Education in colonial America involved parents and preachers, pedagogues and public officials striving to impart learning, literacy, and occupational skills. Theirs was the most awesome of responsibilities. They were preparing the young for life and labor in a strange new world. As in British North America, the principal educational institution in New Netherland was the family. In the 1650s, after the Dutch West India Company gave up its monopoly of commerce and made land available on rather generous terms, families came to replace single men and women as the most likely immigrants to New Netherland, whose population increased sharply. Nicasius de Sille, the newly-appointed provincial secretary, wrote in 1653 that “children and pigs multiply here rapidly and more than anything else.”

The pervading emphasis on family life in Dutch culture is well known, and as the remarkable work of Alice Kenney has demonstrated, much the same family ethos was transplanted and flourished along the banks of the Hudson. But whether the settlers were Dutch or not, the plain fact is that the primitive state of society in early America placed extraordinary demands upon them as parents. Indeed, Director General Peter Stuyvesant, recognizing the limitations of governmental powers, looked to the family as the first line of defense against heresy, hedonism, and social instability. His efforts to suppress rowdy and immoral behavior, regularize marriage practices, and provide preachers and teachers were certainly intended to strengthen family life. Following Roman-Dutch law, he made sure that the rights of any child who had lost one or both parents were protected and that usually entailed appointing guardians.

Thinking in terms of social order as well as economic prosperity, Stuyvesant expected young New Netherlanders to learn a trade. Their parents did too. In fact, the family in the Dutch colony, like the family in the Dutch Republic, was usually very dedicated to preparing its offspring, both male and female, to preserve and advance the family’s economic interest. Whatever the circumstances of the children involved, occupational education took place almost always within the family setting. Parents either trained their own children, or else apprenticed them out to relatives, or friends, or acquaintances in this or that particular trade or profession. The government might intervene on behalf of poor children, but the result was much the same: apprenticeship within the family setting.

We know that the family was almost exclusively responsible for occupational education. Unfortunately, we do not have much precise information about the process. Relatively little scholarly research has been done on economic education in New Netherland; not much more is known about the way the young were prepared for labor in early New York. Indeed, the sources are widely scattered, and the task of finding and interpreting the pertinent data is surely daunting. Yet the effort ought to be made. By doing so in even the limited and admittedly preliminary way which follows, we might gain fresh insight into the peoples of New Netherland and seventeenth-century New York, their family values and attitudes toward childrearing, and their responses to both English conquest and economic expansion.

In both England and the Netherlands, the primary means of occupational training was apprenticeship. There were basically two kinds of apprentices. On the one hand were youngsters, usually boys of fourteen or older, whose parents voluntarily bound them out to learn a trade. On the other were poor, orphaned, or illegitimate children involuntarily bound out by public officials concerned primarily with finding decent homes for them. Among the latter, occupational training was distinctly secondary to custodial care. In either case, the apprentice was bound by law to serve his master, who stood in loco parentis, for a minimum number of years. England’s Statute of Artificers of 1562 called for at least seven years of service; the term varied in the United Provinces. Thus, while serving craft and professional guilds, apprenticeship also enabled public officials to protect
Fig. 36. Indenture of Marritje Hans to Philip Gerrissen.
From NYCM: Vol. 2, p. 111a. Courtesy of Manuscripts and Special Collections,
New York State Library, Albany, NY.
society by arranging for the care of disadvantaged youths. There was one primary difference in the development of apprenticeship in England and the Dutch Republic. By the time of the West India Company, reading, writing, and sometimes arithmetic were usually included among the skills that Dutch apprentices were to be taught. In England, literacy skills were seldom a part of apprenticeship in England and the Dutch youths. There was one primary difference in the development of the indentures, though the Puritans in New England, like their Calvinist kinsmen in the Dutch Republic and New Netherland, included literacy instruction in apprenticeship agreements.9

As elsewhere in colonial America, the guild system was not transferred to New Netherland. Apprenticeship was to develop there through a mixture of custom and expediency. From the beginning, the children of merchants and artisans were taught the family trade by their parents or other relatives. However, clearly defined apprenticeship agreements calling for occupational training do not begin to appear in the official record with any regularity until the 1650s. Before that time, the indentures simply emphasized the work that the youth was expected to perform—not learn how to do—or else legally transferred the child to another couple because its original parents were unable to sustain the family unit. Consider the contract made by seaman Cornelis Jansen, who in 1639 bound out his young son Jan for seven years to Jacob Hendrick Harmansen, a farmer living near Newtown. No mention is made of Jan's mother, and her absence may have precipitated the indenture, whereby Harmansen promised to “take care of the boy as if he were his son,” and Jansen promised to leave his son with Harmansen without trying to get him back for the said time. So the son had a home while the father very likely returned to the sea.10

