

**REPRESENTATION OF CRIMINAL PRACTICES  
IN “THE MAIDENS” NOVEL BY ALEX MICHAELIDES**

*The article examines the reasons of Zoe’s criminal behaviour and the way she acquired criminal techniques in “The Maidens” novel by Alex Michaelides. The qualitative method has been applied for conducting the research and the empirical material is analyzed by using the textual data analysis method.*

**Key words:** *techniques of crime, criminal distraction, behavior, social learning, poverty.*

The current study examines the novel through the lens of criminology by using aspects of Differential Association Theory proposed by Sutherland, which believes that crime is not innate behavior, but it can be learnt. The researcher used certain principles of theory to examine “The Maidens” novel by Alex Michaelides. The researchers found out that Sutherland’s four principles are accurate: crime can be committed, crime can be attained from surroundings, and crimes can be learnt from close association and its techniques directions, direction is also acquired through interaction with social surroundings.

Literature is a reflection of society. Literary works imitate the society. Simple literature is the art of written work in various forms as poetry, prose, fiction stories are the forms of literature. Every society has its culture, belief, and living standard. The life never remains the same, but they change with time due to technology, so as literature also changes with the passage of time, such as theme styles are different in different periods and language is also different in each period. Ideas and opinions can be conveyed through language [Dubey 2013]. The word crime is not specific. It is believed that there is not any accurate definition of this term. The crime is explained as a violating act which is disallowed by society. The crime is a misdeed, which is considered by the government as unsaved for an individual to get punishment [Hitchler 1934].

Crime is associated with other fields such as psychology, sociology, geography, demography and criminology. Poverty, salary, culture, family background, education level, lack of income are interlinked with crime. Gender, age, and urbanization are factors which can affect the mind of an individual. According to Ehrlich, a cause of crime can be unemployment.

Criminal activities are directly proportional to unemployment. In human history, society was harassed by crime. Cain was the first person in the world who committed a crime. He was the son of Adam and Eve. He killed his brother Able. The cause of the crime was envy [Gillani et al. 2009].

It is supposed that crime is a single act. Apart from that, there are several psychological complexes which lead towards criminal act. Other factors, such as a sociological perspective, suppose that crime is not inherited but, along with passage of time, it can be acquired. Sutherland proposed the theory of learning in which he presented his thoughts that crime is a result of imitation. Crime is always learnt, and it has various reasons. But a crime is not an inborn skill. There are situations and circumstances which make an individual a criminal. Social, psychological, biological, and economic causes generate crime. Criminology is the study of criminal act and mainly related to more than one field [Brazil 2019].

The current paper will contribute to providing awareness of society with the lens of criminology and the aspects of differential association theory. This research paper is advantageous, and provides enlightenment to readers about how crime can be reduced and eliminated.

Criminology is a branch of science which examines the cause of crime and reduction of crime. In 1890, the word criminology emerged. Criminology is a field of knowledge which mainly analyses human behavior in a society that is against the law. However, this field detects the causes behind crime. This field was being developed within two centuries. According to Edwin Sutherland, criminology is the field which examined the making, breaking, and enforcing of law. He believed that criminologist should investigate the reason behind violations of laws and why people do street crime, political crime etc. Criminologists also evaluate the consequences of laws.

Raffaele Garofalo was an Italian law professor who was the main representative of the positive school of thought. He formulated the word criminology in 1885. According to Raffaele Garofalo, criminology is the interpretation of crime and criminal behaviour. The term criminology was first used in France by a French anthropologist named Paul Topinard. Criminology is a field which deals with different perspectives, such as the reason and the social circumstances behind crime. Criminology also investigates the feelings of sufferers, the reaction of society towards a criminal and punishment for a criminal. According to Paul Rock, criminology is a discipline which deals with different perspectives regarding crime [O'Brien, Yar 2008].

The word criminology is taken from Latin. The word *crimen* means accusation, while *logia* means reason. The field of criminology started during the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> eras in Europe. The initiators of

criminology were theorists. During the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a social philosopher gave his opinion regarding crime and laws. In 1885, an Italian professor, Raffaele Garofalo, coined the term criminology as Criminologia. Afterwards, Paul Topinard who was, French anthropologist, used the term Crimiologia in his major work. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the centre of scholars attention there were reforms of criminal laws. Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham were leading scholars to reform the criminal laws.

