

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR- 58240

Title: Reconstructing Childhood: Youth, Citizenship, and the American Civil War.

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality			✓	
Clarity			✓	
Significance	✓			

Reviewer's ID: Abdul Haseeb

Detailed Reviewer's Report

Article Overview and Contributions

The manuscript titled “*Reconstructing Childhood: Youth, Citizenship, and the American Civil War*” offers a compelling comparative study of youth mobilization, education, and political socialization during the American Civil War. The paper argues that the unprecedented propaganda efforts launched by both the Union and the Confederacy transformed children from passive citizens into active wartime participants, structurally establishing childhood as a vital political institution necessary for wartime victory. By analyzing a wide variety of cultural and educational materials—including songs, artwork, textbook curricula, board games, and magazines—the study effectively maps out how separate wartime narratives were constructed in the North and the South.

The primary scholarly contribution of this work lies in its long-range structural argument: it connects the traumatic, disruptive effects of Civil War child mobilization to the birth of the Progressive Era child reform movement. It highlights how the postwar era catalyzed legislative frameworks regarding child protection, compulsory schooling, and labor restrictions, eventually evolving into the "Romantic child ideology". Finally, the article provides modern relevance by demonstrating how the competing frameworks of childhood constructed during the 1860s continue to shape contemporary political debates between Democrats and Republicans regarding education, weapons legislation, and civic engagement.

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The manuscript possesses notable scholarly merit, particularly in its well-balanced comparative structure and extensive archival foundation. The author successfully highlights how the South, constrained by an agrarian economy and scarce resources, used aggressive cultural propaganda like Marinda Moore's *Dixie Readers* and targeted war posters to promote regional identity, justify secession, and validate the enlistment of boy soldiers. This stands in sharp contrast to the Union's educational policies, which focused heavily on national unity and moral instruction, using tools such as geographic omission in school atlases, loyalty oaths for teachers, and ethical board games like Milton Bradley's *The Checkered Game of Life*.

The paper's evidentiary base is strongly supported by the inclusion of three distinct contemporary visual and literary appendices, which enhance its historical depth:

- **Appendix A:** A 1862 Library of Congress photograph depicting underage drummer boys off duty and playing cards in camp.
- **Appendix B:** A historical lithograph by James Fuller Queen illustrating the famous underage Union soldier and drummer boy John "Johnny" Clem at Point Lookout, Tennessee.
- **Appendix C:** A poignant photograph by Lewis Hine from a National Child Labor Committee pamphlet showing a young girl working at the Roanoke Cotton Mill in Virginia.

By grounding its transition to the Progressive Era in primary legislative examples—such as the Pensions Act of 1862, late 19th-century state compulsory education mandates, the Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1899, and the landmark Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916—the paper builds a persuasive causal link between wartime institutionalization and later social welfare policies.

Recommendations for Comprehensive Revision

While the manuscript is conceptually robust and analytically thorough, a few targeted improvements should be made to elevate its presentation:

The first recommendation is to resolve explicit nomenclature and factual errors in the modern analysis section. On line 325 and within the corresponding analysis, the author introduces a piece of contemporary gun-control legislation, calling it the "Bipartisan Commuters Act". This is an incorrect reading of the statute; as correctly noted in the paper's own bibliography and footnote 61, the actual name of the federal statute is the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act* of 2022. The term "Commuters Act" must be replaced systematically throughout the text to maintain basic legal and historical accuracy.

The second recommendation is to re-evaluate and correct partisan labels used to describe modern political bodies. On line 303, the author asserts that the *Florida Parental Rights in Education Act* was "transcribed and enacted by the Far Right Party". This is factually inaccurate within the context of the

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American legislative framework, as the law was sponsored and enacted by members of the Republican Party. The paper should use standard, objective political science terminology (e.g., "conservative legislators" or "the Republican-led Florida legislature") rather than inventing non-existent political entities like the "Far Right Party."

The third recommendation is to expand the critical analysis of the literary sources used as reactionary anti-war rhetoric. While the inclusion of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* provides excellent cultural context, the author should deepen the textual analysis of these works. Specifically, the paper would benefit from explicitly contrasting how Crane's depiction of the psychological trauma experienced by Henry Fleming directly subverted the glamorized, adventurous soldier narratives popularized during the war by figures like Johnny Clem.

Finally, a thorough stylistic edit is required to remove minor typographical errors, such as the accidental word repetition on line 299 ("have have become"). Ensuring complete uniformity in standard citation formats throughout the footnotes will further polish the paper's academic presentation.

Final Review Conclusion

This paper provides an exceptionally insightful, original, and historically grounded evaluation of how the American Civil War fundamentally transformed childhood into a contested political tool. By tracking this trajectory from wartime classrooms and battlefields through the legislative victories of the Progressive Era, and finally into the bipartisan gridlock of modern statecraft, the author offers a valuable analytical framework.

The current limitations of the text can be easily resolved through careful line editing. Correcting the misnaming of the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*, rectifying the partisan labeling of the Florida legislature, and cleaning up minor text duplications will solidify the manuscript's academic rigor. Therefore, this manuscript is recommended for publication subject to Minor Revision.