



## Children's citizenly participation in the National Revolution: the instrumentalization of children in Vichy France

Lindsey Dodd

To cite this article: Lindsey Dodd (2017) Children's citizenly participation in the National Revolution: the instrumentalization of children in Vichy France, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 24:5, 759-780, DOI: [10.1080/13507486.2017.1282433](https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2017.1282433)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2017.1282433>



Published online: 23 Mar 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 399



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)



## Children's citizenly participation in the National Revolution: the instrumentalization of children in Vichy France

Lindsey Dodd 

Music, Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, HD1 3DH, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

### ABSTRACT

Children held a privileged place in Vichy France. They became the subjects and objects of a vigorous propaganda which recognized their ability to contribute to the National Revolution. This article discusses three ways in which children were instrumentalized by the regime, showing their reciprocal engagement with it, which is understood as 'citizenly' behaviour. First, drawn into the *maréchaliste* leadership cult, they were used to embed the values of the regime. Second, children's compassion was co-opted in various campaigns which contributed to national(ist) solidarity. Third, they engaged with a gendered duty to national population growth, now and in the future. The article uses 'public' written sources (for example, letters and essays sent to Marshal Pétain and thus archived in public collections, not diaries or drawings for private eyes, in private hands) produced by children. Although it recognizes these as epistemologically unstable, such sources present opportunities for understanding elements of children's agency, which is seen in conformity as well as dissent. By recognizing children as historical actors, we can identify them as 'beings' active in their own lives, and not just adults-in-waiting.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 April 2016  
Accepted 2 January 2017

### KEYWORDS

Children; France; Vichy; citizenship; propaganda; Pétain

Children had a privileged place in Vichy France. Nascent in their bodies and minds was the future of the nation. The idea of a stronger tomorrow was a powerful driver of change and regeneration, and pre-adolescent children acted as potent symbols of national growth and power. Seemingly free from the political allegiances which tainted their parents, and splashed across magazines, newspapers and posters, innocence radiated from them like a halo of hope. The authoritarian, repressive, xenophobic and anti-Semitic Vichy regime led by Marshal Philippe Pétain, which controlled the 'free' zone of France after the Armistice in 1940, directly politicized children and drew them into its ideological battles. This was partly a symbolic process. However, as Judith Proud noted, children were not just the subjects of Vichy's propaganda: they were also its objects, as targeted campaigns entered homes and classrooms across the country.<sup>1</sup> An analysis of the instrumentalization of children in Vichy France is therefore a useful gateway into thinking about the way children engage with society more broadly, and by extension about children's citizenship.<sup>2</sup> This article explores how the Vichy government instrumentalized children as *maréchaliste* National Revolutionaries,

mobilized them as agents of national unity, and impressed upon them their patriotic duties as future parents. 'Instrumentalization' presupposes passivity; yet these children were active in understanding and processing Vichy's ideas; making use of them required them to act; acting required choices to be made. I show that children were valued by the regime as small-scale actors with social influence, that they worked with its values, and that they participated in a range of its activities.

Vichy, occupation, collaboration, resistance: all are prolific areas of historical research. But in 2011 Colin Nettelbeck was moved to ask how, in this well-trodden field of enquiry, could pre-adolescent children have been overlooked for so long? Given that children were 'directly inscribed into the very structures of national self-image', he wrote, 'It is hard to see how any history of the French war experience could hope to be complete without taking into account who they were and the forces that shaped them.'<sup>3</sup> Rarely resisters, rarely collaborators, children have not found a place in histories whose focus has frequently been top-down, and bound up with accusation and blame. The dominant model of this past, defined in terms of political, ideological and military conflicts, is a 'bad fit' for children.<sup>4</sup> This is not to suggest that children's lives were not impacted by such conflicts, nor that children as historical actors should be placed outside of political, ideological and military activity. But maybe we need to employ our terms – resistance, collaboration – more circumspectly, and to conceive of action, knowledge and responsibility differently in order to understand the nature of children's experiences at this – and other – times in the past.

As an analytical category, 'youth' has been of far more interest to historians than 'child'. Studies in French and English have been published about the youth of Vichy France since the 1980s, giving insight into the complexity of organizations and experiences of adolescents and young adults.<sup>5</sup> Children are more rarely encountered, except within works which deal with the plight of Jewish children.<sup>6</sup> Those children who were included in the national community, rather than those who were excluded, are less visible in academic scholarship. Existing research into primary education tends to emphasize administration and structure rather than experience.<sup>7</sup> Vichy's family policy has also found its historians, as have women and motherhood, yet children garner little attention in either.<sup>8</sup> Judith Proud's analysis of Vichy propaganda in juvenile literature does allow a glimpse into younger children's worlds,<sup>9</sup> and a few scholarly studies of children's lives exist.<sup>10</sup> But for the most part, children remain outside of historical investigation.<sup>11</sup> This marginalization reflects the fact that many historians are still unwilling to recognize children as having agency and a functioning interiority. As with inner life, so with outer: they are frequently seen as purely private beings, wholly cushioned in the 'private' sphere of the family; yet, as Downs has convincingly argued, children in France were positioned 'along the public-private frontier', as 'public beings with a life outside their families'.<sup>12</sup> I argue that this was not only a positioning, but a reality of their lives.

This study is based on a range of children's 'public' writings (which entered the public sphere at the time of their creation), including many letters addressed to Marshal Pétain from the archives of his correspondence in the Archives nationales in Paris. Given the vast quantity of material written by French people to their leader across the years of his leadership, particular months were chosen across the years 1940, 1941 and into 1942 – when public engagement with the Vichy regime was strongest.<sup>13</sup> Any letters written by and to children were considered. Other archival material relating to health, education and youth was also examined, and letters and children's essays found among the document collections were also examined. The extracts cited in this article are intended as examples of children's

engagement with Pétain and the ideas of the National Revolution, rather than as representative of all children or of all children's writing across the period 1940–44; the aim is to open a discussion on children's historical subjectivity rather than lay claim to comprehensiveness. As a category 'children' is indeed broad, and any claims of representativity should be viewed with caution. With regard to children's ages, I have taken the upper limit of 'child' to be 14 years old; this corresponds with the J1 and J2 ration categories (ages 3–6 and 7–13), the limit of compulsory schooling and a contemporary usage of *les moins de quatorze ans/les moins de quinze ans* (the under-14s/under-15s) as loose categories within propaganda campaigning. Nonetheless such divisions are necessarily arbitrary, if necessary, for the purposes of research; the 'new sociology of childhood' has demonstrated that biological/developmental categorizations of children by age alone are inadequate when analysing their life-worlds; understandings of culture, environment and socialization are crucial too – all of which are difficult to pin down precisely in archival material.<sup>14</sup>

Such challenges are not only faced by historians of childhood, yet assumptions about children's abilities and capacities magnify them. Ludmilla Jordanova has warned against trying to find the 'voice of the child' in the past 'unmediated' by adult intervention.<sup>15</sup> While it seems a matter of common sense that children were more easily manipulated than adults, this comes down to how children are constructed as lacking in reason and competency. Just because children were targeted by policy-makers and propagandists in Vichy France – and elsewhere – we should not make hasty assumptions about how propaganda messages were absorbed. The same applies to adults – who were and are also 'taken in' by propaganda: what of their reason and competency? Children's words are neither more 'authentic' than adults', nor less valid. Nor are children simply passive consumers of what adults tell them: they can internalize, modify and reconstitute ideas, deviate from them, resist them and misunderstand them; they can also use them.<sup>16</sup> Even when children accept the ideas around them, this does not make them lesser subjects in their own lives: it cannot only be in opposition that we see human agency at work. The supervised writing of an essay about Pétain was an act: a cognitive moment in a person's life. Obeying the form of the essay or the letter, writing words aimed to please and to validate the child as a member of a social group, are not negligible things. The writings explored in this article are dialogic. They exist, as James Greenhalgh notes, in 'an intersubjective relationship with a reader in a position to judge',<sup>17</sup> and in their adherence to the norms of form and content children are *doing work* with their words in the sense that they aim to have a particular effect on their reader.<sup>18</sup> Conformity to the dominant values that surrounded them created a sense of themselves as active participants in the national community.

