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CAPITALISM, COLONIAL EXPANSION, AND FORCED CHILD INDENTURE IN THE BRITISH ATLANTIC, 1618-1776

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in Transatlantic History at
The University of Texas at Arlington May, 2024

Arlington, Texas

Supervising Committee:
Stephanie Cole, Supervising Professor
David Narrett
Christopher C. Morris
David Baillargeon

ABSTRACT

Capitalism, Colonial Expansion, and Forced Child Indenture in the British Atlantic
1618-1776

Angela Kaye Austin, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at Arlington, 2024

Supervising Professor: Stephanie Cole

This dissertation examines colonial child servants from the British Isles between the years 1618-1776, illustrating how economic demands, colonial ambitions, and capitalistic drives combined with ethnic and class prejudices to perpetuate the indenture of children irrespective of individual or parental consent. An examination of legislative actions, legal enforcement, and governmental complicity reveals both direct and indirect government involvement in perpetuating involuntary child labor across the British Isles. In fact, the volume of this human trafficking required some level of awareness and support from legislators and officials at both the local and national levels. In some cases, officials removed children from impoverished families and utilized them for labor to promote overseas expansion. In others, the socioeconomic status of their families meant that policymakers and enforcers too often turned a blind eye to merchants' and planters' use of them for economic gain. This work also scrutinizes those who profited from child labor, revealing the networks of profit and power supporting these practices. Analysis of the varying impacts of ethnicity, class, religion, and political conflict over time and across regions provides insights into the broader implications of child labor practices in the context of

English, and later British, expansion. Despite the passing of legislation to prevent abuses in the servant trade, the lax enforcement of these laws, the minimal penalties for violators, and the disregard shown towards those deemed socially and politically undesirable suggest that these legislative efforts were often superficial, and that economic and political priorities ultimately outweighed concerns for the personal agency and liberties of child servants. Though stricter regulations effectively curbed the issue within England by the early eighteenth century, patterns observed in Scotland, Ireland, and the North American colonies imply that the kidnapping industry was not eradicated but merely displaced, shifting its operation to areas with less stringent regulations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have completed this dissertation without the support of an incredible circle of mentors, family, colleagues, and words cannot express my gratitude and appreciation. My supervising professor Stephanie Cole's guidance, patience, and expertise were invaluable to me throughout this process. She provided not only encouragement and constructive criticism, but also helped me navigate through numerous challenges and moments of self-doubt. I am deeply thankful for her help and support. I am also extremely grateful to the other members of my dissertation committee, David Narrett, Christopher Morris, and David Baillargeon, for taking the time to read through numerous drafts, provide insightful feedback, and identify areas where my work could be stronger. Their excellent suggestions have greatly enhanced this dissertation, and the encouragement they provided has helped to motivate and inspire me through this journey.

My advisor, Paul Conrad, was there for me during many emergencies and worked diligently to iron out problems. He, Dr. Cole, and COLA Assistant Dean Les Ridingin were instrumental in helping me to secure funding to complete my studies. The UTA History Department, College of Liberal Arts, and Office of Graduate Studies were incredibly generous, providing scholarships, fellowships, and travel grants that were crucial in helping me pursue my academic dreams, and I am humbly grateful.

Raluca Oprean, my research assistant in London, deserves special thanks. Her help was crucial in accessing essential resources and data overseas, so that I did not have to make as many trips to archives in Britain and Ireland. Without her assistance, the scope of this work would have been much narrower.

Many wonderful archivists at a variety of locations not only provided expert guidance and assistance, but also made my visits to their institutions enjoyable and productive. I want to particularly thank Brianne Barrett, Elizabeth Pope, Laura Haskell, and Gretta Cox-Gorton at the American Antiquarian Society, as well as the staff at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston, who were extremely welcoming and helpful. The archivists and librarians at the Parliamentary Archives, the British Library, the London Metropolitan Archives, the Edinburgh City Archives, and the National Library of Scotland provided expert knowledge and assistance, often helping me find valuable sources that I would have missed on my own. David Luck at the Metropolitan Museum of the Mind, Mary Offenback at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Molly Stillman and Steve Tuttle at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Benjamin Steck at the Library of Virginia, and Roger Hull at the Liverpool Record Office provided outstanding digital assistance. All of you helped make this dissertation possible.

Lastly, I thank my friends and family. My parents' financial and emotional support, along with their unshakeable faith in me and in my work sustained me through the tough times and kept me from giving up. I would never have been able to get to this point without them. To the rest of my family - my brother Jason Austin, sister Amanda Fields, and their families, and my aunt and uncle Mike and Nancy Brockett – thank you for your love, encouragement, and belief in me. My friend Karen Beasley and my mother Barbara Austin spent many nights listening to me read sections of my dissertation and offered much-appreciated feedback and a fresh perspective. Thank you also to the countless friends who supported and encouraged me, both those at UTA and the many outside friends who were always there to listen to the ups and downs of my dissertation adventure. Your friendship and support have been invaluable through this process.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSP – Calendar of State Papers

CSPC - Calendar of State Papers, Colonial

HMSO – Her Majesty's Stationery Office

LMA – London Metropolitan Archives

MJ/SR – Middlesex Justices Session Rolls

MR/E – Middlesex Records, Plantation Work Agreements

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INTRODUCTION

In 1619, Elizabeth Abbott was taken from London as one of the first group of poor children shipped by the Virginia Company to the colony of Virginia to serve as laborers.[1] A field servant who miraculously managed to survive the first five years of her indenture while ninety-five percent of children from the first two groups perished, Elizabeth could not have been more than sixteen years old when she began the journey. Fellow servants reported that the spirited girl "often tymes rann away," and as a result endured several brutal beatings, ultimately dying tragically at the hands of her master in 1624.[2]

James Revel was born near the bustling area of Temple Bar in London around 1652. An only child who was doted on by his parents, he was given a good education, and at the age of thirteen his father found a position for him as an apprentice to a tin merchant, a trade which would have provided him with a stable and respectable living. Though James got along well with his master, he soon fell "into wicked company" with a gang of delinquent young boys prone to robbing houses.[3] Despite acknowledging that he himself "did for nothing lack," Revel found the

[1] See Chapter 1 for a more complete description of the Virginia Company's transportation of several groups of children from London.
[2] H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 1622-1632, with Notes and Excerpts from Original Council and General Court Records, Now Lost* (Richmond, Va: Colonial Press, Everett Waddey Co., 1924) 22-24; General Court, "The Deaths of Elizabeth Abbott and Elias Hinton (1624)," Encyclopedia Virginia, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/the-deaths-of-elizabeth-abbott-and-elias-hinton-1624/; Edmund S. Morgan, "The First American Boom: Virginia 1618 to 1630," *William and Mary Quarterly* 28:2 (1971) 169-198.
[3] James Revel, *The Poor Unhappy Transported Felon's Sorrowful Account. Of His Fourteen Years Transportation at Virginia in America. In Six Parts. By James Revel, the Unhappy Sufferer. ... Concluding with a Word of Advice to All Young Men* (London: printed and sold in

lure of this new criminal lifestyle irresistible. Inevitably, the gang's luck ran out and their misadventures led to the arrest of one of the youths, who turned state's evidence and named the others. Three of the group were hanged, and the other two were transported to Virginia, including Revel, who was given a fourteen-year term of indenture.[4]

Ten-year-old John Jamieson disappeared in the spring of 1741 from Oldmeldrum, Scotland, a village approximately twelve miles from Aberdeen. When his father confronted the merchant responsible for his son's abduction, the merchant replied that even if the he did have John, there was nothing his father could do about it.[5] Though Mr. Jamieson was able to discover his son's location, he was unable to retrieve him, and watched him being driven away by a man with a horsewhip, along with around sixty other boys.[6] Despite intense efforts by his father to

---

Stonecutter Street, Fleet Market, 1780) available at Gale Eighteenth Century Collections Online, https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.uta.edu, n. Some sites list the date as 1680, which seems more likely; also see John Melville Jennings, "The Poor Unhappy Transported Felon's Sorrowful Account of His Fourteen Years Transportation at Virginia in America," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 56:2 (Apr. 1948) 180-194, n. This has a few more notes on Revel's life and the probable dates of his indenture; for a more thorough discussion of Revel's life, see Tamia K. Haygood, "Slavery White: A Study of Runaway Servants in Eighteenth-Century Virginia" MA Diss (Appalachian State University, August, 2014).

[4] Ibid. n. Revel's sentence of transportation rather than execution was most likely due to his young age and lack of prior offenses. The older boys may have been repeat offenders, and thus considered incorrigible.

[5] CS29/1759/2/10, *Pursuer's Proof* , 22, NAS; Peter Williamson and Alexander Cushnie, *State of the Process: Poor Peter Williamson, against Alexander Cushnie, and Others*, (Oxford: Bodlean Library, 1761) 21; Gavin Turreff, *Antiquarian Gleanings from Aberdeenshire Records*, (Aberdeen: J. Murray, 1871) 233; Angela Austin, "Forgotten Children: Scotland's Colonial Child Servants, 1680-1760," MPhil Diss (University of Glasgow, 2017) 45-46.

[6] Ibid; Peter Williamson, William Fordyce, and Walter Cochran, *Memorial for Peter Williamson Merchant in Edinburgh, Pursuer; against William Fordyce of Aquhorties, Walter Cochran of Dumbreck, Town-Clerk-Depute of Aberdeen, Alexander Mitchell of Colpna, Merchant in Aberdeen, Patrick Barron of Woodside, Gilbert Gerrard, David Morris Advocates in Aberdeen, and the Now Deceased Charles Forbes of Shiels, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeen; and Also the Now Deceased James Petrie, Advocate in Aberdeen, Defenders* (Oxford: Bodlean Library, 2010, originally published in Edinburgh, 1765) 48.

free him, John Jamieson was shipped to colonial Maryland and disappeared from historical records.[7]

In 2002, the remains of a young European servant boy from the 1600s were discovered folded up in a makeshift grave in a trash cellar on a tobacco plantation in Maryland. The plantation had been owned by planter William Neale.[8] The boy, estimated to have been between fourteen and sixteen years old at the time of his death, suffered from a range of ailments commonplace among indentured servants during the colonial era. He had healed fractures, herniated disks and other spinal injuries, tuberculosis, and abscessed teeth - testaments to the grueling labor, poor living conditions, and inadequate medical care he had endured in his short life. His arm, most likely thrown up to ward off the blows of a beating, had been freshly broken in two places immediately before his death. Discovered under a pile of garbage estimated to date from the 1660s, he had literally been dumped with the trash.[9]

These vignettes represent the various ways in which children were bound to service in the colonies in North America and the Caribbean, usually against their will. Often, they were a part of state-orchestrated shipments of poverty-stricken children. Others were transported as prisoners, and many were the victims of coercion or abduction. All four stories speak to the fact that those defined as minors in their own era worked within the colonial economy. Though the servant whose bones were discovered in Maryland may have migrated by his own choice, it is

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, “Behind the Scenes,” (n. d.), https://naturalhistory.si.edu/sites/default/files/media/file/wibbehindthescenesfinal.pdf, 2.
[9] Andrea F. Siegel, “Remains of Colonial Teen Pose a ‘History Mystery,’” *Baltimore Sun*, 12 July, 2004, https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2004-07-12-0407120091-story.html; Smithsonian, "Behind the Scenes"; Joseph Caputo, “Solving a 17th-Century Crime,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, (March, 2009), https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/solving-a-17th-century-crime-50842762/.

also very likely that he was brought to the colonies as an involuntary laborer, like Elizabeth Abbott, James Revel, and John Jamieson.

In the annals of colonial history, the stories of young servants like these are often relegated to the footnotes, their experiences overshadowed by grander narratives of exploration and settlement which have often glorified the achievements of colonization while downplaying the oppressive practices that enabled them. These juveniles were bound into servitude not only to fulfill the needs of colonial expansion and satisfy ambitious merchants' quest for profit, but also because of the way authorities saw them – as members of a dangerous class of impoverished subjects, or the children of those who were ethnically different or politically threatening. Although some had the good fortune to be sold to masters who treated them well, most faced lives filled with poverty, illness, and abuse. The vast majority did not survive the terms of their indenture. Bringing these stories out of the archives and into the main text of historical discourse allows us to deepen our understanding of the social, economic, and political dynamics that shaped the transatlantic world, and the ethical controversies which characterized British colonial expansion.

This dissertation is not a broad study of indentured servitude. Over the last four decades, a wide range of historians and economists have covered the topic of adult indentured servants from England and their impact upon the colonial workforce.[10] This will not, therefore, be a

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[10] For example, Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean Burrell Russo, *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); David W. Galenson, "The Market Evaluation of Human Capital: The Case of Indentured Servitude," *Journal of Political Economy* 89:3 (1981): 446–67; David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge

quantitative exploration which adds to or argues with the substantial body of existing literature dealing with overall statistics on indentured servants. My work makes no claim that children formed the bulk of indentured labor. This is also not an analysis of the motivations of voluntary indentured servants or the patterns of their migration, either within Britain or across the British Atlantic. Furthermore, this study does not equate the conditions of indentured servants with those of enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples. While it stresses the complicity of the English state in the involuntary labor of children, it does not suggest that these actions were part of a deliberate, malevolent governmental conspiracy to harm these children or their families.

Instead, this study will reveal that economic demands, colonial ambitions, and capitalistic impulses combined with ethnic and class prejudices to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation of children from the British Isles between 1618 and 1776. It illustrates that the English government harnessed existing social and political tensions to meet demands for colonial labor within a developing capitalist economy, and thereby further colonial expansion. While traditional historiography has often skirted the edges of the state's role in the orchestration and regulation of forced child labor, this dissertation will reveal that individuals and institutions of what would soon be identified as the English state were complicit not just indirectly, but directly, by the laws

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University Press, 1984); Farley Grubb, "The Market for Indentured Immigrants: Evidence on the Efficiency of Forward-Labor Contracting in Philadelphia, 1745-1773," *Journal of Economic History* 45:4 (December 1985): 855-868; Colin A. Palmer, *The Worlds of Unfree Labour: From Indentured Servitude to Slavery* (Aldershot: Ashgate, Variorum, 1998); Sharon V. Salinger, *"To Serve Well and Faithfully": Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Marianne Sophia Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Russell R. Menard, "Plantation Empire: How Sugar and Tobacco Planters Built Their Industries and Raised an Empire," *Agricultural History* 81:3 (Summer, 2007): 309–332; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2014); and many others.

it enacted, the laws it failed to pass, and the selective enforcement of existing laws. It will show that the sheer volume of the traffic in involuntary child labor, in fact, required some level of state awareness and support.

In addition, this dissertation explores the ways in which these children served as a form of social control. In some cases, officials removed the children of impoverished families and utilized them for colonial labor to promote overseas expansion. In others, the socioeconomic status of their families meant that policymakers too often turned a blind eye to merchants' and planters' use of them for economic gain. The view of most government officials and other upper-class members of English society was that their non-English neighbors, along with the poorer classes in England, were morally and culturally inferior and lacked the capacity for self-improvement without close supervision and harsh discipline.[11] Authorities thought that the removal of children from these communities would serve to reduce the population burden as well as the strain on local resources and social welfare systems, actions that ultimately served to strengthen the existing social hierarchy. By separating children from their families and communities, the bonds of kinship and local support networks were severed, making them more reliant on their employers and less likely to challenge existing power structures as they grew to adulthood. Therefore, it is my contention that this social dislocation not only served to curb the potential for future dissent but also to cultivate a workforce conditioned for compliance. By

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[11] See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Hilary M. Beckles, "A 'Riotous and Unruly Lot': Irish Indentured Servants and Freemen in the English West Indies, 1644-1713," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47:4 (October 1990); Catherine Lynette Innes, *The Devil's Own Mirror: The Irishman and the African in Modern Literature* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1990); Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); A. L. Beier, "Vagrants and the Social Order in Elizabethan England," *Past and Present* Vol. 64, No.1 (1974) 3–29.

harnessing children from marginalized populations as economic assets, the British empire was able to leverage their labor to fuel its expansion, thus sacrificing the lives of countless children to colonial expansion.

What This Study Contributes

While many scholars have examined colonialism and its relationship to forced labor, the bulk of attention has remained on the slave trade and racial slavery.[12] Studies focusing on other types of bound labor, including indentured servants, have touched on or overlooked entirely the role and experience of children in that workforce.[13] Moreover, while benefactors of the slave

[12] See Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Timothy Chibuike Anyanwu and Kelechi Johnmary Ani, "Slavery And Colonialism: The Roots of Postcolonial Conflicts in Africa," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 24:1 (2020): 132–41; Philip D. Curtin, "The Black Experience of Colonialism and Imperialism," *Daedalus* 103:2 (1974): 17–29; Daragh Grant, "'Civilizing' the Colonial Subject: The Co-Evolution of State and Slavery in South Carolina, 1670-1739," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57:3 (2015): 606–36; Susan B. Iwanisziw, "Behn's Novel Investment in 'Oroonoko': Kingship, Slavery and Tobacco in English Colonialism," *South Atlantic Review* 63:2 (1998): 75–98; Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Sydney, Cambridge University Press, 1982); Sidney W. Mintz and J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Racism : Essays* (New York: Norton, 1975); Stephanie E. Smallwood, "Reflections on Settler Colonialism, the Hemispheric Americas, and Chattel Slavery," *William and Mary Quarterly* 76:3 (2019): 407; Jelmer Vos, "Work in Times of Slavery, Colonialism, and Civil War: Labor Relations in Angola from 1800 to 2000," *History in Africa* 41 (2014): 363–85; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
[13] See Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America - The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012); James Curtis Ballagh, *White Servitude in the Colony of Virginia: A Study of the System in Indentured Labor in the American Colonies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1895); Hilary M. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); David W. Galenson, "British Servants and the Colonial Indenture System in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Southern History* 44:1 (February 1978): 41–66; David W. Galenson, "The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas: An Economic Analysis," *Journal of Economic History* 44:1 (1984): 1–26; David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An*

trade have been scrutinized to a significant extent, those who profited from the labor of indentured children have never previously been examined in depth.[14] This dissertation seeks to bridge this gap by shedding light on the networks of profit and power that underpinned the trade in colonial child servants.

To date, only one publication, Kristen McCabe Lashua's *Children at the Birth of Empire: British Law, Liberty, and the Global Migration of Destitute Children, c. 1607-1760* has considered how age alongside gender, class, and ethnicity shaped what happened to children forced into service in the British empire.[15] My work extends the analysis by incorporating the

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Economic Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Cheesman Abiah Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania: Indentured and Redemption Labor in Colony and Commonwealth* (Philadelphia: J.J. McVey, 1926); Theo D. Jervey, "The White Indented Servants of South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 12:4 (October 1911): 163–71; Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965); Warren B. Smith, *White Servitude in Colonial South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1961); Marianne Sophia Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); and many others.

[14] Nick Anderson, Lauren Lumpkin, and Susan Svrluga, "Johns Hopkins, Benefactor of Namesake Hospital and University, Was an Enslaver," Gale Onefile, December 9, 2020, https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/ps/i.do?p=ITBC&u=txshracd2597&id=GALE|A644368187&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon; Madge Dresser, "Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 64 (2007): 162–99; President and Fellows of Harvard College, "Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery," Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, 2024, https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/homepage; Brian MacQuarrie and Globe Staff, "Peter Faneuil: Boston Benefactor, Merchant, Slave Trader," *Boston Globe*, BostonGlobe.com, September 12, 2023, https://apps.bostonglobe.com/metro/graphics/2023/09/faneuil-benefactor-boston-landmark-merchant-slave-trader/; Stephen Smith and Kate Ellis, "Shackled Legacy: History Shows Slavery Helped Build Many U.S. Colleges and Universities," APM Reports, September 4, 2017, https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2017/09/04/shackled-legacy; Robert Paul Thomas and Richard Nelson Bean, "The Fishers of Men: The Profits of the Slave Trade," *Journal of Economic History* 34:4 (1974): 885–914.

[15] Kristen McCabe Lashua, *Children At the Birth of Empire: British Law, Liberty, and the Global Migration of Destitute Children, c. 1607-1760* (New York: Routledge, 2023).

political context as well, considering how this additional dimension helped to shape which children were forced into service in the British empire. In addition, this dissertation provides an alternate interpretation to that put forward by Lashua regarding the role of the state in forced child indenture. I certainly agree that age was "the fourth factor that defined a person's agency both at home and abroad," that seventeenth-century views of childhood did not manifest as a widespread indifference towards children, and that children's migration should be studied differently than adult migration, due to complex legal and cultural understandings of childhood.[16]

However, a central point of Lashua's work is that "children mattered," across all levels of society.[17] I argue that, by and large, the priorities of English officials lay more in managing poverty and the numerous social issues it caused than in genuinely addressing the lives of the impoverished. Workhouses and pauper apprenticeships, for example, were more about economic utility than genuine concern for the welfare of poor children. Furthermore, Lashua's central argument that developing ethics regarding the personal liberty and agency of children drove policy changes in England falls apart in the face of the actual impact (or lack thereof) of these laws. Despite a continual stream of legislation which was passed on the issue of forced child indenture, the lax enforcement of these laws, the minimal penalties for violators, and the disregard shown towards children deemed socially and politically undesirable suggest that these legislative efforts were often superficial, and that economic and political priorities ultimately outweighed concerns for the personal agency and liberty of child servants. To the extent that developing ideals of the liberties of Englishmen did affect the trade in child servants, these concerns centered more around parental rights than those of the children themselves. This

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[16] Ibid, 2-5
[17] Ibid, i, 3.

perspective challenges the notion that there was a significant shift towards valuing children's personal liberty during this period. While public protests against kidnapping in England did indeed lead to the implementation of strict regulations on indentured servitude, effectively curbing the issue within England by the early eighteenth century, patterns observed in Scotland, Ireland, and the North American colonies imply that the kidnapping industry was not eradicated but merely displaced, shifting its operations from England to areas with less stringent regulatory environments. Such a shift belies the claim that childhood itself was regarded as having any inherent value.

Methodology

Very often, historical narratives categorize all servants from Great Britain as "English" or "from England."[18] In using a comparative approach to examine child servitude across England, Ireland, and Scotland, this dissertation reveals that issues of ethnicity, class, religion, and political conflict surrounding the Union of Parliaments influenced the forced labor of children, affecting both the children transported by the government and those abducted by opportunistic merchants seeking to profit in transatlantic trade. Comparing the numbers and circumstances of child servants across different regions of the British Isles and different phases of time within those regions can serve to illuminate the ways in which various economic, social, and cultural factors shaped the trade in child servants. In addition, comparing the migration patterns of child servants over different decades, against the backdrop of contemporary social attitudes, economic

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[18] Anthony S. Parent, Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660 – 1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) 86; Abigail Leslie Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 20; David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 95.

conditions, and legal frameworks concerning child labor and welfare can shed light on the direct impact of these varied circumstances on the indentured servant trade and reveal patterns in migration across different areas.

For the purposes of this study, the focus is on children aged seventeen and under. This choice has more to do with highlighting for twenty-first century readers the willingness to exploit children and youths as workers than aligning with seventeenth-century lawmakers, whose views on adulthood varied. However, adulthood was generally considered to begin later than age seventeen. Indeed, apprenticeship and indenture laws consistently mandated that minors serve until their early twenties. For example, Elizabethan Poor Laws required minors in pauper apprenticeships to serve until the age of twenty-four for boys and twenty-one for girls, unless the girls married earlier.[19] These same terms were reflected in the contracts of the first group of children shipped from London by the Virginia Company in 1619.[20] The second group of children sent the following year were required to work until the age of twenty-one.[21] Parliamentary legislation passed in the 1680s stipulated that servants under twenty-one must have the consent of a parent or guardian before signing indenture contracts.[22] In the colonies, males were

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[19] Parliament of England, "Act for the Relief of the Poor, 1601," *Reginae Elizabeth*, Anno 43, Chapter 2; Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531 – 1782* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1990).
[20] Robert C. Johnson, "The Transportation of Vagrant Children from London to Virginia, 1618 – 1622," in *Early Stuart Studies*, ed. Howard Stuart Reinmuth. (Minneapolis: Oxford University Press, 1970) 139.
[21] Susan M. Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1906) 1:293; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant children," 141-143; Barry M. Coldrey, "'...A Place to Which Idle Vagrants May Be Sent.' The First Phase of Child Migration During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Children & Society,* 13:1 (February 1999) 37.
[22] Order in Council 846, 1862-12-13 at Whitehall, in J. W. Fortescue, *CSPC, America and West Indies, 1681-1685* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898); Privy Council of England and Wales, *At the Court at Whitehall, This 26th Day of March 1686. Present, the Kings Most Excellent Majesty ... : Whereas It Has Been Represented to His Majesty, That by Reason of the*

generally required to work until the age of twenty-one, and females until the age of twenty or until marriage.[23]

The foundation of this analysis is built on a diverse range of sources, which I have compiled using local and family histories, birth records, wills, contemporary letters, colonial-era newspapers from both sides of the Atlantic, biographies, autobiographies, and personal ledgers and diaries. Equally important are registrations of indentured servants, records of children transported by the Virginia Company, and colonial court records involving child servants arriving without indentures. I have searched a wide range of British, Irish, and colonial governmental records, including the various Navigation Acts and ordinances regarding transportation of servants, as well as shipping permits, records of ship voyages to the colonies, burgh records, town records, port records, and government reports. I have also analyzed minutes of colonial council proceedings and other government archives, along with court cases in Scotland, England, Ireland, and the colonies regarding kidnapping and illicit trade. Complementing these are political essays from the era being studied, which offer contemporary perspectives and context. Whereas historians have traditionally confined their scope of analysis to shipping records, servant registries, or court cases within a single city, I have found that examining data across a broad array of sources can be particularly helpful in filling in some of the gaps in the historical record, particularly when evidence is sparse or incomplete.

Because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence regarding child servants in Britain, Ireland, and the colonies, a comprehensive and uniform investigation across all regions of the

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Frequent Abuses of a Lewd Sort of People, Called Spirits, in Seducing Many of His Majesties Subjects to Go on Shipboard, Where They Have Been Seized, and Carried by Force to His Majesties Plantations in America ..., (Westminster: W. Bridgeman, 1686)..

[23] Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America*, (New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1946) 391.

British Atlantic during all time periods is not feasible. For example, early seventeenth century records are most complete for children sent from London to Virginia, particularly those shipped by the Virginia Company. Although Maryland was founded in 1632, records of child servants sent to this colony do not appear until the middle of the seventeenth century. For other colonies such as Massachusetts, Barbados, and Bermuda, ship logs exist showing that child servants were transported to these locales during the early seventeenth century, but little further information can be found. During the height of involuntary child labor in the second half of the seventeenth century, records for the Chesapeake and Middle colonies are some of the richest and most readily accessible. Similarly, in examining forced child labor in Scotland, evidence can be found pertaining to children throughout the country, but the bulk of extant records date to the 1690s and 1740s, with the records of children taken from Aberdeen being the most accessible.

Given these archival limitations, this research focuses on patterns suggested by the available evidence. While it is not possible to meticulously document the numbers of children arriving in each colony as involuntary laborers, the aggregated data allows us to identify overarching trends and affirm that the exploitation of minors as forced labor in the colonies was a widespread practice.

A word must be said as to why this dissertation contains no section on Wales. The Laws in Wales Acts of 1535 and 1542 had effectively annexed Wales to England, unifying the two under a single legal system and administrative government.[24] Therefore, during the period under

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[24] King Henry VIII, *Laws in Wales Act 1535* (Philadelphia: Dalcassian Publishing Company, 2019); L. L. C. Books, ed., *1543 in Law: Laws in Wales Acts 1535-1542, Treason Act 1543, Treaty of Greenwich, Act for the Advancement of True Religion, Third Succession Act* (Memphis: General Books LLC, 2010); Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533-1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 5-6.

study, Wales was legally and politically integrated with England. As a result, many historical records from Wales are likely to be subsumed under broader English data, making it challenging to distinguish specifically Welsh cases of child servitude. Wesley Frank Craven wrote in 1971, "Firm evidence on the scale of migration from Wales is extraordinarily difficult to find."[25] Even more telling is the fact that, in tracing colonial child servants appearing before courts in Virginia and Maryland, Richard Hayes Phillips has been able to trace none back to Wales.[26] This does not mean that no children from Wales were sent to the colonies. In fact, some do show up. What it means is that the scarcity of data specifically on Welsh child migrants severely limits the depth and reliability of any analysis focusing on Wales. Given the legal and administrative unification of England and Wales, many servants from Wales may have been recorded simply as being from England in the majority of official documents and records.

Chapter Organization

The argument that follows is organized by geographical and temporal context. This organization reveals the ever-present role of the state, but also captures how shifting political alliances and demands affected the trade in bound child labor. Chapter One consists of a brief overview of the historiography. Chapter Two explores England's transportation of impoverished children in the early seventeenth century. This chapter offers an in-depth exploration of the

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[25] Wesley Frank Craven, *White, Red, and Black: The Seventeenth-Century Virginian* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1971) 2; See also Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*; Mildred Campbell, "Social Origins of Some Early Americans," in Smith, *Seventeenth-Century America,* 78.
[26] Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children of Colonial Maryland and Virginia: Birth and Shipping Records* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2015); Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children in Colonial America: Supplement to the Trilogy* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc, 2021).

mechanisms and motivations behind this government-facilitated movement, setting the stage for a broader understanding of the era's child transportation policies. In Chapter Three, the focus shifts to mid-seventeenth century England, where I examine the transportation of political prisoners and convicts alongside the alarming rise of child kidnapping. This chapter provides a critical analysis of the social and political forces in both England and the colonies which allowed and even encouraged these practices. Chapter Four looks at the situation in Ireland, with a particular emphasis on the period of Oliver Cromwell's reign. This chapter scrutinizes the political history and policies that led to the transportation of Irish children, as well as their relative absence in historical records. Chapter Five provides a detailed examination of Scotland, highlighting the increase in kidnapping there during the eighteenth century. This chapter aims to understand the reasons behind this geographical and strategic shift, analyzing the implication of this transition northward from England following the Union of Parliaments in 1707.

The experiences of children like Elizabeth Abbott, James Revel, John Jamieson, and the nameless servant boy in Maryland serve to humanize the broader historical narrative, bridging a connection to a past that might otherwise feel distant and abstract. Yet, as we delve deeper into this exploration, it becomes increasingly clear that the lives of these children and others like them unfolded within a broader landscape shaped by the attitudes, interests, and policies of the elites. Therefore, the primary objective of this dissertation lies in dissecting and understanding the broader context created by those in power. It is within this framework that the experiences of the individual children involved gain their full historical significance, providing a window into a past where childhood innocence was not a universal right, but a privilege out of reach for many.

CHAPTER 1

A Brief Review of the Literature

Bound Labor and Capitalism

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, England's power and presence in the Atlantic world was relatively minor, paling in comparison to that of Spain, which had already established itself as a dominant force in the Atlantic with a thriving colonial empire.[27] However, by the mid-eighteenth century, the landscape of colonial power had dramatically shifted, and England had expanded its reach and influence, establishing an array of colonies that rivaled even those of Spain in size and significance.[28] By 1760, the British Atlantic encompassed twenty-three colonies with a combined population of nearly two million people, marking England as a formidable colonial power.[29]

The demand for cheap and compliant labor was fundamental to this colonial expansion. During the initial phases of Atlantic colonization, mercantilists prioritized the rapid accumulation of national capital and the creation of New World spheres of power to bolster political supremacy through wealth accumulation.[30] This imperative persisted throughout the seventeenth century as the economic framework evolved toward a more distinctly capitalistic system emphasizing the swift production of goods to advance the interests of individual colonial

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[27] See Trevor Burnard, "The British Atlantic," in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: New York, 2009) 111-135.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid, 112.
[30] Hilary M. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 13.

entrepreneurs. Within both systems, despite their lower capacity for labor, child servants were valued for their manageability, trainability, and lower propensity for rebellion compared to adults.

While chattel slavery is often positioned at the center of discussions on colonial economic development, indentured servitude similarly contributed to and was shaped by the developing capitalist economy. Though the volume was different, both forms of labor were indispensable to the economic development of the British Atlantic Empire. Just as Secretary of Virginia, John Prory, stated in 1619 that the colony's "principle wealth consisteth in servants," Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman report that the capital stored in slaves in the nineteenth century "exceeded the combined value of all the railroads and factories in the U.S."[31] While the long-term implications were dramatically less enduring for white servants compared to the deep-seated legacy of racial slavery, the capital and labor extracted from both slaves and servants were vital in establishing and sustaining colonial economies.

Furthermore, the trade in servants catalyzed a form of capitalistic entrepreneurship that frequently overshadowed moral considerations. The observation of Beckert and Rockman that the African slave trade "witnessed some of the crassest entrepreneurship anywhere in the nineteenth century" underlines the extent to which economic interests overrode ethical standards, a trend that was already apparent two centuries earlier in the trade of indentured servants. [32] Like slave owners who exploited the bodies of enslaved individuals as collateral for loans or financed

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[31] John Prory, quoted in Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) 10; Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) 1.

[32] Beckert and Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism*, 14.

them through mortgages, planters in the Caribbean colonies frequently bought, sold, gambled on, and mortgaged their indentured servants, particularly in the Caribbean colonies.[33]

Traditional Marxist theories separated bound labor and capitalism into antithetical modes of production, and Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations portrayed capitalism as a naturally occurring system of market organization.[34] Indeed, through the first half of the twentieth century, historians wrestled with the question of whether slavery was even rational and profitable.[35] In the 1970s and 1980s, the work of historians such as Stanley Engerman, Robert Fogel, and Douglass North argued that not only was slavery profitable, but it was responsible for the economic growth of the antebellum South and vital to the United States economy.[36]

Newer interpretations of the history of capitalism go further, arguing that capitalism's defining characteristic was the commodification of labor, as seen in chattel slavery and indentured servitude.[37] Additionally, they insist that states, economic markets, politics, and business are intertwined, acting upon one another to form the "political economy of capitalism," thus they must all be studied together.[38] This dissertation aligns with this modern perspective, maintaining that forced child indenture in the British Isles cannot be understood without

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[33] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 71; Beckert and Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism*, 17.
[34] See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of Karl Marx: Analysis and Application* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Adam Smith and C. J. Bullock, *The Wealth of Nations*, New ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004); Sven Beckert, "History of American Capitalism," in Eric Foner, Lisa McGirr, *American History Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).
[35] Beckert, "History of American Capitalism," 316.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Beckert and Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism*.
[38] Beckert, "History of American Capitalism," 319; See also Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

considering how national objectives, economic impulses, and political and social tensions worked together to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation of children in service of colonialism.

Historiography on Indentured Servitude

Prior to the late twentieth century, scholarly works on indentured servitude mainly presented indentured servitude through the lens of American exceptionalism. The stereotype was that of a poor young person who saw the opportunity to improve his or her life, signed an indenture contract, and bravely sailed to the New World, where those who were hardy enough to survive went on to become the backbone of the great nation of America.[39]

In the 1970s and 1980s, economic historians such as Henry Gemery, Farley Grubb, and David Galenson began to take a closer look at governmental policies towards indenture on both sides of the Atlantic and the impact of the servant trade on economic markets. Gemery has provided several numerical and economic analyses of servants sailing from various English ports, Grubb has focused on colonial labor markets, and David Galenson has written extensively on servants in the colonies of Maryland and Virginia between 1654 and 1776.[40] While all of

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[39] See Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *The American People: A History* (C. Scribner's Sons, 1926); Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America. 1607-1776* (Gloucester: Smith, 1965).

[40] See Henry A. Gemery, "Markets for Migrants: English Indentured Servitude and Emigration in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in Emmer, P. C., ed., *Colonialism and Migration; Indentured Labour Before and After Slavery* (Boston, 1986) 33–54; Henry A. Gemery, "Emigration from the British Isles to the New World, 1630-1700: Inferences from Colonial Populations," *Research in Economic History*, Vol. 5 (1980) 179-231; David W. Galenson, "The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas: An Economic Analysis," Journal of Economic History, 44:1 (1984) 1-26; David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: an Economic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); David W. Galenson, "The Market Evaluation of Human Capital: The Case of Indentured Servitude," *Journal of Political Economy* 89:3 (1981) 446-467; Farley Grubb, "Colonial Labor Markets and the Length of Indenture: Further Evidence," *Explorations in Economic History* 24:1 (1987): 101–6; Farley Grubb and Tony Stitt, "The Liverpool Emigrant Servant Trade and the Transition to Slave Labor

them offer quantitative analysis and demographical research on adult English servants, Galenson further argues that indentured servants were active and willing participants in the labor market, negotiating for shorter and more lucrative contracts. More recently, Alison Games and Russell Menard have provided several excellent studies which attempt to quantify indentured servant migration and its economic impact.[41] These are primarily concerned with adult servants, though Games has noted that servants to Bermuda in 1635 were distinguished by their youth. She reports that the average age of Bermudan servants was twelve and a half, while the majority of children ages five to fourteen on the island were indentured.[42]

By the 1980s, scholars had increasingly begun to turn away from the American exceptionalist narrative. Sharon Salinger's work examines indentured servitude in Philadelphia and its evolution from a paternalistic, apprenticeship-like process to a more impersonal, profit-based arrangement. While the majority of literature on indentured servitude deals primarily with the seventeenth century, which was dominated by workers from England, Salinger examines the large numbers of servants brought to Philadelphia in the eighteenth century, in an era when English servitude waned and servant migration from Scotland, Ireland, and Germany increased. In *To Serve Well and Faithfully*: *Labor and Indentured Servitude in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (1987), she explains that, while in the seventeenth century the competition of bound labor with

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in the Chesapeake, 1697-1707: Market Adjustments to War," *Explorations in Economic History* 31:3 (July 1, 1994): 376–405; Grubb, "The Market for Indenture Immigrants."

[41] Russell R. Menard, "From Servants to Slaves: The Transformations of the Chesapeake Labour System," *Southern Studies* 16 (1977): 355–90; Russell R. Menard, "Plantation Empire: How Sugar and Tobacco Planters Built Their Industries and Raised an Empire," *Agricultural History* 81:3 (Summer 2007): 309–32; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (UNC Press Books, 2014); Russell R. Menard, ""British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," in Carr, Morgan, and Russo, *Colonial Chesapeake Society,* 99-132; Games, *Origins of the English Atlantic World*; Games, *Web of Empire*.

[42] Games, *Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 48.

Philadelphia's free labor force served to depress wages and ensured an affordable workforce for employers, by the next century transportation had become increasingly commercialized and targeted towards maximizing profits, leading these investors to transport larger groups of servants and sign them to longer terms of indenture.[43] By 1775, the market had become saturated and economic growth had slowed, causing rates of indentured servitude to decline sharply, and ultimately, Salinger finds, free labor squeezed indentured labor out.[44]

The controversial study *Freedom Bound* by Christopher Tomlins argues that indentured servitude was not as important a part of colonial society as historians have depicted.[45] Tomlins notes that despite the high numbers of indentured servants arriving in the Chesapeake, they seldom made up more than a quarter of the settled European population after the 1620s and only about 5 percent by the mid-seventeenth century.[46] Tomlins further reveals that the legal frameworks defining suitable ages for apprenticeship in the England - ten to eighteen - and the pressures placed on young people to enter these arrangements were designed to address the "many problems raised by disorderly youth."[47] Since over half the North American colonial population in the earliest years of settlement was under twenty-five, it seems logical to conclude that colonial authorities viewed indenture in much the same way.[48]

John Wareing is perhaps the foremost authority on indentured servants. His most recent work, a comprehensive volume entitled*, Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from*

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[43] Sharon V. Salinger, *"To Serve Well and Faithfully": Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 172-83.
[44] Salinger, *"To Serve Well and Faithfully,"* 180.
[45] Christopher L. Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[46] Ibid, 36-38.
[47] Ibid, 240-242. n. Tomlins reports that apprentices were to serve until their early twenties, somewhere between twenty-one and twenty-four, as negotiated by master and apprentice.
[48] Ibid, 243.

London to America, 1619-1717: 'There is Great Want of Servants,' (2017) examines the role of the servant trade in promoting English imperialism. Like Salinger, Wareing sees colonial merchants as holding the true power, and points out that for the servants themselves, indenture was often a matter of life or death. Wareing's work does discuss child servants, as well as those of all ages who were kidnapped into servitude, illustrating that many servants actually held little power over their situation. As Wareing notes, colonial officials often overlooked allegations of merchants forcibly binding servants into labor contracts due to the colonies' desperate need for workers.[49] However, like the previous authors, Wareing's focus remains on servants from England.

Felons sentenced to indenture terms in the colonies have also received a moderate amount of coverage by writers including Abbott Emmerson Smith, A. Roger Ekirch, Peter Wilson Coldham, Gwenda Morgan, and Peter Rushton. As early as 1947, Smith's *Colonists in Bondage* argued that though some servants signed indenture contracts of their own accord, more came to the colonies unwillingly, particularly convicts whom the state forced to choose between transportation and the death penalty. Due to the endless demands for labor, planters in British North America welcomed even convicted felons, thus the British government could easily rid themselves of their undesirable populace of religious dissidents, political prisoners, felons, and vagabonds and bolster its colonial workforce at the same time. True to the era's exceptionalist narrative - and apparently trusting that all those condemned as "convicts" were indeed criminally minded - Smith explained that the harsh labor conditions served as a test of fitness, which only

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[49] John Wareing *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: 'There is Great Want of Servants*.' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 125.

the strongest survived to form the backbone of a hardy American race. Only one servant in ten would survive, he observed.[50]

Twenty years later, in *Bound for America: The Transportation of British Convicts to the Colonies, 1718-1775* (1987) Ekirch maintains that transportation was devised more as a gateway for profit than an appropriate punishment for crime, since transportation of lawbreakers enabled the continuing prosperity of the British colonies. Merchants vied for lucrative government contracts to transport convicts from all corners of the British Isles and sell them for an even greater profit to mid-level planters who were unable to afford more expensive African slaves. The influx of convict labor, he explains, hurt the position of bound laborers at large, by leading the public to associate all indentured servants with convicts, thus driving down their social status and earning them harsher treatment from their masters.[51]

British genealogist Peter Wilson Coldham has made substantial contributions to the historiography of indentured servitude, particularly in the compilation of valuable records found in English archives. His *Emigrants in Chains* (1992) examines convict laborers from 1614 to 1775, concluding that the vast majority of these desperate people remained in a permanent underclass following the end of their indenture terms.[52] Coldham's work discusses not only convicted felons, but also political prisoners and kidnapped children from the Scottish Highlands. He illustrates that by the mid-seventeenth century, the English government had developed a two-tiered justice system which was highly discriminatory toward the poor,

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[50] Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America. 1607-1776* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965) 299-300.
[51] Ekirch, *Bound for America*.
[52] Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigration to the Americas of Felons, Destitute Children, Political and Religious Non-Conformists, Vagabonds, Beggars and Other Undesirables, 1607-1776* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1992) 1.

politically dangerous, and otherwise undesirable, opponents to the state, who were often transported to the peripheries of the British Empire.[53]

Works by Morgan and Rushton explore the topic of convict transportation without making any large, overarching arguments about the reasons for it. In *Eighteenth-Century Criminal Transportation* (2003), Morgan and Rushton explore the variation in approaches to transportation across the British Isles. For example, they note that some municipalities transported high numbers of convicts, while other areas transported barely any at all. They also challenge the romanticized view of transported convicts through an examination of popular ballads, pamphlets, and autobiographies of felons who escaped from the colonies and returned to England. Naturally, only the most sensational stories regarding convict laborers were seized on by the press, leading to popular misconceptions, such as the idea that many criminals returned home before completing their indenture terms, which Morgan and Rushton reveal to be a fiction.[54]

Particular segments of child servitude have been examined in depth by writers such as Robert Johnson, Barry M. Coldrey, Peter Wilson Coldham, and Joseph Robbins. Johnson has written on the London orphans shipped by the Virginia Company in the early seventeenth century, providing a detailed description of events.[55] Coldrey has written numerous essays on the shipment of English vagrant children to the colonies, and his 1995 work *A Thriving and Ugly Trade* looks at the migration of child servants to Australia in the late eighteenth and nineteenth

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[53] Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains*.
[54] See Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, *Eighteenth-Century Criminal Transportation: The Formation of the Criminal Atlantic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
[55] Robert C. Johnson, "The Transportation of Vagrant Children from London to Virginia, 1618 – 1622," *Early Stuart Studies*, Howard Stuart Reinmuth, ed. (Minneapolis: Oxford University Press, 1970) 137 – 140.

centuries.[56] In addition to his work on convict labor, Coldham has examined the apprenticeships of children from Christ's Hospital in London, and Joseph Robins has covered the plight of poor children in Ireland, including those transported as laborers.[57] However, none of these works explore child servitude across the British Isles or links the trade to a wider capitalist context.

