

Chapter I

Chapter I

Introduction

“If every saint has a past, then every criminal has a future” (Gandhi). In recent times there are many burning sociological issues that affect the wellbeing of people. One of the most important issues would be crime and criminals. Every day a person hears or witnesses or becomes a victim to criminal activities. Particularly, young adults aging from ten to twenty four face a higher risk of violent crime arrest than any other age group. Adolescent is the stage where a child goes through emotional and physical change towards adulthood. This is the stage in which they are more prone to explore new things, at the same time they are vulnerable to transgressive behaviour. The major reason behind transgressive behaviour is due to separation of parents, single parenting, household dysfunction, peer influence and other situational factors. Thus the thesis focuses on these causes and effects of crime among adolescents.

The chapter focuses on crime and criminology; the origin and development of criminology; types of criminal behaviour; crime and literature; crime in early literary works; the constant growth of crime fiction in America is discussed from nineteenth century; the origin and development of Young Adult literature and its sub genres are traced till the age of Todd Strasser; his biography and works; the novels taken for the research and the review of literature; aim and objectives of the research are highlighted; and the structure of the thesis is discussed.

“Crime is a major source of social concern today” (Heidensohn 1). Criminal activities are behaviours that result in breaking the law which the government has imposed on the people. To understand this behaviour and to control them, a new field of study was introduced, called criminology. Criminology is the study of crime, focusing on the

reasons behind a deviant behaviour, its impact and the measures to prevent them. The role of a criminologist is to identify and answer how, why and who committed a crime.

Criminology as a separate field encompasses so many other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, psychiatry, political science and literature.

The origin and development of criminology are traced from seventeenth century to twentieth century; crime and criminology, seventeenth century – demonography; eighteenth century – classical school of criminology; nineteenth century – neo-classical school of thought, positive school, crime as a political behaviour and crime as a learned behaviour; and twentieth century – biological determinism, sociological view of crime; criminal behaviour and the new disciplines in criminology.

In the seventeenth century, demonography started to appear more in the belief of people than it was before. Crime or criminal behaviour was considered as the cause of possession by the devil and prayer, punishments or death became the tools for chasing or destroying the evil spirits. Witchcraft was among the alleged behaviours and Puritans believed that devils have the ability to possess souls for sinister purposes. In the history of civilisation witchcraft is often considered to be a capital offence.

In the eighteenth century, the classical school of criminology emerged in Europe. This paved a way for abandoning the supernatural explanation for the cause of crime. The classical school was grounded on the idea that man is a self-determining creature, acting on the basis of intelligence and reasoning. Therefore he is responsible for his own actions. The prominent writers of the classical school were Cesare Bonesana and Marchese di Beccaria. Classical school's approach to punish the first time offenders and repeaters, the same basis was a major shortcoming of the school.

The nineteenth century marked the beginning of many new thoughts of criminology. They are: neo-classical school of thought ; positive school; crime as a political behaviour; and crime as a learned behaviour. The 'neo-classical school of thought' had a softer approach; they suggested that even though 'free will' determines the nature of human conduct but it could be affected by incompetence, pathology, insanity or other conditions that makes it impossible for an individual to exercise his free will. Also this school accepted that external factors such as circumstances can influence an individual to choose between right and wrong.

Even though classical and neo-classical schools continue to stand as the foundation of many contemporary criminal justice processes, a new school came into existence, "positive school" and it rejected the notion that behaviour was self-determining. The main idea of positivism was rooted in determinism. It believed that an individual was not an independent creature who acts by choice rather an individual's behaviour was determined by biology, or by one's ancestors or by some natural, physical, social or cultural factor.

Crime as a political behaviour came into existence with Quinney's concept of 'powerless people's conflict with the powerful', this made crime sound more like a political enterprise. The conception of Quinney roots in the economic determinism which led to the later development of criminological conflict and criminogenesis. Karl Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) discusses the power conflict in the society. Capitalism can be a means for the suppressed to rise against the powerful through criminal activities.

The concept of crime as a learned behaviour was first discussed by French magistrate and sociologist Gabriel Tarde in his *Les Lois de l'imitation (Laws of Imitation)* in 1890. A more developed theory of crime as a learned behaviour appeared in Edwin H. Sutherland's

theory of “differential association”. In this theory he states that criminal knowledge, motive and skills are learned and this represented a major breakthrough in criminology.

In the twentieth century after Lombroso, researchers started conducting experiments on his idea of biological determinism and many developed on his idea which resulted in forming new theories. Later it also developed into molecular biology and hypothesized that there is a link between chromosome abnormalities and crime. Some European courts have accepted the chromosome theory as a defence to criminal theory. However this biological based explanation for crime causation receives little support in American criminology. It is because the logic for these biological factors was structured weakly, hence ignoring the environmental, cultural, social and legalistic factors which also have a role to play in an individual’s criminal behaviour. In spite of these shortcomings the biological school continues to persist in European criminology.

