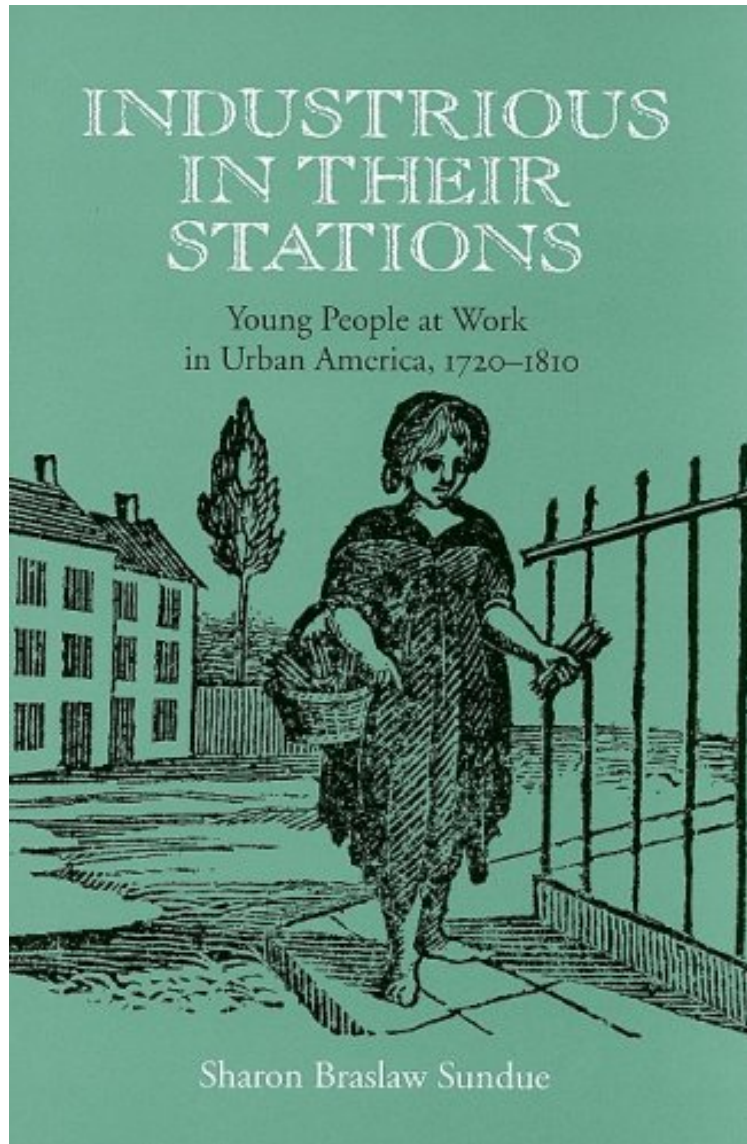


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Industrious in Their Stations: Young People at Work in Urban America, 1720-1810

Sharon Braslaw Sundue

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Industrious in Their Stations is the first comparative study of child labor in eighteenth-century America. Focusing on Philadelphia, Boston, and Charleston, Sundue examines the work experiences of children and analyzes regional differences in child labor according to gender, race, and class. During the eighteenth century, work was central to the lives of most young people. Work skills, learned young, were regarded as the crux of a useful education, heralded as a preventative against idleness and sin, and as representing a vital contribution to the economy. By century's end, however, the "diffusion of knowledge" to all white citizens was being described by many political thinkers as critical to securing the new republic, and more formal education had gained popularity. But this expansion of schooling opportunities did not affect all groups of children equally. Sundue argues that controlling access to education, both academic and vocational, was an essential mechanism for controlling the potentially unruly poor. By comparing regional elite efforts to afford the young poor both vocational and formal academic education, Sundue offers a nuanced, complicated picture of how inequality was constructed both prior to and after the American Revolution, highlighting its disparate impact on class, race, and gender in late eighteenth-century America.

About the Author Sharon B. Sundue is Associate Professor of History at Drew University.