

**A Transnational Tale of Teenage Terror:
The Blackboard Jungle in Global Perspective**
by Adam Golub

The Blackboard Jungle remains one of Hollywood's most iconic depictions of deviant American youth. Based on the bestselling novel by Evan Hunter, the 1955 film shocked and thrilled audiences with its story of a novice teacher and his class of juvenile delinquents in an urban vocational school. Among scholars, the motion picture has been much studied as a cultural artifact of the postwar era that opens a window onto the nation's juvenile delinquency panic, burgeoning youth culture, and education crisis.¹ What is less present in our scholarly discussion and teaching of *The Blackboard Jungle* is the way in which its cultural meaning was transnationally mediated in the 1950s. In the midst of the Cold War, contemporaries viewed *The Blackboard Jungle* not just as a sensational teenpic, but as a dangerous portrayal of U.S. public schooling and youth that, if exported, could greatly damage America's reputation abroad. When the film did arrive in theaters across the globe, foreign critics often read this celluloid image of delinquent youth into broader narratives about the corrupting effects of imported U.S. culture. The recent transnational turn in historical and cultural studies has challenged scholars to study the "global flow of people, ideas, texts, and products," and to explore the ways in which these flows affect local cultures and complicate national histories.² To fully appreciate the cultural work of *The Blackboard Jungle* and its significance in the history of childhood and youth, we need to situate its production, distribution, and reception in a larger intercultural global context.³

Drawing on archival evidence as well as a small but growing body of secondary scholarship, my essay reconstructs the transnational history of *The Blackboard Jungle*. While a handful of scholars have focused on the local impact of the film, particularly in Germany, Austria, France, and the U.K., this essay more broadly surveys its reception in a variety of countries, including those outside of Europe, and it also explores the ways in which the domestic controversy surrounding *The Blackboard Jungle* was shaped by Cold War geopolitics.⁴ This more expansive history shows us that an intense debate about the movie's impact took place in both the American and the foreign press, in the U.S. State Department and within Hollywood, and among civic leaders and social scientists outside of the United States. Revisiting these debates provides us with a new understanding of how global concerns circumscribed the domestic controversy surrounding MGM's "Drama of Teenage Terror. More importantly, it reveals how, in the 1950s, the United States exported a way of seeing and thinking about juvenile delinquency that influenced ideas about rebellious youth—and delinquent American culture—around the world.

"A Portrait of Democracy at Work"

The plot of the *Blackboard Jungle* centers on Rick Dadier, a young, newly-married army veteran (played by Glenn Ford) who teaches English at North Manual Trades in New York City. His students are working class, racially diverse, and all male, characteristics that implicitly offer viewers an explanation for their delinquent behavior. The film famously begins with a scene of the young men—some wearing cuffed jeans and white t-shirts, some sporting ducktails—dancing in the schoolyard to the strains of "Rock Around the Clock," by Bill Haley and the Comets; their subcultural style provides another explanatory frame for their deviant tendencies. Undeterred by

an older teacher who tells him that North Manual Trades is the “garbage can of the education system,” the idealistic Dadier is determined to make a connection with his students. From the start, however, the school is depicted as dangerous. Early in the film, Dadier saves a female teacher from an attempted rape in the library. He and a colleague are beaten up in a back alley one night while coming home from a bar. His pregnant wife receives “poison pen” letters from a student implying that Dadier is having an affair. The students mock and disrespect him throughout. Dadier struggles with thoughts of quitting even as he achieves small victories, especially in his attempts to reach out to an African American student played by Sidney Poitier. In the final scene, a student attacks Dadier with a knife in the classroom, but the other students, led by Poitier’s character, defend Dadier and pin the troublemaker to the wall with an American flag. With this show of support, Dadier decides not to quit his job. Despite ending with this positive—and patriotic—message, the film generated immense controversy both in the United States and around the globe due to its violent content, its negative depiction of public education, and its sensationalized focus on delinquent youth subculture.