In most of the early indentures involving children, the emphasis is on servitude rather than training. For example, in 1640 James Claughton sold the indenture of his servant boy, Jan Duytse, to Pieter Cornelissen. The boy was to work for eleven consecutive years. Although Cornelissen was a house carpenter and Jan probably learned a trade while serving out his indenture, Cornelissen paid 130 guilders for the boy's labor, with no provisions that he educate him in any way. What Jan learned was not the issue. Nor was occupational training specified in many similar indentures.11 However, now and again, there would appear a fleeting reference to some form of occupational education. The 1644 indenture of Marritje Hans, daughter of Hans Jansen, to Philip Gerritsen, tavern keeper, is indicative of the transition from the purely occupational to the partly educational indenture. Marritje was to serve the Gerritse, husband and wife, for three years, during which time they would give her “board, lodging and the necessary clothes, and also have her taught sewing, in such a manner as a father should or might do with his child . . .”12

The population growth of the 1650s brought more artisans and merchants and a greater demand for their wares to New Netherland. It also widened the opportunities for occupational training. Perhaps because Stuyvesant insisted that all legal documents be clearly drawn and registered, indentures began to state more precisely than ever before their educational requirements. For instance, Evert Duyckingh agreed in 1648 to take Cornelis Jansen, whose father had been killed in the late Indian wars, as an apprentice for eight consecutive years. Besides providing the necessary food, clothing, and shelter, Duyckingh promised “to teach [Cornelis Jansen] the trade of a glazier or such [other] trade as Evert can and to have him taught reading and writing.”13 Reporting to the Orphanmasters in 1661 on the situation of his orphaned brothers and sister, Jeremias Janzen Hagenaar explained that his brother Arien, age 14, was remaining with him to learn the family trade of carpentry.14 Hoping to gain some experience in retail sales, Cornelis van Schelluyne, with his father's approval, bound himself in January 1663 to serve Jan Cornelissen van der Heyden “in merchandising, keeping books and whatever appertains thereto, which service shall continue till the first day of September next.” Besides board and lodging, Cornelis was to receive a new suit of clothes and a present at the end of his service, plus whatever knowledge in running a shop he might pick up.15

Apprenticeship was valuable for more than the trade that was learned. Personal contacts were made that could be of vital importance in converting occupational skills into a successful livelihood. Tavern keeper Daniel Litschoe paid what he called “a good sum” to get his stepson, Herman Jansen Swaartvogar, apprenticed to a surgeon in New York. But it was worth it. While learning surgery, Herman was also meeting potential patients.16 Although not apprentices in any legal sense, several young New Netherlanders got their start in the service of Patroon van Rensselaer. Others worked for rising merchants like Frederick Philipse, Olaf Stevenson van Cortlandt, Cornelis Melyn, or David de Vries. Connections then, as now, were very important. Anticipating the many economic alliances that would later be forged through wedlock in New York, the marriage of Jeremias
Evert Duyckinckh engages Cornelis Jansen from Rotterdam as an apprentice for the term of eight consecutive years, commencing on the first of Mar Anno 1649 and ending on the first of May Anno 1657, during which time the above mentioned Evert Duyckinckh is bound to bring up the said Cornelis Jansen and to provide him with food, drink, necessary clothing, lodging, washing, etc.; also, to teach him the trade of a glazier or such [other] trade as Evert can and to have him taught reading and writing. The guardians must pay the school money. During the aforesaid time the said boy must remain in the service of Evert Duyckinckh and show him proper respect, as an apprentice is bound to exhibit toward his master. Thus done and signed the 6th of October Anno 1648, in New Amsterdam.

Everdt Duickinck

Jan Jansz Damen
Oloff Stevensz

In my presence,
Jacob Kip, clerk of the secretary
1649
van Rensselaer to Maria van Cortlandt in 1662 brought together two powerful commercial families with many branches and wide-ranging trading interests that would both expand apprenticeship opportunities and the chances of business success for kin and friend alike.\(^{17}\)