So the letters and essays used in this article which show identification with the messages put forward by Vichy's propagandists should be seen as more than dumb malleability. I argue that they are not incompatible with a notion of children's agency. Historians have often used the concept of agency to pull those languishing in 'powerlessness, marginality and invisibility' into the light to reveal them as active, self-willed people in the world. But as Mary-Jo Maynes points out, the way in which a 'social agent' is typically understood derives from 'Western, masculinist notions of the autonomous self' wherein the capacity to act is 'driven by the imperatives of rational choice, [and] aware[ness] of how the world works'. If agency means 'the capacity to act' we should note that not all acts are equally historically visible, and that agency exists not only in 'moments of political rebellion or heroic action

in the public sphere.<sup>19</sup> We also find humans capable of acting in everyday realms, and in moments of conformity.<sup>20</sup>

Revealing the past agency of historical actors has been a means of staking their claims to personhood, belonging and citizenship. Since the Enlightenment, childhood has been constructed as a period of pre-formation, a period of separation from the real, adult world. In the Western world, the emergence of compulsory schooling coupled with the removal of children from the economic realm pulled them out of the public sphere. They became 'citizens in waiting'.<sup>21</sup> Many historians have internalized this cultural trope which has led to the omission of children from most historical research. Yet in common with other authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century, Vichy saw children as social actors in the here and now, thus moving beyond their construction as citizens-in-waiting. Noakes and Grayzel point out that citizenship is 'both felt and enacted in profoundly different ways by different members of the nation':<sup>22</sup> women's, men's and children's citizenship is lived differently. Current research in citizenship seeks to deepen and extend its remit beyond a rights-based definition,<sup>23</sup> and scholars typically include other elements beyond rights and duties, such as citizenship as identity or citizenship as participation.<sup>24</sup> Marc Jans writes that children have the ability to 'identify themselves with larger social groups and communities', and they also participate in society; they are not simply determined by their environment but act upon it in the contexts available to them.<sup>25</sup> Children's citizenship includes their rights and duties to the nation, but also the ways in which they identify with national goals and values, as well as their active participation in national life. In this article I argue that children were recognized by Vichy as having the ability to act, change and influence the world around them; they were recognized as having social agency;<sup>26</sup> and in their engagement with the regime and its leader, I suggest that they enacted a kind of 'citizenly' behaviour.

## National Revolutionaries

Perhaps the most popular feature of the new regime was Marshal Pétain himself. Indeed, while enthusiasm for the National Revolution waned during 1941 among much of the population, Pétain still drew cheering crowds as late as spring 1944. Jackson sees this attachment to the 'victor of Verdun' as a 'genuinely popular political culture', and children played a key role in the imagery and activity of what historians tend to call *maréchalisme*.<sup>27</sup> This describes the cult of Pétain and popular feeling towards him, in contrast to what is usually termed Pétainism, that is, adhesion to Vichy's policies. In the process of securing children's loyalty to the person of the Marshal, it was intended that they would internalize the values he embodied, and in 1940, there was a conflation between the leader and the conservative, authoritarian and nationalistic values of the Maurassian right wing. As time passed, the gap between the web of values spun around the person of Marshal Pétain and the realities of both Vichy's policy of collaboration and its domestic reforms widened. While the National Revolution as a set of policies met failure in almost every sphere, as an ideology its link to Pétain and the conservative Right endured. Pétain's supposed honesty, his love of loyalty, his simplicity, his courage, his sacrifice, alongside his patriotism and leadership aligned with visions of a pre-modern and pre-revolutionary France, a land of honour, tradition, stability and hierarchy. While historians must be clear about the differences between *maréchalisme* and Pétainism, it is much less easy to prise apart the values and ideals associated with the two. Across their writings, children appeared to be saying that they would act in certain ways,

carrying out particular activities which we can see as linked to the values of the National Revolution, but they were doing so because of their admiration for Marshal Pétain.

Leadership cults were a key site of authoritarian regime-building, and wherever they occurred (or occur) children have been drafted into their 'emotional communit[ies]'.<sup>28</sup> Catriona Kelly remarks that Stalin's leadership cult was 'a school for citizenship and national identity', and despite the clear differences in tone and tactics, the same point can be made about Pétain.<sup>29</sup> His relationship with children was constructed as a co-dependency which locked children into its bond. Pétain needed children's support; in fact they were informed explicitly that by taking his ideals home with them, '[i]n your own way, you will be helping the Marshal in his work'.<sup>30</sup> Endowed with these responsibilities, children were recognized as social actors who participated in the achievement of certain political goals.

The supposed special bond between Pétain and children was carefully cultivated. The first mass mobilization of children came at Christmas in 1940. All schoolchildren under the age of 15 were 'invited' to send a drawing of 'the little corner of France that they love the most' to Pétain as a Christmas 'surprise'. The instructions to teachers elaborated the aim of the project: 'Through this act, children pay homage to the person of Marshal Pétain, and to what this person symbolises: devotion to the public cause'.<sup>31</sup> Teachers were to give minimum guidance, and to send all drawings without selection. The emotional dimension was stated: 'upon receiving these drawings, a smile will appear on his lips': children had the power to make him happy.<sup>32</sup> More than two million drawings arrived at the Hôtel du Parc, and became the subject of propagandist magazine articles and exhibitions.<sup>33</sup>

So successful was the campaign that the 'Surprise for the Marshal' was repeated the following year with a different goal. At the start of the new academic year in autumn 1941, Pétain gave a speech to schoolchildren. It emphasized his reliance on them to build a durable National Revolution. 'You need to know that I am absolutely counting on you to help me reconstruct France, to make the French a great people, loyal and honest,' he said. Inciting children to act in order to demonstrate their loyalty to him, he told them that 'it's not enough for you to tell me, you must show it to everyone.' This was not just about the future: 'I do not want to wait until you have become grown-ups': their contribution mattered now.<sup>34</sup> The speech proposed the establishment of 'loyalty leagues'. These child-run classroom committees were supposed to stamp out disloyalty and cheating. In this way, Pétain's speech envisioned a small-scale model of Vichy's repressive morality. While modelling community and honesty, the loyalty leagues also encouraged the denunciation and the ostracizing of those who fell short of social expectations. In this way, the overlap between *maréchalisme* and Pétainism appears: children's allegiance to Marshal Pétain caused them to modify their behaviour in line with the conservative values of the National Revolution.

The second 'Surprise for the Marshal', then, towards Christmas 1941, instructed children to 'write personally to Marshal Pétain to tell him how you have followed his advice (loyalty leagues, honesty clubs, your efforts, your successes)'.<sup>35</sup> Each class was to establish its own 'code of honour, to be pinned up on the wall of the classroom. The children themselves will supervise its observance'.<sup>36</sup> By involving children in policing their own classrooms, it was believed that the regime could inculcate 'more honesty and more rectitude' and achieve 'deep and lasting results': this was a plan to change moral values for the long term.<sup>37</sup> The loyalty leagues, therefore, were a means by which children acted directly in response to Pétain's request and could see themselves as participating in the reshaping of national character along lines opposed to the much criticized laxity of the Third Republic.

Archival evidence indicates that many children engaged with the regime, both under instruction from teachers and more freely. In January 1942 the Marshal visited the Chantier de la Jeunesse at Chatel-Guyon to thank the youth workers who opened his post from children. Each worker there aimed at opening 1000 letters per day.<sup>38</sup> The Archives nationales bear witness to the vast number of letters children wrote to Pétain, some clearly at the behest of teachers or in response to particular campaigns, but others seemingly – from the subject matter or date – more spontaneous. While Halls cites a teenager who, in 1944, denounced his letter-writing to Pétain as a coercive manipulation (as fits the mood, perhaps, of 1944),<sup>39</sup> in many letters, and those of younger children in particular, there are marks of sincerity at the moment of writing. It should be recognized too that even a coercive act of writing is a cognitive event in a child's life: the composition of an essay or a letter at school may have a significant and lasting impact, particularly if it involved direct contact with an object of admiration such as the Marshal.

First, then, children addressed Pétain as a direct result of adult intervention. Like many children in France, the girls of the École de Cimiez Monastère in Nice had to compose an essay about Pétain. Such essays show some of the ways in which they were encouraged to think about him. For example, 13-year-old Pierrette B. wrote:

The Marshal is not only a brave man he is also a good man. I love him because he's the leader of France, I love him because he loves work. Finally, I love him as he's a good leader and I'm sure he will lift up once more this beaten and exhausted France. That is why, French girls, if we want to live in a beautiful France, joyful and gay like before, we must work hard.<sup>40</sup>

Pierrette's rallying words looked to the future of the nation created through the leader's qualities of courage, honesty and effort. Loving Pétain was part of her patriotic duty. Her words echo not just, perhaps, her schoolmistress's counsel to work hard at school and in life, but also the broader denunciation of the values of France before 1940 – of her parents' generation. Marie-Louise G. was an 11-year-old refugee from the Nord, also now living in Nice. Her admiration for Pétain derived from his action in the summer of 1940, which had legitimized his power: 'It was he who stopped the refugees dying like animals.'<sup>41</sup> Micheline S. was three and a half years old. Her grandfather – a veteran of 1914–18 – took it upon himself to write to Pétain on her behalf. The letter, written from her perspective, shows the entrenchment of the idea of Pétain's grandfatherly role – all the stranger given its author was the girl's real grandfather. The letter ends: 'I'll finish, granddad Marshal, by kissing you with all my little heart and wishing a long life for you and for France.'<sup>42</sup> Sources like this bring into stark relief the unknowableness of their moment of creation. What was the domestic scene as this letter was written? We might assume Micheline was present: what was her input? Could she recognize Pétain from his portrait at three years old? How did her grandfather explain who he was? Had she a concept of 'France'? Her understanding must have been limited. But the fact that someone so very young was pulled into the cult of the Maréchal is nonetheless worthy of remark.