In December 1954, several months before the scheduled premiere of *The Blackboard Jungle*, an executive at Loew’s theaters wrote Metro Goldwyn Mayer studios to express concerns about the film’s potential impact abroad. The executive, Dave Blum, worried that communists might use the story as propaganda to persuade foreign audiences of the inferiority of American education. Because Loew’s would be responsible for international as well as domestic distribution, Blum advocated for several script changes that he thought would stymie communist attempts to exploit the motion picture. For one, he wanted to make it clear to audiences that “the school that forms the basis of this picture is an antiquated exception that is being eliminated.” He also urged MGM to include an expression of the idea that delinquency “has always been an aftermath of war and the present wave of unruly children is found in all countries.” The film could “spoon-feed” this idea, Blum added, by specifically alluding to the problem of juvenile delinquency in the Soviet Union.⁵ After viewing a rough cut of *The Blackboard Jungle*, MGM producer Dore Schary wrote Blum back and told him not to worry. In his letter, Schary rebuffed Blum’s suggestions and countered that the film already made it clear that this school was atypical. Schary then proceeded to praise *Blackboard Jungle* as a “portrait of democracy at work” because it showed that “with patience and courage and understanding, even these hotbeds of delinquency can be eliminated.” In closing, Schary assured Blum, “You need have no concern over its foreign distribution.”⁶

History would soon prove Schary’s appraisal wide of the mark. In the meantime, *The Blackboard Jungle* opened in the United States in March 1955 to large audiences and considerable controversy. MGM’s so-called “portrait of democracy at work” was aggressively marketed as a “Drama of Teen-age Terror.” Sensational newspaper advertisements for the film blared, “They Turned a School Into a Jungle!” and “They Brought Their Jungle Code Into the School!” There was even a promotional float that drove around New York City featuring a scowling teenager who cleaned his fingernails with a switchblade.⁷ The film itself reportedly inspired a gang of girls in Memphis to burn down a cattle barn (though no such scene appears in the movie), and it was blamed by authorities for a rash of “juvenile outbreaks” in upstate New York.⁸ As more and more civic groups and educators denounced the motion picture—one school principal called it a “libel” against public education—commentators began to debate the wisdom of exporting this depiction of a chaotic American school to the world.⁹

In one camp were those who feared *The Blackboard Jungle* would give the international community a distorted impression of U.S. schools and harm the nation’s reputation as a model

democracy. Advocates for distribution, on the other hand, contended that the United States would come off looking more humble and sincere to foreign audiences because it was admitting that some aspects of American society were not perfect.¹⁰ In an attempt to appease the ever louder chorus of detractors, MGM spliced in a special foreword for foreign distribution stating that the plot was fictional and the conditions depicted were not representative of U.S. schools in general. The MGM Foreign Department also made sure that the subtitles for *The Blackboard Jungle* avoided any dialogue references to the low wages earned by U.S. schoolteachers.¹¹ With these amendments in place, the film was packaged, shipped, and screened in theaters worldwide throughout the summer and fall of 1955. Dore Schary's earlier assurances to Dave Blum notwithstanding, *The Blackboard Jungle* swiftly generated as much controversy abroad as it had in the United States.

In many countries around the world, MGM's "portrait of democracy" was received more as a "portrait of delinquency" that threatened to corrupt children and undermine public order. Film censors in Great Britain, for example, were concerned that *Blackboard Jungle* would inspire acts of juvenile delinquency. Consequently, they cut five minutes of footage and gave it an "X" rating that prohibited children from attending.¹² Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Cuba, and Holland also restricted admission to adults.¹³ Australia's chief censor initially banned the film outright; the decision was reversed on appeal, but 165 feet of objectionable footage was still excised.¹⁴ Women's organizations in Toronto unsuccessfully pressed the Ontario Board of Film Censors for an immediate Province-wide ban on that grounds that the film glorified "the classroom development of criminal tendencies." In reviewing the film, one West German newspaper stated pointedly that juvenile delinquency was at its core "an expression of American civilization." In Japan, parents groups in several cities demanded that movie houses stop showing the film. Responding to public outrage in Kobe, law enforcement officials drafted a bill for submission to the local assembly that would authorize the police department to ban movies and publications it deemed "harmful to juveniles," such as *Blackboard Jungle*. The censor board in India declared the film "unsuitable for public exhibition" and it was similarly banned in some fifteen different countries."¹⁵

