The Enslaved Children of the Dutch World:

Trade, Plantations, and Households in the Eighteenth Century

Ramona Negrón

Ramona Negrón
ramonanegron@live.nl

ResMA Colonial and Global History
Leiden University

Supervisor: Dr. Karwan Fatah-Black
Second reader: Prof. Dr. Michiel van Groesen

15 June 2020

24.054 words

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

The idea for this thesis started in 2018 when my supervisor dr. Karwan Fatah-Black suggested reading Colleen A. Vasconcellos' book *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica, 1788-1838*. Since then, I have made it a personal quest to find as much as I could about the lives of enslaved children in the eighteenth-century Dutch World.

Writing this thesis would not have been possible without the help of many people. Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor dr. Karwan Fatah-Black. Over the last three years, his continuous support, encouragement, and enthusiasm have been of immense help and inspiration. I am very grateful for all of the chances he has given me, and I truly could not have wished for a better supervisor.

I also want to thank my colleagues at the Amsterdam City Archives, who enthusiastically helped me with finding source material and encouraged me to present the stories of some of the enslaved children found in the archive through articles and presentations to visitors, including the mayor of Amsterdam. I am indebted to Ellen Fleurbaay, Pauline van den Heuvel, Mark Ponte, Jirsi Reinders, Laurien van der Werff, Tessa de Boer, Anne Sits, Jessica den Oudsten, Myrthe Bleeker, Micaela Cabrita da Palma, and Eva Dorst especially for their help and support.

I want to thank the many volunteers from the 'Alle Amsterdamse Akten' project, most importantly Yvonne Colijn, Ellen Ruijter, Petra S., M. de Jong, and Quinten, who shared their findings with me. Without them, I would not have been able to write about the lives of many of the children mentioned in this thesis.

Several discussions with my two friends Anne Sits and Jessica den Oudsten were of great inspiration and motivation. Throughout the process of writing this thesis, they have helped me with their great feedback and commentary for which I am very grateful.

Lastly, I want to thank my parents, Henry and Jolanda, and my sister Gabriëlle for their unconditional love and support.

Introduction

In the eighteenth century, there was not a place in the Dutch World where enslaved children could not be found. On the coasts of Africa, enslaved children were purchased by Dutch slave traders. After a months-long voyage, Dutch slave traders sold enslaved children in the Dutch colonies to slaveholders, who brought the enslaved children to their plantations and households. There, enslaved children found themselves living under extreme conditions, surrounded by violence and death often without the protection of a parent. Some children were forced to work alongside adults in the fields, others tended cattle or were taught a skill such as carpentry. The most visible were enslaved boys who worked as footboys. They served their owners and followed them everywhere they went. Sometimes, this meant following their owners to the Dutch Republic, where it had become fashionable to have African children as servants.

While over the years the number of publications on the Dutch slave trade and the Dutch colonies in the Atlantic has grown rapidly, enslaved children are still left out of the narrative. Their significant histories have blurred into the background. Historians such as Gert Oostindie, Humphrey E. Lamur, and Alex van Stipriaan have included the labor of enslaved children on Dutch plantations in their work, but studies that focus on more than the labor of enslaved children in the Dutch Atlantic do not exist.[1] This is especially striking considering that internationally there has been a growing interest in the study of child slavery for a few decades. In 1995, historian Wilma King published her important work *Stolen Childhood. Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America,* in which she argued that enslaved children did not have childhoods: the traumas that they experienced as children forced them into adulthood at a young age.[2] Her study started a debate about the nature of enslaved childhood. Historian Marie Jenkins Schwartz

[1] Gert Oostindie, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou. Twee Surinaamse plantages, 1720-1870* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications 1989); Humphrey E. Lamur, *The Production of Sugar and the Reproduction of Slaves at Vossenburg (Suriname), 1705-1863*; Humphrey E. Lamur, 'The Slave Family in Colonial 19th-Century Suriname', *Journal of Black Studies* 23 (1993) 71–381; Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast. Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie 1750-1863*. Caribbean series 13 (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij 1993).

[2] Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood. Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2011) xxi-xxii.

argued in *Born in Bondage. Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* five years later that the childhood of enslaved children was not stolen, but contested. Even though planters interfered with the upbringing of slave children, Schwartz recognized that enslaved people were not powerless and were often able to raise their children as they wished.[3] Following Schwartz's appreciation of enslaved agency historians such as Barbara Bush, Jennifer L. Morgan, and Sasha Turner have broadened the study of childhood to the more complete investigation of the history of gender and family in the plantation complex.[4] They have examined the role of mother-child relationships in the New World, focusing on the British Caribbean and the United States. They have discussed how the conditions on plantations, most importantly malnutrition, harsh treatment, and workload, affected how enslaved mothers were (un)able to raise their children. Turner, for instance, argued that while the extreme conditions on plantations in Jamaica made conception and childrearing extremely difficult, enslaved mothers and community members 'developed autonomous social networks and customs around maternal and infant care.'[5] In this way, enslaved people 'cultivated their own approaches to the caring for mothers and their children.'[6]

Historian Colleen A. Vasconcellos argued in 2015 the historiography had failed to discuss how the childhood of enslaved children had changed over time, and specifically, that historians had not considered how the abolitionist movement had affected enslaved childhood.[7] In her book *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica, 1788-1838*, Vasconcellos argued that the English abolitionist movement was the main spark for the change in childhood in Jamaica.[8] Because of the abolitionist movement, planters had no choice but to focus on the natural increase of the slave force, meaning that planters were forced to change the treatment of children and pregnant women on

[3] Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage. Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2000) 3-4.
[4] Barbara Bush-Slimani, 'Hard Labour: Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies', *History Workshop Journal* 36 (1993) 83–99; Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women. Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2004); Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies. Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2017).
[5] Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 14.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Colleen A. Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica, 1788–1838* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press 2015) 7.
[8] Ibid, 97.

their estates. Vasconcellos, however, also explained that 'with few exceptions, planter ideas of childhood in Jamaica throughout this period existed purely in economic terms.'[9] What remains unanswered is if changes in enslaved childhood were similar across empires, and how they had developed before the age of abolition.

Despite these valuable contributions, three trends in current historiography continue to deter our understanding of the role and experiences of enslaved children in Atlantic slave societies. Firstly, current studies pay no attention to changing ideas about childhood in eighteenth-century Northwest Europe and how that affected the childhood of enslaved children in the colonies. By understanding changing ideas about childhood in the eighteenth century, it becomes clear how the childhood of enslaved children significantly differed from the childhood of the enslavers' children. Secondly, current studies mostly examine child slavery in the nineteenth century. That is not surprising considering sources on enslaved children in the eighteenth century are scarcer. Yet, if we want to understand how enslaved children experienced their childhood and how that changed over time, it is important to shift focus to earlier times. Lastly, as historian Audra D. Diptee argued in her important work on children in the British slave trade, 'the experiences of children during the process of enslavement in Africa remains an undeveloped theme in the historical narrative.'[10] There is an urgent need to reassess the role of children in the transatlantic slave trade to provide answers to questions regarding how children were enslaved, how they boarded slave ships, and how they experienced the Middle Passage. This is part of a broader historical narrative, namely the mobility of enslaved children through empires. Because current studies on child slavery have focused on particular colonies, the mobility of enslaved children remains unnoticed. Throughout the eighteenth century, hundreds of children were transported to the metropole to serve as footboys. The experiences of enslaved children in the slave trade and enslaved children transported to the metropole are particularly lacking in current historiography.

The consequences of ignoring the role and perspective of children are pointed out by Vasconcellos, who argued in her article 'Finding Enslaved Children's Place, Voice,

[9] Ibid, 99.
[10] Audra A. Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', *Slavery & Abolition* 27 (2006) 192.

and Agency' that because of the lack of interest in the study of enslaved children, their unique story only remains part of that of their mothers or families.[11] Historians thus need to shift focus: to other empires, to the eighteenth century, to the mobility of enslaved children from and to the colonies and the metropole, but most importantly, to the enslaved children themselves.

The question central in this thesis is: How did enslaved children in the eighteenth-century Dutch World of plantations, ships, and metropolitan centers experience their childhood? How enslaved children experienced their childhood was determined by external factors: changing ideas about childhood in eighteenth-century Northwest Europe, the role of enslaved children in the Dutch transatlantic slave trade, the role of enslaved children on plantations and in households, and the demand for enslaved children in the Dutch Republic. Each of these aspects is examined in separate chapters. In doing so, this thesis is the first work that provides a complete overview of child slavery in the eighteenth-century Dutch World. Even though gender and family history have an important place in this research, I tried to move away from the voices of the adults, and instead tried to focus on the enslaved children themselves. This is, of course, easier said than done. That is not only because eighteenth-century sources regarding child slavery are scarce. It is also for the simple fact that children were more than anyone else illiterate and thus unable to speak for themselves. The sources in which they appear are always written down by the adult slaveholder or their administrators. Additionally, there are no personal memoirs of formerly enslaved people in the Dutch World as they exist for the Anglo-World. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to find the voices of enslaved children in these sources. If enslaved children do not speak for themselves, how can I examine how these children experienced their childhood?

What was required was an important shift of approach, which is best described by historian Marisa J. Fuentes in *Dispossessed Lives. Enslaved Women¸ Violence¸ and the Archive*. Fuentes argues that if we change 'the perspective of a document's author to that of an enslaved subject', if we question the veracity of the archive, and if we try to fill out 'minuscule fragmentary mentions or the absence of evidence with spatial and

[11] Colleen A. Vasconcellos, 'Finding Enslaved Children's Place, Voice, and Agency within the Narrative', *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 30 (2015) 19.

historical context', then 'our historical interpretation shifts to the enslaved viewpoint in important ways.'[12] Another important argument was made by historian Ludmilla Jordanova, namely that in the study of the history of children, 'silences need to be interpreted as carefully as statements.'[13] Important questions I asked by myself during this research were: What does the source *not* say? Why is this information missing? What does the absence of information mean? This meant looking at sources with a different viewpoint: that of the enslaved child.

With these questions in mind, I consulted a variety of sources, which can be sorted into three categories. Firstly, I used administrative sources, such as shipping contracts, instructions, and accounts, surgeon's journals, sales lists, and plantation and household inventories. Secondly, I looked at testimonies. This included travel accounts of John Gabriel Stedman (1744-1797)[14] and contemporaries, but also witness statements. In one case, this even included a statement by three enslaved children themselves. Lastly, I researched legal sources, such as the *Plakaatboeken*, to examine the absence of enslaved children in colonial legislation.[15]

Because few slave studies have included the role of enslaved children in the Dutch World, I mostly used secondary literature about child slavery in the British colonies, mostly Jamaica, to complement the Surinamese primary sources. Though colonized by a different colonial power, eighteenth-century Jamaica was in many was a colony that was similar to Suriname. One important similarity is that both colonies were sugar colonies. The labor on sugar plantations was particularly harsh. This context

---

[12] Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives. Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2016) 4.

[13] Ludmilla Jordanova, 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century: Problems of Historical Interpretation', *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990) 72.

[14] Because the published edition of Stedman's *Narrative* was heavily edited, I chose to use his original transcript from 1790.

[15] Amsterdam City Archives (NL-SAA), *Inventaris van het Archief van de Notarissen ter Standplaats Amsterdam*, 5075; NL-HaNA, *Oud Notarieel Archief*, 11.05.11.14; National Archives The Hague (NL-NaHA), *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 1.05.03; Zeeuws Archief (NL-ZA), *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC)*, 20; Prize Papers Collection, HCA32-1132; Prize Papers Collection, HCA32-1134; David Henry Gallandat, 'Noodige onderrichtingen voor slaafhandelaren', *Verhandelingen van het Zeeuws Genootschap* (1769); Jan Jacob Hartsinck, *Beschryving van Guiana, of de wilde kust in Zuid-America* (Amsterdam: Gerrit Tielenburg 1770); J. D. Herlein, *Beschryvinge van de volk-plantinge Zuriname* (Leeuwarden: Meindert Injema 1718); John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam. Transcribed for the First Time from the Original 1790 Manuscript*. Richard Price and Sally Price eds. (New York: Open Road Distribution 2010); J. Th de Smidt and To van der Lee, *Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname, 1667-1816* I & II. West Indisch plakaatboek (Amsterdam: Emmering 1973).

is important in understanding how enslaved children experienced their childhood on these plantations. Another important similarity is that both colonies had large settlements of maroons, runaway slaves who frequently attacked plantations for provisions. The governments of both colonies were constantly under the fear of attacks or uprisings, which affected how they directed the colonies.[16]

The combination of these sources shows how children experienced their childhood in a world that constantly inflicted their status as slaves on them. In this way, I was able to reconstruct the lives of over a hundred children, with and without names, who experienced their childhood in the eighteenth-century Dutch World: in the slave trade, in the colonies, or in the Dutch Republic.

Each chapter examines a different aspect of child slavery in the eighteenth-century Dutch World. I begin in chapter 1 by exploring the difficulties in the study of child history. To place the childhood of enslaved children in their own time and place, it is paramount to know how childhood changed from the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century in Northwest Europe, what the challenges are with defining "child" and "childhood", and what this means for the study of enslaved children in that period. Most importantly, I realize that in this research I am biased. This is something that cannot be avoided. Every historian who studies the history of childhood is biased because every historian has experienced childhood him/herself. Chapter 1 is, therefore, a conceptual chapter based on secondary literature which not only helps us to understand childhood in the eighteenth-century metropole and how this significantly differed from childhood in the Atlantic colonies, but also confronts the issues historians of childhood encounter in their research and examines how to solve them.

In chapter 2, I reassess the role of children in the Dutch transatlantic slave trade. While most research on the Dutch slave trade has been based on Dutch West India Company (WIC) records, I also consulted contracts of private trading companies, which show that children's share in the slave trade has been greatly underestimated. The chapter further examines the trade on the African coast, how children experienced the Middle Passage, and their sale in the colony of Suriname. Not only were most of the enslaved people who were traded by the Dutch sold in Suriname, the colony's

[16] Brooke N. Newman, *A Dark Inheritance. Blood, Race, and Sex in Colonial Jamaica* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2018) 7-8.

permanent decrease in the slave population also gives insight into how planters valued enslaved children on their estates and how children in the Dutch transatlantic slave trade were essential in maintaining the plantation complex.

Chapter 3 examines the lives of enslaved children in the colony of Suriname. This chapter confronts the problem of parenthood, examines the environment enslaved children grew up in, and reveals what kind of work these children performed on plantations and households. I chose to focus on the Dutch colony of Suriname for three reasons. Firstly, it is the most logical departure from chapter 2 considering the fact that most Dutch slave ships sold their captives in Suriname, meaning that it was in this place where most of the enslaved children traded by the Dutch would end up. Secondly, the colony's problems with the natural increase of the slave population give insight into how enslaved children were valued by Dutch enslavers. This chapter challenges the assumption that enslaved children were considered burdens and shows how they were considered valuable for the plantation economy.

In chapter 4, I examine how eighteenth-century trends in art and court culture increased the demand and thus the presence of enslaved children in the Dutch Republic, and how enslaved children experienced their childhood in a place where slavery formally did not exist. With the use of travel accounts and declarations from Amsterdam notaries, this chapter not only reveals how there was a specific trade in enslaved children in Amsterdam, but it also shows with new cases and new perspectives on older cases how enslaved children actively resisted their lives in slavery in a world that constantly inflicted their status of slaves on them.

In this way, I hope to give a voice to the many children who were enslaved by the Dutch in the eighteenth century. Their voices have been silenced for too long.

Chapter 1 The concepts of "child" and "childhood"

> I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday…. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege.[17]

Frederick Douglass (c.1818-1895), born on a plantation in Maryland, started his autobiography with these sentences. He described how he was never informed about his age. As a child, he noticed that white children did know their ages. It shows the contrasting childhoods of Douglass, as an enslaved child, and the white children, who were free.

For historians, it can be difficult to interpret sources regarding the lives of enslaved children. This has to do with three main problems. Firstly, by focusing only on enslaved children we forget how to place their childhoods in their own historical time. Childhood as we understand it today is not what childhood meant in the eighteenth century, nor what it meant in slave societies. Secondly, it is wrong to think that there is one definition of "child" and "childhood". The concepts of "child" and "childhood" are difficult to work with because there are multiple meanings attached to them. Lastly, even if we are aware of the aforementioned two problems, it is still difficult to study enslaved children. Studying child slavery poses new problems that need to be tackled in their own way. In this chapter, I will examine these problems by first analyzing how childhood changed from the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century in Northwest Europe, then I will consider the difficulties with defining "child" and "childhood", and lastly, I will turn to the study of child slavery in the eighteenth century and the problems containing it.

[17] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover Publications 1995) 1.

I Childhood from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century

Historian Philippe Ariès' book *L'Enfant et la Vie Familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, or *Centuries of Childhood* as it was translated into English, was the first study on childhood throughout history and has remained the standard reference.[18] Ariès is most known for his conclusion that 'in Medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist'.[19] He emphasizes that this did not mean that parents showed no affection towards their children, but argues that an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, namely the separation of child from adult, was lacking. In practice, this meant that as soon as children could live without the constant care of their parents, they belonged to adult society. Infants, according to Ariès, were too fragile to participate in adult society and therefore 'simply did not count'.[20] Additionally, the meaning of the word "child" in the Middle Ages is not synonymous with the meaning it has today. According to Ariès, 'people said "child" much as we say "lad" in everyday speech.'[21] In Ariès' view, this suggests an absence of a definition of "child". Historian Lawrence Stone in his book *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, argues that in the Middle Ages there was "the open lineage family" (1450-1630), in which relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children 'were necessarily fairly remote, partly because of the ever-present probability of imminent death, partly because of cultural patterns which dictated the arranged marriage, the subordination of women, the neglect and early fostering out of children and the custom of harsh parental discipline.'[22] Additionally, there was no sense of domestic privacy. Aid and direction form kin and community was the rule.

Stone argues this family system developed into "the restricted patriarchal nuclear family" (1550-1700), in which children were considered part of the economic unit and subjected to 'physical and moral coercion from an early age in order to maximize their productivity.'[23] There was also a decline in aid and direction from the community and

[18] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (Chatham: Pimlico 1962). The French edition was published two years earlier in 1960.
[19] Ibid, 125.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1977) 653.
[23] Ibid, 653-654.

heightened religious enthusiasm.[24] This system, however, quickly developed into "the closed domesticated nuclear family" (1620-1800), characterized by family bonding and women withdrawing from active participation in the family economy and occupying themselves with the care of children.[25] This fits more with Ariès, who argues that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a new concept of childhood emerged, 'in which the child, on account of his sweetness, simplicity and drollery, became a source of amusement and relaxation for the adult.'[26] Ariès explains that this attitude towards children was eventually criticized but nevertheless shows that it was 'no longer desirable that children should mingle with adults, especially at table.'[27] This attitude had also entered the lower class, resulting in ill-mannered children with parents who paid no attention; 'what the children want, they want too.'[28] At the end of the seventeenth century, moralists and pedagogues but also members of the upper class society began to despise this attitude towards children. Because sources on children before the 1800s are scarce, it is hard to determine whether Stone or Ariès is correct, but it is clear that ideas about childhood had been changing. Most importantly, children were now distinguishable from adults.