In other cases children's letter-writing appears more spontaneous. Again, we cannot know whether a parent stood at the child's side, or what prompted the child to ask for writing paper and a stamp. Such missives vary widely, some careful, many misspelt, some illustrated, some blobbed with ink. All were very earnest, and all were answered, many with small gifts of date jam, sweets or writing paper.<sup>43</sup> Claire B. in Marseille (aged 13) wrote to 'the honoured and beloved leader of all the little French boys and girls [...] who has saved France twice' to express 'all the confidence I have in France and in you'. She was worried

about her country's predicament, 'but knowing she is in your hands [...] I feel comforted and happy, because I know she will become great and beautiful again.'<sup>44</sup> A portrait of Pétain was a prized possession. Serge G. (age not given) in Allier told his leader:

I've stuck all the photos I can find of you on my bedroom walls, big ones and small ones. I've decorated the best one with flags, and put it in front of my bed so that you're the first thing I see when I wake up.<sup>45</sup>

His letter, a single act of engagement, speaks powerfully of a longer-term project – of collection, of arrangement, of admiration – which is evidence of certain children's on-going relationship with their leader. Jacqueline D. (aged 11) placed Pétain on the same level as her religious idols, writing that she had positioned his portrait 'in my bedroom, between my statues of the Holy Virgin and Saint Theresa.'<sup>46</sup> Such affection seems heartfelt, particularly when expressed in ways which make parental interference seems less likely. For example, six-year-old Gerard J. sent Pétain a drawing of a squirrel and told him: 'I've picked lots of green beans to preserve for the winter. If you need some I will send them to you.'<sup>47</sup> The instrumentalization of children's emotions is clear in these letters. Pétain was a real presence in their lives and the epistolary relationship many established with him created a genuine bond: they praised him, reported their achievements, gave him gifts and told him of their lives. With many male relations absent this relationship could provide comfort, as well as the excitement of proximity to such a hero.

How, then, did children respond to the loyalty leagues? Certainly, some threw themselves into the project with gusto. Jacques G. (aged 13) explained to the Marshal that 'if a pupil is copying, we force him to confess and his name is put up on the dishonour board.'<sup>48</sup> In the same class, Claude D. told Pétain that before the loyalty league:

It was unfair. But now everything is back in order. No pupil is copying or cheating in his work. The pupil who is top of the class really deserves that place. Please believe, Monsieur le Maréchal, that what you asked has been carried out by all pupils.<sup>49</sup>

For Claude, the meritocratic solution to the problem of cheating was important; he also assured his leader of children's readiness to carry out orders. Other children saw something beyond the classroom in the actions their leader had inspired in them. Jean O. (aged 14) explained that 'we can only count on our own efforts to pick up our broken France, and destroy lying, idleness and laziness for ever',<sup>50</sup> thus aligning himself with certain ambitions of the regime.

One letter, however, suggested that things were not quite so rosy. Thirteen-year old André B. was unimpressed with the functioning of the loyalty leagues in his school:

I think that the loyalty leagues are an excellent idea. But too many children see our League as something insignificant, and there are still lots who aren't very loyal at all. This is mostly because they don't understand the meaning of the word loyalty. The 'moral action' teachers aren't very keen on this subject, but they're wrong. They should be made to do it, made to because otherwise the leagues won't be any use, just a waste of time.<sup>51</sup>

André's letter shows not only the degree of conflict that the leagues could engender, but also a spirit of denunciation and coercion. A lack of enthusiasm was echoed across the Paris schools. For example, the headmistress of the Lycée de Jeunes Filles in Sèvres reported in January 1942 that her students 'still do not seem keen on this organization: they balk at the idea of making a formal engagement.'<sup>52</sup> It should be remembered that in this period such *lycées* educated children as young as 11.<sup>53</sup> In contrast to the letters sent by children

to Pétain, these teachers express children's lukewarm attitudes, or even their hostility. The difference here may be related to geographical location (occupied versus unoccupied France) or the pupils' mixing with older adolescents at the *lycée*. But neither perspective should be seen as precluding the existence or sincerity of the other. Like adults, children exhibited a range of responses. But clearly not everyone leapt at the chance to serve Pétain in the way that he had asked.

In some instances youthful disobedience went even further. In June 1941 Jérôme Carcopino, the Minister for National Education and Youth (and Chief Education Officer for the Paris region), wrote tetchily to all his Parisian headteachers: 'On numerous occasions I have stressed in my instructions the necessity of keeping children removed from any partisan excitement.' Here, then, was recognition that children could be disruptive when they took an interest in politics. Headteachers in the Paris region sometimes reported finding anti-German and anti-Vichy tracts on their premises, and, worse, in March and December 1942 at different schools, portraits of Pétain were lacerated and some stolen.<sup>54</sup> Gushing *maréchalisme* was not the only form of social engagement available to youngsters – and young people were therefore seen as a force to be policed and controlled.

Children were used to push the values of the National Revolution deeper into French society, on the back of a genuine interest in Pétain as leader and hero. Children participated in the transmission of National Revolutionary messages from school which they were expected to carry home. Their relationship with Pétain was cultivated assiduously, and many youngsters were excited to write to him, whether as a requirement or more freely. Many letters suggest an appropriation of the nationalistic, *maréchaliste* vision of France's future and a keenness to engage. It is wrong to seek children's agency only in examples of dissent; for in picking up their pens, finding a stamp, drawing a picture, choosing the right words, children were active in conforming to dominant values. Their behaviour is certainly no less citizenly in terms of an understanding of duty, identity and participation than many adults'. We also become aware of children's social influence in their immediate environment, and their ability to assert themselves inside a web of norms and values.

### **Agents of national unity**

From the beginning of the Occupation, Pétain urged solidarity between French people. But as time went on, ideological divisions widened as policies became increasingly radicalized and citizens were pitted against each other in a struggle for scarce resources. Children showed awareness of the divisions around them, and were encouraged to play a role in resolving them within Pétain's quest for national unity. Again they were both subjects and objects. Juvenile ill health was a serious concern among health professionals as children's bodies bore the brunt of food and fuel shortages, but it was also the means to inspire charitable giving. More than that, children were mobilized into charitable activity which was tagged with ideological labels.<sup>55</sup> Through state-sponsored charity work, children enacted their citizenship by creating welfare provision for others.

Newspaper editors received instructions about how to promote children's solidarity in their publications: 'Each child must learn to forget his own worth and selflessly dissolve his whole strength into the collective strength, not looking for any reward except the honour of service rendered.'<sup>56</sup> It was not just the better off who were required to spare their excess: 'Before we get them used to being thin, we must teach them that it is not shameful to be

poor.<sup>57</sup> To resign the needy to their lot, but also inspire them to help others, was felt to be the surest way to squeeze the most out of children's energetic compassion. By focusing on poverty, hardship and rigour it was hoped that children could be inspired to work harder and find satisfaction in the idea of serving their young neighbours.

Christmas was a key site of children's mobilization. In 1941, the Marshal's 'Winter Aid' charity had called upon children to help other children in the 'Christmas of the Separated', with Christmas trees, gifts, presents and family hospitality 'offered to the most deprived'. The 'Christmas Trees of the Separated' would provide a 'symbol of union and of hope'.<sup>58</sup> Children gained awareness of the pain war had brought to other households, learning too of social inequalities. This entrenchment of hardship in young minds ensured that charitable collection went on long after the Christmas appeal had ended. Children became agents of a propaganda of national solidarity. Delegations from each *département* were invited to Vichy each Christmas to present to Pétain their schoolmates' charitable collections in staged ceremonies that were then used in *maréchaliste* publicity. Some children from Le Havre wrote to Pétain after their visit in December 1941:

At the moment we are taking part in this great movement of mutual help and national solidarity. We have understood our duty. Despite our misery, despite our suffering, we want to make a gesture, not a generous one, but simply a French one [...] In this way [...], we look to serve. We think that this is the best way to show our deference and our attachment to you.<sup>59</sup>

Pens guided by their teachers, probably; but also evidence that children were co-opted into a wider national project in which their acts of charity mattered.