In Italy, U.S. Ambassador Clare Booth Luce pressured organizers of the Venice Film Festival not to show *The Blackboard Jungle*. She worried that communists in Italy would exploit the film as anti-American propaganda and she threatened to boycott the festival if the movie was screened. Though the ambassador had never actually seen the motion picture, she claimed to trust the opinions of close advisors who had. According to a member of her delegation, *The Blackboard Jungle* imparted "an unflattering and unrealistic view of American school life." MGM cried censorship, but the U.S. State Department supported Luce's actions, stating that it was her diplomatic responsibility to speak out against any film that was "not... truly representative of America."¹⁶ Dore Schary called the Luce affair "hypocritical nonsense" and "flagrant political censorship," while *Variety* opined that *The Blackboard Jungle* was "not typical of American classroom misbehaviorism" just as Italian gangster films were not representative of Italy.¹⁷ At the same time, those who had been dubious of MGM's decision to export the film in the first place ran to Luce's defense. For example, the film critic for the Los Angeles-based Catholic newspaper *The Tidings* wrote, "Unless those who choose to make such controversial films as *The Blackboard Jungle* voluntarily withhold them from foreign audiences to whom they may convey a false and damaging impression of American life, government intervention is inevitable."¹⁸

To be fair, audience reception abroad was not uniformly hostile. In Egypt, for example, the Ministry of Education paid for a special screening of *The Blackboard Jungle* for schoolteachers. The Evangelical Film Guild of Australia called the movie “valuable and instructive” and recommended it to “all worldly and clerical teachers, parents and lawyers concerned with juvenile delinquency.” In Singapore, one newspaper editorialized that *The Blackboard Jungle* fostered “good international relations as one country’s confession to the world that it is angry at its sociological weakness.” In Finland, theaters encouraged attendance by taking the unusual step of offering tax-free screenings.¹⁹

In the face of this mixed global reaction, MGM felt compelled to defend its actions—and public reputation—by launching a campaign to foil further attempts to suppress, restrict, or edit *The Blackboard Jungle* abroad. In October 1955, the studio issued a manual to theater managers stationed overseas to use as a guide in defending the motion picture against foreign censorship. In the manual, MGM boasted that the movie was in fact acting as a “force for good” in the world because it showed how troubled youth could be “won over to a decent way of thinking” through the perseverance of a caring adult.²⁰ *The Blackboard Jungle* was described as “a testament to the courage and liberty of cinematography” and a “tribute to the teaching profession.” The studio also enclosed a series of talking points to help theater managers make the case that *Blackboard Jungle* had proved “helpful to the world-wide problem of juvenile restlessness” and was therefore “honoring America.”²¹ In addition, the package listed numerous quotes from different foreign newspapers that had heaped praise upon the film, such as this statement from the *London News Chronicle*: “Nothing so fosters good international relations as one country’s confession to the world that it is angry at its sociological weakness.”

One U.S. newspaper noted that all of this global controversy only added fuel to the film’s “box office bonfire abroad.” By May 1957, the motion picture had grossed \$8 million worldwide.²² As the episodes recounted above suggest, *The Blackboard Jungle* was a global—not just American—phenomenon in the 1950s. Its history is appreciably an *internationalized* history, one characterized by stories of cross-cultural contact, conflict, and negotiation. Reconstructing this history can help us understand—and teach—the movie’s cultural significance in fresh and important ways. To illustrate this point, I would like to enlarge on three episodes in particular that make clear how transnational processes shaped the film’s multivalent meanings.