The attitude towards children changed remarkably during the Age of Reason. According to Ariès, texts of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century 'mark the beginning of a serious and realistic concept of childhood.'[29] A psychological interest in children developed; to correct children's behavior, one had to understand them first. Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) criticized attitudes towards children. Children were citizens in the making and thus had to be educated in the right way. In *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (1689) Locke denied that knowledge was inborn and argued that knowledge was likely to be acquired by experience.[30] Children, therefore, were "blank sheets", or *tabulae rasae*, who would gradually become knowledgeable. In *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762) Rousseau argued that children had to be safeguarded against the

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, 655-656.
[26] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 126.
[27] Ibid, 127.
[28] Ibid, 128.
[29] Ibid, 128-129.
[30] David Archard, *Children. Rights and Childhood* (London and New York: Routledge 1993) 2.

vices in society and that they had to develop character and reason.[31] A system of rewards was preferred to corporal or verbal punishment.[32] While Locke rejected the idea that parents owned their children, Rousseau argued they were bound to them and had to act in their children's interests.[33] Linda Pollock argues that 'parenting, especially motherhood, was regarded as a vital duty, an indispensable obligation to be carried out by the mother.'[34] Parents, as Pollock explains, had a shared goal: 'They aimed to produce useful members of society for the future.'[35] The influence of the neighborhood and kin on the family unit declined sharply.[36]

II The difficulties with defining childhood

Although these ideas spread through all layers of society, Ariès rightfully argues that not only in the Middle Ages but also for a long time after that in lower classes, 'children were mixed with adults as soon as they were considered capable of doing without their mothers' due to child labor necessary to maintain the household.[37] Stone's family systems, therefore, would sometimes coexist before one finally took over. Ariès also makes a point by saying that while schooling developed in the seventeenth century, girls were often excluded, and their childhood remained "brief". According to Ariès, girls were considered little women by the age of ten. It is, however, unclear how this developed in the eighteenth century, because there are no studies that pay attention to this gender division in childhood. Historian Ludmilla Jordanova rightfully points this out in her article 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century: Problems of Historical Interpretation' by arguing that even though the eighteenth century was characterized by social, economic, cultural, and political divisions by gender, historians of childhood thus far have ignored the gendered aspect of childhood.[38]

---

[31] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 116.
[32] John H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past & Present* 67 (1975) 67.
[33] Archard, *Children*, 8-9.
[34] Linda A. Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship. Parents and Children over Three Centuries* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England 1987), 165.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*, 655.
[37] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 395.
[38] Jordanova, 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century', 73.

There also have been problems with what some call the "Ariès-thesis", the idea that the concept of childhood began to emerge not until the end of the seventeenth century.[39] In his book *Children. Rights and Childhood* philosopher David Archard makes his criticism of Ariès clear: 'Ariès judges that the past lacked a concept of childhood. In fact what the past lacked was our concept of childhood.'[40] Instead of an absence, there was a dissimilar presence of childhood.[41] This discussion shows an important conceptual problem historians of childhood encounter, namely the difficulty to define childhood in the past. Jordanova in her aforementioned article identifies three "special" difficulties historians encounter when writing about childhood. Firstly, children are not stable subjects to study. Their childhood is a temporary state without clear boundaries. Childhood has a beginning and an end, but the boundaries are not definitive. The definition of a child is constructed locally, not biologically, and can therefore differ. Thus, there are no universal definitions of "child" or "childhood". Secondly, historians who study childhood always have a direct personal bias because they have experienced childhood themselves. This has to do with the third difficulty, namely that 'historians are the products of societies that currently hold complex, deeply contradictory, and largely unarticulated views about children. Our capacity to sentimentalize, identify with, project on to, and reify children is almost infinite.'[42] According to Jordonova, we also have to dispose of the idea that children have a 'separate history of their own,' because 'there is no such separate and private world as there is no autonomous, authentic voice of children in which a separate history could be rooted.'[43] Furthermore, 'historians have to examine societies that themselves had great problems with the nature of children and childhood.'[44]

"Child" and "childhood" are interlinked concepts, yet they have different meanings. A child is mostly understood in terms of age or state in life. Logically, "child" refers to the state people are in after birth and before adulthood. Children are growing up into adults, but do not possess the qualities to consider them adults yet. There is no

[39] Archard, *Children*, 26-27.
[40] Ibid, 27.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Jordanova, 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century', 79.
[43] Ibid, 78.
[44] Ibid 79.

checklist with qualities that an adult should possess, nor does it mean that an adult possesses all the qualities we consider "mature", but societies unconsciously have ideas about what it means to be an adult. Yet, the concept of child could also have other meanings. It may refer to familial relations. For instance, I am the child of my parents, but I am an adult. Sources that mention "the child of", therefore, do not necessarily refer to the state of life they are in but can also refer to kinship ties. The word "child" is also used to describe a person who is in a protecting, responsible relationship with someone else or to describe a person who is connected to an attribute. To make it even more complicated, "child" is also used to address people without any further connotation, as argued by Ariès. Yet when we describe someone as "childish" there is a negative connotation: someone is acting "as a child" or is being "immature". As historians we should consider these different meanings of "child" and make clear who or what we mean when writing about children.

The same problems arise with childhood. "Childhood" refers to the state of being a child. Archard argues that childhood has to be understood in terms of age, but that age at the same time is not all that separates childhood from adulthood.[45] Moreover, Archard argues that there is a distinction between "concept" and "conception" when studying childhood:

> The concept of childhood requires that children be distinguishable from adults in respect of some unspecified set of attributes. A conception of childhood is a specification of those attributes. In simple terms to have a concept of "childhood" is to recognise that children differ interestingly from adults; to have a conception of childhood is to have a view of what those interesting differences are.[46]

Archard identifies three different conceptions of childhood: *boundaries*, *dimensions*, and *divisions*. With boundaries Archard means when childhood is deemed to end. But childhood also has a beginning. This beginning concerns the question when a human being comes into existence. This is, however, a discussion not relevant for this thesis since I am interested in the question how to distinguish childhood from adulthood and thus, like Archard, only interested in the boundary that signals the end of childhood.

[45] Archard, *Children,* 23.
[46] Ibid, 22.

According to Archard, societies may have 'formal practices or a division of roles and responsibilities that amount to the setting of a boundary.'[47] Archard argues that 'these are likely associated with the permission to marry, departure from the parental home or assumption of the responsibility to provide for oneself.'[48] It is important to note that different conceptions of childhood have different boundaries. Western societies consider a ten-year-old a child, but non-Western societies may consider the age of ten as the end of childhood.[49]

This is closely related to the aspect of dimensions. We can understand childhood from different angels. Archard explains these angels as follows:

> These include the moral or juridical perspective from which persons may be judged incapable, in virtue of age, of being responsible for their deeds; an epistemological or metaphysical viewpoint from which persons, in virtue of their immaturity, are seen as lacking in adult reason or knowledge; and a political angle from which young humans are thought unable to contribute towards and participate in the running of the community.[50]

This results in a problem: these various dimensions of childhood allow for different definitions of childhood, meaning one enjoys different childhoods of different lengths. Thus, childhood cannot be defined as 'one consistent and agreed period of human life.'[51] Archard gives two ways of dealing with this problem. First, one can accept that people experience different childhoods of different lengths depending on different aspects. However, this would be troublesome. It makes it almost impossible to study "childhood". Therefore, Archard argues that 'a particular conception of childhood may treat the various dimensions *as if* they were consistent one with another.'[52] This means that the end of childhood under one aspect is the end of childhood under all other aspects as well. In this way, there can be a clear-cut boundary of childhood: 'For

[47] Ibid, 24.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid, 25.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

instance, the law might select as an upper limit to childhood an age whose significance is non-legal.'[53]

The third dimension Archard identifies is divisions. Different societies have different sub-divisions of childhood. For some cultures weaning is significant, for other cultures it is the acquisition of speech, or simply reaching a certain age. Two sub-divisions are worth mentioning: "adolescence" and the "middle-aged child". According to Ariès, "adolescence", the period after puberty in which a child transitions into an adult, did not exist before the nineteenth century, yet critics have argued that terms such as "youth" point to earlier acknowledgements of this sub-division of childhood.[54] According to Archard, we can understand childhood in two ways. Broadly speaking, 'childhood is a comprehensive term for the stage extending from birth to adulthood. Infancy, adolescence and whatever other terms may be available to a culture constitute sub-divisions of that period.'[55] However, one could also argue that 'childhood is the stage after infancy but before adolescence.'[56] Then, the "child proper" is after infancy but before adolescence. Archard calls this the "middle-aged child". The middle-aged child plays an important role in defining child and childhood, for it is the most characteristic sub-division in childhood today. Yet, because premodern or non-Western conceptions of childhood put the end of childhood earlier, for instance seven to ten years, the middle-aged child does not exist in these societies, nor does adolescence.

III The childhood of enslaved children

Child labor has a crucial role in defining childhood. Ariès and especially Stone seem to suggest that child labor conflicts with childhood. Because children in history, especially in the lower classes, were considered part of the economic unit, their childhood ended early. But the boundaries of their childhood are not clear-cut. It is, for instance, by no means clear at what age children took up "work". Additionally, Jordanova points out that in these societies 'it is by no means self-evident how the term "work" should be

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 316.
[55] Archard, *Children*, 26.
[56] Ibid, 27.

used' since 'many activities contributed to the material well-being of families that would not normally be called work now.'[57] But at the same time, activities that were considered learning experiences for children were often not designated as such either. Thus, even though children in history were occupied with activities we now may consider work, it did not necessarily mean that these children had no childhood or that the concept of childhood did not exist.

It becomes more complicated when children are enslaved. One can question whether enslaved children experienced any childhood at all. Besides the problems historians encounter when studying childhood, studying childhood in the context of slavery during the eighteenth century poses new problems because of certain aspects in their lives that even children who performed any sort of labor did not experience. I will illustrate this by applying Archard's three conceptions of childhood. Firstly, the manner in which the boundaries of childhood are constructed is more complicated. In the eighteenth century, children were considered citizens in the making and therefore needed the right education to make sure they would become virtuous members of society. Enslaved people, however, were not considered citizens but property. Thus, enslaved children would not need education in the same way. They had to become hardworking slaves, not virtuous citizens. Their "education" consisted of performing forced labor from an early age. Historian Colleen A. Vasconcellos, who studied enslaved children in Jamaica during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, describes their days as follows:

> Enslaved children were expected to work twelve- to fifteen-hour days in the hot tropical sun or even longer in the great house, just like enslaved adults. When their work was slow, they suffered the lash just like adults. And they resisted their enslavement and their owners just like enslaved adults when they acted out, stole food, ran away, burned corps, destroyed equipment, and poisoned their owners.[58]

Ariès argued that the particular nature of childhood is the separation of child from adult. Yet, as Vasconcelllos illustrates, enslaved children were not separated from adults at all. Important to note is that their family units were different as well. Unlike most

[57] Jordanova, 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century', 73.
[58] Vasconcellos, 'Finding Enslaved Children's Place, Voice, and Agency within the Narrative', 19.

children in the eighteenth century who were raised by their own parents and relatives, this was not necessarily the case for enslaved children. “Saltwater” children (born in Africa) often had no parents or family members to raise them. “Creole” children (born in the colony), who may have had family members, were not necessarily raised by them either. Thus, the familiar surroundings under which enslaved children had to grow up were way different from that of other children in the eighteenth century.

The dimensions of their childhood differed as well. As Archard argued, the various dimensions of childhood allow for different childhoods of different lengths. For enslaved children, however, the number of dimensions was way smaller. For instance, the political or legal dimensions of childhood did not apply to them. There is only one dimension that mattered the most to enslavers and that was economic. This dimension consisted of two aspects. Firstly, children were judged by their capability to work on plantations or in households. Secondly, children were judged by their reproductive capability; to “produce” new enslaved children. The goal of their childhood was to maximize their productivity. Other dimensions were not considered relevant for enslavers.

Thus, Ariès’ statement that in the Middle Ages infants ‘simply did not count’ seems relevant for the childhoods of enslaved children.[59] Taken literally, infants really did not count. In the plantations and estate inventories, infants were mentioned but almost never “counted”. They were most times listed under their mothers, often without names. Other than infants, or *zuigelingen*, there was only one sub-division of childhood in the inventories, either *jongens*, boys, or *meisjes*, girls. When we link this to Archard’s concept of the middle-aged child, it seems that in eighteenth-century slave societies this was the most important sub-division of childhood. The boundaries of these sub-divisions, however, are unclear because age is never mentioned. This also may have to do with the fact that age did not necessarily matter to enslavers. It is likely that enslavers valued labor abilities based on physical appearance more than age. Sometimes, especially for saltwater children, their ages were not even known. However, even if enslavers were aware of age, it was from their point of view not always desirable to inform enslaved people about that part of their identity either, as the citation from

[59] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 125.

Frederick Douglass shows. Not sharing enslaved people's age was also powerful instrument in depriving enslaved people of one of the most important aspects of their identity.

Conclusion

In eighteenth-century slave societies, there was a *dissimilar presence* of childhood. This means that enslaved children did experience childhood, but that their childhoods differed immensely from not only our concept of childhood but also the eighteenth-century concept of childhood in Northwest Europe. The experiences of enslaved children did not fit with the eighteenth-century concept of childhood, where children were seen as innocent beings who needed to be educated to become virtuous citizens and who needed to be safeguarded from the vices in society. The childhood of enslaved children more resembled that of childhood in the Middle Ages, or what Stone described as "the open lineage system". The separation between child and adult was lacking. For historians who study enslaved children, therefore, it is important to be aware of the difficulties with defining "child" and "childhood" and to realize that there was no universal definition of these concepts in the eighteenth century.

Chapter 2 Enslaved children in the Dutch slave trade

> The first object that saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, that was soon converted into terror, which I am yet at loss to describe, and much more the then feelings of my mind when I was carried on board.[60]

Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745-1797) was about eleven years old when he was kidnapped together with his sister. They were taken from their hometown in the Kingdom of Benin (Nigeria) and sold to slave traders. Equiano was soon separated from his sister. He changed owners several times before he was finally sold and transported to Barbados. After his arrival in the New World, he would change owners again multiple times.

In her book *Slavery at Sea*, historian Sowande M. Mustakeem argued that it is still unclear 'how a significantly high number of children were not only forced into slavery but were also purchased, boarded on a ship, and transported through a slaving voyage.'[61] This chapter aims to answer these questions by studying the role of children in the Dutch slave trade, subsequently their role in contracts and instructions, the trade on the African coast, the Middle Passage, and the sale in Suriname. By analyzing various Dutch slave ships and accounts, the experiences of enslaved children during the slave trade can be constructed.

I The contracts and instructions

For a long time, the main player in the Dutch slave trade was the Dutch West India Company (WIC). The trading company was originally established in 1621, but reestablished in 1674 after financial difficulties. With the reestablishment, the WIC maintained its monopoly on the slave trade, to the great disappointment of many

[60] Olaudah Equiano, *The life of Olaudah Equiano, or, Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Mineola: Dover Publications 1999) 31.
[61] Sowande M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea. Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2016), 167.

private merchants. Discussions about opening up the slave trade for private trade and slave smugglers continued to threaten the company. In 1730, when the WIC charter had to be renewed for an additional thirty years, the States General forced a reduction in the WIC monopoly. The WIC maintained its monopoly on the Gold Coast and also retained the exclusive right to import enslaved people in Suriname. But if they purchased a permit, private merchants were now free to trade elsewhere on the African coast and in the Caribbean. Many merchants, however, were still unsatisfied because they wanted full access to the slave trade. In the 1730s, the WIC finally gave up its last monopolies: in 1734 the trade on the Gold Coast and in 1738 the trade in Suriname. The Society of Suriname immediately placed advertisements in Dutch newspapers to encourage merchants to import enslaved people in Suriname.[62] Almost 80% of the enslaved people shipped to the Dutch colonies were sold in Suriname, according to historian Henk den Heijer.[63]

The largest private shipping company ever known in the Dutch Republic was the Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC), founded in 1720.[64] In theory, the company only traded within Europe. In practice, however, the company illegally traded with the Spanish colonies in the America's and Suriname.[65] After the abolition of the WIC monopoly, the MCC started to focus on the trade in Africa. Many of the directors of MCC were already familiar with the slave trade, either by information from the WIC or former involvement in smuggling voyages. The first MCC-ship that left Middelburg for the slave trade was the *Hof van Holland* in 1732. The voyage was, however, unsuccessful, with a loss of 17.500 guilders. The slave trade of the MCC was most profitable in the 1760s and 1770s.[66] Besides the MCC, there were many more merchants interested in the slave trade. Smaller trading companies sent their ships to the coasts of Africa and the Dutch colonies for the slave trade.

---

[62] Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1990) 201-205; Henk den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven. Scheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674-1740* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers 1997) 360; Leo Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden. Moord aan de monding van de Marowijnerivier* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers 2013), 169.
[63] Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 366.
[64] Ibid, 367.
[65] Ruud Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC. Opkomst, bloei en ondergang* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers 2014) 71; 85.
[66] Ibid, 96.

Contracts of the WIC, MCC, and private merchants offer important insight into the role of enslaved children in the Dutch slave trade. It is generally believed that Dutch slave traders usually purchased captives between the ages of 15 and 36 years old.[67] This implies that captives in this age group were considered most valuable in the slave trade. There are two reasonable arguments for this. Firstly, captives aged between 15 and 36 were reproductive and could thus "produce" new laborers. Secondly, captives in this age group were most productive. They could do the harsh plantation work that elderly captives were incapable of doing. This means that the age of 15 not only symbolized the beginning of adulthood, but also the end of childhood.

This idea is, however, problematic. The idea that the Dutch preferred to trade in captives in the age group 15 to 36 years is based on WIC-contracts. When we compare WIC-contracts with contracts and instructions of the MCC and private traders, the age group that was considered most productive differs immensely. The preferred age group seems to have been an individual choice rather than a general belief. In table 1 contracts of the WIC, MCC, and the private shipping company Jochem Matthijs and Coenraad Smitt in Amsterdam are compared.[68] According to WIC-contracts, captives older than 37 years were not considered saleable. Younger captives (<15 years) were allowed to be purchased but would be sold in discounts: 18-14 years three for the price of two, and 2-7 years two for the price of one. Infants were not considered saleable individually,

Trader	**Number of enslaved people**	**Ratio**	**Age group**
WIC	Depends on ship size; piezas de indias	⅔ men ⅓ women	15-36 years <15 years discount
MCC	As many as possible	Not specified	Not specified
Jochem Matthijs and Coenraad Smitt (Amsterdam)	320	⅔ men ⅓ women, but ½ also allowed	10-20 years

Table 1: Specifications in contracts and instructions of the WIC, MCC, and private shipping company Jochem Matthijs and Coenraad Smitt.
Source: see note 68.

[67] Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden*, 20. I chose not to spell out numbers for readability reasons in this chapter.
[68] WIC, 1706: NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 4776A, 26 April 1706, scans 29-32. MCC, for example the *Raadhuis van Middelburg*: NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.2, scan 4. Jochem Matthijs and Coenraad Smitt, for example the *Nicolaas*: NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10763, deed 223, 2 March 1756, scans 669-673.

they followed their mothers. Two-thirds had to consist of men, one-third of women. As historian Leo Balai argues, however, it is likely that over time the WIC deviated from its strict contracts and that eventually, every saleable captive was taken.[69] How many captives had to be transported to the colonies depended on the size of the ship. In one contract, for instance, 250 captives had to be sold in Suriname, while the WIC-ship the *Leusden* could carry 750 captives.