The biggest patron in New Netherland was the Dutch West India Company. Stuyvesant knew this when he asked the Amsterdam directors collectively to be the godfather of his first born son, Balthazar. William Beekman, vice director-general of the South River, wangled from the Company an appointment as cadet for one of his sons. Evert Pietersen, Comfortor of the Sick and official schoolmaster at New Amstel from 1656 to 1659, happily acknowledged the patronage of the Company toward his two boys. His son Arent, a miller, was assisted by the Company in coming to New Amstel. "My son Jan Evertsen," Pietersen wrote in 1656, "goes daily to the office of the Director to write, for which he received his thanks. He is on the road to success."\(^{18}\) Similarly, Domine Johannes Megapolensis urged the Classis in 1658 to use its influence to get his son Samuel employed as a clergyman by the Amsterdam directors. Samuel remained in Holland and studied medicine for a few more years, but he was hired in 1664 by the Company to serve the Reformed Church in New Amsterdam.\(^{19}\)

In summary, we must say that apprenticeship was not simply transplanted from the fatherland to New Netherland. More precisely, it developed there under the twin influences of population growth and Stuyvesant's reforms. As the 1650s progressed, apprenticeship agreements increasingly punctuated the court records. In both New Netherland and the Dutch republic, apprenticeship was perceived as a vital economic and educational institution. Such were the sentiments expressed by Jeremias van Rensselaer, who received word that his brother Richard had changed his apprenticeship from a lady shopkeeper to a merchant in Amsterdam. In 1656, writing from the family patroonship of Rensselaerswick in New Netherland, Jeremias scolded his younger sibling: "You must take care to learn something, for it is high time for you to learn, and by changing in this way from one person to another, one can not acquire any business method."\(^{20}\)

As mentioned earlier, apprenticeship in the Dutch republic was much like apprenticeship in England, though the latter seldom called for literacy instruction. In New England, the Puritans, like the Dutch, usually required that apprentices be taught reading and writing. But in one respect, apprenticeship in New England and New Netherland differed sharply. In almost ritualistic fashion, New England Puritans regularly bound out their children at the age of puberty to undergo the anxieties of adolescence with another family. Exactly why is not clear, but as Edmund S. Morgan has pointed out, occupational training or advantage was apparently not the primary reason. Rather, Morgan thought Puritan parents simply were reluctant to discipline their own children. Taking a less sympathetic view, Emory Elliott claims that the first generation of New Englanders embraced this "psychologically wrongheaded practice" as part of a larger scheme to keep children diffident and undaunted before their elders. To support his charge, Elliott refers to New England wills and court records that literally bristle with resentment toward disobedient and ungrateful children. Elliott overstates the case, but the antagonism between many Puritan fathers and their children can hardly be denied.\(^{21}\)

In happy contrast, there is no indication that any general suspicion or distrust separated the founding fathers of New Netherland from their children. New Netherlanders were generally reluctant to bind out their children, and did so only for occupational advantage or economic necessity. Their wills were remarkably free of the acrimony found in Puritan legal records.\(^{22}\) Partiality there must have been, but Dutch parents were influenced by custom if not always genuine affection to provide for their offspring more or less equally. While the English favored the eldest son with primogeniture and entail, the Dutch followed rules of partible inheritance. Sons and daughters were enjoined to share and share alike. Partible inheritance also prevailed in New Netherland, except among the New Englanders who migrated to Long Island. In modern parlance, New Netherlanders and their children seem to have been thoroughly bonded through mutual love and respect. Their use of apprenticeship reflected that deep and abiding familial affection.\(^{23}\)

II

Like every other aspect of life in New Netherland, apprenticeship and occupational education were affected by the English conquest in 1664, though changes were for the most part gradual. Duke James, the proprietor of New York, anxious not to drive away erstwhile New Netherlanders, followed a conciliatory policy. Stirred occasionally by further emigration from Europe and Britain and the proliferation of religious sectarians, the mixture of peoples in New York actually became even more varied over the next four decades: "Here bee not
many of the Church of England.” wrote Governor Thomas Dongan in 1687, “few Roman Catholicks, abundance of Quakers—preachers men and women especially: Singing Quakers, Ranting Quakers; Sabbatarians; Antisabbatarians: some Anabaptists, some Independents; some Jews; in short of all sorts of opinion there are some, and the most part none at all.” Dongan added that “the prevailing opinion is that of the Dutch Calvinists.”

Not until 1700 did the British equal the Dutch population of polyglot New York City, and New Yorkers of Dutch descent dominated the economy and politics of the Hudson Valley and western Long Island until after the American Revolution. To placate New Yorkers of whatever nationality, the English found it expedient to broaden and give legal sanction to the religious accommodation that Petrus Stuyvesant had tolerated in practice. The provincial government thought it wise to steer clear of any systematic educational policy, lest it arouse ethnic antagonisms or fears of cultural aggression. Whether offered within the family circle or the larger community, education thus remained a local and personal matter, regulated only broadly by the provincial government, but ultimately the responsibility of particular towns and especially the family itself.

