

*Dr. Benjamin Spock's "Baby and Child Care" is the biggest-selling book in the United States, second only to the Bible.*

Financially, American families were better off after the Second World War than they had ever been. Parents who quit school in eighth grade to go to work were now sending their own children to high school. Adulthood was postponed at least until a child was 16. Working-class young people had leisure time. You could hear the grandmothers murmur, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop."

Americans had traditionally been permissive with their children. They had to be—they were too busy working to pay much attention to them. But during the decade when the parents of post-war teens were raised, the pendulum had shifted for a brief period of time, and for the first time the country was full of parents who were raised with an iron hand.

The short-lived trend of being strict with your children was ended by a pediatrician named Dr. Benjamin Spock. Though not totally against discipline, Dr. Spock favored the traditional American attitude of permissiveness. Moreover, his bestseller "Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care" strongly suggested that, except in rare circumstances, mothers should devote themselves entirely and full time to caring for their children. Women read this to imply that if a child turned out bad, the mother was to blame.

Parents used Dr. Spock's book as a child-rearing bible, attempting to raise their offspring in this "modern" way but still expecting these children to be respectful, considerate, responsible—to act the way they had when they were brought up under the strict hand of their own parents. By comparison, their own children seemed wild, out of control.

Youngsters aged 13 to 19 were now considered a separate social group: teenagers. Sociologists had a field day studying them. Immigrants had not actually been assimilated into American culture, they said. There were too many gaps between the "haves" and the "have-nots," they said, though in Greenfield this gap had existed since John Turner's time. Cultural anthropologists insisted that it was natural for these have-not teens, denied access to upward mobility, to adopt what they termed "deviant behavior."

Deviant or nonconformist behavior, in their opinion, could only be a result of insanity. Scores of movies and television shows were made on the subject. Teenagers were seen as having a collective mental illness, and with the "baby boom" after World War II, there were more children and teens than ever before. All 48 states now