The Smitts owned a private shipping company in Amsterdam and were involved in the transatlantic slave trade. From three of their ships, the *Nicolaas*, the *Surinaamse Welvaart*, and the *Juffrouwen Anna en Maria*, several contracts have survived dating from 1756 to 1776. In the contracts, the captains of the ships were always given the same instructions. All ships were ordered to purchase 320 captives at the coasts of Africa and transport them to the West Indies (Suriname) for a turnover of either 80.000 or 100.000 guilders.[70] If less, the crew could not claim their contributions. If more, the captain's contribution would be raised. The Smitts were less strict in the gender ratio. The captains of the slave ships were ordered to keep to the ratio of ⅔ men and ⅓ women, but if a better deal, half of the captives could consist of women. A striking detail in the shipping contracts of the Smitts is their preferred age group. The Smitts ordered captains to only trade captives who were between 10 and 20 years old. This means that the WIC and the Smitts had very different ideas about who were most lucrative in the slave trade. For the children enslaved by the *Nicolaas* (1756-1773), the *Surinaamse Welvaart* (1753-1778), and the *Juffrouwen Anna en Maria* (1763-1769) then, their childhood ended even earlier. It seems Amsterdam slave traders were especially interested in the trade in enslaved children. Recently, the story of the *Pink* (1763) was discovered, a slave ship that was sent to Africa by slave trader Pieter Volkmar to purchase 200 children and to sell them in Suriname.[71]

In the shipping contracts of the MCC age was never mentioned. The captains of MCC-ships were simply given the instruction to buy as many captives as possible. There

[69] Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden*, 105.
[70] In one contract of the *Juffrouwen Anna en Maria* the ship had to carry 350 captives.
[71] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3537, 11 June 1765. '…ter inhandeling van omtrend tweehondert kinderen slaaven op de kust van Africa en van daar gedestineerd naa Surinaame en verdere havens in de West Indien.' The goal was thwarted by three uprisings. No other sources regarding the voyage of the *Pink* have been found thus far.

were no restrictions regarding gender or age. What mattered most to the MCC-directors was that the ships were fully loaded. The result of this was that MCC-ships generally carried a great number of enslaved children. By comparing the contracts of different trading companies it is not only revealed that slave traders had different trading strategies and ideas about children, but it also becomes apparent that enslaved children were considered productive laborers and that there was a market for them.

II The trade in Africa

With these contracts and instructions Dutch slave captains set sail to the coast of Africa. Many children who were sold to Dutch slave traders had been traveling through Africa for months or sometimes years before they reached the coast.[72] Historians David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman point out that 'the basic problem is that our knowledge of individual slaves is limited to their point of embarkation – apart, that is, from their gender and age category.'[73] Yet, as historian David Geggus has illustrated, the sex and age ratio of captives depended on regional trends. He argued that 'of the three elements – men, women, children – constituting these human cargoes it was the percentage of children that varied most from one exporting region to another.'[74] Regions like Congo and Bight of Biafra sold many more children than the regions of Senegambia, the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin.[75] Geggus observed there were three aspects that influenced these ratios: the mode of enslavement, the distance from place of capture to the coast, and European commercial considerations. Most of the enslaved were captured in kidnapping raids or in war.[76] It is generally believed that women and children were more vulnerable to kidnapping, and men were mostly captured during wartime. According to historian Audra A. Diptee, however, there is evidence that slave raiding 'did not allow captors to discriminate by age or even sex as they went after their

[72] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 187; Barbara Bush, "Daughters of injur'd Africk': African Women and the Transatlantic Slave Trade', *Women's History Review* 17 (2008) 678.
[73] David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, 'Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864', *Economic History Review* 46 (1993) 312.
[74] David Geggus, 'Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records', *The Journal of African History* 30 (1989) 40.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Bush, "Daughters of injur'd Africk", 676.

victims.'[77] Additionally, especially in the nineteenth century, males captured in war were boys, not adults.[78] Regarding the distance, the assumption is made that 'male ratios were likely to rise and child ratios to fall with the length of the interior trade route' but there are no means to track this.[79] This is especially complicated if we consider the fact that most children passed through many hands before they reached the coast, which meant that their journey to the coast could be interrupted many times.[80] And as the different contracts from the WIC, MCC, and private merchants show, European traders had different commercial strategies as well: 'captains loaded slaves on the African coast with a specific market in mind.'[81] Purchasing captives was also a time-consuming operation with slave ships traveling to different trading places along the coast of Africa. Captives could spend weeks or months on slave vessels before they would even set sail to the New Word.[82]

No matter the regional differences, it is clear that 'most African children carried across the Atlantic were evidently sold separately from their mothers.'[83] The surviving MCC-accounts (*negotieboeken*) show that they were not only sold separately in the colonies, children were also purchased separately.[84] As Mustakeem argues, 'separations of African families persisted throughout the trade, undermining the essence of human and emotional connections.'[85] The only exception was the sale of infants. Diptee argues that 'there virtually was no market for infants in the slave trade.'[86] They were unlikely to survive the Middle Passage and their selling prices in the colonies would be low. Despite this, a high number of infants was aboard slave ships. As historian Barbara Bush explains, 'women delivered children and had miscarriages en route.'[87] Often, women

[77] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 183-184. Diptee cites the testimony of sailor Isaac Parker, who described the slave raiding process: '… taking hold of everyone we could see…'
[78] Eltis and Engerman, 'Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864', 313.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 187.
[81] Eltis and Engerman, 'Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade', 314.
[82] Bush, "Daughters of injur'd Africk", 681.
[83] Geggus, 'Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade', 39.
[84] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1387, scans 1-61; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1049, scans 1-31; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1052, scans 1-19; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scans 1-70.
[85] Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 90.
[86] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 186.
[87] Bush, "Daughters of injur'd Africk", 679.

boarded slave vessels with infants. Other women gave birth while waiting to be purchased at the coast, or even during the Middle Passage.

The age of many captured children was unknown. British slave traders, therefore, used height to determine the age. According to them, 'enslaved individuals were considered children if they were under 4 feet, 4 inches tall,' equivalent to 1,32 meters.[88] Unfortunately, there are no data on average heights in African countries in the eighteenth century, but we can doubt that people over 1,32 meters were actually adults. This would mean that children way below the age of fifteen were already considered capable of doing mature plantation work and were also purchased and sold as adults. This fits with a description from the captain of the MCC-ship the *Zanggodin*, who wrote in his journal that during a slave uprising 'seven big boys who [he had] purchased as men' had sailed away in a sloop.[89]

It is unknown if Dutch slave traders also used height measurements to determine age, but it is clear that determining the age of captives was a complicated process. David Henry Gallandat, born in Switzerland but sent to Vlissingen in 1744, described that African slave traders could complicate things even more. As surgeon (*opperchirurgijn*) he traveled to the West Indies and the coasts of Africa. In 1769, 'Noodige onderrichtingen voor de slaafhandelaren' was published, in which he advised slave traders.[90] According to Gallandat, slave traders had to examine the following characteristics of the captives they wanted to purchase: I) age; II) face; III) speech and hearing; IV) external ailments; V) internal ailments; and VI) place of birth. Regarding the age of enslaved Africans, Gallandat warned Dutch slave traders for African slave traders, who, according to him, were not always honest about the ages of the captives they were selling. African slave traders tried to make older captives look younger by washing them, dying or pulling out grey hairs, and giving them more to eat and drink. It happened, according to Gallandat, that even surgeons mistook 50- to 60-year-olds for 30- or 40-year-olds.[91] Therefore, Gallandat instructed Dutch slave traders as follows:

[88] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 185.
[89] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1385, 18 Oct. 1769, scan 33: '*…en vermiste 12 mans, 12 weijven, 7 groote jongens die ik voore mans betaaldt hadt…*'
[90] Gallandat, 'Noodige onderrichtingen voor slaafhandelaren'.
[91] Ibid, 4.

> …with all possible attention, examine, if the hair is dyed, he has to wash it at some places to detect deception, and suspect foul play, if there are any bald areas discovered. In other respects, he has to pay attention to the flaccidity of the breasts of women, to wrinkles on the skin, if the slave lacks any teeth, etc. to discover and determine the age. The precautions are not necessary when one visits a young or immature slave, because that can be discovered with the blink of an eye.[92]

We can thus assume that for many captains it would be impossible to strictly keep to the instructions given to them regarding age, either because the age of captives was unknown or because African slave traders tried to fool them.

Depending on the captain or shipping company, enslaved people were either counted by heads or *piezas de indias*, a unit to value people in the slave trade developed by the Spanish and Portuguese. One *pieza* was equal to a healthy male or female captive, in general aged between 15 and 25 years old. Captives older and younger were valued lower, for instance as ½ or ⅔ pieza. Contracted slave ships mainly used piezas de indias. The WIC-ship the *Leusden* (1727-1728) even carried sixteen boys and girls of ¼ piezas, meaning they must have been extremely young but still considered valuable enough to count them considering infants were not counted at all.[93] MCC-ship the *Raadhuis van Middelburg* sailed on contract in 1741-1742 and had to deliver 201 piezas de indias in Suriname for a price of 225 guilders each.[94] Interesting is that captain Jol used different terms in his account and on the sales lists. In his accounts he used the rather confusing terms "man", "woman", "⅔ man", "⅔ women", "½

Ages of the enslaved	**Piezas de indias**
>37 years	Less than 1
15-36 years	1
8-14 years	⅔
2-7 years	⅓
<2 years	0

Table 2: Piezas de indias based on age.
Source: NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 4776A, 26 April 1706.

[92] Ibid. '*…hy moet, met alle mogelyke oplettenheid, onderzoeken, of het hair geverfd is, hy moet het op eenige plaatsen afwasschen om het bedrog te ontdekken, en altoos een kwaad vermoeden hebben, wanneer 'er op 't hoofd kaale plekken ontdekt worden. Voor 't overige moet hy ook acht geven op de slapheid van de borsten der vrouwen, op de rimpels van de huid, of de slaaf de tanden ontbeert, enz. om hier door ten naasten by den ouderdom te kunnen ontdekken en bepalen. Deze voorzorgen zyn onnoodig, wanneer men een jongen of onvolwasschen slaaf visiteert, wyl zulks dan met den eersten opslag van 't oog ontdekt kan worden.*'
[93] Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden*, 105.
[94] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.3, scans 47-48.

man", "½ woman", "girl", and "boy".[95] On the sales list he used the terms "full man", "full woman", "⅔ boy", "⅔ girl", "⅓ boy", and "⅓ girl".[96] As a result, 192 enslaved people valued at 188⅔ piezas were sold, which was not enough. When captain Jol arrived a year later with the same ship in Suriname with newly enslaved people, planters argued that Jol had to deliver the enslaved people to them since Jol had not kept to the contract last year. By the order of the Court of Policy and Criminal Justice 60 of the 226 newly arrived enslaved people were not offered for sale but immediately delivered in discharge to former contracts.[97]

It seems, however, that not all MCC-captains used piezas de indias. In the accounts and journal of the *Zanggodin* (1768-1770), the captain simply used "man", "woman", "boy", "girl", and "child". The term "child" only referred to infants. On 7 August 1769, for example, the captain purchased 'four women with a child and one boy slave.'[98] The captain of the *Zeemercuur* (1787-1790) used the same five categories in purchasing captives at the African coast.[99] What terms the captains of the *Nicolaas* (1756-1773), the *Surinaamse Welvaart* (1753-1778), and the *Juffrouwen Anna en Maria* (1763-1769) from the Smitts used is unclear, though in the several contracts only the number of preferred enslaved people was mentioned. Considering that the captains would lose their contributions if they were unable to comply to the contracts, it is likely that what mattered most to the Smitts and their captains was the turnover.

III The Middle Passage

Once slave traders had purchased enough captives, the slave ships set sail to the Caribbean. Women and children were separated from men. Conditions on slave ships must have been traumatizing for the children aboard. Mustakeem explains:

> Heavily dependent on their parents for survival, socialization, and a sense of belonging, enslaved children, perhaps more than teenagers and their adult

[95] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1049, scans 3-31.
[96] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.3, scan 53.
[97] NL-NaHA, 1.05.03, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, inv. nr. 199, 27 May 1743; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1052, scan 19. 251 people embarked, 25 died during the Middle Passage, leaving 226 to be sold in Suriname.
[98] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1387, 7 Aug. 1769, scan 46: *'…4 vrouwen met kind en 1 jonge slaaf.'*
[99] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scans 1-70.

> counterparts, faced tremendous vulnerability, grief, and isolation within the specter of slavery at sea unable to be measured or quantified.[100]

Because of the separations, captains were reliant on other purchased women to take care of enslaved children aboard.[101] Women who were sold with their infants were, apart from trying to protect their own bodies from sexual abuse, faced with the almost impossible task to take care of their babies. Additionally, there were women who gave birth during the Middle Passage. Sources leave unspoken whether these women were already pregnant when they were captured or if they became impregnated during the trade. The only source that provides insight into the number of childbirths aboard Dutch slave ships is the surgeon's journal (*chirurgijnsjournaal*). Of MCC-ship the *Zeemercuur* (1787-1790) the surgeon's journal has survived. From 27 February 1788 until 24 June 1789, the surgeon registered illnesses, deaths, and childbirths aboard the ship. On 29 May 1788, a woman gave birth to three daughters. One girl was born dead, the other two girls died within two weeks.[102] A year later, on 22 June 1789, a woman gave birth to two sons. One boy was "not healthy" and blind and died soon after, the other boy died two days later.[103] In total, nine women gave birth. All of them seem to have survived their childbirth, yet all babies except for one was either born dead or died shortly after.[104] In addition to the deaths of infants born during the slaving process, many infants who had boarded the ship with their mothers died as well. In total, 17 out of 20 infants died.[105]

Because it is unknown when these women were enslaved, it is impossible to say when these children were conceived. The deaths of infants are problematic as well. It seems reasonable to assume that these babies had no chance of surviving the living conditions aboard a slave ship. Yet, there was another reason for the high mortality rates of infants. The WIC-ship the *Rusthof* arrived in 1734 in Suriname. It turned out

[100] Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 169.
[101] Ibid, 41.
[102] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1410, 29 May 1788, scan 13. The first girl was born dead, the second girl died on 2 Jun. 1788, and the last girl died on 14 Jun. 1788.
[103] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1410, 22 June 1789, scan 28. The first boy died the same day, the second boy died on 24 Jun. 1789.
[104] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1410, 25 March 1789, scan 27. A woman gave birth to a daughter, both recovered on 6 April 1789.
[105] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scans 1-70; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1410, scans 1-32.

that of the 719 captives, only 331 had survived. In addition, 66% of the purchased captives were women, many of whom were pregnant. Infants were, of course, not counted, but it was rumored that over a hundred infants had been aboard the ship. Any further information is lacking, except for the fact that according to the captain many women had been unable to care for their infants due to spoilt provisions. As Balai points out, however, it is doubtful whether these infants all died due to sicknesses or food shortages.[106] Often, captains did not want to be 'plagued with a child on board.'[107] What they did to prevent this from happening was gruesome. According to Bush, 'in fact, it was probably more common for infants to be killed, as ship captains were generally not interested in purchasing them.'[108] But when infants were taken aboard slave ships, their lives were still hanging by a thread. Infants were not protected from the abuse aboard ships either. Mustakeem tells the story a nine-month-old baby who refused to eat. Enraged, the captain severely flogged the child and dropped it. The child died only minutes after. Then, the captain 'called the mother of the child to heave it overboard.'[109] She refused, and was flogged until she agreed to obey the captain's orders: 'she took it in her hand, and went to the ship's side, holding her head on one side because she would not see the child go out of her hand, and she dropped the child overboard.'[110] She cried for several hours. Mustakeem explains that it is unknown if this woman 'psychically survived the passage carrying the pain of profound loss into her enslaved life on land, or if the emotional wounds from her son's murder became too much for her to continue living.'[111]

Only in some contracts the (mal)treatment of captives was discussed. In all contracts from the Smitts, officers were instructed to 'treat slaves amicably' and to order their sailors to do the same.[112] The captain was ordered to 'provide the crew and slaves with enough provisions, and [to] treat them well.'[113] That some crew members, however, did not stick to these instructions is shown by three declarations of the sailors

[106] Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden*, 141-142.
[107] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 190.
[108] Bush, "Daughters of injur'd Africk", 190. See also: Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 211.
[109] Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 93. Testimony of Isaac Parker of the ship the *Black Joke*, captain Marshall.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] For example: NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10860, deed 1179, 9 Oct. 1771, scan 581.
[113] For example: NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10763, deed 232, 2 Mar. 1756, scan 671.

of the *Juffrouwen Anna en Maria* at Amsterdam notary Salomon Dorper in 1765.[114] They declared several incidences of abuse by first mate Egbert Stam and principal chef (*oppermeester*) Matthijs Brukelman. Not only did they abuse several crew members, they also severely abused the captives aboard the ship. They explained that Stam and Brukelman were guilty of 'abusing the slaves in an inhuman manner, bruising them up, *as if they were not humans but beasts*.'[115] The sailors told of several cases where Stam and Brukelman abused captives who died of their injuries, but explained that many more captives were abused and had died during the voyage. One of the cases that was described in the declarations was the following:

> …that on a certain day, said principal chef had, in a miserable manner, beaten, hit, and kicked a certain negro boy, who was unable to take his medicine, and that after he principal chef had been away for a while, the said negro boy died.[116]

Another woman was so severely beaten that she had a miscarriage and died a few days later.[117] At some point, the sailors approached captain Pieter Lagerboom, who, according to the declaration, had been unaware of the situation, and asked him to replace Stam and Brukelman. In Suriname, they were incarcerated at the fort. A few days later, however, the two men boarded the ship again. Apparently, captain Lagerboom wanted them to be tried in Amsterdam instead of Suriname.[118] Yet, in 1766, the Smitts paid Stam his salary of 846 guilders, amounting for 22 months and five days of work, from the day the ship set sail from Texel (5 August 1763) to the day the ship arrived in Amsterdam (20 June 1765).[119] This means that even after Stam was fired, he still got paid.

---

[114] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10821, deed 685, 29 June 1765, scans 831-842; NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 698, 2 July 1765, scans 38-44; NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 738, 12 July 1765, scans 168-175.
[115] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 698, 2 July 1765, scan 40: *'…slaeven onmenschelijk te mishandelen, bond, en blaauw te slaen, en te trappen, niet of zij menschen maar of zij beesten waaren.'*
[116] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 698, 2 July 1765, scan 41: *'…dat op een sekeren tijd gedagte oppermeester een seker negerjonge, die geen medicijnen konde inneemen op een embarmelijke wijze heeft geslaagen, gestooten, en getrapt, en na dat hij oppermeerster een poos was weggeweest, is de voorn. negerjonge overleeden.'*
[117] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 698, 2 July 1765, scan 41.
[118] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 738, 12 July 1765, scan 171.
[119] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10826, deed 355, 1 April 1766, scans 398-400.

In the contracts with MCC-officers there were no agreements about their behavior towards captives.[120] MCC-captains, on the other hand, received several instructions. The second instruction to the captain of the *Zanggodin* (1768-1770) said that it would not be tolerated if any officers or sailors would 'debauch or in any way abuse' the enslaved people aboard on the penalty of forfeiture of salary.[121] Since this instruction was printed it likely was given to all MCC-captains. Nevertheless, the reason behind the instruction does not seem to come from concern about the well-being of the enslaved, but rather the fear for uprisings. The captain was 'admonished to make sure not to be taken by surprise' by the captives aboard and thus it was the desire of the MCC that they would not be mistreated.[122] It is striking that in the instructions to the captain of the *Raadhuis van Middelburg* (1741-1742 and 1742-1743) the uprisings were mentioned, but there was nothing about the treatment of the captives aboard. To guarantee that the crew would not be taken by surprise, the captain had to keep his handgun on the ready.[123] Either the MCC found it unnecessary prior to 1740 to give special instructions regarding the treatment of the enslaved, or the particular instructions are missing from the archive. It is also unclear how the WIC instructed its crew.

Nonetheless, it is clear that there were no specific instructions regarding the treatment of children. Mustakeem argues that because the transport of captives 'focused exclusively on social order' all captives had to oblige.[124] That meant that also young children were confronted with 'aggressive and deadly tactics' to maintain order.[125] Children's maternal needs were ignored, while at the same time mothers were confronted with the limits of motherhood.

[120] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1366.3, scans 19-20; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.3, scans 11-15; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.4, scans 9-10.
[121] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1366.3, scan 32.
[122] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1366.3, scan 32.
[123] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.3, scans 4-5; NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.4, scan 5.
[124] Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 92.
[125] Ibid.