The sociological view of crime emerged in America slowly in the first half of the twentieth century. During the 1920s and 1930s, sociological theory of criminology was developed at the University of Chicago by Robert E. Park, a sociologist. According to the research, criminal behaviour was seen unlike any other social behaviour. Criminal behaviour was believed to be restricted by cultural values especially joining cults or social groups with deviant value systems, varying nature of ethics, attitude towards law and society, and criminal associations.

Second half of the twentieth century gave rise to many embodiments in discipline leading criminology to branch out in other studies such as anthropology, ecology, victimology and demography. Victimology talks about the criminal victimisation, which solely analyses crime in the perspective of the victim’s psychology giving rise to the law Victim Support in 1980s. Criminal justice also has its roots in criminology and it is one of the prominent fields with emphasis on the justice for a crime through prosecution and punishment of the

criminal. The late twentieth century had seen many criminologists coming into the picture bringing in new aspects to the table and debates on the perpetual challenges for the discipline.

Criminal behaviour is analysed through many schools for ages. Its approaches had been introduced to analyse and understand crime and criminals by the criminologists. Eventually, two criminologists Marshall B. Clinard and Richard Quinney were able to categorise criminal behaviour under eight major types. They were violent personal crime, occasional property crime, occupational crime, political crime, public order crime, conventional crime, organised crime and professional crime.

Violent personal crimes are crimes such as murder, assault and forcible rape which are done under certain circumstance by a person with no previous criminal records. Occasional property crime includes auto theft, shoplifting, check forgery and vandalism where the offenders rationalize their criminal behaviour. Occupational crime consists of embezzlement, fraudulent sales, false advertising, price fixing, fee-splitting, black market activity, prescription violation and antivirus violation. Political crime includes treason, sedition, espionage, sabotage, war collaboration and radicalism. Here the offenders find illegal methods as a necessary means to achieve a change in the society. Public order crime focuses on drunkenness, vagrancy, disorderly conduct, prostitution, traffic violation and drug addiction. Conventional crime consists of robbery, larceny, burglary and gang theft. Most of these criminals are part-time juveniles beginning their criminal career. Organised crime includes organised gambling and narcotic distribution. These offenders pursue crime for a living. Professional crime consists of forgery and counterfeiting. They have a high status in the criminal world.

Down the ages many different writers and critics looked at crime through innumerable ways. The identification of the origin of crime represented in history dates back to the middle age. Many crime causation ideas developed were theoretical and hypothetical in

nature that they nevertheless had a significant impact on the treatment of criminals during the age they were developed but were used as a base structure for the later developments in the field. Slowly, on account of people's interest in crime, many literary personalities began showing interest in this genre.

Crime and literature together focuses on the insights and understanding of crime. Crime has been present in numerous literary classics and it has been witnessed in the early days of literature beginning with *Beowulf*. For ages, crime has been an underlying theme of many renowned literary works. Shakespeare's famous works such as *Macbeth* (1623), *Othello* (1621) and *Hamlet* (1603) have characters with criminal motives. These works are a fine example of the presence of crime in early literature. These works were never categorised under crime even though they had the element of crime.

Many writers had started writing about crime with a new outlook. One fine example was De Quincey's "Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts". This work was considered as a revolutionary work because it talked about poets' duty to aestheticize murder. "De Quincey's dilettantism in murder led him to see an artistic, even aesthetic, side to murder" (Alshiban 58). De Quincey comments:

"[The poet] must throw interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with him (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them—not a sympathy of pity or approbation)... as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look." (De Quincey 545)

Thus like De Quincey many writers have come forward and given their original prospect that changed the face of crime writing in English.

The development of crime fiction in literature is traced. crime fiction as a popular genre; crime fiction's impact in psychology; English crime writers; the beginning of American crime writers; the development of the genre crime fiction in American literature between nineteenth and twenty-first century; and intermixing of genres with crime fiction are highlighted.

Crime fiction is one of the most popular literary genres whose roots are in human culture. Crime was simply put forward as 'violation of law'. The concept of crime began with the moral enterprises in the society. As Jean-Patrick Manchette defines, "The crime novel is the great moral literature of our time" (Headline). Crime fiction genre acquired a particular form in the late nineteenth century. Since then many critics have come up with different definitions for crime but Jo Nesbo, a Norwegian crime writer stated that, "Crime fiction is a genre for writing stories about people – about conflict, about guilt, about passion, about the human condition" (Nance). According to Nesbo, crime fiction was a mere reflection of the human condition in every walk of life in a society.