In 1942 the Youth Section of the Ministry of Propaganda laid plans for a third Christmas 'Surprise' for Marshal Pétain. There were two goals: 'We will give the under-14s the opportunity to do something to benefit other young people, as well as the opportunity to show their love for the Maréchal. Indeed, it is among the youngest that this love has kept the most purity.'<sup>60</sup> There was fundraising potential within children's affection for Pétain. Each schoolchild had to earn two francs to send to Vichy, the fruit of a 'real effort' and not just taken from a piggy bank.<sup>61</sup> Children's charitable activity was also seen as a means of reaching adults: 'The demonstration of this feeling will have a significant influence inside families across the whole country. It will be an example of solidarity in action which will be easy to use in the General Propaganda around Christmas-time.'<sup>62</sup> But if the intention was to cultivate pure selflessness – that is, to embed a value-driven behaviour – the message was muddled by the prominence given to Pétain:

At Christmas-time, the Marshal of France will be extremely pleased to learn that hundreds of thousands of children have put his calls for solidarity into practice. It will be a real comfort to him in the midst of the terrible worries that he has to face each day.<sup>63</sup>

Yet acting to gain Pétain's recognition was not quite the same thing as acting selflessly towards those in distress.

Many threw themselves into fundraising activities, for the Maréchal, for others and for the nation. Halls notes that by November 1941, children had raised 17 million francs for the state-run charity, the *Secours national*.<sup>64</sup> Across the winter and spring of 1941–42, schoolchildren were drafted into a mass campaign to sell Pétain badges, worth 50 centimes each. Each child was given 100 badges, and across the department of the Seine alone there were 20,000 sellers on the streets. These youngsters competed enthusiastically to see who could sell the most. The profits went towards several gala performances for children from the

hardest-hit sections of society – those bombed out or made refugees, or whose fathers were prisoners-of-war or unemployed.<sup>65</sup> One hundred and twenty thousand children attended such events in the Paris region on 1 May 1941.

In the suburb of Aubervilliers, 3000 of those needy children received an elaborate invitation to their local event. On its reverse was a poem: in exchange for a seat at the gala they were expected to ponder more deeply their duty to the nation. Lines included: ‘Give yourself to France with fervour/Its wounds will heal with the ardent breath of your youth/Through your work, at school, in the fields or the workshop.’<sup>66</sup> Maybe this message resonated and gave a patriotic boost; maybe the excitement of seeing clowns and jugglers was greater; or perhaps it fell on ears deafened by the weight of daily burdens. It is hard to know. What is important to note is that children were endowed with the capacity to make a difference at a national level. However, the continued existence of social divisions was clear, as the most successful badge-sellers were treated to a separate gala at the Vélodrome d’Hiver on 4 May.<sup>67</sup> Some children helped: sturdy, resilient, active; others were helped: vulnerable, dependent, passive. Charity could not heal this division, and in fact exposed it still further.

The archives of Pétain’s correspondence contain hundreds of letters accompanying children’s charitable donations. The gesture was not always apolitical: some children saw it as a gesture of a national solidarity and a contribution to renewal along the lines advocated by the Maréchal. For example, 11-year-old Marie-José E. and her sister Pauline had been selling photos of the ‘Father of the *Patrie*’ at their school. She remarked in her letter that they were ‘all set on following you until the very end in order to save our *Patrie*’. But she had experienced some difficulties selling to certain children: ‘It was a bit more difficult because there are some *gaullistes* [*sic*], that is, enemies of France.’ Marie-José was thus aware of political divisions, although we cannot know the extent of her understanding. She hoped it would please Pétain to know that ‘in the forbidden zone, little girls are busying themselves with your charity and also doing some propaganda for you.’ Her 359-franc-donation was more than a simple charitable gesture; her letter constructed it as a political statement.<sup>68</sup>

Children were supposed to work hard for what they collected, but many of their charitable endeavours revolved around playful activities which gave a great deal of pleasure as well as the glow of altruism. For example, a joint letter arrived in Vichy from nine children (ages not given) on holiday in the Alps who had put on a little play and collected 255 francs.<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere, a group of 13-year-old girls performed Molière’s *Les Précieuses ridicules*, inviting friends and family, and had raised a whopping 1720 francs.<sup>70</sup> Guy C. (aged 13) put on a Guignol show with two friends; they were sending 50 francs, half of the sum they had raised, ‘to save some children in our beautiful and grandiose France’. The other half would be reinvested in their puppet theatre.<sup>71</sup> For these children, with toy theatres, mountain spa holidays and Molière scripts, money was not short. The amounts they sent spoke of parents and friends who were comfortably off. What was the extent of self-sacrifice for those who put on the performance or those who threw some notes into the hat afterwards? Motivations are complex and may be multiple; once again, the historical evidence is shown to give limited insight into the emotional depth of the writer’s world, which is necessary if we are to attribute confidently an ideological intention.

But there are also plenty of examples of self-denial. The girls in the *neuvième* (aged 8–9) at the Institut Sévigné sacrificed their end-of-year prizes. In a joint letter, they implied that the idea was their own, and was their contribution to national renewal:

We admire the bravery with which you're working for French recovery. We have learnt that our *Patrie* always rises from defeat. So we, children of France, we want to participate in this recovery. We have asked that we don't receive any prizes this year and that the money will instead be sent to you for your wonderful charity, the Secours national.<sup>72</sup>

Other children gave up the small sums which were available to them. Suzanne G. attached to a letter 'the small amount of ten francs which I got today for my eighth birthday, to rescue some poor little French children.'<sup>73</sup> Raymond T. (age not given) also sent five francs, regretting that 'five francs isn't very much these days,' although he added that perhaps 'a poor little child might be happy to buy five francs' worth of bread.<sup>74</sup> There was plenty of recognition of how hard other children's lives were. The schoolgirls at the Institut Sévigné wrote that 'we know, Monsieur le Maréchal, that lots of children have lost their homes and others have lost their dads.'<sup>75</sup> A six-year-old donated a doll's cradle, but this time, demonstrating that one could give physically while suffering emotionally, she asked the recipient to 'say a prayer for my Daddy who is a prisoner in Germany.'<sup>76</sup> These charitable gestures were partially motivated by personal compassion, generational solidarity and an understanding of the hardships of war, and partially by an impulse towards Pétain and national recovery.

Children's donations show their direct engagement with the broader national community; but they were also used symbolically and more unwittingly. In a drive to evacuate children from the Paris suburbs in 1943, national unity was invoked vigorously to procure foster homes. It was pointed out that 'by saving children we save the future':<sup>77</sup> what good was population growth if that human capital was imperilled in insanitary and mortally dangerous towns? Country dwellers were told that 'the great duty of solidarity towards children falls to all of us.'<sup>78</sup> Looking after the evacuees was a national duty. Teachers who accompanied pupils to the Creuse were instructed to ensure that 'through the bond of unity that these children create between the provinces and the Capital, the unity of the *Patrie* will emerge stronger [...] than ever before.'<sup>79</sup> Solidarity was carried on the shoulders of the children themselves: they became agents of national unity, and the bonds they created would build 'true friendship[s] which will reinforce national feeling and the unity of the *Patrie*'.<sup>80</sup> Once more, children were tasked as actors with an ability to influence their environment, building bridges to assure future national cohesion.

So again, children showed identification with certain ideas and values which we can link to the National Revolution – in particular, calls for solidarity, patriotism and duty. By participating, they enacted their citizenly belonging. Their charitable fundraising also made a concrete contribution to welfare of a kind more associated with adult citizenship. While their fundraising was often voluntary, just as with earlier drawing and letter-writing campaigns, there was an aspect of coercion too. Some children demonstrated a keen awareness of hardship and couched their donations in the language of patriotic self-sacrifice, but the evident difference between the haves and have nots militated against the establishment of egalitarian solidarity. Their motivations for and means of fundraising showed the scale of this difference; yet this should not undermine the sincerity of many gestures. Whether these were done in the spirit of the National Revolution or not, children helped alleviate misery and, in that sense, did as much, if not more, than many adults.