IV The sale in Suriname

Despite the harsh conditions aboard, it seems that the mortality rates of children were relatively low compared to that of adult captives.[126] The most striking example of this is the voyage of the MCC-ship the *Zeemercuur* (1787-1790). Due to an outbreak of scurvy, only 98 of the 272 purchased captives survived the Middle Passage. In table 3 the demography of the enslaved on the *Zeemercuur* is illustrated. For this ship, the purchasing accounts, as well as the surgeon's journal and sales list have survived, thus giving unique insight into the demography of the enslaved aboard as well as selling practices in Suriname. It is striking that 79,5% of men and 60,2% of women did not survive the voyage to Suriname, while 73,5% of boys survived. In this case, girls suffered from scurvy more than boys, resulting in only 42,9% of girls surviving.[127] On the *Leusden* (1727-1728), however, it was reversed: 53% of boys and 60% of girls survived and were sold in Suriname.[128] As Diptee argues, more quantative analyses have to be done, 'but at the very least, the records do make it clear that children survived the process of enslavement, made it to the Americas, and were available for sale in sizeable proportions.'[129] An explanation for the relatively low mortality rates of children could be that their conditions aboard slave ships were different compared to adults. While men were shackled at the wrists and ankles, children and women were not. Diptee argues that young boys 'at times were even left to wander about the decks', though it is hard to say whether this was also the case on Dutch slave ships.[130]

	Men	**Women**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Infants**	**Total**
Purchased	117	93	34	28	11	272
Born					9	
Died	93	56	9	16	17	174
Sold	24	43	25	12	3	98

Table 3: Demography of the enslaved on the MCC-ship the Zeemercuur (1787-1790). Note: infants were not taken into account.
Source: NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scans 1-70.

[126] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 190.
[127] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scans 1-70.
[128] Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden*, 105. 76 boys and 30 girls were purchased, of whom 40 boys and 20 girls survived.
[129] Diptee, 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', 191.
[130] Ibid.

That most children were sold separately is evident in the sales list of the *Zeemercuur* (appendix I). Jacques Ruden bought two girls for 600 guilders, J. H. B. Lousade bought three girls for 1000 guilders, and also the widow Nunes bought one girl for 400 guilders.[131] Of the three remaining infants, two were sold with their mothers. It is striking that one infant was sold separately. Mrs. Ruysenaar bought a baby girl for 60 guilders.[132] It is likely that her mother had died during the Middle Passage, which meant that the child could not follow her mother. Yet, someone must have taken care of the child aboard since it would be unable to care for itself. Additionally, it is interesting that someone chose to solely buy an enslaved baby. Unfortunately, there are no further details on the sale, but it suggests that there may have been a market for infants after all.

The other children mentioned were again separated, this time from fictive kin. They would never see the women that had taken care of them during the Middle Passage again and were now transported to plantations or households, scared of the fate that awaited them. Other buyers bought groups of enslaved people, or pairs. The free Pieternella bought a woman and a girl, for the relatively small sum of 300 guilders.[133] W. J. Spillenaar bought a woman with her infant, a boy, and two girls for 680 guilders.[134] Another person bought a man and a girl for 700 guilders.[135] Since kinship ties were not written down, it is unclear if these captives were related. In 1718, Herlein, an unknown writer who published a description of the colony of Suriname, explained that enslaved people were publicly sold in pairs, for example one man with one woman.[136] Sociologist Willem F. L. Buschkens argues that 'this measure was introduced in order to give small planters and opportunity to make purchases as well, as the captains of slave ships were sometimes wont to sell their entire cargo en masse to some big planter privately in contravention of the regulations.'[137]

[131] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scan 61.
[132] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scan 61.
[133] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scan 61.
[134] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scan 61.
[135] NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scan 61.
[136] Herlein, *Beschryvinge van de volk-plantinge Zuriname*, 91.
[137] Willem F. L. Buschkens, *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles* ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff 1974), 52.

The veracity of Herlein's book is, however, debatable. There were rules regarding the sale of families, but these could easily be ignored. The reasons behind these rules are questionable as well. On 3 January 1743, Governor Mauricius wrote about it in his journal. It is the first reference to apparent regulations regarding the sale of enslaved people. There had been complaints that slave traders, 'in an improper manner', sold 'the mothers and fathers and their children, and husbands and wives separately.'[138] It was not "improper" because separating family members was a brutal act. It was improper because in this way, buyers who had sold one family member, were now forced to buy the additional family member for an expensive price to prevent losing the already purchased family member to despair.'[139] Though enslavers knew separating family members was inhuman – they had seen the suffering and pain – the well-being of the enslaved was not their biggest concern. Their concern was that because of this, prices were going up. Governor Mauricius argued that the "improper sale" was 'not only a violation of humanity' but moreover could only have 'pernicious effects', probably meaning revolts.[140] According to Governor Mauricius, it had been custom to sell families together, just as the WIC had always done.[141] Thus, he ordered slave traders to inform if their captives had 'a husband, wife, or child' before offering them for sale. Buyers would not be bound by the sale if afterwards it would turn out that the enslaved person they had bought had family members who had been sold to someone else.[142]

Though Mauricius called the separate sale 'a violation of humanity', his focus seemed to be more on the issue of rising prices and the fear of revolts. Additionally, since children often had already been separated before boarding the slave ships in Africa, most harm had already been done. Governor Mauricius also had no consideration for fictive kinship ties that were formed during the Middle Passage. Most importantly, the rule was not made into legislation. Even so, 'an end was put to this rule in 1770, when a large number of estates exchanged owners and the slaves of these

[138] NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 199, 3 January 1743.
[139] NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 199, 3 January 1743.
[140] NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 199, 3 January 1743.
[141] NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 199, 3 January 1743.
[142] NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, inv. nr. 199, 3 January 1743.

estates were sometimes sold separately.'[143] Only on 4 August 1782, an edict was issued that prohibited the separate sale of mothers and children, and it was promulgated once more in 1828.[144] Yet, the sales list of the *Zeemercuur* suggest that even after 1782 the practice of selling family members separately still continued. We can assume that for most of the eighteenth century, children and parents, and husbands and wives were, in fact, often sold separately despite rules and edicts.

An important lacuna in the rules and edicts is the separation of children and their fathers. When there was talk about the separation of children and their parents, only the separation of children and their mothers mattered. Regarding infants this seems logical, considering they were dependent on their mothers way more than their fathers. It seems, however, that only the separation of mothers and their children was considered inhuman and undesired. And even though Mauricius mentioned that husband and wives were sold separately and that this was inhuman, the subsequent rules and edicts make no mention of this practice. Keeping families together was not in the colony's interest.

Most importantly, the rules and edicts made no mention of age. It is unclear until what age the separate sale of children and their mothers was not "allowed". "Child" was undefined, meaning the Mauricius' rule can be interpreted in different ways. It is unlikely that it referred to familial relations. That would mean that no one could be (re)sold, except for children who had been separated from their parents already in Africa. In the nineteenth century, various colonies issued legislation regarding the separate sales. In 1842, the Código Negro was issued in Cuba, which 'banned separations of mothers from children under three years old.'[145] The Brazilian Rio Branco Law from 1871 banned the separate sale of children under the age of twelve from their parents, as well as the separate sale of married couples.[146] One way to explain Mauricius' regulations is that it only applied to the separate sale of mothers and their infants. This would fit with the descriptions used in the MCC-accounts, in which "child" was solely

[143] Buschkens, *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles*, 65. Buschkens cites Rudie van Lier, *Samenleving in een grensgebied: een sociaal-historische studie van Suriname* (Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus 1971).
[144] Ibid.
[145] Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom. Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 2013), 84.
[146] Ibid, 56.

used to refer to infants, and “boy” and “girl” to older children. Another way to explain this is that because the rule was not made into legislation, it was up to slave traders and enslavers how to interpret it, for their own benefits.

Conclusion

This chapter showed that the number of children in the slave trade must have been higher than previously assumed. The problem with defining “child” in the slave trade has been overlooked. Not only were infants never counted, the contracts of the MCC and the Smitts show that the minimum age of 15 was not maintained by private merchants. Additionally, contracts, journals, and accounts show that there was a market for enslaved children and that slave traders were interested in purchasing them. A key element in the slave trade of children seems to be separation. In Africa, children were already separated from their parents, during the Middle Passage, their needs were neglected, and in Suriname they were once again sold by themselves. Like Equiano, once enslaved in Africa, many children would never see their relatives again.

Chapter 3 Enslaved children in the colony of Suriname

> I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction was over. I expected it would be my turn next. It was all new to me. I had never seen any thing like it before. I had always lived with my grandmother on the outskirts of the plantation, where she was put to raise the children of the younger women. I had therefore been, until now, out of the way of the bloody scenes that often occurred on the plantation.[147]

Frederick Douglass (c.1818-1895) here recalled the first moment he witnessed a flogging, more specifically, the flogging of his aunt Hester. As he said himself, 'I was quite a child, but I well remember it.'[148] Douglass and his mother were separated when he was still an infant. He only saw her four or five times in his life, and she died when he was around ten years old. Douglass was initially raised by his grandmother, who took care of all the children on the plantation, but after a few years he was selected to live at his master's household.

This chapter focusses on the experiences of enslaved children in eighteenth-century Suriname by examining the problem of parenthood, the social environment in which enslaved children grew up, and the work they performed. With the use of travel accounts, plantation and household inventories, law books, and plantation records, we get a glimpse of the experiences of enslaved children in the colony. As noted in the introduction, studies that focus on enslaved children in Suriname do not yet exist. Therefore, studies on eighteenth-century Jamaica, a colony similar to Suriname, is used to provide context where data on Suriname is lacking.

[147] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 5.
[148] Ibid, 4.

I The problem of parenthood

As various historians have argued, in eighteenth-century Caribbean colonies there was a permanent conflict between production and reproduction.[149] Enslaved women who were pregnant would deliver "new" laborers but at the same, they had to continue their plantation work. According to historian Alex van Stipriaan, pregnant women on Surinamese plantations were seen as nuisances. Pregnancy resulted in a temporary loss of manpower and extra mouths to feed.[150] Turner argues the following: 'The sugar plantations' huge demand on bondwomen's labor meant that pregnancy and childcare were viewed as distractions by capitalistic planters whose main focus was maintaining productivity and profitability.'[151] Balai even argued that enslaved women who got pregnant would be unable to perform any labor for three years.[152] This, however, is very unlikely. Pregnant women were generally not reprieved from labor. According to Bush-Slimani, 'pregnant women were often kept at field work up to the last few weeks of pregnancy and were expected to return to work no later than three weeks after delivery.'[153] Contemporary soldier John Gabriel Stedman wrote that enslaved women brought their children into the world 'without pain like the Indian women, resuming their domestic employment even the same day.'[154] Also Herlein mentioned that women continued work after two or three days, with their infants tied to their backs.[155]

That enslaved women experienced no pain in childbirth fits with the perception of enslaved women in the colonies, the "black woman stereotype".[156] Bush-Slimani explains this stereotype as follows: 'Plantocratic writings continued to reiterate the

---

[149] See amongst others: Barbara Bush-Slimani, 'Hard Labour: Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies', *History Workshop Journal* 36 (1993) 83-99; Richard Follett, 'Heat, Sex, and Sugar: Pregnancy and Childbearing in the Slave Quarters', *Journal of Family History* 28 (2003) 510–539; Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies. Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2017); Sasha Turner, 'Home-grown Slaves: Women, Reproductions, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', *Journal of Women's History* 23 (2011) 39–62; Kenneth Morgan, 'Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica, c.1776–1834', *History* 91 (2006) 231–253; Colleen A. Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica, 1788–1838* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press 2015); Pedro Welch, 'The Slave Family in the Urban Context: Views from Bridgetown, Barbados, 1780-1816', *The Journal of Caribbean History* 29 (1995) 11–24.
[150] Van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast,* 320.
[151] Turner, 'Home-grown Slaves', 40.
[152] Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden,* 41.
[153] Bush-Slimani, 'Hard Labour', 86.
[154] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam.* 513. Citations used in this chapter were normalized for readability reasons.
[155] Herlein, *Beschryvinge van de volk-plantinge Zuriname*, 103.
[156] Morgan, 'Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica', 240.

racist view which had existed from the early days of slavery that African women, being nearer to the animal world than white women, gave birth painlessly and "with little or no difficulty" and could be returned to hard labour soon after childbirth.'[157] This was in sharp contrast to ideas about white women, who were exhorted 'to avoid "all acts of exertion" after childbirth, even so light as bending down to open a drawer.'[158] The stereotype was used by enslavers to justify their productive and reproductive exploitation of enslaved women.

Besides the fact that pregnant women had to continue hard labor during their pregnancies, they were not spared from physical punishment either. As in other Caribbean colonies, there were no laws protecting enslaved women who were pregnant in Suriname.[159] According to historian Kenneth Morgan, 'by the turn of the nineteenth century it had become standard practice to place pregnant women in a hole dug in the ground to receive their belly and then to flog them on the back.'[160] Combined with dietary deficiencies, diseases, and hard labor, this not only limited reproduction but also caused miscarriages, stillbirth, and infant mortality. Economist Richard Steckel calculated that the estimated weight of babies delivered by enslaved women in the American South was roughly 1100 grams below modern standards. Yet, as historian Richard Follett argues, 'slave women in the sugar country probably delivered even smaller infants than those studied by Steckel, and those who survived faced high infant mortality risks from cot death and other infections.'[161]

Nevertheless, the presence of many creole children and pregnant women in plantation inventories shows that enslaved children were born in great numbers on plantations, and that some of them did survive. Another consequence of the exploitation of enslaved women was, however, that if their infants survived, they would not be allowed the resources to rear them. Oftentimes, enslaved women tied their infants to their backs and continued work in the fields. Some planters used wet nurses who nursed other women's children while they were out on the fields. As Follett argues, 'the

[157] Bush-Slimani, 'Hard Labour', 87.
[158] Ibid.
[159] De Smidt and Van der Lee, *Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname*.
[160] Morgan, 'Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica', 239. See also: Turner, 'Home-grown Slaves', 52-53.
[161] Follett, 'Heat, Sex, and Sugar', 528; 539.

prevalence of wet nurses in the sugar district indicates that some slaveholders attempted to optimize the potential reproductive capacity of their female property by manipulating lactational amenorrhea to establish large families within a relatively limited chronological span.'[162] Most plantations in Suriname had *creolenmama's* or *vroedvrouwen* (babysitters or midwives), often elderly women on plantations who were unable to perform any other labor.[163]

This means that children were raised by other women on the plantation during the day, and that they would reunite with their mothers at night. Throughout the eighteenth century, however, there was a large group of enslaved children who had no mothers. Sometimes, their mothers had died in childbirth, or they had died of diseases, malnutrition, or abuse, and as noted in chapter 2, most of the saltwater children would arrive at plantations without relatives. Even though they might have been old enough to do plantation work during the day, they were not cared for by their mothers at night. It is unknown who took care of these children, but Morgan argues that 'it was not uncommon for slave women to adopt other slaves' children despite coping with their own.'[164] At the same time, as Turner argues, 'planters insisted on the early separation of mothers and children, in part to prevent children from adopting their parents' vices.'[165] Even children who had parents or who were adopted, would be separated from them on purpose.

An interesting observation in eighteenth-century Surinamese plantation inventories is that parent-child relationships were almost never written down, except for infants who were listed with their mothers, but even that was not always the case. According to historian Jennifer L. Morgan this suggest that planters were 'increasingly unwilling to even tacitly acknowledge the emotional qualities of such relationships.'[166] This is in sharp contrast to household inventories, where mother-child relationships of the enslaved were often written down. It is likely that proximity to the enslaver, the

[162] Ibid, 527. Follett explains that 'sexual abstinence delayed pregnancy, but before the introduction of modern contraceptives and milk replacement formula, the relative length of birth intervals remained closely associated with breastfeeding, for whilst women nurse their babies, hormonal activity suppresses ovulation.'
[163] Buschkens, *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles*, 65.
[164] Morgan, 'Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica', 247.
[165] Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 222.
[166] Morgan, *Laboring Women,* 135.

relatively small number of enslaved people in households, and the different work they had to perform made it more important for enslavers to acknowledge these bonds.

Nevertheless, both in plantation and in household inventories, one particular relationship was always missing: the father-child relationship. Some historians have interpreted this as evidence that slave families were matrifocal, while others have argued that enslaved people, in fact, 'largely lived in nuclear families of two parents and their children.'[167] As Vasconcellos explains, 'a concentration on nuclear or matrifocal families oversimplifies the complex nature of life in the slave villages.'[168] In her view, 'evidence suggest that some enslaved children belonged to kin-like groups created long before they were born.'[169] The creation of kin-like groups was especially important for orphaned children, children who were purchased in West Africa, and children who were repurchased in the colonies. Some children tried to identify with a "new family".

It is important to realize that enslavers may have had reasons to hide information about the paternity of enslaved children. For them, it was not relevant or not desired to write down the paternity of enslaved children. Firstly, as Turner argues, 'women's reproductive capability ensured their general importance to slavery's ideological framework.'[170] In sharp contrast to their enslavers, whose offspring followed the line of the father, children born to enslaved women followed the status of their mother. Because their mothers were crucial in defining their status, the fathers of enslaved children were not relevant to write down. Secondly, for some enslavers, providing information about paternity could personally affect them. Even though it was forbidden for white people in Suriname to have sexual relationships with African or indigenous people, the presence of mulatto children reveals that this law dating from 1686 was constantly violated.[171] Governor Mauricius complained about it in 1746, saying that 'even councilors of the Court of Police and Criminal Justice, who are deemed to know

[167] Welch, 'The Slave Family in the Urban Context'; Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica*, 25.
[168] Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica*, 25.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Turner, 'Home-grown Slaves', 40.
[171] De Smidt and Van der Lee, *Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname,* see laws: 134, 240, 319, 421, and 556.

the laws, are guilty of this.'[172] Historian Cynthia McLeod argues that often white men had black concubines, even if they were married.[173] Since this was a violation of the laws, not many enslavers would have been keen to reveal their paternity of enslaved children in inventories.

This also meant that children may have experienced their lives in slavery differently based on who their parents were. As historian Gert Oostindie explains, the lighter the skin, the closer to the planter.[174] According to Vasconcellos, the 'status as a mulatto, the child of an enslaved woman and a white man', set mulatto children 'apart from the rest of the slave community.'[175] Children of mixed parentage had certain benefits that other enslaved children did not have, which could greatly influence their lives in slavery. Firstly, mulatto children had more manumission opportunities than most enslaved children.[176] Historian Rosemary Brana-Shute, who studied Surinamese manumission requests of the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, argued that 'the assumption that manumissions were essentially the human acts of white men freeing their mistresses and/or their offspring, distorts the historical experience' because 'some white males also freed black adults and children while many white men freed no slaves, including blood kin.'[177] Brana-Shute argues that this type of manumission could not have been more than a third of all manumissions in Suriname. She also explains, however, that most enslaved people who were manumitted were, in fact, children.[178] Additionally, manumission was a process, in which the enslaved person had to develop a private relationship with the enslaver. In this way, 'freedom was only granted to specific slaves by specific people.'[179] Enslaved children who had a white father were already one step ahead of other enslaved children.

Yet, as Vasconcellos argues, 'while their whiteness often elevated the status of enslaved mulatto children on the island, that whiteness actually diminished their value

---

[172] Cynthia McLeod, *Elisabeth Samson. Een vrije zwarte vrouw in het achttiende-eeuwse Suriname* (Schoorl: Conserve 1996), 72.
[173] Ibid, 28.
[174] Oostindie, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou,* 167.
[175] Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica*, 39.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Rosemary Brana-Shute, 'Approaching Freedom: The Manumission of Slaves in Suriname, 1760–1828', *Slavery & Abolition* 10 (1989) 52.
[178] Ibid, 48.
[179] Ibid, 40; 58.

to the Jamaican plantation economy.'[180] This seems incorrect at first, because mulatto children and adults were often valued the highest in plantation inventories. They were often skilled and kept away from field labor.[181] But that was exactly the problem. Planters generally considered mulatto children to be "weak" and therefore 'entrusted enslaved mulattos with positions that required skill and intelligence because they would be of no benefit to the plantation economy in any other capacity.'[182] In this way, the status of enslaved mulatto children on plantations was ambiguous. Their diminished value to the plantation economy resulted in an elevated status of these children on the plantations themselves.