Crime fiction is considered to provide a unique impact in psychology by enabling its readers to become witnesses of a crime. Especially forensic crime novels which involve crime scene investigation with scientific specialties. This form of crime novels are used as a distraction therapy by doctors who state that forensic crime fiction can improve a person's mental health and could be considered for the treatment of depression. These patients find crime fiction as escapism to cope with other difficulties in life. Thus crime fiction provides a distraction and gives confidence to face difficulties.

The English crime writers have shown great interest in writing texts based on crime and criminals following the fast steps of Willie Collins. Works of Arthur Conan Doyle's and Agatha Christie's have stood the test of time and are read across the world even today. Doyle made 'Locked room mystery' a popular genre in the English language. Locked Room Mystery is a sub-genre of detective fiction where a crime is committed under a seemingly impossible circumstance for the criminal to enter and exit the crime scene. This form has been considered as one of the milestones in crime fiction.

American crime writers flourished. As far as American society is concerned, only a few Americans tend to think analytically about crime and most of them have a limited, false or varying knowledge about it. The American society had a strong faith in religion which made them wonder about the role of morality and immoral acts such as crime. As stated by Alexander Moudrov, "... seventeenth-century Puritan ministers sowed the seeds of a flourishing American crop of crime literature with their monitory execution sermons and pamphlets" (Rzepka and Horsley 2). Thus puritans marked the genesis of crime writing in the late seventeenth century.

The eighteenth century crime fiction witnessed the influence of British crime writing. It focused on true crime stories and criminal trials. Earliest American crime fiction is "The Newgate Calendar", a collection of criminals' biographies. Another notable work is "The Female Review" by Herman Mann in 1797. Additionally, the trial of John Peter Zenger in 1735 became a popular subject of crime fiction in America during the eighteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, American crime fiction showed a potential growth in the beginning of its career with the publication of Edgar Allan Poe's (1809-1849) crime novels. Poe was one of the pioneers of American detective crime fiction. His first work is *Murder in the Rue Morgue* (1841). Poe was influenced by French crime writing which

followed the pattern: a crime is committed. A detective identifies the clues and eventually leads to capturing the real criminal. Edgar Allan Poe's works were called "tales of ratiocination" (Scaggs 1). Only after Poe's publication, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series were published.

Twentieth century had a promising growth in crime writing. In the beginning, American crime fiction and detective fiction had similar characteristics and plot structure. Both had mysteries to be solved by detectives who eventually culminated in capturing the criminal. So both these genres were considered indistinguishable till the twentieth century. This thought was changed in the middle of the twentieth century with the publication of *Brighton Rock* (1938) by Graham Greene and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) by Patricia Highsmith who had criminal protagonists. These works showed deviation from the general characteristics of crime because the main character shows no remorse towards their crimes. Stephen Knight in his book *Crime Fiction 1800-2000* stated: "... a major contribution to crime fiction made largely in America, which is best called the crime novel ... it focuses on the criminals and their feelings before, during and especially after the crime" (140).

The twentieth century foregrounded crime fiction in a new light, with writers breaking the traditional form of crime fiction. The publication of Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*, in 1969, marked the beginning of the golden age of crime fiction in the twentieth century. The new genres of psychological crime thrillers that sprouted in the twentieth century were hardboiled crime fiction, private eye detective, police procedural and historical crime.

Hardboiled crime fiction is also known as noir fiction, which in French means 'black' indicating the dark nature of the writing style. Charles Frazier comments: "Hardboiled crime fiction came of age in 'Black Mask' during the twenties and thirties. Writers like

Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler learnt their craft and developed a distinct literary style and attitude towards the modern world” (ch. 2). Frazier emphasises the words ‘black mask’ to address hardboiled crime fiction because of its vivid portrayal of violence which reflects the dark themed nature of the genre.

Hardboiled detective fiction genre originated in America by writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett who started writing during the interwar period. As mentioned by Milda Dantye in her *Introduction to the Analysis of Crime Fiction*, expresses: “Crime fiction became extremely popular during the interwar period and has never lost its popularity since” (12). Thus Chandler and Hammett played a huge role in helping the genre gain attention from the public. Raymond Chandler’s first crime fiction, *The Big Sleep* (1939) broke all the stereotypical writings in crime by providing excessive detail to the violence and sufferings involved in the story. For this reason Chandler was considered as the founder of hardboiled detective fiction.

The twentieth century was also controlled by “private eye” detective works (Knight 140). Private eye or private investigator are characterised as intelligent, quick witted and perceptive in nature. He works for the private customers rather than with the police. This type of fiction falls under both detective fiction as well as crime fiction for its nature to analyse and understand the criminal’s behaviour.

