



# **A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s**

*James Gilbert*

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The youth culture is on everyone's lips today, as pressures build to ban controversial song lyrics, reintroduce school prayer, and prohibit teenagers' access to contraceptives. It's not the first time Americans have been outraged over the "seuction of the innocent."

When James Dean and Marlon Brando donned their motorcycle jackets and adopted alienated poses in *Rebel Without a Cause*, *East of Eden*, and *The Wild One*, in the 1950's, so did countless numbers of American teenagers. Or so it seemed to their parents. American teenagers were looking and acting like juvenile delinquents. By mid-decade, the nation had reached a pitch of near obsession with the harmful effects of film, radio, comic books, and television on American youth. Experts across the land denounced mass culture as depriving young people of their innocence and weakening their parents' hold on them. By the end of the decade, the obsession had ended, although the actual numbers of juvenile delinquents had apparently risen.

*A Cycle of Outrage* explores the 1950's debate over the media and juvenile delinquency among parents, professionals, and the creators of mass culture themselves. In this groundbreaking study, James Gilbert sees the attempt to blame the media as part of a larger reaction of discomfort echoed in recent debates over censorship. The book examines how the central phenomena of the 1950's--the development of youth culture and the rise of a mass media society--became intertwined and confused and argues that young people ceased to be a threat as they were recognized to be a market.

,bout the Author:

James Gilbert is a Professor of History at the University of Maryland. He is the author of *Another Chance: America After World War II*, among other books.

A groundbreaking study of the '50s obsession with juvenile delinquency

·Sheds new light on the rise of the youth culture and America's response to change

·"A marvelous exploration...He deeply illuminates our understanding of the contemporary United States."--William M. Tuttle, Jr.

·"Cultural history at its best."--David Nasaw

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