Holly Brewer's *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (2012) looks at the shifting legal status of children during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to illustrate a transition from patriarchal values emphasizing social class and gender to the prioritization of personal consent and individual reason, which were products of the Protestant Reformation and Age of Enlightenment. Brewer's work contains much valuable information and insight on indentured and apprenticed children, and the evolution of political thought regarding the signing of labor contracts. She challenges assumptions that such contracts were purely voluntary and connects indentured servitude and apprenticeship to broader patterns of economic inequality and social stratification in England and colonial America. Additionally, Breuer reveals that in 1563 all contracts signed by children of any age were considered legally valid as long as a magistrate had approved them, adding that at this time government authorities were legally permitted to coerce children into signing apprenticeship contracts by imprisoning them until they agreed.[58] By the next century, when this study begins, indenture laws had changed to stipulate a legal age of consent under which parental signature was necessary.

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[56] Barry M. Coldrey, *" 'A Thriving and Ugly Trade--': The First Phase of Child Migration, 1617-1757*," (Pascoe Vale: Tamanaraik Publishing, 1997); see also Barry M. Coldrey, "'...A Place to Which Idle Vagrants May Be Sent.' The First Phase of Child Migration During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Children & Society,* 13:1 (February 1999) 32–47.

[57] Peter Wilson Coldham, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1990); Joseph Robins, *The Lost Children: A Study of Charity Children in Ireland, 1700-1900* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1987).

[58] Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 243.

However, the earlier attitude that did not question coercion helps provide context for understanding the policies studied here.

Another valuable insight that informs the arguments made here - the role of colonial economic systems that drove the expansion of empire - can be found in Abigail L. Swingen's 2015 study on the role of unfree labor in the formation of British imperial philosophy, *Competing Visions of Empire; Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire*. While she touches on the exploitation of child servants, Swingen is mainly concerned with the rise of racial slavery and its relationship to imperialism.[59]

Bits of information on child servants can be found in other types of histories as well. For example, David Dobson mentions the Scottish kidnapping trade in writing on Scottish emigrants to the Americas.[60] Though T. M. Devine, noted expert on Scottish tobacco merchants, occasionally refers to kidnapped servants kidnapped and child servants in his works concerning the Caribbean slave trade, these topics are not given a great deal of attention.[61]

While this study benefits from recent work in capitalism and the empire, research that has sought to plumb the extent of the trade in child laborers is also important. American scholar

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[59] Abigail Leslie Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).
[60] See David Dobson, *Directory Of Scots Banished To The American Plantations* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1983); David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607-1785* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994) 52, 71, 93; David Dobson, *Scottish Quakers and Early America, 1650-1700* (Baltimore, Md.: Clearfield, 2006); David Dobson, *The Original Scots Colonists of Early America, 1612-1783* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1989) 97; David Dobson, *The People of the Scottish Burghs: The People of Montrose, 1600 - 1799*, (Baltimore: Clearfield, 2014).
[61] T. M. Devine, "Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?," *Britain and the World* 4, No.1 (March 2011) 40–64; T. M. Devine and John R. Young, eds., *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1999); T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire, 1600-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003); T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities c. 1740 – 90* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1975).

Richard Hayes Phillips has painstakingly researched undocumented child servants from the British Isles, revealing that between 1660 and 1720, over 5,000 children from the British Isles lacking indenture contracts were sold as servants in the colonies of Maryland and Virginia alone.[62] As far as possible, he groups these children into their distinct countries of origin and through meticulous archival research has been able to trace approximately 1,500 of these children back to their families.[63] Unfortunately, Phillips's work covers only the colonies of Maryland and Virginia during the years 1660 to 1720.

This study also intervenes in an intense scholarly debate on how prevalent coercion was in the indentured servant trade. Abbott Emmerson Smith argued that, though the majority of servants emigrated involuntarily, those who were actually kidnapped were very few.[64] Writing before current sensibilities about class, Smith put a great deal of faith in the claims of merchants and recruiting officers that they had done everything by the book, and that the servants themselves were dishonest members of the poorer classes, "the most ignorant and idle of the inhabitants."[65] It is concerning that, relating to a series of Aberdeen court cases during the 1760s, Smith specifically supported the testimony of merchants and local officials charged with child abduction that they had followed all proper legal procedures, despite the testimony of town clerk Robert Thomson, which clearly shows otherwise.[66] Then again, Smith seemingly agreed with

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[62] Richard Hayes Phillips, *Without Indentures: Index to White Slave Children in Colonial Court Records* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2013).
[63] Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children of Colonial Maryland and Virginia: Birth and Shipping Records*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2015).
[64] Abbot Emerson Smith, "Indentured Servants: New Light on Some of America's 'First' Families," *The Journal of Economic History* 2:1 (1942) 41; Smith, *Colonists in Bondage,* 86.
[65] Smith, "New Light," 46.
[66] Smith, "New Light," 44; CS29/1759/2/10, NAS; Cheeseman A. Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania: Indentured and Redemption Labor in Colony and Commonwealth, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1926) 153; Smith, *Colonists in Bondage,* 81.

one Englishman's statement that, "nearly all transported servants were so idle, debauched, and worthless that they were of no use at home anyway."[67]

Since then, many historians have embraced Smith's statements regarding kidnapping, while not necessarily adopting his views of the servants themselves. Wesley Frank Craven, David Galenson, Christopher Tomlins, Carl Bridenbough, Alison Games, and Abigail Swingen are among those who have supported the idea that cases of servant abduction were rare, quoting Smith's work.[68] Bernard Bailyn proclaims that, though some abductions did occur, kidnappers "were too disreputable and their wares too few and too unattractive and hence too difficult to market to become major contributors to the indentured servant trade," a perspective that this study challenges.[69]

The research presented in this dissertation links to a group of historians who have recently argued that the trade in servants was rife with deception and trickery, and that abduction was actually quite widespread. The work of John Wareing has shown that, even in the cases of servants bound by official contracts, there was so much nefarious behavior on the part of recruiting agents, mariners, and others involved in the process of indenture that abducted servants could easily wind up on official registers, giving the appearance of legality.[70]

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[67] Smith, "New Light," 50.
[68] Wesley Frank Craven, *White, Red, and Black: The Seventeenth-Century Virginian*, Richard Lectures (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1971) 5-6; David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865*; Carl Bridenbough, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Games, *Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 55; Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, 25.
[69] Bernard Bailyn and Barbara DeWolfe, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) 299-300.
[70] John Wareing, " 'Violently Taken Away or Cheatingly Duckoyed': The Illicit Recruitment in London of Indentured Servants for the American Colonies, 1645-1718", *London Journal*, 26:2 (2001) 1–22; John Wareing, "Preventive and Punitive Regulation in Seventeenth Century Social

Both David Harris Sacks and John Donoghue support Wareing's conclusions.[71] Though neither of these scholars focuses primarily on servants, they each make substantial contributions to the history of indentured servitude. In his exploration of the economic, urban, and social history of Bristol, a major English trading port, Sacks discusses the many complaints against citizens of Bristol for kidnapping and transporting both children and adults to the Americas from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, as well as the government legislation passed concerning this issue. According to Sacks, kidnappers targeted children in particular, and "stole them whenever they could."[72] It is his contention, however, that seventeenth-century regulations restricting the transportation of servants against their will was more a ploy to control the commercial activities of religious and political radicals who sought to profit through colonial trade than an effort to protect the inhabitants from abduction.[73] In fact, he relates that city officials seemed to go to great lengths to shield those accused of such crimes from the angry mobs of parents and other family members which formed to demand justice for kidnap victims.[74]

Like Sacks, political historian John Donoghue reports that kidnappers particularly sought out children and adolescents, adding that one chief reason for this was the fact that children could be given longer terms of indenture than adult workers, making them especially attractive to

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Policy: Conflicts of Interest and the Failure to Make 'Stealing and Transporting Children and Others Persons' a Felony, 1645-1773", *Social History*, 27:3 (2002) 288–308; John Wareing, "The Regulation and Organisation of the Trade in Indentured Servants for the American Colonies in London, 1645–1718, and the Career of William Haverland, Emigration Agent," Ph.D. Diss., (University of London, 2000).

[71] See D. H. Sacks, Chapter 10 in D. H. Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450–1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); John Donoghue, " 'Out of the Land of Bondage': The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition", *The American Historical Review*, 110:4 (2010) 940–974; John Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes: an Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[72] Sacks, *The Widening Gate,* 305.

[73] Ibid, 303.

[74] Ibid, 305.

buyers.[75] Donoghue maintains that coercion and deception were the "main means" of supplying unfree colonial labor during the 1640s and 1650s, stressing that the line between the trade in voluntary servants and those forced unwillingly into servitude was much thinner than most historians have maintained.[76] In addition, he notes that England's legal system destined the homeless poor, as well as those accused of breaking the law, to colonial bondage, which was often as good as a death sentence.[77]

Australian scholar Barry M. Coldrey is another who agrees with this view. While Coldrey acknowledges that many impoverished children were sent to the colonies by well-intentioned benefactors seeking to provide them with education and job prospects, he notes that great numbers of children were abducted, both because it was simply easier to kidnap children than adults, and because child servants could be more harshly disciplined (and thus more easily controlled) than those who were older.[78]

What many of these scholars miss, including those who estimate kidnapping as a pervasive problem, is the value of looking at trial records in a comparative perspective. Records across many different cities suggest that not only were a large number of allegations and criminal trials brought against individuals for the abduction of servants for the Americas, many of those who were accused actually confessed, as shown by a survey of seventeenth and eighteenth-century newspapers and legal records throughout the British Isles. Several plaintiffs confessed to having shipped off hundreds of unwilling victims. Such confessions challenge the argument that kidnapping was not a widespread phenomenon.

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[75] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes,* 243; Donoghue, "Out of the Land of Bondage," 968.
[76] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes,* 214, 244; Donoghue, "Out of the Land of Bondage," 951.
[77] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes,* 214-215.
[78] Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 32-47.

Only one work, published just last year, is entirely devoted to the examination of child servants from the British Isles. Kristen McCabe Lashua's *Children at the Birth of Empire: British Law, Liberty, and the Global Migration of Destitute Children, c. 1607-1760* has considered how age alongside gender, class and ethnicity shaped what happened to children forced into service in the British empire.[79] Along with these categories, my work examines political context as well, considering how this additional dimension influenced which children were forced into bound service in the British empire. In addition, this dissertation offers an alternate interpretation to that put forward by Lashua regarding the role of the state in the forced indenture of children.

I strongly agree that age was "the fourth factor that defined a person's agency both at home and abroad."[80] I believe this category of analysis has been overlooked for far too long, and can yield significant insights into the study of indentured servitude, child labor, and colonialism. I also support Lashua's contention that seventeenth-century views of childhood did not manifest as a widespread indifference towards children, as well as her assertion that children's migration should be studied differently than adult migration, due to the complex legal and cultural understandings of childhood.[81]

A central point she makes, however, is that "children mattered," to basically everyone, at all levels of society. My work provides evidence illustrating that, while there were certainly officials, judicial figures, businessmen, clergymen, and others who did care about the welfare of these child laborers, overall, English officials were more concerned with managing poverty and the social issues caused by it than they were about the lives of the impoverished. It seems clear

[79] Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*.
[80] Ibid, 2.
[81] Ibid, 5.

that the funneling of impoverished children into workhouses and pauper apprenticeships was more about economic utility than genuine concern for the welfare of poor children. I argue that the same can be said for forced indenture contracts.

Furthermore, Lashua's central argument is that evolving ideas concerning the personal liberty and agency of children drove policy changes in English law. This notion seems to me to be undercut by the fact that, despite a continual stream of legislation which was passed on the issue of forced child indenture, this legislation was frequently not enforced, violators were often given minimal penalties, and little concern was shown for children deemed socially and politically undesirable or "other." I interpret these facts to indicate that economic and political priorities outweighed concerns for the personal agency and liberty of child servants. On this issue my views align more with those of John Donoghue, who writes that, "Despite its unlawfulness, corruption and a lack of political will allowed kidnapping to flourish as the first dominant form of human trafficking in the colonial Chesapeake for most of the seventeenth century."[82] In the following pages, I will present evidence to support this statement.

Moreover, to the extent that developing ideals of the liberties of Englishmen did affect the trade in child servants, I argue that these concerns centered more around parental rights than those of the children themselves. Laws concerning voluntary indenture for minors centered around obtaining the consent of the servant's parents, and often stipulated that the parents must be present at the indenture, rather than specifying that a minor servant's personal consent must be obtained.[83] Lastly, while it is true that decades of public protest against kidnapping did

[82] John Donoghue, "Child Slavery and the Global Economy: Historical Perspectives on a Contemporary Problem," in James Garbarino and Garry Sigman, eds., *A Child's Right to a Healthy Environment* (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2010) 209.
[83] For more discussion of laws governing the indenture of minors, see Chapter 3, "Picking up Steam: Political Prisoners, Convict Transportation, and the Rise of Kidnapping."

eventually result in strict regulations on English servant indenture, and that this considerable body of legislation did largely eliminate the issue of kidnapping in England by the early eighteenth century, what evidence can be gleaned from Scotland, Ireland, and the North American colonies implies that the kidnapping industry was not ended, but instead simply moved out of England and into non-English areas.

Historiography of Childhood

In considering the practice of sending children and adolescents to the Americas as colonial laborers, this study relies on - and briefly intervenes in - the history of childhood. This literature emphasizes the degree to which our own expectations of child protection differ from those of the early modern era, though not without considerable debate. In 1962 Philippe Ariès famously declared the notion of childhood to be a relatively new concept formed among the European bourgeoise in the Middle Ages, which did not penetrate to the lower classes until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Prior to that time, according to Ariès, children were viewed as miniature adults, dressed as adults, and did adult work. After people began to move out of the communal "great houses," and into homes of their own containing only the nuclear family, increased privacy led to a focus on the family, and on children in particular.[84] At the same time, a decrease in child mortality rates further encouraged parental interest and attachment. At this point, two different attitudes towards child-rearing began to emerge, that of coddling indulgence or strict discipline.

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[84] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood; a Social History of Family Life. Translated from the French by Robert Baldick.* (New York, Knopf, 1962) 395-398.

Also key in shaping views on childhood, Ariès explained, was the rise of formal education. In order to more closely supervise and control their students, educators began to segregate pupils by age, thus contributing to the idea of childhood as a distinct life stage during which one was subordinate to authority and in need of supervision. Along with this transition in views of childhood, the end of the sixteenth century also saw the development of the concept of adolescence. While medieval children were thought to be neutral regarding sexual matters, once the idea of childhood developed, they were viewed as innocents to be protected from corruption.[85] When a child reached puberty, he or she was placed under a strict code of sexual conduct and monitored to ensure adherence. Ironically, the increasing focus on children of all ages meant that, though they received more attention than previously, they were also subject to greater restrictions.

Hugh Cunningham's *Children and Childhood in Western Society* proposes that the modern vision of childhood was formed as a result of Reformation values stressing the importance of education.[86] Arguing that the shift in parental attitudes began in the eighteenth century, Cunningham maintains that the key factor influencing this was not merely the Enlightenment, but its impact upon attitudes toward Christianity, namely a de-emphasis upon the idea of original sin.[87] Rather than viewing children as innately corrupt and in need of correction, they were transformed into "messengers from God to a tired adult world."[88] At this critical juncture, approaches towards parenting shifted from a focus on the spiritual health of the child to

[85] Ibid, 29, 268.
[86] Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, (London: Longman, 1995) 57-58.
[87] Ibid, 58.
[88] Ibid.

a concern for the child's development.[89] Parents became more interested in allowing the child to develop naturally. Cunningham adds that at this point governments showed increasing interest in programs to assist underprivileged children, and by the late nineteenth century, the focus became preserving the innocence of children, yet allowing for their individuality and personal rights. Families had fewer children, but these were more highly valued on an emotional level. By the twentieth century, society became torn between the idea that children were people with their own inalienable rights and the romantic vision of the emotional child.

Thus, these authors consistently describe a transition to a more indulgent and affectionate view of children and adolescents, though the exact era of transition is not solidly agreed upon. For Ariès, the shift began in the bourgeoise class following the Middle Ages, and finally became accepted by the lower classes in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Cunningham, however, believes the change occurred in the eighteenth century. Both Ariès and Cunningham see the rise of mandatory formal education as key to the formation of the concept of childhood, while Cunningham adds the evolution of Christian ideals regarding original sin which took place during the Enlightenment.

In 1998, scholarly approaches were refashioned when Hugh Cunningham stunned the field by claiming Ariès' statement that the concept of childhood as a distinct stage of life did not exist in medieval society was, in fact, based upon a mistranslation of the text. According to Cunningham's article "Histories of Childhood," Ariès was actually saying that a *sentimental* view of children did not exist until after the Middle Ages.[90] In other words, it is not that a

[89] Ibid, 62.
[90] Hugh Cunningham, "Histories of Childhood," *American Historical Review* 103, No.4 (1998) 1197.

realization of distinct differences between children and adults is a new phenomenon, but rather the tendency to view children with particular tenderness and indulgence as compared to adults.

However, this transformation in attitudes towards children and adolescents, as charted by Ariès and Cunningham, needs to be contextualized in both a racialized framework, and also against prevailing prejudices towards the poor. This more indulgent and affectionate view of childhood was predominantly observed towards white children from economically stable families. The protective attitudes extended to children by society were not generally afforded to children of other races and socioeconomic statuses. Instead, the ongoing enslavement and exploitation of non-white and impoverished children was underpinned by a societal framework that refused to recognize their innocence or afford them the protections of childhood. Therefore, changing attitudes toward children during the era under study were intertwined with the broader social hierarchies and racial prejudices. The transition to a more protective and affectionate view of childhood was a racially and socially exclusive transformation, which not only overlooked but possibly facilitated the continued mistreatment and devaluation of children from excluded groups.

Though informed by prejudices, shifts in Western European attitudes that created a sense of childhood as a separate stage of life did have import for children and adolescents employed as indentured servants in the British Isles during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These evolving views are evident in the way colonial newspaper advertisements for runaway servants were worded. Advertisers consistently refer to male servants under eighteen, and often even those ages eighteen and nineteen, as *boys* or *lads*, while those aged twenty and older are called *men*. The same holds true for female servants, who are invariably described as girls when under eighteen. This terminology signifies the perception of youth and immaturity associated with

children and adolescents and indicates that people during the colonial era tended to see adulthood as beginning around the age of twenty. The use of terms like "boy" and "girl" for young servants acknowledges their youthful status and lack of full maturity. By referring to male servants aged twenty and older as "men" and female servants of the same age as "women," the advertisements acknowledge their transition into adulthood. At that point, they were likely seen as having acquired more experience, responsibility, and independence compared to their younger counterparts. While the language used in colonial newspaper advertisements, therefore, suggests that the general populace acknowledged the innocence and distinctiveness of childhood, even among those who were working as servants, government authorities and influential policymakers of the time did not extend this recognition of childhood innocence to children from poor or non-English backgrounds.

For evidence of emotional views towards childhood in cases of coercion or abduction of children into indentured servitude, we can look at the behavior of parents whose children had been taken. An entry in the Session Rolls of Middlesex County, England for August 6, 1661 describes the "great loss and greefe" felt by the parents of George Creech and Thomas Riddle, two young boys who had been taken to Virginia without the consent of their families.[91] A 1690 publication details how two especially persistent fathers of kidnapped children caught Captain Azariah Daniel and brought him to justice for shipping their children without their consent. Another father of a missing child aggressively tracked down the fellow responsible, managed to extract a confession from the man that he had sent his son to Barbados along with one hundred

[91] John Cordy Jeaffreson, ed., "Middlesex Sessions Rolls: 1661" in *Middlesex County Records* Vol. 3, 1625-67 (London, 1888), 309-318; Coldham, "London Children to Virginia," 283.

fifty other children, and brought him before the court for conviction.[92] The primary response of these parents, as described in the historical records, indicates a deep emotional attachment to their children. The use of terms like "great loss and greefe" suggests that the parents experienced profound emotional pain due to the abduction of their children. The lengths to which they went to retrieve their children, including legal action and tracking down kidnappers, reflect a strong sentimental bond and a protective instinct akin to that of modern-day parents. However, parental concern in these cases likely stemmed from a combination of both sentimental attachment and economic necessity. The grief and efforts to recover their children can be seen as driven by a natural parental affection, while the economic implications of losing a child's labor added a practical dimension to their distress.

Evidence lending further weight to the depth of emotional attachment felt by the parents comes from an Aberdeen kidnapping trial of 1769. In that trial, prosecution attorney John McLaren painted a vivid account of, "fathers and mothers running frantic through the streets, crowding to the doors and windows of the houses where their children were incarcerated, and there giving them their blessing, taking farewell of them for ever, and departing in anguish and despair, imprecating curses upon those who were the authors of their misery."[93] In the same trial, former colonial servant and kidnap victim Peter Williamson testified that, despite the prevalence

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[92] See Azariah Daniel, *The Grand Kidnapper at Last Taken Or, a Full and True Account of the Taking and Apprehending of Ca Azariah Daniel For Conveying Away the Bodies of Jonathan Butler, and Richard Balgrave, Also the Large Confession He Made Before Justice Richards in Spittle-Fields, with His Commitment to New-Gate. With Account of Edward Harrison, Conveying Away the Children of Thomas Vernon Salesman, with the Manner of His Confession how a Hundred and Fifty Children More Have Been Sent Down the River in Several Ships; with His Commitment to Newgate*, (London: James Read, 1690), available at Early English Books Online, https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu.

[93] CS29/1769/2/10/1, *Memorial for William Fordyce and Walter Cochran*, 19, NAS; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 155.

of poverty and scarcity during the mid-eighteenth century, most parents would not think of willingly selling their children into servitude, as "few were found in whom the impulse of parental Affection was not stronger than the Sensation of Hunger and Want."[94] Williamson's assertion that it was "absurd to imagine that any parents would dispose of their own flesh and blood to strangers," who would leave them in the "remotest parts of the world" underscores the depth of the parental bond.[95]

These are just a few examples of attitudes during the early modern era. Many letters and newspaper notices containing heart-wrenching pleas from distraught parents seeking their offspring can be found in archives throughout the British Isles, and those who had the means did their best to seek justice with legal authorities. In his memoirs, James Revel recounts how, upon learning he was to be transported to the colonies, his mother was distraught, and his father said it cut him to his heart.[96] "To see him grieved pierced my soul," Revel relates.[97]

The evidence gleaned from these sources, then, seems to strongly support the theory that, regardless of class status, parents in the early modern era viewed their children through a protective, sentimental lens. However, this dissertation will reveal that, when it came to poor children, those from non-English backgrounds, or members a group that threatened political

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[94] Peter Williamson, William Fordyce, and Walter Cochran, *Memorial for Peter Williamson against William Fordyce of Aquhorties, Walter Cochran of Dumbreck, Town-Clerk-Depute of Aberdeen, Alexander Mitchell of Colpna, Merchant in Aberdeen, Patrick Barron of Woodside, Gilbert Gerrard, David Morris Advocates in Aberdeen, and the Now Deceased Charles Forbes of Shiels, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeen; and Also the Now Deceased James Petrie, Advocate in Aberdeen, Defenders* (Oxford: Bodlean Library, 2010, originally published in Edinburgh, 1765) 2.
[95] Peter Williamson, "A Discourse on Kidnapping," in *French and Indian Cruelty: Exemplified in the Life and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune of Peter Williamson* (London: 1759) 100-101.
[96] Revel, *Poor Transported Felon*, 3
[97] Ibid.

instability, sentimentality about childhood could be set aside when financial profit was at stake. Through the eyes of many early-modern entrepreneurs and political entities, children were economic assets, valuable for their labor potential, provided they were from impoverished or non-English families. In addition, the rights of parents from these groups to control their children's future were dismissed. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that, while parents in the early modern era did view their offspring with affection and a desire to protect, to many of those involved in servant transportation, they were merely commodities to be utilized for economic gain. This disparity highlights not only the variation in perceptions of childhood during the early modern era, but also the profound impact of social class and ethnicity on the experiences of children during this period.

CHAPTER 2

MANAGING ENGLAND'S "SUPERFLUOUS MULTITUDES"

Background

In the early seventeenth century, England was experiencing a profound social transformation marked by a growing disparity in wealth and living standards between the upper and lower classes. Changes brought about by the Protestant Reformation were in part responsible.[98] Prior to the Reformation, the Catholic Church had played a crucial role in providing poor relief, with monasteries, churches, and religious orders running hospitals and orphanages, and supplying food and shelter for those in need. Almsgiving, or giving to the poor, was stressed as an essential means of gaining favor with God.

The actions of Henry VIII dramatically altered this landscape. His dissolution of the monasteries in the mid-sixteenth century, despite his own anti-Lutheran stance, effectively dismantled the primary institutions providing assistance to the poor, and transferring monasterial

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[98] See William P Quigley, "Five Hundred Years of English Poor Laws, 1349-1834: Regulating the Working and Nonworking Poor," *Akron Law Review* 30:1 (1997); Robert C. Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348-1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 45; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Penguin, 2003); A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (London: Methuen, 1985) 4-7; Bassi, Daniella, "Involuntary White Servitude and English Law," *University of Vermont History Review*, Vol. XXVI (2015-2016) 1-19.

wealth and land to the Crown and gentry. This shift created a gaping void in the social welfare structure. Protestantism, particularly its more Calvinistic forms, emphasized individual responsibility, hard work, and self-reliance, fostering a societal outlook which discouraged social welfare measures and led to an increased stigmatization of the poor.[99]

Another driving factor in this widening rift was the practice of enclosure, or the division of communal fields and pastures into privately owned plots, which resulted in the eviction of large numbers of peasants from their traditional farmlands as wealthy landowners sought to maximize agricultural production, primarily by sheep grazing and the production of wool. In 1583 Philip Stubbes declared that enclosure was the reason, "why rich men eat up poore men, as beasts doo eat grasse."[100] The idea still rankled many Englishmen twenty years later. Francis Trigge observed in 1604 that the traditional camaraderie and communal spirit of "merrie England" had been significantly diminished by the "covetous Inclosures."[101] Trigge mourned the loss of communal harmony that had once seen inhabitants sharing meals and lodging, suggesting that the covetous enclosures had fundamentally altered the social fabric and community life of the country.[102] According to J. M. Neeson, historians agree that common right gave commoners

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[99] Beier, *Masterless Men*, 4-5.
[100] Philip Stubbes, Quoted in Richard Burt and John Michael Archer, eds., *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) 21.
[101] Francis Trigge, *To the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie, the Humble Petition of Two Sisters, the Church and Commonwealth: For the Restoring of Their Auncient Commons and Liberties, Which Late Inclosure with Depopulation, Vncharitably Hath Taken Away: Containing Seuen Reasons as Euidences for the Same* (London: George Bishop, 1604) 27.
[102] Ibid; For more information about enclosure, see R. W. Hoyle, *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011); Richard Burt and John Michael Archer, eds., *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Charles D. Liddy, "Enclosure Riots: Risings of the Commons in English Towns, 1480-1525," *Past & Present*, 226:1 (February 2015) 41-77; Briony McDonagh, "Making and Breaking

an independence they valued, and that the extinction of common right marked the decline of small farms, relegating commoners to wage dependence, a significant marker on the way to England's evolution to a capitalist society.[103]

This displacement of large numbers of peasants coincided with the emergence of new farming techniques and the introduction of New World crops, which drove up agricultural prices and increased commercial expansion, creating new wealth and opportunities for the burgeoning merchant class while exacerbating the impoverishment of the majority. As amplified food production led to a dramatic increase in the country's population, rents and food prices began to rise astronomically, enriching the wealthy and driving the underclasses into further poverty. England's population swelled by 1.2 million in the initial half of the 1600s, a forty percent increase.[104] During this period, it is estimated that over half the English population, both rural and urban, struggled to earn enough to meet their basic needs.[105] Peasants ousted from newly enclosed lands and in search of employment flocked in droves to population centers such as London, causing urban growth to skyrocket between 1550 and 1650.[106]

Property: Negotiating Enclosure and Common Rights in Sixteenth-Century England," *History Workshop Journal*, 76:1 (Autumn 2013) 32-56; Jonathan Healey, "The Political Culture of the English Commons, c.1550-1650," *Agricultural History Review* 60:2 (2012) 266-287.

[103] Neeson, Chapter 1, *Enclosure and Social Change.*

[104] For 1.2 million increase, see Russell R. Menard, "British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," in Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean Burrell Russo, *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 109 and Robert V. Wells, "The Population of England's Colonies in America: Old English or New American?," *Population Studies*, 1:89; for forty percent see Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) 16.

[105] Lawrence Stone, "Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700," *Oxford Journals*, 33:1 (April 1966) 23.

[106] Ibid, 33; R. O. Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1998); Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2001); Margarette Lincoln, *London and the 17th Century: The Making of the World's Greatest City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Paul Griffiths, *Lost*

This population explosion, rapid urbanization, and heightened poverty ignited widespread concerns. Contemporaries feared that an overabundant population would have disastrous effects on the country's social structure and economic stability, as seen by an anonymous pamphleteer's insistence in 1609 that there was nothing more dangerous than, "when the people do increase to a great multitude and number . . . for hereupon comes oppression, and diverse kind of wrongs, mutinies, sedition, commotion, rebellion, scarcity, dearth, poverty, and sundry sorts of calamities."[107]

Contemporary social commentators stigmatized the indigent as agents of disorder and moral decay, as they were commonly held to be idle through sheer laziness rather than destitute due to external circumstances. One of the greatest dangers to England, Thomas Hobbes believed, was "that dissolute condition of masterlesse men without being subject to lawes, when they have no coercive power to tie their hands."[108] Government officials also perceived unemployed vagrants, and even people working in non-traditional occupations such as peddlers, tinkers, unlicensed healers, street entertainers, and fortune tellers, as a threat to both the government and the social order, purportedly sowing sedition and chaos among the populace.[109] Children of impoverished parents were seen as destined to follow in their parents' footsteps and become the

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Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Beier, *Masterless Men*, 40-45; John Donoghue, "Child Slavery and the Global Economy: Historical Perspectives on a Contemporary Problem," in James Gabarino and Garry Sigman, eds., *A Child's Right to a Healthy Environment* (New York: Springer, 2010) 203-204; Robert V. Wells, "The Population of England's Colonies in America: Old English or New American?," *Population Studies*, 46:1 (1992) 100; James Horn, "Servant Emigration," in David Armitage and M. J. Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) 84.

[107] Quoted in Abigail Leslie Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 13.

[108] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Routledge, 2016, f. p. 1651) 125.

[109] Beier, *Masterless Men,* 6-11.

next generation of beggars and vagrants.[110] Consequently, authorities believed that forcing the homeless and unemployed to labor would not only enhance the nation's economic productivity, but would also improve the moral character of the laborers. The Vagabonds Act of 1597 had introduced penal transportation for vagrancy, or homelessness, so any poor person or child found wandering the streets who could not prove he or she was gainfully employed was subject to criminal transportation.[111] This legislation penalized the many poor families who traveled from town to town in search of employment opportunities. Additionally, the Poor Law of 1601 allowed county officials known as Overseers of the Poor, who worked under the supervision of Justices of the Peace, to remove children from poor parents who were not "thought able to keep and maintain" them.[112]

The transportation of vagrants abroad also presented an opportunity for the government to relieve itself of the burden of maintaining impoverished subjects in jails or through poor relief. Around this time, prominent voices of the day began urging England to take advantage of the American colonies as a repository for unwanted workers. In 1616, John Smith suggested that, "each parish . . . apparel their fatherless children, of thirteene or fourteen years of age," and

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[110] Anna Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting: Seventeenth Century English Penal Policy and Superfluous Populations," in John Donoghue and Evelyn Jennings, eds., *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500-1914,* (Boston: Brill, 2016) 137, 145.
[111] J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I: and her Parliaments 1584-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957) 348-349; Barry M. Coldrey, "'...A Place to Which Idle Vagrants May Be Sent.' The First Phase of Child Migration During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Children & Society,* 13:1 (February 1999) 34; Vagabonds Act of 1597, Quoted in Charles James Ribton-Turner, *A History of Vagrants and Vagrancy, Beggars and Begging* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887) 133, n. This was most likely banishment to Newfoundland, the East or West Indies, France, Germany, or Spain, as specified in an Order of Council enacted in 1603.
[112] Parliament of England, "Act for the Relief of the Poor, 1601," *Reginae Elizabeth*, Anno 43; Frederic P. Miller, Agnes F. Vandome, and McBrewster John, eds., *Act for the Relief of the Poor 1601* (VDM Publishing, 2011); Bassi, "Involuntary White Servitude and English Law," 8.

dispatch them to Virginia, where they might, through laboring, "live exceedingly well," along with enriching those for whom they worked.[113] According to Smith, "young boyes and girls . . . or any other, be they never such idlers, may turne, carry, and return fish, without either shame, or any great paine: hee is very idle that is past twelve yeares of age and cannot doe so much."[114] A proposal was made in 1619 by member of Parliament, Sir Robert Cotton, to transplant England's "superfluous multitudes of poor people" to Ireland, and again in 1621 Sir Edwin Sandys, treasurer of the Colonial Council of Virginia and founder of the Virginia Company, used the same wording in encouraging the shipping of vagrants to Virginia, arguing that it would enable the nation to rid itself of the "superfluous multitude" of poor children on the streets of London which the city was "especially desirous to be disburdened."[115]

Because of these factors, the vast majority of child servants sent to the colonies in the early seventeenth century were drawn from the poorer classes in England. Poor laws were already in place stipulating that Justices and Overseers could place poverty-stricken children in mandatory apprenticeships to train them in useful occupations. The ways in which these apprenticeships worked, however, demonstrate lawmakers' understanding of the poor as a population in need of control. Pauper apprenticeships were designed not only to train children in specific trades but also to rigorously discipline their bodies for laborious work and shape their

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[113] John Smith, "A Description of New England," 1616, found at Digital Commons, University of Nebraska, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=zeaamericanstudies .

[114] Ibid.

[115] Sir Robert Cotton, *A proposal for the transplantation of the superfluous multitudes of poor people which overspread the realm of England to Ireland, 1619*, Cotton MS Titus, British Library; microfilm 1173, p. 1374, National Library of Ireland; Susan M. Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1906) 1:249; Theodore K. Rabb, *Jacobean Gentleman: Sir Edwin Sandys, 1561-1629* (Princeton University Press, 2017) 240.

spirits towards a life of servility and obedience.[116] This system, often devoid of compassion, played a pivotal role in instilling a rigid work ethic and submissive demeanor in young apprentices, reflecting the societal norms and expectations of the time. By law, boys were apprenticed until they were twenty-four years of age, and girls until they were married or turned twenty-one, whichever happened first.[117] Sandra Dahlberg notes that, since the average age of indenture for poor children in the early seventeenth century was seven, these unfortunates were often made to serve twice as long as those who entered voluntary apprenticeships, which customarily lasted only seven years.[118] Mandatory apprenticeship contracts, she reveals, were given to poor children as young as two years of age, whereas voluntary apprenticeships were entered into around the age of fourteen.[119]

It was a very small step to extend this practice to overseas indentures. The Vagabonds Act of 1597 marked the onset of a new governmental approach to poverty at a critical moment of colonial expansion. The evidence that follows - of children shipped overseas, colonial appeals for cheap labor, and the eventual enactment and lax enforcement of related laws and regulations – indicates that the social critiques of commentators like Thomas Hobbes concerning the poor proved influential. At minimum, these views provided a context for increased state involvement in the trafficking of thousands of children as bound laborers to the English colonies between 1618 and 1643.

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[116] Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 217.
[117] Parliament of England, "Act for the Relief of the Poor, 1601," *Reginae Elizabeth*, Anno 43, Chapter 2 (1601); Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531 – 1782* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1990).
[118] Sandra Dahlberg, "'Doe Not Forget Me': Richard Frethorne, Indentured Servitude, and the English Poor Law of 1601," *Early American Literature,* 47:1 (2012) 6-7.
[119] Ibid.

<u>The London Children</u>

The first shipment of English children to the American colonies was initiated in 1618, when the Common Council of London entered into an agreement with the Virginia Company to send one hundred orphans and children from impoverished families to Virginia at the city's expense. Policymakers considered this decision beneficial to the city, as it helped to reduce the large number of disruptive street children who often lived by stealing, and also beneficial to the children, who would be gainfully employed.[120] After completing their terms of indenture, each child was to be given fifty acres of land, boys when they turned twenty-four and girls when they either turned twenty-one or married, whichever should happen first.[121]

Officials swiftly went to work gathering up children from the streets and markets of London, ostensibly targeting homeless orphans. However, it must be noted that there is no concrete evidence that all of the children thus collected were genuinely destitute, or that they lacked families who may have objected to their forced relocation. In fact, the Lord Mayor of London, Sir George Bolles, ordered aldermen to inquire whether impoverished parents

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[120] Susan M. Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1906) 1:259, 268-271; David Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An economic analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 11; Robert C. Johnson, "The Transportation of Vagrant Children from London to Virginia, 1618 – 1622," in Howard Stuart Reinmuth, ed., *Early Stuart Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970) 137 – 140; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 33 – 35, 38 – 40; Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race Vol. II: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (London: Verso Books, 2012) 65; Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 232; John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: "There Is Great Want of Servants,"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 31; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007) 292; Kristen McCabe Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire: British Law, Liberty, and the Global Migration of Destitute Children, c. 1607-1760* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023) 114.

[121] Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 139.

"burdened" with too many children would care to send any of their offspring to Virginia. The parents were to be assured that the children would be educated and provided for.[122]

Ultimately, one hundred eleven boys and twenty-nine girls between the ages of eight and sixteen were collected and held at Bridewell Hospital, a local detention center, for shipment to Virginia.[123] For reasons not clearly stated, only seventy-five boys and twenty-four girls were shipped to Virginia in early 1619 on the *Jonathan*, the *George*, and the *Neptune*.[124] While an explanation for the lower numbers was not specified in the records, subsequent changes in the process suggest that the other forty-one had families who reconsidered the arrangement. It is also possible that officials had concerns about the children's health or deemed them unsuitable for the voyage for some other reason.

Before these young laborers had even left, King James I wrote to the Treasurer of the Virginia Company, Thomas Smythe, to inquire about the possibility of similarly disposing of another troublesome group of youths hanging around the Royal Court. "The court hath of late been troubled with diverse idle young people," the King wrote, "who although twise punished

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[122] Ibid, 140; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 233.
[123] Bethlem Museum of the Mind Archive, BCB-06, *Minutes of the Court of Governors*; Bridewell Royal Hospital, *Records of Individuals Ordered to be Sent to Virginia, 1618-1637*, Library of Virginia, #26237, Personal Papers Collection; Peter Wilson Coldham, *The Complete Book of Emigrants, 1607-1660* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1990); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000) 59; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 36.
[124] Ibid; Kingsbury*, Records of the Virginia Company*, 1:270; Edward Duffield Neill, *Virginia Company of London. Extracts from their Manuscript Transactions: With Notes* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868) 12; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant children," 139-140; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 36. n. The majority of historians covering this subject appear to have simply repeated what is stated in Johnson's 1970 article, i.e. that 99 children were transported. However, a search of the records of Bridewell reveals that 140 children were originally taken up for that purpose, yet only 99 were sent, leaving questions about what happened to the other 41.

still continue to follow the same having noe employment."[125] There was, "no other course," he thought, than to send the youths to Virginia on the first available ship and see that they were, "sett to work there," or else they would surely "never be reclaimed from the idle life of vagabonds."[126] The adolescents were swiftly collected by the Common Council of London and held at Bridewell for transportation to Virginia.[127] They would not have to wait long, as the Virginia Company enthusiastically requested another hundred children later that year.[128]

Several elements of this second shipment of apprenticed children to the colonies indicate that Virginia Company officers were refining the process in a way that reflected their sense of the children as cheap, disposable labor. First, they stipulated that only children ages twelve years and above should be sent this time, suggesting that the children's capacity for labor was a primary consideration by this point.[129] Second, they attempted to create terms more favorable to the Virginia Company, at the cost of their young fellow Englishmen's futures. The initial plan

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[125] Letter from King James I to Sir Thomas Smyth, January 13, 1618, London Metropolitan Archives, #COL/RMD/PA/01/005; Edward D. Neill, *Virginia Vetusta: During the Reign of James the First* (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1885) 103, 154, 162, 169; Alfred James Copeland, ed., *Bridewell Royal Hospital, Past and Present: a short account of it as palace, hospital, prison, and school, with a collection of interesting memoranda hitherto unpublished* (London: Wells, Gardner, Darton, & Co., 1888) 137-138; Charles McLean Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934) 1:135; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 114; Brewer, *By Birth or Consent*, 272.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Kingsbury*, Records of the Virginia Company*, 1:270-271; Neill, *Manuscript Transactions*, 12; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 36.
[129] Kingsbury*, Records of the Virginia Company*, 2:270-271; Letter from Sir Edwin Sandys to Sir William Cockaine, the Lord Mayor of London, the Aldermen, and the Common Council, Nov. 17, 1619, in Neill, *History of the Virginia Company*, p 160-162; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant children," p. 140-141; Peter Wilson Coldham, *The Complete Book of Emigrants, 1607-1660* (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2009) 16; Allen, *Invention of the White Race,* 2:65; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 233; Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 272.

was that the second shipment of boys and girls would not receive a grant of land following their indentures, but would become tenants on the public lands, and be given their own stocks of corn and cattle. Following further negotiations with the Lord Mayor and aldermen, who argued for better terms for the children, the Virginia Company relented and agreed to provide each one with twenty-five acres of land upon completion of the indenture contract at the age of twenty-one.[130] This time, the mayor instructed aldermen not only to sweep the streets of London for unattended children, but to pressure "overcharged and burdened" parents to send some of their children to Virginia, informing them that if they failed to do so, their families would receive no further poor relief from the parish.[131] The latter directive lends support to the conjecture that some families may have changed their minds the first time and retrieved their children before the ships set sail, resulting in far fewer embarking on the journey than had been planned. To overcome this difficulty and ensure that the requested number of young workers could be sent to the colony, authorities believed additional measures were necessary.

Though the actions of these officials sound harsh to twenty-first century readers, the motivations of the London officials cannot be wholly categorized as either genuinely benevolent or heartlessly exploitative. At the time, London was under enormous strain from the influx of rural migrants and escalating crime rates.[132] A. L. Beier notes that the city was confronting

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[130] Kingsbury*, Records of the Virginia Company*, 1:293; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant children," 141-143; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 37.
[131] Corp of London, "Journal of Common Council, 31.208" in Coldham, *Complete Book of Emigrants*, 16; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 142.
[132] See Bucholz and Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1998); Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2001); Margarette Lincoln, *London and the 17th Century: The Making of the World's Greatest City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Beier, *Masterless Men*, 40-45.

widespread juvenile delinquency, and city officials viewed the rising numbers of vagrant youths with anxiety, fearing they could become potential rioters.[133] It was not only the heavily populated downtown areas which were a problem. The London suburbs had become infamous for crime and poverty, described by London playwright Thomas Dekker as "caves where monsters were bred up to devour the cities and themselves," where all manner of criminals and miscreants could be found.[134] In 1617, the Lord Mayor had expressed his fears that "the overflowing multitude of inhabitants should, like too much blood, infect the whole city with plague and poverty."[135]

This dynamic involved not only a push from London, but a pull from Virginia. Propaganda put forth by the Virginia Company painted the colony as a paradise, to entice as many to settle there as possible.[136] Many people in England believed the hype, at least at first. It is likely that London officials had little idea of the hardships they would be subjecting the children to by sending them there. They may have thought that the youngsters sailing to Virginia would be at least as well positioned, if not better, as those placed in local apprenticeships. The efforts of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen to obtain more beneficial terms for the children, particularly land for each child upon the completion of his or her contract, demonstrated a level of concern and consideration for their long-term prospects, as well as recognition of the importance of providing these young people with the opportunity for future stability and economic independence.

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[133] Beier, *Masterless Men*, 44.
[134] See Thomas Dekker, "English Villainies," in *The Wonderful Year [Etc] and Selected Writings*, E.D. Pendry, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) 234; Beier, *Masterless Men*, 43.
[135] Charles Edward Banks, *The Planters of the Commonwealth* (Boston, Massachusetts: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2014) 29.
[136] Virginia Company of London, "A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affaires in Virginia," (1620) in Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 3:307-365.

However, the coercive approach used in exerting pressure on struggling parents to part with their children, putting them in the position of having to choose between keeping their families together or risking the loss of essential financial support, indicates that city officials were more focused on reducing the financial burden on the city than on addressing the root causes of the rise in juvenile crime. Sending the children to Virginia would provide a convenient way to transfer the cost of supporting them from the city and parish to the colony itself.