II The social environment

The environment in which enslaved children were raised forced them into adulthood way before their time. This was especially the case in the colony of Suriname, which, in Brana-Shute's words, 'evolved a reputation for being one of the most brutal of all slave societies in the New World.'[183] The hundreds of plantations placed around the rivers suffered from a chronic labor shortage, which made the slave trade of vital importance for maintaining of the plantation economy. During the eighteenth century, new export products were introduced, such as coffee and cacao, though sugar remained the colony's primary export product.

The hierarchy on Surinamese plantations depended on whether the plantation owners lived on the plantation or not. During the second half of the eighteenth century, more plantation owners were absent. This so-called "absenteeism" made that in 1769, two-thirds of all plantation owners were not living in Suriname.[184] In this case, the director (*directeur*) had the highest authority on the plantation, who in turn was supervised by an administrator (*administrateur*), who lived in Paramaribo. An administrator sometimes supervised multiple plantations at once, and visited the

[180] Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica*, 12.
[181] Oostindie, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou*, 167; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 233.
[182] Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica*, 49.
[183] Rosemary Brana-Shute, *The Manumission of Slaves in Suriname, 1760-1828* (PhD diss.; University of Florida 1985) 61.
[184] Van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 41.

plantations only a few times a year. The director delegated some of his tasks to one or two *blankofficiers*, white overseers.[185] From the slave population, a few men were selected as *bastiaans* or *negerofficiers*, black overseers who supervised the work and control of the enslaved people working on the plantation. The slave population was further divided by "profession". This hierarchy did not exist in households in Paramaribo. There, the slave owner had the highest authority.

Figure 1 shows plantation Leeverpoel in eighteenth-century Suriname. Number 6 shows the slave village, where the enslaved people on the plantation lived in small dwellings, usually built next to each other. In figure 2 (next page) we see plantation Cornelis Vriendschap, a much smaller plantation. Here, number 8 shows rows of slave dwellings. According to Jan Jacob Hartsinck, the slave dwellings were 'usually constructed of wood and contain[ed] a door, but no windows.'[186] The furniture consisted of some mats, pots, and pans, or tools used to cultivate the *kostgrondjes*.[187]

Smaller children, who were unable to perform any work, stayed at nurseries during the day in the care of a *creolenmama* or *vroedvrouw*. As writer and activist Anton de Kom explained, every morning, the *creolenmama* would bath the children and feed

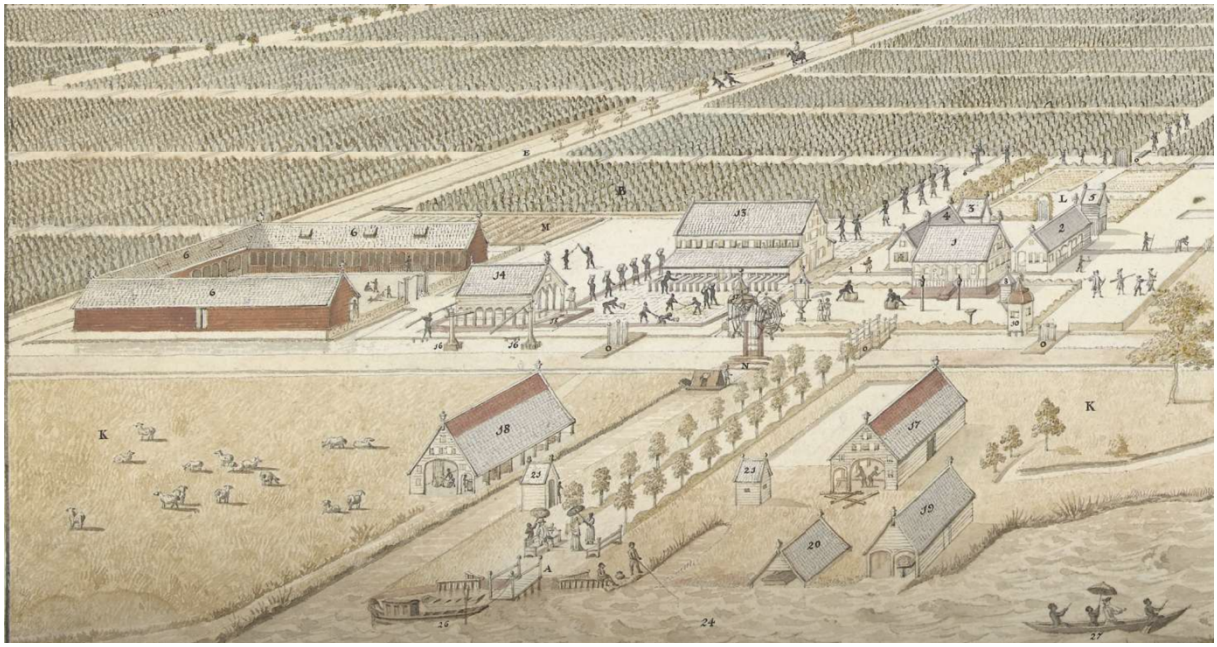

Figure 1: Slave village of coffee plantation Leeverpoel, c. 1700-1800 (cut-out).
Source: Rijksmuseum.

[185] Oostindie, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou*, 67.
[186] Hartsinck, *Beschryving van Guiana, of de wilde kust in Zuid-America*, 915.
[187] Ibid.

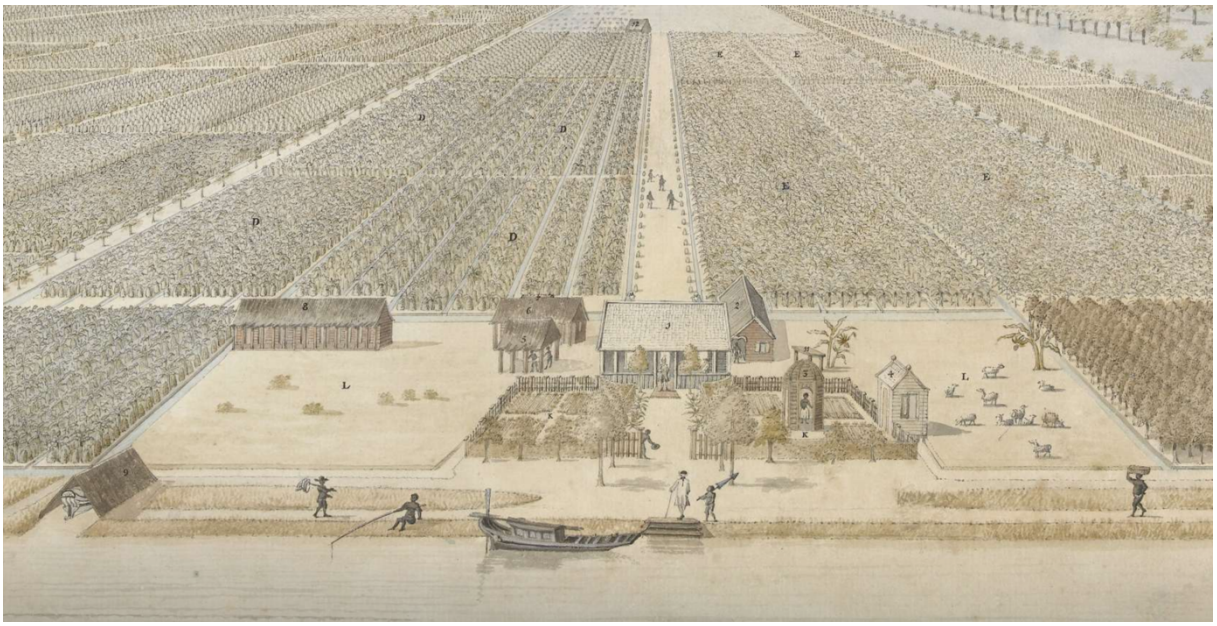

Figure 2: Slave village of plantation Cornelis Vriendschap, c. 1700-1800 (cut-out).
Source: Rijksmuseum.

them rice and plantains, after which they had to thank the planter or director. The other task of the *creolenmama* was to inform the master if a child had died. This was dangerous, because the loss of children infuriated plantations owners; it was a loss of capital.[188] The mothers of the children would leave their children before sunrise and would come back to collect them after sundown. According to Vasconcellos, children stayed at these nurseries until the age of five, after which they were branded and were introduced to plantation labor.[189] When we look at the slave villages at Leeverpoel and Cornelis Vriendschap, it is striking that the villages were put next to the fields. This meant that little children, who were staying at nurseries in the slave village, 'watched their mothers labor in the sun and suffer under the whip.'[190]

The slave village of Leeverpoel was also surrounded by on one side the *kostgrondjes* (M), plots of lands which the enslaved people on the plantation used to cultivate their own crops. Planters had to provide their enslaved people with *kostgrondjes*, but throughout the eighteenth century, planters did not provide them with enough land nor the time to work the land. Thus, plantations in Suriname were characterized by permanent food shortages. This becomes most clear from the laws and

[188] Anton de Kom, *Wij slaven van Suriname* (Amsterdam and Antwerpen: Contact 2009) 40-41.
[189] Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica,* 30.
[190] Ibid.

notifications issued by the Court. There were already complaints in 1684. Enslaved people were supposedly stealing food to provide for themselves; planters gave them no time to work their lands. In a new law, planters were ordered to provide enough land for the enslaved.[191] Of course, this did not solve the other problem, namely that enslaved people on plantations were forced to work sixteen-hour shifts and had no time to work their lands. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Court kept issuing legislation and notifications. The Court send officials to inspect plantations, distributed copies of notifications, and even tried to help planters who were unable to buy enough food. Planters could even be prosecuted if they were negligent. In 1780 and 1781 the Court desperately again ordered the planters to provide their enslaved people with enough food.[192]

Obviously, food shortages resulted in malnutrition. Follett calculated that 'considering the number of hours, collective stress, and exhaustion of this work' – referring to the work on sugar plantations in the Caribbean – 'it appears realistic to conclude that slaves expended between 5,000 and 6,500 calories per twenty-four hours on working, resting, and sleeping.'[193] The laws show that the daily calorie intake of enslaved population in Suriname was insufficient throughout the eighteenth century.

Malnutrition, in combination with hard labor, made enslaved people extremely vulnerable to diseases. In plantation inventories, diseases or physical disabilities of enslaved children were written down. In the eighteenth century, children were mostly affected by the yaws disease, an infection of the skin, bones, and joints. On plantation Lunenburg in 1742, for instance, five out of the fifteen children had the yaws.[194] Yaws not only affected children but also infants. On plantation Appecappa in 1775, the four infants called Locus, Aprill, Bienvenue and Probie were all ill. Today, yaws is considered a childhood disease, since it are mostly children who are affected.[195]

---

[191] De Smidt and Van der Lee, *Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname,* law 119.
[192] Ibid, laws 128, 538, 658, 729, 761, 823, and 836.
[193] Follett, 'Heat, Sex, and Sugar', 523; 521. To compare, Follett argues that 'the World Health Organization estimates that a male engaged in heavy work for eight hours burns 3,490 calories per day.'
[194] NL-HaNA, 11.05.11.14, inv. nr. 689, scans 191-208. Fransje, Otto, Philida, Amelia, and Marianne had the yaws.
[195] World Health Organization, 'Yaws', https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/yaws (accessed 13 March 2020).

Though leprosy was uncommon among children, there were children infected with the disease. In 1803, a horrid case is found on plantation Tout Lui Faut, where a girl called Azia had leprosy and was pregnant.[196] Unfortunately, her age was not written down, but considering that she was still listed under girls, she must have been very young. Court officials were very concerned with the spread of yaws and leprosy. Most importantly, the Court was concerned that enslaved people would spread the diseases under white people living in the colony. Enslaved people walking around Paramaribo could spread the diseases not only among 'the old people but mostly to unaware and unknowing white children.'[197] In 1728, it was forbidden to let enslaved people who were sick walk around Paramaribo. If planters sent enslaved people to the city, they would be fined.[198]

	Debet		**Credit**
15 Mar.	*Negerin* Bebe has given birth to a boy called Kees	29 Apr.	*Negerin* Swaantje has died of tuberculosis
		8 May	*Neger* boy Mormus has died of dysentery
8 Jun.	Bought from Berranger & Comp. 10 new coast slaves, consisting of 6 boys and 4 girls, who were called as follows: Bonaparte, De Winter, Willem, **Salomon**, Damon, Adonis, Bellona, Badina, Carolina, and Mimie for *f.* 860 each		
30 Jun.	Transported to men and women the following boys and girls: Allemantje, Mozes, Aron, Arabie, Casper, Jan, Rosa, Africa, Toetoeba, Jojo, and Diana	30 Jun.	Transported to men and women the following boys and girls: Allemantje, Mozes, Aron, Arabie, Casper, Jan, Rosa, Africa, Toetoeba, Jojo, and Diana
Jul. 2	*Negerin* Olimphia has given birth to a boy called Coridon	Jul. 3	*Neger* boy **Salomon** has died of convulsion
		Jul. 13	*Neger* Matroos has died of phthisical disease *(kwijnende ziekte*)
		Jul. 29	*Neger* Cadet, has died old and worn down
		Aug. 1	*Neger* boys Cham, who has not been of any service for the last two years, has died of geophagia (earth-eating)
		Sept. 18	*Neger* girl Constantia has died of yaws
Oct. 26	*Negerin* Clara has given birth to a boy called Cojo	Nov. 24	*Neger* Tambour has died of leprosy
		Dec. 6	*Neger* boy Pedro has died of geophagia (earth-eating)

Table 4: Balance sheet of slave population at plantation Tout Lui Faut, 1801.
Source: Prize Papers, HCA32-1132, scans 911-943.

[196] Prize Papers Collection, HCA32-1132, scans 1060-1067.
[197] De Smidt and Van der Lee, *Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname*, law 330.
[198] Ibid.

Enslaved children were also registered having other diseases. Some children had dropsy, dysentery, smallpox, tuberculosis, or sexually transmitted infections. That some of these diseases could be fatal, is illustrated by records of plantation Tout Lui Faut dating from 1801 (table 4; previous page). On the 8th of June, ten saltwater children were purchased. One of them, Salomon, died only a few weeks later of convulsion. Interesting is that two children, Cham and Pedro, died from the effects of geophagia, or earth-eating. According to Morgan, 'dirt eating was general in British Caribbean slave society: slaves regularly ate baked clayey cakes (called "aboo") as a natural, if unconscious, response to nutritional deficiency.'[199] Apparently, the director and overseers were not providing their slave population with enough food supplies, which made Cham and Pedro start to eat dirt instead. On September 18, the girl Constantia died of the yaws. Van Stipriaan calculated child mortality rates on Surinamese plantations and concluded that during the nineteenth century it remained high. This had to do with the fact that for diseases such as the yaws no remedies were available.[200] Apart from diseases, there were also children who had other physical disabilities. On plantation Naccaracca in 1725, the girl Serafina had one hand and one eye, and the girl Tarie had a sore throat.[201] Diseases and disabilities greatly influenced their value to the plantation economy.

Laws concerning the punishment of enslaved people in Suriname did not protect enslaved children. According to Turner, planters 'feared that undisciplined children could become rebellious and lazy.'[202] It meant that enslaved children could be punished as adults. Stedman accounted for this, saying that 'men, women, or children, without exception' were flogged.[203] According to Stedman, on the 29th of April 1776, he saw two children punished at a goldmine:

> On the 29th, late in the evening, we made [it to] the goldmine, where seeing a negro boy and a girl suspended from a high beam with a rope tied to their hands, which were behind them, thus in the most agonizing tortures, and with their shoulders half out of joint, I, without the smallest ceremony cut them down,

[199] Morgan, 'Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica', 236.
[200] Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 330-331.
[201] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 159, scans 21-33.
[202] Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 236.
[203] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, 363.

> swearing to demolish the overseer for inflicting this new mode of torture without he promised to forgive them, which [he] miraculously did.[204]

Stedman also told of a fourteen-year-old mulatto girl who was 'dragged to Court in chains with her mother and a few more of her relations' and cried out 'most bitterly, that she was going to be tried by Mr. Schouten her mother's master for refusing to do the work of a common negro slave.'[205] She was 'not only obliged to submit, but, at his insisting, condemned for disobedience to be privately flogged, together with her poor mother and all her relations who had dared to support her.'[206]

The most well-known example is Stedman's description of Maria Susanna du Plessis, who owned plantation Nijd en Spijt, and who is remembered for her particular cruelty as a slave owner. According to Stedman, Du Plessis had attacked a young mulatto girl with a knife, cut off her breasts, and served them to her husband out of jealousy.[207] Earlier, she had drowned an infant because it did not stop crying. The mother of the child immediately drowned herself, as heartbroken as she was.[208] Du Plessis also attacked a new girl, about fifteen years old, who had arrived from Africa and did not speak 'the language of the country.'[209] In Stedman words, 'jealousy instantly prompted her to burn the girl all over the cheeks, mouth, and forehead with a red hot iron, and cut off the Achilles tendon of one of her limbs, which not only rendered her a monster but miserably lame so long as she lived, without the victim knew what she had done to deserve such a punishment.'[210] One day, some enslaved people complained to Du Plessis about the cruelties she had inflicted, asking her to be milder to them, after which Du Plessis 'instantly knocked out the brains of a quadroon child, and caused two of the heads of its relation to be chopped off, being young negro men who had endeavored to oppose it.'[211] Even though some historians have disputed the veracity of

---

[204] Ibid, 488.
[205] Ibid, 598.
[206] Ibid, 598-599.
[207] Ibid, 340; Hilde Neus-Van der Putten, *Susanna du Plessis. Portret van een slavenmeesteres* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers 2003) 15.
[208] Neus-Van der Putten, *Susanna du Plessis*, 15.
[209] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, 340.
[210] Ibid, 340.
[211] Ibid, 341.

the stories told about Du Plessis, it is clear that enslaved children not only lived in a violent environment, but that they also were victims of violence themselves.

III Work performed by enslaved children

It was in this violent environment where enslaved children grew up and were forced to work. From the inventories themselves it is not clear from what age children got to work, because ages are only rarely mentioned. As Vasconcellos argued, enslaved children in Jamaica stayed at nurseries until the age of five. According to Jan Jacob Hartsinck, who in 1770 published a history of Suriname, a child was considered an infant until the age of three.[212] Hartsinck based his information on the *hoofdgelden*, a tax on all people present on plantations. The tax had to be paid out in sugar, as illustrated in table 5. From the *hoofdgelden*, the following age groups can be defined: infant (0-2 years), child (3-12 years), adult (> 12 years).[213] Therefore, we can assume that all children listed under "boys" and "girls" were between the ages of three and twelve years old, unless mentioned otherwise.[214]

Most children would be slowly introduced to general plantation work. According to Turner, enslaved children in Jamaica took up plantation work around the age of eight. They were put in the third gang, where they remained until the age of twelve, after which they were transported to the second and first gang.[215] Vasconcellos puts children's transition to plantation work earlier and argues that children 'transitioned

People on plantation	**Tax to be paid**
white person	50 pounds of sugar
enslaved person > 12 years old	50 pounds of sugar
enslaved person aged 3-12 years old	25 pounds of sugar
enslaved person < 3 years old	0

Table 5: *Hoofdgelden* tax system.
Source: Dutch Slavery Tax Suriname, 'On the original source', https://www.dutchslaverytaxsuriname.com/en/on-the-original-source/ (accessed 15 March 2020.