This accommodating English attitude was codified in the Duke’s Laws, a mixture of laws and custom from both New England and New Netherland, promulgated in 1665. Gradually replacing the Roman-Dutch law of New Netherland, the Duke’s Laws first applied only to Long Island, Staten Island, and the Bronx Peninsula. It was extended to Manhattan and the Hudson River Valley in 1674 and the Delaware region in 1677. Because of the Duke’s Laws, the transition from Dutch to English rule scarcely disturbed regulations for servants and apprentices. In fact, much as Stuyvesant had done before them, Governor Richard Nicolls and his immediate successors, Lovelace, Andros, and Dongan, willingly allowed local custom to dictate the relationship between master and servant or apprentice, placing the weight of the provincial government behind customary practices by way of vaguely worded statutes which could be invoked by town or county officers whenever necessary. Such was surely the logic behind the following provision on apprenticeship in the Duke’s Laws:

The Constables and Overseers are strictly required to Admonish the Inhabitants of Instructing their Children and Servants in Masters of Religion and the Laws of the Country, And that Parents and Masters do bring up their Children and Apprentices in some honest and Lawful Calling, Labour or Employment.

A hundred years would elapse before New York enacted another provincial statute directly applicable to apprenticeship.

Under the Duke’s Laws, servants and apprentices were enjoined to obey and serve their masters and mistresses faithfully; the latter were warned not to abuse their charges. On the one hand, servants or apprentices—the two terms were used interchangeably and imprecisely much of the time—were to obey their masters or dames as if the latter were their natural parents. A servant was prohibited from buying or selling anything, and one who ran away would have to serve beyond the terms of his indenture twice the time of his unexcused absence. According to the standard form, every youth bound out promised to abstain from fornication, marriage, gambling, absenting himself without leave, and “haunting Alehouses, Taverns or Playhouse.” Beginning 1684, laws were passed periodically at both the local and provincial level prohibiting unscrupulous individuals from encouraging “servants and apprentices” to frequent taverns or pilfer from their respective masters; the law assumed a causal relationship between the consumption of alcohol and thievery among servants.

On the other hand, while the apprentice promised to serve and protect the interest of his employer, the master promised to instruct and usually provide food, clothing and lodging for his charge. Besides instructing the servant or apprentice in manners and morals and some honest calling, the master or dame was not to provoke or treat him cruelly or tyrannically. Should a master abuse his servant, the latter could justly complain to the constable or overseers of the town. And should a master or dame “smite out the Eye or Tooth, of any such man or maid Servant, or shall otherwise Maime or disfigure them, such Servants after due proof madle shall be sett free from their Service, and have a farther allowance and recompense as the court of Sessions shall judge meet.” Whether the indenture was written or oral, though, the courts of New York tended to favor the master or dame unless gross abuse was evident, and even then the courts hesitated to abrogate the contract. Indeed, as it was under the Dutch, indentures either for apprentices or servants gave masters or dames in New York the same wide-ranging discretion that parents exercised over their children.

Consider the case of Barendt Mynderse vs. William Hoffmayer tried at Albany in April 1677. Mynderse complained that the defendant “keeps his son from his
work and that the boy's term does not expire until the fall." Hoffmayer replied that Mynderse's wife mistreated the boy and sent him away, and that Mynderse's children called young Hoffmayer a bastard. Even so, Hoffmayer was "willing to have the boy learn the smith's trade, if they treat him decently." The court ordered the boy to return to his master and "serve out his time, but the plaintiff is ordered to treat him decently, and pay the costs, because the boy was sent away."

In another Albany case, Abel Hardenbroock, a shoemaker previously charged with mistreating an apprentice, brought suit in March 1671 against Hendrick van der Borgh, who had run away after agreeing to serve four years to learn the shoemaking trade. Hardenbroock demanded that the defendant be condemned to serve out his time or else pay him board money for thirteen months time. The mediators for the defendant reported that Hardenbroock did not "provide proper board for the boy and so ill treats him with beatings and kicking that it is impossible for deft. to live any longer with him." The Mayor's Court decided that the apprenticeship should be terminated, though Hendrick van der Borgh had to pay his former master one hundred guilders sewant and the cost of litigation to the court itself.