Moreover, the Virginia Company claimed that in the colony the children would be "brought to goodness" under the "discipline of severe masters."[137] This language not only reflects contemporary attitudes towards the poor, implying that the children were fundamentally flawed and morally deficient in a way which could only be corrected through severity and corporal punishment, it betrays a tacit endorsement of the potentially abusive treatment to which they would be subjected. Sandys described the children as "ill disposed, and fitter for any remote place then for this Citie . . . of whom the Citie is especially desirous to be disburdened."[138] His choice of terms implies that the city's primary goal was not to rehabilitate these children or offer them a brighter future, but rather to rid the city of children who were perceived to be socially problematic. As social historian Barry Coldrey states, "They were sent because their presence embarrassed, inconvenienced or threatened respectable society."[139] Since Bridewell functioned as a juvenile detention center, and many of the admittance records of children in this second group contain descriptions such as "a common guest," "a young rogue," and "will take no warnings," it is likely that city and hospital officials hand-picked many of these young

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[137] Ibid, 143; Letter from Sir Edwin Sandys to King's Secretary, Sir Robert Naunton, January 28, 1620, in Neill, *History of the Virginia Company of London*, 161 and Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 3:259.
[138] Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 3:259.
[139] Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 32.

troublemakers because they wanted to be rid of them, while others must have been thrown in to make up the requested hundred.[140]

Before the ship set sail, an incident occurred in which several of the children declared that they would not go to Virginia.[141] This unexpected resistance revealed a critical issue: the organizers lacked the necessary authority to transport them against their will. Recognizing the need for a swift solution, Sandys, the Virginia Company official, immediately wrote to the King's secretary seeking authorization to proceed despite the children's objections.[142] In response, the Privy Council intervened and granted the authority, further decreeing that any who remained uncooperative and continued to resist were to be imprisoned, punished, and *disposed of*.[143] Though there is no record of whether any of the children were, in fact, disposed of, these threats were successful in quelling the juvenile uprising, and in February 1620 both the London children and those apprehended on the orders of King James set sail, willingly or unwillingly. The largest group sailed on the *Duty*, a fact which gave rise thereafter to the term "Duty boys," signifying pauper boys sent to Virginia as indentured servants.[144] However, approximately a quarter of the children on the *Duty* were girls.

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[140] Bethlem Museum of the Mind Archive, BCB-06, *Minutes of the Court of Governors*; Bridewell Royal Hospital, *Records of Individuals Ordered to be Sent to Virginia, 1618-1637*, Library of Virginia #26237, Personal Papers Collection, Library of Virg; Coldham, *Complete Book of Emigrants*, 17; Wareing*, Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 31.
[141] Sir Edwin Sandys to Sir Robert Naunton, January 28, 1620, in Neill, *History of the Virginia Company*, 160-161; Kingsbury*, Records of the Virginia Company*, 3:259; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 144; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 233; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 59; Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, 2:65; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 37; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 116; Brewer, *By Birth or Consent*, 272.
[142] Ibid; John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: "There Is Great Want of Servants,"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 31.
[143] Ibid.
[144] H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the General Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 1622-1632*, *1670-1676, With Notes and Excerpts From Original Council and General*

The experiences of one such boy can be found in a collection of letters left behind by one of the children who sailed to Virginia. These can be found in the *Records of the Virginia Company*, and consist of three letters to his parents and one to his churchwarden, Mr. Bateman, written in 1623.[145] Though scholars who first discovered his correspondence assumed Richard Frethorne to be an older, voluntarily-indentured servant, in 2012 Sandra Dahlberg made an extremely convincing argument supported by extensive archival research and textual analysis that he was instead a twelve-year-old pauper child sent from London to Virginia in 1622 aboard the *Abigail.*[146] Dahlberg particularly focuses on specific clues within Frethorne's correspondence with his churchwarden which hint at his status as a parish-indentured child. Read in this context, the letters suggest that he was reaching out to the church official who controlled his indenture contract and held the authority to redeem it.[147]

In addition, Dahlberg has meticulously scoured the records of the parish of St. Dunstan, tracing the servant to a large Frethorne family living in the east end of London in the 1620s.[148] From a family known to be "intellectually gifted and literate, but poor," Richard was a bright and resourceful child, as revealed by his letters. Two of his older brothers had attended Cambridge and Oxford on scholarships, and another was apprenticed (via pauper apprenticeship laws) to a local tradesman.[149] Possibly his parents and churchmen thought that sending him to Virginia

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Court Records, into 1683, now lost (Richmond: Everett Waddey Co., 1924) 36, 93, 117, 154; Allen, *Invention of the White Race,* 2:65; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 144; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975) 116; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants, 37.

[145] Susan M. Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906) 4:40-41, 58-60; Dahlberg, "Richard Frethorne."

[146] See Dahlberg, "Richard Frethorne."

[147] Ibid, 2.

[148] Ibid, 5.

[149] Ibid, 15.

would help improve his prospects, or his family may have been among those threatened with the suspension of poor relief if they failed to send any of their children to the colonies.

It is clear that Richard was led to believe life in the colony would be a drastically different situation than he found himself in, since he made reference to the unrealistic picture of Virginia widely believed by those back in England.[150] Malnourished and in rags, his coat having been stolen by another boy, Frethorne pled with his parents to either take up a collection at church to buy out his indenture contract, or to send him food he could sell in the colony to redeem his indenture; he underscored the dire circumstances, writing, "there is nothing to be gotten here but sickness and death."[151] Many of the immigrants, he asserted, would rather "lose any limb" if only they could be back in England again.[152] The response to his letter, he stressed, would be life or death for him. Unfortunately, the latter option prevailed. Richard's parents had taken ill and died within days of each other just as the *Abigail* docked at Virginia in December 1622, so they did not receive his letters.[153] Within a few months, the boy would perish too, as shown by the fact that his name is recorded on a list of colonists who had died by February 1623.[154]

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[150] Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 4:58-60.
[151] Letter from Richard Frethorne to His Parents, May 20, 1623, in Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 4:58-60; James Horn, *A Land As God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York: Basic Books, 2008) 247-248.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Dahlberg, "Richard Frethorne," 24.
[154] "A List of the Names of the Dead in Virginia, Since April Last," February 16, 1624, in John Camden Hotten, ed., *The Original lists of persons of quality; emigrants; religious exiles; political rebels; serving men sold for a term of years; apprentices; children stolen; maidens pressed; and Others Who Went From Great Britain To The American Plantations, 1600-1700* (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1874) 189-193. Frethorne's name can be found on page 192, in the township where he is known to have served master William Harwood, though he is listed as "Richard Frethram."

In the spring of 1623, Richard's letters were intercepted by Virginia Company member Nathaniel Rich, who used them to bring charges against his rival Edwin Sandys for administrative neglect resulting in the abuse and starvation of servants.[155] Rich claimed that the immense level of fatalities in the colony was the result of company mismanagement, as Sandys encouraged the sending or large numbers of laborers and colonists before arranging provisions or lodging, an inexcusable act perpetuated for the financial gain of ship owners ruthlessly pursing profit at the cost of human lives.[156] The company's reaction to this crisis was public posturing and private apathy. While company officials formed a committee following Rich's expose to address these issues and reform the abuses, the lack of any real change following the revelations of Frethorne's letters suggests their actions were a hollow gesture designed to preserve their reputation. It is clear that their primary concern was maintaining a positive public image and preserving profit. They publicly promised to alleviate the hardships, yet behind closed doors acknowledged that they lacked the funds to do anything about the situation.[157]

Mortality of Early Child Servants

Richard Frethorne's tragic story was not only very common, it was the norm. An examination of Virginia Company records, census records, and colonial muster rolls reveals that mortality rates were extremely high among all the initial shipments of children from London. Twenty children's lives were lost on the 1619 voyage of the *Diana,* and sixteen on the voyage of

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[155] Dahlberg, "Richard Frethorne," 23.
[156] Nathaniel Rich, "Notes of Letters from Virginia," in Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 4:160.
[157] Virginia Company of London, "A Court Helde for Virginia on Wednesday in the Afternoone ye 18 of June 1623," in Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 2:439.

the *Jonathan* the following year.[158] These casualties illustrate how perilous conditions on board vessels bound for the Americas were during this era, where children were particularly vulnerable to illness, malnutrition, and other challenges of Atlantic voyages.

Even more telling is the census taken of the Virginia colony a mere five years after the arrival of the initial group in 1619. Only seven members of the first contingent of ninety-nine children were still living at that point, and only five of the hundred who sailed in 1620 can be found, making the survival rate only slightly more than half of the ten percent listed by John Wareing in *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*.[159] Of course, high mortality was a problem faced by all English settlers during the 1620s, a period characterized by harsh living conditions, inadequate food supplies, and widespread disease.[160] Another historian of indentured

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[158] Neill, *History of the Virginia Company*, 200; Alexander Brown, *The First Republic in America : An Account of the Origin of This Nation, Written from Records Then (1624) Concealed by the Council, Rather than from the Histories Then Licensed by the Crown* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1898) 307-308.

[159] "Muster Rolls of Settlers in Virginia, 1624," in Hotten, *The Original lists of persons,* 199-265; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 233; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade,* 31; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 147; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 59; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 233.

[160] Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*; Kupperman, *Jamestown Project*; Carville V. Earle, "Environment, Disease, and Mortality in Early Virginia," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 96-125; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown," *Journal of American History,* 66:1 (1979):24-40; Horn, *A Land As God Made It*; David A. Price, *Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America : The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012). n. James Horn reports that nine hundred men were rumored to have died between 1619 and 1620, but that the Virginia Company acknowledged only three hundred casualties (Horn, *A Land As God Made It*, 248). Edmund S. Morgan suggests that, ". . . the problem was not altogether one of whether supplies existed. It was a question of who had them and of who could pay for them." He cites as evidence the fact that in 1621 the governor and council of Virginia set wage rates for day laborers at three to four times those in England, along with the fact that demand for colonial servants remained extremely high, though masters had to feed, house, and clothe them. (Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 105-107).

children, Kristen McCabe Lashua, quotes a figure of forty percent in the first year of settlement, based upon the estimates of Alison Games and James Curtis Ballagh.[161] This rate is further corroborated by an account from Spanish captive Don Diego De Molina in 1613; De Molina reported that out of three hundred settlers, less than one hundred fifty would survive a year.[162] Franklin Jameson provides an even more devastating statistic, that four out of five servants working the tobacco fields died within their first year.[163] However, even this alarming rate of four out of five deaths should have yielded approximately forty survivors out of the first two groups of London children, whereas there were only twelve.

John Donoghue argues that child and adolescent servants suffered more than adults, due to their weaker constitutions, which made them more vulnerable to disease and death from overwork.[164] At least five of the boys from London were killed in the 1622 Indian attack by the Powhatan tribe, which killed nearly a third of the inhabitants of Jamestown, but warfare with

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[161] Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire,* 28; Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 130; James Curtis Ballagh, *White Servitude in the Colony of Virginia: A Study of the System in Indentured Labor in the American Colonies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1895) 14.
[162] Letter of Don Diego De Molina, 1613, in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625* (New York, NY: C. Scribner's Sons, 1907); https://encyclopediavirginia.org/primary-documents/letter-of-don-diego-de-molina-to-don-alonzo-de-velasco-1613/.
[163] Tyler, *Narratives of Early Virginia*, 80 n. 3.
[164] R. O. Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London: A Social and Cultural History, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1998); Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, 1st ed (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2001); Margarette Lincoln, *London and the 17th Century: The Making of the World's Greatest City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Beier, *Masterless Men*, 40-45; John Donoghue, "Child Slavery and the Global Economy: Historical Perspectives on a Contemporary Problem," in James Gabarino and Garry Sigman, eds., *A Child's Right to a Healthy Environment* (New York: Springer, 2010) 207.

Natives does not account for the meager overall survival rate.[165] As Lashua notes, in the face of such high instances of adult casualties, it is all the more surprising that officials would not have more concern for the safety of the children they were sending to the colony.[166]

According to Johnson and Nugent, a mere three survivors of the first two shipments of London children can be traced beyond 1625, Nicholas Granger and Nathaniel Tatum from the first group, and Henry Carman from the second.[167] Granger and Carman wound up profiting from the trade in servants themselves, both receiving hundreds of acres of land in their mid-thirties in return for financing the transportation of others to the colony.[168] Nathaniel Tatum was apparently able to return to England after completing his indenture contract, where he married and started a family, eventually moving his family back to Virginia and becoming a substantial landowner there.[169]

However, at least one other surviving boy who arrived with the earliest shipments, Thomas Hatch, is recorded in the minutes of the Council and General Court of Virginia as having his term extended another seven years in 1627, along with Henry Carman. This extension, mandated by the terms of the Virginia Company's indenture contracts, was due to their involvement in various offenses. [170] Hatch, who had sailed on the *Duty* in 1620 at the age of

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[165] Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 3:564-571; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 147; Games, *Web of Empire*, 120; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 115.
[166] Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 116.
[167] Nell Marion Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants, 1623-1800* (Richmond: Dietz Printing Co., 1934) 170; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 148; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 38; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 114.
[168] Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, 170; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 148.
[169] Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, 90; Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 148-149.
[170] Kingsbury, Records of the Virginia Company, 1:270-271, 293, 304-307, 411-12; 3:259; McIlwaine, *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, 93, 95, 117, 154; Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 116.

twelve, was now nineteen. Carman was twenty-two, having been seventeen when he arrived with Hatch. Both were forcibly assigned to serve the Governor and members of the Colony Council for seven more years. Carman's extended term resulted from impregnating a fellow servant, Alice Chambers.[171] Hatch faced a harsher repercussion for having dared to express his opinion that a local man convicted of the crime of sodomy had been wrongly executed.[172] Not only was he ordered to serve seven additional years in service to Virginia Governor George Yardley, but to be whipped, pilloried, and have one of his ears cut off.[173] A few other members of the children shipped from London by the Virginia Company may have also survived, despite not appearing under recognizable names on the 1624 census. These were the distinct exceptions representing not only the unusual resilience and tenacity, but also the remarkable luck, of a small number of individuals within a dangerous and oppressive system.

One girl who appears in the 1624 census but died only a few months later that year is Elizabeth Abbott, whose death is a flagrant example of the worst type of servant abuse. That Elizabeth was one of the few children to survive the first few years of her servitude was all the more remarkable considering the fact that she was not a house servant, but worked in the tobacco fields. Not easily tamed, the girl ran away repeatedly, and ultimately was punished by allegedly being given five hundred lashes with a whip embedded with fishhooks.[174] After being punished she fled to a neighbor's house, and in a few days her wounds had become infected and putrefied,

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[171] McIlwaine, *Minutes of the Council*, 117, 139.
[172] Ibid, 93; Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 124-125.
[173] Ibid.
[174] McIlwaine, *Minutes of the Council,* 22-24; Edmund S. Morgan, "The First American Boom: Virginia 1618 to 1630," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 28:2 (1971) 196; General Court, "The Deaths of Elizabeth Abbott and Elias Hinton (1624)," Encyclopedia Virginia, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/the-deaths-of-elizabeth-abbott-and-elias-hinton-1624/; Morgan, A*merican Slavery, American Freedom*, 127.

according to the testimony of the neighbor. The witness further stated that she had returned the girl to her master, Virginia Company member John Proctor, begging him to have mercy upon her, but he replied that he would not.[175] Another neighbor testified that he had tried confronting Proctor over Elizabeth's condition, telling him that if he did not send for the doctor she would die, but Proctor said he did not care whether she lived or died.[176] Finding no real help from anyone around her, the girl ran away again into the woods, where neighbors soon found her dead.[177] Multiple witnesses at the inquest blamed Elizabeth for not behaving herself, and this was apparently the opinion of legal officials, since there is no record of Proctor ever having been punished for her death.[178]

Child Labor and the Colonial Economy

Such a large-scale loss of young lives also had profound implications for the colony itself, as the death of a significant portion of the child labor force obstructed their contributions to the labor market and impeded their potential impact on economic development. In sending these children and youths to the Americas, the English government established what would become a pattern of using the colonies as a convenient solution for removing undesirable elements from the core society. This practice not only commodified children, reducing them to assets to be bought, sold, and traded, thereby perpetuating their exploitation, it also helped to

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[175] McIlwaine, *Minutes of the Council,* 22-24.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] n. During Proctor's court appearance concerning the death of Elizabeth Abbott, witnesses also testified against him concerning the death of Elias Hinton, an indentured boy Proctor had allegedly beaten to death with a rake. See McIlwaine, *Minutes of the Council*, 23; "Deaths of Elizabeth Abbott and Elias Hinton," https://encyclopediavirginia.org/primary-documents/the-deaths-of-elizabeth-abbott-and-elias-hinton-1624/.

ingrain the idea in the minds of the British public that the practice of utilizing the distant colonies as dumping grounds for populations deemed problematic was an acceptable alternative to working to address the causes of social issues at home.

While political economists of the early seventeenth century did not directly address the shipment of child servants to the Americas, this practice aligns with mercantilism, the dominant economic ideology of the time, which prioritized the maximization of national wealth and the efficient management of economic resources. Explorer and colonist John Rolfe noted that the buying, selling, and mortgaging of servants in the colonies would be seen as "a thing most intolerable," were these servants in England.[179] However, within the mercantilist context, the colonies were seen as resources to be exploited for the mother country's gain. The physical and psychological distance of the colonies from England also contributed to this perspective, allowing for a dehumanization that would be less acceptable on English soil. Within this context, the use of cheap labor in the colonies, even if it was forced, was likely to have been seen as justified, since it would lower production costs and potentially increase the volume and profitability of colonial exports, thereby improving England's balance of trade. [180] The practice

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[179] John Rolfe, "An account by John Rolfe of the Jamestown colony's first exposure to slaves from Africa via Dutch traders, 1619 ," accessible at W. W. Norton & Company, *Give Me Liberty!*, https://wwnorton.com/college/history/foner2/contents/ch02/documents03.asp; also quoted in Armitage and Braddick, *British Atlantic World*, 140.

[180] See Gerard Malynes, *The Maintenance of Free Trade, According to the Three Essentiall Parets of Traffique, Namely, Commodities, Moneys, and Exchange of Moneys ..., or, An Answer to a Treatise of Free Trade ...* (London: I.L. for William Sheffard, 1622); Gerard Malynes, *The Center of The Circle of Commerce. Or, A Refutation of a Treatise, Intituled The Circle of Commerce, or The Ballance of Trade* (London: VVilliam Iones, 1623); Edward Misselden, *The Circle of Commerce. Or The Ballance of Trade in Defence of Free Trade: Opposed to Malynes Little Fish and His Great Whale, and Poized Against Them in the Scale. Wherein Also, Exchanges in Generall Are Considered: And Therein the Whole Trade of This Kingdome with Forraine Countries, Is Digested into a Ballance of Trade, for the Benefite of the Publique. Necessary for the Present and Future Times* (London: Nicholas Bourne, 1623); Edward Misselden, *Free Trade, or, The Meanes to Make Trade Florish: Wherein, the Causes of the*

of sending servants to the colonies could also be seen as an attempt to leverage local labor resources to foster economic self-sufficiency. Thus, the transformation of children into commodities and their utilization in the colonies reflects early instances of capitalist behaviors emerging within the mercantilist framework, indicating a shift towards practices that would later define modern capitalism.[181]

Quantifying the Early Migration of Child Servants

While following the stories of the first two shipments of children from London to Virginia is instructive, supporting a larger argument about state involvement in shipping of children as laborers in the seventeenth century requires evidence of a broader pattern, both in quantity of children and continued laxity in protecting them from harm or exploitation. The actual numbers of children sent from England to the colonies over the first half of the seventeenth century are lost to history, but scattered British and colonial legal records, Virginia Company business records, personal correspondence, and contemporary accounts reveal that it was, at minimum, ten thousand, and likely much more. On 18 August, 1627, for example, the Reverend Joseph Mead wrote to Sir Martin Stuteville, Virginia Company shareholder, that "some fourteen or fifteen hundred children, which they have gathered up in divers places" were at that time sailing to Virginia.[182]

Decay of Trade in This Kingdome Are Discouered, and the Remedies Also to Remooue the Same, Are Represented (London: Iohn Legatt, for Simon Waterson, 1622).

[181] See Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, C. J. Bullock, ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004); David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London: Electric Book Co., 2001); Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of Karl Marx: Analysis and Application* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[182] Massachusetts Historical Society, "Aspinwall Papers," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society,* Vol. IX (Boston: The Society, 1871) 3, n; Father Cyprien

Government and colonial records indicate that demand for child laborers remained high in the 1620s and 1630s, and that colonial officials frequently repeated their requests, a practice unlikely to have occurred had their initial pleas not been satisfactorily addressed by London's providers of child servants. Additional groups of London apprentices were requested by the Virginia Company in the fall of 1620, and again in 1622.[183] The Council for New England, a joint stock company awarded a royal charter for the purpose of expanding the English realm, soon followed the Virginia Company's lead, requesting shipments of poor children in 1622, 1623, and 1632, not merely from London, but from "every shire in England."[184]

Parish and colonial records reveal that several smaller groups of poor children were sent to the North American colonies during the 1620s, 1630s, and 1640s. The Coffer Books of Winchester, for instance, indicate that six children from that city were sent to Virginia in 1625, while parish records for Barnstaple in Devon reveal an additional three sent from there that same

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De Gamache, *The Court and Times of Charles The First: illustrated by authentic and confidential letters, from various public and private collections, Vol. I,* ed. Thomas Birch (London: Henry Colburn, 1848) 262; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 59; Walter Hart Blumenthal, *Brides from Bridewell; Female Felons Sent to Colonial America* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1962) 65; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 31; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 158.

[183] Johnson, "Transportation of Vagrant Children," 144-146; Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 1:424.

[184] *Council for New England: Records, 1622-1623*, Folio C, American Antiquarian Society, 13, 24, 37; Banks, *Planters of the Commonwealth*, 30; Charles McLean Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History, Vol. 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934) 135, n. 2.

year.[185] According to the Church Wardens' accounts, Saint Giles in the Field Parish in London was still sending children of the poor to New England in 1636.[186]

In 1641, Massachusetts agent Hugh Peter orchestrated a larger shipment of children to the colony, to be drawn from the ranks of street children in England who went "roughing up and down . . . not being imployed in any honest and lawful calling."[187] Additionally, the Governor of Massachusetts recorded the arrival of twenty children sent by Parliament and the City of London on the *Seabridge* in 1643.[188] The latter were probably children sent following a public collection taken up in London for that purpose in January, 1643, which was the last public attempt to send a group of poor children from London to the colonies, according to John Wareing.[189]

However, this pattern of sending disadvantaged children across the Atlantic was not confined to public initiatives alone; it persisted as individuals continued to ship groups of impoverished minors to the Americas as laborers until at least the 1660s. For example, Puritan merchant Nicholas Abdy left one hundred twenty pounds in his will for transporting twenty destitute children to the New World in 1649.[190] Barry M. Coldrey also details an account from

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[185] Anonymous, *Hampshire Notes and Queries* (London: John Francis, 1849) 4:82-83; Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934, 62); Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 38.
[186] Secretaries of State, *State Papers Domestic, Charles I*, SP 16, British National Archives, 536:711; Banks, *Planters of the Commonwealth*, 31; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 233.
[187] Quoted in Raymond Phineas Stearns, *The Weld-Peter Mission to England* (Boston: Col. Soc. of Mass., 1936).
[188] John Winthrop, *The History of New England From 1630 to 1649* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1853) 2:96; Stearns, *The Weld-Peter Mission,* 238; Banks, *The Planters of the Commonwealth,* 31; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 233.
[189] Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade,* 31.
[190] Probate will of Nicholas Abdy, 13 March 1649, from Calendars of wills and administrations in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, held at the Public Record Office, in Coldham, *Complete Book of Emigrants*, p. 241; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 40.

1664, in which a group of children in Dorchester, who were being maintained at the town's expense, were shipped to Boston by Mayor George Cole in 1664, where they were given indenture terms of eight to nine years.[191]

Sandra Dahlberg cites the contemporary estimates of colonial leaders Nathaniel Rich and John Smith to illustrate that some 8,500 poor children were sent to Virginia alone between 1619 and 1625.[192] In addition, ship passenger lists compiled by John Camden Hotten record some three hundred-fifty unaccompanied children between the ages of five and seventeen sailing to plantations in Bermuda, Barbados, and Saint Christopher during the first half of the seventeenth century.[193] Supporting these figures is the account of a minister on Bermuda in 1625 in which he observed that "many poore boyes and girls, (taken up, out of the streetes, out of Newgate and Bridewell and the Hospitals)" were sent to that island, as well as that of a shipwrecked Spaniard who noted in 1639 that all of the field workers in Bermuda were young orphans.[194] Thus, while exact figures for the entire duration of time period across all colonial destinations may not be precisely quantified, evidence from a composite of official and unofficial records suggests a pattern and scale of operation in the movement of children to the colonies that would significantly exceed the numbers for Virginia in the years 1619 - 1625.

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[191] Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 40

[192] Dahlberg, "Richard Frethorne," 22; John Smith, "Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, Or, The Path-way to Experience to Erect a Plantation," (1631) in John Smith and Philip L. Barbour, *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580-1631): In Three Volumes* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) 3:253-307; Nathaniel Rich, "Notes of Letters from Virginia" May-June 1623 in Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 4:158 -159; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 59.

[193] John Camden Hotten, ed., *The Original lists of persons of quality; emigrants; religious exiles; political rebels; serving men sold for a term of years; apprentices; children stolen; maidens pressed; and Others Who Went From Great Britain To The American Plantations, 1600-1700* (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1874).

[194] Rev. Lewis Hughes and Joan de Rivera, as quoted in Games, *Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 48.

To be sure, the numbers pale beside figures for adult immigrants to the colonies. Peter Wilson Coldham estimates that between fifty to one hundred English ships carried settlers to Virginia between 1624 and 1635, and Alison Games has traced nearly 5,000 people from London who migrated to the colonies in 1635 alone.[195] Though children transported as servants may not have made up one of the largest segments of the overall immigrant population, and not all child servants were forced into servitude, focusing on the larger pattern of state involvement in child labor beyond the more widely known shipments of 1619 and 1620 is important, as it helps to deepen historical understanding of the social and ethical controversies which characterized British colonial expansion.

Parental Perspectives

Grasping the full implications of thousands of children subjected to dangerous conditions and arduous labor in the colonies requires an understanding of the potential conflicts between parents of these children and the state that explicitly or implicitly sanctioned their indenture. Recognizing the prevailing attitudes towards children is crucial in assessing how extensive the state's reach was in commandeering their labor for the colonial venture. It may seem obvious that, confronted with the prospect of their children being sent into servitude in distant lands, poor parents struggling for survival themselves most likely experienced a mix of emotions. However, the actual balance of those emotions, i.e. where they may have landed on the spectrum of indifference to devastating grief, has been hotly debated by scholars in the relatively new discipline of the history of childhood. Some have argued that a sense of children as fragile beings in need of protection had not yet developed among the lower classes at this point. Lawrence

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[195] Games, *Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 1.

Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800,* appears to confirm this. He characterizes the common attitudes of impoverished parents towards their children as "indifferent, cruel, erratic, and unpredictable," largely due to the constant struggle to survive, concluding that children of the poor were, "often neglected, and sometimes abandoned, since they could not be fed," and that, "those who were kept were liable to be roughly treated."[196] The indisputable evidence of child abandonment in difficult circumstances, Stone believes, suggests that lower-class parents felt a need to obtain some economic benefit from their children.[197] It is important to remember, however, that such abandonment was not necessarily indicative of a lack of affection, but often a desperate last resort under impossible circumstances.

Though upper-class contemporaries did claim that the poor expressed, "great thankfulness" when their children died, because they had one less mouth to feed, Patricia Crawford argues that parental feelings during this era were far more layered than those contemporaries seemed to believe.[198] Rather than indifference, the spectrum of parental emotions when faced with the death of a child likely ranged from relief to guilt, self-blame to despair. Even if parents did feel some degree of relief at the idea of one less mouth to feed, they are likely to have blamed themselves for their failure to keep a child alive. Seeing their children starve, Crawford contends, caused poor parents "intolerable anguish, even driving some to murder."[199] The doctrine of providentialism, which held that all that all earthly events were messages from God, meant that many parents may have interpreted their children's deaths as a punishment for their own sins, dramatically intensifying these feelings of guilt.

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[196] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper, 1977) 393, 470.
[197] Ibid, 114.
[198] Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England,* 129.
[199] Ibid, 121.

Paradoxically, at the same time wealthier contemporaries accused poor parents of being glad to lose a child to death, they also alleged that those parents were foolishly tender-hearted and failed to punish their children adequately.[200] This contradiction suggests a significant disconnect between the realities of parenting in poverty and the perceptions of the wealthier classes. Despite this widespread belief, many examples can be found of mothers and fathers using harsh discipline to correct their children, at times to such a degree that observers found unjustifiable.[201] Poverty, coupled with harsh living conditions and high stress levels, sometimes escalated into physical abuse. According to Crawford, a belief in ensuring obedience through strict discipline and threats of damnation, rooted in Protestant Christianity, was common among the lower classes.[202] Yet, there are also examples of poor parents who went the opposite direction and behaved very indulgently towards their children.[203] Superstition and stories of ghosts and goblins were common among the poor, and well-known nursery rhymes worked to instill good behavior through fear, as did fanciful threats, such as, "The rats will eat you alive," or "Your insides will rot away."[204]

However, Crawford notes several instances in which parents tried their utmost to protect and defend their children even when they did wrong. For instance, one father whose child had robbed a woman begged her to "make no more noise about it," promising to recompense her and be her "friend for life."[205] In another case, a mother whose son was on trial for theft staunchly defended him, maintaining that she had always strived to earn an honest living and had

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[200] Ibid, 144.
[201] See Ch. 3, "Bringing Up a Child," in Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*.
[202] Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 145.
[203] Ibid, 129.
[204] Ibid., 147.
[205] Ibid, 138.

instilled the same values in her child, but that circumstances had arisen that were beyond his control.[206] A mother whose daughter had run away from her master declared in court that her child would rather die than continue to live with her master, and the mother herself threatened to commit suicide if the court should punish her daughter.[207]

Even more direct evidence of the possibility that parents did not universally accept plans to send their young children to work in the colonies comes from the stories of those who resisted the removal of their children under pauper apprentice laws, especially given that these children would remain in England. Resistance was more widespread than one might imagine, as evidenced by records of law officers in the 1630s complaining of "the unwillingness of foolish poor parents to part with their children."[208] Mothers and fathers sometimes tried to retrieve children who had been bound out as apprentices, as well.[209] Crawford notes that many parents did not care for the idea of young children working hard, and did not think it was good for them.[210] In Bristol, town officials believed the construction of a larger workhouse would, restrain "fond Parents, who upon frivolous Pretences would take their Children from the Parochial Work-house."[211] These and many other instances underscore the deep-seated love and protective instincts in these parents, challenging an upper-class mindset. These records reveal not that parents were eager to be relieved of the cost of supporting their children, but that they distinctly wanted their children to remain at home, and kept them at home for as long as they were able.[212]

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[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid, 158.
[208] Charles I - Volume 250: November 1-19, 1633 | *British History Online*, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas1/1633-4/, 270-293.
[209] Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 106-107, 158-61.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Anonymous, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Maintenance of the Poor In a Letter to a Member of Parliament.* (London: T. Goodwin, 1700) 17.
[212] Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 172.

As further evidence of the parent-child bond in poor families, Richard Frethorne's letter to his parents indicates that he had confidence in their love and desire for his wellbeing. He addresses them as "Loving and Kind Father and Mother," describing his destitution and telling them, "I know if you did but see me, you would weep to see me" and asking them to give his love to all his friends and family.[213] This correspondence communicates the boy's strong belief in his parents' deep care and concern for him. It also illustrates a considerable depth of familial affection, and a trust that the parents will be moved to hear about their child's hardships. Richard's insistence on communicating his plight to his parents, and his belief in their capacity and willingness to intervene, suggests that he viewed his parents as protectors and potential saviors. Despite the vast geographical distance between them, he still sought solace and hoped for rescue by his family.

Considering the wide variation in parental attitudes and family dynamics, it is logical to assume that attitudes also varied when it came to the subject of colonial servitude. What is certain is that the dire economic circumstances struggling families experienced made the elites' ideas of child rearing irrelevant to poor parents, who had much less support and fewer resources than those in higher social and economic classes. The state often called fathers away for military service and provided inadequate forms of childcare for working mothers.[214] Many families were headed by single parents, whether through death or abandonment. Mothers were sometimes forced to decide which child had the greatest needs, and might be forced to sacrifice one child over another when it came to adequate food and nurturing. For a man, the inability to provide for his family impacted his social authority and sense of masculinity. Though impoverished parents

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[213] Letter from Richard Frethorne to His Parents, May 20, 1623, in Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 4:58-62.
[214] Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 155-56, 167, 198.

may have earnestly wanted to protect their children, and tried their best to do so, both the rigors of life and the power imbalances of the time often rendered this an impossibility.

The choices parents made regarding their children's future were heavily influenced by societal norms and economic necessities. According to Patricia Crawford, apprenticeships may have been more easily found for boys than girls, but there is some evidence that widowed parents sought to keep girls at home, as they were more of an asset to the domestic economy.[215] Girls also required more sexual protection, though young boys were not immune to sexual abuse.[216]

Because several instances of sexual abuse of servants can be found in the records of London's Old Bailey Criminal Court from later in the century, it is safe to assume that such things occurred during this era as well. For example, apprentice Stephen Arrowsmith was convicted of raping his master's eight-year-old daughter repeatedly over the course of six months. Arrowsmith pled innocent, claiming that the child "took pleasure in" their encounters.[217] The Court replied, "with great detestation and abhorrence of so Horrid and Vile an Offence," that no child under ten years of age should be abused, with or without consent.[218] However, the court often ruled against offenders in cases where victims were above the age of ten. For instance, twelve-year-old Hepzibah Dover testified that she had been raped twice by her stepfather. A doctor was called to the stand and declared that the girl "appeared to be abused, and in a very

[215] Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England,* 159.
[216] See Ch. 3, "Bringing Up a Child," in Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 142-3, 146-7, 250.
[217] Stephen Arrowsmith. Sexual Offences; rape. 11 December 1678, "Old Bailey Online – The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913 – Central Criminal Court," https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t16781211e-2?text=%22stephen%20arrowsmith%22.
[218] Ibid.

vile condition," whereupon the court sentenced the stepfather to death.[219] While the court records of Old Bailey begin only in 1674, they likely reflect patterns of abuse that were present earlier.[220]

It must be considered, too, that these records most likely represent only a small fraction of actual cases of sexual abuse. Impoverished parents had neither the time nor the money to wage a court case, and even in the later records, children were often very hesitant to talk about what they had experienced, out of fear of being punished. As a result, many incidents of sexual abuse are likely to have gone unreported.

Records from the next century suggest that indentured children and teens on ships bound for the Americas may have faced particularly perilous circumstances, especially females. Servant Elizabeth Hughes described her gang rape by the captain and crew members on board the *Tryton* in 1749, which her employers responded to by telling her it was "the business of everybody on board to oblige the captain," dismissing her from their service, and telling the captain he could do with her as he wished.[221] On a 1742-43 voyage from Scotland, an especially attractive girl from the Scottish Highlands was taken to the crew's quarters, where she died under mysterious circumstances.[222] The same sailor who testified to this also reported that during the sale of the ship's young passengers, one of the girls was deliberately kept back by the first mate for his own personal use, strongly suggesting the sexual abuse of a minor.[223]

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[219] William Garner. Sexual Offences; rape. 7 September 1748, "Old Bailey Online," https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17480907-50?text=%22hepzibah%20dover%22.
[220] See "Old Bailey Online - The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913 - Central Criminal Court," https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/.
[221] Peter Wilson Coldham, *Bonded Passengers to America* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1983) 72-74.
[222] CS29/1769/2/10, *Peter Williamson, merchant in Edinburgh v Captain William Fordyce of Auchorties and Walter Cochran of Dumbreck* (1769), NAS.
[223] Ibid.

Parental action in the face of the abuse of their children, their resistance to forced apprenticeship, even harsh punishments designed to instill a sense of danger and the need for submission all suggest that those who wanted to use poor children as laborers in the new world could not reliably count on parental complicity. While circumstances varied, and some parents might not have forced the issue, the substantial evidence of caring, protective parents who sought to keep their children close to home challenges the notion that parents would have wholeheartedly supported a system that sent their children to distant lands.

Systemic Issues

Rather than impoverished parents being eager to shed their children by sending them out as colonial servants, evidence of high labor demands and profits to be gained suggests that a larger, more complex system was shaping the dynamics of child indenture. The English upper class praised the transplantation of pauper children as a commendable, generous act. Sir John Chamberlain expressed the thoughts of many aristocrats when he wrote in October 1618, that transporting London children to Virginia was "one of the best deeds that could be done," and all at a minimal cost to the city.[224] However, while elites framed this relocation of poor children to the Americas as an act of benevolence, economic motivations clearly shaped these decisions. Though there is no reason to believe that wealthy men such as Chamberlain were not genuinely sympathetic to the plight of underprivileged children, and viewed their relocation as a beneficial solution, they overlooked considerations such as the children's consent and individual freedoms -

[224] Norman Egbert McClure, *The Letters of John Chamberlain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939) 2:170; Kupperman, *Jamestown Project*, 292; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire,* 117.

principles that would later underpin liberal thought, exemplified in the philosophy of John Locke.

Through their unpaid labor, indentured children became crucial pillars of the colonial economic structure, as Sandra Dahlberg explains, stabilizing the risk for planters, and thereby contributing to the sustained viability of the colonial communities.[225] Furthermore, the practice of sending these children to distant colonies fundamentally undermined the protections they were accorded under the Poor Law, which stipulated that they must be provided with at least two sets of clothing, shoes, a cloak, and a hat, along with sufficient food and shelter.[226] From such a great distance, an English parish had no control over colonial masters and could not ensure that the children were being properly treated and provided for, as they could those apprenticed in England. Thus, a vacuum of accountability and oversight was created, which profit-hungry planters often took advantage of.

In Virginia, the Colonial Council was tasked with overseeing the treatment of children sent to the colony from England, but the men on the Council were not disinterested observers. Many of them personally profited from the labor of indentured children, creating a significant conflict of interest.[227] Though responsible for protecting the welfare of these children, council members frequently prioritized their own economic interests over their guardianship responsibilities.[228] In essence, the very mechanism intended to safeguard these children became complicit in their exploitation. By removing child servants from the safety net of English legal

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225 Dahlberg, "Richard Frethorne," 21.
226 Anne Cole, *An Introduction to Poor Law Documents Before 1834* (London: Alden, 2000) 23.
227 Dahlberg, "Richard Frethorne," 22.
228 Ibid.

protections, colonial masters were able to maintain unbridled control over their servants' labor, commercial value, and their very bodies.

Allegations of corruption also tainted the 1641 Weld-Peter Mission, in which colonial agent Hugh Peter orchestrated a shipment of children to Massachusetts. It was framed as an act of benevolence, an opportunity to provide these underprivileged children "driven out of Ireland; and other poor fatherless children of this Kingdom [England], that are out of Employment," with a fresh start in the New World, and funds were actively raised through public collections, giving it the aura of a noble cause.[229] However, rumors arose that the children sent to Massachusetts had been abducted from the streets of Essex, and that the money collected for them had been misappropriated to line the pockets of officials involved. Historian Raymond Phineas Stearns notes that a portion of the funds raised was used to build a house for a participating official, while two others appear to have been guilty of embezzlement.[230] Upon their arrival in the colonies, many of the child servants faced harsh treatment.[231] One, a boy named Nathaniel Sewell, died at the hands of a master who overworked him, exposed him to harsh weather, hung him in the chimney, and refused him water.[232]

Significantly, several prominent members of the English and colonial political elite who played a key role in shaping public policy were also reaping substantial profits from the

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[229] Quoted in Stearns, *Weld-Peter Mission*, 214.
[230] Ibid, 215-216.
[231] Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) 187; Wareing*, Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade,* 31; see also Leo Francis Stock, ed., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America. Vol. 1 1542-1688* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924) 139-140; Stearns, *Weld-Peter Mission,* 283; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) 312-313..
[232] John Winthrop, "Winthrop's Journal 1630-1649," Vol. 2 in *Colonial America a History in Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 187.

shipment of servants. The conflict of interest here is clear – those who benefited financially from the exploitation of child servants were much less likely to support and enforce legislation strictly regulating the servant trade, and more likely to turn a blind eye to abuses of the system. One of these powerful men was Martin Noell, elected to Parliament in 1647, who also served on the Board of Trade, and the Council of State. In Parliament, Noell was on the committee on poor relief and colonial affairs, which was responsible for coordinating the shipment of vagrants, criminals, and other undesirables to the colonies. As a sugar merchant and planter with estates across the Caribbean, Noell was profiting heavily from the shipment of indentured servants and African slaves to various parts of the British Atlantic empire.[233]

Another powerful Englishman was Noell's close business partner, the successful colonial merchant Thomas Povey, who served with him on the "Committee for Managing the Affairs of Jamaica," and held the office of secretary on the Council for Trade in the America during Cromwell's rule. In 1655, Noell and Povey proposed the formation of a West Indian Trade Company specifically for the shipment of "vagabonds, beggars, or condemned persons" to Barbados, though the idea was rejected.[234] Nonetheless, they did receive contracts the following year to ship Scottish highlanders to the island.[235]

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[233] For information on Noell, Abbott, Povey, and Thomson, see John Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes: an Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Abigail Leslie Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); R. B. Sheridan, "The Rise of a Colonial Gentry: A Case Study of Antigua, 1730-1775," *The Economic History Review* 13:3 (1961) 342–357.

[234] Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, 20; Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convicgt Labor in America* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965) 56; Hilary M. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 53-54.

[235] Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, 50.

Merchant and colonial planter Maurice Abbott was Governor of the East India Trading Company, councilor and alderman for the city of London, and a politician in the English House of Commons before becoming Lord Mayor of London in 1638. Abbott had estates in Virginia, Bermuda, St. Christopher, and Barbados, from which he shipped tobacco, sugar, and indigo. As early as 1619, he was engaged in shipping England's poor into colonial servitude.[236] Another very big name among colonial merchants was Maurice Thomson, owner of several tobacco and sugar plantations. Thomson worked closely with Martin Noell in shipping white servants and black slaves to Virginia and the Caribbean. Along with Noell and Povey, Thomson was considered one of the leaders in an elite circle of merchants who dominated colonial trade and shaped colonial legal policy to suit his own interests.

The evidence presented thus far illustrates how this intertwining of private interests and political responsibilities created an environment where legislation designed to prevent the mistreatment of servants could be easily circumvented or ignored. The power and influence of prominent men shielded them from scrutiny, enabling them to pursue their private objectives unchecked. In essence, elite colonial merchants and planters were able to effectively manipulate the levers of power to create conditions beneficial to their commercial endeavors.

There were instances in which even the supposed protectors, the children's families, exploited this system for their own vindictive or selfish motives. This can be seen in cases where children were sent into colonial servitude as pawns in familial disputes, whether to keep them from inheriting property, or as revenge upon a spouse. The most famous example of this, immortalized in the novel *Kidnapped*, was the kidnapping of twelve-year-old James Annesley of

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[236] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 27.

Dublin by his uncle in an attempt to remove him from the line of inheritance.[237] Though this case would not occur until the next century, instances of this type had been taking place for quite some time by the time of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel. In 1620, after discovering his wife had a lover, Samuel More of Shropshire took the couple's four young children, whom he now assumed to be illegitimate, and sent them to Massachusetts on the *Mayflower* despite many attempts by their mother to protect them. Three of the four children died within the year. [238] Another father, John Hornold of Middlesex, conspired to kidnap his four-year-old son Richard in order to send him Virginia, because he had developed strong doubts about his wife's fidelity. Richard was heir to eight hundred pounds a year, which Hornold was determined to prevent him from accessing. Luckily, the scheme was foiled, and the boy was provided for by his maternal grandfather.[239] Hornold was not alone, there are reports of several men who behaved similarly, after deciding that their wives had been adulterous.[240]

In some cases, members of the gentry disciplined their children or resolved familial disputes by binding them out as colonial servants. In 1623, for example, Lady Elizabeth Finch

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[237] Campbell Craig (lessee of James Annesley, Esquire), *Memoirs of An Unfortunate Young Nobleman: Return'd From Thirteen Years Slavery in America, Where He Had Been Sent By the Wicked Contrivances of His Cruel Uncle* (London: J. Freeman, 1743); A. Roger Ekirch, *Birthright: The True Story That Inspired Kidnapped* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010); Jon Henley, 'Stranger Than Fiction: The True Story Behind Kidnapped', *The Guardian* (February 18, 2010); Simon Edge, 'Kidnapped by a ruthless Lord', *Daily Express* (March 1, 2010).

[238] See *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, (*Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1847), https://www.americanancestors.org/DB202/i/11737/165/0; Martyn J. Whittock, *Mayflower Lives: Pilgrims in a New World and the Early American Experience* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2019); Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England*, (Routledge, 2015) 121-123.

[239] Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, 122-123; Peter Wilson Coldham, "The 'Spiriting' of London Children to Virginia: 1648-1685," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 83:3 (July 1975) 282.