[212] Hartsinck, *Beschryving van Guiana, of de wilde kust in Zuid-America*, 888.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Sometimes infants were also listed under boys and girls. If so, they were still described as infants but not listed as a separate category or with their mothers.
[215] Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 223-224.

from the nursery to the field at age five or six, from the children's gang to the second gang at age eight or nine, and eventually to the first gang by age fifteen.'[216] Most importantly, 'children were expected to perform the same work at the same pace as the adults working alongside them.'[217] In his study on the two Surinamese plantations, Oostindie found that children were also involved in the process of cooking sugar. As Oostindie argues, the work in the mill and cookhouse was less heavy compared to field work, but at the same, it was way more dangerous. Enslaved people sometimes got stuck in the mill and lost limbs or even their lives. Additionally, the work must have been hard considering the noise of the mill and the heath of the fire and the steamy boilers. Oostindie explains that around eight children had to work in the mill and cookhouse to pass down cane to the adults working the mill. On plantation Perou (1795), there were two boys called Grorans and Adonis who 'passed on cane on a chair.'[218]

Other children were taught a craft or skill. This meant that from a young age, these children were apprenticed to either adults on the plantations or sent to Paramaribo. On plantation De Hoop (1728), for instance, the mulatto boy Mars was learning carpentry.[219] On plantation Suijningheid (1771), the girl Monkie was learning how to cook, just as the boy Primo at plantation Montresor (1792).[220] In the city, where children could not work the fields, enslaved children were more often skilled. Johanna Margaretha van Strijp, who was Maria Susanna du Plessis' mother, owned 23 household slaves upon her death in 1769. The two brothers Jasmijn and Tripon were both taught a craft: Jasmijn was taught carpentry and Tripon masonry.[221] Sara Lemmers, who owned a total of 56 households slaves upon her death in 1775, had apprenticed the four boys Unico, Coffij, Jan, and Gideon to be taught carpentry and masonry.[222] On plantation Livonia (1775), the girl Hendrina was learning how to wash, and the mulatto boy Dophyn was learning to be a gardener.[223] At plantation Appecappa (1775), the boy

[216] Vasconcellos, 'Finding Enslaved Children's Place, Voice, and Agency within the Narrative', 19-20.
[217] Ibid, 20.
[218] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 286, scans 661-708. 'Geeft riet op de stoel.'
[219] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 162, scans 63-79.
[220] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 232, scans 293-336; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 279, scans 31-79.
[221] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 229, scans 333-340. Johanna Margaretha van Strijp lived at the Oude Paardenmarkt.
[222] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 242, scans 81-97.
[223] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 242, scans 391-406.

Parus was taught how to *dress*, or to cure people, as was the boy Willem at plantation Montresor (1792).[224] At plantation Klynhoop (1792), six girls were taught how to sew.[225]

Some children were given specific tasks, or had already acquired a skill. The girl Theresia that belonged to the estate of Edward Tothill, for instance, was described as a cotton spinner, the boy Cojo at plantation Appecappa (1775) made tiles, and on plantation Livonia (1775), eight boys were described as cotton grinders.[226] The *karboeger* boy Hendrik, who belonged to late Pieter Bresch, made boats on plantation Tulpenburg (1792), and on plantation De Vreede (1710), the indigenous boy Mahewul was described to be a hunter and fisherman.[227]

There was, however, a gendered aspect to the work enslaved children performed. As Turner argues, 'planters singled out enslaved boys for highly disciplined and skilled roles', such as tending cattle.[228] Boys who tended cattle 'would "lead and yoke cattle, and ride and tackle mules" for open grazing and carrying canes, manure, copperwood, and hogsheads. Mule and cattle boys also were responsible for preventing animals from "trespassing in the canefields" and provision grounds.'[229] Examples of this can be found at plantation Livonia (1775), where the boy Profyt tended 'all animals', and at plantation Montresor (1792), where the boy Bernard tended the cows while the boy Nieuw Jaar tended the sheep.[230]

Another task especially reserved for boys was that of footboy.[231] As footboys, these boys had to serve their owners. In eighteenth-century Surinamese inventories, we find many enslaved boys are described as footboys. Some slave owners even had more than one footboy. On plantation Suijnigheid, owned by Jacobus Hendrik Lemmers, for

[224] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 242, scans 703-729; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 279, scans 31-79.
[225] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 279, scans 277-329. The girls Lucie, Marrianna, Celia, Hannah, Sarah, and Chrestina were taught how to sew.
[226] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 187, scans 389-405. Edward Tothill lived at Watermolenstraat 11, Paramaribo. Tothill died in 1749. Of his ten household slaves, six were children. NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 242, scans 391-406. The boys Generaal, Capteyn, Cesar, Geluk, Junij, Vaendrig, Avans, and Mathijs were cotton grinders.
[227] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 279, scans 503-506. *Karboeger(in)* was used to describe people who had a black parent and a parent of mixed race, mulatto or indigenous. NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 153, scans 29-36.
[228] Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 231.
[229] Ibid.
[230] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 242, scans 391-406; NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 279, scans 31-79.
[231] Men could also be footboys, though it mostly were boys who were footboys.

instance, there were two footboys: Carmanjol and Curioos.[232] Footboys had to follow their owners everywhere they went, and sometimes were hired out to serve others. Walking around with a footboy showed the slave owner's wealth. These children were, therefore, status symbols. For children who were footboys, it meant that they were taken away from their family – if not already – to serve their owners. If their owners traveled, footboys traveled along with them. For footboy Quaco, this meant that he had to follow Stedman on expedition to fight the marrons. During the expedition, Quaco was sent to Paramaribo to get provisions multiple times, almost drowned when he tried to wash Stedman's hammock, helped Stedman navigate, and even saved him when he was lost in the jungle.[233] According to Stedman, these children also dressed the planter:

> A negro boy puts on his stockings and shoes, which he also buckles and, while another dresses his hair, his wig, or shaves him; and a third is fanning him to keep off the gnats or mosquitos – having now shifted, he puts on a very thin coat and waistcoat, all white, when under the shade of an umbrella carried by a black boy, he is conducted to his barge…[234]

For girls, however, the gendered aspect of slavery was more violent and disruptive in their childhoods. Moreover, their childhoods ended way earlier. Vasconcellos explains this as follows:

> …ideas of womanhood stretched to girls as young as ten, who were raped by the white men on their estates. In fact, the nature of girls' work became more complex as planters increasingly linked gender to reproductive potential, and enslaved girl's work summarily took on a reproductive component as a result. By the time enslaved girls reached the delicate age of eleven, they were women; more specifically they were breeding wenches.[235]

Stedman hints at this by saying that enslaved women 'also come early to the age of maturity.'[236] That the childhood of girls depended on their reproductive capabilities, is shown in plantation accounts, recently retrieved from the Prize Papers collection. The

[232] NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 232, scans 293-336.
[233] See: Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*.
[234] Ibid, 364.
[235] Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica*, 10.
[236] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, 513.

pregnant girl Azia mentioned before does not seem to have been an exception. In the accounts of plantation Frederiksdorp (1796-1798), we get insight into the practice of transporting children to adults. On 31 January 1798, some children were transported over from boys/girls to men/women, one of which was the girl ar. On 20 July, Lidia gave birth to a boy; he died ten days later.[237] The same thing happened at plantation Marienbosch in 1802. On 20 January, the girl Dulcia was transported to women. Seven months later, Dulcia gave birth to the girl Dafina. Dulcia died in childbirth.[238] Both girls were already pregnant when they were transported to women. Unfortunately, their ages are not mentioned, but we can assume that these girls were not transported over to women because they had reached a certain age, but because they were pregnant. Their reproductive capability forced them into adulthood way before their time. Examples such as these show that there was a difference in how enslaved boys and girls experienced their childhood, because of the gendered aspect of slavery that not only applied to adults, but also to children in the Caribbean colonies.

Conclusion

This chapter showed how enslaved children experienced their childhood in the colony of Suriname was greatly influenced by three determining factors, namely 1) parenthood (i.e. who their parents were and if they were raised by them); 2) the environment in which they were raised; and 3) what type of work they had to perform. Age was rarely a determining factor. Physical appearance, productivity, and reproductive capability not only determined whether children were listed under adults or children, but also if they were treated that way. Moreover, there was a gendered aspect to the work that enslaved children performed that greatly influenced how they experienced their childhoods. Like Douglass, many enslaved children would never forget the horrors of the plantation.

[237] Prize Papers Collection, HCA32-1132, scans 1105-1145.
[238] Prize Papers Collection, HCA32-1134, scans 944-963.

Chapter 4 Enslaved children in the Dutch Republic

> …one day the captain of a merchant ship, called the "Industrious Bee," came on some business to my master's house. This gentleman, whose name was Michael Henry Pascal, was a lieutenant in the royal navy, but now commanded this trading ship, which was somewhere in the confines of the country many miles off. While he was at my master's house it happened that he saw me, and liked me so well that he made a purchase of me … However he meant me for a present to some of his friends in England: and I was sent accordingly from the house of my then master, one Mr. Campbell, to the place where the ship lay.[239]

In 1757, the then eleven-year-old Olaudah Equiano was purchased in Virginia by lieutenant Michael Henry Pascal as a gift to Pascal's friends in England. Pascal renamed him Gustavus Vassa, which Equiano fiercely rejected.[240] During the eighteenth century, many more African children were transported to Europe. As historian Mark Ponte has shown, there had been a free black community in Amsterdam since the seventeenth century.[241] As the Dutch presence in the Atlantic and the African coasts intensified, more and more African people started to appear in the Dutch Republic, including enslaved children.

This chapter demonstrates how trends in art and court culture increased the demand for African children as footboys in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, and what their lives looked like in a place where slavery formally did not exist. Moreover, this chapter shows with new cases, such as the case of Sambij, Birree, and Porx (1764-1765), and with new perspectives on old cases, such as the case of Claes (1736), how enslaved children resisted their lives in slavery and fought for their beliefs. While the Dutch tried to reinforce their status as slaves on them, these children were aware of the possibilities in the Dutch Republic and tried to escape their lives in slavery, as they had probably seen others do before them.

---

[239] Equiano, *The life of Olaudah Equiano,* 38-39.
[240] Ibid, 39.
[241] Mark Ponte, '"Al de swarten die hier ter stede comen" Een Afro-Atlantische gemeenschap in zeventiende-eeuws Amsterdam', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis/ The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 15 (2019) 33–61.

I Trends in art and court culture

As art historian Elmer Kolfin explains, from 1660 onwards, black stereotypes increasingly influenced art.[242] Consequently, the "vividness" of black people on paintings decreased.[243] Kolfin attributes this to the fact that more black people were present in the Dutch Republic, but also that they were increasingly more popular in art. The demand for black figures on paintings increased so rapidly, that artists started to base them on stereotypes.[244] Not only the aristocracy, but also merchants, WIC men, and sea captains had portraits painted with African boys in the background.[245] Often, the African children were shown wearing oriental clothing, offering the white man or woman on the portrait fruit, coffee or tea with sugar, or jewelry. The children and the items they were holding represented the white man's or woman's acquired wealth overseas. As historian Rachid-S. Pegah argues, 'as blacks gradually gained

Figure 3: Portret of Adriaan van Bredehoff (1672-1733) with his servant Tabo Jansz.
Source: RKD.

Figure 4: Portrait of Lucas Schorer (1657-?) and a servant by Louis de Fontaine.
Source: RKD.

[242] Elmer Kolfin, 'Zwarte modellen in de Nederlandse kunst tussen 1580 en 1800, feit en fictie', in: Nieuwe Kerk, *Black is beautiful. Rubens tot Dumas* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: De Nieuwe Kerk and Waanders 2009) 71.
[243] Ibid, 87.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Gert Oostindie and Emy Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications 1986) 151.

omnipresence in the divertissements and artifacts of European higher society […], they were increasingly represented as inferior.'[246] Oftentimes, African children were depicted with *slavenbanden* (silver or silk collars) and leashes, clearly indicating their subordinated position. It is often uncertain whether these children really existed. It is likely that most of these children were stereotypes of "the African boy".[247] This shows that there was not only a demand for African children in Europe, but also that their presence, even if imagined on portraits, was used to convince others of the power and wealth of the white man or woman portrayed.

The first places where African children appeared in Europe were at courts. Art historian Esther Schreuder argues that from the beginning of the fourteenth century, African children were gifted to European monarchs, and that from the sixteenth century, most European courts had black musicians, standard bearers, servants, soldiers, and envoys.[248] Historian Anne Kuhlmann, who studied the presence of black Africans at German courts, argues that 'the court is not only significant because it was the place where black stereotypes – which became fertile ground for modern European racism – were first carved out; it was also a major social environment, in purely numerical terms, for people of African origin, particularly in the central, eastern, and northern regions.'[249] Kuhlmann continues by saying that European courts were important as 'political, social, cultural, and also religious centers of early modern Europe', and were therefore considered trendsetters.[250]

European courts gifted African children to each other, but there were also slave traders or governors who selected African children especially for them. An example is Stanislas Jean, French governor in Senegal, who in 1786 described how he was busy selecting African children for French aristocracy. He selected a two-year-old girl for the

[246] Rachid-S. Pegah, 'Real and Imagined Africans in Baroque Court Divertissements', in: Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke and Anne Kuhlmann eds., *Germany and the Black Diaspora. Points of Contact, 1250-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books 2013) 88.
[247] Oostindie and Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser*, 150.
[248] Esther Schreuder, '"Zwarten" in de hofcultuur, 1300-1900: van propaganda tot troost', in: Nieuwe Kerk, *Black is beautiful. Rubens tot Dumas* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: De Nieuwe Kerk and Waanders 2008) 21.
[249] Anne Kuhlmann, 'Ambiguous Duty. Black Servants at German Ancien Régime Courts', in: Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke and Anne Kuhlmann eds., *Germany and the Black Diaspora. Points of Contact, 1250-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books 2013) 58.
[250] Ibid, 59.

duchess of Orléans.[251] Another example is the story of Antonius Guilielmus Amo, who was born around 1703 in the village of Nkubeam (Ghana). When he was four years old, the WIC gave him as a present to duke Anton Ulrich van Brunswijk-Wolfenbüttel.[252]

The most well-known African children at the Dutch court are Cupido and Sideron. Schreuder has published several works about their lives at the court of stadholder Willem V (1748-1806) in The Hague, where both children arrived as presents. Sideron, born in 1756 in Curaçao, came to the court in 1763.[253] Somewhere around 1765, Cupido, born in Guinea, arrived at the court as well. Both of them never returned to their places of birth. The Hague must have made an impression on Cupido and Sideron. The city was characterized by the many embassies and governing and juridical institutions that were situated there, but also the many city palaces and all the flowers and greenery. It was an international city, swarming with foreign ambassadors and their servants.[254] Most importantly, it was where stadholder Willem V and later his wife Wilhelmina van Pruisen (1751-1820) lived, with their two hundred and fifty employees.[255] French philosopher Denis Diderot, however, called the city a 'den of espionage' and a 'resort of blabbermouths', referring to the many envoys in the city and the idle lives of the rich.[256] As in Amsterdam, there were African people living in the city. In the latest fashion, wealthy residents, just as their Amsterdam counterparts, had African servants.[257] Cupido and Sideron were also not the first Africans to arrive at the court; Jean Rabo (1714-1769) was the former valet of Willem IV and Anna van Hannover and lived in the Hague until his death in 1769.[258] Cupido and Sideron experienced court culture to the fullest, with extravagant dinners, balls, concerts, theatre plays, and other cultural activities. In 1765 and 1766, for instance, Mozart – who was at that time only ten years old – visited the court to give concerts.[259]

---

[251] Esther Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron. Twee Moren aan het hof van Oranje* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans 2017) 22.
[252] Ibid, 25.
[253] Ibid, 30. Sideron also appears in the sources as *Citron*, *Citroen*, *Cederon*, *Cideron*, *etc.* Esther Schreuder explains that he signed as *Sideron*.
[254] Roelof van Gelder, *Dichter in de jungle. John Gabriel Stedman, 1744-1797* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact 2019) 189.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron*, 41; Gelder, *Dichter in de jungle*, 189.
[257] Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron*, 41.
[258] Ibid, 43.
[259] Gelder, *Dichter in de jungle*, 190.

Kuhlmann argues that 'the court seems to have offered better options for social advancement than other social spaces, even when black people first arrived as "gifts."'[260] Most importantly, there existed a strong hierarchy, but it was not racially defined. Instead, servants' positions relied on their relationships with their rulers.[261] In 1778, Cupido and Sideron were promoted to valets.[262] From valets it was required they were loyal, faithful, and were dedicated to serving their ruler. As valets, Cupido and Sideron were in charge, had their own servant, and were paid at least five hundred guilders a year.[263] When Willem V fled to England in 1795 for the patriots during the Batavian Revolution (1794-1799), he took Cupido and Sideron with him. This is striking, because Willem V only took a small part of his household with him.[264] Wilhelmina even appointed Sideron as her first valet, and Willem V continued to financially support Cupido's wife and children after his death in 1806.[265]

Yet, as Kuhlmann explains, 'court service, in a symbolic sense, could be regarded as both an honor and a form of subordination.'[266] Historian Sarah C. Maza explains this as follows: 'No matter how much affection employers felt for their servants, no matter how genuine their concern for some members of their staff, it rarely crossed their minds that these men and women were beings like themselves.'[267] As Maduro argues, they were living proof of their owners' amassed wealth in the colonies and started to become fashion statements.[268] While this was at first only reserved for the aristocracy, wealthy planters, traders, and colonial officials to have African servants, during the eighteenth century it became popular under the upper class (of whom some had not even been to the colonies) as well.[269] African children turned into status symbols.

[260] Kuhlmann, 'Ambiguous Duty', 65.
[261] Ibid, 67.
[262] Schreuder, '"Zwarten" in de hofcultuur, 1300-1900: van propaganda tot troost', 29.
[263] Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron*, 239.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid, 241.
[266] Kuhlmann, 'Ambiguous Duty', 68.
[267] Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in 18th-Century France. The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2014) 195.
[268] Oostindie and Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser*, 139.
[269] Ibid, 139.

II Trade and presents

The increased demand for African children in the Dutch Republic was made possible by a specific trade in children and the practice of giving them away as presents, as the European courts had done for centuries already. Recent findings in the Amsterdam notarial archive, consisting of authorizations to sell enslaved children, suggest that there was a specific trade in African children in Amsterdam in the eighteenth century. This trade had four characteristics: 1) the traders worked in the maritime industry, often with higher ranks; 2) the enslaved children were both Asian and African, male, and often not staying in Amsterdam themselves; 3) the trade took place at the notary, were the trader either authorized someone else to sell the enslaved child, or directly sold the enslaved child to its new owner.

The following examples illustrate what this trade looked like. On 22 September 1722, Grietje Witte went to Amsterdam notary George Wetstein. She explained that her son, Dirk Laburg, who was first mate on the Dutch East Indiaman the *Hakkesburg*, had died during his homebound voyage. According to Witte, he had left 'a certain black boy called Titus' in the care of freeman Johannes Tibauts in Batavia. As sole heir, Witte authorized Jan Meijert, constable's mate (*konstabelsmaat*) on the VOC-ship the *Meynden*, to claim from Tibauts the boy Titus and to sell him for the highest price possible.[270]

In another example, we can actually follow the same child switch owners multiple times. On 16 April 1739, Michiel Scholvijn, from Zaandam, and Pieter Lakeman, then first mate on the VOC-ship the *Adrichem*, appeared for Amsterdam notary Philippus Pot. Scholvijn declared to have sold 'a black slave or boy from Malabar called Cupido, currently staying at the Cape of Good Hope in the care of Willem …, constable of the battery there, for a sum of 180 guilders.'[271] If Lakeman, when he would arrive at the Cape, would find Cupido dead, missing, sick, or with broken limbs, in which case 'he would not be fully able to serve,' Scholvijn had to pay Lakeman's wife the purchase price 180 guilders back.[272] The story continues in 1745, when Gesina

[270] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 8299, deed 170, 22 September 1722.
[271] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10131, deed 144, 16 April 1739.
[272] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10131, deed 144, 16 April 1739. Michiel Scholvijn described Cupido as 'from Malabar' (India), but also as 'black'.[272] Where Cupido was born, remains unclear.