As a means of economic education, apprenticeship in colonial New York served the children of rich and poor alike. The Orphanmasters in New York City and the Consistory of the Reformed Church in Albany took it upon themselves to find apprenticeships for orphans or children of poverty-stricken parents. In 1684, although his efforts were undertaken with the best interests of the children in mind, Domine Dellius of Albany was rebuffed by one Paulyn and his wife when the clergyman tried to arrange for their children to live "with some good people who would support them and bring them up decently." Rather than give up the children, Paulyn asked that his family be taken off the poor rolls of the Reformed Church. Having heard that the children were still not getting enough to eat, the consistory finally secured the intervention of the Albany Court "to see to it that the said children do not suffer want or damage through the unreasonable obstinacy of their ignorant parents."

The evidence suggests that the reactions of the Paulyns were typical. Judging from dozens of contracts from the years 1664 to 1690, Dutch New Yorkers apprenticed or hired out their children only because they could not care for them or because they wanted their offspring to gain special occupational skills. The instances where Dutch New Yorkers indentured their children at an early age were usually the result of one parent being dead or not at hand or of dire economic necessity. Probably for one of these reasons, Elizabeth Gerritz "hired out" in 1677 her ten-year-old son Abraham Jansen to Gerrit Visbeeck for eight consecutive years. Visbeeck agreed not only to supply the youngster with adequate food and clothing but also "to teach him to read." Having recently remarried, Barentie Stratsman in 1674 bound out her eight-year-old daughter by her first husband to Richard and Elizabeth Pretty for a term of eight years. In 1683, hard times and possibly the death of his wife may well have induced Jan Heyndricksen van Solsberghen to indenture his ten-year-old son for six years to Claes Jansen van Bockhoven.

Far more common were apprenticeship indentures that explicitly called for occupational training of one sort or another. For example, Simon Le Roy hired out his eleven-year-old son Augustyn in 1682 for six years to Adam Winne on condition that Winne teach young Augustyn ropemaking. In 1674, Peter Winne apprenticed his fifteen-year-old offspring Francoys to Rutgert Arentsen for four years to learn the shoemaker's trade. Similarly, in 1677, William Parker, a court messenger of Albany, apprenticed his seventeen-year-old son James to shoemaker Hendrick Bries for two years to teach him both the shoemaking and tanning trades. In 1687, Elizabeth Howell of Southold put out her son George Harrud to Josua Horton for four years. Horton promised to give the boy room and board, plus "to learn him to read and write, and to teach him the trade of an house carpenter." Many other examples could be cited. Quite clearly, during the two decades following the English conquest, population growth and economic expansion broadened the variety of apprenticeship training and increased the demand for apprentices in New York. In the minds of many New York parents, an apprenticeship under some skilled shoemaker, blacksmith, wheelwright, cooper, or carpenter was especially advantageous for the future well-being of their sons.

The more well-to-do or ambitious families had higher economic aspirations for their progeny. Besides sending his boys to the Latin school at New Amsterdam, William Beekman underwrote the mercantile ventures and political forays of his eldest son Henry. Beekman's younger son Gerardus either studied medicine in Leyden or more likely was apprenticed to some doctor in New York. At any rate, there still exists in Beekman's hand a copy of the famous medical text by Sylvius of Leyden published in 1672. Settling in Flatbush, Gerardus began to lay the
foundation for a most successful career in both politics and medicine. At just about the same time, Oloff Stephensen van Cortlandt of New York City was personally directing the mercantile education of his sons, Stephenus and Jacobus. Stephenus seems to have served a kind of internship with his father's merchant friends in Boston, and Jacobus received similar training in Jamaica. In Albany, Harmen Gansevoort was hard at work building up the family brewery. His young son Leendert literally grew up in the business and acquired skills that would make him one of Albany's wealthiest brewers and merchants.

Although atypical because his family was the largest landowner in the colony, the apprenticeship of Kiliaen van Rensselaer illustrates the importance of this traditional form of occupational education in the developing economic and social structure of colonial New York. The eldest child of Maria van Cortlandt and Jeremias van Rensselaer, Kiliaen was the pride and joy of his parents. Pampered throughout his childhood, he was sent to school at age four. Following the death of his father in 1674, Kiliaen's education was left in the hands of his strong-willed mother, who was ably advised by her father, Oloff Stephenson van Cortlandt. Young Kiliaen had spent considerable time with Grandfather van Cortlandt, due in part to the frequent pregnancies, complicated by generally poor health, of his mother. Maria had at first planned to send Kiliaen to Holland for his professional training, but the second Anglo-Dutch war intervened, and on the advice of the Van Cortlandts, she apprenticed the fifteen-year-old Kiliaen to a New York City silversmith in 1678. This apprenticeship was probably arranged by Grandfather van Cortlandt, who doubtless kept a watchful eye on both his grandson and the latter's master.