The Blackboard Jungle and Japan

The *Blackboard Jungle* uproar in Japan can readily be connected to broader concerns about U.S. occupation and cultural influence. Japan had achieved sovereignty in 1952, but the United States still leveraged much control culturally and diplomatically when *The Blackboard Jungle* was screened in 1955. In fact, Japan’s Cinema Censorship Board, Eirin, labeled the film “harmful,” but its hands were tied by a policy—held over from the Allied occupation—that granted U.S. movie companies the sole power to determine which films would and would not be exported to Japan. According to this policy, the Japanese simply could not decide whether or not they wanted to import a motion picture. The Japanese daily newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* argued that this system was a “national disgrace” and pointed out that European movie companies, unlike American studios, at least gave the Japanese an option. Many major Japanese newspapers similarly launched an editorial crusade against the U.S. movie industry that was prompted by the imminent release of *The Blackboard Jungle*. The president of the Japanese Theater Owners

Federation appealed to Metro Goldwyn Mayer to “cooperate with us and enable us to reject undesirable pictures,” but the studio did not yield. In the end, *The Blackboard Jungle* was shown in Japan, though the Japanese were able to place some age restrictions on the screenings: children under 18 were barred from admission in the entire Kanakawa Prefecture as well as in several major cities, including Osaka, Kobe, and Kyoto.²³

Anxieties about the general content of U.S. culture also mediated the reception of *The Blackboard Jungle* in Japan. In the postwar years, particularly with the influx of American popular culture, concerns about the influence of U.S. film, music, and juvenile literature on Japanese youth were voiced with greater frequency. After the war, for example, Japanese translators of Mark Twain worried that popular characters like Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn might inspire delinquent behavior among young people, so they edited out scenes involving smoking, cursing, and stealing.²⁴ When American jazz music began attracting more young fans in the postwar era, a prominent Japanese psychologist claimed that the music was having a “narcotic effect” on the minds of Japanese teenagers, causing the “suspension of thought” and the inability to “quietly [think] about things.”²⁵ Anxieties about youth and mass culture crystallized in the much-discussed 1950 case of a young chauffeur in Tokyo who stole funds from his employer and subsequently went on a spending spree with his teenaged girlfriend. When caught and pressed to explain himself, the chauffeur simply said to authorities—in English—“oh, mistake.” In the public eye, this couple came to symbolize a younger generation corrupted by consumer culture. The lovers were allegedly fans of Hollywood gangster films and they “conversed in a curious polyglot of Japanese and broken English, had no apparent interests beyond material consumption and sexual pleasure, and felt no remorse at all for their casual crime.”²⁶ *The Blackboard Jungle* was read into this larger narrative of corruption by mass culture; after the film opened, the press claimed it “incited violence,” and the media pounced on the story of a schoolboy in Kyushu who had pulled a knife on a classmate after going to see the motion picture.²⁷

In postwar Japan, *The Blackboard Jungle* traversed two interrelated societal debates—one about childhood and U.S. mass culture, another about Japanese sovereignty. Its reception and meaning were transnationally mediated by local discourses about juvenile misbehavior, concerns about the corrupting effects of American popular culture, and resentment of lingering policies from the U.S. occupation. When we look beyond the United States to Japan to better understand *The Blackboard Jungle*, we find it symbolized something much larger than a school story in the 1950s—it reinforced the image of an unyielding, delinquent American culture that would not fully recognize Japan’s independence.

