who deserted his regiment.¹⁷⁸ While this was very likely unplanned, the apprentice girls’ flattering physical descriptions probably indirectly aided masters in their efforts to get their apprentice girls back.

In addition to realistic physical descriptions, masters sometimes added in an extensive range of personality traits to give the public a much better idea of who their apprentice girls were. Alice Dodd gave incredible detail about Margaret Roger’s personality: “very talkative, and a great liar...her left eye is lower and less than the other, which she commonly shuts when she laughs.”¹⁷⁹ Alice Dodd was obviously well acquainted with her apprentice. Thomas Cromby described his thirteen-year-old runaway apprentice Sarah Mason as “very artful and cunning.”¹⁸⁰ Philip Fullan described his nineteen-year-old apprentice girl Mary Patterson as having “a very bold look, and is ignorant and saucy.”¹⁸¹ David Waldstreicher argues that masters did so to connect their runaway’s “deceit to their most valuable and human characteristics.”¹⁸² While this might be true in some cases, it was also probably true that this wide assortment of characteristics that described different apprentice girls within the public realm actually illustrated authentic personality. In other words, these characteristics brought these girls to life.

II: Apprentice Girls as Victims of Abuse and Tragedy

The plight of vulnerable, suffering apprentice girls garnered a great deal of public sympathy and attention. Apprentice girls experienced abuse that was all too similar to that of a slave - the difference was the level of public attention apprentice girls received. For slaves, free black men and women in urban Mid-Atlantic America, violence and inequality was the norm, but for white

¹⁷⁸ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, September 9, 1777, 471.

¹⁷⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12, 1752, 7, Accessed October 24 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1118C0C3D3BAB478/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁸⁰ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, October 26, 1778, 398, Accessed October 25 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/109C5F269A0CC320/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁸¹ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, August 31, 1775, 389.

¹⁸² Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” 261.

apprentice girls, violence was unacceptable.¹⁸³ The details of one hideous crime scandal were continually republished in major newspapers across the Mid-Atlantic in 1766 and 1767.¹⁸⁴ This began in 1766, when a Mrs Brownrigg and her son John Brownrigg were indicted for the murder and abuse of Mary Clifford:

...about six months ago the said John Brownrigg beat the deceased with the buckle-end of a thick leather belt, till the blood ran from her head, neck and shoulders (several wounds she had before received being but just skinned over)...whereupon [his mother's bidding] he gave the deceased about twenty cuts with the lash of the whip, after which the mother and son went away, leaving the poor creature naked...Elizabeth Brownrigg began to beat the deceased about one month after her being bound apprentice, and from that time the wounds of the unhappy girl were never suffered thoroughly, but being constantly kept open by repeated severities.¹⁸⁵

A year later, Mrs Brownrigg's husband and John (again) made the American press for abusing the other apprentice girl who survived Clifford, Mary Mitchell:

James Brownrigg, and John his son, were tried at Guildhall, on two separate indictments, for assaulting, whipping, and ill-treating Mary Mitchell, the surviving apprentice girl of the said James...It appeared that the father had once beaten her, twice dipped her head in water, and confin'd her; and that the son had whipped her naked three times with great severity, and locked her up several times.¹⁸⁶

The amount of attention dedicated to this trial in the *New-York Gazette* showed that the American public was incredibly shocked by the abuse of apprentice girls. The Boston newspaper headlines read "A Particular Account of the Cruel Treatment of the Two Unhappy Girls, Apprentices to the Painter in Fetter-Lane."¹⁸⁷ The *New-York Gazette* called Mrs Brownrigg's treatment of the girls "barbarous."¹⁸⁸ Such abuse and whipping for an apprentice girl of European ancestry was both unusual and alarming to American readers. Colonial Americans spoke openly and assertively about the depravity of assaulting women and girls.¹⁸⁹ Historian G.J. Barker-Benfield argues that eighteenth-century Britain saw a rise of

¹⁸³ Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *A Fragile Freedom: African American Women and Emancipation in the Antebellum City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 48.

¹⁸⁴ This story was published multiple times in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York.