Four years later, Kiliaen had successfully completed his apprenticeship. Although now nineteen and probably qualified as a journeyman silversmith, Kiliaen wanted to continue his training in the art and become a master silversmith himself. Since master silversmiths were not only highly skilled artisans but also the bankers of their day, Maria and the Van Cortlandts approved of Kiliaen's professional aspirations. Taking charge of the matter, Grandfather van Cortlandt called upon his mercantile colleagues in Boston, who in turn placed Kiliaen in the service of the most talented silversmith in the city, Jeremiah Drummer. Because he was already a journeyman, Kiliaen probably did not pay Drummer the customary apprentice fee. Nor did Drummer pay Kiliaen for his assistance, providing only his room and board. Two Van Cortlandt business associates, Utscher and Paterschall, were "his sureties, in case he should undertake some big piece of work and spoil it, so that he would have to make good the loss." Within a year, Drummer had taught Kiliaen how to make the big silver goblets, tankards, and platters, the mark of a true master silversmith. Kiliaen's younger brother, Hendrick, was apprenticed to a merchant in New York City. Kiliaen himself, besides exercising his trade as a master silversmith, began to manage the affairs of Rensselaerswijck, which would benefit even more by Hendrick's mercantile training. Utilizing their several talents and family connections, Kiliaen and Hendrick not only preserved but extended the economic and political power of the Van Rensselaer clan in New York.

During the last years of the seventeenth-century, the most complete list of apprenticeship indentures comes from New York City. In 1694, the Common Council ordered that

Noe Merchant or handy Craft Tradesman Shall take Any Prentice to teach or instruct them in their Trade or Calling without being bound by Indentures before the Mayor, Recorder, or Any one of the Aldermen of the Said Citty and Registered in the Town Clerkes Office and not for Less Term than four Years.

For the years 1695 to 1707, one hundred and eight apprentices were registered in the city of 4,500. Of these indentures, ninety-three were definitely trade agreements. They included seven girls, three of whom were to be taught "housewifery," sewing, and in two cases reading as well. The boys, several in their mid-teens, were bound out variously to merchants, carpenters, wheelwrights, and bakers. Altogether, more than twenty trades were registered.

One of the most striking features of the list is that almost half of the apprentices (47%) were either orphans or else sons or daughters of widows. Only thirty-one apprentices (29%) almost certainly had living fathers. It should also be noted that only forty-two (39%) apprenticeship agreements made any provision for literacy instruction.

Dividing the indentures by nationalities, at least half of the Dutch (50%) and about one-third (35%) of the English apprentices were to be taught reading, writing, and sometimes arithmetic (See Appendix).

Based on these figures, it may be said that close to a majority of the young people were bound out not simply
to learn a trade but primarily to have a decent home because they were either orphaned or without one or the other parent. The custodial functions of apprenticeship, so esteemed for supporting social stability in England, were apparently just as important in New York as its occupational function. Especially noteworthy is the huge proportion of English as compared to Dutch apprentices, something like 66% to 17%. The English were not a majority in New York City in 1707. In fact, Britons were very likely still outnumbered by the Dutch. But as the apprentice list from 1694 to 1707 suggests, the English were proportionately more numerous among the poor of the city.

As for the Dutch, four of their eighteen indentures were for professional apprenticeships, two under merchants and two under “chirurgeons.” Of the remaining fourteen, one was a shoemaker who bound himself as a journeyman, and the other thirteen were tightly-drawn trade indentures, nine of which (68%) called for literacy instruction. Only four (31%) of the thirteen indentures involved boys who were orphaned or bound out by widowed mothers. No Dutch girls appear on the apprentice list. This suggests that the Dutch were making other arrangements for the children’s occupational education. They may have simply disliked the formal registration requirement and evaded it. As Douglas Greenberg has concluded, Dutch New Yorkers were somewhat contemptuous of English political authority.

III

On the basis of this brief survey of apprenticeship indentures and related documents, some tentative conclusions may be made regarding economic education in New York on the eve of the eighteenth century. First, excepting orphans and children of poverty, youths were usually not bound out until their middle teens or later, and the term of service was seldom more than five years. Unlike what we know of the Puritans in New England, Dutch New Yorkers socialized their children without resort to removal from the family circle, and they utilized apprenticeship primarily for occupational training. Evidence is admittedly scanty, but the English who settled among the Dutch on western Long Island seem to have followed the Dutch practice of apprenticeship, while the English on the “East End” very likely perpetuated the Puritan ritual of putting out young children for the sake of some psychological conditioning. Interestingly, while continuing to divide their property among both sons and daughters, Dutch New Yorkers by 1700 were making concessions to English tradition and law by granting the eldest son a double portion, though other children usually shared equally.