Police procedural based novels formed a very small part in the crime fiction genre but were effective. According to Braithwaite “Crime rates have been increasing since the Second World War in most countries, developed and developing” (Walklate 8). This increase in crime rates led to an onset in police related fictions. It made people understand the struggles of police officers in the society. It is believed that, “ ... in most detective fiction written before 1950, police officers play a decidedly subordinate role ... and then things

changed. Post-Second War and then post-Vietnam, transformations in American society had a lot to do with the change” (Panek 155).

“One of the more remarkable developments in crime writing since 1980 has been the veritable explosion of crime fiction placed in a historical setting” (Bertens and D’haen 156). Historical crime fiction gained prominence in the year 1980 with the publication of Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1980), in which an English monk investigates a series of murders in the fourteenth century.

Twenty-first century has also seen a rise in crime fiction in America, with many prominent crime fiction writers emerging in the country. Some writers have put aside the concept of ‘unravelling a mystery’ in order to bring in more violence to the forefront. Traditionally crime fiction followed a pattern of ‘whodunit’ but in recent times there has been an introduction of ‘whydunit’. Authors who focus on this type of subject are Ruth Rendell, Patricia Cornwell, Minette Walters and Barbara Vine.

The intermixing of other genres with crime was greatly welcomed by readers of the contemporary century. Crime fiction has given rise to so many new sub-genres in literature with some of them being suspense thriller, legal thriller, political thriller, true crime and young adult crime.

Suspense thriller is characterised by giving the audience a heightened sensation of suspense linked to some criminal activity. Legal thriller focuses on the aftermath of a crime with connection to courtroom proceedings. Political crime is defined as the crime based on the political differences of a country. It has also begun to gain popularity with the writings of authors such as James Patterson, Alex Sinclair, Michael Bennett, John Grisham and Val McDermid.

One form of crime genre that never lost its fame from the beginning was ‘true crime’, which exclusively focused on actual crime or fictionalisation of real crime. People became more interested in such stories that recently many TV shows and podcasts also started focusing on this subject. “True crime is a “pop culture phoenix”... waxing and waning in popularity, but never going out of style” (Rzepka and Horsley 2). One of the most famous true crime thrillers is *The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris. Other novels such as *The Girl Next Door* by Jack Ketchum, *The Stranger beside Me* by Ann Rule and *American Predator* by Maureen Callahan also attained fame.

Apart from these there is a sprouting subtle division in the combination of the genres known as “Young Adult crime”, which focuses on the crime committed by a person under the age of twenty four. Thus the twentieth and twenty first centuries had an explosion of sub-genres and crossover genres branching their way from crime fiction.

Young Adult literature’s origin and development are discussed. The age group; Young Adult literature in the United States; Young Adult literature as the most read genre; the origin of new sub-genre in Young Adult fiction such as new realism, bleak realism, problem novels and contemporary realist fiction are discussed; Young Adult literature and crime; teenagers psychology; Young Adult offences related fictions; and Young Adults psychological struggles are traced till the age of Todd Strasser.

According to the World Health Organisation, Young Adults are categorised between the age group of ten and twenty-four. This is the age where a teenager goes through emotional and physical change. Moreover teenagers are more prone to explore new things, as a result they choose a path either good or bad. In order to prepare the young minds for the future, Young Adult literature emerged.

Literature for Young Adults in the United States was given more importance after the Second World War. As a result there was a drastic impact on the economy; therefore teens were given an increase in economic resources and social autonomy. Consequently books for Young Adults had a breakthrough with an increase in publication. Aforementioned transformation of Young Adult novels is based on the concept 'Bildungsroman', a German term, meaning the genre of novels in which an adolescent character matures to adulthood. This genre is often romantic in nature with an optimistic ending for the protagonist. 'Entwicklungsroman' is a similar term, referring to a broader category of novels consisting of an adolescent's development to adulthood. These coming of age novels form the foundation for the Young Adult genre as it is recognized today.

Young Adult literature is one of the most read fictions among American readers in recent times with the inclusion of romance, fantasy and dystopia. Many historians and critics believed that Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) was the first publication in the English history of Young Adult novels. In the 1950s a number of books targeting boys such as science fiction, sports and adventure stories came into existence. The age also had seen genre dealing with adolescent's values, emotions and experience. With the publication of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher of the Rye* in 1951, Young Adult literature had a huge breakthrough in the genre.

The sub-genres of Young Adult fiction are new realism, problem novels, bleak realism, and contemporary realistic fiction. The idea of 'new realism' started to spring among Young Adult writers in the 1960s with the writings of serious coming-of-age novels. During this age the publication of *The Outsiders* (1967) by S. E. Hinton paved the way for a change in the genre. He introduced real characters and violence as the theme in the everyday lives of the Young Adults.