Psychologists believe that it is necessary to explore reasons behind crime. Their main concern is to explore the reason why crimes happen in the society and what factors encourage individuals to commit a crime. However, there are several theories to answer these questions. For instance, according to biological perception, a thief commits crime due to bad genes. According to psychological belief, a robber commits crime due to personality defects, sociologists, while sociologists and ideologists supposed that crime can be learnt from society.

However, there are the following theories of crime: biological theories, psychological theories, sociological theories and social-psychological theories.

The analysis of the empirical data is based on the qualitative method, the aim of which is to collect data and analyze the surroundings data which is non-numerical surroundings in order to comprehend the social surroundings [Adedoyin 2020].

The objective of this research is to investigate the main theme, which is the reason behind Zoe's criminal behavior and technique. "The Maidens" novel depicts the crime and techniques of crime which can be acquired by an individual through interactions. The theory of criminology explains the reasons for crime and criminal behavior and its techniques which can be acquired by an individual.

Textual analysis is used in the present study in order to interpret language and symbols. It helps to understand how people understand the text in order to get the meaning by using their senses. McKee stated that textual analysis is a method through which researchers gather information in order to understand the vision of people regarding the world. The objective of textual analysis is to obtain the message or meaning from the text. The objective of textual analysis is not just to interpret text on the basis of structure or on volume of text, although its objective is to identify in what manner the text is diffused and explodes [Arya 2020].

According to Edwin Sutherland's theory, the actions of crime can be pursued by society. The second principal of differential association theory demonstrates that criminal behaviour can be imitated through close

association. During adolescence, criminal behaviour can strongly affect the future, it can lead to the lack of academic interest that can cause the expulsion from the university and involvement into crime. It is observed that the impact of crime can be long-lasting in adulthood: *“Sebastian said that my father, the man who would wrap my life and make me into this monster, wasn’t present”*. [Michaelides 2021: 173].

Sebastian also became a criminal because of his father. However, Southerland’s statement is true that crime is learnt from close association. It is observed that humans learn from their environment. There are several sociological factors, such as loss of parents, a bad childhood, a drop out from institution. Interaction of parents with children can be a cause of learning of criminal behaviour [Tiwari, 2020]. Similarly, Sebastien saw his *“father a monster who smokes a lot, drank, uses drugs and beat his mother in front beats Sebastien.” “She held up the knife. A large knife used for cutting lambs. She held it up, pointing it at my father’s chest. At his heart”* [Michaelides 2021: 173].

The above lines are important to support the principal of differential association theory, when an individual is attacked due to self-protection by using attacks such as a knife and a gun. These lines say that when Sebastian was a kid, his father used to beat his mother. One day, his mother raised her voice and showed her knife for self-defense. Sebastian said to his mother he would kill his father, because he saw the way to crime during adolescence. He learnt from close association so he was able to kill his father-in-law.

*“I never thought I was capable of love, I mean. I only knew hate. I’m so afraid I’ll hate you too, one day. But before I ever hurt you, I will turn the knife on myself and plunge it deep into my heart. I love you, Zoe”* [Michaelides 2021: 243].

The above lines also support the principal of the differential association theory that crime can be learnt through communication or through an individual’s interactions. Zoe was a young girl who had the influence of crime during her adolescence. Firstly, Sebastian killed his grandfather in front of her. Secondly, one day she got a letter in which Sebastian expressed his love. Also, he gave him the way to crime. He expressed his grief that his mother left him, and he suffered a lot due to his father’s behaviour. So, it is proved that Zoe learnt criminal behaviour through communication. Likewise, she learnt how to commit crime from Sebastian. When Sebastian died, she was unable to think anything. As a result of anger, she worked on his main plan for revenge.

*“Not me. Him. It was all Sebastian. I just did what he told me to. It was a labor of love”* [Michaelides 2021: 255].

The above lines explain the criminal behaviour of Zoe. She killed girls who belonged to “The Maidens” group, but she said it was a plan of Sebastian, and she just worked on his plan. These lines also illustrate that crime can be acquired through close association. Criminologists found out that not all youngsters are criminals in their maturity, but those who observe violence near them can be criminals.

Family can be more responsible for acquiring criminal behaviour. Factors which lead an individual towards crime can be divorce, violence, fostering and other factors.