[240] Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 234.

sent her son to Virginia to be "tamed."[241] Apparently this drastic measure failed to work, since shortly after his return from the colonies the young man died of injuries received in a "drunken quarrel with the watch." Similarly, Sir Edmund Verney and his wife sent their son Thomas to Virginia in 1634 to prevent an unsuitable marriage. This effort was short-lived, as Thomas somehow managed to return in only a few months, only to be enlisted in the navy by his father soon after.[242] Stories such as these imply that rigid, structured environments were thought to be transformative agents for wayward youths.

Child Convicts

In addition to orphans and children from poverty-stricken families, the ranks of convicted criminals sentenced to transportation also included many children, since anyone over the age of seven was considered an adult in the eyes of the law, if he was judged "capable of deceit" and was punished accordingly.[243] Children between the ages of seven and fourteen could be sentenced to death, if it were shown they knew the difference between good and evil.[244] Penal transportation in England began in 1607 and would not fully end until 1851, with a total of approximately 50,000 offenders having been sent overseas.[245] The rationale was much the same

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[241] John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, Norman Egbert McClure, ed. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939) 2:502; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 157.
[242] John Bruce, ed., *Letters and Papers of The Verney Family Down to the End of the Year 1639* (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Sons, 1838) 160, 163-165; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 157.
[243] Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: In Four Books; with an Analysis of the Work* (New York: W. E. Dean, 1847) 1:386.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigration to the Americas of Felons, Destitute Children, Political and Religious Non-Conformists, Vagabonds, Beggars and Other Undesirables, 1607-1776* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 2007) 2, 7.

as that for transporting the waifs of London. In 1611, Governor Thomas Dale of Virginia wrote to the earl of Salisbury on the subject, claiming that the convicts themselves would benefit, and that their servitude would be useful in advancing the colony, as well as contributing to the commercial and industrial growth of England.[246] This idea resonated with those in power, and in 1614, King James advocated that judges recommend colonial servitude as an alternative penalty for those convicted of petty crimes on the basis that the courts would avoid having to put so many people to death for relatively trivial offenses.[247]

Criminals transported for a capital offense served for fourteen years, while those who were sentenced for non-capital offenses were given seven years of service.[248] However, in the case of children, the term of service depended upon age, just as it did for poor children. In both cases, males were generally required to work until the age of twenty-one, and females until the age of twenty or until marriage. Since children could be bound to indenture contracts at a very young age, this resulted in especially lengthy terms of service. Richard B. Morris reports children as young as six being bound to indenture contracts.[249] The legality of a contract signed by a six-year-old seems dubious to modern sensibilities. However, Sandra Dahlberg has found children of two years old entering pauper apprenticeships, and Ruth Wallis Herndon and John E. Murray also note cases of extremely young children being apprenticed, even revealing that,

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[246] Letter from Thomas Dale to Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, August 17, 1611, in William Noel Sainsbury, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, Vol. 1, 1574-1660: Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1880) 11-12, *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol1.
[247] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 56.
[248] Roger Kershaw and Janet Sacks, *New Lives for Old* (Kew: The National Archives, 2008) 13; Philip Bean and Joy Melville, Lost Children of the Empire (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990) 29.
[249] Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America*, (New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1946) 391.

"children were bound out at every age from a few months old."[250] Since many of those in pauper apprenticeships were sent to the colonies, it should not be surprising to find extremely young children appearing in colonial courts to have the terms of their indentures set. In fact, during the previous century all contracts signed by children of any age were considered legally valid as long as a magistrate had approved them.[251] As Holly Brewer has revealed, in 1563 government authorities were legally permitted to coerce children into signing indenture contracts by imprisoning them until they agreed.[252] By the next century, indenture laws had changed to stipulate a legal age of consent under which parental signature was necessary, but this still did not apply to children deemed vagrants, who could legally be picked up without parental consent and shipped abroad.[253]

Even more than the poor, those convicted of criminal acts were considered undesirables that the country would be much better off without. Juvenile offenders who had committed crimes we would now consider misdemeanors were packed into jail cells, then onto ships, with the most violent offenders. Peter Wilson Coldham relates that by far the most common crime they were

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[250] Ruth Wallis Herndon and John E. Murray, eds., *Children Bound to Labor: The Pauper Apprentice System in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009) 15.
[251] Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 243.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Parliament of England and Wales, "January 1647: An Ordinance for Encouragement of Adventurers to the Several Plantations of Virginia, Bermudas, Barbados, and Other Places of America," in C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1911) 912-913; "Order in Council 846, 1862-12-13 at Whitehall," in J. W. Fortescue, *CSPC, America and West Indies, 1681-1685* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898); Privy Council of England and Wales, At the Court at Whitehall, This 26 Day of March 1686. Present, the Kings Most Excellent Majest*y ... : Whereas It Has Been Represented to His Majesty, That by Reason of the Frequent Abuses of a Lewd Sort of People, Called Spirits, in Seducing Many of His Majesties Subjects to Go on Shipboard, Where They Have Been Seized, and Carried by Force to His Majesties Plantations in America ...*, (Westminster: W. Bridgeman, 1686).

transported for was theft of a handkerchief, though he believes this may have been a "token indictment" used by merciful judges to reduce charges for more serious offenses.[254] "The majority of those transported to the colonies," Coldham writes, "may . . . justly be regarded as having fallen victim to oppressive circumstances and harsh environment rather than as professional villains."[255]

Conclusions

The practice of transporting juvenile criminals and underprivileged children into colonial servitude was a means of leveraging these minors as assets in the pursuit of colonial expansion and profit. Initiated in 1618 with the transportation of London street children, this policy established a precedent for utilizing minors to supply the labor demands of colonies in the British Atlantic. The relative ease with which these children could be so readily removed without proper verification of their circumstances speaks to a governmental inclination to view/treat these young lives as instruments in the larger economic and colonial machine. Moreover, the intervention by the Privy Council granting authority to transport the second group against their will further emphasizes the coercive nature of this process and the state's role in facilitating their forced relocation.

Despite the survival of less than ten percent of the child servants shipped from London in 1619 and 1620, policymakers hailed that initial mission as a great success. They most likely overlooked the high mortality rates due to the larger profits to be made from providing cheap

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[254] Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains*, 3, 15.
[255] Ibid, 14.

labor to the colonies. As a result, the removal of poor children to the colonies became a sustained policy. The scale of these operations, as revealed in the mention of around 1,500 children being sent in a single instance in 1627, coupled with the records of repeated shipments taking place as late as 1664, indicates significant state involvement in the promotion and facilitation of forced child labor. By removing these groups to the Americas, the English government was able to effectively control population and reduce pressures on social welfare systems, while simultaneously serving the labor needs of the colonies. What's more, by populating the colonies with English servants, the authorities hoped to strengthen England's grip on these territories. Sending the "idle" and the poor to work in the colonies enabled the authorities to kill two birds with one stone – boosting the colonial economy and relieving pressure on domestic resources.

That the demand for child laborers continued to grow, resulting in several additional requests by the colonies illustrates that child servants were a coveted resource in the colonial project, one which warranted a widespread campaign to procure them. Though traditionally thought to be a less significant segment of colonial immigration, as compared to other groups, the importance of indentured child labor to the colonial economy is demonstrated by the continuation of this practice over several decades. Indentured children, through their uncompensated labor, directly contributed to the colonies' economic growth.

The shipment of child laborers to the colonies also functioned as a tool of social control, enforcing class hierarchies. Expansion of the colonial labor market was fundamentally supported by Elizabethan criminal law, which also served as an instrument of class oppression, targeting the underprivileged and "undesirable." Children, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds, were placed at the bottom of this hierarchy, stripped of their agency, and coerced into accepting their subservient position in society. What's more, this system eroded poor

parents' rights, giving parents little to no claim over their children. Coercive laws and policies enabled the government to intervene and commodify their children as labor resources. Many parents, trapped in a cycle of poverty and confronted with limited options might have seen the shipment of their children to the Americas as a necessary, albeit painful, sacrifice. However, even when they deeply wished to, impoverished parents were often unable to keep their children.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL PRISONERS, CONVICT TRANSPORTATION, AND THE RISE OF KIDNAPPING

As the seventeenth century progressed, the nature and scale of government-facilitated forced migration evolved in magnitude and scope. From the deportation of poor children and vagrants, the English state soon branched out to include prisoners of war, political dissidents, and basically anyone deemed to threaten the established order in any way. Paradoxically, the First English Civil War of 1642, which sought to end the tyranny of Charles I, paved the way for a surge in the trafficking of unfree labor across the Atlantic world.[256]

Despite a decline in population due to wartime casualties, the period following the war's end in 1646 saw a steep rise in the number of people unwillingly transported to the colonies.[257] The reasons for this were twofold. First, the overthrow of the monarchy, followed by Oliver Cromwell's rise to power during the Interregnum, had led to a regime deeply focused on consolidating its authority and suppressing dissent. Consequently, those who resisted the new government found themselves condemned to be transported overseas. Secondly, in response to growing demands for labor in the colonies, unscrupulous tactics in servant recruitment became increasingly widespread, resulting in many non-criminal, non-vagrant individuals being transported to the Americas against their will.

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[256] Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) 183.
[257] Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 2:129-30; Charles Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experience of the British Civil Wars, 1638-1651* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 191-219; John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: "There Is Great Want of Servants,"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 32; Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution,* 12, 183.

In this chapter, I will argue that the government's attempts to suppress dissent, along with unscrupulous tactics in servant recruitment targeting children and adolescents in particular, combined with the African slave trade to play a foundational role in the construction of England's Atlantic imperial economy. Therefore, an examination of the trade in child labor exposes deep flaws within the ethical and moral framework of Britain's early empire. I will demonstrate how English authorities proved ineffective or reluctant to pass and enforce laws preventing the abduction of minors, partly due to prevailing prejudices against the poor and partly because the elites benefited from the trade in child labor. While there were indeed officials and judicial figures strongly opposed to kidnapping who made genuine attempts to eradicate it, the overarching failure and inconsistency in enforcing these laws reveal a troubling degree of complicity by the English state.[258] Colonial lawmakers, motivated by their desire to sustain a steady flow of inexpensive labor, contributed to this exploitation by implementing "custom of the country" laws, which cleverly bypassed English prohibitions against the forced migration of children. Officially aimed at standardizing labor practices, these laws in reality served to legitimize the system of child trafficking, and that this legal framework made it much easier to exploit minors as a labor resource within England's rapidly expanding imperial economy.

Background

As England's transatlantic empire expanded, the North American colonies and the West Indies became integral parts of a complex mercantile system, designed to channel benefits back

[258] For a more generous view of the efforts of lawmakers and other officials, see Kristen McCabe Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire: British Law, Liberty, and the Global Migration of Destitute Children, c. 1607-1760* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023).

to the metropole, primarily through the exchange of goods, laborers, and raw materials between the colonies and the mother country.[259] The colonies provided products such as tobacco, sugar, and cotton, naval stores which were not readily available in England, thereby enriching the British economy. In return, colonies were expected to purchase English manufactured goods, fostering a cycle of dependency that enhanced England's economic stature. This economic strategy influenced policies such as the Navigation Acts, which restricted colonial trade to English ships and mandated that certain colonial goods could only be exported to England.[260]

This period witnessed a significant restructuring of trade as sugar and tobacco became vital imports, shifting the focus of English trade from Europe to the Americas and other regions, and fundamentally altering the global economic landscape. Beginning in the 1640s, massive global demand for sugar led to the rise of massive sugar plantations in the Caribbean, which surpassed many contemporary textile manufactories in scale and complexity, incorporating new

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[259] See Jessica S. Hower, *Tudor Empire: The Making of Early Modern Britain and the British Atlantic World, 1485-1603* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020); Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*; Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute, 1972); Sean M Kelley, "New World Slave Traders and the Problem of Trade Goods: Brazil, Barbados, Cuba and North America in Comparative Perspective," *English Historical Review* 134:567 (June 12, 2019): 302–33; Russell R. Menard, "Plantation Empire: How Sugar and Tobacco Planters Built Their Industries and Raised an Empire," *Agricultural History* 81:3 (Summer, 2007) 309-332.
[260] Ibid; O. M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951); Nicole A. Jacoberger, "Sugar Rush: Sugar and Science in the British Caribbean: Britain & the World," *Britain & the World*, 14:2 (September, 2021) 128–50; Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Larry Sawers, "The Navigation Acts Revisited: Economic History Review," *Economic History Review*, 45:2 (May 1992) 262–84; B.W. Higman, "The Sugar Revolution," *Economic History Review,* 53:2 (2000) 213–36; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London: Verso, 2003); Lawrence A. Harper, *The English Navigation Laws; a Seventeenth-Century Experiment in Social Engineering* (New York: Octagon Books, 1964).

technologies to maximize sugar production.[261] By 1650, Britain was importing approximately 5,000 tons of sugar annually from Barbados alone, reflecting sugar's ascendancy as a cornerstone of the colonial economy.[262] As a result of the Navigation Acts, English maritime capabilities expanded considerably as well, with the merchant fleet growing from 150,000 tons in 1640 to 340,000 tons by the mid-1680s, marking what many historians consider a "commercial revolution."[263]

The shift towards plantation agriculture, particularly sugar, required an immense labor force, leading to greater dependency on indentured servants and, increasingly, African slaves. Bound labor was pivotal for landowning colonists, whose prosperity and influence hinged on access to a cheap, plentiful workforce, and thus on their participation in the trafficking of slaves, convicts, and indentured servants. Since demand for both tobacco and sugar was surging, the goal became to produce as much of both as possible for export.

Questions of Liberty and the Rights of Englishmen

This environment set the stage for an English Atlantic realm characterized by escalating unfreedom and persistent disputes over rights.[264] Against the backdrop of pro-Stuart uprisings, the concept of "liberty" resonated deeply, and the rhetoric was widely applied. Planters, while reaping the fruits of forced labor, were quick to condemn any policy that threatened their access

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[261] Jacoberger, "Sugar Rush"; Menard, "Plantation Empire"; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; Higman, "Sugar Revolution".
[262] Menard, "Plantation Empire," 310; Jacoberger, "Sugar Rush," 131.
[263] Menard, "Plantation Empire," 323-324.
[264] See "Chapter 6: Lost Liberty and Laboring People in the Atlantic World," in Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

to cheap workers. To justify their stance, they co-opted the language of liberties and rights, equating their entitlement to utilize bound labor with the inherent rights of freeborn Englishmen.[265] The sight of bound laborers working on Barbadian plantations served as a reminder to the planters of the consequences of lost freedom. As Carla Gardina Pestana explains, this constant visual prompted a heightened fervor in their discourse and intensified their underlying anxieties about liberty.[266] The 1650s, a period marked by a surge in the Barbadian sugar industry, also witnessed an increasing interest from English merchants in expanding trade within the Caribbean. The growth of the slave and indentured servant trades alongside the merchants' ambitions made for a landscape where economic aspirations were intertwined with deep-seated fears about the fragility of personal liberty.

While the underlying bias against Scots and Irish made the transportation of political adversaries from these countries less objectionable to the English, the imprisonment and forced servitude of rebels who had been free-born Englishmen seemed more questionable. This issue was thrust to the forefront during a 1659 Parliamentary debate in England addressing the treatment of Salisbury rebels, men who had fought for Charles I in the Civil War, and had been exiled to Barbados as punishment under Cromwell's Interregnum. Sir John Lenthall remarked, "I hope it is not the effect of our war to make merchandise of men." Sir Arthur Haselrigge echoed these sentiments, observing that, "If we have fought our sons into slavery we are of all men most miserable."[267]

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[265] Ibid, 191.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Sir John Lenthall and Sir Arthur Haselrigge, quoted in Hilary Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 52-53.

The leaders who had passionately championed liberty and freedom during the revolution found themselves increasingly viewed by the public as hypocrites. A pamphlet published in 1659 fueled this discontent, immediately producing a major scandal. Seventy men and teenage boys suspected of taking part in a 1654-55 Royalist rebellion in the west of England had been condemned without a trial and transported to Barbados. Two gentlemen who were among this group, Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle, published a pamphlet entitled “Englands Slavery, or Barbados merchandize” revealing the mistreatment of the rebels and the horrible conditions under which they labored. Hailing themselves as “freeborn people of this nation, now in slavery,” they protested that they and the others had been, “picked up, as they travelled upon their lawfull occasions,” kept prisoner for an entire year without trial, then abruptly put aboard a ship bound for Barbados where they were sold as plantation laborers.[268] Many of those in the group, they stressed, had been nowhere near the area where the revolt took place, and one seventy-six-year-old man had been transported merely for stating that if he were younger he would join the rebels.[269] “If this be the liberty and privilege of the Subject [of England],”the authors lamented, “the people of England are in but a sad condition.”[270]

This was a blatant abuse of authority, intensified after Cromwell's death in 1658, under his weak successor, Richard Cromwell. The idea that Englishmen, especially those of noble birth, were facing such conditions enraged the populace. One parliamentarian noted that the

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[268] Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle, “Englands Slavery, or Barbados Merchandize; Represented in a Petition to the High Court of Parliament, by Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle Gentlemen, on Behalf of Themselves and Three-Score and Ten More Free-Born Englishmen Sold (Uncondemned) into Slavery: Together with Letters Written to Some Honourable Members of Parliament," (London, n. p., 1659) 3-5.
[269] Ibid, 13.
[270] Ibid.

scandal "almost set the nation in a flame."[271] The episode became a focal point of criticism against the Cromwellian regime, illustrating how the basic rights of Englishmen were being disregarded. It was now clear that the colonial machine could, at its convenience, turn its back on the very values it claimed to propagate, and citizens' rights could be disregarded in favor of political expediency.

Convict Transportation

In addition to the many political prisoners sent to labor on colonial plantations, transportation of those convicted of crimes in English courts steadily increased throughout the century. The scales were heavily weighted against most of the accused. The laws and legal system, including the death statutes, largely represented the interests of the propertied classes and their desire to maintain the existing social order. This was especially true for those owning land in the colonies who needed a steady supply of plantation labor. In contrast, those who found themselves in English jails and prisons were most often from the ranks of the propertyless and oppressed. Jurors, responsible for determining the fate of these defendants, were typically small landowners, sharing the same social class as the creditors, landlords, employers, constables, and overseers who were most often prosecutors of the accused.[272] Therefore, they had a vested interest in maintaining the social order and protecting property rights. As if this was not enough, judges were allowed to dispense favors and payments to jurors, influencing their decisions.[273] In

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[271] Leo Francis Stock, ed., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, Vol. 1 1542-1688*, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924) 252.
[272] Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 74-79.
[273] Ibid, 83

fact, according to Peter Linebaugh, some jurors actively sought jury service as a means to seek political office or preferment, while others were driven by personal grievances or a desire for revenge over their enemies, resulting in harsh verdicts. These jurors would often align their decisions with the government's interests, stretching evidence to support convictions.[274]

Those transported for crimes included many children and adolescents, most of them either impoverished children who had resorted to stealing what they could not buy, adolescent females who turned to prostitution, or teen boys who had fallen in with a bad crowd, joining one of the many gangs that infested urban areas and were prone to pickpocketing and other forms of stealing, including breaking into homes.[275] Interestingly, Linebaugh reveals that approximately forty percent of criminals hanged in London were apprentices.[276] Since most apprentices completed their training in their early twenties, nearly half of those hanged would have been young people.

The public's perceptions towards the transportation of these vagrants and convicts varied, based upon social station. For the upper classes, this was deemed a pragmatic approach to remedying societal challenges. Those closer to the transportees naturally had a different take on the matter, but a significant portion of the population remained indifferent, perceiving the practice as a distant concern or even an essential measure for maintaining societal order. The

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[274] Ibid, 83-84.

[275] See Bethlem Museum of the Mind Archive, BCB-06, *Minutes of the Court of Governors*; Bridewell Royal Hospital, *Records of Individuals Ordered to be Sent to Virginia, 1618-1637*, Library of Virginia, #26237, Personal Papers Collection; entries for Bridewell in Coldham, *Complete Book of Emigrants*; James Revel, *The Poor Unhappy Transported Felon's Sorrowful Account. Of His Fourteen Years Transportation at Virginia in America. In Six Parts. By James Revel, the Unhappy Sufferer. ... Concluding with a Word of Advice to All Young Men* (London: printed and sold in Stonecutter Street, Fleet Market, 1780).

[276] Linebaugh, *The London Hanged,* 98, 101-102.

transportation of vagrants and convicts had a profound impact on public perceptions of colonists and the colonies themselves, reflecting a sense of "metropolitan" superiority over the colonies. In 1644, Sir Josiah Child painted a harsh picture of colonists in Barbados, describing them as "a sort of loose vagrant people, vicious and destitute of means to live at home," and a decade later Lionel Gatford reflected these sentiments, declaring that those who settled Virginia were, "the most of them the very scum and off-scouring of our Nation, vagrants, or condemned persons, or such others, as by the lossness and viciousness of their lives have disabled themselves to subsist any longer in this Nation."[277]

Involuntary Servitude as a Solution for Family Disputes

Through the latter half of the century, involuntary indenture due to familial disputes continued. For instance, John Baker petitioned Parliament in 1660 protesting that his sister had sent him into involuntary servitude in Virginia when he was eleven or twelve.[278] John Semper was accused in 1687 of selling his ward, also named John Semper, to Maryland in order to gain control of the family estate to which the younger John was heir.[279] In a slightly different situation, a young man named James Dennis conspired with his mother Elizabeth to ship Mary Hurlington, mother of his illegitimate child, to Barbados in 1647, reflecting the extent to which individuals could manipulate the indenture system for personal vendettas or to escape social and

[277] Lionel Gatford, "Publick Good without Private Interest," (London: n.p., 1657) 4; Sir Josiah Child quoted in David Souden, "'Rogues, Whores and Vagabonds'? Indentured Servant Emigrants to North America, and the Case of Mid-seventeenth-century Bristol," *Social History* 3:1 (January 1978) 23.
[278] Stock, *Proceedings and Debates*, *Vol. 1,* 269-270; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 158.
[279] London Metropolitan Archives, CLA/004/01/02/003, *Lord Mayor's Charge Book*, Oct. 1695-Aug. 1699, 129; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 158.

financial responsibilities.[280] At times, families still made use of the colonies as a punishment for young people who misbehaved, as shown by two cases which occurred in 1684. That June, the parents of Elizabeth Bird shipped her off to Carolina after she was found to have stolen lace, and a month later James Godfrey sent his nephew Robert Redman to Maryland because he found him utterly unmanageable.[281]

The Rise of Kidnapping

As the century progressed, attitudes towards life in the colonies evolved. The dissemination of information had initially worked in favor of those recruiting voluntary servants for the plantations, whose enticing picture of life in the colonies went largely unchallenged by first-hand counternarratives. However, growing public awareness of the immense hardships of colonial servitude made business increasingly difficult for labor recruiters. Though few vagrants were transported after 1642, a new and even more sinister phase of forced migration began.[282] As the demand for colonial servants continued to surge, coupled with a decrease in those willing to voluntarily sign indenture papers, recruiters resorted to increasingly unscrupulous means, and the

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[280] London Metropolitan Archives, MJ/SR/1000, recognizances 50 and 51; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 158.

[281] London Metropolitan Archives, MR/E, Indenture 832; John Wareing, "Some Early Emigrants to America, 1683-84: A Supplementary List." *Genealogists' Magazine*, 18 (1976) 240; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 157; Mildred Campbell, "Social Origins of Some Early Americans," in James Morton Smith, ed., *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959) 77.

[282] For the decline in transportation of vagrants, see entries in Peter Wilson Coldham, *The Complete Book of Emigrants, 1607-1660* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1988); and Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 31-32. For the rise in prosecutions for Spiriting after this time, see Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 110; Peter Wilson Coldham, "The 'Spiriting' of London Children to Virginia: 1648-1685," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography," 83:3 (Jul. 1975).

practice of kidnapping, or "spiriting," became a serious problem in the mid-1600s.[283] Mass deportations of felons and paupers had gone relatively unopposed by the general public, but the growing instances of child abduction were another story altogether. These random acts of kidnapping presented a palpable threat that transcended class boundaries, bringing the issue closer to home for many, and inspiring great concern.[284]

As a lucrative spiriting industry developed, highly organized kidnapping rings arose in London, Bristol, Plymouth, Southampton, and Dover.[285] Networks of agents and merchants on both sides of the Atlantic engaged in procuring servants through deceit, coercion, and even violence. Operating as the muscle behind this enterprise were individuals known as "crimps,"

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[283] William Noel Sainsbury, ed., *CSPC, America and West Indies, Vol. 1, 1574-1660* (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1860); Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 46; Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race, Volume Two: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (London: Verso, 1997) 120 – 121; Barry M. Coldrey, "…'a place to which idle vagrants may be sent': The First Phase of Child Migration During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Children and Society,* 13:1 (February, 1999) 41.

[284] For some excellent resources on kidnapping, see John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: "There Is Great Want of Servants,"* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017); John Wareing, "'Violently Taken Away or Cheatingly Duckoyed'. The Illicit Recruitment in London of Indentured Servants for the American Colonies, 1645–1718," *London Journal* 26:2 (November 2001) 1–22; John Wareing, "Preventive and Punitive Regulation in Seventeenth-Century Social Policy: Conflicts of Interest and the Failure to Make 'Stealing and Transporting Children, and Other Persons' a Felony, 1645-73," Social History 27:3 (2002) 288; Anna Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting: Seventeenth Century English Penal Policy and Superfluous Populations," in John Donoghue and Evelyn P. Jennings, eds., *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500-1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 132–59; John Donoghue, "The Axe is Laid to the Rot," in John Donoghue, *Fire under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) 239-276; Daniella Bassi, "Involuntary White Servitude and English Law," *University of Vermont History Review,* Volume XXVI (2015-2016) 1-19.

[285] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 50; Robert H. Bremner, ed., *Children & Youth in America: A Documentary History, Vol I: 1600 – 1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) 9-12.

hired by merchants and mariners to secure servants.[286] They employed a variety of tactics to entice unsuspecting victims. One notorious method involved a deceptive sales pitch, where promises of a blissful life in the colonies were used to lure the gullible and naïve. False assurances of a life of luxury, the finest garments, and royal treatment painted an enticing picture to prospective servants.[287] Adolescent boys were sometimes tempted with alcohol and prostitutes, while younger children were coaxed onto ships with sweets and promises of enjoyable activities.[288] If these means of persuasion failed, crimps often resorted to physical

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[286] Walter Hart Blumenthal, *Brides from Bridewell; Female Felons Sent to Colonial America* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1962) 54-78; Douglas Skelton, *Indian Peter: The Extraordinary Life and Adventures of Peter Williamson* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2007) 24; Lois Green Carr, Phillip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo, eds. *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 127; James S. Borlase, 'Kidnapped or The Adventures of Peter Williamson: A Tale of the Slave Dealers of Aberdeen', *Dundee Courier* (Tuesday, 23 May, 1882) 7; Cheeseman A. Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania: Indentured and Redemption Labor in Colony and Commonwealth, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1926) 146.

[287] Peter Williamson, William Fordyce, and Walter Cochran, *Peter Williamson against William Fordyce of Aquhorties, Walter Cochran of Dumbreck, Town-Clerk-Depute of Aberdeen, Alexander Mitchell of Colpna, Merchant in Aberdeen, Patrick Barron of Woodside, Gilbert Gerrard, David Morris Advocates in Aberdeen, and the Now Deceased Charles Forbes of Shiels, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeen; and Also the Now Deceased James Petrie, Advocate in Aberdeen, Defenders* (Oxford: Bodlean Library, 2010, originally published in Edinburgh, 1765) 49, 53. n. This contains testimony from court case CS29/1769/2/10, held by the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh; Marcus Wilson Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783: Studies of the Economic, Educational, and Social Significance of Slaves, Servants, Apprentices and Poor Folk* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1931) 50; John Donoghue, *Fire under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) 243; Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607 – 1776* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1965) 85.

[288] Peter Williamson, William Fordyce, and Walter Cochran, *Memorial for Peter Williamson against William Fordyce of Aquhorties, Walter Cochran of Dumbreck, Town-Clerk-Depute of Aberdeen, Alexander Mitchell of Colpna, Merchant in Aberdeen, Patrick Barron of Woodside, Gilbert Gerrard, David Morris Advocates in Aberdeen, and the Now Deceased Charles Forbes of Shiels, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeen; and Also the Now Deceased James Petrie, Advocate in Aberdeen, Defenders* (Oxford: Bodlean Library, 2010, originally published in Edinburgh, 1765) 51; Smith, *Colonists in Bondage* 69; Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 243;

force, seizing unwilling victims by force.[289] To further cloak their operations in legitimacy, official-looking office fronts were set up, complete with personnel posing as "office-keepers." Bulk indenture forms were printed, with spaces left blank for the names of unwitting servants. The office managers, described by a contemporary as well-dressed but morally bankrupt, obtained signatures or marks for these forms by any means necessary.[290] This veneer of respectability served to legitimize kidnapping operations in the eyes of many, blurring the lines between lawful commerce and criminality. As Abbott Emerson Smith observed in "Colonists in Bondage," these “kidnappers and spirits instead of being deplorable outlaws in the servant trade were the faithful and indispensable adjuncts of its most respected merchants.”[291]

However, court records indicate that others at the time clearly saw these actions as unlawful. William Haveland (or Haverland) was brought to court twenty-two times between 1668 and 1705 on charges of abducting servants and two cases of “improperly supplying” servants. Haveland was also a prominent London citizen and businessman, who served as a juror, and held several public offices, including constable and High Bailiff. He and John Dykes, brought up on charges eighteen times himself, were accused of spiriting one hundred people out of England in one year. John Wareing has uncovered the fact that Dykes had sixty-four known associates in the business of servant abduction, clearly an extensive and well-organized network.[292] This is powerful evidence that kidnapping was not merely the work of a few isolated

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Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965) 338; Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes,* 50.

[289] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 243; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson,* 49-50; Morris, *Government and Labor*, 338; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 157.

[290] Edward Ward, *The London Spy for the Month of Nov. 1698-Apr. 1700* (London: J. How, 1699) 45-46.

[291] Smith*, Colonists in Bondage*, 77.

[292] Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 112.

individuals, but part of a much more extensive criminal enterprise. Despite their frequent court appearances, seldom were Haveland or Dykes found guilty, raising questions about the extent to which the English law was equipped or willing to deal with such crimes effectively. Even when these men were convicted, they were typically given small fines, though upon one occasion Haveland was fined five hundred pounds.[293] Often the matter appears to have been settled out of court.[294] The constant influx of migrants to London presented ample opportunities for exploitation, and the public positions and influence of men such as these made them unlikely to pay for their crimes.[295]

In the colonies, too, powerful men were involved in the trade. In April 1646, Mary Ford petitioned Parliament for the return of her two children, a boy aged three and a girl aged five, whom she claimed had been stolen by Commissioner of Maryland, Thomas Cornwallis and taken to that colony.[296] There is no record of further prosecution. While no other accusations against Cornwallis have surfaced, it is noteworthy that London merchant Robert Lewellin, whom Cornwallis partnered with, was allegedly involved in unethical practices surrounding the procurement of Irish servants.[297] In addition to his connection with Lewellin, the prominent status of Cornwallis and the prevalent patterns of the era do raise the possibility that he, like many other prominent officials, may have been involved in the illicit servant trade. Similarly, in

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[293] Ibid, 189, 206, 213
[294] Ibid, 233.
[295] For information on Haveland and Dykes, see John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: "There Is Great Want of Servants,"* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[296] Parliamentary Archives: Main Papers, HL/PO/JO/10/1/20425, April 1646 – Petition of Mary Ford, widow, against Thomas Cornwallis, Lords Journals, VIII., 283; Historical Manuscripts Commission, Sixth Report, appendix, 109; Coldham, *Complete Book of Emigrants*, 231.
[297] For information on Lewellin's activities in Ireland, see John W. Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America, 1653 – 60," *Irish Historical Studies* 3:11 (March 1943) 267-281.

May 1645, Edward Peade, a prominent London merchant and commissioner for the Somers Islands (Bermuda), faced allegations of child-stealing, raising questions about the moral compass guiding colonial expansion.[298]

Though indentured servants traditionally came from the lower ranks of society, spirits targeted people across all social classes, particularly children and adolescents. A notable example is the kidnapping of thirteen-year-old Charles Bayly, the son of an aristocratic family, who had himself served as an interpreter for the French ambassador to England.[299] The Bayly family had fled to France to escape the Civil War in England, but young Charles decided he was bored and longed to return to London. Without mentioning this idea to his parents, the thirteen-year-old decided to take a ship back to England. While walking alone on the road to London after the ship docked at Gravesend, he crossed paths with a kidnapper and was taken to Virginia as an indentured servant.[300] Since Bayly's parents had no idea what had become of him, his story did not come to light until he returned to England fifteen years later and published his memoirs.[301]

The backdrop of constant warfare and rebellions facilitated the growth of this facet of the servant trade. The inherent breakdown in social and administrative structures in turbulent political eras contributed to an environment in which it was easier for someone to go missing, the general chaos acting as a smokescreen behind which spirits could operate more freely. In 1657,

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[298] Sainsbury, CSPC, 1:404; David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 275.
[299] Charles Bayley, *A True and Faithful Warning unto the People and Inhabitants of Bristol, and unto the Rulers, Priests, and People of England, in General, That They Might Prepare to Meet the Lord ...: Also Some Queries Which Deeply Concern All Who Are in Authority in the Nation, to Consider of. With a Brief Account of Some Tryals and Sufferings, Which the Author Hereof Hath Suffered ...* (London: publisher not identified, 1663), 7-8.
[300] Ibid, 8.
[301] See Kenneth L. Carroll, "From Bond Slave to Governor: Charles Bayly (1632?-1680)," *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 52:1 (1968) 19–38.

soldiers stationed in London were exposed for arranging the illegal transportation of abducted servants to Jamaica.[302] The revelation that these men belonged to Cromwell's own regiment was especially disturbing, raising pressing questions about the integrity and oversight of those with whom political power rested. That same year, Virginia appeared as the destination for trafficked workers, though in this instance Cromwell's men were not implicated. Church of England clergyman and writer Lionel Gatford noted in his description of Virginia that, "very many Children and servants sent . . . were violently taken away, or cheatingly duckoyed without the consent or knowledge of their Parents or Masters."[303]

Throughout England, a long trail of documented allegations and prosecutions demonstrates the magnitude of this issue, with port cities such as Bristol, London, Gravesend, and Southampton seeing the highest numbers of recorded instances. In 1643 spiriting activities became so common that alarmed port authorities in London launched an investigation into such activities, making multiple arrests.[304] A Parliamentary Ordinance of 1643 stated that there was hardly a ship leaving London for the West Indies that did not carry a cargo of spirited servants. The ordinance provided that every ship leaving the port was to be searched by harbor officials for such individuals.[305] The following year, Bristol mariner Michael Diggens was accused of being "an old Roge" who had tricked many victims into colonial servitude, but Diggens was apparently the tip of the iceberg in that harbor city.[306] In *The Widening Gate*, David Harris Sacks describes how the 1650s and early 1660s saw Bristol's dark underbelly exposed, its archives

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[302] Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution,* 209.
[303] Gatford, "Publick Good," 4-5.
[304] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 50.
[305] Ibid.
[306] David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 253-254.

chronicling a growing list of those accused of similar activities.[307] Even some local noblewomen and the mayor himself were involved in the business.[308] In fact, evidence was uncovered in 1685 that the mayor was actually in league with Bristol's main kidnapping ring.[309] Due to such highly-placed cohorts, as well as extensive webs of informants within the legal system, spirits often seemed to have advanced knowledge regarding government discussions and plans. As a result, whenever investigations were to be mounted, they would go underground to evade detection or capture. They also had an uncanny way of changing their practices to evade new legal measures.[310]

The issue had become so prevalent by 1649 that Virginia planter William Bullock candidly admitted this was the "usual way" of obtaining servants.[311] Bullock reported that ship captains generally stocked up on captives, most of whom were children, at places like St. Katherine's Dock, a fact confirmed by Parliamentary investigations during the 1640s and 1650s, which revealed that most shiploads of servants were made up primarily of those who had been abducted.[312] John Donoghue notes that Carl Helyar, a planter in Barbados, found it necessary to specifically warn his labor recruiter in England to avoid shady agents who specialized in spiriting

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[307] Ibid, 254

[308] C. M. MacInnes, *Bristol and the Slave Trade* (Bristol: Historical Association of Great Britain, 1968) 1-2; James Curtis Ballagh, *White Servitude in the Colony of Virginia: A Study of the System in Indentured Labor in the American Colonies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1895) 38-39; Blumenthal, *Brides from Bridewell*, 67; Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 51.

[309] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 51.

[310] Ibid.

[311] William Bullock, *Virginia Impartially Examined, and Left to Publick View* (London: John Hammond, 1649) 14.

[312] Ibid, 47

servants, a warning that would not have been necessary had not even "respectable" merchants commonly worked hand in hand with kidnappers.[313]

Legislative Attempts and Failures to Stop Servant Abductions

To combat increasing public outcry over this problem, several legal statutes of escalating seriousness were passed in England. A Parliamentary ordinance in 1645 stated that "divers lewd Persons do go up and down the City of London, and elsewhere and in a most barbarous and wicked Manner steal away many little Children," and directed law officers to "be very diligent in apprehending all such persons as are faulty . . . in stealing, buying, inveigling, purloyning, conveying, or receiving Children so stolne, and to keep them safe imprisonment, till they may be brought to severe and exemplary punishment." Marshals of the Admiralty and of the Cinque Ports were also instructed to search all vessels harbored in the Thames and Downs rivers for captives being held for transportation to the colonies.[314] New legislation introduced in 1647 took things a step further, requiring customs officials to keep a register of all those aboard ships sailing from English ports, stipulating that "neither force be used to take up any such servants, nor any Apprentises enticed or desert their Masters, nor any Children under age admitted without express consent of their Parents."[315] The law also mandated that the governor of each colonial

[313] Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*, 244.
[314] Parliament of England and Wales, "May 1645: Ordinance Against Stealing Children," in C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1911) 681-682.
[315]Parliament of England and Wales, "January 1647: An Ordinance for Encouragement of Adventurers to the Several Plantations of Virginia, Bermudas, Barbados, and Other Places of America," in Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances,* 912-913.

province was to provide a return certificate confirming the arrival of each person, and that "no fraud be used to carry any such persons to any other place."[316]

In Bristol, one of the main ports of embarkation for ships sailing to the colonies, the city council passed an ordinance in 1654 ordering that a more detailed log be kept of all indentured servants sailing to the colonies, along with their destinations and the terms of their indentures in order to prevent the "Inveigling, purloining, carrying and Stealing away Boys Maides and other persons and transporting them Beyond Seas."[317] The ordinance required every servant bound for the colonies to have their indentures enrolled in the Tolzey book, as local apprenticeships were, and stipulated that no shipmaster or other member of the crew should allow any servant to board unless they had followed this procedure.[318] The water bailiff was tasked with meticulously inspecting ships for any servants being transported who had not followed the enrollment procedure.[319] Though the specified fine of twenty pounds sterling for noncompliance seems like a laughably low sum, in today's world this would amount to over five thousand dollars, a clear deterrent.

Despite such regulations, and perhaps due to the complicity of high-ranking officials who benefited from the trade in servants, an entry in the Records of the Privy Council dated 26 July, 1660 still declares "That diverse Children from their Parents, and Servants from their Masters,

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[316] Ibid.

[317] John Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century* (Bristol: W. George's Sons, 1900), http://archive.org/details/annalsofbristoli00latiuoft, 248-250; David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 254.

[318] Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, 248-250; Reprinted in whole or in part in David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 31, Peter Wilson Coldham, *The Bristol Registers of Servants Sent to Foreign Plantations, 1654-1686* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1988) 5: Sacks, *The Widening Gate*, 254.

[319] Sacks, *The Widening Gate*, 256.

are daylie inticed away, taken upp, and kept from their said Parents and Masters against their wills, by Merchants, Planters, Commanders of Shipps, and Seamen trading to Virginia, Barbado's, Charibee Islands and other parts of the West Indies, and shipped away to make Sale and Merchandize of."[320] That day, the Council had been made aware that a ship called the *Seven Brothers*, then lying in the River Thames off Gravesend was, along with two other ships in that vicinity, detaining several children and apprentices "so deceived and inticed away Cryinge and Mourninge" for release. It was ordered that officers and other searchers should raid the ship and liberate any children or young people who were being forcibly detained. If the master or crew resisted, they were to be arrested and brought before the Council. It was further declared that if the *Seven Brothers* had already left Gravesend, it was to be stopped in the Downs and searched there.[321]

The pervasiveness of the problem eventually spurred legislative action in the Caribbean as well. In 1661, Barbados responded to the growing concerns by enacting the *Act for the Governing of Servants, and Ordaining the Rights Between Masters and Servants,* which specifically prohibited the importation of English child servants under the age of fourteen without written consent of a parent or guardian.[322]

Unfortunately, as is often the case with illegal practices that yield substantial profits, the steps taken up to this point failed to be effective in stopping abductions. In fact, according to historian Hilary M. Beckles, kidnapping rings grew larger and Spirits began to operate with even

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[320] Privy Council of Great Britain, *Acts of the Privy Council of England: Colonial Series, Vol. 1, 1613-1680* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908) N. 486, 26 July 1660, 296-297.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Barbados, *The Laws of Barbados Collected in One Volume by William Rawlin, of the Middle-Temple, London, Esquire, and Now Clerk of the Assembly of the Said Island.*, 2011, No.21, http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A30866.0001.001.

less discretion.[323] Naturally this sparked a torrent of popular protest, and in 1663 Parliament established another investigative committee to look into the volume and effects of kidnapping in English ports. In the ensuing report of July 12, 1664, Sir Heneage Finch found that virtually every ship to the colonies carried servants who had been taken against their will.[324] Though one might expect such damning revelations to lead to a swift and severe legislative response, the outcome was notably lackluster. Instead of creating tighter, more effective restrictions to curb this type of activity, the findings served primarily as a reminder to port authorities, emphasizing their responsibility to inspect ships headed for the colonies.[325]

Parliament eventually put forward a plan in August of 1664 requiring that every colonial emigrant be personally interviewed to confirm they were sailing of their own free will, and failure to properly register a servant carried a £20 penalty. The permission of friends or relatives was required for the indenture of children under twelve years of age, and good reason for the indenture had to be shown.[326] However, that year Parliament also passed legislation encouraging magistrates to round up vagrant youths and send them to the Caribbean plantations. The magistrates were to receive half the capital paid for the juvenile servants by the merchants, with the other half going to the Crown.[327] Still, in 1668, the *Seven Brothers* appears in the records again, as the parents of "lost child John Brookes" went out of their way to track him down and retrieve him from that vessel. After they had paid the shipmaster what was, in effect, his ransom,

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[323] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 50.
[324] William Noel Sainsbury, *CSPC, America and West Indies, 1661-1668* (London: Longman and Co., 1880), No.769. I., 220.
[325] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 50.
[326] Wareing, *Emigrants to America*, 12 – 13; Ballagh, *White Servitude*, 30, 39.
[327] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 48.

the child was freed and other ships harbored nearby were searched, with several other children being released after government warrants were issued.[328]

Attempts were made to make kidnapping a crime punishable by death without benefit of clergy in 1662, 1670-71, and 1673, but due to a variety of factors, including disputes over registration procedures, the untimely deaths of sponsors of the bill, mercantile lobbying, legislative hold-ups, and concerns over wording, the crime remained a misdemeanor.[329] While at times offenders were imprisoned, whipped, and pilloried, often they were allowed to settle the matter out of court by paying a fine. Women such as Ann Taunt, who had "entertained" gentlemen's sons in order to entice them into the grip of kidnappers, were punished as well.[330] Taunt's targeting of young men from the upper classes most likely provoked significant outrage among those in power, making her a particular target for punishment.

By 1682 the government introduced yet stricter guidelines regarding indenture agreements, stipulating that contracts for any servant under the age of twenty-one must be signed in the presence of a justice of the peace or borough magistrate, and only with the consent of parents or masters. Those under fourteen were required to have their parents, churchwardens, or parish overseers present.[331] In 1686, a similar but more explicitly-worded act was passed stipulating that any servant under the age of twenty-one must sign the indenture in the presence of at least one government official in London or two government officials in any other county,

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[328] Sainsbury, *CSPC, America and West Indies, Vol. 2, 1661-1668*, 555; Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting," 152; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 148.
[329] See Stock, *Proceedings and Debates, Vol. 1, 1542-1688,* 358 and John Wareing, "Preventive and Punitive Regulation in Seventeenth-Century Social Policy" *Social History, Vol. 27*, No.3 (2002) 288-308.
[330] Wareing*, Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 109
[331] Order in Council 846, 1862-12-13 at Whitehall, in J. W. Fortescue, *CSPC, America and West Indies, 1681-1685* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898).

who would take care to ensure that consent was given by the servant's parent or master. Any child under fourteen whose parents were not present to give their consent in person was forbidden to be carried onto the ship for at least a fortnight after the signing of the indenture contract, and the parents had to be expressly notified.[332] The repeated emphasis on age fourteen in legislation implies that puberty was seen as a benchmark for youth autonomy and parental oversight within the indenture system. This age distinction appears to pinpoint a critical point where legislative protections become markedly stricter, revealing an increasing desire of legislators to prevent the exploitation of younger children.