The subject matter of Young Adult literature started to grow in the 1970s. It took a didactic turn with the inclusion of personal, political and social problems in Young Adult writing. This helped to institute a new sub-genre in Young Adult realism known as ‘problem novel’, which often centres on a particular problem and in most of the cases at the end of the novel it offers its readers different ways to cope up with the problem or provides contact information to help those who go through similar situations. The problem novel gives its Young Adult readers a feeling of assurance that “I am not alone, other people have felt what I feel”, which is “the heart of YA fiction” (Aronson 8).

Contemporary Realistic Young Adult novels are pushing and expanding the boundaries of Young Adult literature. According to *Radical Reads: 101 YA Novels on the Edge*, by Joni Richards Bodart, “Radical Young Adult fiction deals with incest, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, sexual and physical abuse, mental and physical illness, dysfunctional families, homosexuality, gangs, homelessness, manipulation, prejudice, suicide, peer pressure, violence, and murder” (xi). The former categories of fiction were considered dark, gritty, harsh and difficult to read. Yet many critics have highly recommended these novels for awards in the Young Adult literature category. The authors of these works say that such writing provides a valuable reading experience and are appreciated by many Young Adult readers. This kind of literature is known as realistic Young Adult fiction or ‘bleak’ realism in Young Adult literature.

Recently there has been a shift in focus of Young Adult literature on crime. These works tend to focus on subjects that are uncomfortable and unsettling, such as murder, rape, sexual and physical abuse. This form of writing depends highly on the characterization, plot, point of view, setting, language, narration, themes and subject matters. Tragic themes tend to make Young Adult crime novels more realistic and contemporary in nature.

Frances Jensen, author of *The Teenage Brain*, says that a teenager's brain is similar to defective spark plugs. She writes, "Teens are not quite firing on all cylinders when it comes to the frontal lobes. Thus, we shouldn't be surprised by the daily stories we hear and read about their tragic mistakes" (Kolbert). Young people committing crime is one of the major concerns across the world, due to the rise in the number of juvenile arrests in recent years. According to the United States Department of Justice twenty-five percent of the overall crime is committed by youngsters and in the past five years it has increased to twenty-seven percent. Hence Young Adults aging from fourteen to twenty-four face a higher risk of violent crime arrest than any other age group. Michael Cart in his book *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* says,

Ranging from physical and emotional violence to drug and alcohol abuse, from risky sexual behaviour to driving recklessly and carrying weapons to school, risky behaviours remain very real factors in the daily lives of twenty-first century teens. Indeed, the top three killers of teenagers are accidents, homicides, and suicide.
(Cart 163)

Young Adult literature highlights the major problems concerning Young Adult offences such as school shooting, suicide, bullying, abuses and racial discrimination. Some salient novels focusing on bullying- *Speak* (1999) by Laurie Halse Anderson and *One of Us is Lying* (2017) by Karen M McManus. *The Hate You Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas focuses on racial discrimination and *Thirteen Reasons Why* (2007) by Jay Asher covers suicide. *Hate List* (2009) by Jennifer Ann Brown and *Give a Boy a Gun* (2000) by Todd Strasser highlight school shootings.

The preceding writers not only talk about the external problems of the young people but also the psychological struggles undergone in adulthood. Todd Strasser in particular, has written many novels based on Young Adult crime and his writings have

the element to entertain and enrich the young minds, especially about the problems they face and the downsides of their wrong choices.

Todd Strasser and his writing history are traced. His works based on non-fiction, middle graders, light reads and serious fiction are highlighted. The review of literature, the aim and the objective of the research and the novels taken for the research are introduced. Further the chapter divisions are discussed.

Todd Strasser is an American writer born on May 5, 1950 in New York City. He got his education in Long Island and at a young age he showed interest in reading. Though his writing was poor, he struggled with writing until he moved to Europe where he lived as a street musician for a few years. There he started writing songs, poems and letters to home which began to kindle his interest towards literature. So he moved to New York and pursued his studies in literature and writing at Beloit College. Later Strasser made a living by working as a reporter for the Middletown Times Herald-Record newspaper and later worked as a copywriter for Compton Advertising in New York.

In 1978 Strasser published his first novel, *Angel Dust Blues*. With the profit of his first book, he started a fortune cookie company. For twelve years he focused on his business. In 1990 he moved to Westchester County with his family where he currently resides. He has written more than hundred and forty books for teens and middle graders along with many short stories and non-fictions. Apart from publishing books, he has also written articles for New York Times and magazines such as The New Yorker and Esquire.

A few of Strasser's works were written under the pen names: Morton Rhue and T.S. Rhue. Todd uses the name Morton Rhue for his German publications. In French 'Mort' means 'Tot' which sounds similar to 'Todd' and 'Rue' in French implies 'Strasse'. He also uses the pseudonym T.S. Rhue. The initials represent his original name, Todd

Strasser and he added Rhue at the end for people to recognise him through his other pseudonym, Morton Rhue. However, most of his publications in America are done under his original name.