West Germany’s Blackboard Jungle

When we follow *The Blackboard Jungle* to West Germany, where it was released in late 1955, still other interpretations of its cultural work become possible. In her book *Jazz, Rock & Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, Uta G. Poiger helpfully describes the ways in which the film shaped German understandings of juvenile delinquency. When a wave of youth riots erupted across both Germanys in the mid-1950s, many commentators blamed the uprisings on U.S. cultural imports. Specifically, critics singled out *The Blackboard Jungle* (along with *The Wild One* and *Rebel Without a Cause*) for showcasing fashion, music, and behavior that was negatively influencing German youth. In reviewing *The Blackboard Jungle*, for instance, West German newspapers expressed concern that the movie’s

theme song, “Rock Around the Clock,” as well as the jazz soundtrack, “symbolized and illustrated American male delinquency.” A German educational expert pointed out that the white gang leader in *The Blackboard Jungle* exemplified a teenager who has regressed into a “wild state” and exhibits nihilistic behavior.²⁸ As was the case in Japan, West Germans feared that degenerate American culture would create degenerate German youth. And as in Japan, West Germans already had their own share of concerns about local teen deviance.

The West German press used the term *Halbstarke* (“hooligans”) to describe and discuss the perceived epidemic of juvenile delinquency on German soil. The term had first been used in the early 1900s, but in the 1950s it was revived by the German media in stories about the youth riots and in reports about growing gang activity. Generally, the term was broadly and indiscriminately applied to any nonconformist youth, “in large part due to the unwillingness of the media to differentiate between ‘real’ juvenile criminals and comparatively harmless groups of young people roaming the streets.”²⁹ Media portrayals of West Germany’s *Halbstarkeproblem* in the media connected the hooligans’ American fashion—tight jeans, T-shirts, short jackets, greased back ducktails—to their delinquent behavior. Social science professionals similarly laid blame for *Halbstarke* on the United States: “adolescents, and especially young males, modeled their rebellious behavior on American examples transmitted to Germany via American movies and music.”³⁰ Poiger makes the case that *The Blackboard Jungle* influenced this emerging discourse. She notes that the film “shaped West German representations of *Halbstarke*.” For example, one newspaper photo showed male teens whistling at a woman walking by on the street; the dress, pose, and facial expressions of the *Halbstarke* invoke a similar scene in *The Blackboard Jungle*.³¹ The American motion picture also inspired a West German film on the topic of juvenile delinquency. *Die Halbstarcken*, released in October 1956, told the story of a working-class gang of adolescents who committed robberies. Shot in black and white, featuring a soundtrack of fast-paced American music, and starring young actors dressed in jeans and short jackets, *Die Halbstarcken* was a “self-conscious West German answer to *The Wild One*, *The Blackboard Jungle*, and *Rebel Without a Cause*.” The film was notable, argues Poiger, because “it helped to spread the term *Halbstarke* and because it translated into German terms a trope that characterized a German view of American juvenile delinquency.”³²

In West Germany, then, we find a case study of the influence of *The Blackboard Jungle* on local media depictions of youth deviance and on professional explanations for the causes of such deviance. Moreover, we see how the film provided a set of class and age-based tropes for the German culture industry to imaginatively borrow in constructing their own ideas about juvenile delinquency. The story of *The Blackboard Jungle* in West Germany is one of creative creolization—the forging of a new transnational tale about youth culture and rebellion that reminds us how “the identity of exported cultural signs is altered exactly at the moment in which they intersect with other cultures.”³³

MGM’s Cultural Diplomacy

Finally, studying *The Blackboard Jungle* in a global context shows us how the film can be read as a chapter in the larger story of Cold War cultural diplomacy. As Richard Pells observes, the Cold War was “waged as much for cultural influence as for political, economic, and military domination.”³⁴ In the postwar era, the U.S. State Department became more involved in sponsoring and exporting American culture as part of its foreign policy strategy. At the governmental level, particularly via the United States Information Agency, there was a new push

to “define culture strategically in an international context” and export a positive vision of American culture and society.³⁵ Thus, during the Cold War, the State Department built “America Houses” across the world that featured reading rooms, lecture and concert halls, galleries, and repositories of musical recordings and films—all meant to showcase the “good life” in the United States. It also sponsored tours of jazz musicians and the “Family of Man” photography exhibit. It promoted its agenda through broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America. It even financially rewarded Hollywood studios that exported films offering a positive cultural self-portrayal of the United States.³⁶