This tightening of the reigns was not appreciated by merchants. On a visit to London, St. Kitts planter Christopher Jeaffreson wrote to a friend, "the kidnappers and their employers have been brought into such trouble that servants are now harder to come by than ever," since "the offices which were as conveniently as illegally set up for that purpose" had been shut down.[333] For merchants such as Jeaffreson, the lack of cheap labor resulting from these measures was a significant disruption to their business model.

Though laws passed in the 1680s did have a temporary effect in lowering the incidents of stolen children, kidnappers quickly found ways to circumvent the legislation, and were soon back to their old tricks.[334] According to Wareing, the government's attempts to address the issue of kidnapping by force had limited success until 1718, and some cases of coercion by deception

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[332] Privy Council of England and Wales, *At the Court at Whitehall, This 26th Day of March 1686. Present, the Kings Most Excellent Majesty ... : Whereas It Has Been Represented to His Majesty, That by Reason of the Frequent Abuses of a Lewd Sort of People, Called Spirits, in Seducing Many of His Majesties Subjects to Go on Shipboard, Where They Have Been Seized, and Carried by Force to His Majesties Plantations in America ...*, (Westminster: W. Bridgeman, 1686).
[333] Christopher Jeaffreson, quoted in Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 52; Wareing *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 204.
[334] See Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade,* 217-235.

continued to occur as late as 1770.[335] Through the seventeenth century, the retrieval of stolen children required an especially determined or powerful parent, guardian, or master. For example, George Nedham petitioned the Privy Council when his thirteen-year-old son Edward was spirited aboard a vessel bound for Carolina by merchant Joseph Strutt in 1690. Consequently, the ship was ordered to be stopped and searched for kidnapped children.[336] According to an entry made a few days later, the ship was allowed to proceed on its way a few days later after the removal of improperly indented servants, including Nedham's son, but Strutt was brought to trial in December, convicted, and fined today's equivalent of $32,000.[337]

A publication dated that same year describes how the fathers of two twelve-year-old boys, Jonathan Butler and Richard Blagrave, managed to doggedly track down the mariner responsible for their disappearance, recover their boys, and bring the kidnapper to swift justice. The pamphlet also relates that a salesman, Thomas Vernon, who had been searching for his only child for quite some time, received a tip that mariner Edward Harrison was responsible for the boy's disappearance. Bringing the constable to Harrison's residence, he extracted a confession that he had sent Vernon's son to Barbados three weeks earlier. Harrison reported that there were over one hundred fifty more stolen children aboard other ships anchored in the River Thames at that time. Hearing this, many other parents of missing children pressured the Lord of the Admiralty and obtained an order to search all outward-bound ships.[338]

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[335] Ibid, 246-248.

[336] Privy Council of Great Britain, *Acts of the Privy Council of England, vo. 16, June 1680 - May 1683* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908), No.390, 27 Nov 1690, 183-184.

[337] Ibid, 2 Dec. 1690, 184; for Strutt's trial and conviction, see Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 159.

[338] See *The Grand Kidnapper at Last Taken Or, a Full and True Account of the Taking and Apprehending of Ca Azariah Daniel For Conveying Away the Bodies of Jonathan Butler, and Richard Balgrave, Also the Large Confession He Made Before Justice Richards in Spittle-Fields, with His Commitment to New-Gate. With Account of Edward Harrison, Conveying Away the*

Based on these accounts, it appears likely that the rate of kidnapping was on the rise during the second half of the seventeenth century, despite legislative efforts to address the issue. However, this observation warrants a cautious approach. It is equally plausible that what we are seeing is not an actual increase in incidents, but a shift in reporting bias. After heightened public attention to the problem, there may have been an increase in the number of cases being documented and reported, whereas previous cases may have been less likely to be widely publicized.

Another report in the Exeter newspaper the *Flying Post* in 1698 detailed how two hundred young boys were held captive on a ship moored in the River Thames, awaiting transportation to the colonies. The informant for this story was a boy who told a reporter that a man had given him a letter to carry to a house by the waterside. He gave him some coins and promised to pay him the rest when he returned from the errand. However, when the boy entered the specified house, he was forced to swear that he had no parents alive, then was sent aboard the ship where there were about two hundred other boys aged between eight and twelve years old.[339] Mothers also sought justice on kidnappers. When Edward Butler was taken aboard a ship, the *Benjamin and Mary*, set to sail for Maryland, his mother got a warrant from the Lord Chief Justices, retrieved her son, and brought his abductor to court, where he was convicted.[340] Another mother, Elizabeth Perrismore, sought the help of the Lord Mayor of London to rescue her son James from the ship *Society*.[341]

Children of Thomas Vernon Salesman, with the Manner of His Confession how a Hundred and Fifty Children More Have Been Sent Down the River in Several Ships; with His Commitment to Newgate, (London: James Read, 1690).

[339] *Flying Post*, 1 September, 1698.

[340] www.oldbailyonline.com, reference #t16991213-65

[341] Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 147.

One cannot help but wonder how many stories of this nature went unrecorded. Of course, prosecutions only happened when victims or their families managed to lodge a formal complaint. Many, particularly those in the lower socioeconomic stratum, would have struggled to find the time and money to pursue the matter, and kidnapping was notoriously difficult to prove, particularly when the victim had been taken abroad. Given the power dynamics of the time, lodging a complaint against a powerful figure could be a daunting, if not dangerous, undertaking. The introduction to the Middlesex Session Records, vol. 4, contain this comment from the editor: "From the remarkable absence of annotations touching verdicts and sentence it may be inferred that the kidnappers charged by these indictments were not tried for the offences of which they were accused, but were allowed by the Court to appease and compensate their prosecutors with payment of money."[342] Moreover, Wareing states that it was considered much more acceptable at the time to settle cases out of court.[343] Though David Souden logically reasoned in 1978 that children who were kidnapped would not have been listed in the official servant registries, Wareing's more recent research has revealed that prolific kidnapper John Dykes is listed as master on twenty-nine of the indentures in the official London Registry.[344]

However, it was still the opinion of many in power that forced labor would be good for abductees. During the transportation of the Monmouth rebels to Barbados in 1685, hundreds of men and adolescent boys who had nothing to do with the rebellion found themselves shipped to the sugar plantations. When Governor of Barbados, Edwyn Stede, reported that four hundred innocents had been shipped to his colony on forged indentures between June and November of

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[342] John Cordy Jeaffreson, ed., *Middlesex County Records*, *Vol. 4* (London: Middlesex County Records Society, 1886) xlvi.
[343] Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 171.
[344] Souden, "'Rogues, Whores and Vagabonds," 26, Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 124, 235.

1685, the Lords of Trade and Plantations replied that those should be put to work like the rest, since it would be good for them, and they would 'in all probability live more peacefully than they did before.'[345]

Colonial Courts and "Custom of the Country" Laws

As colonial courts were staffed by the same class of Englishmen as London courts, they, too, failed to bring justice to kidnap victims, instead siding with the planters and other colonists whose livelihoods depended on the availability of cheap labor. The courts played a pivotal role in facilitating and legitimizing forced servitude. A body of colonial legislation known as the "custom of the country" laws required servants arriving without formal indenture contracts to appear before the colonial courts to have their ages adjudged and the terms of their indentures set. For many decades the bulk of historians discussing the indentured servant trade have casually stated that servants would either bring official contracts with them, or they would be indentured "according to the custom of the country."[346]

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[345] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 52.

[346] For example, see Smith, *Colonists in Bondage,* 19; Ballagh, *White Servitude,* 50; Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 36; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2014) 243; John Brewer and Susan Staves, *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014) 576; J. J. John, *History of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania: Including Its Aboriginal History, the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods, Early Settlement and Subsequent Growth, Political Organization, Agricultural, Mining, and Manufacturing Interests, Internal Improvements, Religious, Educational, Social, and Military History, Sketches of Its Boroughs, Villages, and Townships, Portraits and Biographies of Pioneers and Representative Citizens, Etc., Etc* (Chicago: Brown, Runk & Co., 1891) 208; Theodore W. Allen, *Invention of the White Race Vol. 2: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (London: Verso Books, 2012) 135; Cathy D. Matson, *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives & New Directions* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2006) 148 n. 5, 152 n. 17; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade,* 46-47, 141; Anna Suranyi, *Indentured Servitude:*

In examining this issue, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of servants who appeared in court to have their ages adjudged were minors. A significant number of these were deemed to be below the legal age for self-indenture and would technically have required the consent of a parent or guardian, yet colonial law allowed them to be legally registered as a bound servant without such a signature. In addition to this, servants sometimes declared before a colonial court that they had been kidnapped or entrapped.[347] Moreover, for every servant who

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Unfree Labor and Citizenship in the British Colonies (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021) 165-166; Debra Meyers and Melanie Perreault, *Order and Civility in the Early Modern Chesapeake* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014) 76-77. There are many others.

[347] For example, for John Greene, see Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1674-1676) CM376-7.pdf, 129; Phillips, *Without Indentures,* vii, 26; for John Lyme, see Maryland State Archives, Somerset County Judicial Records, Vol. 106 (1689-1690) 33; for John Hall, Christopher Whitworth, Jeremiah Spurling, Roger Yappe, Thomas Lees, John Archibald, and James Smith, see Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1690-1693) CM376-17.pdf, 18; for Morris Fitzgerald, see Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1704-1710) CM376-23.pdf, 307, 321; for William Hiferney, see Hiferney v. Hollot, Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England: Printed by Order of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,* Vol. 3 (New York: AMS Press, 1968), June 10, 1661, 220, http://www.archive.org/details/recordsofcolonyo0102newp; for Robert Collins, see Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Lidgett v. Collins & Sprague v. Collins, *Colonial Society of Massachusetts Publications* (Boston : The Society, 1895) 18-20, 43-44, http://archive.org/details/colonialsocietyo29colo; for Anne Dempsey, see State of Pennsylvania, *Pennsylvania Court of Quarter Sessions (Philadelphia County) Court Docket, 1753-1770,* FS Library Film 965370 (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1974); Blumenthal, Brides From Bridewell, 70; Morris, Government and Labor, 343; for Francis Ross, see Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1704-1710) CM376-23.pdf, 402, for John Butterfield, see Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1722-1725) CM376-28.pdf, 186; for a kidnapped servant named White, see New Jersey State Archives, Burlington County, *Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace Minutes*, Vol. 2, 1764-1787, #1996.027; Morris, *Government and Labor*, 343; for Philip Welch and William Downing, see Essex County Quarterly Courts, *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1912) 293-296; Thomas Franklin Waters, *Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony: A History of the Town From 1700 to 1917,* Vol. 2 (Ipswich: Ipswich Historical Society, 1905) 221-222; Morris, Government and Labor, 314-342; for Ricckett/Richard Mecane, see Bernard Christian Steiner, ed., *Proceedings of the Provincial Court of Maryland, 1658-1662: Court Series (3)*, Archives of Maryland (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1922) 476-478; for Alexander Stewart, see Scotch-Irish Society of America, *The Scotch-Irish in America: Proceedings and Addresses of the Tenth Congress, at Chestersburg, PA, May 30 – June 2, 1902* (Nashville: Bigham & Smith, 1902) 424; Lapp, *Records of Chester County, Vol. 1,* 355, 361; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11;

spoke up, there were many others who had sailed on the same ships and appeared in court without indentures on those same dates, accompanied by the same merchants and mariners, which strongly implies the circumstances of their servitude were similarly questionable.

Several who did not state in court that they had been kidnapped later wrote about it in their memoirs or passed the story down to their children. Tracing these names back to court records nearly always reveals servants who appeared before the court without indentures or parental approval, suggesting these stories were true. For instance, Mary Royle told her descendants that she had been kidnapped from Dumfries, Scotland when she was twelve or thirteen and taken to Philadelphia.[348] In the court of Chester County, Pennsylvania in 1697, we find Mary appearing without indentures to have the terms of her contract set.[349] Alexander Stewart, appearing in court the same day, also reported having been kidnapped.[350]

As Parliamentary laws regarding servants passed in 1647 and onward indicated, indentured servants were required to declare before a magistrate that they were going of their own free will, and have the contract notarized by the city clerk. Minors were required to have the written consent of a parent or master. The absence of these components would legally nullify the indenture. However legal it may have been according to colonial law to receive undocumented servants, it was not legal to ship them out of their home country without an official contract. Basically, what emerges from the "custom of the country" laws is an unspoken agreement: the

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East Nottingham Trustees, *The Nottingham Lots: A Tercentenary Celebration 2001* (East Nottingham: Xlibris, 2006) 52.

[348] Copy, *Genealogy of the Bailey Family*, 20; Hallen, *The Scottish Antiquary* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1891) No.704; Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania,* 157.

[349] Lapp, *Records of Chester County*, Vol. 2, 130; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11; David Dobson, *Scottish Quakers and Early America, 1650-1700* (Baltimore: Clearfield, 2006) 24.

[350] Lapp, *Records of Chester County, Vol. 1,* 355, 361; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11; East Nottingham Trustees, *The Nottingham Lots,* 52.

colonies were willing to overlook the legality of a servant's arrival, whether they arrived in the colony through legitimate means or not. Since thousands of children, often entire shiploads at a time, arrived without indentures, allowing them to serve without properly endorsed and processed indentures would indicate either systematic exploitation or gross neglect of the law. Essentially, by reframing these dubious indentures as legally contracted agreements, colonial courts imbued them with a façade of legitimacy, thereby sanitizing the illicit system.[351]

Even when indentures were recognized as being illegal, colonial court rulings were unpredictable. There were numerous cases where illegal indentures were recognized as such by the court, but the outcomes for the affected servants were wildly inconsistent, seemingly dependent upon which judge presided over the case. Thomas Lees, John Archibald, John Hall, Jeremiah Spurling, James Smith, Christopher Whitworth, and Roger Yappe testified that they had all been abducted at Gravesend, and the court declared their indentures to be "kidnappers indentures," yet they were all ordered to "return to their several masters service & serve acording to ye Custome of ye Country, their Indentures being adjudged invalid by ye Courte."[352] To add to the sketchiness of this ruling, Hall, Spurling, Whitworth, and Yappe were in service to the judge himself, Henry Hawkins, Sr., and Archiball was the servant of his son, Henry Hawkins, Jr.[353] It seems remarkably bad luck that these seven young men, clearly the victims of Spirits, had the misfortune of their petition for freedom being heard by Hawkins. The indenture of Daniell Linghams was found to lack any official notarization, while those of William Frazier and Robert Gluffar possessed counterfeit signatures and seals of the Justice of the Peace, but the youths were

[351] The analysis provided here is the author's synthesis of legislative trends and practices regarding indentured servitude, derived from an examination of Parliamentary laws and colonial records from 1647 onwards.
[352] Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1690-1693) CM376-17.pdf, 18.
[353] Ibid, and (1685-1686) CM376-13.pdf, 47.

nonetheless ordered to serve according to the custom of the country.[354] Morris Fitzgerald, who had been tricked into signing an indenture, was told by the court of Charles County, Maryland, that if he had "made a foolish bargaine" the court could not help him.[355]

That some were able to plead their case successfully does not negate the overwhelming ways in which the system worked against kidnapped minors. Rather, an analysis of these records suggests that across the colonies justices occasionally sided with these claims, and thereby acknowledged that in binding children through the courts, masters and mariners had acted criminally. For example, the indenture of eleven-year-old Francis Ross was declared void when the court ruled that it had been obtained "suruptitiously."[356] Francis Arrington was freed due to his indenture having been entered into while he was a minor without the consent of a parent or guardian.[357] Evidently at least one judge in Charles County, Maryland was following the guidelines stipulated by English law. Edmund Brunon, a cabin boy who had been sold by his captain was freed on the grounds that the captain had no authorization to put him up for sale.[358] Upon her master's death, Dorothy Frawner was able to obtain release through her plea that she was the daughter of a freeborn subject of England.[359] Thomas Jackson's father had paid for his passage and provided him with a wardrobe of clothing, so there was no need for him to work off his passage. Nevertheless, the captain of his ship had forced him to serve him for four years, after which time Jackson was still legally a minor. The court freed him and allowed him to select a local guardian.[360] When William Hiferney petitioned the court in Plymouth, Massachusetts,

[354] Ibid, (1688-1690) CM376-16.pdf, 110-111, 114.
[355] Ibid, (1704-1710) CM376-23.pdf, 307, 321.
[356] Ibid, (1699-1700) CM376-20.pdf, 101 and (1704-1710) CM376-23.pdf, 402.
[357] Ibid, (1727-1731) CM376-31.pdf, 96.
[358] Ibid, (1686-1688) CM376-14.pdf, 10.
[359] Ibid, (1690-1693) CM376-17.pdf, 139.
[360] Ibid, (1699-1700) CM376-20.pdf, 29.

protesting that he had been stolen out of Ireland and tricked into signing an indenture for twelve years' service because he was unable to understand English, his term was reduced to ten years instead of the original twelve.[361] The court of Suffolk, Pennsylvania, also freed Robert Collins, kidnapped in London, and fined the shipmaster who had brought him to court.[362] In Philadelphia, the court freed Anne Dempsey after she petitioned the court stating that she had been abducted from Ireland and "Cruelly used on the Voyage."[363] Also freed by his master was John Owen in Charles County, Maryland, whose indenture was ruled invalid.[364] In Burlington, New Jersey, a young man with the surname White was freed from his indenture when he told the court he had been kidnapped from Ireland five years earlier.[365]

Even those who had willingly signed their contracts found that the terms were not always honored. Sometimes the original indenture was stolen, and they were forced to serve a longer term according to the custom of the country. As with those kidnapped into servitude, the outcome of their petitions for freedom depended on the judge who heard their case. While Roderick Lloyd, Abram Parker, and Robert Smallpage were freed, John Hinsey and Daniel Ross were ordered to serve the longer term stipulated under the custom of the country, as was

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[361] Hiferney v. Hollot, Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England: Printed by Order of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,* Vol. 3 (New York: AMS Press, 1968), June 10, 1661, 220, http://www.archive.org/details/recordsofcolonyo0102new
[362] Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Lidgett v. Collins & Sprague v. Collins, *Colonial Society of Massachusetts Publications* (Boston : The Society, 1895) 18-20, 43-44, http://archive.org/details/colonialsocietyo29colo.
[363] State of Pennsylvania, *Pennsylvania Court of Quarter Sessions (Philadelphia County) Court Docket, 1753-1770,* FS Library Film 965370 (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1974).
[364] Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1671-1674) CM376-06.pdf, 29.
[365] State of New Jersey, *Rules of the Courts of Common Pleas, and General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, of the County of Burlington, in the State of New Jersey, 1765-1772*, folio 85, (1769).

Christopher Whittimore, another servant of Judge Henry Hawkins.[366] Others had willingly signed contracts specifying they would be taught a certain trade, but found themselves forced into hard field labor.[367] There are also many instances of masters refusing to release servants after their years of indenture were up or they had come of age. Often the servant was able to prove that they were being fraudulently retained, but just as many cases are recorded of those who were ordered to return to their master's service.[368]

Another area of contention was freedom dues, entitlements owed to indentured servants upon completion of their term of service.[369] Anna Suranyi suggests that the practice probably stemmed from the fact that servants in England were hired annually and reimbursed after the completion of a one-year term.[370] Despite their legal entitlement, masters frequently evaded these obligations, forcing servants to go to great lengths to obtain what was owed to them.[371] Luckily, once a servant was able to take his or her master to court, the court almost invariably sided with

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[366] Ibid, 86; Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1680-1682) CM376-10.pdf, 60; (1700-1702) CM376-21.pdf, 126; (1725-1727) CM376-30.pdf, 244; (1731-1734) CM376-32.pdf, 114 (1688-1690) C)M376-16.pdf, 114.

[367] Maryland State Archives, *Provincial Court*, v. 67, 26; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 148-149.

[368] Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1662-1666) CM376-02.pdf, 242, 322; (1671-1674) CM376.06.pdf, 139; (1674-1676) CM376-07.pdf, 129; (1676-1678) CM376-08.pdf, 18; (1678-1680) CM376-09.pdf, 141, 152, 156, 157; (1682-1684) CM376-11.pdf, 59, 84, 86, 87; 135; (1686-1688) CM376-14.pdf, 175; (1688-1690) CM376-16.pdf, 110; (1690-1693) CM376-17.pdf, 18, 69, 97, 123, 138, 200, 280; (1696-1698) CM376-19.pdf, 169, 180, 186; (1704-1710) CM376-23.pdf, 237, 266; (1720-1722) CM376-27.pdf, 45, 74, 126; (1722-1725) CM376-28.pdf, 76; (1727-1731) CM376-31.pdf, 118.

[369] See Smith*, Colonists in Bondage*, 238-41; Suranyi, *Indentured Servitude*; Galenson, "Market Evaluation of Human Capital," Ian M. G. Quimby, *Apprenticeship in Colonial Philadelphia*, Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts (New York: Garland Pub., 1985) 52; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2022) 32; Gloria Lund Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) 89, 116-117; Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 274, 288, 323, 325.

[370] Suranyi, *Unfree Labor and Citizenship*, 21.

[371] Also noted in Herrick, *White Servitude*, 205-206, 211-212.

the servant.[372] Nevertheless, once they left the courthouse the master or mistress sometimes continued to refuse payment. In Tyrrell County, North Carolina, Rachel Smith had to take her mistress to court three times over a period of two years before finally obtaining her freedom dues.[373]

Quantifying Kidnap Victims

It is difficult to assess the true degree of the problem, but evidence beyond legislation suggests that contemporaries believed it to be a serious issue. Widely traveled Anglican clergyman Morgan Godwyn estimated that 10,000 servants were spirited from England in the year 1670 alone.[374] After being promised a pardon in 1671, the notorious William Haveland turned state's evidence against his associates, claiming that John Steward had been a spirit for twelve years, sending 500 abducted servants to the colonies per year, and William Thew had been in the trade even longer, and in one year had spirited 840 young people.[375] Similarly, in the 1682 trial of John Wilmore, a Mr. Witherman testified that more than five hundred children had been abducted in the last two years, many of these by Wilmore.[376] Historians Peter Linebaugh

[372] Maryland State Archives, Charles County (1680-1682) CM376-10.pdf, 150; (1704-1710) CM376-23.pdf, 21, 111, 266; (171-1715) CM376-25pdf, 266; (1720-1722) CM376-27pdf, 45.
[373] Betty Fagan Burr, *Tyrrell County, North Carolina, Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions* (Nacogdoches, Tex. (Nacogdoches, 1981) Sept. 1735, Dec. 1735, March 1737.
[374] Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indians Advocate Suing for Their Admission Into the Church* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 1680) 171.
[375] Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*, 74; Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade*, 189-190.
[376] Thomas Bayly Howell, ed., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816) 1347-1350.

and Marcus Rediker estimate that many of the approximately 200,000 servants sent to the Americas in the 1600s migrated against their will, including "thousands of children."[377]

Differences in English and Colonial Servitude

Not only were servants in a tricky position regarding the lengths of their contracts, in the colonies servants found themselves without other legal protections of servants and apprentices in England. In the colonies, even small transgressions could result in a servant's time being dramatically extended, sometimes even doubled. Also, unlike in England, masters in the colonies were allowed to buy and sell servants as often as they desired, to whomever they desired, without the servant's consent or that of their parents.[378] Colonial regulations dictated almost every facet of servants' lives, encompassing not only their labor, but also where they went, how they spent their free hours, and even personal choices related to love, marriage, and possession of property.[379] In contrast, servants in England operated under the umbrella of established laws, which provided a framework for rights and ensured a degree of fairness in punitive measures. Colonial servants were deliberately alienated from these protections. By removing servants from the safety net of English legal protections, colonial masters were able to maintain unbridled control over their servants' labor, commercial value, and their very bodies. This stripping of

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[377] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000) 57-59.
[378] See Anna Suranyi, *Indentured Servitude: Unfree Labor and Citizenship in the British Colonies* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021); Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 120.
[379] See Suranyi, *Unfree Labor and Citizenship*.

rights reduced servants to tradable form of property and served to reinforce the authority of colonial masters.

In other ways, too, the journey from England to the colonies transformed the very essence of servitude. Within England's boundaries, servitude bore a semblance of familial affiliation. Ann Kussmaul describes how English servants were frequently integrated into households, treated as dependent yet valued members of the family. Their work, though demanding, was bound by the traditional familial structures and relationships prevalent in English society.[380] Once transported across the Atlantic, especially to the Caribbean colonies, they were degraded to mere commodities. Hilary Beckles recounts how records of shipments from this era list servants as "freight" and those under sixteen years of age as "half-freight."[381] Such classifications unambiguously communicated the servants' perceived value as goods with measurable market prices.

In fact, the experience of servitude was almost wholly dependent upon who happened to buy the laborer. For example, Peter Williamson, kidnapped from Scotland, had the good fortune to be bought by a master who had also been taken from Scotland as a child, and who not only educated him, but made him his sole heir.[382] After his difficult initial experience, James Revel's

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[380] Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*: *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 9.
[381] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 60.
[382] See Peter Williamson, William Fordyce, and Walter Cochran, *Memorial for Peter Williamson Merchant in Edinburgh, Pursuer; against William Fordyce of Aquhorties, Walter Cochran of Dumbreck, Town-Clerk-Depute of Aberdeen, Alexander Mitchell of Colpna, Merchant in Aberdeen, Patrick Barron of Woodside, Gilbert Gerrard, David Morris Advocates in Aberdeen, and the Now Deceased Charles Forbes of Shiels, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeen; and Also the Now Deceased James Petrie, Advocate in Aberdeen, Defenders* (Oxford: Bodlean Library, 2010, originally published in Edinburgh, 1765); Peter Williamson, *The Life and Curious Adventures of Peter Williamson, Who Was Carried off from Aberdeen, and Sold for a Slave*,

second master treated him well and bought him a ticket back home to England when his term of servitude was over.[383] Those less fortunate included Elizabeth Abbot, whose master beat her to death, and Richard Frethorne, who was starved, and probably turned outdoors to fend for himself, as his master had threatened.[384]

Even amidst the public outcry against kidnapping, the sustained view that enforced labor was beneficial to the lower classes, even to those who had not committed any crimes, meant that bound labor in some form would continue to be a convenient solution to the labor shortage in the colonies, ensuring that plantations remained profitable. By their endorsement of forced labor, particularly for the lower classes and others perceived as troublemakers, the ruling elites could maintain control over potentially rebellious elements, suppress dissent, and keep the broader population in its place.

(Aberdeen: James Daniel and Son, 1878); Peter Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty, Exemplified in the Life and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune, of Peter Williamson, Who Was Carried off from Aberdeen, in 1744, and Sold for a Slave: Containing the History of the Authors Surprising Adventures . . . A Description of the British Settlements, & C* (York: Nickson, 1757); Douglas Skelton, *Indian Peter: The Extraordinary Life and Adventures of Peter Williamson*, Reprinted (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2007); Frances McDonnell, *The Adventures of Peter Williamson* (Saint Andrews: Heritage Books, 1998).

[383] See James Revel, *The Poor Unhappy Transported Felon's Sorrowful Account. Of His Fourteen Years Transportation at Virginia in America. In Six Parts. By James Revel, the Unhappy Sufferer. ... Concluding with a Word of Advice to All Young Men* (London: printed and sold in Stonecutter Street, 1780).

[384] For Elizabeth Abbott, see H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 1622-1632, 1670-1676, with Notes and Excerpts from Original Council and General Court Records, into 1683, Now Lost* (Richmond: Everett Waddey Co., 1924) 22-24; Edmund S. Morgan, "The First American Boom: Virginia 1618 to 1630," *William and Mary Quarterly* 28:2 (1971) 196; For Richard Frethorne, see Sandra Dahlberg, "'Doe Not Forget Me': Richard Frethorne, Indentured Servitude, and the English Poor Law of 1601," *Early American Literature* 47:1 (2012); Letter from Richard Frethorne to His Parents, May 20, 1623, in Kingsbury, *Records of the Virginia Company*, 4:58-60.

CHAPTER 4:
TAKING CARE OF THE "IRISH PROBLEM"

On August 13, 1661, the Provincial Court of St. Mary's County, Maryland, convened to consider the freedom petition of a young servant named Ricckett Mecane. Mecane testified that six and a half years prior he had been taken from Ireland against his will and carried to Maryland, where he was forced to sign an indenture and sold as a servant for fifteen years to planter Thomas Gerrard.[385] Now he was twenty-one years old, but still had eight and a half years left on his contract, and he believed it was, "contrary to the lawes of God and man that a Christian Subject should be made a Slave."[386]

After two months of bouncing the case back and forth between county and provincial jurisdictions, testimony finally got underway on October 4, 1661. Several witnesses testified that in 1654 Gerrard had, along with Colonel Thomas Speake, bought eight Irish boys for terms of fifteen years each.[387] One witness expressed the opinion that the oldest of the boys could not have been more than ten, and "many of them not neere so much."[388] The wife of Colonel Speake further testified that some of the boys were so little she had asked her husband why he had not brought cradles along to rock them in.[389] Ultimately, the jury found that the petitioner, whom

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[385] Bernard Christian Steiner, ed., *Proceedings of the Provincial Court of Maryland, 1658-1662*, Archives of Maryland (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1922) 476-478.
[386] Ibid, 476.
[387] Ibid, 476-478.
[388] Ibid, 477. n. Mecane was most likely between 12 and 14 years of age at the time, based upon his own claim to be 21 in 1661 and the court's assessment of his age as 19.
[389] Ibid, 478.

they referred to as "Richard Mecane," was not twenty-one, but nineteen, and must serve an additional two years.[390] Considering the fact that the jury was made up of colonial landholders, it is a wonder that Mecane was only sentenced to two additional years of servitude rather than the eight and a half stipulated by the original contract. However, it is also possible that the decision to reduce his servitude, rather than uphold the full term of his indenture, could indicate a degree of unease with the ethicality of sentencing a boy whom they determined to have been a mere twelve years old when his indenture began to serve until nearly age thirty.

In a similar case two months earlier, magistrate and judge Samuel Symonds appeared before the court of Essex County, Massachusetts on June 25, 1661, protesting that he had bought two Irish boys in 1654, but that now, seven years later, the two were "absolutely refusing to serve" him any longer, though they had several years left on their contracts.[391] The boys, Philip Welch and William Downing, had presumably been eleven and thirteen when sold to Symonds, and were obliged, under their respective terms of eleven and nine years, to serve until they were twenty-two years of age.[392] Now they argued before the court that they had been stolen out of Ireland against their will and that they had never consented to serve Mr. Symonds, but nevertheless had worked for him to the best of their ability for seven long years. They pointed out that this was three more years than kidnapped English servants were made to serve in

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[390] Ibid.
[391] Essex County Quarterly Courts, *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1912) 2:293-296; Thomas Franklin Waters, *Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony: A History of the Town From 1700 to 1917,* Vol. 2 (Ipswich: Ipswich Historical Society, 1905) 221-223.
[392] Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, 295; Alexander M. Welch, *Philip Welch of Ipswich, Massachusetts, 1654, and His Descendants* (Richmond, William Byrd Press) 7.

Barbados, and that since they were now of age, they felt that they should no longer have to work for him.[393]

The jury, which happened to include Symonds himself, stated that if the indentures were found to be legal, the two would have to serve Symonds for two more years, but if they were found to be illegal, they would go free.[394] The shipmaster who had brought them from Ireland appeared with a bill of sale, insisting that the names of the servants in question were actually William Dalton and Edward Welch, as stated on the bill.[395] Two witnesses, John Ring and John Downing, declared that they, Welch, and Downing, along with "divers others," had been stolen out of their beds "weeping and crying" by English soldiers, taken from Ireland by shipmaster George Dill (or Dell in some documents), and shipped to Massachusetts against their will in the *Goodfellow*. They also affirmed that, since they had known them, the plaintiffs had always gone by the names Philip Welch and William Downing (or Downey, in some documents).[396] This matter was most likely complicated by the fact that English was not the first language of Welch and Downing. Like many Irish servants during this era, when they arrived in the colonies, the

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[393] Waters, *Ipswich*, 221-222; Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, 2:293-294; Welch, *Philip Welch*, 5-6. n. The contracts of Welch and Downing stipulated that they would serve Symonds until the age of twenty-two, indicating that they were eighteen and twenty at the time of the trial. The family history of Welch states that Philip was "barely eleven" when abducted in 1654, which would have made him eighteen at the time of the trial. See Welch, *Philip Welch*, 3. Therefore, it can be assumed that by "of age," the boys meant that they were both eighteen or over.
[394] Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, Vol. 2, 295; Welch, *Philip Welch*, 10.
[395] Ibid, Welch, *Philip Welch*, 4; Waters, *Ipswich*, 222. n. Many times the names of servants on indenture forms and bills of sale differed from what a servant acknowledged his or her name to be, yet masters and mariners inevitably assumed that the correct name was the one on the paperwork, rather than what the servant reported. Incorrect names on the contract were almost certainly the result of an agent or captain recording them inaccurately, particularly if they were written in haste or the servant did not speak English. However, this also happened with English servants.
[396] Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, Vol. 2, 296; Welch, *Philip Welch,* 9; Waters, *Ipswich*, 221-222.

boys probably spoke only Gaelic. At the time of the trial, Welch was apparently still chiefly speaking Gaelic, since the trial records state that those, "such as doe well understand his language doe say he owneth his name to be Philip."[397]

The allegations of the witnesses that they had been taken by English soldiers was corroborated by the bill of sale itself, which contained the captain's note, "two of the Irish youthes I brought over *by order of the State of England*."[398] These elements strongly imply that the English state was involved in removing Irish children from their homes without the consent of said children or their parents. However, for the English colonists, such an order from the English government would imbue the contracts with greater legitimacy. Perhaps due in part to this official endorsement, the jury deemed the indentures legal, and the young men were sentenced to serve until the end of their terms.[399]

It is clear that the decision-makers in both of the cases discussed, whether the jury of colonial landowners in Maryland or Symonds himself in Massachusetts, were relatively wealthy individuals with interests in maintaining the status quo. Their influence and positions of authority are likely to have skewed the trial outcomes, reflecting the broader power dynamics and imbalances of colonial society. However, despite their limited power, the refusal of some young servants to passively accept the sentences imposed upon them, and their pursuit of legal justice despite the slim chance of success, reveals a little-known narrative of personal agency and resistance within a colonial society skewed against them.

<u>Background</u>

[397] Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, Vol. 2, 295; Welch, *Philip Welch*, 8.
[398] Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, 2:295; Welch, *Philip Welch of Ipswich*, 4.
[399] Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, 2:296.

As we look more deeply into the exportation of forced labor from Ireland to England's Atlantic colonies during this period, it is crucial to understand the roots of its emergence. Central to this historical context is the English perception of the Irish as an ethnic and cultural "other," a perspective that played a significant role in shaping this system. However, this aspect represents only a part of the broader narrative. Equally important were the roles of merchants, motivated by profit, and the English government's strategic interest in asserting control over newly subjugated territory. While an amalgamation of cultural biases, economic interests, and political strategies laid the groundwork for the exploitation of child labor across Britain and Ireland, in the case of Irish servants, the element of ethnic and cultural differentiation was particularly pronounced. Therefore, in examining this subject it is necessary to consider the longstanding attitudes of the English toward the Irish. Though the concept of "race" as understood in the modern sense was not fully developed in the early 1600s, there was certainly a marked attitude of ethnocentrism and cultural superiority present in English views of their Celtic neighbors in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall.[400]

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[400] See Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* 30:4 (1973): 575–98; Nicholas P. Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-76* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1976); Nicholas Canny, Alaine Low, and Wm Roger Louis, *Volume I: The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1998); Nicholas Canny, "Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World," *The Historical Journal,* 46:3 (2003): 723–47; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Sean J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford University Press, 2002); Sean J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland, 1460-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Robbie McVeigh and Bill Royston, "Civilising the Irish," Race & Class, 51:1 (July 2009) 2-28; Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964); John Patrick Montaño, *The Roots of English Colonialism in Ireland* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: The Irish Aristocracy in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Micheál Ó Siochrú and Jane Ohlmeyer, *Ireland: 1641: Contexts and Reactions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

A strongly rooted bias against subsistence agriculture and tribal culture, which the English deemed uncivilized, further compounded the animosity. In the eyes of the English, land should be devoted to surplus-oriented agricultural production. Therefore, Irish pastoralism, i.e., the practice of moving bands of livestock from place to place to meet the animals' grazing needs, was seen as a misuse of the land and contrary to God's will. In 1540, English ministers were informed that Ireland was, "for the moost parte, nothing but woddes, rockes, greete bogges, and barren grounde, being unmanured or tilled," where the Irish lived, "like wild and salvaige persones."[401] Therefore, the English felt that they were legitimately entitled to take possession of the lands of their choice and to embark upon a range of improvement projects.[402] Soon this was expanded to other facets of life, until the conclusion was reached that all manifestations of difference, whether in language, law, clothing, hairstyles, architecture, or child-rearing marked the Irish as crude savages.[403]

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the English government subjected Ireland to an increasing and unprecedented level of control, attempting to force total cultural assimilation, and to mold Ireland into merely an extension of England. Following the passage of the Kingship Act in 1541, Henry VIII initiated radical changes, restructuring the Irish government, imposing allegiance to the Anglican Church, appropriating Irish lands, and eliminating native cultural expressions. Traditional dress was prohibited, as was the native language, observance of indigenous customs, and art forms such as poetry and music.[404] The

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[401] Montaño, *Roots of English Colonialism*, 1.
[402] Ibid, 9-11, 386; John Patrick Montaño, "Cultural Conflict and the Landscape of Conquest in Early Modern Ireland," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies,* 40: Special Issue: Irish Environmental Humanities (2017) 124.
[403] See Montaño, *Roots of English Colonialism.*
[404] Ibid, 22, 27.

continued unwillingness of the Irish to adopt Anglo customs, along with ongoing violent revolts against the settler society, led to a series of government policies during the Elizabethan era which focused on further erasure of the indigenous culture and the weakening of the Gaelic nobility. In addition to adopting English modes of dress and facial hair, indigenous Irish were often forced to assume Anglicized surnames.[405] Their children were required to attend schools where they were taught English.[406] With the Union of Crowns in 1603 under James VI and I, the idea of a unified British Empire encompassing all the countries of the British Isles gained official prominence.

The Ulster Plantation, initiated in 1607, targeted six counties in the north of Ireland, where land was confiscated from Gaelic lords and granted to settlers from England and Scotland in an attempt to create a loyal Protestant base in a region perceived by the English as rebellious and unruly. This movement aimed at 'civilizing' Ulster through the introduction of Protestant settlers and the establishment of English governance.[407] The intention was not only to establish control over Ireland, but also to sever Gaelic Ulster's connections with the Gaelic Highlands of Scotland, thus weakening Celtic culture and its historical bonds.[408] The vision was of an empire not merely defined by the land, but by control of the surrounding seas.[409]

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[405] Montaño, *Roots of English Colonialism*, 302.
[406] Ibid, 326.
[407] See Micheál Ó Siochrú and Eamonn Ciardha, *The Plantation of Ulster: Ideology and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Montaño, *Roots of English Colonialism*; Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*; Gerard Farrell, *The "Mere Irish" and the Colonisation of Ulster, 1570-1641* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017); Terry Barry, ed., *A History of Settlement in Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[408] Ibid.
[409] Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 13; Alison Cathcart, "The Maritime Dimension to Plantation in Ulster, ca. 1550–ca. 1600," *Journal of the North Atlantic*, Special Volume 12: Maritime Communities of the North Atlantic Arc in the Early Modern Period (2019) 95–111.

Among the English colonists in early seventeenth-century Ireland were twelve poor boys ostensibly collected in London from a children's hospital and other charities and bound as servants in County Londonderry.[410] However, the Middlesex Sessions also record an early instance of spiriting, very likely related to this contingent of children. In the spring of 1616, the Middlesex Sessions record an incident in which Thomas Aldred and William Watkines accused Richard Lighterfoot of enticing away William Smyth, an apprentice, along with other apprentices from various masters in order to transport them to Ireland without the knowledge or consent of their masters or, it is presumed, their parents.[411]

Throughout Ireland, the early 1600s were marred by punitive English policies and what historian Lawrence Stone refers to as "planned genocide by starvation," which propelled entire Irish families and communities into exile.[412] This era, filled with famine from 1621 – 1638, compounded by ongoing warfare, impelled a mass exodus of the Irish populace. Desperate migrants were ripe for exploitation by unscrupulous mariners. For example, in 1630, the ship *Peter* landed in Bristol with between forty and sixty Irish migrants who had been told that when they arrived in England the locals would happily provide them with plenty of food, drink, and

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[410] James Stevens Curl, *The Honourable Irish Society and the Plantation of Ulster, 1608-2000: The City of London and the Colonisation of County Londonderry in the Province of Ulster in Ireland : A History and Critique* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2000) 96; Kristen McCabe Lashua, *Children At the Birth of Empire: British Law, Liberty, and the Global Migration of Destitute Children, c. 1607-1760* (New York: Routledge, 2023) 112.

[411] Sess. Roll 548/63 Sess. Reg. 2/285, "Sessions, 1616: 14 and 15 March," in County of Middlesex. Calendar To the Sessions Records: New Series, Volume 3, 1615-16, (London, 1937) pp. 172-191, British History Online https://www.british-history.ac.uk/middx-sessions/vol3/pp172-191; Lashua, Children at the Birth of Empire, 150.

[412] Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529-1642* (London: Routledge, 1996) 78.

money.[413] When apprehended, the captain admitted to having transported boatloads of Irish migrants to England and Cornwall for years under false pretenses.[414]

As difficult as things were for these migrants, at home in Ireland, matters were about to get much worse. In 1641, a conflict erupted when eighty Catholic landowners, led by Rory O'More and Phelim O'Neill, attacked Dublin Castle and other strategic locations to challenge anti-Catholic discrimination and reclaim confiscated estates. [415] The rebellion, initially intended as a small-scale act to prompt negotiations, was perceived by the broader Irish Catholic population as a chance for both social revolution and revenge. To the Protestant English Parliament, it seemed to be part of a widespread Catholic conspiracy.[416] Caught between escalating violence and a punitive government response, many in the Catholic elite, who had initially been skeptical, were driven to join the fray. The ensuing conflict resulted in significant casualties among both Protestant civilians and Catholic participants.

In the wake of the uprising, impoverished families, devoid of food, shelter, and means of livelihood, wandered the countryside in a desperate search for sustenance. English historian Robert Dunlop quotes English records stating that people resorted to feeding on weeds and rotting animal carcasses, with many dying in the roadways and leaving their children at the

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[413] Beier, *Masterless Men*, 63.
[414] Ibid.
[415] See Ó Siochrú and Ohlmeyer, *Ireland: 1641*; M. Perceval-Maxwell, *Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1994); Eamon Darcy, *The Irish Rebellion of 1641 and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2015); Lord Ernest William Hamiliton and Lord Ernest Hamilton, *The Irish Rebellion of 1641: With a History of the Events Which Led Up to and Succeeded It* (London: J. Murray, 1920); John Gibney, *The Shadow of a Year: The 1641 Rebellion in Irish History and Memory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Pres, 2013).
[416] Ibid.

mercy of wolves and other animals.[417] The chronicler attributed this tragedy to the "habits of licentiousness and idleness" the Irish had acquired.[418] Though the English government issued a proclamation that all Irish were to be punished, some English parishes continued to offer relief to Irish Protestant refugees, particularly as Protestant families who had migrated to Ireland began to return to England in droves at this point to escape the warfare.[419]

In the aftermath of the 1641 uprising, efforts to restore order and address the rampant poverty and widespread famine were marked by policies that were both a response to the crisis and a reflection of social attitudes of the time. Oliver Cromwell was appointed by Parliament in 1649 to lead an invasion of Ireland to avenge the massacre of Protestant settlers in the 1641 uprising, and to further crush all resistance to the Commonwealth. His brutal campaign marked a new phase in Irish migration.[420] In 1652, Cromwell's Act of Settlement authorized the transportation of Irish Catholics, paupers, and political prisoners to the colonies.[421]

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[417] No.380. Robert Dunlop, ed., *Ireland under the Commonwealth: Being a Selection of Documents Relating to the Government of Ireland from 1651 to 1659* (Manchester: University Press, 1913), 2:340.
[418] Ibid.
[419] A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (London: Methuen & Co, Ltd., 1985) 64.
[420] See Maurice Ashley, *Charles I and Oliver Cromwell: A Study in Contrasts and Comparisons* (London: Routledge, 2022); John Donoghue, "The Curse of Cromwell: Revisiting the Irish Slavery Debate," *History Ireland,* 25:4 (2017) 24–28; Graham Goodlad and Martyn Housden, *Oliver Cromwell* (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, LLP, 2007), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utarl/detail.action?docID=3306071; Aubrey Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review,* 19:76 (1930): 607–23; Aubrey Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation Part II," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review,* 20:78 (1931) 291–305; John P. Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland.* (Dublin: Mellifont Press, Ltd., 1922).
[421] T. M. Moody and Theodore William Moody, *Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691* (Cotswolds: Clarendon Press, 1991) 363-364.