¹⁸⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 12, 1767, 2, Accessed January 28 2016, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1111266F2E56E270/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁸⁶ *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy*, January 25, 1768, 2, Accessed January 28 2016, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10DAAFFAD95D7FF0/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁸⁷ *Boston News-Letter*, October 29, 1767, 1, Accessed March 10 2016, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/105B578FAC716148/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁸⁸ *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy*, October 29, 1767, 3, Accessed March 10 2016, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10DAAFD793C39DB8/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁸⁹ Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1.

sentimentality and protests against human suffering and maltreatment. While Barker-Benfield notes that some historians have connected such sentimentality to the suffering of slaves, he argues that many of the novels published in the eighteenth century directed any sense of sentimentality towards the “imprisonment of women by men.”¹⁹⁰ This provides a possible explanation as to why early American society protected runaway apprentice girls – young women bound to a man’s household were most likely seen as particularly defenseless in abusive and violent situations.

Furthermore, the American public recognized that those who abused or murdered apprentice girls justly deserved the punishments for their actions. There was a great deal of public knowledge concerning those who had committed capital crimes against apprentice girls. An extract from a “gentleman of character and fortune in New York, dated April 6 1783” in the *Pennsylvania Packet* noted that a man who committed suicide was the husband of a woman who had been executed for the murder of her apprentice girl.¹⁹¹ This wife would be known by the public as the one who paid the price for her atrocious crime. Such crimes were atrocious not so much because of the act itself but because it was a “perversion of the authority entrusted to parents...to ensure the well-being and direct the moral education of dependent children and kin.”¹⁹² While Cornelia Dayton uses this phrase to discuss incest in her book rather than murder in this case, her words apply to murderous mistresses and their apprentice girls who were fully dependent on them for nurturing. Dayton also notes a particular instance where an orphaned apprentice girl was allegedly raped and assaulted by a slave. The girl submitted her recorded testimony of the incident to court and the slave boy was imprisoned.¹⁹³ When apprentice girls were involved as victims in crimes of

¹⁹⁰ G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-century Britain*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 224-225.

¹⁹¹ “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman of Character and Fortune in New-York, dated April 6, 1783,” *Pennsylvania Packet*, August 21, 1783, 2, Accessed January 28 2016, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10E6861480F5B658/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁹² Cornelia Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 276.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 268. Dayton notes that Diana Parish’s master, Benjamin Pardee, brought the case to court but it was ultimately Diana Parish’s testimony that stood in court. Ultimately, the perpetrator was sentenced to death. This

violence, abuse and murder involving slaves and masters, the law was on the side of the apprentice girl.

Such public support for apprentice girls most likely contributed to larger societal changes throughout the eighteenth century. Public sentiment against the suffering of apprentice girls had real, tangible effects on the way eighteenth-century American society dealt with their poor children. Right on the top of an advertisement in New York's *Daily Advertiser* in 1795 selling the "unexpired time of an apprentice girl" was an article that described a recently opened Christian school that housed young boys and girls: "This excellent institution is earnestly recommended in the patronage of the humane and benevolent. Orphans and the children of indigent persons, are hereby snatched from ignorance and vice, preserved from the influence of such examples, and are qualified to be useful members of society."¹⁹⁴ This article was perfectly compatible with the type of public sentiment surrounding victimized apprentice girls. In the eighteenth century, the principal institution that catered to needy boys and girls in urban spaces was the almshouse.¹⁹⁵ It is possible that the rising public knowledge about vulnerable apprentice girls fueled the need to set up this institution in New York. This "excellent institution" provided an alternative to apprenticeship for poor children, both boys and girls. This also suggests that the various forms of educational development in society for poor children were driven by a rise in public sentiment and compassion for vulnerable persons in society. In such cases, public favor was power.

Public interest in the various sufferings of apprentice girls shows that apprentice girls were seen as vulnerable victims at the hands of their masters. These opinions were not inconsequential. Sentiment, in this case, brought about larger societal change and development when fuelled by

perpetrator was allegedly a slave boy named Cuff, which probably contributed to why Diana's testimony was seen as admissible.