## Future population, future parents

A third dimension of Vichy's instrumentalization of children was in the service of its demographic policy. Anxiety over population was neither unique to the Vichy years, nor, indeed, to France. Across the Western world, fears over demographic quality and quantity grew from the nineteenth century onwards. But in France, population decline became an obsession. After the defeat of 1940, for which Pétain blamed 'too few children', it was linked to an idea of French military weakness.<sup>81</sup> Individualism, selfishness and modern life had led France to this state, it was claimed, and women bore the brunt of recriminations.<sup>82</sup> Since 1939, teaching about demographic problems in schools had been obligatory but not enforced.<sup>83</sup> However, from 1940 Vichy, flanked by numerous Catholic associations, splurged on propaganda. Capuano has counselled against confusing demographic and family policy – one purely quantitative, the other focused on the qualitative dimension of family morality – yet in scholarly studies of pronatalism or familialism one crucial social group is frequently invisible, without whom there could not be family, demography or motherhood: children.<sup>84</sup> Yet they were at the heart of efforts to encourage population growth, as well as the object of propaganda initiatives in and outside the classroom.

During the autumn of 1941 and into 1942, a vigorous publicity campaign was undertaken to raise awareness of demographic matters. Aimed at an adult audience, the strategy had five phases. The first highlighted the severity of the population deficit, and the second explained the system of welfare allocations for large families. Phase three attempted to normalize large families, using the slogan 'one + one = six'. A fourth phase explored the different organizations in place to assist families. Only the final phase was really about children, and then as ideas rather than people. In much of Vichy's output dealing with motherhood and large families, children existed only as a mass: as a crowd of little futures. Indeed, in the way that children were to be presented in the final phase of the campaign, their symbolism overrode their present reality: 'The Child, symbol for France of restoration, rebirth and expectation [...] The Child, hope of France!'<sup>85</sup> In contrast to the instrumentalization of children themselves in support of Pétain, to embed the regime and to raise money, which required their active, citizenly participation, here their mere existence would suffice. Having children was privileged over being children.

Not just the symbol of future national strength, children became the means to put pressure onto mothers – and those not yet mothers. In the propaganda campaigns around Mother's Day the regime utilized images of children but also required children's participation in the festival of public adulation which constructed motherhood as women's only legitimate identity.<sup>86</sup> One of numerous leaflets, 'Three Little French Children', was illustrated with pictures of a boy, a girl and a baby. It asked women: 'Would you deny your natural vocation? Would you deny your own happiness? Would you deny them their future? Would you deny France?' The final exhortation asks: 'If you refuse to have them, who knows? He could be another Pascal, a Pasteur, a Lyautey.' The boy child, then, was seen through his contribution to future national greatness. Pictured diligently writing at a desk, the caption above him reads: 'I'll be a Marshal.' Predictably, the girl child's value lay in her contribution to future population growth. She is pictured playing with her dolls, and captioned: 'I'll have as many children as I've got dolls.'<sup>87</sup> In each case, the children were 'becomings' rather than 'beings'.<sup>88</sup>

Not just the subjects of propaganda aiming at demographic growth, children were also its objects. A whole programme was mapped out to teach them their future national duty as

parents. Procreation was not a biological possibility for pre-adolescent children, of course, but the ground was prepared. Advice to primary-school teachers suggested decorating classrooms with paintings which glorified children, motherhood and family life such as Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons* (1773). Maths could focus on demographic calculations, geography on demographic maps.<sup>89</sup> The idea was to 'create a climate' ripe for future parenthood. Within an education system built on sexual inequality,<sup>90</sup> girls began preparing their future maternity early:

The littlest ones have their beloved dollies: they should learn to change them, to wash them or pretend to feed them from a bottle. And is it not too much to ask that, from time to time, the older ones get to practice this in a crèche or nursery, with real children?<sup>91</sup>

The example was given of a headmistress who put her pupils into the service of a local orphanage: 'Young girls exposed to the sweet labours of motherhood will have little difficulty wanting to become mums themselves.'<sup>92</sup> Girls, then, were constructed as mothers-in-waiting.

Some girls absorbed these ideas with patriotic relish; in this way, they were certainly working with the values of the regime and developing an understanding of their citizenly responsibilities. Letters to Pétain from girls at the École Ménagère de Mirecourt (Vosges) (ages not given) reported their progress in learning to become 'true Frenchwomen who will contribute to the recovery', as Georgette K. wrote.<sup>93</sup> Their task as future housewives and mothers was strongly connected with the nation's salvation, and bound into their obedience to Pétain. Lucette G. effused: 'Maréchal, here we are! Yes, here we are! [...] Thanks to you, we'll become good housewives who will raise their children as you wish. That is, in the right way to lift France up, higher than all the other people of Europe.'<sup>94</sup> Writing surely under their tutors' watchful eyes, they appear brim-full of enthusiasm to 'serve our *Patrie*, become true Frenchwomen, good wives and mothers', as Marie-Louise G put it.<sup>95</sup> Motherhood was in the future, but girls' engagement with the regime's gendered values, and their contribution to the national community, were present realities. These letters give a necessarily skewed perspective: those who resisted the notion of glorious motherhood may not have attended such classes, which were not compulsory. Even these girls may have had mutinous thoughts which they did not express. But this was certainly an intense sales pitch, and there is no reason to doubt that it generated enthusiasm too.

The propaganda campaigns around Mother's Day also suggest children's responses to the 'new political language' of patriotic motherhood.<sup>96</sup> Teachers marking children's letters to their mothers, composed as homework, were instructed to identify those worth publishing in local papers<sup>97</sup> – yet more child-generated propaganda, this time to 'glorify the idea of family.'<sup>98</sup> Children were as central to Mother's Day as women were, and their participation in feting their mothers was required as part of their national duty.

Across the letters written by children in the 1941 Mother's Day campaign, mothers' hard work and self-sacrifice featured heavily, as did love and affection. Why doubt that these words were heartfelt? Some children wrote a straightforward thank-you for their mothers' love and care. Others recognized 'the civic dimension of maternity.'<sup>99</sup> Fourteen-year-old Michel praised his mother: 'You, who have given our beautiful country seven little French citizens, you deserve to be thanked publicly and receive everyone's recognition today.'<sup>100</sup> Georges A. in the *cinquième* class (12–13 years) recognized that his mother's role had become more meaningful since 1940. He told her 'I understand even more now that France is in trouble, how much the maternal virtues should be celebrated.'<sup>101</sup> For others, this went beyond repopulation. Roger V. (aged 11) was quite specific: 'All of this, Mum, every child

owes his mother because it's she who does her duty the most in creating the families that populate the country with inhabitants who will fight for their *Patrie* and all do their duty.<sup>102</sup> Roger was not alone in recognizing that male children like himself would have a role as future soldiers, and that mothers were to thank for providing such heroic boys: 'The child grows up, he becomes a young man, a soldier, goes to serve his *Patrie*: that's war. Mothers' hearts break with the fear that they'll never see their sons again,'<sup>103</sup> wrote Georges A. A boy's exciting dream of serving his country was juxtaposed with a recognition of the maternal suffering that war brought; however, that was, as his letter to his mother recognized, women's duty, thus part of their citizenship, just as soldiering was men's.

Yet celebrating mothers and family was not always straightforward. In the first instance, Vichy's vision of the right kind of French family was prescriptive and exclusive: gypsies, Jews and many foreigners were certainly not included.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, very large numbers of children had disrupted family lives for various reasons. One can only imagine the sorrow of Marie-Madeleine P. (aged 14), whose Mother's Day letter was topped with a note from her teacher: 'This young girl is an orphan. She cried as she wrote her letter.'<sup>105</sup> Thirteen-year-old Roger L.'s letter to his mother also spoke of his sadness. Evacuated, Roger missed his mother. He wrote: 'For a fortnight now I've not seen you, not in the morning, nor at lunchtime, nor at night.' His words expressed a small reproach for the injustice of his situation: 'It's a difficult time at the moment for everyone, without exception, so it's good to feel more united, especially in a family, and that's right, isn't it? We're all suffering the same pain, and when I say "we" I mean all of France, so all French people must come together for support, and French families must show the example.'<sup>106</sup> Why, then, was his own family not following this example? It must have been hard to bear in the face of relentless propaganda glorifying large, happy families, with children eating, playing and cuddling their mothers in posters, magazines and brochures everywhere.

Vichy's instrumentalization of children to promote its family policy, then, touched the classroom and the home, and used children's emotional experiences to provide opportunities for sentimental publicity which extolled the virtues of family life, duty and sacrifice, which were core ideological components of the National Revolution. Children were the subjects of propaganda as a mass of reproductive futures, and the various ideas of children and childhood were used to pressure parents to have more children. They also demonstrated citizenly behaviour in their identification with the patriotic rhetoric of motherhood, in their engagement with the regime's sharply gendered ambitions and in their participation in shaping and working with its values and norms. But by catapulting children into their own futures, the sad realities of their daily lives which undermined the familialist message were overlooked.