Bristol merchant Richard Netherway was granted a license in 1653 to ship 100 Irish political prisoners to Virginia.[422] Further, Act 385, passed 23 May, 1653, ordered that all laws pertaining to "vagrants, sturdy beggars, idle and disorderly persons, and all laws and statues touching bastardy, swearing, drunkenness, and for relieving and setting of the poor to work," in England would also be in force in Ireland.[423] Thus, Cromwell began employing in Ireland the same heavy-handed policies which would soon spark outrage among the English public. However, unlike the English populace, which could appeal to the regime on the grounds that they were freeborn Englishmen, the Irish had always been considered a foreign people. An amendment passed in 1657 ensured that all Catholics who had supported resistance to English domination in any way could be subject to transportation.[424] As a result, Donoghue reports, entire villages were emptied of their occupants as the English sought to remove anyone suspected of political insurgency or of sympathy with insurgents.[425] Even children of upper-class Catholics were at risk. Irish historian John Prendergast relates the tale of the family of Daniel Connery, a gentleman of Clare, whose three adolescent daughters were shipped to Barbados after their father's banishment for harboring a priest.[426] "How many girls of gentle birth," he wonders,

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[422]Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigration to the Americas of Felons, Destitute Children, Political and Religious Non-Conformists, Vagabonds, Beggars and Other Undesirables, 1607-1776* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1992) 48 .

[423] No.389. Dunlop, *Ireland under the Commonwealth,* 2:343.

[424] "June 1657: An Act for the Attainder of the Rebels in Ireland," in C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds. *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London, 1911) 1250-1262.

[425] John Donoghue, "Unfree Origins of English Empire-Building in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic," in John Donoghue and Evelyn Jennings, eds., *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500-1914*, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 118-119.

[426] John P. Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland.* (Dublin: Mellifont Press, Ltd., 1922) 90.

"must have been caught and hurried to the private prisons of these men-catchers none can tell."[427]

Colonial policies facilitating the transportation of paupers from Ireland under the guise of addressing poverty and famine also created avenues for even more blatant abuse. Though the transportation of paupers can be seen as an attempt by the government to control and mitigate the widespread destitution resulting from war and famine, it inevitably led to the forced transportation of non-vagrant individuals. Moreover, Irish families who migrated to England in an attempt to escape famine and warfare in their own country were branded as vagrants by default, viewed not just as economic burdens, but potential threats to English society.[428] As A. L. Beier reports, the Irish "were thought to be barbarous enough on their own soil, but even more obnoxious when they came to England," with what were thought to be their "dubious morals, dirty habits, and popery."[429]

Clash of Cultures

A major factor exacerbating the conflict between the English and the Irish lay in the fact that the chasm between the two cultures was not easily bridged, and enduring differences between the two societies in areas such as government, justice, and social norms contributed to suspicion and misunderstanding. One notable difference lay in the very foundation of leadership. In English society, the principle of primogeniture dictated that the eldest son inherited the kingship or noble titles, ostensibly ensuring a linear, predictable transfer of power. Irish Chiefs ascended not by mere birthright, but through a more communal process involving the consensus

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[427] Ibid.
[428] Beier, *Masterless Men*, 10-11.
[429] Beier, *Masterless Men*, 64.

of the *derbfine*, a family council made up of relatives within four generations of a former or current chief. This system placed a greater emphasis on collective decision-making and community approval rather than bloodline entitlement.[430]

Moreover, traditional Celtic justice was restorative rather than punitive - transgressors were expected to restore justice by compensating the injured party directly for crimes such as theft, assault, etc. Even grave offenses such as homicide were addressed through the payment of eraic, or "blood money," to the bereaved family.[431] The English saw such practices as indicative of a corrupt government based upon bribes, as if justice could be bought or sold, rather than understanding it as a cultural tradition of restoring harmony. Additionally, Irish legal matters were adjudicated by brehons, a group of hereditary legal scholars well-versed in ancestral laws passed down through generations. These brehons were seen as custodians of wisdom, their judgments steeped in tradition dating as far back as the seventh century.[432] The English system relied instead on a decentralized system of jurisprudence shaped by custom and judicial precedents.[433] This discrepancy between the Irish emphasis on ancestral wisdom and the English reliance on evolving legal precedents highlighted the cultural "otherness" perceived by the English. These differences made the expectation of Irish cultural and legal integration into the English system unrealistic. Such deeply ingrained ways of life and governance were not only a matter of practice but of identity, making the path to mutual understanding and integration exceptionally difficult.

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[430] Connolly, *Contested Island,* 12.
[431] Ibid, 14.
[432] Ibid.
[433] See Nan Goodman, *Banished: Common Law and the Rhetoric of Social Exclusion in Early New England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

The roles and rights of women in traditional Irish society also contrasted starkly with English norms. For example, Irish women had more agency, being able to own property independently of their husbands.[434] "In Gaelic Ireland," Mary O'Dowd relates, "canon law on marriage was observed selectively."[435] Prior to 1500, flexible marital norms allowed for divorce if either party became dissatisfied with the arrangement, and marriages could be annulled if familial alignments shifted or no offspring were produced, without either party incurring the stigma seen in English views toward divorce.[436] This former ease in dissolving marriages is most likely a major reason that Irish society made no distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children, whereas in English society marriage was nearly always until death and illegitimate children tended to be outcasts excluded from inheritance.[437] The elevated position of women in Irish households is shown by the comments of Richard Stanihurst, who noted in 1584 that the "prime place at the table is bestowed upon the woman of the household."[438]

Cultural differences bled over to create different forms of both Catholicism and Protestantism as well. Irish Catholic veneration of shrines, relics, and holy wells, along with practices which suggested the manipulation of supernatural forces were of great concern to Protestant immigrants from England and Scotland, while other indigenous worship traditions also shocked English Catholics.[439] Among the latter were the lively excesses of feasting and celebration indulged in by Irish Catholics during holy days, the interpretation of penance as a negotiation with or even payment of money to the clergy, and the use of indulgences as an

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[434] Ibid, 20.
[435] Mary O'Dowd, "Family: Marriage Patterns and Family Life from 1500 to 1690," in James S. Donnelly, ed., *Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture* (Detroit: Macmillan, 2004) 239.
[436] Ibid, pp 20, 59; O'Dowd, "Marriage Patterns and Family Life," 239.
[437] O'Dowd, "Marriage Patterns and Family Life," 240.
[438] Ibid, 20-21.
[439] Ibid, 340-344.

alternative to confession or a pre-emptive payment for future sin.[440] Ironically, Protestant Ireland was much more tolerant of extreme views than the Anglican or Presbyterian churches in England and Scotland. Thus, it served as a haven for exiled religious radicals such as Puritans and Presbyterian Covenanters, who exhibited the strictest and most virulently anti-Catholic form of Calvinistic Protestantism.[441] As Angus Calder notes, Scottish preachers who were outlawed at home sought refuge in Ireland.[442] Thus, the very character of Protestantism and Catholicism within Ireland ensured that major clashes between the two groups were inevitable.

Historians Sean Connolly, Roy Foster, and Kevin Whelan posit that the true intent of England was less about eradicating Irish Catholicism as a religion than an attempt to undermine Catholic sociopolitical influence by barring Catholics from holding public office and substantial land ownership, a maneuver linked to class dynamics rather than religion.[443] The English elite viewed the Catholic gentry as competitors for control and influence, so by implementing laws that restricted the rights and privileges of Catholics they could maintain and strengthen their own position at the top of the social hierarchy. Despite these oppressive policies, a Catholic landowning class persisted in the shadows, often navigating its way through feigned conversion, a strategic choice which allowed them to preserve their status and wealth.[444] For the broader Irish

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[440] Ibid.
[441] Ibid, 353-355.
[442] Angus Calder, *Revolutionary Empire: The Rise of the English-Speaking Empires from the Fifteenth Century to the 1780s* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981) 280.
[443] See Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power*; R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1988), 153-156, 203-207; Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism, and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760-1830* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).
[444] Ibid.

Catholic community, irrespective of their socioeconomic status or place of residence, the experience was one of exclusion and discrimination, according to Howe.[445]

Anti-Irish Biases in Literature and Social Commentary

Anti-Irish bigotry was vividly encapsulated in literature from the sixteenth century, which framed the Irish as inherently inferior and legitimizing their exploitation in colonial territories. Raphael Holinshed's "Chronicles" (1587) exemplifies early literary depictions, referring to the Irish as "the wilde Irish" and "wicked Irishe," further embedding the narrative of savagery into the English consciousness. In his poem “The Faerie Queene,” Edmund Spencer depicted them as, "wilde fruit, which salvage soyl hath bred,” and described Ireland as being “overspread” with “brutish barbarisme."[446] Another contemporary work referred to the Irish as “wood-born savages” and “dung-hill gnats.”[447] According to American sociologist Margaret Hodgen, the English historically ascribed traits of ignorance, savagery, and an animalistic nature to all groups perceived as fundamentally different or "other."[448]

This negative characterization continued into the seventeenth century. In “A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued” (1612), Sir John Davies, legal scholar and advocate of English imperialism, portrayed the Irish as murderous barbarians, “little better than Canniballes, who doe hunt one another, and hee that hath most strength and swiftnes doth

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[445] Howe, *Ireland and Empire*, 67; Block and Shaw, “Subjects Without an Empire,” 36.
[446] Edmund Spenser, *The faerie queene: disposed into XII bookes, fashioning twelue morall vertues*. London: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1905 f. p. 1590, 1:10.
[447] From a seventeenth-century poem, quoted in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) 18.
[448] Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, 364.

eate and devoures all his fellowes."[449] He voiced the opinion that "a barbarous country must first be broken by a war, before it will be capable of good government," justifying the subjugation of Ireland.[450] Roger Williams, founder of the Rhode Island colony, used the term "Indians" to depict non-English societies, writing in 1652 "we have Indians at home, Indians in Cornwall, Indians in Wales, Indians in Ireland…".[451]

In the eyes of many British observers, the perceived inherent inferiority of the Irish made them naturally predisposed to roles of servitude. This dehumanization also served to solidify English identity and superiority. By juxtaposing themselves against the inferior Irish, the English could emphasize their own civilized and superior nature, thereby reinforcing the ethnocentric hierarchies of the period. According to Amanda Page McGee, brutal actions taken by Irish supporters of the Stuart Kings, such as burning towns and shooting into crowded churches, were widely publicized by English media, stirring up even more fear of the Irish among the citizens of England.[452]

Colonial Attitudes

The derogatory perception wasn't confined to English still in Britain or Ireland. In the plantation economy of the Atlantic World, Irish servants elicited a unique fear among Caribbean

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[449] John Davies, *Historical Relations, or, A Discovery of the True Causes Why Ireland Was Never Intirely Subdu'd nor Brought under Obedience of the Crown of England: Until the Beginning of the Reign of King James of Happy Memory* (Dublin: Samuel Dancer, 1666).
[450] Ibid.
[451] Roger William, quoted in Tony Claydon and Thomas N. Corns, *Religion, Culture and National Community in the 1670s* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011) 149.
[452] Amanda Page McGee, *Products of Circumstance: Eighteenth-Century Runaway Indentured Servant Advertisements in a Changing Atlantic World* (MA Thesis, Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2017) 16.

planters, one which was rooted in the historical animosities of the English towards the Irish.[453] Irish workers were not just another source of labor, they were a problem – a social, cultural, and economic quandary that vexed the English colonial establishment. They were the "other," not only by virtue of their servitude, but by their religious and cultural identity. Beckles writes that the Irish were viewed as "belonging to a backwards culture, unfit to contribute anything beyond their labor to colonial development."[454] The 1661 *Act for the Good Governing of Servants, and Ordaining the Rights Between Masters and Servants*, passed in Barbados, referred to the Irish as "turbulent and dangerous spirits."[455] This animus was further evidenced by administrative communications, such as those of Barbados Governor Willoughby whose letters to the English Privy Council begged them to "prevent any excess of Irish" in future shipments of servants.[456] Caribbean planter Christopher Jeaffreson wrote in 1673 that in his opinion the Irish were "good for nothing but mischief."[457]

Anti-Irish sentiment was prevalent in the North American colonies as well, as can be seen in a Virginia statute of 1653 that specifically targeted Irish servants, stipulating that they should serve for at least six years, rather than the four-year minimum required for servants from other locations.[458] A Massachusetts *General Court Act in 1654* prohibiting the importation of the Irish

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[453] Hilary M. Beckles, "A 'Riotous and Unruly Lot': Irish Indentured Servants and Freemen in the English West Indies, 1644-1713," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47:4 (October 1990) 504.
[454] Ibid, 511.
[455] Beckles, "Riotous and Unruly Lot," 517.
[456] Letter of Governor William Willoughby to the Privy Council, 16 Dec., 1667, in Sainsbury, *CSPC*, 1661-1668, 526.
[457] Letter of Christopher Jeaffreson, 15 Aug, 1673, quoted in Beckels, "Riotous and Unruly Lot," 511.
[458] William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, Passed on the Fifth Day of February One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight ...* (New York: R. W. & G. Bartow, 1823) 1:411; Carla Gardina Pestana, *The*

into that colony, due to the "cruel and malignant spirit" allegedly manifested by them.[459] By the eighteenth century, laws like South Carolina's 1698 *Act for the Encouragement of White Servants* explicitly excluded "native Irish" and Catholics, underscoring the religious and racial undertones in colonial attitudes.[460] The Leeward Islands declared in 1701, "that if any Irish servants should be brought there for sale they should not be inforced to buy them."[461] Similarly, Maryland imposed an impost specifically on Irish Catholic servants in 1704, possibly due to the six hundred Irish Catholic servants who had arrived in 1698.[462]

Quantifying Servant Migration from Ireland

The historical archives reflect the turbulence, upheaval, and administrative chaos of early modern Ireland, particularly in the scarcity of documentation of Irish migration during the colonial era. Though shipping records from the seventeenth century are fragmentary for all of the British Isles during this time, there is a particular lack of recorded evidence regarding servants from Ireland. The gap in documentation, particularly under Cromwell's administration, may also be reflective of the lower perceived value of Irish servants to both English and colonial shipmasters. These voyages were only marginally documented, if at all, revealing an oversight and neglect in record-keeping that further discounted Irish servants and erased their individual

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English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) 190.

[459] Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation," 621.

[460] Theo D. Jervey, "The White Indented Servants of South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 12:4 (Oct. 1911) 164; Warren B. Smith, *White Servitude in Colonial South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1961) 164-165.

[461] Colonel Jory to the Council of Trade and Plantations, quoted in Kristen Block and Jenny Shaw, "Subjects Without an Empire: The Irish in the Early Modern Caribbean," *Past & Present*, no. 210 (2011): 58.

[462] Margaret M. R. Kellow, "Indentured Servitude in Eighteenth-Century Maryland," *Histoire Sociale* 34 (November 1984), 236; Purcell, "Irish Colonists in Colonial Maryland," 284.

narratives from the annals of history. Such omissions have likely resulted in an underestimation of the extent to which Irish natives served as bound laborers in the English colonies. Despite the conspicuous absence of documentation, it is clear that there were a great many Irish servants in the Americas during the colonial era, and all of them had to have arrived in the colonies via ship, despite their voyages not being recorded.[463]

Hundreds of unaccompanied Irish children can be found appearing before colonial courts to have their cases adjudged.[464] In addition, several other records can be found of trials waged by

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[463] For evidence of Irish servants in the colonies, see *Transcript of the Minutes of the Barbados Assembly, 1654-1658* (1934). British National Archives, PRO 31/17/43 & PRO 31/17/44; Sir Robert Schomburg, *History of Barbados. Comprising a Geographical and Statistical Description of the Island; a Sketch of the Historical Events of Settlement; and an Account of the Geology and Natural Productions* (London: Routledge, 1848), 84; Letter from Governor William Willoughby to the Privy Council of England, Dec. 16, 1667, William Noel Sainsbury, *CSPC, America and West Indies, Vol. 2, 1661-1668* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1880) 526; Aubrey Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 19:76 (1930) 607–23; Aubrey Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation Part II," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 20:78 (1931) 1–305; Aubrey Gwynn, "Early Irish Emigration to the West Indies (1612-1643)," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 18:71 (1929) 377–93; Richard J. Purcell, "Irish Colonists in Colonial Maryland," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 23:90 (June, 1934) 279-294.; Diane Rogers, "The Immigrant Servants Database," Price Genealogy, October 15, 2021, https://www.pricegen.com/the-immigrant-servants-database/; Also see runaway servant advertisements found in colonial newspapers held at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston, Massachusetts, and at newspapers.com - *American Weekly Mercury*, B*oston Evening Post*, *Boston Gazette*, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*; *Boston News-Letter*; *Boston Post Boy*; *Connecticut Gazette*; *Connecticut Courant*; *Connecticut Journal; Essex Gazett*e; *Essex Journal; Independent Reflector*; *Maryland Gazette*; *Massachusetts Spy*; *New England Courant; New England Weekly Journal*; *New Hampshire Gazette*; *New York Chronicle*; *New York Evening Post*; *New York Gazette*; *New York Journal*; *Newport Mercury*; *Pennsylvania Gazette*; *Pennsylvania Journal*; *Pennsylvania Packet*; *Providence Gazette*; *Rhode Island Gazette; Virginia Gazette.*

[464] Richard Hayes Phillips, *Without Indentures: Index to White Slave Children in Colonial Court Records*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2013); Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children of Colonial Maryland and Virginia: Birth and Shipping Records* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2015); Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children of Charles County, Maryland: The Search for Survivors* (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2015); Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children in Colonial America: Supplement to the Trilogy* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2021); Beverley Fleet, *Virginia Colonial Abstracts,* 3 volumes (Genealogical Publishing Com, 1988); Dorothy B. Lapp,

minor servants claiming to have been abducted from Ireland and shipped to the colonies.[465] Advertisements for runaway servants found in colonial newspapers show that a large portion of runaways were Irish, including children and adolescents.[466] Moreover, in the suit involving Welch and Downing, Samuel Symonds of Massachusetts testified that he when he bought the two servants in 1654, "there had come over many Irish before that tyme."[467]

Records of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania, vol 1 and 2 (Danboro: Richard T. and Mildred C. Williams, 1972); H. Clay Reed and George Julius Miller, *The Burlington Court Book: A Record of Quaker Jurisprudence in West New Jersey, 1680-1709* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1998); Sam Sparacio and Ruth Sparacio, *Richmond County, Virginia Order Book Abstracts*, 1697-1735 (McLean: Antient Press, 1991); Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England* (Boston, 1855-1861), 12 volumes; Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England,* 5 volumes (Boston: W. White, 1853) Colonial Society of Massachusetts, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* (Boston : The Society, 1895) http://archive.org/details/colonialsocietyo29colo; State of Pennsylvania, *Pennsylvania Court of Quarter Sessions (Philadelphia County) Court Docket, 1753-1770,* FS Library Film 965370 (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1974); State Archives of North Carolina, "Colonial Court Records, 1665-1787," https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov.

[465] See Hiferney v. Hollot, Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England: Printed by Order of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,* Vol. 3 (New York: AMS Press, 1968), June 10, 1661, 220, http://www.archive.org/details/recordsofcolonyo0102new; State of New Jersey, *Rules of the Courts of Common Pleas, and General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, of the County of Burlington, in the State of New Jersey, 1764-1787*, (1832) folio 85; State of Pennsylvania, *Pennsylvania Court of Quarter Sessions (Philadelphia County) Court Docket, 1753-1770,* FS Library Film 965370 (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1974); Maryland State Archives, Somerset County Judicial Records, Vol. 106 (1689-1690) 33.

[466] See Diane Rogers, "The Immigrant Servants Database," Price Genealogy, October 15, 2021, https://www.pricegen.com/the-immigrant-servants-database/; also, colonial newspapers held at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Massachusetts in Boston, Massachusetts, and at newspapers.com: *American Weekly Mercury;* B*oston Evening Post; Boston Gazette; Boston Gazette and Country Journal*; *Boston News-Letter; Boston Post Boy*; *Connecticut Gazette*; *Connecticut Courant*; *Connecticut Journal; Essex Gazett*e; *Essex Journal; Independent Reflector*; *Maryland Gazette*; *Massachusetts Spy*; *New England Courant; New England Weekly Journal*; *New Hampshire Gazette*; *New York Chronicle*; *New York Evening Post*; *New York Gazette*; *New York Journal*; *Newport Mercury*; *Pennsylvania Gazette*; *Pennsylvania Journal*; *Pennsylvania Packet*; *Providence Gazette*; *Rhode Island Gazette; Virginia Gazette*.

[467] Samuel Symonds, as quoted in Welch, *Philip Welch*, 25, 26, 28.

Due to the silence of official records on this matter, it is difficult to get a good idea of the numbers of children shipped from Ireland as colonial servants. Though there are many accounts of governmental strategies for dispatching Irish political dissidents, vagrants, and children to colonial shores, as well as evidence of the presence of large numbers of Irish servants in the colonies, there is a distinct lack of archival information regarding the specific ships and voyages on which they sailed. Alison Games estimates that between 1649 and 1660 alone, at least 10,000 Irish servants were transported to the Americas.[468] In his 2013 work *Fire Under the Ashes*, Donoghue states that during these years approximately 20,000 Irish Catholics were transported to the colonies.[469] Later, in a 2016 work he reported that estimates of servants transported from Ireland range from 30,000 to over 100,000, and that it is clear that children were specifically targeted.[470] However, in a different work authored that same year he adjusts his estimate, stating that the number of Irish transported to the English colonies "certainly exceeded ten thousand," and that the true number could be "possibly tens of thousands."[471]

Governmental records suggest a large-scale transportation of Irish children to colonies in the North America and the Caribbean during Cromwell's administration. On September 6, 1653, the Calendar of State Papers records licenses issued to merchants from Boston and London to

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[468] Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 255-258.
[469] John Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) 259.
[470] John Donoghue, "Child Slavery and the Global Economy: Historical Perspectives on a Contemporary Problem," in James Gabarino and Garry Sigman, eds., *A Child's Right to a Healthy Environment* (New York: Springer New York, 2010) 205.
[471] John Donoghue, "Unfree Origins of English Empire-Building in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic," in John Donoghue and Evelyn Jennings, eds., *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500-1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 118 and 118 n. 16.

ship 400 children from Ireland to New England in the ships *Goodfellow* and *Providence*.[472] The following month the same merchants were awarded another contract to ship 250 women and 300 men, all to be twelve years and older.[473] Correspondence between Henry Cromwell and Secretary of State John Thurloe throughout September and October of 1655 discussed plans to ship young Irish girls and boys to Jamaica.[474] Though force would be required to catch the girls, Cromwell remarked, it would be "for their own goode."[475] As for the boys, he thought 1,500 to 2,000 would suffice, musing "We could well spare them . . . and who knows, but that it may be a meanes to make them English-men, I meane rather Christianes."[476] On October 3, 1655 an Order of the Council of State directed Commissioners of the Admiralty to send 2,000 Irish children - 1,000 girls and a "like number" of boys under the age of fourteen to Jamaica.[477] The shipment of child servants from Ireland continued into the next century to at least some degree, since a 1767 letter from Nathaniel Russell of South Carolina mentioned a ship of 400 Irish servants that

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[472] Order of the Council of State, Sept. 6, 1653 in Sainsbury, *CSPC, 1574-1660*, 338.

[473] No.431. Dunlop, *Ireland under the Commonwealth,* 2:374-375; Anna Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting: Seventeenth Century English Penal Policy and Superfluous Populations," in Donoghue and Jennings, *Building the Atlantic Empires,* 147 n. 59.

[474] Thomas Birch, ed., *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe ... Containing Authentic Memorials of the English Affairs from the Year 1638, to the Restoration of King Charles II. Published from the Originals, Formerly in the Library of John Lord Somers ... and since in That of Sir Joseph Jekyll ... Including Also a Considerable Number of Original Letters and Papers, Communicated by ... the Archbishop of Canterbury from the Library at Lambeth ... the Earl of Shelburn, and Other Hands. The Whole Digested into an Exact Order of Time. To Which Is Prefixed, the Life of Mr. Thurloe* (London: F. Gyles, 1742) 30:241, 385, 415; 31:105, 129, 139, 198, 241.

[475] Letter from Henry Cromwell to John Thurloe Sept. 11, 1655, in Thurloe, *Papers of John Thurloe*, 30:241.

[476] Letter from Henry Cromwell to John Thurloe Sept. 18, 1655, in *Papers of John Thurloe*, 30:385; Games, *Web of Empire*, 264-268; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 122.

[477] Order of the Council of State, Oct. 3, 1655 in Sainsbury, *CSP, Colonial, 1574-1660*, 431; Lashua, *Children at the Birth of Empire*, 122.

arrived in Charleston on July 19 of that year, including "many children without Parent Friend or Relation."[478]

John Blake contends that because no records of the 2,000 children arriving in Jamaica can be found, "we may reasonably conclude that the children never left Ireland."[479] He also explains that no evidence can be found in the records of the high court of admiralty regarding the voyage of the *Goodfellow*, though it is possible to verify that the *Providence* did transport passengers from Ireland to Virginia.[480] Yet, shipping records from the seventeenth and eighteenth are highly fragmentary, particular concerning Ireland, making it unrealistic to imagine that such proofs would be easily found. Blake himself states that the search for these records was a "longshot."[481]

As previously stated, Massachusetts passed legislation banning the importation of servants from Ireland in 1654, the year after the voyage of the *Goodfellow* was licensed.[482] It would be logical to assume that such sentiment would have severely limited the demand for shipments of Irish children in 1653. However, the fact that Boston merchant David Selleck

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[478] Letter from Nathaniel Russell to Rev. Ezra Stiles, Charles Town, July 19, 1767, quoted in Warren B. Smith, *White Servitude in Colonial South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1961) 42 n. Some scholars offer less dramatic assessments of the extent of the trade in Irish laborers than Games and Donoghue. James Kelly estimates that 6,000 child servants sailed to the North American colonies from Ireland between 1729 and 1760, perhaps 2,500 of whom were kidnapped. See James Kelly, "'Horrid' and 'Infamous' Practices: The Kidnapping and Stripping of Children, *c*.1730– *c*.1840," *Irish Historical Studies* 42:162 (November 2018) 269. Marianne Wokeck writes that around 200 Irish servants of all ages per year migrated to North American colonies in the 1720s, comprising a mere twenty percent of the total immigration. See Marianne S. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) 17.
[479] Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America," 271.
[480] Ibid, 272.
[481] Ibid.
[482] Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation," 621.

sought to ship hundreds of Irish children to that colony indicates that a market for them did exist. More to the point, as testimony from the 1661 Massachusetts court case brought by Philip Welch and William Downing demonstrates, young people *were*, in fact, taken from Ireland and shipped aboard the *Goodfellow,* captained by George Dell, to Boston a few months after the license was issued.[483] Additional support comes from Samuel Gardner Drake, who quoted a contemporary paper as stating that the *Goodfellow*, captained by George Dell, again arrived in Boston in 1663 with a "large number" of Irish servants, indicating that Dell must have made a decent profit from the first voyage.[484] These facts illustrate that the absence of documented evidence of a voyage in contemporary English maritime records does not prove that the voyage did not occur.

Unscrupulous Recruitment Practices

Nevertheless, the focus of this discussion is not primarily on the quantity of servants transported, as the argument does not hinge on children constituting a significant portion of the bound labor force in the colonies. Instead, the emphasis is on the manner in which this trade was conducted and what it reveals about government involvement and endorsement. This approach shifts the analysis from a quantitative assessment to a qualitative examination of the mechanisms and implications of state-supported indentured servitude, providing a deeper understanding of the systemic and institutional frameworks that facilitated such practices.

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[483] See Essex County Quarterly Courts, *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts*, 293-296; Waters, *Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony*, 221-222.
[484] Samuel G. Drake, *The History and Antiquities of the City of Boston ... from Its Settlement in 1630 to the Year 1770: Also, an Introductory History of the Discovery and Settlement of New England. With Notes, Critical and Illustrative.* (Boston: L. Stevens, 1854) 342. N. The original paper was, at the time of writing, in the position of a Frederic Kidder, Esquire.

As in England, several shiploads of Irish vagrants and felons sailed to the colonies, but the means by which merchants acquired Irish passengers further reflects English attitudes about the Irish. Indeed, merchants' "recruitment" methods were rife with unethical practices. Merchants from Bristol, London, and the colonies were known to sweep up innocent bystanders, particularly if the jails and prisons were running low on transportees.[485] One such merchant, Martin Noell, was prosperous in the Caribbean and was a transporter of indentured servants and African slaves. He also helped to finance Cromwell's Irish campaign and, along with access to Irish vagrants and other political prisoners, he was rewarded with land confiscated from Irish Catholics.[486] Historian John Blake points to London merchants Edward Wood, John Jefferies, Robert Lewellin, and Valentine Austin as being involved in the procurement of Irish servants through dubious and unethical practices.[487] One of these men, Lewellin, may have engaged in the same sort of unethical conflict of interest as Samuel Symonds, with whom we began this chapter. Lewellin partnered with Commissioner of Maryland, Thomas Cornwallis, whom Mary Ford brought suit against for stealing her children from England and spiriting them away to Maryland in 1646.[488] According to nineteenth-century Irish historian John P. Prendergast, the chief merchants involved were David Selleck, Richard Leader, Robert Yeomans, Joseph Lawrence, "and others."[489]

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[485] See Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America"; Donoghue, "Unfree Origins."
[486] Donoghue, "Unfree Origins," 118-119.
[487] Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America," 278, 280.
[488] For information linking Lewellin to Cornwallis, see Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America," 273, N. 3; for Mary Ford's petition to Parliament see Parliamentary Archives: Main Papers, HL/PO/JO/10/1/20425, April 1646 – Petition of Mary Ford, widow, against Thomas Cornwallis, Lords Journals, VIII. 283; Historical Manuscripts Commission, Sixth Report, appendix, 109; Coldham, *Complete Book of Emigrants*, 231.
[489] Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland,* 90.

Despite the many legally sanctioned shipments, the English Council of State did make attempts to prevent independent mariners from engaging in widespread abduction of the general public. On January 20, 1654, legislation was enacted to prevent the seizure of family members of anyone whose head of household would vouch for their good behavior.[490] Later action in December of that year ordered that all ships in the Dublin harbor be detained until they had been searched for kidnap victims, and in January 1655 a ship bound for Barbados was captured and its captain arrested.[491] The following July another ship bound for Barbados was searched pursuant to a report that it contained unwilling servants.[492] As abductions continued, the Council resorted in 1657 to cancelling contracts which authorized shipmasters or labor agents to collect vagrants for transportation, because emigration agents had, "enticed and forced women from their children and husbands, and children from their parents. . . "[493] However, another impetus for this action is suggested by the fact that the legislation specifically states that, ". . . they have not only dealt so with the Irish but also with the English."[494] Prendergast affirms that, in his opinion, such abductions were halted because agents began to seize the children of the English themselves and force them onto ships bound for the colonies.[495] The English-born Lord Cork, Richard Boyle, complained in a letter to Henry Cromwell against the "wickedness of many of this nation to fetch poor Irish people out of their beds and sell them into the Barbadoes."[496] No other legislation was

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[490] John Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America," 278; Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting," 157.
[491] Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America," 277; Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting," 157.
[492] Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America," 297; Suranyi, "Indenture, Transportation, and Spiriting," 157.
[493] No.929. Dunlop, *Ireland under the Commonwealth,* 2:655-656.
[494] Ibid, 656.
[495] Prendergast, *Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland,* 90.
[496] Richard Boyle, Lord Cork, quoted in T. C. Barnard, "Crises of Identity among Irish Protestants 1641-1685," *Past & Present*, No. 127 (May, 1990): 72.

passed until Sept. 8, 1663, when a proclamation was made against "Certain persons, wickedly pretending authority, who have stolen children to sell them in foreign parts."[497] The proclamation further instructed the Mayors of Dublin and other Irish cities to search all ships for captive children, arrest those found to be traffickers, and bring them to the Assize for trial.[498] The sheer number of efforts to stop the process of stealing children through legislation testifies to the likelihood that the practice was continued, though the fact that enforcement mechanisms only became truly operative when English children were involved speaks to the racial reasoning that underlay the trade in child labor in this period.

A Word About Northern Ireland

Scots Irish from Northern Ireland immigrated in much greater numbers, overall, than those from Southern Ireland.[499] However, researching child servants from this region presents challenges, primarily because the distinct entity of "Northern Ireland" did not exist at the time. In colonial records, those identified were labeled simply as "Irish," a term with which they would have also identified themselves.[500] Through meticulous analysis of birth and shipping records, historian Richard Hayes Philips has managed to trace twenty-seven children appearing before colonial courts without indentures back to what is today known as Northern Ireland.[501] However,

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[497] Ormonde, *Irish Proclamations*, 8 September 1663, No. R178920, http://estc.bl.uk/R178920.
[498] Ibid.
[499] Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860: A History of the Continuing Settlement of the United States*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger (New York, NY: Harper, 1961) 49.
[500] William Henry Williams, *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware, 1639-1865* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1996) 40; Carl Frederick Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956) vii.
[501] Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children in Colonial America: Birth and Shipping Records* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., 2015); Richard Hayes Phillips, *White*

outside extensive research of such records, distinguishing these children from those from Southern Ireland is problematic unless they specifically declared their city of origin in court, which was rarely the case.

In all areas of Ireland, unethical English merchants driven by opportunism and ethnic or cultural bias were most likely responsible for the bulk of abductions in Ireland during an era when political unrest coupled with social upheaval and intense colonial labor demands created an environment ripe for exploitation.[502] Finding themselves at the crossroads of supply and demand, merchants seized on this opportunity, capitalizing on the existing loopholes in legal policy and, by masking their illegal activities as altruism, these merchants were able to operate with relative impunity, as they had learned to do in England.

It is important to recognize, however, that witnesses in the 1661 Massachusetts court case stated that they were taken "by English soldiers," and the shipmaster's bill of sale for two of these servants confirmed that they were "brought over by order of the State of England."[503] This raises the question as to what extent the English government was responsible for the abductions of Irish servants, even when the shipping was officially conducted by independent merchants. The alleged involvement of military personnel suggests not only an overlap of interests between private merchants and government agents, but potentially a high degree of collusion between the two which facilitated the forced transportation of the Irish under the guise of maintaining order over an inferior, and even dangerous, population or providing economic relief.

Slave Children of Colonial Maryland and Virginia: Supplement to the Trilogy (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2021).

[502] For a similar argument see Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America," 281.

[503] Essex Courts, *Records and Files*, 2:295; Welch, *Philip Welch of Ipswich*, 4.

<u>Conclusions</u>

As the court cases discussed at the beginning of this chapter reveal, colonial legal systems often failed to deliver justice to young servants. Biased juries, vested interests, and the prioritization of economic imperatives over individual rights made the courts less an avenue of redress and more a tool for maintaining existing power structures. Demand for colonial labor simply tended to overshadow ethical considerations. For those of Irish descent, cultural and ethnic biases also played a role in the perceived legitimacy of their indenture. The disdain harbored by English colonists towards the Irish, frequently cloaked in religious doctrine, perpetuated discriminatory practices. A recurring theme of control, whether over land, bodies, or narratives, serves as a central pillar of colonialism. It was through such control that English authorities sought to reshape Irish identity, to “make them Englishmen.”

These biases laid the groundwork for the forced transportation of Irish Catholics, paupers, political prisoners, and children during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The emptying of villages and targeting of the native gentry signified an attempt not only to quash resistance, but to prevent any resurgence of an Irish Catholic sociopolitical class capable of challenging English hegemony. Such policy patterns reflect an intent to employ colonial transportation not merely as a solution to social issues, but a tool for deeper cultural and social restructuring.

That anti-kidnapping legislation was a direct response to the abduction of English children and adolescents from Ireland, despite the fact that Irish children had been being shipped abroad for decades, indicates that an ongoing and widespread problem did not become intolerable until it began to affect the English population. Such practices only became unacceptable to the authorities when agents began to overstep the societal boundaries which

maintained that the exploitation of Irish poor or Catholic children was permissible, but that of non-vagrant English Protestant children was not.

The opportunistic behavior of merchants from Bristol, London, and the colonies is a significant factor, and the behavior of these men merits more in-depth inspection. While it may be tempting, however, to lay the blame solely at the feet of unscrupulous merchants, the fact is that colonialist ambitions created an environment where ethical boundaries were frequently blurred. The desperate need for colonial labor, coupled with the political situation in Ireland, generated a near-perfect storm for exploitation to occur. In other words, these were not isolated acts of avarice by a handful of merchants. Rather, they were symptomatic of a larger, deeply rooted colonial structure that prioritized economic gain over the rights of those deemed less worthy – the poor, Catholics, and native Celtic Irish.

However, the alleged involvement of the English military in the abduction of servants suggests that the activities of merchants, often viewed solely as driven by personal greed, were in fact supported, if not sanctioned, by governmental authorities. If these accounts can be believed, the presence of English soldiers in the trafficking of forced child labor would have lent a semblance of legality and official approval to these actions, effectively providing a cover for what would otherwise be considered blatant criminal behavior. Equally significant, though less overt, were the actions of colonial courts that disregarded evidence of children being illegally indentured, further contributing to the legitimization of these exploitative practices.

Such collaboration could have served multiple purposes: for the government, it could have facilitated the expansion of colonial labor forces and the suppression of potential Irish resistance by dispersing the younger population, particularly the boys and male adolescents. For

merchants, the involvement of the military would have provided a shield against legal repercussions, allowing them to continue their activities with reduced risk.

If true, this cooperation is an extremely significant factor, suggesting that the exploitation of Irish children was not merely the result of rogue individuals, as historians of Irish history have claimed, but part of a larger colonial strategy endorsed at multiple levels of authority.[504] Ultimately, however, child abduction in Ireland, whether facilitated by direct governmental actions or exploited by merchants amid societal upheaval, was effectively sanctioned by a combination of state policies and social attitudes that regarded the Irish, like the English poor, as expendable resources in service of broader economic and colonial objectives.

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[504] See Blake, "Transportation from Ireland to America, 1653 – 1660."

CHAPTER 5:
THE SHIFT TO SCOTLAND

Although there was no substantial government-coordinated effort in Scotland to transport children to the colonies, involuntary child labor was still a significant issue there. While England's child labor trade was influenced by governmental policy on poverty and colonial labor needs, and Ireland's situation was further complicated by ethnic and colonial dynamics, the situation in Scotland was shaped by a blend of these elements, along with political considerations surrounding the Union of Scotland and England.

Background

Concerns about poverty and vagrancy in sixteenth-century Scotland prompted the creation of policies aimed at managing and often removing those deemed undesirable from society.[505] The Scottish Parliament's Act of 1574 set a legislative precedent, mandating that idle beggars aged fourteen to seventy were to be branded on the right ear, and banished, unless a respectable citizen would take them into service.[506] In an attempt to maintain public order and deal with rising poverty rates, justices of the peace were established to oversee the management

[505] For the obsession with vagrancy, see Ian Whyte, *Scotland Before the Industrial Revolution: An Economic and Social History, c1050-1750* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 168.
[506] Rosalind Mitchison, "The Making of the Old Scottish Poor Law," *Past & Present*, No.63 (May, 1974) 62-63.

of both vagrants and pauper apprenticeships, a system borrowed from England.[507] In 1605 the Scottish Parliament expanded its scope of control over paupers and vagrants, ruling that a sheriff or magistrate could authorize the sale of these individuals to overseas plantations.[508] A further act in 1617 stipulated that impoverished children could be "enserfed" until age thirty by a decision of the church, or by burgh magistrates. Children under the age of fourteen were required to have parental consent for such contracts.[509] Thus, we see that Scottish policies reflected and were influenced by practices which had been employed in neighboring England.

However, the political landscape shifted dramatically in 1649. Following the execution of Charles I in January 1649, an act was passed by the English Parliament on March 17 abolishing the offices of King, Queen, and Prince for "all the people of England and Ireland, and the dominions and territories thereunto belonging," and specifically prohibiting the descendants of Charles I from holding any sort of crown or royal title in England, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, or the islands of Guernsey and Jersey.[510] Two days later additional acts did away with the House of Lords and declared England and its dominions and territories to be a "Commonwealth and Free State."[511] Scotland responded by promptly defying the English Parliament and declaring the previous king's son King Charles II, setting the stage for Cromwell's invasion of Scotland in

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[507] Ibid, 64.
[508] David Masson, ed., *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh: H.M. General Register House, 1887) 8:56-57; Julian Goodare, *The Government of Scotland, 1560-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 269.
[509] T. Thomson, *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, Vol. 4: 1593-1625* (London: Printed by command of his majesty King G, 1816) 542-543, c. 10.
[510] Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-1660* (Clarendon Press, 1906) Act #88, 384-387.
[511] Ibid, Acts #89 and #90, 387-388.

1650.[512] This invasion, culminating in the Battle of Dunbar in 1650, significantly weakened Scotland's autonomy, shaping its subsequent union with England. Despite this, Scotland remained comparatively autonomous politically in the seventeenth century, in contrast to Ireland, which created a unique dynamic with English authorities. As a result, the servant trade in Scotland was linked with broader political issues until well after the Union of Parliaments in 1707.

Vagrants, Convicts, and Political Prisoners

Transportation of those deemed undesirable in Scotland expanded significantly under Oliver Cromwell, as it did in England. In 1653, an order was issued by the English Council of State explicitly targeting minors for removal to New England, calling for the shipment of "150 or 200 Irish or Scotch youths, unless English can be procured."[513] The wording of this order reflects a preference of colonial masters in the 1650s for English workers, when they were available, as opposed to Scottish and Irish. This was most likely due to some degree of ethnocentric bias, with English planters preferring servants who shared their culture and national background.

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[512] Jonathan Fitzgibbons, "Rethinking the English Revolution of 1649," *The Historical Journal* 60, no. 4 (December 2017): 889–914; Keith Lindley, *The English Civil War and Revolution: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2013); Chris Gerrard et al., *Lost Lives, New Voices: Unlocking the Stories of the Scottish Soldiers at the Battle of Dunbar 1650* (Havertown: Oxbow Books, 2018).

[513] William Noel Sainsbury, *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series, Vol. 1, 1574-1660* (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1860) 399; Aubrey Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 19, no. 76 (1930): 617.

In addition, thousands of defeated prisoners of war, adult men and teenage boys, were sentenced to colonial transportation.[514] For example, the defeat of the Scots at the Battle of Dunbar in 1650 saw 1,110 prisoners shipped to Virginia and another 150 to New England, while the Battle of Worcester the following year led to a further 1,600 prisoners being transported to Virginia and 150 to Massachusetts.[515] The *Sarah and John* sailed from London with 227 prisoners of war in November 1651, arriving in Boston the following February.[516] On April 6, 1654, instructions were issued to Cromwell's general to transport "such of the enemies now in arms in the Highlands . . . as often and in such numbers as you shall think fit."[517]

Even after Cromwell's rule, many thousands of Scottish prisoners of war continued to be sent to the Americas. By the restoration of Charles II, numbers of paupers, vagrants, and political prisoners had dramatically increased due to warfare, economic distress, and displacement.[518] Between 1662 and 1665, according to Hilary Beckles, the Scottish government authorized the transportation to Barbados of "rouges, drunks, and others who made civil life unpleasant for the upper classes."[519] Though transportation of convicts had begun a century earlier, Great Britain's

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[514] See David Dobson, *The Original Scots Colonists of Early America, 1612-1783* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1989); Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigration to the Americas 1607 – 1776*, (Phoenix Mill: Alan Sutton Publishing, Ltd., 1992); Ian Adams and Meredyth Somerville, *Cargoes of Despair and Hope: Scottish Emigration to North America, 1603-1803* (Edinburgh: J. Donald Publishers, 1993).
[515] Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains,* 50; Adams and Somerville, *Cargoes of Despair and Hope,* 18.
[516] *Aberdeen Journal*, April 21, 1783.
[517] C. H. Firth, *Scotland and the Protectorate: Letters and Papers Relating to the Military Government of Scotland from January 1654 to June 1659* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1899) 79; Aubrey Gwynn, "Cromwell's Policy of Transportation Part II," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 20:78 (1931) 304.
[518] Adams and Somerville*, Cargoes of Despair and Hope,* 18-19; Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains*, 50.
[519] Hilary M. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 47.