Strasser's mission is "to inspire literacy" (Strasser). He has always insisted on quality education which according to him is the practicality of education which would help the kids to survive in the outer world and not just to gain knowledge to get a job. In many of his works he had criticized the ineffectiveness of education to train the young minds for the future. He has been a guest speaker and has conducted many workshops among middle school students on reading and writing skill development. He also has given speeches in underprivileged schools with deviant behaviour and taught these students the value of education. Many school libraries have his books to be read during leisure hours. Strasser through his lectures and workshops was able to inspire many students to start writing. Strasser has said: "Most teens today want books with characters they can identify with.... There's always an important underlying message I want to get across" (Harris 109)

Strasser's works have been prescribed in many school syllabuses and reading recommendations. 'Lit 4school' is an online platform for literature and media studies for school students. This website is affiliated under ZLS at Leipzig University. In this platform the syllabus and reading recommendations consist of Strasser's *The Wave* and *Give a Boy a Gun* as a prescribed text for students from the age group nine to twelve.

The Westwood Regional School has a student's choice list of books for reading in the Reading Workshop and Strasser's *Boot Camp* and *Can't Get There from Here* were included in the list for the students to read. Strasser also gave a lecture about reading in that school. The Olentangy local school district had many students recommend Strasser's book for reading. The school has included his novels *If I Grow Up* and *The Wave* in their reading club.

Many of his novels such as *The Wave* (1981), *Give a Boy a Gun* (2000), *Can't Get There from Here* (2004), *The Accident* (2006), *Boot Camp* (2006), *If I Grow Up* (2008) and *Fallout* (2013) have won several awards in the category of Young Adult and teens. Strasser has won awards such as Charlotte Award, Best Young Adult for Reluctant Readers and American Library Association Best Fiction for Young Adults in 2004 and 2005. Some of his works were recommended by the American Library Association for relevant Young Adult reading.

Strasser's works can be divided into light read and serious fiction. Most of Strasser's light read books are either novelisations of movies or series. His light-hearted series books for young teens are relatively enjoyed by many teenagers in America. His light read books are *Help! I'm Trapped* collection of seventeen books. His timezone high trilogy includes *How I Changed My Life* (1995), *How I Created My Perfect Prom Date* (1996) and *How I Spent My Last Night on Earth* (1998).

Many middle school students show interest in reading his books. His middle-graders category consists of books such as *Con-fidence* (2002), *The Diving Bell* (1992), *Abe Lincoln for Class President* (1995) and *Don't Get Caught* (2001). He has also written *Is That a Dead Dog in Your Locker?* (2006), *Is That a Glow-In-The-Dark Bunny in Your Pillow Case?* (2009), *Is That an Angry Penguin in Your Gym Bag?* (2009) and *Is That an Unlucky Leprechaun in Your Lunch?* (2009). Strasser has also written books based on movies and series. Some of the famous works are *Home Alone* (1990), *The Man of the House* (1995) and *The Good Son* (1993). Many of his works were adapted into movies as well. They are *The Accident* (1988), *A Very Touchy Subject* (1985) and *Workin' for Peanuts* (1983).

Strasser's serious books are appreciated by many people, especially teachers for his creative and accurate interpretation of young people. These works mainly deal with

the contemporary issues prevailing in the society. It was commented in an article that, “Rhue’s books are raw and gritty. He writes about street kids in New York, about adolescent misfits who go on shooting rampage in their school, and about teens like Robert who are losers until something like *The Third Wave* comes along to give a sense of worth” (Stan 3). Some of his famous works are *Angel Dust Blues* (1979), *The Wave*, *Help! I am Trapped* series, *Give a Boy a Gun*, *Can’t Get There from Here*, *Famous* (2009), *If I Grow Up*, *Boot Camp*, *Fallout*, *Price of Duty* (2018) and *Summer of ’69* (2019).

Strasser’s novel, *Angel Dust Blues* was written and published in 1979. This was the first novel written by Strasser and it was nominated for Colorado Blue Spruce Award in 1987. The novel reflects the reality of the society with real life characters who can be found in the society and empathised. The common societal problem such as high expectations of parents and loss of parental care is observed from a child’s perspective.

Strasser’s novel *The Wave* was written under the pen name Morton Rhue for his German readers. The book was a novelisation of a teleplay by Jonny Dawkins in the year 1981. It was made into a movie as well. The novel and the movie are both fictionalised accounts by a history teacher named Ron Jones’ experiment of the ‘Third Wave’. The idea for the book started with an essay by a teacher named Ron Jones in the 1970s. In his essay he describes the experiment he conducted in his social studies class in 1967. This became a TV series and Todd Strasser was asked to write a novel based on the film script and it became a box office hit.

