

*Abstract*

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The aim of this thesis is to give an insight into the socio-psychological reasons behind the disruptive criminal behaviour in adolescents and the ways to overcome their flaws in Todd Strasser's select novels. The research is based on the developmental stages of risk and protective factors in criminology which contribute as a motive for criminal and non-criminal behaviours respectively in adolescents. These stages are analysed under two conceptual frameworks and two theoretical frameworks.

The objectives of the research is: to trace the adverse conditions undergone by adolescents in their early childhood; to identify the delinquent factors which influence the adolescents towards crime; to recognise the circumstantial factors which lead adolescents to commit a crime; and to explore the transformation of adolescent criminals through protective factors in Todd Strasser's select novels.

The developmental approach allows to examine the pathway, transition - the beginning and the final stage; and the turning point of any criminal behaviour. The pathway to crime begins with familial impact created on adolescents and the changes they face overtime from childhood. It is traced with the application of Adverse Childhood Experience. Later, the transition begins with the influence of the peer pressure. It is identified with the application of Differential Association Theory. The final stage of transition is analysed through the impact of critical life events such as situational factors which are highlighted by the application of Situational Action Theory. Finally the adolescents with the help of a protective factor have a change of heart and resent for their act of crime. This protective factor is analysed through Enlightened Witness. Moreover, the juxtaposing characters who are placed in a similar situation but do not commit a crime are also examined in the novels.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. **Chapter I** titled, “**Introduction**” focuses on the history of criminology and origin of crime fiction in American literature. It also traces the origin and development of young adult literature till the age of Todd Strasser. The life and works of Todd Strasser are dealt in detail. This chapter attempts to give an insight into the review of literature; the novels chosen for the research, and the framework of the thesis along with methodology.

**Chapter II** titled, “**The Scars of Childhood Violence**” focuses on the hardships undergone at the early stages of childhood. This is the first stage of risk factor which paves way to criminal behaviour. It is traced with the help of a study, called Adverse Childhood Experience, which is a physical or an emotional abuse which leads the children to have negative emotions such as trauma, anxiety and depression. These negative emotions may result in a negative outcome of transforming them into criminals, when they grow up. Through the application of Adverse Childhood Experience, the abuses undergone by adolescents in their childhood are identified as scars, with reference to the select novels of Todd Strasser.

**Chapter III** titled, “**Delinquent Influences among Adolescents**” highlights the learning process of criminal behaviour through close interactions. This is the second stage of risk factor which traces the beginning of the transition process in the early adolescence. The influential factors are mapped with the application of the nine principles of Differential Association Theory. The nine principles are: criminal behaviour is learned; criminal behaviour is learned through interactions with others; most learning processes of criminal behaviour happens among intimate personal groups, especially among peers; the process of learning criminal behaviour include learning about the techniques and the motives as well; the direction of motives and driving factor towards criminal behaviour is learned through

the interpretation of legal codes in one's area as favourable or unfavourable; If the number of favourable interpretations that support violating the law outweigh the unfavourable interpretations then an individual will choose to become a criminal; all differential associations can vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity; the process of learning criminal behaviours takes place through interactions with criminals; and criminal behaviour is an expression of generalized needs and values. Through these nine principles the learning process of criminal behaviour in the characters are identified.

**Chapter IV** titled, "**Circumstantial Transgression by Adolescents**" attempts to explain the situation which induces adolescents to commit a crime. This is the third stage of risk factor which covers the final transition process of criminal act. The situational action theory is applied for analysis. The theory covers three components: motivation, perception and choice. These three components result in the final course of action which is committing a crime. Thus the circumstantial factors which prompted the characters to commit a crime are identified in the select novels of Todd Strasser.

**Chapter V** titled, "**Transformation through Enlightened Witness**" focuses on the transformation experienced by the characters through protective factors which help them to overcome criminal behaviour. These protective factors mediate or moderate the effects of exposure to risk factors. The turning point of adolescent criminals are traced through the with the application of the Enlightened Witness.

**Chapter VI** titled, "**Summation**" culminates all the ideas discussed in the previous chapters. The thesis focuses on contributing to the growth of society by creating an awareness amongst its readers to the possibilities to reduce criminal activities among adolescents. The research is an attempt to understand the author's select works and its outreach to common societal problems.