*“But before I ever hurt you, I will turn the knife on myself and plunge it deep into my heart. I love you, Zoe”* [Michaelides 2021: 243].

Southerland states that people’s criminal behaviour is obtained from the members who are united with a criminal group. When an individual is associated with them, then he will also copy their behaviour. It has been investigated that it is not mandatory that criminal behaviour is directly learnt from criminal but when an individual gathers with them and hears their ways, so he can apply those ways when he kills somebody. He can acquire criminal behaviour not only from meeting, but an individual can acquire the ways from books and movies.

The techniques of crime can be learnt. Zoe was a student at St Christopher’s college. She learnt criminal behaviour from close associates. She learnt techniques to commit crime. Tara was her close friend, and she belonged to “The Maidens” group that is led by Professor Edward. She worked on the plan which was made by Sebastian before his death and she killed her. The police discovered that a young girl was attacked with a knife which was sharp. She received a letter in which the technique of crime was depicted. Sebastian expressed his hate towards his father and expressed his love for Zoe. He said that if he ever hated Zoe, he would kill himself with a knife. Hence, Zoe used this instrument for the murder.

The cause of crime is also the usage of drugs and alcohol. Sebastian’s father was violent and Sebastian had observed his behaviour since childhood. For self-defense, his mother used a knife in order to threaten his father. However, Sebastian learnt this way from his family, while Zoe learnt this way from Sebastian. Hence, it is proved that Sutherland’s statement is true that the techniques of crimes can be learnt from close association.

*“They found another body. What? When? This morning, by the river. Another girl”* [Michaelides 2021: 225].

One day, the police found another a dead body which belonged to a special group named “The Maidens”. The name of that girl was Sarena. The police discovered that she was killed by a knife. However, Zoe used a knife for murder. This technique was learnt by Sebastian.

*“A monster with a knife was among them, unseen, prowling the streets, apparently able to strike and then melt away”* [Michaelides 2021: 145].

It was observed from two cases that a monster came and killed maidens with a knife. The monster also lives among them because he knows all the secrets of “The Maidens”. The third dead body was found. She was also associated with “The Maidens” group. According to the postmortem, a criminal killed the girl with a knife. A criminal cut the throats of Tara, Veronica, and Serena.

*“What about the murder weapon? You mean knife? They’ve not found it yet, have they? I think – I know where it is”* [Michaelides 2021: 146].

The above lines indicate that Zoe was planning to kill her aunt. Once, Zoe said that she knew where the weapon was. She said she knew because one day she saw a criminal who was disappearing with a weapon. The police and investigators still couldn’t find them. Zoe made a plan to trap Marina. She said that she had received a postcard, and then it would be Zoe’s turn. They must discover the knife in order to get fingerprints. They went to the folly which is near to Paradise River. Before that, Marina found a letter in which Zoe seemed like a murderer. When Marina showed her the letter, Zoe could not control her anger. She told the whole story. Marina found that she was the victim. Zoe said that it was the plan of Sebastian, and he was killed by “The Maidens” (Sebastian was dead). She took a knife to attack Marina. Zoe was a girl who was studying at St Christopher’s college. She lost her parents in early childhood. Her parents died in a car accident. She suffered a lot in her childhood.

*“It’s true. I’ve been in love with Sebastian ever since I can remember, ever since I was a little girl. And he loved me”* [Michaelides 2021: 252].

The above lines show the anger of Zoe. This line said to Marina shows that they loved each other. One day, Sebastian made love with her, and she admired him. He used to make love in Athens. Once, they went to house of Marina’s father where Sebastian killed his father-in-law. At the age of fifteen, she learnt crime. When she went to St Christopher’s college she observed a group of maidens who were instructed by Professor Edward. She mentioned the group with Sebastian. He made up a plan to kill his wife, Marina.

*“But then, you took him away, and he never came back. Sebastian didn’t want to go to Naxos. You made him. It’s your fault he’s dead”* [Michaelides 2021: 254].

The above lines show hatred of Zoe towards her aunt. She assumed Marina as a criminal of her happiness. These lines are related to a flashback when Sebastian wanted kids, so Marina went to a doctor. The doctor suggested she going out on holiday and spending precious time with her

husband. But Sebastian did not want to go because he had a lot of work to do. But due to Marina, he went to Naxos to spend their holiday. He loved swimming, so on one day when he was swimming at the beach he drowned. However, Zoe assumed that Mariana was responsible for Sebastian's death.