Secondly, while the range of apprenticeship opportunities was very limited in New Netherland, New York by the last quarter of the seventeenth century had many and needed more coopers, smiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, and artisans of various trades. The expansion of commerce and agricultural settlement demanded them. Apprenticeships in such trades were highly sought after, and parents might pay the master, or as in many cases, pay for the apprentice’s clothing and laundry. Everywhere, the emphasis was upon the young learning a trade and preparing for the future. It could even be found in work contracts for servants or slaves. In 1682, Captain Johannes Clute of Albany hired out “a certain little negress (named Sara) for the time of three succeeding years” to Aemot Cornelis Viele, but there were explicit conditions that Viele had to meet. He promised “to exercise her in godly prayer and to bring her up in the fear of the Lord, likewise to teach her ‘to sew, knit and Spin according to her capacity.”

Thirdly, apprenticeship training of some sort was virtually the only means of joining the “aristocratic trades” of merchant, physician, and apothecary or chemist. Concerning apprenticeships in the crafts and trades, New York City boys who successfully served out their indentures were made freemen, that is, free to practice their trade in the city. In addition to the usual two sets of clothes, one for work and another for Sunday, apprentices sometimes received from their masters upon fulfilling their contract “tools” of their trade. But most important of all, they were qualified as journeymen in their craft, and such skills were very much in demand in the province of New York. In fact, it was common for rural villages to lure artisans into their communities with grants of lands, sometimes tools, and usually promises of a monopoly in the trade. A good craftsman then, as now, was hard to come by. For instance, the town of Jamaica voted in 1670 “that Nicklas the coper should have half a acrer of Land by the Bever pond to build a house and to supply the Towne with such copers work as the Towne shall stand in need of.” In 1680, John Davis, brickmaker of Setauket (Brookhaven), was given a lot in Huntington on condition he supply that town with bricks. At a town meeting in 1681, Huntington voted land to Thomas Skidmore to set up his house and blacksmith shop. Skidmore promised “to train another to take his place when he leaves.” Four years later, Huntington gave
land to Benjamin Scrivenir on condition that he "weave for the town."49

Fourthly, by the end of the seventeenth century, apprenticeship indentures customarily called for youths bound out to be taught "to read, write and cypher." More often than not, such provisions specifically pledged the master to allow "the said Apprentice three Months after Christmas to goe to the Night Schools every year." Usually the master paid for the schooling, but the burden sometimes fell upon the father, or the master and the father shared the expenses involved. In fact, as Robert Seybolt demonstrated half a century ago, the ubiquitous evening schools of colonial New York came into being to instruct apprentices and artisans who were at work during the day. The earliest mention of the evening school in America is found in the "Instructions and Rules for Schoolmaster Ever1 Pietersen, drawn up by the Burgomasters of his City [New Amsterdam]," dated November 4, 1661. The purpose of this collateral education was succinctly stated in an indenture that called for teaching the apprentice to "Read Write and Cypher so far as will be Sufficient to Manage his Trade."50

Fifthly, the custodial functions of apprenticeship should not be treated lightly. Indeed, by the end of the seventeenth century, though the variety of trade apprenticeships had increased markedly, so had the number of involuntary agreements and indentures that clearly made the apprentice hardly more than a servant. Almost invariably, girls were apprenticed as servants. Indeed, the apprentice list for New York City from 1695 to 1707 was indicative of current trends. To a considerable degree, apprenticeship always was particularly filled with the poor and the orphaned and seemed to be becoming more so, though that hardly lessens its educational or economic importance. For the disadvantaged youth, apprenticeship no doubt provided advantageous occupational training; but it was also used a lot simply to protect society from potentially disruptive young people.51

Finally, a note of caution. One should not exaggerate the extent of formal apprenticeship in New Netherland and early New York. Its importance can hardly be denied. However, as Carl Bridenbaugh noted years ago in his study of the colonial craftsman, occupational training was pretty much a family affair, with skills being transmitted from parent to child across the generations. Sons began at an early age to imitate and assist their fathers and thereby learned their crafts. Even more important, most seventeenth-century New Yorkers, remember, were farmers, not merchants or craftsmen. Daughters too were similarly introduced to the many chores of housewifery by their mothers. In families where the wife and husband jointly ran the family business, daughters as well as sons were taught the trade; the latter was especially true among Dutch New Yorkers. For most New York children, occupational training took place in the home or else with nearby relatives without benefit of indentures of apprenticeship. But having made that caveat, let me insist that for those whose family and relatives were outside a craft or profession, apprenticeship was the primary avenue for gaining skills and for entering that trade.52