Vegtermans, now widow of Lakeman, appeared for the same notary. She declared that her husband, VOC-captain Lakeman (apparently he got promoted), had died and that she was his sole heir. Vegtermans then authorized Jacobus Mulder, VOC *equipagemeester* at the Cape, to claim all of Lakemans possessions there and sell them for the best price possible, including 'the Moorish boy or slave called Cupido, currently staying at the house of widow Paling at the Cape of Good Hope.'[273] Thus, in 1745, Cupido would have gone "through the hands" of at least three different slave owners, and stayed at different locations at the Cape of Good Hope.

Many of the enslaved children sold from Amsterdam stayed at the Cape of Good Hope. Considering they were often owned by VOC staff this makes sense. Historians Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum explain that 'in 1636, the VOC forbade "natives to secretly board homeward vessels" and "Europeans to take slaves on their (homeward) voyage" to the Dutch Republic', yet 'complaints of slaves actually reaching the Dutch Republic without permission would persist in spite of this.'[274] If a company servant wanted to transport an enslaved person to the Dutch Republic, he had to request permission. What many company servants did instead was that they left their enslaved people behind at the Cape of Good Hope. From 1720 to the end of the eighteenth century, Mbeki and Van Rossum estimated that the number of enslaved people at the Cape rose from 3,000 to more than 15,000.[275] An important observation Mbeki and Van Rossum make is that the enslaved people traded by VOC personnel 'were strikingly young', which attests for the children found in the Amsterdam notarial archive.[276] They also explain that enslaved people came to the Cape via various routes and had various origins, and that slave transport to the Cape in general was 'a profitable business'.[277] It is, therefore, likely that Cupido, for instance, was bought by Scholvijn in Malabar, but brought there by someone else.

[273] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10143, deed 273, 23 November 1745.
[274] Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum, 'Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: a Study into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and the Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa', *Slavery & Abolition* 38 (2017) 100.
[275] Ibid, 98.
[276] Ibid, 110.
[277] Ibid, 105.

Some of the traded African children were resold to European courts or to rich merchants.[278] Others were given away as "gifts", during the eighteenth century a common practice among WIC-officials and traders. The gifted children often came from Guinea, Suriname, or the Antilles.[279] According to Schreuder, the MCC even gave its captains enslaved people as profit distributions. In 1733, *oppercommies* Hertogh had given captain Andries Graan of the WIC-ship the *Leusden* an enslaved girl, who was sold in Suriname for 725 guilders.[280] In November 1733, the WIC decided that captains of slave ships were no longer allowed to board captives for their own private trade. It is, however, unlikely that all captains abided by the rules.

There are multiple examples of African children that were transported to other parts of the worlds because they were presents. Quaco told Stedman, for instance, that he had been a gift to an army captain, who had consequently sold him to a Dutch captain, which was how he ended up in Suriname.[281] In Suriname, Quaco was purchased by Walter Kennedy, who loaned him to Stedman in 1772, and in 1781 he was "given" to the countess of Rosendaal. Another well-known example is Jacobus Capitein (c.1717-1747). Capitein was born in West Africa, kidnapped, and sold to captain Aarnout Steenhart when he was seven or eight years old. Captain Steenhart then gave him as a present to Jacob van Goch, who worked for the WIC in Shama (Ghana). Jacobus stayed there with Van Goch until 1728, when Van Goch decided to leave for Holland.[282] He took Jacobus with him, who was now ten or eleven years old. Van Goch first took him to Middelburg, and later The Hague, where Jacobus went to school. Jacobus is remembered for his dissertation from 1742, in which he argued that slavery did not contradict Christian freedom.[283] That same year, he left the Dutch Republic to go back to Elmina to become a missionary, with little success.[284] Children who were traded and gifted in this way switched owners and places multiple times.

---

[278] Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron*, 26.
[279] Ibid, 25.
[280] Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden¸* 125. Captain Andries Graan only received half of the selling price, because the *commiezen* transferred the remainder to the WIC.
[281] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, 529.
[282] Christine Levecq, 'Jacobus Capitein: Dutch Calvinist and Black Cosmopolitan', *Research in African Literatures* 44 (2013) 147.
[283] Ibid, 154.
[284] Ibid, 157-163.

III Footboys

Most children would arrive in the Dutch Republic as footboys. They had been forced to follow their owners overseas to a totally unknown country. On 18 February 1765, an inventory was made of all the possessions of Jan Jeltema aboard *de Hollandia* by notary Philippus Pot and captain David Speet.[285] The ship had left Suriname in September 1764 and had arrived in Amsterdam two months later. Jeltema, who was already ill when he boarded the ship, died during the voyage. Jeltema had brought a variety of items with, including silver shoe-buckles, chocolate, books, wigs, clothing, a bed, and a hammock. On the last page, however, it is revealed that he had not only brought items aboard. Casually listed among the above mentioned variety of objects 'a black slave boy, for ditto a red cap, a skort (*rokbroek*) and a camisole, a baize (*baaijtje*) and a little mirror.'[286]

In the various deeds that followed that year, the boy was not mentioned again. Finally, in 1766, he appeared in a receipt. Jeltema's assets in Suriname were worth a total amount of 20,372 guilders but he still had to pay his creditors, including Arend Exalto 'a certain pretention for the negro boy Apropo who has served the aforementioned deceased [Jan Jeltema] on his voyage hither.'[287] The "black slave boy" was thus called Apropo and he had belonged to Arend Exalto in Suriname. Apropo had served Jeltema as a footboy and had taken care of him during his voyage to Amsterdam. In an earlier receipt, Jeltema's heirs declared they had received *all* of Jeltema's possessions – '*nothing excluded*'.[288] His heirs had also paid captain David Speet three hundred guilders for the transport of Jeltema, 'a black boy, and the aforementioned goods.'[289] The question whether Apropo was sent back to Suriname, or stayed in Amsterdam with Jeltema's heirs, is left unanswered.

Important to note is that footboys who were brought to the Dutch Republic were brought to a place where slavery formally did not exist. This did not mean, however, that these children were considered free persons by the Dutch. The life of Stedman's footboy Quaco illustrates his complicated status as a footboy in the Dutch Republic. When Stedman left Suriname in 1777, he took Quaco with him. That winter, Quaco

[285] Jan Jeltema has barely left any traces in the archives. What he did in Suriname is unknown.
[286] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10170, deed 42, 18 February 1765.
[287] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10172, deed 10, 16 January 1766.
[288] NL-SAA, 5075, inv .nr. 10170, deed 37, 17 February 1765.
[289] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10170, deed 37, 17 February 1765.

stayed with Stedman's brother in Zutphen, where went to school, and in March, Quaco followed Stedman again, this time to Bergen op Zoom.[290] In 1778, Stedman took Quaco with him to Antwerpen, Mechelen, and Brussels where he visited cathedrals, palaces, and art collections.[291] On 10 July 1778, Stedman finally wrote down in his diary: 'This day Quaco is out of slavery, being come one year and six weeks.'[292] From here, it becomes clear that Stedman was aware of the legislation regarding enslaved people in the Dutch Republic from 1776, a year after Stedman brought Quaco to the country. Although slavery was forbidden, there were in reality enslaved people living in the Dutch Republic. Throughout the eighteenth century, more planters, captains, or merchants took enslaved people with them to the Dutch Republic, but their presence caused juridical problems. If enslaved people set foot in Amsterdam, where they free? Or did they remain property of their masters? In 1776, the Court finally ended the confusion about the status of enslaved people brought over to the Dutch Republic from the colonies. Enslaved people maintained their status and had to be sent back to the colony they came from within six months after their arrival. Owners could appeal for an extension of another six months, but after that year, the enslaved person would be free.[293]

It seems that Stedman had appealed for an extension, which freed Quaco only after one year. Interestingly, Quaco did not leave Stedman and kept serving him until 1781. Yet, in his travel account Stedman wrote down that in 1777:

> I now also made a *present* of my true and faithful black boy Quaco by his own consent to the countess of Rosendaal, to which family I was under very high obligations and who, since on account of his honesty and sober conduct, not only christened him by the name of Stedman at my desire, but created him to be their butler, with a promise to take care of him as long as he lived and which was a blessing I could never have bestowed on him myself.[294]

[290] Gelder, *Dichter in de jungle*, 194.
[291] Ibid, 197.
[292] Ibid, 198.
[293] Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron*, 26.
[294] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, 620.

As historian Roelof van Gelder, however, points out, this did not happen until 1781, four years later, when Quaco had been a free person for a few years already.[295] This not only shows that Stedman tried to portray himself differently, but also that "freedom" was a relative concept among slave owners in the Dutch Republic. While Stedman knew Quaco was a free person, he still felt he had the right and power to give Quaco away as a "present" to the countess of Rosendaal. In Stedman's eyes, Quaco's freedom was surely different from white people's freedom in the Dutch Republic, even after the 1776 legislation.

IV Resistance

That the Dutch Republic, specifically Amsterdam, offered possibilities to escape slavery was something enslaved children in the eighteenth-century Dutch World were aware of. The story of Snak, Bastiaan, and Claes clearly illustrates that children actively resisted their lives in slavery and tried to find ways to escape the colonies to the Dutch Republic, because they knew slavery formally did not exist there. It all started in 1733 in Amsterdam when Nicolaas Pot had asked captain Steven van Lint, who would sail to Curaçao with the ship the *Maria Jacoba*, to transport his 'servant or slave' the black boy Snak to Curaçao.[296] There, captain Van Lint had to bring Snak to Jacob de Petersen. A declaration from captain Van Lint, his wife Maasje Everts, and their son Woutertje from 1735 provides more information about Snak. According to Van Lint, Snak had said goodbye to Pot 'very satisfied and even gladdened and cheerful.'[297] Afterwards, Snak had left with captain Van Lint without 'being held' by him 'and thus *liber* and free.'[298] Together they walked from the Leidsedwarsstraat, where Pot lived, to the house of captain Van Lint in the Oranjestraat. There was another black boy staying at captain Van Lint's house, but his identity remains a mystery. Son Woutertje had gone out shopping with both Snak and the other boy and bought each of them a hat.[299]

[295] Van Gelder, *Dichter in de jungle*, 202-203.
[296] The age of Snak was not mentioned.
[297] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10124, deed 263, 31 October 1735.
[298] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10124, deed 263, 31 October 1735.
[299] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10124, deed 263, 31 October 1735.

Once in Curaçao Snak was brought to De Petersen, who sold Snak to fiscal Jan van Schagen. The Van Lints declared that they had visited fiscal Van Schagen various times, and that they had never seen him mistreating his slaves, including Snak.[300] The message behind the declaration is clear: Snak had no reason to desert his new master. Snak, however, decided to run away from Van Schagen. In Curaçao, there were a few different ways in which enslaved people could run away. Most enslaved people fled to the other side: Venezuela. Spanish colonial officials were authorized by the Spanish Crown to manumit runaway slaves who had fled rival protestant colonies. Additionally, as Linda M. Rupert explains, 'the dozens of small sea-craft which sailed regularly between the Dutch island and the Spanish American mainland provided ample opportunity for enslaved Afro-Curaçaoans to flee the island.'[301] By the mid-eighteenth century, 'marronage from the island to the mainland skyrocketed.'[302] Another escape route was via St. Eustatius or St. Maarten to surrounding English and Spanish islands.[303] Sometimes, however, enslaved people boarded ships to Amsterdam as stowaways. Increasing shipping between Curaçao and Amsterdam offered enslaved people an opportunity to flee to the Dutch Republic. Legislation issued by governor Jeremias van Collen in 1714 raises the assumption that this happened frequently: stowaways had to be transported back to Curaçao as soon as possible.[304] We should not forget that Snak had experienced Amsterdam. He was aware of the simple fact that theoretically slavery did not exist there, and he had seen free African people walking around the streets. Perhaps he had even developed a social network, or knew people that would help him.

In May 1735, he secretly boarded the *Maria Jacoba*, the same ship that had brought him to Curaçao and was still under the command of captain Van Lint. With two other enslaved boys, Bastiaan and Claes, he hid aboard the ship.[305] Bastiaan and Claes belonged to Paulina Heijer, widow of Jan Ellis, and were household slaves.[306] Claes was

[300] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10124, deed 263, 31 October 1735.
[301] Linda M. Rupert, 'Marronage, Manumission and Maritime Trade in the Early Modern Caribbean', *Slavery & Abolition* 30 (2009) 363-364.
[302] Ibid, 364.
[303] Oostindie and Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser*, 147.
[304] Ibid, 147.
[305] The ages of Bastiaan and Claes were not mentioned.
[306] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 8730, deed 1653, 15 August 1735.

also a shoemaker.[307] On the 3rd of May, the ship set sail to Amsterdam. At night, Bastiaan was discovered, and the next morning Snak and Claes were discovered as well.[308]

The fate of Snak and Bastiaan remains unknown. They either voluntarily went back to Curaçao, or they fled to the free black community in Amsterdam. The latter is not completely unlikely, especially for Snak, considering that Claes was only arrested months after his arrival. That he was arrested, was because of an interesting court case. Heijer, his owner, argued that Claes was her "property" and had to come back to Curaçao. Claes, however, argued that he was free because he was on "free soil". Interestingly, the Amsterdam *schout* agreed with Claes and rejected Heijers request. Unfortunately for Claes, Heijer appealed to the High Court (*Hoge Raad*), that agreed that slavery was indeed forbidden in the Dutch Republic, but also argued that it was not forbidden for slave owners to prosecute their enslaved people. The conclusion of the High Court was that Claes had to be transported back to Curaçao on the first ship that would leave.[309]

But even if enslaved children had no knowledge of the Dutch Republic before, they actively resisted their enslavement once there. The following story about Sambij, Birree, and Porx, three footboys who served their owner WIC-*oppercommies* Roelof van Ulsen (1723-1765), shows the courage enslaved children had to fight for their beliefs in a world totally unknown to them. Van Ulsen had decided in 1764 that after having served the WIC for almost thirty years in Africa, he wanted to return to the Dutch Republic. In October that year he boarded the slave ship the *Publicola*. There were three hundred and fifty enslaved people on the ship, of whom 32 belonged to Van Ulsen. Van Ulsen also had four footboys with him, Sambij, Birree, and Porx; the fourth boy was eventually added to the "cargo" and sold.[310] Under the command of captain Jacob van

[307] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10124, deed 305, 4 December 1735.
[308] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 8730, deed 1653, 15 August 1735.
[309] Miguel Peres dos Santos, 'Transcript of the ruling of the case against Claes by The High Court in The Hague on the 23 of June of 1736', *Geographies of Freedom* <https://geographiesoffreedom.wordpress.com/2019/02/05/transcript-of-the-ruling-of-the-case-against-claes-by-the-high-court-in-the-hague-on-the-23-of-june-of-1736/> (accessed 8 April 2020); Hans-Jan van Kralingen, 'Some remarks on slavery and legal history', *Leiden Law Blog* (2014) <https://leidenlawblog.nl/articles/some-remarks-on-slavery-and-legal-history> (accessed 8 April 2020).
[310] A. A. van der Houwen, 'Om de schatten van Roelof Ulsen, een nalatenschap in de 18e eeuw', *Brielse Mare* 9 (1999) 36. This article speaks of Pollux, Berij (or Pichem), and Poerij. In their own declaration they call themselves Sambij, Birree, and Porx, which is why I chose use these names.

Bell (c.1728-c.1767) the *Publicola* sailed from Guinea to Suriname, where Van Ulsen stayed for a few months with Sambij, Birree, and his son Hermanus. Porx stayed aboard the *Publicola* to take care of Van Ulsen's luggage. On their voyage to Rotterdam, Van Ulsen fell ill and died.[311] Months later, Sambij, Birree, and Porx declared for the Amsterdam notary Jelmer de Bruijn that captain Van Bell was a 'bad white'.[312] Sambij, Birree, and Porx wanted to save Van Ulsen's corpse so that he could be buried in the Dutch Republic, but captain Van Bell had thrown him overboard instead. Other sailors had later told them that captain Van Bell had done wrong, because 'great men' where always buried on land. They also declared that captain Van Bell had often been angry towards Van Ulsen, and that Van Ulsen complained about it towards them.[313]

Additionally, the boys declared that they had seen captain Van Bell had given his wife some of Van Ulsen's belongings, including his bed and his cattle. Once in Rotterdam, captain Van Bell had been nicer to the boys, but – as they declared themselves – with an evil purpose. Not much later, he had taken them aside and threatened them with the following words:

> If they write to you from Amsterdam, you have to tell them you will not come, because if you do, they will send you with the first ship to Suriname and sell you there for slaves, but if you stay here, then I will bring you back to Guinea make sure you will be free.[314]

Most importantly, he then forbid them to tell others of their conversation. The threat is significant, because it shows how the Dutch tried to reinforce the status of enslaved people in a place where slavery formally did not exist. In Guinea, the three boys had been enslaved by Van Ulsen and they had followed him overseas as footboys. But now, they found themselves in a place where slavery did not exist, without their owner. Captain Van Bell was aware of this, but nevertheless tried to threaten their freedom in order to secure himself.

[311] Ibid, 37.
[312] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3610, 19 August 1765.
[313] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3610, 19 August 1765.
[314] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3610, 19 August 1765.

From the declaration it becomes clear the three boys also did not speak the Dutch language; it was translated from Portuguese. They admitted that they had been very afraid, but – courageously – told a Dutch sailor, who they considered 'their friend'.[315] This Dutch sailor reassured them that captain Van Bell had lied, and that no such thing would happen in Amsterdam. Therefore, they went to the notary in Amsterdam and told him about the crimes of their captain, and even listed all of the items he had stolen during the voyage from their late owner Van Ulsen. The declaration was used in a case against captain Van Bell filed by Van Ulsen's heirs.[316] The declaration is unique because it tells the story from the perspective of the three enslaved boys, not that of the enslaver. The fact that the three boys had to tell the whole story a second time so that two other men who spoke Portuguese, including slave trader Pieter Volkmar, could check its validity, shows that they were not fully trusted either. The two men, however, declared that the story was translated correctly and also that the three boys had taken an oath in a way that was familiar in Africa, namely drinking a certain type of water.[317]

Conclusion

This chapter showed that the presence of enslaved children in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic has to be reconsidered. Throughout the eighteenth century, dozens or maybe hundreds of children were traded, gifted, or transported to the Dutch Republic, where they served their owners as footboys – as status symbols. The simple fact that they were given to someone as a "present" or used to show their owners' wealth and power, shows that they were considered nothing more than an "object" without feelings or own will. However, as the stories of Snak, Bastiaan, Claes, Sambij, Birree, and Porx, show, enslaved children in the Dutch Republic fought for their freedom and their beliefs, in a world where slavery was always lurking. The fact that children resisted their lives in slavery was probably considered extra problematic by the Dutch, because it implied that slave owners were unable to even keep enslaved children under their control.

[315] NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3610, 19 August 1765.
[316] Van der Houwen, 'Om de schatten van Roelof Ulsen, een nalatenschap in de 18e eeuw', 39.
[317] SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3610, 19 August 1765.

Conclusion

The front page shows a drawing that was originally published in John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Suriname* in 1793. It depicts a slave family consisting of a man, a pregnant woman, and two children. The man is carrying fish, and the woman is carrying a basket with vegetables and fruit on her head and one child on her back. The other child is pulling on her dress. The tobacco pipe in her mouth and the cotton spindle in her hand are references to the riches of the Dutch colonies, cultivated by enslaved people under horrendous working conditions. The children in this drawing were taken care of by their parents and were surrounded by their siblings. Yet, the reality for the thousands of enslaved children in Suriname in the eighteenth century was very different.

This thesis has given a voice to the many children who were enslaved by the Dutch in the eighteenth century. They were more than just shadows of their family members or mothers, and their stories are significant in the study of the African diaspora. The various roles they had made them not just valuable but essential to the plantation complex. This thesis provided an overview of child slavery in the eighteenth-century Dutch World. What is revealed, is a link between the different aspects of that world. Children were a defining factor in linking four continents together: Africa, America, Europe, and even Asia. Their unique and important role in the Dutch slave system has been overlooked and underestimated.