¹⁹⁴ *Daily Advertiser*, November 27, 1795, 3, Accessed January 28 2016,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10D9A20EB769E9C0/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

¹⁹⁵ The almshouse is another word for poorhouse. For an excellent overview of this institution and how children fared, see Simon Newman, *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

sufficient public consensus. The amount of support given by the colonial American public to girls who identified as apprentices would have probably been all the more resolute during this period.

III: Apprentice Girls and Daily Life in Revolutionary America

Where apprentice girls were placed in newspapers gives us a lens into where they were positioned in the colonial social imagination. From the 1770s onwards, apprentice girl advertisements were no longer found in the section concerning solely unfree labor advertisements. Apprentice girl advertisements were placed into different parts of the newspaper alongside articles that spanned in range from sea trade, commerce, medicine, war, Revolution and the creation of a new government.¹⁹⁶ Although we have no information regarding the way the public read these different articles, it is possible to discuss and assess the newspaper publisher's motivations in doing so. While it is possible that there was no intentionality in the positioning of articles, this is an unlikely scenario since publishers were monetarily incentivised to promote readership. Publishers probably positioned and selected articles in a way that was most compatible with public preferences to promote readership. This change in the way the newspaper publishers organized their articles and advertisements is therefore worthy of analysis.

If publishers were strategic in their article placement according to what the public desired, then the public surely considered apprentice girls within what the modern reader would define as the "social" public sphere of events.¹⁹⁷ Some apprentice girl runaway advertisements were published alongside poems and entertaining anecdotes in the newspaper. On April 1799, Peter Fitz Randolph put out an advertisement for his sixteen-year-old runaway apprentice Nancy Tunison.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ I mark this turning point particularly around Hannah Mindoe's runaway advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 28, 1777, 471. The newspapers published before that clearly demarcated and grouped all the advertisements for runaway slaves, servants and apprentices together on the same page. This trend ceases around the Revolutionary period, where the runaway apprentice girl advertisements no longer seem to fit a specific category within the American newspapers.

¹⁹⁷ I use inverted commas in this instance because the idea of a "social" public sphere is a form of anachronism. The public sphere cannot be organized in this way because of the extensive interconnectedness of public colonial life. This term "social" public sphere is merely used to prove my point for this particular paragraph concerning the varied presence of apprentice girl advertisements throughout newspapers in colonial America.

¹⁹⁸ *New-Jersey Journal*, April 30, 1799, 4, Accessed October 25 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10766AE3781B3478/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

This advertisement was placed in the column of anecdote of a wedding, the celebration of the opening of a dance school and a poem titled “The Violet” under the title “Literary Bouquet.”¹⁹⁹ The three other columns featured land for sale, houses for sale and horses for sale respectively. Out of all these articles, the runaway advertisement was the only one that gave a name to its main subject, an important characteristic in an era when familiarity was of critical importance.

Additionally, apprentice girl advertisements were published alongside ongoing American public conversations and activities throughout major commercial changes, particularly at a time where major Mid-Atlantic American seaports began to see greater volumes of trade activity. In 1794, the *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer* published an apprentice girl advertisement for fourteen-year-old Charlotte Wettear alongside wholesale land sales and advertisements for Antigua Ham, Muscavado, East-India Sugars and Cherry Brandy.²⁰⁰ On May 26 1795, the “One Penny Reward” advertisement for Sarah Weaver was surrounded by a sea of advertisements for tracts of land on sale and shops of various kinds, including one that specializes in “ironmongery, cutlery and jewelry.”²⁰¹ Even with the growing commercial market, apprentice girl advertisements continued to be printed alongside articles that contained information of much greater economic value. This indicates that global commercial trends could not be divorced from local individual stories. The global and economically significant exchanges and trade were underpinned by the local, small-scale networks of people who knew each other by name.

Also, apprentice girls were represented just as well as major business owners and rich bankers in the newspapers. Modern readers would consider this to be the “business section” of print culture. In Philadelphia’s *Freeman’s Journal* in 1785, an article advertising time of a “likely, smart, young apprentice girl” was printed alongside an announcement from the “Bank of North America” notifying all the stockholders of the bank of where and when to meet to discuss all

¹⁹⁹ *New-Jersey Journal*, April 30, 1799, 4.