One parting comment. Throughout the seventeenth century, ethnic and religious groups in New Netherland and New York sought to maintain their respective cultural identities through an interlocking educational triad of family, congregation, and school. Occupational skills were particularly essential to protect those family traditions. Occupational education, whether apprenticeship or otherwise, usually took place within the rather narrow circle of kin and kin. But even at that, the youth who learned a trade or a craft or a profession almost invariably found much of his personal identity intertwined with that particular occupation. Occasionally, and much more frequently as the eighteenth century began and wore on, the resulting occupational social associations enlarged personal horizons and broadened the young man's conception of self and family. Ironically, the occupational training so essential to preserve the family's economic interests had a growing tendency to weaken the narrow ethnic and religious traditions upon which the family identity was based. It led young merchants and lawyers and craftsmen into the larger political and commercial life of the colony. But for the most part, that work of merging identities remained in the future. As the seventeenth century gave way to the eighteenth, ethnicity prevailed in colonial New York, and apprenticeship in particular and economic education generally buttressed a wonderfully pluralistic society. Diversity not only prevailed; it flourished and enriched the culture of the colony that was becoming the seat of the British Empire in North America.53
### Appendix

**Apprenticeship Registration for New York City Registrants by Nationalities 1695–1707**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Schooling Specified in Indenture Agreements**

**Dutch 1695–1707**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schooling mentioned</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No schooling</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Schooling Specified in Indenture Agreements**

**English 1695–1707**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schooling mentioned</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No schooling</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indentures & Family Background 1695–1707**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children probably orphaned</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother probably a widow</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot tell</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father or two parents mentioned</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes


7. This analysis of apprenticeship as economic education is based on research in all the major collections of published sources and many minor ones. Most of those consulted are cited in the footnotes, though not all. Economic education is placed within a broader perspective in Ronald W. Howard, Education and Ethnicity in Colonial New York, 1664–1763: A Study in the Transmission of Culture in Early America (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1978).


13. Indenture of Cornelis Jansen from Rotterdam to Evert Duyckingh, 6 Oct. 1648, ibid., t: 64, reproduced here.


15. Indenture of Cornelis van Schulluye to clerk for Jan Cornelissen van der Heyden, 13 Jan. 1648, Dutch
Manuscripts, III: 64.

16 Will of Daniel Lisschoe, 26 Dec. 1661, Minutes of the Orphanmasters, 216.

17 Jeremias to Jan Baptist van Rensselaer, 13 July 1662, Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer, 1651–1674, ed. Arnold J. F. van Laer (Albany, NY: Univ. of the State of New York, 1932), 296–97 (hereafter cited as Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer); see also Jeremias to Anna van Rensselaer, 19 Aug. 1662, ibid., 300; Jeremias to Oloff Stevenson van Cortlandt, 27 Aug. 1663, ibid., 326. Other letters in this collection made it clear that the entire Van Rensselaer family and relatives were deeply involved in trade. See also Rink, Holland on the Hudson, 177–95.


19 J. Megapolensis to Amsterdam Classis, 25 Sept. 1658, ibid., I: 435; Amsterdam Directors to Stuyvesant, 20 Jan. 1664, ibid., 541.

20 Jeremias to Richard van Rensselaer, 19 June 1657, Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer, 42–43.


22 For a discussion of family relations in New Netherland, see Howard, Education and Ethnicity in Colonial New York, 101–11. See also Marriage Contract and Will of Brant Peelen and Marritje Peters, 3 July 1643, Dutch Manuscripts, II: 144–46; Settlement of the Estate of Gerrit Wolphertsen van Couwenhaven, 1646, ibid., II: 366–68.


27 Ibid., IV: 924.


31 Abel Hardenbroeck v. Hendrick van der Borgh, 7 Mar. 1671, The Records of New Amsterdam, 7 vols., edited by Berthold Fernow (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1897), VI: 288; see also Mayor’s Court, 23 Aug. 1671, ibid., 252. Sewant refers to certain seashells used by the Indians as money.

32 Domine Dellius and the Paulyns, 10 Mar. 1684, CARS Minutes, III: 432.


36 Oloff Stephensen van Corlandt to Maria van Rensselaer, 16 Jan. 1677, Correspondence of Maria van Rensselaer, 1669–1688, trans. & edited by A. J. F. van Laer.
Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy, 29 Mar. 1753. An example of the status that apprenticeship conferred in many cases may be found in the advertisement of Henry Witman, brass button maker, in New York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy, 1 Oct. 1750.