*"When he died, it was like I'd been stabbed in the guts. I didn't know what to do with all my anger-all my pain. Then, one day- I understand- I saw. I had to carry out Sebastian's plan for him, just as he wanted. To honor him"* [Michaelides 2021: 255].

The above lines elucidate that Zoe got criminal behaviour in order to give relief to her anger. After the death of Sebastian, she became upset, because, after her parents, she lost her lover. However, it made her bad-tempered. Furthermore, she worked on Sebastian's plan. Before her death, Sebastian did not want to go to her Naxos because he was highlighting some quotation from several literary works. She started copying out those quotations which were selected by Sebastian. Once, she attended "The Maidens" group, which was led by Professor Edward, in his room. So, she highlighted those lines in his book confidentially.

*"When he got the idea. It grew in his mind like a beautiful flower, he said – he had such a poetic way of talking-remember? He worked out every detail. And it was beautiful. It was perfect"* [Michaelides 2021: 255].

The above lines explain that Sebastian loved poetry. However, he selected some quotes which were related to death. But he was dead. Zoe knew those quotes which were selected by her lover and she wrote those quotations on postcards and delivered them to victims before their murder. She killed three (3) innocent girls in order to take revenge. Finally, she delivers a postcard to protagonist Marina. On the postcard a picture was attached which was black and white and portraying the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Iphigenia belonged to Greek mythology, who was the daughter of Agamemnon, and she was sacrificed. The quotation was taken from Euripides. The quotation was:

*"... the god has willed your death, and soon, from your throat, steam of blood shall gush forth at the sword"* [Michaelides 2021: 277].

*"Edward Fosca was a murderer."* [Michaelides 2021: 7].

This was a statement given by Zoe to chief inspector Sadhu Sangha that her professor was a criminal to distract attention from herself. According to Zoe, Professor Edward Fosca had a relationship with Tara. But when Tara discovered about his other relationships, she threatened him. She said that Tara was very afraid that she would be killed. However, she was killed with a knife.

*"This new loss of Tara-the horrific loss of a good friend"* [Michaelides 2021: 47].

This line elucidates that when a criminal commits a crime confidentially, he portrays himself as an innocent person. Zoe was a sensitive girl who could feel other people's pain. But Zoe pretended as an innocent girl who had grief for the loss of her friend Tara. During the investigation, evidence was found proving that professor was a criminal. But the professor gave his statement that he had no relationship and Tara belonged to his special group named "The Maidens", and she was just his student. It was assumed by Marina that the person who killed Tara must have observed unkindness and violent behaviour around him when he was little.

*"Another body is found. It was Veronica"* [Michaelides 2021, p.136].

A murderer killed Veronica as a distraction. The news circulated in the college that another girl had been killed. She was the daughter of a US senator. Veronica belonged to a special group named "The Maidens", but she was not a close friend of Zoe. She showed her grief. Before her death, she went to ADC Theater. She was a twenty-year-old girl. She was arranging a birthday party.

*"I mean I didn't like Veronica. I don't know why I can't stop crying"* [Michaelides 2021: 151].

The above line represents distraction when a criminal commits any crime, so he usually wants to divert his attention to another case. It was her plan to divert the attention of people, so that they could focus on Edward Fosca and she could accomplish her goal.

*"In order to defeat the enemy and save the city, a Maiden must be sacrificed; a maiden of noble birth"* [Michaelides 2021: 152].

This was a translation which was written on a postcard that was found in Tara's room. On that card the lines were written which were taken from Euripides. However, it clarifies that the criminal killed maidens to defeat the enemy. Zoe's goals were different. She wanted to kill somebody else, but in order to accomplish her goals, she killed the person belonging to a special group. Another postcard was found around the dead body of Veronica. Those lines were highlighted in the book of Edward Fosca by the murderer. Those lines were picked from Euripides. Edward Fosca considered Euripides as his friend. However, it created suspicion during the investigation that the Professor could be a criminal. Another dead body was found. Likewise, another girl, Sarena, was also associated with "The Maidens" group.

*"The god has willed your death, and soon, from your throat, steam of blood shall gush forth at the sword"* [Michaelides 2021: 227].