²⁰⁰ *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, May 17, 1794, 4, Accessed October 25 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/107B037CEDBFA798/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

²⁰¹ *Federal Intelligencer*, May 26, 1795, 3, Accessed October 25 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1089D6B69F1127D0/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

“business of importance of the corporation.”²⁰² These stockholders were clearly the wealthy, powerful merchants and businessmen of colonial America, yet such an announcement was made neither prominent nor demarcated from the rest of the articles. In the *New Jersey State Gazette*, a runaway advertisement for an apprentice girl Jane Johnson was published right above a court order summoning auditors, creditors and debtors involved in a credit dispute.²⁰³ For the colonial American public, both the poor apprentice runaway and the wealthy bank merchants deserved equal representation. This does not mean that socio-economic hierarchy did not exist. Rather, all ranks of the socioeconomic hierarchy were given equal opportunity for public presence and representation according to public interest.

Furthermore, information regarding apprentice girls were continually printed in Mid-Atlantic America’s newspapers throughout the American Revolution.²⁰⁴ On May 28 1777, an advertisement for runaway apprentice girl Hannah Mindoe was printed in the *Pennsylvania Journal* alongside articles notifying the public of soldiers that had deserted their posts in their respective regiments and an advertisement regarding a new sermon published named “The LOVE of OUR COUNTRY.”²⁰⁵ On October 26 1778, the advertisement for runaway apprentice girl Sarah Mason was the only one printed on the same page as an article that informed the public of the impending victory of “the INDEPENDENCY OF AMERICA.”²⁰⁶ The runaway advertisement for Rachel Parlet was published alongside an article documenting the meeting of the House of Representatives of the United States.²⁰⁷ During the American Revolution, daily life continued. Newspapers continued to print, shops continued to sell their goods, and masters continued to put out advertisements about their runaway apprentice girls. The fact that masters continued to put

²⁰² *Freeman's Journal: or, The North-American Intelligencer*, December 21 1785, 1, Accessed October 25 2015, <http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/10DEE1542F453240/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

²⁰³ *New Jersey State Gazette*, July 21, 1795, 4, Accessed October 25 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1274FF0581864A10/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

²⁰⁴ Runaway apprentice girl advertisements, starting from the 1770s, were consistently published in newspapers and increased in number closer to the turn of the century.

²⁰⁵ *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 28, 1777, 3.

²⁰⁶ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, October 26, 1778, 398.

²⁰⁷ *Maryland Journal*, January 17, 1792, 3, Accessed October 25 2015,

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/HistArchive/ahnpdoc/EANX/1274FE3E8B283380/0E82C294E3C464B7>.

out newspaper advertisements throughout Revolution for their runaway girls suggests that this method was, to some extent, successful. People continued to read about apprentice girls and recognize the girls they read about in the newspapers.

These runaway apprentice girl advertisements were quite possibly a kind of strategy that publishers used to get people to buy and read their newspapers. In a world where face-to-face relationships were crucial to daily life, a runaway apprentice girl who was local to the area would certainly be a pertinent piece of information to many people who knew them. Thus, runaway apprentice girl advertisements and articles concerning apprentice girls were not just reflections of their status as commodities in the eyes of the colonial American public. These were girls who were part of society's social fabric, not just random, insignificant children whose runaway advertisements served the purpose of filling extra publishing space in the newspapers. They were people who were real and familiar members of colonial American towns and cities. Major commercial trends, urban development and Revolution certainly had an impact on the colonial American public's daily lives. But apprentice girls had a permanent, unquestionable place in the American public's imagination.