## Conclusion

This article has reflected on the way in which the Vichy regime instrumentalized school-age children in pursuit of its ideological goals, on how children responded to that, and has suggested that thinking about children's social participation can help us better understand their lives in the past and perhaps the present too. Taking the first point, Vichy used children in three clear ways. The first was a symbolic use of the child, deploying image and rhetoric. This cast children as representative of the future: of future national grandeur, of future population growth. Typically the children depicted were chubby, smiling and healthy-looking, not

frail and vulnerable. Second, children were used as intermediaries or ‘Trojan Horses’. They were schooled in the values of the regime, and expected to pass them on to their parents. And third, they were used as real people in the here and now: the regime directly sought children’s active participation in a range of campaigns. The example of the three Christmas ‘surprises’ for Pétain demonstrated that children mattered to the regime now, as children: they were beings as well as becomings.

I have analysed children’s responses to their instrumentalization through their own words, which generate methodological and epistemological conundrums. Children’s letters and essays are exciting and problematic sources. The moment of the source’s creation is unknowable, as is the motivation or feeling behind it, as is the durability of its impact. Much the same, of course, could be said about similar sources written by adults, and historians must guard against the essentialization of children or assumptions about their capabilities without recourse to scholarly (and interdisciplinary) evidence. Carolyn Steedman has written of a ‘poetics’ of the historian’s encounter with the past which is one, she says, of ‘observation and imagining.’<sup>107</sup> Thus the observable letter must surely be seen as only the expressed tip of a set of behaviours, thoughts and emotions which require something more of us in order to be apprehended.

Some of the children’s writings were clearly structured and/or directed by adults and others were more freely written. Children repeated the core values of the regime enthusiastically, and Pétain emerged very clearly as a hero. They were enthusiastic about the reconstruction of France, and felt empowered by the contribution that they could make, through carrying out a range of patriotic duties, now and in the future. Their reiteration of the slogans, values and ideas of the regime – its nationalism, its pronatalism, its *maréchalisme* – should be seen as more than empty parroting. By writing letters, illustrating them, writing the words they knew would gain approval, children did work with their words, and their writing was meaningful and purposeful. Such writing often echoes propaganda; but just because propaganda existed it does not mean it worked in the way that was intended. The activities children were required to do did not always make sense inside the difficult realities of their daily lives. A distinction exists too between children’s enthusiastic *maréchalisme* and the Pétainism of Vichy policy – but the borders between these terms are blurred. Sometimes value-laden activities – participating in the loyalty leagues, for example – were undertaken because of an attachment to Pétain himself. Finally, the examples used in this article cannot be seen as representative of all children; not all children wrote to Pétain, and these are not all of the letters written to Pétain. Children, like adults, exhibited a range of responses to the regime; the aim of this article was to highlight those who engaged with it.

During the era of the Second World War, children suffered and were targeted as never before. Total war shifted notions of citizenship because it changed who could be called upon to defend the nation, and in what ways; this has rarely been analysed in relation to children.<sup>108</sup> While children’s citizenship is of growing interest in some disciplines, historians of childhood have touched little upon it.<sup>109</sup> Progressive understandings of citizenship comprise not just rights and duties, but also identity and social participation. Children have long been seen as outside of citizenship because of the ‘deficit model’ of childhood which Western society has constructed across the past 200 or so years: they are incomplete and incompetent in relation to adults, and so not capable of enacting citizenship in the same way as adults. The deficit model is ‘future-oriented’: ‘children are typically constructed in instrumentalist terms’ as future adults rather than as social actors as children in the present.<sup>110</sup> But if we

define children not as lacking but as complete *as children*, and if we define citizenship itself as performed and experienced differently by different parts of the population, we can start to see children emerging as active citizens in the past.<sup>111</sup>

## Notes

1. Proud, *Children and Propaganda*, 4.
2. France was, of course, not the only place where children were instrumentalized during this period. Attention to children and young people was a key component of all of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, some of which exhibited similarities with Vichy's policies. See, among others: Kater, *Hitler Youth*; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*; Kucherenko, *Little Soldiers*; Kelly, *Children's World*; Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight*. Yet Vichy was not totalitarian, and was unable to impose total control on young people, because of the number of youth organizations in operation, their pre-war scale and structures, and, in many cases, their closely guarded independence; see n. 5. Such attention to children is not limited to totalitarian societies. See, for example: Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War* or Kennedy, *The Children's War*. Neither should the instrumentalization of children be seen as belonging to the twentieth century (see, for example, Marten, *The Children's Civil War*), nor, indeed, as a purely historical phenomenon.
3. Nettelbeck, 'A Forgotten Zone of Memory?', 159.
4. Nettelbeck, 'A Forgotten Zone of Memory?', 163–4.
5. For example, among others: Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*; Giolitto, *Histoire de la jeunesse sous Vichy*; Lee, *Pétain's Jewish Children*. For interwar France, for example, among others: Whitney, *Mobilizing Youth and Downs*, 'Each and Every One of You Must Become a Chef'. It is important to note that the framing of youth through a range of organizations – particularly religious, but also political and regional or occupational – was nothing new in Vichy France and there has been a great deal of historical research into youth groups in interwar France as well as into the war – and beyond. An analysis of how children interpreted the messages they received from Vichy in light of prior involvement with youth groups or their present participation in newer organizations is beyond the scope of this article; it is not possible to tell from the sources used whether a child was a member of a particular youth group. Nonetheless, children – like adults – had multiple memberships of multiple groups at any one time, and were the recipients of multiple messages, some of which conflicted with each other, and some of which reinforced each other.
6. An exception is perhaps G. Ragache's *Les Enfants de la guerre*, although this focuses more on aspects of childhood than children themselves. On Jewish children in Vichy France, see Chapter 5 of Fogg's *Politics of Everyday Life*, particularly n. 4 on p. 154 for a list of works on the subject.
7. For example: Atkin, *Church and Schools in Vichy France*; Handourtzel, *Vichy et l'Ecole*; Condette, *Les Écoles dans la guerre*.
8. For example, Capuano, *Vichy et la Famille*; on pronatalism, Reggiani's article 'Procreating France'; on women's lives, see, for example: Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin* or Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*.
9. See also Brown, *Critical History of French Children's Literature*.
10. Sturdee, 'The Effect of the Nazi Occupation on the Children of Caen'; Dodd, *French Children under the Allied Bombs*.
11. Childhood memoirs include the collection Carrier, *Maréchal nous voilà*; Le Melleo, *Lorient à l'heure de l'évacuation*; Roux, *C'est la guerre les enfants*.
12. Downs, 'Au revoir les enfants', 24.
13. The periods of the year which were chosen were: (a) around Christmas and New Year, when 'surprises' for Pétain were run; (b) around the *rentrée* when children went back to school in October; and (c) around Mother's Day in the final week of May. When batches of children's letters were evident among the wealth of letters written by members of the population to their