This history of sponsored, “official” cultural exports has been well-documented by Cold War historians.³⁷ What has received less attention is the history of how the U.S. culture industry conducted its *own* cultural diplomacy—especially when it circulated content that was frowned upon by the U.S. government. As was clear from the Luce affair, the State Department bristled at the export of “unofficial” culture that could potentially harm America’s image. The MGM manual for studio managers abroad, defending *The Blackboard Jungle* as a “force for good” because it was honest, inspiring, and therefore in line with U.S. foreign policy objectives, offers a glimpse into this process of unofficial diplomacy. Notably, MGM felt compelled to justify its entertainment product in Cold War political terms, employing the rhetoric of cultural self-portrayal and conducting its own brand of outreach. As the manual proudly proclaimed:

There are those who mistakenly or hypocritically say that *The Blackboard Jungle* should not be shown—or if shown, should not be sent abroad. Such opinion disregards the basic difference between free countries eager to proclaim their glories but not adverse to admitting the less desirable aspects of their culture, and Iron Curtain countries, whose productions... “show only happy, smiling peasants.”³⁸

In other words, the American *Blackboard Jungle* exemplified honest cultural portrayal, in contrast to the phony and staged propaganda screened in “Iron Curtain” countries. MGM clearly strived to graft a significance to its product that was shaped by international circumstances.

Conclusion

In the United States as in Japan and Germany, the meanings attached to *The Blackboard Jungle* were inescapably cross-cultural. In the history of childhood and youth, *The Blackboard Jungle* needs to be understood not simply as an *American* cultural artifact that tells us something about the United States in the 1950s, but as a *transnational* cultural text with multiple and sometimes competing meanings that can tell us something about the dynamics of globalization during the Cold War. In some cases, the film fueled anti-American sentiment, influenced local understandings of juvenile delinquency and youth subcultural style, and disrupted official channels of cultural diplomacy. In other cases, the film was received as an honest and helpful portrayal of a worldwide problem—the outrage it sparked was not necessarily universal. In short, the transnational history of *The Blackboard Jungle* shows us how American images of youth and delinquency circulated meaningfully, multiply, and with consequence beyond U.S. borders during the 1950s.

Notes

¹ These approaches are best represented by James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986); Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Mark Thomas McGee and R.J. Robertson, *The J.D. Films* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1982); Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2005); Beth McCoy, "Manager, Buddy, Delinquent: *Blackboard Jungle's* Desegregating Triangle," *Cinema Journal* 38:1 (1998): 25-39; Adam Golub, "'They Turned a School Into a Jungle!': How *The Blackboard Jungle* Redefined the Education Crisis in Postwar America," *Film and History* 39:1 (Spring 2009): 21-30; and Daniel Perlstein, "Imagined Authority: *Blackboard Jungle* and the Project of Educational Liberalism," *Paedagogica Historica* 36:1 (2000): 407-424.

² Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Culture: The Transnational Turn in American Studies (Presidential Address to the American Studies Association)," *American Quarterly* 57:1 (March 2005), 24. On the "transnational turn" see also David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *The Journal of American History* 86:3 (December 1999): 965-975; Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Organization of American Historians/New York University Project on Internationalizing the Study of American History, "The LaPietra Report," 2000 [<http://www.oah.org/activities/lapietra/final.html>].

³ Three recent essay collections that consider childhood and youth studies in a transnational context are Koichi Iwabushi, Stephen Muecke, and Mandy Thomas, eds., *Rogue Flows: Trans-Asian Cultural Traffic* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004); Sunaina Maira and Elisabeth Soep, *Youthscapes: The Popular, the National, the Global* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); and Paul Fass, *Children of a New World: Society, Culture, and Globalization* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