1718 Transportation Act, passed little more than a decade after the political union of 1707, opened the floodgates. Officially titled "An Act for the further preventing Robbery, Burglary, and other Felonies, and for the more effectual Transportation of Felons," the legislation established a legal framework for sentencing convicted felons to transportation as a form of punishment.[520] As a result, there was a marked increase in the numbers of convicts sent to the colonies, who would now serve sentences of ten to fourteen years, a trend that continued until the American Revolution.[521] Criminals could be sent abroad from the age of fifteen.[522]

The Rise of Kidnapping in Scotland

Young children were also a part of the forced labor equation, however. A Scottish sailor's 1647 confession to having received "ungodlie and unlawful gains by alluring and carrying of children to the West Indies," suggests that kidnapping most likely appeared in Scotland around the same time as in England, though not to the same degree.[523] Other evidence of this includes the search of the *Ewe and Lamb* in 1668 at Leith, following reports that children and adults were being held on board against their will, and a similar search of the *Hercules* in 1673 – both ships linked to the Trent family, known participants in the trade of kidnapped servants.[524] A 1684 case

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[520] Document 6.3. The Transportation Act, Clause V, 1718 (4 George II Cap. 11) printed in John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: "There Is Great Want of Servants,"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 244.
[521] Ibid; Adams and Somerville, *Cargoes of Despair and Hope*, 18-19.
[522] Ibid.
[523] Eric J. Graham, *A Maritime History of Scotland, 1650-1790* (Phantassie: Tuckwell Press, 2002) 38.
[524] David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607 – 1785* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994) 52; Brown, *RPC*, 4:103, 104; Graham, *Maritime History*, 47; for more information on the Trent family and their activities involving kidnapped child servants, see Chapter 2 – "Trent and Coutts: A Case Study of Two Scottish Merchant Families," in Angela

of an abducted servant having been shipped from Gournock to Charleston, South Carolina, further corroborates the presence of such practices in Scotland.[525] In addition, Richard Hayes Phillips has found 278 Scottish children without indentures appearing before colonial courts in Maryland and Virginia between 1660-1720, and at least 131 more can be found in the court records of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.[526] These instances suggest that the illicit shipment of servants from Scotland may have mirrored that in England, but was either much smaller in scale or very poorly documented. The 1690s saw an increase in cases of Scottish children appearing before colonial courts, and by the mid-1700s, when kidnapping had become comparatively rare in England, cases in Scotland flourished.

The reasons for this were both legislative and socioeconomic. Scottish Parliamentary Records reveal very little anti-kidnapping legislation of the sort being passed in England during the late seventeenth century. Even after the Union of Parliaments in 1707, Scotland retained its own systems of law. This meant that the many English laws being passed to prevent abuses in the servant industry did not apply in Scotland.[527] There were a few regulations on servant

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Austin, "Forgotten Children: Scotland's Colonial Child Servants, 1680-1760," MPhil Diss (University of Glasgow, 2017) 25-35.

525 George Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina* (Columbia: Duffie & Chapman, 1870) 83; Walter Hart Blumenthal, *Brides From Bridewell: Female Felons Sent to Colonial America* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1962) 71-72.

526 Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children of Colonial Maryland and Virginia: Birth and Shipping Records*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2015) 207-230; Richard Hayes Phillips, *White Slave Children in Colonial America: Supplement* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2021); Dorothy B. Lapp, ed., *Records of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania 1681 – 1697* (Philadelphia: Patterson & White Company, 1910) Vol. 1: 130, 135, 300, 355, 361, Vol. 2: 130; H. Clay Reed and George J. Miller, eds., *The Burlington Court Book: A Record of Quaker Jurisprudence in West New Jersey 1680-1703* (Washington, D. C.: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1944) 197; David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607 – 1785* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994); David Dobson, *Scottish Quakers and Early America, 1650 – 1700* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1998).

527 Rosalind Mitchison, *A History of Scotland* (London: Methuen, 1970) 161-336.

indenture passed by the Scottish Parliament during this era, such as an act in 1700 stating that no one was to be transported out of the country "except with his own consent, given before a judge, or by legal sentence."[528] In addition, minor children were not permitted to enter into indenture contracts without the signature of a parent or tutor.[529] However, these measures were relatively limited compared to the vast body of legislation on the matter seen in England, and they were not well enforced.

In addition to the comparative lack of restrictions, under the English Parliament's Navigation Acts, Scottish and Irish labourers were among the small group of commodities, along with livestock, salt, and provisions, which could be shipped directly from their country of origin, rather than being required to pass through English ports and be subjected to customs regulations and cargo fees.[530] This exemption made the transportation of Scottish laborers more financially viable and less regulated than those from England. It seems clear that the comparative lack of legal restrictions under Scottish law, compared to English, and the specific exemption from laws governing shipment of English servants would make Scotland a prime location for the enterprise of human trafficking.

Furthermore, the English harbored an underlying ethnic bias against the Scots. Ian Whyte notes that Scots traveling in England during the seventeenth century noticed a significant amount

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[528] T. B. Howell, ed., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors, From the Earliest Period to the Year 1783* (London: T. C. Hensard, 1817) 23:862; Joseph Gerrald, *Lives and Trials of The Reformers, Part 1, Containing the Trial of Joseph Gerrald, Before the High Court of Justiciary at Edinburgh on the 13th and 14th of March, 1794, for Sedition* (Edinburgh: W. Tait, 1836) 27.
[529] See James Lorrimer, ed., *Hand-Book of the Law of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1862) No.518.
[530] Graham, *Maritime History*, 44; Allan I. Macinnes, *Union and Empire: The Making of the United Kingdom in 1707* (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 159, 161.

of aggression displayed toward them by the English, particularly by those of the lower class.[531] This disdain was even more pronounced towards Highlanders, who were viewed as "a wild, primitive people, almost a different race. . . a people from an altogether more primitive and barbaric state of society."[532] Such perceptions extended within Scotland itself, as the largely Anglicized inhabitants of the Lowlands regarded their countrymen from the Highlands with derision.[533] This combination of a more lax legislative framework and the interplay of ethnic and class prejudices – including tensions between Highland and Lowland Scots – created an environment conducive to servant abduction. Both Scots and English merchants and their agents engaged in such activities.

Despite these prejudices, Scottish servants were in particularly high demand in the colonies by the late 1660s and onward. In 1667, Barbados Governor Francis Willoughby petitioned the English Privy Council requesting, "a trade with Scotland for transporting people of that nation hither." [534] Six years later St. Kitts planter Christopher Jeaffreson wrote that, "Scotchmen and Welshmen we esteem the best servants, and the Irish the worst," and in December 1683, Governor Richard Dutton urged the Lords of Trade to ensure a yearly supply of Scottish servants to Barbados, "finding by a long experience that they are much the better

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531 Ian Whyte, *Scotland Before The Industrial Revolution: An Economic & Social History c. 1050 – c. 1750* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 219.
532 Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) 18, 80.
533 See Bailyn and Morgan, *Strangers within the Realm*; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Eric Richards, *Britannia's Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 23.
534 Governor Willoughby to the Privy Council, 16 Dec, 1667, as quoted in Beckles, "Riotous and Unruly Lot," 509-510.

servants than any that are sent thither from any other place."[535] A bias in favor of Protestants was behind much of this. The fact that most lowland Scots were of the Protestant faith appealed a great deal to colonial planters. Irish Catholics were stereotyped as drunk, lazy, and "opposed to Protestant colonial interests," leading planters to try to avoid them when possible, and to strongly favor Scottish servants.[536] This level of demand would naturally incentivize mariners to gather up as many Scottish servants as they could.

To make the situation even more attractive, in 1678 Barbados passed "An Act to Encourage the Bringing in of Christian Servants," stating that if any merchant brought "good servants" to Barbados and failed to find a buyer within ten days, government officials would sell them at the rate of thirteen pounds per head.[537] In 1698, South Carolina similarly enacted a bluntly titled "Act for the Encouragement of the Importation of White Servants," which awarded ship masters a bounty of twelve to thirteen pounds for every white male servant between twelve and forty.[538] Though repealed two years later, the bounty was reinstated in 1712, and in 1716 it was raised to twenty-five pounds.[539]

Pressures Facing Scots Traders

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[535] Lord Dutton to the Lords of Trade, 19 Dec 1683, quoted in Hilary M. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 38.
[536] Hilary M. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 38.
[537] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 218.
[538] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) http://site.ebrary.com/id/10839294, 187; Theo D. Jervey, "The White Indented Servants of South Carolina," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 12:4 (Oct. 1911) 164-165.
[539] Jervey, "White Indented Servants," 166.

In order to contextualize the forced transportation of minors and better understand the motivations of the merchants who participated in this trade, it is essential to understand the economic conditions of the period. By the late seventeenth century, Scotland was facing considerable challenges in maintaining its foothold in colonial trade. The English Navigation Acts, along with exorbitant tariffs, made it virtually impossible for Scottish traders to continue to operate successfully within the British Atlantic. Despite these obstacles, they managed to carve out their own niche by coming up with innovative strategies to circumvent obstructions and turn challenges into profitable ventures.[540] In feature of Scottish commerce, as well as the shipment of a variety of unfree labor. Along with indentured servants, African slaves, British convicts, and prisoners of war, were shipped to the American colonies by ambitious Scots traders.[541]

Prior the Union of Parliaments in 1707, Scotland, while regally linked with England under the Crown, retained its own distinct commercial interests and maritime institutions. Given the rising tide of English protectionism, England's imposition of trade restrictions on its

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[540] See Allan Macinnes, *Union and Empire*; T. M. Devine, 'Colonial Commerce and the Scottish Economy, c. 1730 – 1815', in L. M. Cullen and T. C. Smout, eds., *Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History 1600 – 1900* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 1977); T. M. Devine, *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities c. 1740 – 90* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd, 1975).

[541]Alexander Macdonald, James Dennistoun, and Joseph Robertson, eds., *Acts of the Parliament and of the Privy Council of Scotland relative to the establishing and maintaining of schools from the year 1496 to the year 1696* (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1840); Brown, ed., *RPC,* 11:78, 257; John W. Fortesque, *Calendar of State Papers, Amer. & West Indies 1675 – 1676* (London: HMSO, 1899) 304; Marguerite Wood and Helen Armet, *Extracts From the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, vols. 10 – 13* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1940 - 1967); Susan Mowat, *The Port of Leith: Its History and its People* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1994) 216 – 218, 220; MacArthur, *History of Port Glasgow* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Co., 1932), 61 - 62; Graham*, Maritime History*, 44, 46 – 49, 218; Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 55; J. M. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England 1660–1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 479; c; Peter Gouldesbrough, 'An Attempted Scottish Voyage to New York in 1665', *Scottish History Review,* 40:129 (Apr. 1961) 56 – 62;.

transatlantic colonies was to be expected. Despite Scotland's regal union with England, it found itself experiencing direct and significant constraints on its trade with the colonies. One of the most impactful measures was the Navigation Act, passed by the English Parliament in 1660, which stipulated that all vessels trading with England's overseas colonies must be helmed by an English captain, and crewed predominantly by Englishmen. Additionally, colonial goods were to be directed exclusively to England or another English colony, with non-compliant ships subject to seizure.[542] Scotland's efforts to negotiate a suspension of the Act were flatly rejected in 1661, leading to heightened tensions.[543] In response, Scotland enacted its own legislation to support Scottish mariners, further exacerbating the friction between the two nations.[544] The English reaction to these Scottish Acts was one of hostility, deepening the divide. Scottish Commissioners, advocating for Scotland's interests, argued that the Union of Crowns granted Scotland the right to engage in domestic trade with England and her colonies.

In 1663, a compromise was struck, permitting the Scots access to colonial trade, albeit with certain conditions. Ships destined for the colonies were required to pass through English customs, and shipmasters had to provide a detailed inventory of the cargo. A few specific exports, including salt, fish, grain, horses, and servants, were exempted from the standard tariffs

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[542] Macinnes, *Union and Empire*, 156; Graham, *Maritime History*, 14; Nelson Klose and Robert F. Jones, *United States History: To 1877* (Hauppage: Barons, 1994) 37; Hugh Edward Egerton, *A short history of British colonial policy* (London: Methuen & Co., 1897) 70 – 71; 'Navigation Acts', Digital History website, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu; 'Import and Export: The Navigation Laws', Living Heritage, www.parliament.uk; Murray N. Rothbard, "The Restoration and the Navigation Acts" (Mises Institute, Oct. 23, 2012) https://mises.org/library/restoration-and-navigation-acts.

[543] Macinnes, *Union and Empire,* 159.

[544] *Act for encouraging of shipping and navigation*, [M1661/1/341], *Acts approved* [M1661/1/65] http://www.rps.ac.uk/; Graham, *Maritime History,* 15.

and customs checks that applied to other goods.[545] However, this tentative peace was short-lived. Successive English legislation from 1670-72 required captains agree in writing that all goods would be carried to England or another English colony within eighteen months.[546] The subsequent Plantation Duty Act of 1673 further tightened the noose, imposing customs duties on colonial exports and appointing colonial customs agents to collect these duties. Merchants were eligible for a refund only if the goods were ultimately shipped to England or another English colony, effectively ensuring that exports would be subjected to English customs for merchants to recover their expenses.[547] Throughout the 1690s, Scottish mariners faced escalating tariffs and stringent regulations, particularly as English tariffs on colonial goods imported into the British Isles surged significantly from 1690 through 1704, to the point of quadrupling.[548] Directly flouting these requirements, Scottish mariners often opted to sail directly to Scottish ports, bypassing the required English customs checks. They would then re-route their goods to England and Ireland at a later date, thus circumventing exorbitant English import fees.[549]

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545 Graham, *Maritime History*, 14 – 18; Klose and Jones, *US History to 1877*, 37; 'Navigation Acts', Digital History website, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu; 'Navigation Laws', Living Heritage website, www.parliament.uk; Rothbard, 'Restoration and the Navigation Acts' (Mises Institute, Oct. 23, 2012) https://mises.org/library/restoration-and-navigation-acts.

546 ''Navigation Acts', Digital History website, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu; Egerton, *British colonial policy*, 72.

547 'Navigation Acts', Digital History website, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu; 'The Navigation Acts', Chronicles of America, http://www.chroniclesofamerica.com/southern-colonies/navigation_acts.htm; Egerton, *British colonial policy*, 72.

548 Graham, *Maritime History*, 62 - 64; S. J. Brown and Christopher Whatley, eds., *The Union of 1707: New Dimensions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008) 3, 10 - 12; T. M. Devine, *Tobacco Lords*, 35; Devine, *Scotland's Slavery Past*, 12 - 13; T. M. Devine, "Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?," *Britain and the World,* 4:1 (2011), 40 - 64; MacInnes, *Union and Empire*, 143 - 160, 173, 187; L. M. Cullen, "Merchant Communities Overseas, the Navigation Acts and Irish and Scottish Responses," Cullen and Smout, *Comparative Aspects*, 165 – 166; Christopher Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707 – 1830: Beyond Jacobitism, towards Industrialisation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 36, 74.

549 Graham, *Maritime History,* 102-103.

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, England intensified its customs regulations in a bid to safeguard its economic interests in the colonies.[550] These regulations were apparently enforced with remarkable strictness, so that even ships seeking refuge from storms or in need of repairs were seized on the Clyde for not having cleared English customs.[551] The situation was further complicated by intermittent warfare between England and France. Given Scotland's historical sympathies with France and its geographical proximity to England, the possibility of a French invasion was a serious threat, compelling heightened surveillance on Scotland's western shores.[552] Embargos were imposed in 1689 and 1691 on all ships sailing from the western coast.[553] Meanwhile, rumours of an impending French invasion in the east prompted careful monitoring that region as well.[554] This dual threat, perceived from both the west and east coasts of Scotland, resulted in a comprehensive and cautious approach to maritime activities, with the English government maintaining a tight grip on naval movements to mitigate the risk of invasion. While intended to protect the British Isles, these measures also constricted Scotland's maritime trade, placing additional strain on Scottish merchants already grappling with the restrictive English customs regulations.

Crown officers were particularly vigilant and quick to act against any vessel that was even remotely suspected of harboring Jacobite sympathies. Scottish ships frequently fell victim

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[550] Graham, *Maritime History,* 73 – 75; Macinnes, *Union and Empire*, 3.
[551] Eric Graham, 'In Defence of Scottish Maritime Interest, 1681 – 1713', *Scottish Historical Review, Vol. 71* (Apr.-Oct., 1992) 94.
[552] Graham, "Scottish Maritime Interest," 91 - 93; Graham, *Maritime History*, 64; Paidraig Lenihan, ed., *Conquest and Resistance: War in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 78-79.
[553] Lenihan, *Conquest and Resistance*, 78-79.
[553] Ibid, 78; Siobhan Talbott, *Conflict, Commerce and Franco-Scottish Relations, 1560 – 1713* (London: Routledge, 2016) 123; Graham, *Maritime History*, 64; Graham, "Scottish Maritime Interest," 91
[554] Graham, *Maritime History,* 64.

to confiscation, often on the flimsiest of pretexts. When these ships were wrecked by storms, they faced the risk of being plundered, with the crew subjected to physical assault and stripped of their possessions.[555] The extent of overzealous enforcement of English officials is shown by an incident in 1689, where a ship carrying Sir Robert Barclay's family to Bath for a visit to the spa was intercepted and seized. The family, caught up in this overreach, was treated harshly and detained under the suspicion of communicating with Jacobite forces.[556]

Faced with rising tariffs and ever-increasing regulations, Scottish traders turned to smuggling, becoming adept at evading English customs. Tactics included forging documents, falsifying records, and finding creative ways to skirt regulations. [557] Even after the Treaty of Union in 1707, smuggling continued to flourish. Smuggling operations were often run by organized, frequently violent, gangs that controlled Scottish ports. They were also often aided by the public, which had grown increasingly exasperated with English constraints. Upon learning that smugglers had been arrested, mobs would quickly form demanding their release.[558]

The Scots had other options beyond skirting the law, however. One popular tactic was the shipping of convicts, political prisoners, and indentured servants to the colonies, a legal trade that was left open to them. Moreover, convicts were abundant, since magistrates in Scotland, like those in England, viewed even the slightest offenses as punishable by as many as ten years' hard

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[555] Graham, *Maritime History*, 64, 75, 95; Brown and Whatley, *Union of 1707*, 156, Graham, "Scottish Maritime Interest,", 95.
[556] Graham, "Scottish Maritime Interest," 93, 95; Graham, *Maritime History*, 37.
[557] Macinnes, *Union and Empire,* 137, 159-160; Devine, *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past*, 12; Brown and Whatley, *Union of 1707,* 12; Graham, *Maritime History*, 108 – 112; Theodora Keith, "Scottish Trade with the Plantations before 1707," *Scottish History Review,* 6:21 (Oct. 1908) 43 – 47.
[558] Graham, *Maritime History*, 111.

labor in Barbados. Hilary Beckles reports that in 1655, a group of young men in the village of Ancrum were shipped to that island simply for interrupting a minster's sermon.[559]

Prior to the rise of black slavery around the turn of the century, the financial profits involved in the provision of white labour were considerable. White servants during the seventeenth century could be sold for between five and ten times their purchase price. Though prices decreased considerably during the eighteenth century, as shipment of slave labour from Africa increased, merchants were still able to sell white servants for at least twice the expenses paid.[560] For those fortunate enough to secure contracts with local sheriffs for the transportation of political prisoners or convicts, the financial gains were significantly higher. Not only were they paid by the government for the expenses of the journey and any associated legal fees, the sale of the servants in the colonies further padded their pockets.[561] Scottish officials, mirroring those in England, were eager to alleviate overpopulation, and to expel criminal elements from the country. This situation presented a unique opportunity for the emerging, assertive mercantile class in Scotland, which capitalized on this new human commodity, both as a strategy to bypass customs regulations and as a profitable revenue stream. From 1662 well into the mid-eighteenth century, the Scottish Privy Council issued licenses to vessels, authorizing them to transport felons, political prisoners, beggars, vagrants, and indentured servants, to the colonies.[562]

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[559] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 49.
[560] See Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America. 1607-1776* (Gloucester, Mass.: Smith, 1965) 37-39; Farley Grubb, "The Market for Indentured Immigrants: Evidence of the Efficiency of Forward- Labour Contracting in Philadelphia, 1745 – 1773," *The Journal of Economic History,* 45:4 (December 1985), p 857 - 858; Blumenthal, *Brides From Bridewell,* 42.
[561] Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England 1660–1800*, 479.
[562] Macdonald, Dennistoun, and Robertson, *Acts of the Parliament and of the Privy Council of Scotland*; Brown, ed., *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1899)

Considering the profits involved in the transportation of servants, it is not surprising that industrious merchants would be drawn to the prospect of indenturing servants for sale in the colonies. It is also not surprising that these merchants would be tempted to cut corners and bypass legal restrictions in order to maximize their profits, as they had learned to do with other exports. It was very difficult to prove that a merchant or mariner had knowingly abducted a non-vagrant person or child, and once the victim had been transported across the Atlantic, the difficulties of prosecuting the person responsible were amplified.

Building Family Fortunes

Against this backdrop of legal challenges, several merchant families capitalized on the opaque system, amassing sizeable fortunes through illegal trading activities, including the illicit shipment of child servants. Two such families who were able to become powerful forces both at home and in the colonies were the Trent and Coutts families. These two families formed a business network encompassing the cities of Leith, Inverness, Montrose, Midlothian, Barbados, London, Philadelphia, Boston, and various towns in the colony of New Jersey.[563] An Anglo-Scottish merchant family, the Trents became very powerful in Scotland, England, and the

11:78, 257; John W. Fortesque, *Calendar of State Papers, Amer. & West Indies 1675 – 1676* (London: HMSO, 1899) 304; Marguerite Wood and Helen Armet, *Extracts From the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, vols. 10 – 13* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1940 - 1967); Susan Mowat, *The Port of Leith: Its History and its People* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1994) 216 – 218, 220; Graham, *Maritime History*, 44, 46 - 47; 218; Peter Wilson Coldham, *Emigrants in Chains: A Social History of Forced Emigration to the Americas 1607 – 1776*, (Phoenix Mill: Alan Sutton Publishing, Ltd., 1992; Peter Goldesbrough, 'An Attempted Scottish Voyage to New York in 1665', *Scottish History Review, Vol. 40* (Apr. 1961), 56 – 62.
[563] Angela Austin, "Trent and Coutts: A Case Study of Two Scottish Merchant Families" in *Forgotten Children,* 25-35; n. Despite operating out of a wide variety of Scottish towns, the Trents and Coutts were not active in Aberdeen, as Kristen McCabe Lashua implies in *Children at the Birth of Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2023) 189.

Americas, particularly Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Not only were they prominent colonial businessmen, but the influence of the family also extended beyond commercial enterprises into the political sphere. William Trent, founder of Trenton, New Jersey, became active in colonial government, holding the offices of Member of the Governor's Council of New Jersey, Representative of Burlington, New Jersey, Speaker of both the New Jersey and the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, and Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, as well as member of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania.[564]

The Coutts family, who would become leaders in the British banking industry, were highly active in the government of Montrose, Scotland, with various members serving as Provosts, Burg Treasurers, town Bailies, and Town Council Members.[565] Like the Trents, the Coutts family network spanned both sides of the Atlantic, with bases in Montrose, Philadelphia, Maryland, and London. Between them, the families owned at least seventeen ships, with some members also owning shares in over forty others.[566]

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[564] A. Van Doren Honeyman, ed. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New Jersey*, ser. 1, Vol. 11 (Somerville: The Unionist-Gazette Association, 1924) 99; William Nelson, ed. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey*, First Ser., Vol. 21 (Patterson: New Jersey Historical Society, 1899) 88 – 89; M. A. Nicholson, 'Stolen Children', The Scottish Genealogist Vol. 29:11 (1982) 11; Thomas L. Montgomery, ed. *Pennsylvania Archives* (Harrisburg: Harrisburg Publishing Company, 1906) 13:126, 128; H. B. McCall, *Some Old Families: a Contribution to the Genealogical History of Scotland : With an Appendix of Illustrative Documents* (Birmingham: Watson and Ball, 1890) 131, 138; Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 55; William Trent House Museum website, http://williamtrenthouse.org.

[565] James G. Low, *John Coutts, or Notes on an Eminent Montrose Family* (Montrose: William Jolly, 1892) 9; David Dobson, *The People of the Scottish Burghs: The People of Montrose, 1600 - 1799*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2014) 17; Rev. Charles Rogers, *Genealogical Memoirs of the Family of Colts and Coutts* (London: Cottonian Society, 1879) 15; E. H. Coleridge, *The Life of Thomas Coutts, Banker* (London: John Lane, 1919) 6.

[566] William Hand Browne, ed. (1903). *Proceedings of the Council of Maryland, 1696/7-1698* (Baltimore: The Friedenwald Company, 1903) 25:163; Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn,

The two families developed a partnership and were known to have been involved in illegal trading, each of them having been caught smuggling upon several occasions.[567] Records indicate that their ships transported indentured servants, convicts, and African slaves.[568] Further

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eds. *The World of William Penn* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986) 356; Albright G. Zimmerman, "James Logan, Proprietary Agent," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 78:2 (1954) 142 – 176; Dobson, *Ships from Scotland to America*, Vol. 1 – 4 (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1998-2011); Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, p 52 – 54; Dobson, *Barbados and Scotland Links, 1627-1877* (Baltimore: Clearfield, 2005) 11, 13, 16, 26, 32, 44, 50, 105, 113, 124, 133, 145 – 146; William Trent Museum website, http://williamtrenthouse.org; William Penn, *The Papers of William Penn, Vol. 3, 1685 – 1700*, Marianne Wokeck, ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987) 491; Darold D. Wax, 'Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania' *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 86:2 (1962) 146; Katherine Gerbner, "'We Are Against the Traffick of Men-Body': The Germantown Quaker Protest of 1688 and the Origins of American Abolitionism," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 74:2 (2007) 153; Dobson, *Ships from Scotland to America*, Vol. 1 – 4; Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, America and West Indies, 1699* (London: HMSO, 1908) nos. 137, 138; Samuel Hazard, ed., *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, Vol. 2, December 18, 1700 to May 10, 1717 (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co, 1852); Graham, *Maritime History*, 226; Charles Browning, ed., *The American Historical Register*, (Philadelphia: Historical Register Publishing Company, 1895).

[567] See Austin, "Trent and Coutts," *Forgotten Children*, 25-35; W. F. Corbett, ed., *Pennsylvania Wills and Abstracts, Book A: 1682-1699, Philadelphia County* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1891) 407; Zimmerman, "James Logan," 150-152; Browne, *Proceedings of the Council of Maryland*, 25:267; William Whitehead, ed. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey* (Newark: n. , 1881) No.11:121, No. 15; Edward Randolph, 'Report of Edward Randolph concerning illegal trade in proprietory colonies, including a related petition from the proprietors, Nov. 10, 1696', *Documenting the American South: Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, *Vol. 1, 1662 – 1712*, https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr01-0216, 467 - 468; J. W. Fortescue, *CSP, America and West Indies, 1696 – 1697* (London: HMSO, 1903) 558, 213; Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 52; State of New Jersey, *New Jersey Archives, Vol. 11* (Trenton: John L. Murphy Publishing Company, 2011) 15; Headlam, *CSP, America and West Indies, 1700 – 1701*, Vol. 17, nos. 91, 137, 137, 634; Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 54; Constance J. Cooper, ed., *350 Years of New Castle, Delaware: Chapters in a Town's History* (Wilmington: Cedar Tree Books, 2001) 40; and the Slave Trade' 146; Gerbner, "Traffik of Men-Body," 153; William Trent Museum website, http://williamtrenthouse.org.

[568] See Browne, *Proceedings of the Council of Maryland*; H. Brown, ed., *RPC, 1661 – 1691*, vols. 1 – 8, (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1899-1908); David Dobson *Directory of Scottish Settlers in North America, 1625 – 1825* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1985); Dobson, *Scottish Quakers*, 27; Wax, "Quaker Merchants."

examination of British and colonial records gives the impression that at least some of the indentured servants were abducted. A ship owned by Lawrence Trent, the *Ewe and Lamb*, was searched while docked in Leith in 1668, following allegations that adults and children had been kidnapped and forced onto the vessel against their will, to be transported as servants.[569] The *Hercules*, owned by Maurice Trent, was searched at Leith in 1673 for the same reason.[570]

Between 1693 and 1697, Maurice Trent appeared in the courts of Pennsylvania counties Chester and Bucks with at least 114 child servants to have their terms of indenture determined, since they lacked proper documentation. Some of the children were as young as seven.[571] The records vary in how they refer to Trent's role, with some listing him as the transporter of the children, and others as their owner. At least four boys do appear to have been directly indentured to Trent, though in other cases they were indentured to different masters, suggesting that the term "owner" used in reference to Trent might more accurately denote "transporter" or "seller."[572] One of the children appearing before the court with Maurice Trent in 1697 was Mary Royle.[573] Mary's son Joshua Brown later reported that according to his mother, she was forcibly taken from Dumfries, Scotland when she was about twelve years old, along with many other children, and transported to Philadelphia.[574] At least one of the other children appearing with

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[569] Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 52.
[570] Brown, *RPC*, 4:103, 104; Graham, *Maritime History*, 47.
[571] Dorothy B. Lapp, ed., *Records of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania 1681 – 1697*, (Philadelphia: Patterson & White Company, 1910) 1:130, 135, 300, 355, 361; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11; Dobson, *Scottish Quakers*, 23, 27.
[572] Lapp, *Records of Chester County*, 1:355, 361; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11.
[573] Lapp, *Records of Chester County*, 2:130; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11; Dobson, *Scottish Quakers*, 24
[574] Copy, *Genealogy of the Bailey Family*, 20; Hallen, *The Scottish Antiquary* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1891) No.704; Cheesman Abiah Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania: Indentured and Redemption Labor in Colony and Commonwealth* (Philadelphia: J.J. McVey, 1926) 157.

Trent in 1697, Alexander Stewart, also reported having been kidnapped.[575] Meanwhile, James Trent appeared with several other children in New Jersey, and one boy in Newcastle, Delaware.[576]

During the 1690s the *Lillie of London*, owned by the Coutts family, made regular voyages to the colonies from Montrose and the Orkneys. The vessel transported cargoes of indentured servants from the eastern coast of Scotland, with a significant number of these passengers being children. Maryland's colonial records refer to an unnamed ship owned by James Coutts and captained by James Trent arriving in Philadelphia in 1697 with over 150 servants. In the record, Trent mentioned his plan to continue on to Barbados after stopping in Philadelphia.[577] The ship in question was either the *Lillie of London* or another Coutts vessel used for the same purpose.

Another mariner whose activities appear highly questionable is Glasgow Provost and merchant Walter Gibson, who regularly shipped prisoners and indentured servants to the Carolinas and the Caribbean during the 1680s on his vessels the *Carolina Merchant* and the *James of Irvine*. Like the Trent and Coutts families, Gibson is known to have been involved in

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[575] Scotch-Irish Society of America, *The Scotch-Irish in America: Proceedings and Addresses of the Tenth Congress, at Chestersburg, PA, May 30 – June 2, 1902* (Nashville: Bigham & Smith, 1902) 424; Lapp, *Records of Chester County*, 1:355, 361; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11; East Nottingham Trustees, *The Nottingham Lots: A Tercentenary Celebration 2001* (East Nottingham: Xlibris, 2006) 52.
[576] H. Clay Reed and George J. Miller, eds., *The Burlington Court Book: A Record of Quaker Jurisprudence in West New Jersey 1680-1703* (Washington, D. C.: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1944) 197; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11; Robert Bremner, *Children & Youth in America: A Documentary History, Vol I: 1600 – 1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) 119; Nicholson, "Stolen Children," 11.
[577] Brown, *RPC, 1661 – 1691*; David Dobson, *Ships from Scotland to America*, 1:73; Browne, *Proceedings of the Council of Maryland 1696/7-1698*, No.163.

illegal trading activity.[578] He collaborated with Robert Malloch in Edinburgh to ship servants from Leith to the Carolinas, indicating a network of operations extending beyond Glasgow.[579] At least one servant, Elizabeth Linning, who sailed on the *Carolina Merchant*, declared that she had been kidnapped while visiting the dock at Gournock in July of 1684.[580] Linning managed to escape at Charleston, and was able to obtain the help of the governor, bringing her case before the council in Charleston that October. After obtaining a confession from the ship's captain, Gibson's brother James, that he had abducted her against her will, she was released.[581] No record could be located concerning Gibson's punishment or lack thereof. It is also noteworthy that records show the ships of Gibson usually docked in Ireland before sailing to the colonies, raising the possibility of additional abductions of servants there as well.[582]

Famine and Warfare

Further complicating the situation was the turbulent atmosphere of the era, which provided fertile ground for illicit activities. Famine and devastation combined with repeated Jacobite Risings to create an environment permeated by political and social chaos through the

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[578] Brown, *RPC*, 7:178; Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 56; David Dobson, *Directory of Scots Banished to the American Plantations 1650 – 1775* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1983) 10, 17 - 19, 35, 37, 44, 55 - 56, 62, 71, 76, 79, 94, 156 – 157, 173, 177, 201 -203, 212, 230; Joseph Wagner, "The Scottish Colonising Voyages to Carolina and East New Jersey in the 1680s," *The Northern Mariner / Le Marin du Nord*, 30:2, 155-166.
[579] Henry Paton, ed., *RPC*, *1661 – 1691*, (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1933) 9:95; Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 64; Dobson, *Scots Banished*, 4, 7, 19, 30, 33, 44, 47, 50, 55, 68, 74 - 76, 82, 85, 97, 113, 118. 157, 169, 177, 217, 222, 228.
[580] Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church,* 83; Blumenthal, *Brides from Bridewell,* 71-72.
[581] Ibid.
[582] See Wagner, *Scottish Colonising Voyages*.

early eighteenth century.[583] The overthrow of James II in favor of William and Mary in 1688 left Scotland deeply divided. As with the regicide of Charles I forty years earlier, a significant portion of Scots viewed the king's ousting with disdain, seeing it as an illegitimate seizure of the throne from the rightful monarch. This transition of power, therefore, ignited a series of political and military struggles known as the Jacobite Risings, aimed at restoring the Stuart line to the throne.[584] Historian Geoffrey Plank points out the irony in the fact that supporters of James II and VII, conservatives loyal to the ruling monarch, were forever afterward transformed into radical subversives due to their allegiance.[585]

Severe weather in the 1690s followed closely on the heels of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1689, producing a series of crop failures in the war-torn country which led to widespread famine, food riots, and disease outbreaks.[586] In 1698, Scottish writer and politician Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun estimated that around 200,000 people – approximately one-sixth of Scotland's

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[583] See Karen J. Cullen, *Famine in Scotland: The "ill Years" of the 1690s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Karen Cullen, "The Famine of the 1690's and Its Aftermath: Survival and Recovery of the Family," in Elizabeth Ewan and Janay Nugent, *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2008); Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain, 1689-1746 - University of Texas at Arlington* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980); Jonathan Oates, *The Jacobite Campaigns : The British State at War* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011); Geoffrey Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery : The Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the British Empire - University of Texas at Arlington* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson, *Inglorious Rebellion: The Jacobite Risings of 1708, 1715 and, 1719* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 19772); Robert E. Tyson, 'Demographic Change,*'* in T. M. Devine and John R. Young, eds., *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Lothian, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1999); Ian Whyte and Kathleen Whyte, *On the Trail of the Jacobites* (London: Routledge, 2021).

[584] Lenman, *Jacobite Risings*; Oates, *The Jacobite Campaigns*; Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*; Sinclair-Stevenson, *Inglorious Rebellion*; Whyte and Whyte, *On the Trail of the Jacobites*.

[585] Plank, Rebellion and Savagery, 16.

[586] Michael Fry, *A Higher World: Scotland 1707 – 1815* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2014) 38-40; M. Flinn, ed., *Scottish Population History* (Cambridge: 1977) 219 – 23; Tyson, "Demographic Change," 201; Richards, *Britannia's Children*, 80; Kennedy, *Annals of Aberdeen*, 290 – 291.

population at the time – had been reduced to wandering beggars.[587] Robert E. Tyson describes the catastrophic impact of the famine on the population, with mortality rates ranging from ten to twenty percent in some areas, and even higher in others.[588]

Karen J. Cullen, the leading expert on the famine of the 1690s, notes that this period saw a significant influx of destitute wanderers, often carrying diseases, into Edinburgh. The situation became so dire that in 1696, refugee camps were established to accommodate the influx.[589] During such periods of acute scarcity, with countless impoverished individuals roaming the countryside in search of sustenance and perishing of starvation in city streets, the number of people choosing indentured servitude as a means of escape naturally rose. Cullen quotes an observer in 1698 reporting that he saw an "abundance of all sorts" eager to depart for the colonies. [590] Two years later, a correspondent complained to Parliament, "Our people in great multitudes have been forced to sell themselves as bond servants…to other Nations in their Plantations." Cullen also discusses complaints made in the 1698 Banff kirk sessions that poor strangers would often bring their children to the town and desert them. She also reveals that in 1700 the kirk session had to provide for a child who had been abandoned on the streets of Banff.[591] Nevertheless, she remarks that cases of child abandonment in late seventeenth century Scotland were "exceedingly rare."[592]

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587 Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, 'Two Discourses concerning the Affairs of Scotland', *Selected Discourses and Speeches* (Edinburgh: n.p, 1698) 55.
588 Tyson, "Demographic Change," 48 – 50.
589 Cullen, *Famine in Scotland,* 160; Cullen, "Famine of the 1690's," 155.
590 William Fall, Letter to Daniel Edward Mason, 6 August 1698, quoted in Cullen, *Famine in Scotland*, 174 – 175.
591 Anonymous, Letter to Parliament, 1700, quoted in Cullen, *Famine in Scotland,* 104-105.
592 Ibid, 105. See also Karen Cullen, "The Famine of the 1690s and Its Aftermath" in Ewan and Nugent, Finding the Family 157-158.

Such desperate circumstances created favorable conditions for the operation of kidnapping rings. With a large population in desperate need, and limited options available, spirits could be seen as benefactors, offering destitute children a chance at a better life in the colonies. At the same time, they were perceived as helping to rid the countryside of vagrants who were often more feared as potential criminals and sources of disorder than sympathized with as victims of misfortune.[593] This perspective is demonstrated by merchant Andrew Sympson, who regarded people who became servants as "rather a burden than a benefit to the nation."[594] Similarly, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun expressed the view that the poor were "no way advantageous, but a very grievous burden to such a poor country," and that "it were better for the nation they were sold to the galleys or West Indies, than that they should continue any longer to be a burden and curse upon us."[595]

Within this context of widespread distress and mass migration, the abduction of children, even from families which were not as desperate or impoverished, could more easily escape detection. The pervasive nature of poverty and the resulting surge in individuals willingly entering servitude may have inadvertently provided cover for such abductions, blending them into the broader exodus towards the colonies. This likelihood was especially true if the abduction were orchestrated by a well-dressed businessman professing to run a respectable practice that ostensibly benefitted society. Barry M. Coldrey's research reveals a notable increase in the

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[593] Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, "Second Discourse concerning the Affairs of Scotland," in Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, *Selected Discourses and Speeches* 4(Edinburgh: n.p., 1698) 48; Cullen, *Famine in Scotland*, 161 – 162, 168, 176; Robert E. Tyson, "Famine in Aberdeenshire, 1695 – 1699," David Stevenson, ed., *From Lairds to Louns* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986) 37.
[594] Andrew Sympson, quoted in Cullen, *Famine in Scotland*, 176.
[595] Fletcher of Saltoun, "Second Discourse," 55.

trafficking of English child servants during the tumultuous 1640s.[596] Given this pattern, it stands to reason that a similar trend would likely hold true for Scotland during politically fraught eras.

Due to all of the above reasons, Scotland presented a particularly favorable atmosphere for spiriting operations. An anonymously authored pamphlet written in 1699 for the purpose of exposing corruption in the servant trade discusses a practice allegedly witnessed frequently by the author – "English Merchants and others, who formerly Traded and sent Ships to the Coast of Africa, for buying and carrying Slaves from thence to the several Plantations of America," had "fallen upon an easier way of being served much cheaper, better, and more expeditiously nearer home."[597] These English merchants would form business partnerships with Scottish businessmen, convince them to buy shares in English ships, then suggest that the new investors recruit their relatives, friends and acquaintances in Scotland to help them gather up those who could be bound for labor in the colonies. The essay reports that when the ships arrived, these underlings would eagerly set about collecting potential workers, like "Spaniel-Doggs" fetching birds.[598] The author reported that he had heard of thousands of vigorous, healthy youths and tradesmen having been, "tricked this way within the last two years" (1697-1699) and "barbarously cheated out of their liberties."[599]

Colonial court records during this decade indicate that kidnapping was an issue during the famine. At least 129 Scottish children without indentures appear before the colonial courts of

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[596] Barry M. Coldrey, "…'a place to which idle vagrants may be sent': The First Phase of Child Migration During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Children and Society,* 13:1 (February, 1999) 41.
[597] A Sincere well-wisher to the honour and interest of his country, *An Essay against the Transportation and Selling of Men to the Plantations of Forreigners with Special Regard to the Manufactories, and Other Domestick Improvements of the Kingdom of Scotland, Humbly Offer'd to the Consideration of Those in Authority* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1699) 5.
[598] Ibid, 6.
[599] Ibid, 6-7.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey in the 1690s.[600] Some of these children reported having been taken from their homes and forced into servitude.[601] Phillips has documented an additional 44 Scottish children appearing in the courts of Virginia and Maryland during this turbulent decade.[602] This record of minors appearing to have the terms of their indentures set suggests that while few parents may have willingly parted with their children, kidnapping and the forced transportation of children were common issues during the famine.

Attitudes Towards Poverty and Vagrancy

In addition to these factors, the cultural and ethical framework of seventeenth century Scotland, deeply influenced by Calvinist principles, played a significant role in shaping attitudes towards vagrancy and labor. The Calvinist ethic placed a high value on hard work and industry, viewing idleness as a serious transgression. In this context, vagrancy was not just a social issue but a moral failing. Unemployment was equated with immorality and defiance of lawful authority.[603] Youths without masters of employment were perceived as disorderly and obscene.[604] Simon Newman and A.L. Beier have explained how these views, coupled with the

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[600] Lapp, *Records of the Courts of Chester County,* 1:130, 135, 300, 355, 361; Nicholson, 'Stolen Children,' 11; Dobson, *Scottish Quakers*, 23, 27.
[601] Lapp, *Records of Chester County*, 1:355, 361, Vol. 2, 130; Nicholson, 'Stolen Children,' 11; Dobson, *Scottish Quakers*, 24; Scotch-Irish Society of America, *The Scotch-Irish in America,* 424; East Nottingham Trustees, *The Nottingham Lots,* 52.
[602] Phillips, Birth and Shipping Records, 207-230.
[603] Gordon Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1985) 280 – 281; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 34.
[604] Ibid.

widespread fear that Britain was overpopulated, created a mindset that was more accepting, and even supportive, of colonial transportation of minors.[605]

Rather than being solely a punitive measure, transportation was held to be a constructive solution benefiting all parties involved. It provided those in servitude with gainful employment, thereby saving them from the perils of idleness; it relieved the community from the financial and social burden of supporting the unemployed; and it supplied planters with a much-needed workforce. Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun's 1698 essay, 'Two Discourses concerning the Affairs of Scotland' exemplifies the mindset of the time. Fletcher proposes that Scottish vagrants, whom he apparently assumed were primarily Highland clansmen come down to scavenge off the people of the Lowlands, should be put into mandatory hereditary servitude, so they would not "die with hunger in Caves and Dens, and murder their young children" or "rob as much food as they can out of the Low-country and retire to live upon it in those mountains."[606] His characterization of vagrants highlights the regional and cultural biases between the Celtic Highlands and the Anglo-Scottish Lowlands.

Dissenting opinions on transportation did exist, as shown by the 1699 pamphlet entitled "An Essay Against the Transportation and Selling of Men to the Plantations of Forreigners." It is thought to have been written by James Watson, Jr., an Edinburgh printer and founder of the *Edinburgh Gazette*, who would later be imprisoned for his criticisms of the Scottish

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[605] Simon Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) 17-18; A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985); Melvyn Dubofsky and Foster Rhea Duller, *Labor In America: A History* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1999) 4.