- leader, these were also examined. As the letters were on microfilm, it was a question of scrolling through and identifying (easily) children's handwriting and drawings among the letters.
14. A key text for understanding this paradigm is James and Prout, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. For an overview useful to historians seeking to understand interdisciplinary approaches, see Kehily, *An Introduction to Childhood Studies*.
  15. Jordanova, 'Children in History', 5.
  16. Useful sources for exploring children's letter-writing include Hall, Robinson and Crawford, 'Young Children's Explorations of Letter Writing'; Salo, 'Dear Mrs. President: Children's Letters to the President of Finland as Documents of Life'; and Stanley 'The Epistolarium: on Theorizing Letters and Correspondences'.
  17. Greenhalgh, "'Till we Hear the Last all Clear'", 169.
  18. Alexander, 'Agency and Emotion Work'.
  19. Maynes, 'Age as a Category of Historical Analysis', 120, 116.
  20. Alexander, 'Agency and Emotion Work', 122.
  21. Schmidt, 'Children and the State', 174, 186.
  22. Noakes and Grayzel, 'Defending the Home(land)', 57.
  23. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood*, 35; Delanty, 'Models of Citizenship', 286.
  24. Waters, *Social Movements in France*, 46.
  25. Jans, 'Children as Citizens', 3, 38–40, drawing on Delanty, *Citizenship in a Global Age*.
  26. For a discussion of the problems of searching for children's agency in the past, see Alexander, 'Agency and Emotion Work'.
  27. Jackson, *France*, 280.
  28. Spencer, 'What is Charisma?', 347, in Kallis, 'Fascism, "Charisma" and "charismatization"', 26.
  29. Kelly, 'Riding the Magic Carpet', 203.
  30. Archives Nationales, Paris. F41 293. Anon, booklet 'Aux enfants de France', undated, 21.
  31. AN, F41 293. Service des Concours (Vichy), draft circular to members of the teaching profession (undated, probably December 1940).
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. AN, 2AG 498. Henri d'Amfreville, 'Quand les enfants de France dessinent pour le Maréchal', *Vrai*, 15 October, 1941: 6.
  34. AN, F41 293. Pétain's 'Speech to Schoolchildren', 13 October 1941.
  35. AN, F41 293. General Secretariat for Information (Youth Section), text for teachers to read to all schoolchildren in lieu of a poster (undated, probably December 1941).
  36. AN, F41 293. Minister of National Education and Youth to Chief Education Officers and School Inspectors, 15 September 1941.
  37. *Ibid.*
  38. Anon, 'Le maréchal Pétain à l'auberge de la jeunesse', *Le Temps*, 30 January 1942.
  39. Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 14–15.
  40. AN, F41 269. Pierrette B., 'Le portrait du Maréchal Pétain', 2 December 1940.
  41. AN, F41 269. Marie-Louise G., 'Le portrait du Maréchal Pétain', 2 December 1940.
  42. AN, 2AG 165. Micheline S. (via her grandfather), letter to Pétain, 3 January 1942.
  43. See the long series of letters relating to the sending of gifts to children in AN, 2AG 145, for example.
  44. AN, 2AG 329. Claire B. to Pétain, 28 November 28, 1942.
  45. AN, 2AG 165. Serge G., letter to Pétain, 8 September 1941.
  46. AN, 2AG 165. Jacqueline D., letter to Pétain, 11 September 1941.
  47. AN, 2AG 165. Gerard J., letter to Pétain (undated, probably September 1941).
  48. AN, 2AG 265. Jacques G., letter to Pétain, 12 December 1941.
  49. AN, 2AG 265. Claude D., letter to Pétain, 12 December 1941.
  50. AN, 2AG 265. Jean O., letter to Pétain (undated, probably December 1941).
  51. AN, 2AG 265. André B., letter to Pétain, 1 December 1941.
  52. AN, AJ 16 7149. Headmistress of Lycée de Jeunes Filles, Sèvres, to Chief Education Officer, Paris region, 31 January 1942.

53. While many children during this period only completed their obligatory primary education, remaining at the same school until the age of 14, others were sent to *lycées* in the *sixième* or 'sixth' class aged about 11, and continued until they passed their *baccalauréat* when they were about 18 years old. In the current French system *sixième* is the first year of the *collège* cycle of secondary education with pupils only starting the three-year *lycée* cycle around the age of 15.
54. AN, AJ16 7149. Headmaster of Lycée Carnot to Chief Education Officer, Paris region, 4 December 1942; Headmaster of Lycée Louis-le-Grand to Chief Education Officer, Paris region, 19 March 1942; Headmistress of Lycée Lamartine to Chief Education Officer, Paris region, 29 October 1941.
55. See Le Crom, *Au Secours Maréchal*.
56. AN, F41 269. General Secretariat for Youth (Propaganda Service), 'Bulletin de Presse', no. 2 (undated, probably autumn 1940), 23.
57. *Ibid.*
58. AN, F17 293. General Secretariat for Information (Youth Section) to all Headteachers, 8 December 1941.
59. AN, F17 13395. 'Message des enfants du Havre au Maréchal Pétain', December 1941 (received on 18 December 1941).
60. AN, F41 269. Ministry of Propaganda (Youth Section), 'Campagne de propagande sur les moins de 15 ans à l'occasion de Noël 1942', 11 September 1942.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. AN, F17 13395. Ministry of National Education, General Secretariat of Public Instruction to all Prefects and Headteachers, 21 November 1942.
64. Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 14.
65. AN, AJ16 7122. Director-general of the Secours national (Paris Region) to all Headteachers, 18 April 1941.
66. AN, 2AG 154. Ville d'Aubervilliers (Délégation spéciale d'Aubervilliers), invitation to the Gala de la Jeunesse Française, 1 May 1941.
67. AN, AJ16 7122. Director-general of the Secours national (Paris Region) to all Headteachers, 18 April 1941.
68. AN, 2AG 165. Marie-José E., letter to Pétain, 5 August 1941.
69. AN, 2AG 165. Signed collectively, letter to Pétain, 30 July 1941.
70. AN, 2AG 165. Janine C., letter to Pétain, 30 July 1941.
71. AN, 2AG 165. Guy C., letter to Pétain, 3 June 1942.
72. AN, 2AG 165. Signed collectively by schoolgirls at the Institut Sévigné, letter to Pétain, 5 July 1941.
73. AN, 2AG 165. Suzanne G, letter to Pétain (undated, probably July, 1941).
74. AN, 2AG 165. Raymond T., letter to Pétain, 9 September 1941.
75. AN, 2AG 165. Signed collectively by the girls in the *neuvième* class at the Institut Sevigné, letter to Pétain (undated, probably July, 1941).
76. AN, 2AG 154. Bulletin du Secours national (unoccupied zone), 15 April 1941.
77. AN, F17 13371. Anon, 'En sauvant les enfants nous sauvons l'avenir', *Clairon*, 3 July 1943.
78. *Ibid.*
79. Archives Municipales de Boulogne-Billancourt (AMBB), 6H 18. R. Ozouf (Inspector of Primary Education for the Seine), 'Note destiné aux instituteurs ou institutrices de la Seine chargés du contrôle des enfants évacués', 4 May 1943.
80. *Ibid.*
81. Speech of 17 June, 1940, in Jean-Claude Barbas, ed. and Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français 17 juin 1940–20 août 1944* (Paris, 1989), 57.
82. Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 74, 42.
83. Halls, *Youth of Vichy France*, 47.
84. Capuano, *Vichy et la famille*, 12.
85. AN, 2AG 498. General Commissariat for the Family, note 'La campagne de propagande en faveur de la famille' (undated, probably 1941).

86. Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin*, 127.
87. AN, 19760145 145. Leaflet 'Ils sont trois petits Français' (undated, probably 1941).
88. The idea of children being characterized as 'becomings' rather than 'beings' comes from Prout, *Future of Childhood*; see also Bacon and Frankel, 'Rethinking Children's Citizenship', 38.
89. AN, 2AG 497. Anon, *L'Instituteur et son rôle dans la restauration de la famille française, par un instituteur*, Secrétariat d'Etat à la Santé et à la Famille, Commissariat Générale à la Famille, undated (probably 1941), 27.
90. On gendered education in the Vichy era, see Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 71–97.
91. AN, 2AG 497. *L'Instituteur et son rôle*, 36.
92. *Ibid.*
93. AN, 2AG 329. Georgette K., letter to Pétain, 3 January 1942.
94. AN, 2AG 329. Lucette G., letter to Pétain, 3 January 1942.
95. AN, 2AG 329. Marie-Louise G., letter to Pétain, 3 January 1942.
96. Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 45.
97. AN, AJ16 7122. Minister of Public Instruction to all Headteachers of Primary Schools, 12 May, 1941.
98. *Ibid.*
99. Bernini, 'Mothers and Children in Post-War Europe', 244.
100. AN, AJ16 7122. Michel B., letter to his mother, undated (probably May 1941).
101. AN, AJ16 7122. Georges A., letter to his mother, 21 May, 1941.
102. AN, AJ16 7122. Roger V., letter to his mother, 21 May 1941.
103. AN, AJ16 7122. Georges A., letter to his mother, 21 May, 1941.
104. See Fogg, *Politics of Everyday Life*.
105. AN, AJ16 7122. Marie-Madeleine P., letter to her mother, 16 May 1941.
106. AN, AJ16 7122. Roger L., letter to his mother, 21 May 1941.
107. Steedman, *Dust*, 117.
108. Noakes and Grayzel, 'Defending the Home(land)', 57.
109. There is a body of scholarship around the history of child rights, however. See e.g. Fass, 'A Historical Context for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child', or Marshall, 'The Construction of Children as an Object of International Relations'.
110. Lister, 'Why Citizenship?', 697.
111. James, 'To Be(come) or Not to Be(come)', 169.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Barry Doyle, Shannon L. Fogg, Sophie Heywood, Laura King, David Lees and Wendy Michallat for comments on earlier versions. Any errors are my own.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council grant number AH/M006220/1.