Conclusion: *Huckleberry Finn*, Apprentices and Redefining Colonial American Society

...Set down and stay where you are. I ain't going to hurt you, and I ain't going to tell on you, nuther. You just tell me your secret, and trust me. I'll keep it; and what's more, I'll help you. So'll my old man, if you want him to. You see, you're a runaway 'prentice - that's all. It ain't anything. There ain't any harm in it. You've been treated bad, and you made up your mind to cut. Bless you, child, I wouldn't tell on you. Tell me all about it, now - that's a good boy.²⁰⁸
- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

When Mark Twain wrote his novel nearly a hundred years after the peak of apprenticeship in America, apprentices were still alive and well in the imagination of the American people. Twain's literary masterpiece confirms that apprentices were not only common in American society – they were also well cared for and protected by the public. This is what Twain meant when he wrote, “you're a runaway 'prentice – that's all...Bless you, child, I wouldn't tell on you.”²⁰⁹ Historians have, for a long time, disregarded apprentices due to the fact that apprenticeship became largely unimportant as a labor institution after the eighteenth century.²¹⁰ What historians have yet to realize is that the image of the young apprentice was one beloved by American society long after the institution's demise.

Apprentice girls bring a different perspective to the way we think about family and childhood in colonial America. Apprenticeship was virtually the sole prominent institution for children in an age when such institutions were scarce.²¹¹ Historians have largely considered childhood to be intimately tied to the family in terms of the parent-child relationship. In this way, the household was the fundamental colonial governing unit for childhood.²¹² But the lives of apprentice girls show that childhood in early America was also the responsibility of the larger community. Apprentice girls were probably domestic servants in their master's households, but

²⁰⁸ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 70. Mark Twain's celebrated novel was first published in the United States in 1885.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ In *White Servitude in Colonial America*, David Galenson defines apprenticeship as part of the indentured labor system in colonial America, and argues that this system became significantly less important compared to other forms of labor at the close of the eighteenth century. David Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America*, 178-179.

²¹¹ James Marten, ed. *Children in Colonial America* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 6.

²¹² Carole Shammas, “Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective,” 143-144.

their public and private lives were defined by so much more than their domestic service. Beyond the walls of the private household, these girls took on a wide variety of roles, including commercial intermediaries, enterprising daughters and legitimate community members in society. They sought protection from the law and civil authorities when in need. They interacted with a wide variety of individuals within and beyond the communities they lived with. They continued to develop their relationships with their birth mothers and relatives even outside of the cities they worked. Through apprentice girls, colonial communities and urban societies were probably much more close knit than what we initially thought them to be.

In light of apprentice girls, the historiographical concepts of the *masculine public* and *feminine private* need to be altered. Mary Beth Norton notes that in the seventeenth century, women were defined more by their rank and vocation (as mothers, wives) rather than their gender. In the eighteenth century, gendered definitions of the private and public took hold in ways that completely removed elite women from the political and governmental affairs.²¹³ But Norton fails to realize that the early American public sphere remained highly integrated and connected to local social phenomena even during the American Revolution, the undisputed climax of political activity in early America. These local events and happenings most undoubtedly included young women and girls known as female apprentices, who in theory, as females and as servants, should be the ones who would most convincingly prove their invisibility in any sort of public sphere. Therefore, the concepts of the private and the public in eighteenth-century American historiography cannot be rigidly defined as completely exclusive spaces.

Also, the lives of apprentice girls allow us to rethink the way women and gender issues are studied in early American history. Gender and women's history in colonial America have been so far dominated by the study of wives and mothers.²¹⁴ While these are extremely important and valid

²¹³ Norton, *Separated by Their Sex*, 3-6.

²¹⁴ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Kathleen Brown and other prominent early American historians, have written entire books on the lives of married women in early America.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982), Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in*

topics, the study of female apprenticeship shows us that early American women's history cannot be solely defined by their existence during and after marriage and motherhood. Before women were mothers and wives, they were young girls. And many of these young girls were apprentices. Life before marriage, for many of these girls in colonial America, was one that was highly significant and deeply connected to the daily life of urban society. Whether traversing the streets, walking in the marketplaces and outside their houses, common married women, mothers as well as apprentice girls were visible and significant members of colonial society.