[606] Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, "Second Discourse," *Selected Discourses*, 48.

government.[607] Clearly written in response to an upsurge in the number of bound workers sailing abroad during the famine, the author of the pamphlet made several excellent arguments for the employment of transportees in their own country rather than abroad. It would be much better, he contended, if the poor were made useful in their own sphere, through employment in industries such as fishing or linen production, rather than exporting the country's labour force abroad to enrich foreign regions.[608] The degree of danger involved in publishing such views is shown by the fact that the pamphlet ends abruptly at page twenty-four, at which point the press was stopped by the Scottish government and the publication suppressed by Edinburgh authorities.[609]

Discomfort Under the Union

While the 1603 Union of the Crowns had initially ignited hopes among Scots for a future of shared peace and prosperity, the subsequent Anglicization of James I and VI and his successor, Charles I, had gradually eroded this optimism, fueling fears that Scotland's identity would be subsumed by England.[610] Efforts towards a more formal union of Scotland and England were made several times during the seventeenth century, but always met with resistance and skepticism. Proposals for full union were repeatedly rejected by the English parliament, and

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[607] See W. J. Couper, "James Watson, King's Printer," *Scottish Historical Review*, 7:27, 244 – 262.
[608] Sincere well-wisher, "Transportation and Selling of Men,," 10.
[609] Sincere well-wisher, "Transportation and Selling of Men," 13, n.
[610] Roger A. Mason, *Scotland and England, 1286-1815* (Edinburgh: J. Donald Publishers, 1987) 165. See also William Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh: J. Donald Publishers, 1977); Macinnes, *Union and Empire*; Janet R. Glover, *The Story of Scotland* (London: Faber, 1977); Ashley, *Charles I and Oliver Cromwell*; Birch, and Williams, *Court and Times of Charles the First*.

Scottish initiatives towards commercial union were similarly rebuffed.[611] The disparity in wealth and resources between the two countries undermined the case for economic union, and the difficulties of legal assimilation were considered insurmountable.[612] Moreover, Scots were demonized in England as "beggars, thieves, and murderers."[613] To add to these challenges, Scottish Jacobites and Episcopalians viewed the potential union as a threat, the former seeing it as undermining their cause and the latter fearing the consolidation of Presbyterianism. Conversely, Presbyterians harbored fears of Episcopalian resurgence under the union.[614] As a consequence, public discourse surrounding the subject was highly charged throughout both countries.

However, by the reign of Queen Anne, the English perspective had shifted to a large extent, driven chiefly by security concerns over the possibility of a Franco-Scottish alliance.[615] Nevertheless, when the parliaments were officially united in 1707, many Englishmen continued to view the Union as an erosion of their national identity and a threat to their resources.[616] The fear was that Scotland, a poorer and less developed nation, would become an economic burden, draining English wealth through its demands for access to trade and employment opportunities. This perspective was exacerbated by existing prejudices and stereotypes about the Scottish people.

In Scotland, the Act of Union was largely met with gloom and resentment by many, necessitating a major cultural and psychological shift as the nation grappling with its diminished

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[611] Macinnes, Union and Empire, 4-5.
[612] Ibid, 5; Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England*, 128.
[613] Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England*, 102.
[614] Ibid, 238.
[615] Ibid, 270.
[616] Colley, *Britons,* 13-17.

stature.[617] P. Hume Brown wrote that Scotland had become "a severed and a withered branch and her people knew it."[618] The dissolution of the Scottish Parliament, and the consequent loss of executive authority and control over foreign policy led to fears that Scotland was "destined to be assimilated as a province of London."[619]

The early years following the Act of Union in 1707 were marked by growing discontent among the Scottish aristocracy and populace. One significant episode illustrating the dissatisfaction involved the Duke of Hamilton in 1711. Upon receiving the additional British title of Duke of Brandon, Hamilton anticipated securing a seat in the House of Lords, a common privilege for peers of the realm.[620] However, a ruling decreed that no British title should grant a Scottish peer the right to this honor. Moreover, it was established that Scots who became peers of Great Britain would consequently lose their right to vote for the sixteen Scottish representatives in the Upper House.[621] This decision effectively disenfranchised the most prominent members of the Scottish aristocracy, exacerbating feelings of alienation and resentment towards the Union.

Compounding these political grievances were economic pressures that disproportionately affected Scotland. Taxes were increased on salt, which severely impacted Scottish fisheries, a vital industry for the country's coastal communities.[622] Furthermore, a reassessment of the Malt tax in 1713 placed an additional burden on Scotland's brewing industry.[623] These economic measures increased perceptions that Scotland was disadvantaged within the Union, contributing

[617] IIbid; Bailyn and Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm*, 67-68.
[618] P. Hume Brown, quoted in Bailyn and Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm*, 67.
[619] Bailyn and Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm*, 67-68.
[620] Glover, *Story of Scotland*, 171-173.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Ibid, 172.
[623] Ibid.

to a sense of economic disenfranchisement. The accession of George I to the throne in 1714 did little to alleviate these tensions. The new king, viewed as distant and unfamiliar with British customs and politics, failed to garner affection among his Scottish subjects. Discontent with his reign and the Union's perceived failures provided fertile ground for Jacobite sentiments to resurge.

Jacobite Risings of 1708, 1715, 1719, and 1745

Due in no small part to the widening divisions and discomfort experienced following the Union of Parliaments, armed risings of pro-Stuart factions in 1708, 1715 and 1719 served not only to deepen these social and political divisions, but to increase the chaos and widespread destruction within Scotland. The first of these involved a French-supported invasion force that would land in Scotland, where it was hoped they would be joined by Scottish supporters. However, the expedition was plagued by delays and poor coordination. The British government, having been alerted to the plan, was able to prepare defenses and position naval forces to intercept the French fleet. When French and Jacobite forces reached the Firth of Forth near Edinburgh, the presence of the Royal Navy and indecision among the Jacobite leaders led to the abandonment of the landing attempt. Admiral Byng's fleet engaged the French, though neither side achieved a decisive victory. Ultimately, the French fleet was forced to return to France without landing any troops.[624]

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[624] John S. Gibson, *Playing the Scottish Card : The Franco-Jacobite Invasion of 1708* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988); A Gentleman in South-Brittain, *An Account of the Late Scotch Invasion; as It Was Open'd by My Lord Haversham in the House of Lords, on Fryday the 25th of February, 1708/9. With Some Observations That Were Made in the H-Se of*

The 1715 Rising, led by the Earl of Mar, drew support from a significant portion of the Scottish nobility, as well as from Highland clans and other parts of Britain, illustrating widespread unrest and the enduring appeal of the Jacobite cause. The Earl publicly denounced the Union as a catastrophic mistake and proclaimed that Scotland's "ancient liberties were delivered into the hands of the English," a sentiment which resonated deeply with many Scots.[625] Despite initial successes and significant support, the rebellion ultimately fizzled, with key Jacobite leaders fleeing or being captured.[626]

The 1719 Rising was a smaller, less coordinated effort, distinguished by foreign involvement. Spain, seeking to disrupt British power during the War of the Quadruple Alliance, supported the Jacobite cause. A Spanish force landed in the Western Highlands, joining Scottish Jacobite leaders in an attempt to spark a widespread rebellion. However, the endeavor was doomed from the outset due to its limited scale, poor planning, and lack of broader support.[627] Ultimately, the Jacobite Risings of 1715 and 1719 further destabilized the country, greatly increasing mistrust between Scotland and England, and exacerbating regional divisions. Despite their failure, the Risings of the early eighteenth century kept the Jacobite flame alive,

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C-Ns; and True Copies of Authentick Papers. In a Letter from a Gentleman in South-Brittain to His Friend in North-Brittain (London: n. p., 1709); Charles Sanford Terry, ed., *The Jacobites and the Union, Being a Narrative of the Movements of 1708, 1715, 1719, by Several Contemporary Hands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922).
[625] John Erskine, Earl of Mar, quoted in Glover, *Story of Scotland*, 173.
[626] Daniel Szechi, *1715: The Great Jacobite Rebellion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Murray Pittock, *Scotland: The Global History, 1603 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022); Terry, *Jacobites and the Union*; Lenman, *Jacobite Risings in Britain*; Oates, *Jacobite Campaigns*; Sinclair-Stevenson, *Inglorious Rebellion*; Whyte and Whyte, *On the Trail of the Jacobites*.
[627] Paul S. Fritz, Chapter 4: "The Spanish-Jacobite Conspiracy of 1719," in Paul S. Fritz, *The English Ministers and Jacobitism Between the Rebellions of 1715 and 1745* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019) 41-50; Sinclair-Stevenson, *Inglorious Rebellions*; Pittock, *Scotland: The Global History*; Lenman, *Jacobite Risings*; Oates, *Jacobite Campaigns*; Glover, *The Story of Scotland.*

contributing to the mythos surrounding the Stuart cause and setting the stage for the more famous and fateful Rebellion of 1745.

By the 1740s, the political and military landscape of Europe, particularly the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), created new opportunities for the Jacobites. France, seeking to destabilize Britain, saw support for the Jacobite cause as a means to divert British military resources and potentially realign alliances in their favor. The Rising of 1745 was the last and most famous of the Jacobite uprisings, led by Charles Edward Stuart, also known as "Bonnie Prince Charlie," grandson of the deposed James II of England and VII of Scotland. Charles managed to rally numerous Highland clans to his cause, and achieved a series of stunning victories, most notably at the Battle of Prestonpans in September 1745, where his army decisively defeated a government force.[628] However, despite these initial successes, the movement failed to garner the widespread support hoped for from English Jacobites, and divisions within their leadership led to a retreat back to Scotland. The final blow to the Jacobite cause came at the Battle of Culloden on April 16, 1746, where the Duke of Cumberland's government forces defeated the Jacobites in a bloody and brutal battle. The defeat at Culloden marked the end of the 1745 Rising and effectively the Jacobite cause as a military threat to the Hanoverian monarchy.[629]

The aftermath was brutal, with the British government undertaking severe reprisals against those suspected of Jacobite sympathies. The Duke of Cumberland initiated a campaign of

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[628] Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*; Lenman, *Jacobite Risings in Britain*; Oates, *Jacobite Campaigns*; Charles Sanford Terry, *The Rising of 1745, with a Bibliography of Jacobite History 1689-1788* (London: D. Nutr, 1900); Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England*; Glover, *Story of Scotland*; Whyte and Whyte, *On the Trail of the Jacobites*; Mason, *Scotland and England*; Bailyn and Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm*.
[629] Glover, *Story of Scotland*, 180

retribution that would leave lasting scars on the country. All stragglers from the Scottish army were to be killed, with no mercy being shown to the wounded. Homes throughout the Highlands were burned and thousands of cattle were rounded up for confiscation.[630] According to Janet Glover, one hundred twenty people were executed, over eleven hundred were transported to the colonies, and nearly seven hundred died while imprisoned.[631] The traditional clan system of the Scottish Highlands, which had provided much of the support for the Rising, was systematically dismantled, and measures were taken to assimilate Scotland further into the British state, including the prohibition of traditional Highland dress and playing of the bagpipes, as well as the disarmament of the Scottish population.[632] Estates were confiscated by the Crown, and the entire Scottish nation was stigmatized as disloyal, despite the fact that many lowland clans had remained loyal to George II.[633]

The Aberdeen Children

During this dark era in Scotland's history, it is not surprising that the trade in child servants would thrive, particularly when one considers that the infamous '45 rising occurred subsequent to another severe famine in Scotland from 1739 to 1742.[634] The main current of historiography highlights the city of Aberdeen, in the Eastern Highlands, as a particular focal

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[630] Ibid, 179.
[631] Ibid, 180.
[632] Ibid, 174-181; Bailyn and Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm*, 111; Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery*; Lenman, *Jacobite Risings*.
[633] Bailyn and Morgan, *Strangers Within the Realm*, 111; Glover, *Story of Scotland*, 174-180.
[634] Philipp Robinson Rössner, "The 1738–41 Harvest Crisis in Scotland," *Scottish Historical Review* 90:229 (2011): 27–63; Marjory Harper, *Adventurers And Exiles: The Great Scottish Exodus* (London:Profile Books, 2010) 33.

point of kidnapping operations in the 1740s.[635] Many early works on the Aberdeen abductions were based primarily on information derived from Joseph Robinson's *Book of Bon Accord*, published in 1839, and from Aberdeen court records. Robinson himself stated that he based his account on city records, as well as William Kennedy's *Annals of Aberdeen*, written in 1818. According to Kennedy, his information was obtained from court records, along with a biography of kidnapping victim Peter Williamson which he held in his possession. The manuscript Kennedy mentioned could have been an unpublished work or a rare publication no longer in existence, such as the 1816 biography by J. Neilson. Robertson estimated that more than 600 children ages six to fourteen were taken from Aberdeen and the surrounding area between 1740 and 1746, a figure which has been quoted in numerous works on the subject.[636] This estimate was arrived at by virtue of the fact that of two vessels sailing from Aberdeen's harbor in 1743

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[635] Gavin Turreff, ed, *Antiquarian Gleanings From Aberdeenshire Records* (Aberdeen: George & Robert King, 1859) 221; Adams and Somerville*, Cargoes of Despair and Hope*, 23; Norman Adams, *Hangman's Brae: true crime and punishment in Aberdeen and the North East* (Edinburgh: Black & White Publishing, 2005) 48; William Haig Miller, James Macaulay, and William Stevens*, The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation*, Vol. 8 (London: W. Stephens, 1859) 589; William Kennedy, *Annals of Aberdeen, From the Reign of King William the Lion, to the End of the Year 1818, With an Account of the City, Cathedral, and University of Old Aberdeen*, Vol. 1 (London: A. Brown and Co., 1818) 294; Joseph Robertson, *The Book of Bon Accord: A Guide to the City of Aberdeen* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1839) 86; Peter Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Encyclopedia* (Stroud: The History Press, 2012) 120; William and Robert Chambers, *Edinburgh Journal*, Vol. 8 (London: W. S. Orr and Company, 1840) 182; Coldrey, 'Idle Vagrants,' 45; The Ministers of the Respective Parishes, *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, *Vol. 12: Aberdeen* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1845); N. A., "Kidnapping System of the Last Century," *Boston Weekly Magazine*, 2:3 (September 21, 1839) 25 – 26.

[636] See Turreff, *Antiquarian Gleanings*; Alexander Keith, *A Thousand Years of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1972); Norman Adams, *Hangman's Brae: True Crime and Punishment in Aberdeen and the North-East* (Edinburgh: Black & White, 2005); Robertson, *Book of Bon-Accord*; Douglas Skelton, *Indian Peter: The Extraordinary Life and Adventures of Peter Williamson*, Reprinted (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2007). There are many others.

carrying similar cargoes of children, one is known to have carried at least sixty-nine, and this trade was carried on for six years, with similar shipments embarking every few months.[637]

While kidnapping appears to have been a pervasive problem affecting cities and towns across Scotland during this era, there is minimal legal documentation of these crimes because most victims and their families lacked the resources for prolonged legal battles to bring the offenders to justice. Ian Whyte observes that crime in general frequently went unreported during this era, and records of crime were often inadequately maintained. The few records which do survive are fragmented and incomplete, as cases were often resolved outside the courtroom.[638] Graham Milne, education officer at Aberdeen Museums and Galleries, notes that what sets Aberdeen apart from other Scottish cities is the documented evidence of the involvement of city officials there in the kidnapping trade.[639] It is the court battles waged there in the 1760s which were pivotal in exposing the extent of corruption in that city.

Aberdeenshire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been depicted as a particularly unstable region, ravaged by warfare and famine.[640] The intensely pro-Jacobite sentiment of the area produced a volatile political environment amidst repeated uprisings in

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[637] CS29/17, National Archives of Scotland; Peter Williamson, William Fordyce, and Walter Cochran, *Memorial for Peter Williamson Merchant in Edinburgh, Pursuer; against William Fordyce of Aquhorties, Walter Cochran of Dumbreck, Town-Clerk-Depute of Aberdeen, Alexander Mitchell of Colpna, Merchant in Aberdeen, Patrick Barron of Woodside, Gilbert Gerrard, David Morris Advocates in Aberdeen, and the Now Deceased Charles Forbes of Shiels, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute of Aberdeen; and Also the Now Deceased James Petrie, Advocate in Aberdeen, Defenders* (Oxford: Bodlean Library, 1765) 3, n. contains testimony from court case CS29/1769/2/10, held by the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh; Robertson, *Book of Bon-Accord,* 89-90; Turreff, ed., *Aberdeenshire Records*, 223.
[638] Whyte, *Scotland Before the Industrial Revolution,* 219.
[639] Graham Milne, quoted in Alison Campsie, "How Aberdeen Children Were Sold into Slavery," *The Scotsman* (Thursday 29 October 2015). Available at *The Scotsman Online*: http://www.scotsman.com/heritage/historicevents/how-aberdeen-children-were-sold-into-slavery-1-3931904.
[640] Tyson, "Demographic Change," 201.

1689, 1708, 1715, 1719, and 1745. As Ronald G. Asch states, "Scottish Jacobites posed a greater threat to British and English political stability than Irish Catholics."[641] The predominantly rural Highland landscape, with extensive unsettled uplands including the mountainous district of Mar, facilitated the emergence of large roving gangs of armed vagrants, reinforcing the link between vagrancy and criminality in the eyes of the populace.[642] The situation was exacerbated when crops failed in 1739 and 1740, leading to widespread famine, epidemic disease, and food riots reminiscent of the 1690s.[643] According to Milne, a lack of employment opportunities in rural Aberdeen and the surrounding areas produced an influx of young people into the city searching for work and livelihood. "People were trying to get rid of the waifs hanging out in the streets," he explains, likely referring to local officials or perhaps even the general public.[644]

Ian Adams and Meredyth Somerville argue that the significant increase in Scottish kidnappings during the mid-eighteenth century originated from the food riots of 1740. They explain that during this period of hardship, many impoverished parents were compelled to sell their children, believing it to be in the children's best interests. When conditions improved, this once accessible source of servants diminished, leading merchants to resort to kidnapping to fulfill the demand for indentured labor.[645]An account book kept by Deputy Town Clerk Walter Cochran during the years 1742-43 does seem to point to a few impoverished families feeling compelled to take extreme measures, selling their children into servitude as a means of

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641 Ronald G. Asch, *Three Nations – A Common History? England, Scotland, Ireland and British history, c. 1600 – 1920* (Bochum : Universitätsverlag N. Brockmeyer, 1993) 40.
642 Whyte, *Scotland Before The Industrial Revolution*, 168, 221.
643 Fry, *A Higher World,* 39 - 39; Flinn, *Scottish Population History*, 219 – 23; Tyson, "Demographic Change," 201; Kennedy, *Annals of Aberdeen*, 290 – 291.
644 Quoted in Campsie, "Aberdeen Children."
645 Adams and Somerville, *Cargoes of Despair and Hope, 23*.

survival.[646] Despite these instances, witness testimony from the kidnapping trials of the 1760s emphasized that the practice of families selling their children into servitude was not widespread, even during the hard times of the 1740s.[647] This suggests that, while the social and economic upheaval of the decade undoubtedly contributed to the ease with which merchants and their agents could indenture servants involuntarily with little legal ramifications, it did so against a backdrop where the sale of children by their families was an aberration rather than a norm, occurring under particularly desperate circumstances rather than as part of a widespread trend.

Historical accounts speak of recruiting agents who formed press gangs to kidnap children from Aberdeen and the surrounding area.[648] The Book of Bon Accord describes this activity, revealing that parents in the area were afraid to send their children into town, and even worried that they might be snatched from their own homes.[649] "For in all parts of the country," the book reads, "in the dead of night children were taken by force from the beds where they slept, and the

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[646] Ibid; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 87; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 222; Miller, Macaulay, and Stevens, *The Leisure Hour*, 589; E. Littell, ed., *Living Age*, Vol. 18 (Boston: E. Littell and Company, 1848) 85; Chambers and Chambers, *Edinburgh Journal*, Vol. 8, 182.
[647] Peter Williamson, "A Discourse on Kidnapping," in Peter Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty* (York: Nickson, 1757) 100; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson,* 2, 61 – 62; CS29/1769/2/10, *Peter Williamson v. Baillie William Fordyce, Walter Cochran Town Clerk Deputy and others*, 2, NAS; GD248/590/4 No.5, *Letters Regarding Court Case: Peter Williamson v. William Fordyce and others,* NAS.
[648] Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 222, 233; Coldrey, "Idle Vagrants," 45; CS29/1759/2/10, "Pursuer's Proof", 23 D and E, 20, B and H, NAS; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 2; Frances McDonnell, *The Adventures of Peter Williamson* (St. Andrews: Heritage Books, 1998) 28; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 87; Miller, Macaulay, and Stevens, *The Leisure Hour*, 580; Chambers and Chambers, *Edinburgh Journal*, Vol. 8, 182; James S. Borlase, "Kidnapped: Or the Adventures of Peter Williamson, a Tale of the Slave Dealers of Aberdeen," *Dundee Courier* (Tuesday, 26 September, 1882) 7; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 25 – 26; Hugo de la Loy, *Hot Pressed Doctors Outwitted; or Who's Afraid* (Edinburgh: J. Robertson, 1808) 214.
[649] Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 87.

remote valleys of the Highlands, fifty miles distant from the city, were infested by ruffians who hunted their prey as beasts of the chase."[650]

The best evidence of the widespread extent of servant abduction in Scotland comes from the 1760s kidnapping trials in Aberdeen. These were waged by Peter Williamson, a former child servant, upon his return to Scotland. While many parents in the Aberdeen area had previously tried to reclaim their children from the merchants who had indentured them, they appear to have been foiled at every turn. This cycle of fruitless efforts persisted until Williamson returned from the colonies and initiated legal action against the Aberdeen magistrates. Upon arriving back in his home country, he published a copy of his memoirs, which garnered significant public interest in both England and Scotland.[651] His account, while not naming any specific individuals as perpetrators, infuriated the Aberdeen business community and magistrates, leading to his arrest for libel and the public burning of his book.[652] In response, Williamson took them to court, winning his first case.[653] Though the defendants were ordered to pay him damages of £100 and court costs of £80 out of their own pockets, they appealed to Walter Scott, Writer of the Signet – a senior legal position on Scotland authorized to issue royal warrants and other significant legal

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[650] Ibid.
[651] Peter Williamson, *The Life and Curious Adventures of Peter Williamson, Who Was Carried off from Aberdeen, and Sold for a Slave*, 20th ed. (Aberdeen: James Daniel and Son, 1878) 108; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 224 – 225; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 183; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 92; Chambers and Chambers, *Edinburgh Journal*, 182.
[652] Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 105; Peter Williamson, "A Short History of the Process between Peter Williamson and the Magistrates of Aberdeen," in Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 141; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 186 – 190; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 225; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 92 – 93; Kennedy, *Annals of Aberdeen*, 295 – 296; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 151.
[653] Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 11; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 16; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 197 – 198; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 225; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 93; Kennedy, *Annals of Aberdeen*, 296; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 151; Adams, *Hangman's Brae*, 52; Chambers and Chambers, *Edinburgh Journal*, 182; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 16; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 197 – 198.

documents - insisting that they were not at fault and had been unfairly treated.[654] After Scott allowed the magistrates to pay the money out of the town's common good fund, Williamson brought another suit for his abduction itself, which he lost, possibly due to the defendants' alleged intimidation of witnesses and bribery of officials with food, alcohol, and entertainment.[655] This ruling was later overturned by the Court of Edinburgh, where Williamson then lived, and he was awarded damages of £200 plus £105 court costs, a substantial sum at that time.[656]

Peter Williamson was the son of James Williamson, a tenant farmer working two properties in Aberdeenshire, and a "man of substance."[657] Contemporaries attested to the family's relative privilege, stating that the children were better-educated than most of their

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[654] Letter from William Davidson and James Jopp, GD248/590/4, No. 5, NAS; Skelton*, Indian Peter*, 198 – 199; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 28.

[655] See Austin, *Forgotten Children,* 51-52; CS29/1769/2/10/1, *"Pursuer's Proof"*, 11 E, *State*, 27 B, C; 33 C; 39 C; 46 D; 58 E; 85 A; 89E NAS; GD248/590/4; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 19 – 24, 27 – 32, 34 - 42, 62 – 72 – 80, NAS; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 216 – 218.

[656] GD248/590/4, NAS; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 225; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 221; Adams, *Hangman's Brae*, 52.

[657] CS29/1759/2/10, "Pursuer's Proof," 25 B, 27 B-E, NAS; Deposition of Francis Fraser, "Pursuer's Proof," in Williamson and Cushnie, *State of the process, poor Peter Williamson, against Alexander Cushnie, and others*, 13-14; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 4; Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 3, 120; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 21, 209. n. Williamson described his family as "not rich, yet…reputable." This has often been misinterpreted by American historians as an indication of poverty, due to a misunderstanding of the social nuances of British understatement. Williamson was not stating that his family was impoverished. In fact, numerous witnesses at the trials testified that James Williamson was no pauper and was able to support his family well. The production of a letter from two country gentlemen of property and position attesting to the reputation and standing of James Williamson, and to the truth of Peter's story further supports this view. While biographer Douglas Skelton recounts that shortly after Peter's disappearance, his mother died and his father was forced to relocate, it is clear from the trial testimony that at the time Peter was abducted his family was doing rather well. See Austin, "Forgotten Children," 50-51.

neighbors, and that there were "few bairns brought up like them in the parish."[658] Peter was sent to Aberdeen for schooling, but while there he fell into the clutches of kidnappers and was sold into servitude.[659] He later recounted that he had been playing with his friends on the quay, when two men approached him and asked if he wanted to go play with a group of other children. When he followed along, he found himself trapped with a group of children being held for the colonies.[660]

After a search by Peter's father and older brother Alexander, the boy was located in a barn on the outskirts of town, along with several other children. However, the guards refused to allow his brother to speak with him and told him that if he did not stop causing trouble, he would be locked up and sent away with the others, so he returned home.[661] James Williamson sought the help of local magistrates, but none would cooperate. Finally, a rural Justice of the Peace was willing to sign a search warrant and Williamson hurried to the old barn to retrieve his son, but by that time the children had been moved, possibly to evade just this sort of legal action.[662]

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[658] Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, p. 4; CS29/1759/2/10, "Pursuer's Proof" 25 B, 27 B – E, NAS; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 21, 209.
[659] Williamson, Fordyce, and Cochran, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 4; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 21; Williamson, *Life and Curious Adventures,* 7.
[660] CS29/1759/2/10, 2, NAS; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 4, 7; Williamson, *Life and Curious Adventures*, 7; Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, p. 3; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 27; Cheeseman A. Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania: Indentured and Redemption Labor in Colony and Commonwealth, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1926) 150; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 1; Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, 34.
[661] Deposition of Alexander King*, State of Process, Poor Peter Williamson, Against Alexander Cushnie*, and others, 11-12; Deposition of John Wilson, Williamson and Cushnie, *State of Process, Poor Peter Williamson, Against Alexander Cushnie*, and others, 12-13; Deposition of John Wilson, Williamson, Fordyce, and Cochran, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 57; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 28.
[662] CS29/1759/2/10, NAS; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 28-29.

Upon arriving in Philadelphia, Williamson was indentured to a fellow Scot who had been taken as a boy from his own home in Perth, Scotland.[663] His new master treated the boy kindly, educating him and ultimately making him his heir.[664] After reportedly experiencing a series of adventures which included being held captive by Indians, escaping to fight with the British during the French and Indian War, being taken prisoner at the Battle of Oswego in 1756, and being returned to England as part of a prisoner exchange, Williamson was finally able to make his way back home.[665]

Some scholars, notably Timothy Shannon and Abbott Emerson Smith, have chosen to place greater weight upon the testimony of the merchants in the trials brought by Williamson, rather than the substantial testimony from a stream of witnesses for the prosecution which contradicted the merchants' account.[666] It is true that Williamson was a larger-than-life character, who dressed as an American Indian to generate publicity for his memoirs.[667] The merchants of

[663]James Graham-Campbell, *Perth: The Fair City* (Perth: John Donald Publishers, 1997) 1 – 2; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 5; Williamson, *Life and Curious Adventures*, 9; Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 9 - 10; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 54; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 2; Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, 9; Adams, *Hangman's Brae*, 49

[664] Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 5; Williamson, *Life and Curious Adventures*, 11; Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 7-10; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 55-57; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 4; Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, 10 – 15.

[665] CS29/1769/2/10/1, 3 – 4, NAS; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 5-10; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 75-94, 102, 180-185; Williamson, *Life and Curious Adventures*, 13-34, 36, 89-90, 108; Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 10-29, 33, 73, 83-99, 104-106; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 224-225; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord,* 91-92; Kennedy, *Annals of Aberdeen*, 295; Chambers and Chambers, *Edinburgh Journal*, 182; Herrick, *White Servitude,* 151.

[666] Smith, "Indentured Servants: New Light on some of America's 'First' Families," *Journal of Economic History*, 2:1 (1942) 44; Timothy J. Shannon, "A 'wicked commerce': Consent, Coercion, and Kidnapping in Aberdeen's Servant Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 74:3 (July 2017) 437-466; CS29/1759/2/10, NAS.

[667] According to Williamson, he had spent time among the Indians while living in Pennsylvania. This generated a great deal of public interest among the people of Scotland, and he capitalized on that.

Aberdeen certainly considered him a charlatan, and believed he had made up nearly every facet of his story. While it is indisputable that some aspects of Williamson's story evolved over time, the consistency and volume of witness testimonies for the prosecution present a compelling counter-narrative to the merchants' version of events.[668] Furthermore, there is no obvious reason to question the testimony that at the age of ten Peter was sent to stay with an aunt in Aberdeen so that he could attend school there.[669] Still, Shannon believes that, "It is likely that Williamson fabricated the story of his aunt and his schooling," and that poverty was the reason for his presence in Aberdeen in 1743, an idea solidly refuted by multiple witnesses during the trials.[670]

The stance taken by Shannon and Smith seems to suggest that the defendants were predominantly reputable businessmen unjustly maligned. This perspective implies a discounting of the alleged victims' accounts in favor of those accused of wrongdoing. Such an approach not only challenges the credibility of the victims but also potentially overlooks the dynamics of power and influence that could skew the narratives in favor of the merchants. Given the well-documented evidence of widespread kidnapping and forced child labor across the British Isles

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[668] In "Forgotten Children: Scotland's Colonial Child Servants, 1680-1760," I addressed the controversy regarding Peter's age when he was allegedly abducted. In the first version of his memoirs, based entirely upon his own recollections, Williamson claimed he was abducted in 1740 at the age of eight. However, after discussions with his family upon his return to Scotland, he acknowledged he had been slightly older. Testimonies from friends and relatives varied, placing his age between eight and twelve years. During the trial, Williamson produced his certificate of baptism, which proved he was born in 1730, making him ten years old in 1740, the year he had been sent to stay with his aunt in Aberdeen. Through the course of the investigation, further records were uncovered showing that he was kidnapped in late 1742 or January 1743, when he would almost certainly have been twelve years old, having been born in 1730 (not thirteen, as Shannon states, unless he happened to have been born in early January).
[669] Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson,* 4; Skelton, *Indian Peter,* 21; Williamson, *Life and Curious Adventures,* 7.
[670] CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof",* pp. 25 B, 27 B – E, NAS; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, p. 4; Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, p. 3, 120; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 21, 209.

and the American colonies, Williamson's account aligns with the broader body of evidence. This consistency lends credibility to Williamson's story of being abducted.

Twenty-one local men were indicted in the 1760s Aberdeen kidnapping trial, with a significant majority of them being merchants. The group also included high-ranking city officials, such as baillies, a justice of the peace, the town clerk deputy, the town clerk, and the Dean of Guild, who also held the position of Procurator Fiscal.[671] The involvement of such prominent figures indicates a staggering degree of corruption within the city's civic structure. Prosecuting attorney John McLaren called on a long line of witnesses who testified about child abductions and attempted abductions throughout the 1740s. Witnesses, including many parents of the victims, consistently affirmed that the children in question were underage at the time and indentured without parental consent.[672] Many parents had desperately sought their children's release, appealing to both the Aberdeen merchants responsible and city officials.[673]

For example, William Jamieson, whose ten-year-old son John had disappeared, was told that even if the merchant did have his son, there was nothing he could do about it, and that he

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[671] Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 3, 12 – 14, 51; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 204, 212.
[672] For a more explicit discussion of victims' accounts, see Austin, "Driven Like Sheep Through the Streets: the Aberdeen Children," in *Forgotten Children*, 44-58; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*; Williamson, *Life and Curious Adventures*; Cheesman A. Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania: Indentured and Redemption Labor in Colony and Commonwealth* (Philadelphia, J. J. McVey, 1926); Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records;* Skelton, *Indian Peter.*
[673]Austin, "Driven Like Sheep Through the Streets," 44-58; CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof"*, 21F, 22 F, 22 P, 24A, NAS; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 108, 116-120; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 224, 231-232; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 3-4, 7, 47 – 49, 57; Skelton*, Indian Peter*, 28-31, 208; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 21-23; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 90; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 154.

himself would be sent abroad if he complained too loudly.[674] Though he was able to locate his son among a group of about sixty other children by the dockside, Jamieson was not allowed to retrieve him, despite the boy's clear desire to go home.[675] When Jamieson obtained a warrant from the Writer of the Signet, he could find no officer willing to serve the powerful merchant who held his son.[676] They "wouldn't disobey him for anything," he reported.[677]

The mother of twelve-year-old James Ingram was physically abused and thrown out of the merchant's shop on at least two occasions as she tried to free her son.[678] This family had an especially difficult time, as James was abducted by various merchants on three separate occasions, in one instance being taken from his bed in tears in the dead of night. The first two times his parents were able, through great effort, to obtain his release, but the third time their efforts failed, and he was sent away, never to be heard from again.[679]

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[674] CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof,"* 22 P, NAS; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 231; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 118.
[675] CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof,"* 21 F, 22 P, 24 A, NAS; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 48 – 49; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 108, 118 – 119; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 222, 231 – 232.
[676] CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof,"* 22 F, NAS; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 3; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 224, 232; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 154; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 119; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 31; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 23; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 90.
[677] CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof"*, 22 F, NAS; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 3; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 224, 232; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 154; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," in Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 119; Robertson, *Book of Bon Accord*, 90.
[678] Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 116-118; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 47-48, 115, 118; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 208; McDonnell, Adventures of Peter Williamson, 21-22.
[679] Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 116 – 117; Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 47.

John Kemp had lost two sons, ages eleven and thirteen. When the eldest boy escaped and returned home, Kemp was coerced into surrendering him in the face of threats of arrest and transportation.[680] Even when parents were able to appeal to sympathetic public leaders like the Provost and the Earl of Aberdeen, their aid proved insufficient to stop merchants from sending children abroad.[681]

Many witnesses reported seeing large groups of children being held captive for transatlantic voyages. William Jamieson discovered his son at the docks, amongst a group of about sixty other children, and witnessed a guard drive the children away, "like sheep through the streets."[682] This was corroborated by Christian Finlater's testimony, in which she recounted seeing a local stabler "driving a parcel of boys before him" through the city's streets, and chasing them down dead-end alleys if they escaped.[683] Peter Williamson's older brother Alexander found him in a barn on the outskirts of town with several other children, and was told that he would be locked in the barn himself if he did not leave.[684] Townspeople searching for the missing sons of the Widow Elsmies recounted that they had found them being held with several other boys and girls in the same barn where Alexander Williamson had seen his brother.[685]

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[680] CS226/9407/2, 77, NAS *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 54 – 55; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 208.
[681] CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof"*, 22-23; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 232-233; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 154; *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 3 – 4; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 120.
[682] CS29/1759/2/10, *"Pursuer's Proof"*, 21 F, 22 P, 24 A, NAS; *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 48 – 49; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records*, 222, 231 - 232; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping,", 108, 118 – 119; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 30; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 23.
[683] CS29/1759/2/10, *State of Process, Poor Peter Williamson, Against Alexander Cushnie*, and others, 23–24, NAS.
[684] CS29/1759/2/10, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 57, NAS; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 28.
[685] CS29/1759/2/10, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 45 – 46, NAS; Williamson "Discourse on Kidnapping," 112.

The magistrates claimed that no children under the age of pupillarity were indentured without the signature of a parent, and that they never transported servants under fourteen years of age, even when authorized, because they would not be bought by the planters in America.[686] However, witness after witness testified that their young child was indentured without their consent, and that they had seen children as young as eight or even six being held for shipment, and that six-year-old James Sheds and the youngest son of Widow Elsmies, who was around seven or eight, were among those abducted.[687] Moreover, as we have seen in previous chapters, many children well under the ages specified did appear before colonial courts without indentures.

Deputy Town Clerk Walter Cochran swore that all servants departing for America were required to appear before a magistrate and sign an indenture form stating that they had voluntarily entered into the indenture and were not forced or compelled by anyone.[688] According to Cochran and William Fordyce, another defendant, everything was conducted by the book, since indentures not properly certified were "not worth two pence in America."[689] It is well-known by colonial historians that thousands of servants came to the colonies with no indentures at all, and this proved to be no obstacle to their sale. Otherwise, there would be no reason for

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[686] A handwritten note at the end of the "State of Process, Poor Peter Williamson, against Alexander Cushnie, and others," states that the age at which a youth could be legally indentured – known as the "age of pupillarity," was fifteen years of age.
[687] CS29/1759/2/10, NAS; *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 2 – 4, 44 – 49, 54, 57 - 58; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 102, 112-113, 120; Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, 109 – 113, 115 – 121, 126, 129; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 26 – 37, 54, 203, 207 - 209; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 21 - 23; Turreff, *Aberdeenshire Records,* 229 - 232; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 153 - 155.
[688] CS29/1759/2/10, *State of Process, Poor Peter Williamson, Against Alexander Cushnie*, 39, NAS.
[689] CS29/1769/2/10/1, *Memorial for William Fordyce and Walter Cochran*, NAS, 11 – 14, 26 - 27; Williamson et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 54; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 153 - 155; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 26, 203.

individual colonies to enact "custom of the country" laws requiring servants to appear before colonial courts to have their ages adjudged and the terms of their indentures set.

The testimony of the town clerk, Robert Thomson, further exposes procedural lapses. Thomson reported that he kept no records of indentures signed by the magistrates, and he did not know of any such records ever having been kept. He further gave his opinion that it would not be possible to keep such records, since the signed and processed indentures were given back to the servants. Thomson was under the impression that, since indentures not properly certified were said to be worthless in the colonies, such documentation was unnecessary, reflecting a significant disconnect between stated legal procedures and actual practice.[690]

The merchants were adamant that no servants were forced to indent against their will, but Alexander Grigerson reported that he and a friend had been chased through the woods by three kidnappers, only narrowly managing to escape.[691] George Leslie testified to having often seen one of the men accused, Hugh Mackie, seizing struggling boys who appeared to be from ten to fifteen years old, and that once he had witnessed Mackie kick a boy into a loch, seriously injuring him.[692] Mackie appears not to have disputed these accusations, and in fact had been officially fined for the incident involving the loch, though the boy was still not released.[693] The description given by the parents of James Ingram, that he had been forced from his bed one night

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690 CS29/1769/2/10/1, *Memorial for William Fordyce and Walter Cochran*, 19, NAS; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 155.
691 Williamson, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 47; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 114 – 115; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 207.
692 Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 49-50; Deposition of George Leslie, "Pursuer's Proof," in Williamson and Cushnie, *State of the process, poor Peter Williamson, against Alexander Cushnie, and others*, 23; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 115; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 40; McDonnell, *Adventures of Indian Peter*, 28.
693 Ibid.

as he and his parents tearfully protested, is ample evidence that neither the boy nor his parents agreed to his indenture.[694]

It is difficult for modern readers to understand how this trade could flourish, with the whole countryside knowing of these activities, yet feeling powerless to prevent it. Given the rampant abductions of children in the region, the most effective precaution for parents appeared to be constant vigilance over their children to prevent them from being seized and transported overseas. Several witnesses recounted how their parents had strictly forbidden them from venturing into town, lest they fall victim to kidnappers.[695]

Conclusions

Despite the absence of a government-driven effort in Scotland to transport children to the colonies, involuntary child labor was a significant problem. As in England, concerns about poverty and vagrancy led to the creation of policies aimed at managing and often removing undesirable elements from society. With the expansion of colonialism in the Americas, the government increasingly began to endorse the transportation of those considered societal nuisances as a means of alleviating poverty and maintaining order. Colonial transportation saw even greater expansion during Cromwell's administration in Scotland than in England, as the self-proclaimed Protector was intent on ridding the realm of those willing to openly oppose his rule. Even after Cromwell's reign, political prisoners continued to be transported for the next century, particularly following the 1718 Transportation Act.

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[694] Williamson, et al, *Memorial for Peter Williamson*, 47; Williamson, "Discourse on Kidnapping," 116; Skelton, *Indian Peter*, 208; McDonnell, *Adventures of Peter Williamson*, 21.
[695] CS29/1759/2/10, NAS.

Kidnapping and forced transportation in Scotland most likely started around the same time as in England but on a lesser scale, or possibly merely less well-documented. The combination of more lenient Scottish laws, the exemption of Scottish servants from English customs regulations, and intense pressures on Scottish merchants to find ways to skirt around trade regulations created an environment ripe for illicit activities, particularly when coupled with the ongoing warfare and repeated famines during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Widespread chaos and destitution made it easier for merchants to indenture servants against their will with minimal legal consequences.

While child servants were transported to the colonies from all parts of Scotland, archival evidence is limited due to underreporting, poor record-keeping, and cases being settled outside of court. Additionally, most victims and their families lacked the means to pursue extensive legal action against perpetrators. The city of Aberdeen stands out as a notable exception, due to a series of trials brought against the town magistrates by Peter Williamson. Because Williamson was able to bring action against the powerful men of Aberdeen, we have documentation of the extent of corruption in that city. The power and influence of officials and businessmen ensured that the town was effectively dominated by their interests, a situation which may well have been true of other Scottish cities during this era.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study, we can see how economic demands, colonial ambitions, and capitalistic impulses combined with ethnic and class prejudices to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation of children in the British Isles between 1618 and 1776. The growing colonial economy created an insatiable demand for labor, and imperialist expansion also required a steady supply of settlers to sustain colonial settlements. At the same time, fears arose that Britain was overpopulated, particularly in urban areas such as London, where poverty and crime rates soared. The transportation of poor children as colonial laborers was rationalized as beneficial not merely to the nation but to the children themselves. In the colonies, masters would put them to work and give them food and lodging, removing such duties from their parents, whom many thought could not properly care for them anyway. In this way, the English government was able to harness existing prejudices towards the poor to fill the labor needs of their Atlantic colonies. These child servants provided a cheap and compliant labor force which contributed to the profitability of the colonies. The fact that the colonies continued to request shipments of child laborers long after the initial group arrived illustrates the value of these children to the colonial enterprise.

Prejudices towards the poor initially drove the exportation of forced child labor, which soon combined with the transportation of criminals, political prisoners, and those seen as dangerous "others." This shift illustrates the willingness of those in Parliament, local government, and court officials to leverage political and social disruptions to further England's colonial ambitions. As the profitability of the colonial labor industry surged and voluntary

migration waned, the demand for laborers intensified. This led individual entrepreneurs to shift their tactics, turning to kidnapping as a lucrative alternative. The fact that organized kidnapping gangs arose in major port cities is a testament to the financial gains to be had. Governing officials began the process, and private interests kept it going.

Though the indenture of poor children had been largely accepted as being for the greater good, the public did not take kindly to their own children being nabbed and vehemently protested this chain of events, causing a flood of legislation to be passed. At the same time, the profitability of colonial labor and its necessity to the colonial enterprise meant that kidnappers were often given a mere slap on the wrist for their crimes, and regulations were often laxly enforced, so the illegal activity continued to thrive. Over time, the continued protest of parents, along with the increased abduction of children from wealthy and politically connected families had produced enough legal restrictions to outweigh the lure of illicit profit, causing the spiriting industry in England to die down substantially.

Though Ireland was operating under English law by the eighteenth century, neighboring Scotland was not subject to the extensive body of anti-kidnapping legislation which had been put in place in England. Therefore, the servant industry in Scotland was subject to much less regulation. Furthermore, the English Navigation Acts conveniently exempted servants from both Scotland and Ireland from customs regulations. Since the children in these countries were not considered to be fully civilized and the colonies still demanded labor, harnessing them as colonial labor assets surely seemed like the perfect solution to the dilemma.

The forced transportation of child laborers was fundamentally linked to the capitalist demands of the colonial economies. While much of this involuntary child transportation was not conducted directly by the English, and later British, government, the state – including both

English and Scottish authorities - played a critical role, even when capitalist entrepreneurs took matters into their own hands. By instigating the process with the transportation of pauper children, by failing to strictly enforce anti-kidnapping legislation, and by failing to mandate severe punishments to offenders, these governments actively participated in the exploitation of child laborers. The selective application of the law, often based on class, economic status, or ethnicity, highlights how courts at every level perpetuated inequalities. Though England was responsible for the bulk of forced child indenture, Scottish legislation often aligned with English policies, reflecting similar patterns of exploitation and legal oversight within Scotland.

Examining forced child indenture in Britain and Ireland contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of power and exploitation in colonial economies, offering a wider perspective on colonization and the development of the British Empire. By integrating the stories of these child laborers into the broader discourse on colonial expansion, this work challenges conventional narratives on indentured servitude and colonial labor practices. Additionally, it calls attention to the need for a reassessment of historical approaches that have traditionally minimized the role of non-adult laborers in early modern economic and social histories.

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