## Notes on contributor

*Lindsey Dodd* holds an MA in Life History Research from the University of Sussex, and PhD in French History from the University of Reading. She is Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Huddersfield, and author of *French Children under the Allied Bombs, 1940–45: an Oral*

*History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016). She has published in *French History* and *Oral History*, and is on the editorial board of the latter. She is co-editor of two forthcoming publications: an edited collection on *Everyday Life in Wartime France* and a special issue of *Essays in French Literature and Culture* on life writing of the Occupation.

## ORCID

Lindsey Dodd  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8198-3384>

## Bibliography

- Alexander, Kristine. "Agency and Emotion Work." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts.* *Cultures* 7, no. 2 (2015): 120–128.
- Atkin, Nicholas. *Church and Schools in Vichy France*. London: Taylor and Francis, 1991.
- Bacon, Kate, and Sam Frankel. "Rethinking Children's Citizenship: Negotiating Structure, Shaping Meanings." *International Journal of Children's Rights* 22 (2014): 21–42.
- Barbas, Jean-Claude, ed. (and Pétain, Philippe), *Discours aux Français. 17 juin 1940 -20 aout 1944*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1989.
- Bernini, Stefania. "Mothers and Children in Post-War Europe: Martyrdom and National Reconstruction in Italy and Poland." *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 22, no. 2 (2014): 242–258.
- Brown, Penny. *A Critical History of French Children's Literature, 2 vols. ii: 1830-present*. New York and Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2008.
- Brubaker, W. Rogers. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Capuano, Christophe. *Vichy et la Famille: Réalités et faux-semblants d'une politique publique*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009.
- Carrier, Maria, ed. *Maréchal nous voilà... 1940-1944. Souvenirs d'enfances sous l'Occupation*. Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2004.
- Condet, Jean-François, ed. *Les Écoles dans la guerre: Acteurs et institutions éducatives dans les tourmentes guerrières XVIIe siècle-XXe siècle*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2014.
- Dekker, J. J. H. "The Century of the Child Revisited." *International Journal of Children's Rights* 8 (2000): 133–150.
- Delanty, Gerard. "Models of Citizenship: Defining European Identity and Citizenship." *Citizenship Studies* 1, no. 3 (1997): 285–303.
- Delanty, Gerard. *Citizenship in a Global Age: Society, Culture, Politics*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.
- Dodd, Lindsey. *French Children under the Allied Bombs (1940–1945): An Oral History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.
- Downs, Laura Lee. "Au Revoir les Enfants. Wartime Evacuation and the Politics of Childhood in France and Britain." *History Workshop Journal*. August 2016, online only at time of writing. <http://hwj.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/08/10/hwj.dbw027.abstract>
- Downs, Laura Lee. "Each and Every One of You must become a Chef": Toward a Social Politics of Working-Class Childhood on the Extreme Right in 1930s France." *Journal of Modern History* 81, no. 1 (2009): 1–44.
- Fass, Paula S., ed. *The Routledge History of Children in the Western World*. 2nd ed. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Fass, Paula S. "A Historical Context for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 633 (2011): 17–29.
- Fogg, Shannon L. *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables and Strangers*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Giolitto, Pierre. *Histoire de la jeunesse sous Vichy*. Paris: Perrin, 1991.

- Greenhalgh, James. "‘Till We Hear the Last all Clear’: Gender and the Presentation of Self in Young Girls’ Writing about the Bombing of Hull During the Second World War." *Gender & History* 26, no. 1 (2014): 167–183.
- Hall, Nigel, Anne Robinson, and Leslie Crawford. "Young Children’s Explorations of Letter Writing." In *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, edited by David Barton and Nigel Hall, 131–149. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamin’s Publishing Company, 2000.
- Halls, W. D. *The Youth of Vichy France*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Handoutzel, Rémy. *Vichy et l’École (1940–1944)*. Paris: Éditions Noesis, 1997.
- Jackson, Julian. *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- James, Allison, and Alan Prout, eds. *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. Basingstoke: Falmer Press, 1990.
- James, Allison. "To be(come) or Not to be(come): Understanding Children’s Citizenship." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 633 (2011): 167–179.
- Jans, Marc. "Children as Citizens. Towards a Contemporary Notion of Child Participation." *Childhood* 11, no. 1 (2004): 27–44.
- Jones, Owain. "‘Before the Dark of Reason’: Some Ethical Considerations on the Otherness of Children." *Ethics, Place and Environment* 4, no. 2 (2001): 173–178.
- Jordanova, Ludmilla. "Children in History: Concepts of Nature and Society." In *Children, Parents and Politics*, edited by Geoffrey Scarre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989: 3–24.
- Kallis, Aristotle A. "Fascism, ‘Charisma’ and ‘charismatization’: Weber’s Model of ‘Charismatic Domination’ and Interwar European Fascism." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 1 (2006): 25–43.
- Kater, Michael H. *Hitler Youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Kehily, Mary Jane, ed. *An Introduction to Childhood Studies*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Open University Press, 2009.
- Kelly, Catriona. *Children’s World. Growing up in Russia, 1890–1991*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Kelly, Catriona. "Riding the Magic Carpet: Children and Leader Cult in the Stalin Era." *Slavic and East European Journal* 49, no. 2 (2005): 199–224.
- Kennedy, Rosie. *The Children’s War: Britain, 1914–1918*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.
- Koon, Tracy H. *Believe, Obey, Fight. Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922–43*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Kucherenko, Olga. *Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children went to War, 1941–45*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Le Crom, Jean-Pierre. *Au Secours Maréchal: l’Instrumentalisation de l’humanitaire (1940–1944)*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013.
- Le Melledo, Paul. *Lorient à l’heure de l’évacuation: Itinéraire d’un Gavroche lorientais*. La Faouët: Liv’éditions, 2004.
- Lee, Daniel. *Pétain’s Jewish Children: French Jewish Youth and the Vichy Regime, 1940–1942*. Oxford: Oxford, 2014.
- Lister, Ruth. "Why Citizenship? Where, When and How Children?" *Theoretical Enquiries in Law* 8, no. 2 (2007): 693–718.
- Marten, James A. *The Children’s Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Marshall, Dominique. "The Construction of Children as an Object of International Relations: The Declaration of Children’s Rights and the Child Welfare Committee of League of Nations, 1900–1924." *International Journal of Children’s Rights* 7, no. 2 (1999): 103–148.
- Maynes, Mary-Jo. "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency and Narratives of Childhood." *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 115–160.
- Muel-Dreyfus, Francine. *Vichy et l’éternel féminin. Contribution à une sociologie politique de l’ordre des corps*. Paris: Seuil, 1996.
- Nettelbeck, Colin. "A Forgotten Zone of Memory? French Primary School Children and the History of the Occupation." *French History and Civilization* 14 (2011): 157–166.
- Noakes, Lucy, and Susan R. Grayzel. "Defending the Home(land): Gendering Civil Defence from the First World War to the ‘War on Terror.’" In *Gender and Conflict since 1914*, edited by Ana Carden-Coyne, 53–70. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

- Pine, Lisa. *Education in Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Berg, 2010.
- Pollard, Miranda. *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Proud, Judith. *Children and Propaganda*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 1995.
- Prout, Alan. *The Future of Childhood*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Ragache, Gilles. *Les Enfants de la guerre: vivre, survivre, lire et jouer en France 1939–1949*. Paris: Perrin, 1997.
- Reggiani, Andreas H. "Procreating France: The Politics of Demography." *French Historical Studies* 119, no. 3 (1996): 725–754.
- Roux, Nicole. *C'est la guerre les enfants*. Cherbourg-Octeville: Éditions Isoète, 2007.
- Salo, Ulla-Maija. "Dear Mrs President: Children's Letters to the President of Finland as Documents of Life." In *Documents of Life Revisited: Narrative and Biographical Methodology for a 21st-Century Critical Humanism*, edited by Liz Stanley, 133–145. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.
- Schmidt, James. "Children and the State." In *The Routledge History of Children in the Western World*. 2nd ed, edited by Paula S Fass. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015: 174–190.
- Spencer, M. E. "What is Charisma?" *British Journal of Sociology* 24 (1974): 341–354.
- Stanley, Liz. "The Epistolarium: On Theorizing Letters and Correspondences." *Auto/Biography* 12 (2004): 201–235.
- Stargardt, Nicholas. *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2005.
- Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. Manchester, NH: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- Sturdee, Jill. "The Effect of the Nazi Occupation on the Children of Caen: A Study of War and Memory." PhD diss., University of Sussex, 1996.
- Tuttle, William M. *'Daddy's Gone to War': The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Waters, Sarah. *Social Movements in France: Towards a New Citizenship*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Whitney, Susan B.. *Mobilizing Youth: Communists and Catholics in Interwar France*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Zahra, Tara. *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.