The novel *The Wave* has marked the rise of Young Adult novels in Germany and it has also been translated into many languages and read in many schools across Germany. German readers are more familiar with the book *Die Welle* (*The Wave*). In the article it is mentioned that many people are well aware of the book *The Wave*. It was acclaimed:

“It is safe to say that almost everyone raised in German schools from the late 1980s on has heard of the book” (Stan 3). This shows the recognition his book has received in other countries.

Help! I am Trapped is a series of seventeen books written by Strasser that started publishing in 1993 till 2001. The plot centers on a group of students and a machine which has the power to switch bodies. The series has a worldwide sales of ten million. Many children across the globe enjoy reading Strasser’s *Help! I am Trapped* series for its creative and humorous narration. Consequently he has won the ‘International Reading Association Children’s Choice’ and ‘Children’s Book Council Children’s Choice’ for this series.

In the novel, *Give a Boy a Gun* Todd Strasser vividly portrays a narration which captures the story behind the headlines, especially school shooting. Published in the year 2000, the novel describes the events and circumstances that led to, and the aftermath of a school shooting. There are two stories in the novel where one talks about the events in Middletown and the other talks about the broader tale of what has happened around the country. The novel got many recognitions and awards such as International Reading Association Young Adults Choice and American Library Association Popular Paperback for Young Adults.

In Germany, *Can’t Get There from Here* was published under the name *Asphalt Tribe* and it was one of the five books to be nominated by the Youth Jury for the honourable German Youth Literature Prize. The novel has won American Library Association Best Fiction for Young Adults, American Library Association Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, International Reading Association Young Adults Choice and American Library Association Popular Paperback for Young Adults.

Boot Camp was written by Strasser in 2007 to shed some light on the cruel treatment of children in Boot Camps across America. Boot Camps are places that parents send their disobedient or misbehaving kids to change their behaviour. These camps use physical and mental abuse to correct the child's behaviour. The novel was well acclaimed and won American Library Association Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers and American Library Association Popular Paperback for Young Adults.

The novel *If I Grow Up* written in the year 2008 by Todd Strasser throws light into the plight of Black Americans in Chicago. The themes in the novel are poverty, racial discrimination, drugs and loss of innocence. In 2010, the novel was honoured with a recommendation from the National Council for the Social Studies Notable Trade Book for Young People.

Fallout is a memoir and a part fictitious story dealing with the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. The novel takes place in an urban neighbourhood where the author and his family experience living underground for days, barely surviving during a nuclear war, which marks an unforgettable moment in history. It is a blend of the author's perspective of his personal experience during the war. This book received a stellar review in the New York Times and was included in the list of must read middle school books by School Library Journal.

Price of Duty by Strasser has received outstanding reviews and it was named as Amazon Young Adult Book of the month of July, 2018. It was also selected for the 2018 New York Public Library Best Book for Teens. The novel focuses on the life of Jake Liddell, his heroic deeds and off military regiments. As a whole it talks about the after effects of military life.

Summer of '69 is an autobiographical work of Strasser. It covers Strasser's summer at Woodstock in 1969. This book also focuses on the war in Vietnam and the great historical moment on man's leap on the moon. It concentrates on adult and mature teen readers by shedding light on the culture of drug usage, sexual desires and the music of the 1960s. The story reflects the mood and spirit of the time.

The dissertation on "Impact of Psycho-Spiritual Intervention on Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Resilience and Subjective Well-being of Juvenile Delinquents" (2018) by Seena N.S. focuses on the role of intervention in helping delinquents to be more resistant towards crime; a case study on juvenile drug addicts was carried out to enhance the study. "A Study of Crime Patterns in Mumbai and Montreal Aetiology and Response to Crime" (2022) is a dissertation focusing on the study associated with the system generating deviance on drugs and to enhance the paradigm that could provide a solution. These two dissertations are constrained to the effects of drugs.

"Differential Adolescent Delinquency Tolerance and the Effect of Race and Gender" (2004) by Evaristus Obinyan is a dissertation on the attitude of adolescents on tolerance for delinquent behaviour. The study through its survey samples was able to identify the different tolerance levels for juveniles according to their race, gender and group. The dissertation "General Strain Theory and Juvenile Delinquency: A Cross-Culture Study" examines the difference and similarities of cultures and its role in developing juvenile delinquency. The study focused on the countries U.S and Taiwan by comparing those using data samples. Both these dissertations focus on the roles of culture, race and gender in inflicting criminal behaviour and data samples are used to support their ideas but they fail to consider other factors such as education and poverty which are some of the main causes of delinquency among adolescents. While this research aims to investigate the development process of offending from childhood to adolescence, especially criminal

behaviours that are majorly prevailing in America such as school shooting, illegal narcotic drug dealing, murdering, violating a person's privacy and under age alcohol consumption. So this research covers all the major possibilities which induce criminal behaviour among adolescents and a solution is also given to overcome criminal behaviour.

