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'Drifting Towards Moral Chaos': The 1954 Mazengarb Report
-a Moral Panic over 'Juvenile Immorality'.

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the degree of Master of Philosophy in Education at
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JANET MADELINE SOLER
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ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
Dom	The Dominion
HVYS	Hutt Valley Youth Survey
'Listener'	The New Zealand Listener
NZH	The New Zealand Herald
NZCER	New Zealand Council for Educational Research
NZEI	The New Zealand Educational Institute
NZPD	The New Zealand Parliamentary Journals
MS 2384	Alexander Turnbull Library Papers 2384
Post	Evening Post
Star	The Auckland Star
'Truth'	The New Zealand Truth

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the concern over 'juvenile immorality' which began in early July 1954 and lasted until October the same year, when the recommendations made by the Mazengarb Report were passed by the House of Representatives. The 1954 Mazengarb Report and the events which surrounded it are analysed using sociological models of 'moral panic'. Such an approach provides the opportunity to examine a societal reaction to juvenile immorality and delinquency. It also allows an evaluation of the contributing groups and the processes which escalate public concern and facilitate the perception of a particular group of adolescents as a threat to society.

The evaluation of the Mazengarb Report and the public reaction which preceded it presupposes a particular theoretical perspective. The development of the concept of moral panic is outlined, and the application of this theoretical model to historical research is critiqued. The study explores the local context which gave rise to the deviant behaviour, the role of the media in escalating public concern, the role of the 'campaigners' and 'defendants', and the legislative outcomes. It is concluded that the public concern over juvenile immorality in mid 1954 reflects the general structure of a moral panic as outlined in sociological models.