While the eighteenth century saw a change in the concept of childhood in Northwest Europe, ideas about the childhood of enslaved children did not progress. Free white children were educated to become virtuous citizens and were safeguarded against the vices of society. This was different for enslaved children, who were never meant to become citizens (i.e. they were property) but hardworking slaves. Even though ideas about childhood were changing in the eighteenth century, these changes did not benefit enslaved children. The changing sentiment about childhood in the eighteenth century only further enhanced racial differences from an even earlier age. Enslaved children saw how white children enjoyed certain privileges in their lives that they themselves did not enjoy. White children knew their birthdays, were surrounded by

their relatives, were educated, and could just play. Enslaved children were deprived of these privileges and forced into a system of racial inequality from the day they were born.

Because problems with defining "child" and "childhood" in the historiography on the Dutch transatlantic slave trade have thus far been ignored, the role of children in the slave trade has immensely been underestimated. The contracts of the MCC and the Smitts show contrary to what historians such as Johannes Postma and Leo Balai have argued Dutch slave traders did not stick to the supposed minimum age of fifteen and extensively traded in children way below that age.[318] The determining factor in the slave trade was not age but workability. The only children that were not desired by slave traders were infants, yet the surgeon's journal of the slave ship the *Zeemercuur* shows that infants were born on great numbers on ships. Current estimates overlook the different trading strategies of slave traders and the presence of infants on slave ships. Therefore, the number of enslaved children in the eighteenth-century slave trade must have been higher than assumed.

In Suriname, enslaved children were put to work on plantations and in households from a young age. The work they performed varied, ranging from field work, work in the sugar mill and cookhouse, or household work, to work where more skill or responsibility were required, such as carpentry or tending cattle. The work enslaved children performed was highly racialized and gendered. Mulatto children were generally exempted from field labor and had more opportunities for manumission. Because of their reproductive capability, enslaved girls were exposed to sexual violence from an early age. There was a permanent danger of sexual violence from white overseers or plantation owners, or even enslaved men on the plantation. Consequently, their childhood ended even sooner than the childhood of enslaved boys. Additionally, the childhood of enslaved children was – as in the slave trade – characterized by separation. Enslaved children barely saw their parents, if they even had them in the first place.

The increasing popularity of African children as servants in elite European households resulted in a growing demand for enslaved children in the eighteenth-

[318] Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*; Balai, *Slavenschip Leusden*.

century Dutch Republic. Likely hundreds of enslaved children, mostly footboys, were traded by and gifted to European courts and planters, and merchants were increasingly interested in having footboys to enhance their status as well. While enslaved children who were brought to the Dutch Republic generally had better chances for life improvement, they became status symbols. Their presence alone resembled their enslaver's amassed wealth and status overseas. Yet, it was exactly in these spheres where enslaved children explored the possibilities to escape their lives in slavery. From the day they were born, enslaved children had heard stories. They had seen other enslaved people pilfer supplies, resist work duties, and run away. The story of Snak, Bastiaan, and Claes shows that enslaved children found each other in their quest for freedom and resisted their lives in slavery together. The fact that captain Van Bell threatened Sambij, Birree, and Porx with re-enslavement in a place where slavery formally did not exist shows how the Dutch were afraid of the resistance of enslaved children and desperately tried to control them to no avail.

If we allocate the mothers and other family members into the background and just focus on the enslaved children themselves, we can see that enslaved children had childhoods, but *dissimilar childhoods*. The childhood of enslaved children differed from our concept of childhood, from the eighteenth-century Northwest European concept of childhood, and most importantly, from each other. How enslaved children in the eighteenth-century Dutch World experienced their childhood depended on a variety of factors, and by generalizing them we overlook the meaning of their lives in the African diaspora.

How enslaved children in the eighteenth-century Dutch World experienced their childhood mostly depended on three factors. Firstly, it mattered if they were surrounded by their parents. Were they raised by their parents? Or were they raised by other people on the plantation or in the household? Children in the slave trade were taken from their parents and experienced their childhood differently from children whose parents or relatives were living on the plantation. They did not have anyone to fall back on and had to find new fictive kin. It also mattered who their parents were in the first place. Children whose fathers were white men were often reprieved from field labor and enjoyed more privileges than children who had two black parents. Secondly, how enslaved children experienced their childhood depended on the type of work they

were forced to do. Enslaved children who were put into the fields were treated harsher than children who were taught a craft or who served as servants. It should, however, be noted, that while children who were reprieved from field work or dangerous work in the cookhouse, were generally better off, they had a higher chance of being separated from their (fictive) kin and were used as status symbols without any other purpose. The lives of footboys who traveled with their owners to the Dutch Republic was less harsh but at the same time way lonelier. Most importantly, the work enslaved children was highly racialized and gendered. Throughout their childhood, they were confronted with the differences between them and white children, but also between them and other enslaved children on the plantation: differences between black and mulatto children, differences between saltwater and creole children, and differences between boys and girls. Lastly, the place where these children were enslaved also greatly impacted how they experienced their childhood. Enslaved children in households generally performed less harsh work but were more prone to violence, while enslaved children in the Dutch Republic had more opportunities for life enhancement but were in an environment where their status as fashion statements and status symbols was permanently inflicted on them. The childhood of all enslaved children of the eighteenth-century Dutch World was characterized by separation and differences. No matter who they were surrounded by, these children often must have felt lonely, and no matter what work they were forced to do and where they were enslaved, these children must have been frustrated. That some enslaved children also resisted their lives in slavery and tried to escape shows that, even though these children lived in awful situations, they remained hopeful to change their lives.

Historian Wilma King was, in a sense, right in arguing that the childhood of enslaved children was “stolen”. Throughout their time as children, enslaved children were surrounded by famine, violence, and death. They were forced to grow up in extreme circumstances on plantations way before their time, and the experiences in their youth would haunt them forever. However, this did not mean that enslaved children had no childhood. King, and others after her, made the mistake of comparing our concept of childhood with the childhood of enslaved children in nineteenth-century America, while the two are, in fact, incommensurable. Schwartz in her turn argued that the childhood of enslaved children was not stolen, but contested. According to

Schwartz, enslaved people were despite the constant interference of planters often able to raise their children as they wished. There are, however, problems with this argument. Studies on slave motherhood have shown that the conditions on plantations not only made it difficult to give birth to alive and healthy babies but also that the opportunity to raise their children was taken from enslaved mothers as they were expected back on the field as soon as possible. This is also why on every plantation in Suriname there were midwives or elderly babysitters. That is, of course, not to say that enslaved parents did not love their children, but just that planters made it extremely difficult for them to raise their children by themselves. Additionally, the work children were assigned to do sometimes forced them to be away from their parents. Some children were sent to Paramaribo or even to the Dutch Republic to acquire a skill. The most striking example is that of the many footboys who traveled long distances with their owners. Lastly, Schwartz argued that enslaved children had (contested) childhoods because their parents were able to take care of them. But what about the enslaved children who had no parents? The stories of enslaved children who were orphans are left out of the narrative.

For decades historians have studied the history of slavery. What historians have in common with the millions of enslaved people transported across the Atlantic and the many slaveholders who exploited the lives of others for centuries is that all of these people were once children. Their experiences as children shaped their lives. Thus, if we want to understand the motives of enslaved people and slaveholders, it is of absolute necessity to pay more attention to the history of childhood and child slavery. This, of course, raises new questions. How did different ideas about childhood relate to each other? How did slaveholders relate their own childhood to that of the enslaved people they owned? Historian Dienke Hondius already showed in *Blackness in Western Europe. Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* how in Northwest Europe the image arose of Africans as childish or as children, and how slaveholders took on a paternalist role.[319] Asking these questions brings us to a better understanding of slave societies in the Atlantic world.

[319] Dienke Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe. Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers 2014).

In this thesis, I limited myself to enslaved children in the eighteenth-century Dutch World to provide an overview that did not yet exist. Moving forward, it would be interesting to further expand the history of child slavery. Comparing the different histories of enslaved children allows for a better understanding of their lives. Which patterns in the childhood of enslaved children in the Atlantic World can be discovered? And what differences? This also means reassessing the role of children in the transatlantic slave trade and in the Atlantic. Too many enslaved children have been "forgotten" because of a lack of interest in the role of enslaved children in the early modern world.

Appendix I Sales list of MCC-ship the *Zeemercuur* (1787-1790)

Buyer	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Paid (*f.*)**
Plantation Felix	8		4	4		4640,-
Plantation Solitude	8		4	4		4640,-
J. B. van Griethuijsen	15	2	8	5		6750,-
W. J. Spillenaar	4		1 + child	1	1	1680,-
Idem (bill of exchange larger than purchase price)						80,-
C. Juliaans	12	8	4			6480,-
H. C. Flohr	2		2 + child			800,-
Idem (still to be paid *f.* 300 with 6% interest)						318,-
W. H. van Ommeren (with 6% interest, but *f.* 80 less)	6	4	1	1		4075,-
Jacques Ruden	2			2		600,-
Mrs. Ruysenaar					child	60,-
J. A. van Lobrecht	1		1			560,-
Mrs. Bologne	1		1			500,-
Mrs. Arens	1	1				500,-
J. H. B. Lousade	3				3	1000,-
Widow Nunes	1				1	400,-
F. C. Stolkert	15	5	7	3		6750,-
Jacoba Reijswijk	1				1	300,-
Aron Jessuron	1		1			400,-
No name – paid in cash	2	1			1	700,-
Leufting	1			1		300,-

J. Mohl	1			1		318,-
Doctor Emanuels	1		1			70,-
No name – paid in cash	1			1		50,-
J. N. Campos	1	1				400,-
The free Pieternella	2		1		1	300,-
Widow Zk. Soesman, *the remnants*	8	2	1	4	1	2145,-

Note: Child refers to infant.

Source: NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scan 61.

List of images and tables

Images

Tables

Table 3 NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406, scans 1-70.

Table 4 Prize Papers, HCA32-1132, scans 911-943.

Table 5 Dutch Slavery Tax Suriname, 'On the original source', https://www.dutchslaverytaxsuriname.com/en/on-the-original-source/ (accessed 15 March 2020).

Bibliography

Primary sources

Amsterdam City Archives (NL-SAA)

NL-SAA, *Inventaris van het Archief van de Notarissen ter Standplaats Amsterdam,* 5075, inv. nr. 4776A, 26 April 1706.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 8299, deed 170, 22 September 1722.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 8730, deed 1653, 15 August 1735.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10172, deed 10, 16 January 1766.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv .nr. 10170, deed 37, 17 February 1765.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10170, deed 42, 18 February 1765.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10131, deed 144, 16 April 1739.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10124, deed 263, 31 October 1735.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10124, deed 305, 4 December 1735.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10143, deed 273, 23 November 1745.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10763, deed 223, 2 March 1756.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 698, 2 July 1765.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10821, deed 685, 29 June 1765.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 698, 2 July 1765.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10822, deed 738, 12 July 1765.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10826, deed 355, 1 April 1766

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 10860, deed 1179, 9 Oct. 1771.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3537, 11 June 1765.

NL-SAA, 5075, inv. nr. 14087, deed 3610, 19 August 1765.

National Archives The Hague (NL-HaNA)

NL-HaNA, *Sociëteit van Suriname,* 1.05.03, inv. nr. 199.

NL-HaNA, *Oud Notarieel Archief,* 11.05.11.14, inv. nr. 153.

NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 159.

NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 162.
NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 187.
NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 229.
NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 232.
NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 242.
NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 279.
NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 286.
NL-HaNA, 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 689.

Zeeuws Archief (NL-ZA)

NL-ZA, *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* (MCC), inv. nr. 1024.2.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.3.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1024.4.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1049.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1052.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1366.3.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1387.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1406.
NL-ZA, 20, inv. nr. 1410.

Prize Papers Collection

Prize Papers Collection, HCA32-1132.
Prize Papers Collection, HCA32-1134.

Secondary sources

Archard, David, *Children. Rights and Childhood* (London and New York: Routledge 1993).

Ariès, Philippe, *Centuries of Childhood* (Chatham: Pimlico 1962).

Balai, Leo, *Slavenschip Leusden. Moord aan de monding van de Marowijnerivier* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers 2013).

Brana-Shute, Rosemary, 'Approaching Freedom: The Manumission of Slaves in Suriname, 1760–1828', *Slavery & Abolition* 10 (1989) 40–63.

---, *The Manumission of Slaves in Suriname, 1760-1828* (PhD diss.; University of Florida 1985).

Buschkens, Willem F. L., *The Family System of the Paramaribo Creoles*. Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 71 ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff 1974).

Bush, Barbara, "Daughters of injur'd Africk': African Women and the Transatlantic Slave Trade', *Women's History Review* 17 (2008) 673–698.

Bush-Slimani, Barbara, 'Hard Labour: Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies', *History Workshop Journal* 36 (1993) 83–99.

Cowling, Camillia, *Conceiving Freedom. Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 2013).

Diptee, Audra A., 'African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century', *Slavery & Abolition* 27 (2006) 183–196.

Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover Publications 1995).

Eltis, David, and Stanley L. Engerman, 'Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864', *Economic History Review* 46 (1993) 308–323.

Equiano, Olaudah, *The life of Olaudah Equiano, or, Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Mineola: Dover Publications 1999).

Follett, Richard, 'Heat, Sex, and Sugar: Pregnancy and Childbearing in the Slave Quarters', *Journal of Family History* 28 (2003) 510–539.

Fuentes, Marisa J., *Dispossessed Lives. Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2016).

Gallandat, David Henry, 'Noodige onderrichtingen voor slaafhandelaren', *Verhandelingen van het Zeeuws Genootschap* (1769).

Geggus, David, 'Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records', *The Journal of African History* 30 (1989) 23–44.

Gelder, Roelof van, *Dichter in de jungle. John Gabriel Stedman, 1744-1797* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact 2019).

Hartsinck, Jan Jacob, *Beschryving van Guiana, of de wilde kust in Zuid-America* (Amsterdam: Gerrit Tielenburg 1770).

Heijer, Henk den, *Goud, ivoor en slaven. Scheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674-1740* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers 1997).

Herlein, J. D., *Beschryvinge van de volk-plantinge Zuriname* (Leeuwarden: Meindert Injema 1718).

Hondius, Dienke, *Blackness in Western Europe. Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers 2014).

Houwen, A. A. van der, 'Om de schatten van Roelof Ulsen, een nalatenschap in de 18e eeuw', *Brielse Mare* 9 (1999) 31–41.

Jordanova, Ludmilla, 'New Worlds for Children in the Eighteenth Century: Problems of Historical Interpretation', *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990) 69–83.

King, Wilma, *Stolen Childhood. Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2011).

Kolfin, Elmer, 'Zwarte modellen in de Nederlandse kunst tussen 1580 en 1800, feit en fictie', in: Nieuwe Kerk, *Black is beautiful: Rubens tot Dumas* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: De Nieuwe Kerk and Waanders 2009).

Kom, Anton de, *Wij slaven van Suriname* (Amsterdam and Antwerpen: Contact 2009).

Kralingen, Hans-Jan van, 'Some remarks on slavery and legal history', *Leiden Law Blog* (2014) <https://leidenlawblog.nl/articles/some-remarks-on-slavery-and-legal-history> [accessed 8 April 2020].

Kuhlmann, Anne, 'Ambiguous Duty. Black Servants at German Ancien Régime Courts', in: Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke en Anne Kuhlmann eds., *Germany and the Black Diaspora. Points of Contact, 1250-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books 2013) 57–73.

Lamur, Humphrey E., *The Production of Sugar and the Reproduction of Slaves at Vossenburg (Suriname), 1705-1863* (Amsterdam: Centre for Caribbean Studies 1987).

---, 'The Slave Family in Colonial 19th-Century Suriname', *Journal of Black Studies* 23 (1993) 71–381.

Levecq, Christine, 'Jacobus Capitein: Dutch Calvinist and Black Cosmopolitan', *Research in African Literatures* 44 (2013) 145–166.

Maza, Sarah C., *Servants and Masters in 18th-Century France. The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2014).

Mbeki, Linda, and Matthias van Rossum, 'Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean world: a Study into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and the Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa', *Slavery & Abolition* 38 (2017) 95–116.

McLeod, Cynthia, *Elisabeth Samson. Een vrije zwarte vrouw in het achttiende-eeuwse Suriname* (Schoorl: Conserve 1996).

Morgan, Jennifer L., *Laboring Women. Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2004).

Morgan, Kenneth, 'Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica, c .1776–1834', *History* 91 (2006) 231–253.

Mustakeem, Sowande M., *Slavery at Sea. Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*. New Black studies series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2016).

Neus-Van der Putten, Hilde, *Susanna du Plessis. Portret van een slavenmeesteres* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers 2003).

Newman, Brooke N., *A Dark Inheritance. Blood, Race, and Sex in Colonial Jamaica* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2018).

Oostindie, Gert, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou. Twee Surinaamse plantages, 1720-1870* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications 1989).

---, and Emy Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications 1986).

Paesie, Ruud, *Geschiedenis van de MCC. Opkomst, bloei en ondergang* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers 2014).

Pegah, Rachid-S., 'Real and Imagined Africans in Baroque Court Divertissements', in: Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke en Anne Kuhlmann eds., *Germany and the Black Diaspora. Points of Contact, 1250-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books 2013).

Peres dos Santos, Miguel, 'Transcript of the ruling of the case against Claes by The High Court in The Hague on the 23 of June of 1736', *Geographies of Freedom* <https://geographiesoffreedom.wordpress.com/2019/02/05/transcript-of-the-ruling-of-the-case-against-claes-by-the-high-court-in-the-hague-on-the-23-of-june-of-1736/> [accessed 8 April 2020].

Plumb, John H., 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past & Present* 67 (1975) 64–95.

Pollock, Linda A., *A Lasting Relationship. Parents and Children over Three Centuries* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England 1987).

Ponte, Mark, "Al de swarten die hier ter stede comen' Een Afro-Atlantische gemeenschap in zeventiende-eeuws Amsterdam', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis/ The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 15 (2019) 33–61.

Postma, Johannes, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1990).

Rupert, Linda M., 'Marronage, Manumission and Maritime Trade in the Early Modern Caribbean', *Slavery & Abolition* 30 (2009) 361–382.

Schreuder, Esther, *Cupido en Sideron. Twee Moren aan het hof van Oranje* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans 2017).

---, "Zwarten' in de hofcultuur, 1300-1900: van propaganda tot troost', in: Nieuwe Kerk, *Black is beautiful: Rubens tot Dumas* (Amsterdam and Zwolle: De Nieuwe Kerk and Waanders 2008).

Schwartz, Marie Jenkins, *Born in Bondage. Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2000) <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674007208> [accessed 9 May 2020].

Smidt, J. Th de, and To van der Lee, *Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname, 1667-1816* I & II. West Indisch plakaatboek (Amsterdam: Emmering 1973).

Stedman, John Gabriel, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam. Transcribed for the First Time from the Original 1790 Manuscript*. Richard Price and Sally Price eds. (New York: Open Road Distribution 2010).

Stipriaan, Alex van, *Surinaams contrast. Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie 1750-1863*. Caribbean series 13 (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij 1993).

Stone, Lawrence, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1977).

Turner, Sasha, *Contested Bodies. Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2017).

---, 'Home-grown Slaves: Women, Reproductions, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', *Journal of Women's History* 23 (2011) 39–62.

Vasconcellos, Colleen A., 'Finding Enslaved Children's Place, Voice, and Agency within the Narrative', *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 30 (2015) 17–29.

---, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica, 1788–1838* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press 2015).

Welch, Pedro, 'The Slave Family in the Urban Context: Views from Bridgetown, Barbados, 1780-1816', *The Journal of Caribbean History* 29 (1995) 11–24.

Index enslaved children

Note:

Name: name of enslaved child in source

Place: place of enslavement

Years: year in the source or living years if known