The present thesis entitled "Adolescent Crimes: Tracing the Scars, Influences, Circumstances and Transformation in the Select Novels of Todd Strasser" is an attempt to define the concept of transgression and redemption under two theoretical frameworks and two conceptual frameworks. It draws out its research by using the development approach which examines the pathway, transition and the turning point of any criminal behaviour. Through these three aspects the risk and protective factors influencing criminal behaviour is identified into four phases in the select novels of Todd Strasser. The two theories are Differential Association Theory and Situational Action Theory. The two conceptual frameworks are Adverse Childhood Experience and Enlightened Witness.

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 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 novels chosen for the research are based on the delinquent themes such as drug dealing, school shooting, underage alcohol consumption, gang life and violating a person's privacy. The select novels of Todd Strasser are *Angel Dust Blues*, *Give a Boy a Gun*, *Can't Get There from Here*, *If I Grow Up* and *Famous*. In the novel, *Angel Dust Blues*, the life of a young boy who became a drug dealer and later resented his actions are

focused. The next novel, *Give a Boy a Gun*, portrayed a fictional school shooting incident that took place in America. The novel *Can't Get There from Here* concentrated on a group of teenagers living on the streets with no proper food and shelter. In the novel, *If I Grow Up*, the life of an underprivileged black teenager was portrayed. The novel *Famous* was about two youngsters and their struggles to achieve popularity. These fictions project teenagers as disoriented people trying to find solace in executing felonious acts only to finally end up regretting their behaviour.

The traditional theories of crime often ignore the developmental perspective and fail to distinguish the different phases of criminal behaviour. The developmental changes across one's life are completely brushed aside. Hence developmental approach allows to examine the pathway, transition and the turning point of any criminal behaviour. The pathway to offending begins with familial impact created on the individual. The changes they face over time from childhood are traced with the application of the study Adverse Childhood Experience. Later, the transition begins with the influence of peer pressure and it is identified with the application of the theory Differential Association Theory. The transition is continued through the impact of critical life events such as circumstantial factors which are addressed through the application of Situational Action Theory. Finally, the individual with the help of protective factors has a change of heart and resents for his deeds. These protective factors are traced with the support of Enlightened Witness.

A conceptual framework of qualitative research is followed in the select fictions of Todd Strasser. In chapter II, descriptive method is used to address the causes for adverse conditions experienced by children. Chapter III and IV uses analytical methods to critically analyse delinquent peer influence and circumstantial crime inducing factors. In chapter V, applied research is followed to derive a solution to adolescent criminal behaviour.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter I entitled “Introduction”, traced the origin and development of criminology; the history of crime fiction in American literature. It also traced the origin and development of Young Adult literature till the age of Todd Strasser. The life and works of Todd Strasser are dealt with in detail. This chapter given an insight into the review of literature, the novels chosen for the research and the framework of the thesis.

Chapter II entitled “The Scars of Childhood Violence” discusses the plot of the select novels of Todd Strasser. The first stage of risk factor which is the pathway to criminality is traced through the study Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). The origin and development of adverse childhood experience is elaborated. Through the application of ACE the struggles undergone by an adolescent during their childhood in the select novels of Strasser are identified.

Chapter III entitled “Delinquent Influences among Adolescents” focuses on the learning of criminal behaviour. The beginning of the transition process towards crime is addressed through delinquent peer influence in their adolescents. The origin and development of the Differential Association Theory; and its role in learning criminal behaviour is traced through Sutherland’s nine propositions. Differential Association theory is used to identify the qualities of negative peer influence in the protagonists of the select novels.

Chapter IV entitled “Circumstantial Transgression by Adolescents” traces the situational factors which induce criminal behaviour in an adolescent. The developmental approach addresses the final transition process towards criminal behaviour through the situational factors present in the adolescent’s life. These situational factors act as a risk factor to induce criminal activities during adolescence. To recognise the circumstantial factors which induce crime, situational action theory is applied in the select novels of Todd Strasser.

Chapter V entitled “Transformation through Witness” focuses on the positive change that occurs in the characters. A transformation which makes them repent their criminal path because of the protective factors present in their life. The developmental approach traces the turning point in the adolescent’s life, with the help of the concept of Enlightened Witness. The regret and the positive changes that occurred in the characters after committing a crime is analysed.

The next chapter deals with the analysis of exploring the first possible step in the life of adolescent criminals, through the select novels of Todd Strasser.