⁴ See Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and two essays that appear in Timothy Shary and Alexandra Siebel, *Youth Culture in Global Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007): Daniel Biltereyst, "American Juvenile Delinquency Movies and the European Censors: The Cross-Cultural Reception and Censorship of *The Wild One*, *Blackboard Jungle*, and *Rebel Without a Cause*," 9-26, and Seibel, "The Imported Rebellion: Criminal Guys and Consumerist Girls in Postwar Germany and Austria," 27-36. Jennifer Stoever-Ackerman recently studied the "interconnections between postwar racialization, U.S. citizenship, and audio technology" in *The Blackboard Jungle* to understand how the film depicts the disciplining of "appropriately nationalized bodies." Stoever-Ackerman, "Reproducing U.S. Citizenship in *Blackboard Jungle*: Race, Cold War Liberalism, and the Tape Recorder," *American Quarterly* 63:1 (2011): 781-806.

⁵ Dave Blum to Robert Vogel, December 3, 1954, Blackboard Jungle—censorship file, MGM Turner Script Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Hollywood, Calif. (hereafter MGM-AMPAS). See also Blum's letter to Vogel, November 23, 1954, MGM-AMPAS.

⁶ Dore Schary to David Blum, January 3, 1955, Blackboard Jungle—correspondence file, MGM-AMPAS. In his autobiography, Schary recalls a similar exchange with the president of the Motion Picture Producers Association: "I got a call from [the MPAA president], who... asked me not to go ahead with the production. He warned me that the [U.S.] government might try and stop me because of the nasty look at our school system it would give foreign countries." Dore Schary, *Heyday: An Autobiography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 285.

⁷ Advertisements featured in *Daily News* (New York), March 18 and 16, 1955. Float described in letter, Scott Meredith to Evan Hunter, March 15, 1955, Box 26, Evan Hunter Papers, Special Collections, Mugar Library, Boston University, Brookline, Mass.

⁸ "Girls Burn Barn in Memphis; Blame 'Blackboard Jungle,'" *Motion Picture Daily*, May 17, 1955; "Police Seek to Finger 'Blackboard Jungle' As Root of Hooliganism," *Variety* (weekly), May 18, 1955, Blackboard Jungle clippings file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Hollywood, Calif. (hereafter BJ-AMPAS).

⁹ Our Town's Teachers: Blackboard Jungle?" *New York Post*, May 5, 1955, BJ-AMPAS.

¹⁰ The public debate about foreign distribution was summarized in "Export 'Blackboard Jungle,'" *Variety* (weekly), April 20, 1955, BJ-AMPAS. See also "Evil Propaganda in Films?" *Citizen-News*, June 14, 1955, BJ-AMPAS.

¹¹ "Export 'Blackboard,'" Darryl F. Zanuck to Dore Schary, January 19, 1956, Blackboard Jungle—correspondence (Schary-Zanuck), MGM-AMPAS.