Also, the term "unfree labor" may not be the best way to describe apprenticeship. Although many of these apprentice girls were bound by indenture and could be traded between different masters, their experiences as apprentices cannot be solely defined by their bondage. Apprenticeship was certainly a form of labor, but it was also a gateway unto a much wider variety of occupations that girls could exploit once they ended their apprenticeship. This is due to the informal, personal nature of work in early America that potentially produced a wide range of diverse experiences depending on the individual girl and her community.

This thesis also calls for a change in focus from the elite to the commoner in colonial American history. The richest ladies of early Philadelphia and New York may have had little freedom in terms of the places they could go, what they could say and what they could do, but to assume that their experience was common with those of the female laboring classes would be a major overstep. This is particularly true when we consider that elite women were not the majority in urban areas.²¹⁵ If we take our focus away from the elite class of colonial America, we find a colonial America that recognized and placed individuals like apprentice girls at the very center of urban daily life.

Colonial Virginia (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

²¹⁵ Nearly every early American historian who studies urban centres notes the overwhelmingly large numbers in the laboring classes particularly in the port cities and urban townships. Carl Bridenbaugh is one such historian. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 235-236.

Also, if we incorporate apprentice girls into our imagination of colonial and revolutionary American society, we find that individuals in colonial America governed their society in ways that would probably seem illogical to the modern reader.²¹⁶ Eighteenth-century Mid-Atlantic America was a place that valued the active interests and participation of its younger members and thrived on the productive abilities and relationships that apprentice boys and girls brought as individuals. This was a society that did not separate business, commerce, government and entertainment into distinct categories. This was a society that took it upon themselves to ensure civil order and sometimes, bend the rules according to what they saw fit. This is why it is much more useful to think of the different facets of colonial society not through the popular themes we would use today but through the relationships that people had with one another. For human relationships, though sometimes unpredictable, haphazard and inefficient, made up the organizational basis upon which eighteenth-century America thrived.

Through the lives of apprentice girls, we see a colonial America that was deeply invested in the lives of its young people. Despite the fact that colonial society was neither sophisticated nor efficient in its organization, members of the public rallied together quite successfully to protect and defend the interests of those they valued. Apprentice girls won no battles in the American Revolution, gave no famous speeches and produced no monumental inventions, but they certainly stole the hearts of the colonial American people. It is for this very reason that they deserve to be called the daughters of colonial America.

²¹⁶ Historians who have written on early America have generally discussed labor in particular as an isolated category in their research. I argue that labor in early America needs to be discussed in conjunction with the kinds of relationships that laborers possessed in order to gain a more complete and accurate picture of early America. Samuel McKee, for example, wrote *Labor in Colonial New York* discussing slavery, indentured servitude and apprenticeship in completely isolated categories.

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A general description of all trades, : digested in alphabetical order: by which parents, guardians, and trustees, may, with greater ease and certainty, make choice of trades agreeable to the capacity, education, inclination, strength, and fortune of the youth under their care. Containing, I. How many Branches each is divided into. II. How far populous, or necessary. III. Which they require most, Learning, Art, or Labour. IV. What is commonly given with an Apprentice to each. V. Hours of Working, and other Customs usual among them. VI. Their Wages, and how much may be earned by, or is commonly given to, Journey-Men. VII. What Money is necessary to set up a Person in each. VIII. Which are incorporated Companies, with the Time of their Incorporation, Livery-Fine, Situation of their Hall, Court-Day, Description of their Arms, Mottos, &c. To which is prefixed, an essay on divinity, law, and physic. London, England: Printed for T. Waller, at the Crown and Mitre, opposite Fetter-lane, Fleet-street, 1747.

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Conductor generalis: or, The office, duty and authority of justices of the peace, high-sheriffs, under-sheriffs, goalers, coroners, constables, jury-men, and overseers of the poor. As also the office of clerks of assize, and of the peace, &c. Collected out of all the books hitherto written on those subjects, whether of common or statute-law. The whole alphabetically digested under the several titles, with a table directing to the ready finding out the proper matter under those titles. To which is added, a collection out of Sir Mathew Hales, concerning the descent of lands; with several choice maxims in law, and the office of mayors, &c. New-York: Printed and sold by J. Parker, at the new-printing-office, in Beaver-Street, 1749.

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