- ¹² “‘Jungle’ Appalls Critics in Britain,” *New York Times*, September 18, 1955, 69; Robert Vogel to Dore Schary and Richard Brooks, January 31, 1956, Blackboard Jungle—foreign file, MGM-AMPAS. It is unclear which scenes were cut for screening in England. On the British reaction to *Blackboard Jungle*, see also Biltereyst, 15-20.
- ¹³ “Blackboard Jungle: A Sociological Study and Box-Office Production Extraordinary: Its Relation to Censorship,” October 17, 1955, 2. *Blackboard Jungle*—censorship file, MGM-AMPAS.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.* The changes made for viewing in Australia included shortening the shot of a “lady school teacher’s legs as she ascends steps to auditorium stage” and the scene of a “lady school teacher lifting dress and adjusting suspenders on both stockings.” Australian censors also abridged scenes involving a rape, an alley fight, and a classroom fight. See local censor board report, Australia, August 31, 1955, BBJ—production code file, MGM-AMPAS.
- ¹⁵ “Toronto Hubbub Over ‘Blackboard,’” *Variety* (weekly), May 25, 1955, BJ-AMPAS; Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 89; “‘Jungle,’ ‘Bamboo’ Films Stir Furor in Japan,” *Citizen-News*, September 8, 1955, BJ-AMPAS; “India Bans 2 U.S. Films,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1955, 45; Peter Ford, DVD commentary, *The Blackboard Jungle*, Turner Entertainment Co., 2005, dist. by Warner Home Video.
- ¹⁶ “U.S. Film Dropped at Fete in Venice,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1955, 9; “‘Blackboard Jungle’ Gets Ax; Schary Irked,” *Citizen-News*, August 27, 1955; “State Dept. Upholds Luce’s ‘Blackboard’ Blast in Answer to Arthur Loew’s Complaint,” *Variety* (daily), September 22, 1955. Venice Film Festival organizers permitted Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to substitute another picture, *Interrupted Melody*, in place of *The Blackboard Jungle*. The press commonly referred to this entire episode as the “Affair Luce.” Multiple press clippings on this incident are collected in BJ-AMPAS.
- ¹⁷ “Mrs. Luce’s Venice Nix on ‘Jungle’ Raises Old Bogey: Who’s to Tell What’s Good or Bad for Export?” *Variety*, August 31, 1955; “Diplomacy?” *Variety*, August 31, 1955. BJ-AMPAS.
- ¹⁸ “‘Jungle’ Incident Teaches Lesson,” William H. Mooring, *The Tidings*, September 9, 1955, BJ-AMPAS. Hollywood film writer and producer Arthur Hornblow piled on: “The smell of anti-Americanism and Communism in Italy is not a joke... It impresses many American film people currently in Italy that Ambassador Luce performed a needed service to our industry.” “Hornblow Tells How ‘Jungle’ Quit Venice,” *The Tidings*, September 16, 1955, BJ-AMPAS.
- ¹⁹ Robert Vogel to Dore Schary, Berman, and Richard Brooks, 12 December 1955. *Blackboard Jungle*—foreign file, MGM-AMPAS; “Mixed Global Reaction to ‘Blackboard,’” *Variety* (weekly), 11 November 1955, p. 16.
- ²⁰ Pandro S. Berman to W.T. Wilson, n.d., letter included in “Blackboard Jungle: A Sociological Study,” 5, 7.
- ²¹ “Blackboard Jungle: A Sociological Study,” 7, 8.
- ²² “Controversy Adds Fuel to ‘Blackboard Jungle’s’ Big B.O. Bonfire Abroad,” *Variety* (daily), December 2, 1955, BJ-AMPAS. “‘Blackboard Jungle’ \$8,000,000 Gross,” *Hollywood Reporter*, May 31, 1957, BJ-AMPAS. See also Dore Schary to Darryl Zanuck, January 16, 1956, Blackboard Jungle—correspondence (Schary-Zanuck), MGM-AMPAS.
- ²³ “‘Jungle,’ ‘Bamboo’ Films Stir Furor in Japan”; “2 U.S. Films Arouse Anger of Japanese,” *Washington Post*, September 9, 1955, 50; “‘Jungle’ Curbed in Japan,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1955, 10.
- ²⁴ Tsuyoshi Ishihara, *Mark Twain in Japan: The Cultural Reception of an American Icon* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 70-71.
- ²⁵ Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 189-190.
- ²⁶ John Dower, *Embracing Defeat.: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 527.
- ²⁷ Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (Expanded edition) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 424.
- ²⁸ Poiger, 88, 71. On German reaction to *The Blackboard Jungle*, see also Thomas Fuchs, “Rock ‘n’ Roll in the German Democratic Republic, 1949-1961,” in Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, “*Here, There and Everywhere*”: *The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 192-206
- ²⁹ Seibel, “The Imported Rebellion,” 28.
- ³⁰ Poiger, 80, 81, 106.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 86.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 101. Seibel similarly argues that *The Blackboard Jungle* “shaped the screen images of youth” in postwar German film.
- ³³ Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 3.

³⁴ Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 39.

³⁵ Eric Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 109.

³⁶ Pells, 214.

³⁷ See Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1997); David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and also Pells, Sandeen, and Wagnleitner, op cit.

³⁸ "Blackboard Jungle: A Sociological Study," 9.