This line is picked up from Electra by Euripides [Euripides 1938]. This line indicates the death that Marina was also going to die. One day, the protagonist of the novel, Marina received a postcard after Serena's murder.



She observed that these lines were highlighted in the book of Edward. However, it was about to prove that Edward Fosca was the murderer. Zoe played a game with her aunt Marina. She said to Marina that she had received a postcard too. Marina became afraid of losing her. However, she decided that they would leave this college before night. While packing, Marina found a letter that represented the monster.

*“Sebastian said if anything happened to you, he would be the first suspect. We need a distraction like in magic trick”* [Michaelides 2021: 254].

The above lines elucidate that all the murders were just distractions. Sutherland states that the criminal got specific directions. Similarly, Zoe got the direction that she had to kill someone else to divert the attention. The above line quoted by Zoe is that Marina wanted distraction to kill her aunt easily. It was a game played by both to kill Marina and capture her property. Before the murders, Sebastian died, so Zoe made a plan and killed the maidens. It proved that when a criminal commits crime he diverts people’s attention and presents himself innocent to accomplish his/her objectives. Zoe said that when she was killing Tara it was very difficult, but the maidens must sacrifice. The idea of “The Maidens” group given by Zoe and Sebastian was a plan, but Sebastian died and Zoe made this plan successful.

*“You are not the detective, you are the victim”* [Michaelides 2021: 255]

This line elucidates that Marina was the victim who they wanted to kill. Zoe brought her to the college, so that she could investigate the case, but it was the plan. Marina was a psychotherapist and the Dean of college assigned her to investigate the case. The murder was part of the distraction so that Marina could focus on Edward Fosca. According to Sutherland, criminals had direction and motivation as well. However, she was motivated when she saw her grandfather’s murder. Sebastian was neutral. So when criminals commit a crime, they justify themselves. Likewise, Zoe justified herself that she was not a criminal, but Sebastian killed those maidens. Further, she justified herself that Sebastian asked her to create justification in order to accomplish her main goals. However, Sutherland’s statement is true that the criminal had specific directions to move and motivation for crime.

The objective of the current study was to explore the reason behind the criminal behaviour of Zoe and how she acquired criminal behaviour and the techniques to kill. “The Maidens” novel was analysed through the lens of criminology by using aspect differential association theory. The plot was examined with four principals of differential association theory. As a result it was found out that Sutherland’s four principals are accurate for “The Maidens” novel.

The researchers found that Zoe learnt criminal behaviour in order to get revenge, but she made a plan to kill maidens too, in order to create a distraction to kill Marina. Crime can be learnt as Zoe learnt criminal behaviour. Crime can be learnt through close association. Moreover, Zoe learnt criminal behaviour from Sebastian because he killed her grandfather in front of her. It is not obligatory that crime can be learnt directly, but crime can be acquired through communication, movies and TV. Crime can be acquired from close association. Similarly, Zoe was associated with Sebastian.

He wrote letters to her in which he mentioned his plan to kill the maidens. The techniques can also be acquired likewise Zoe learnt the techniques from letters which were sent by Sebastian. Hence, it can be cleared that criminal techniques can be obtained from close association with communication. She learnt specific directions from Sebastian, to create distraction in order to kill Marina and motivation that they would be together in the end.

The author of this novel highlighted crime in this novel. The author depicted the lives of youngsters that who are attracted to crime and, in order to achieve their desire, they choose to commit crime. The author has discussed various themes in this novel. Alex Michaelides portrayed the image of society by using Greek mythology that where youngsters made their main plans to distract investigators and, due to their anger, they take revenge, and they assume themselves innocent. Within the study the researchers discussed various aspects of the novel, such as the significance of title, criminal behaviour, techniques of crime, and Zoe as a criminal.

Crime is so common in this world. In order to accomplish any need, people choose the option of crime. Youngsters are frequently associated with crime. Differential association is a significant theory of criminology which states that crime can be learnt from various association. It is not mandatory that criminal behaviour is directly learnt from criminal but when an individual meets them and hears their ways, he can apply those methods when he kills somebody. He can acquire criminal behaviour not only from meeting, but an individual can acquire ways from books and movies. Learning starts when an individual gets motivation in different ways. Zoe got the technique from a letter which was written by Sebastian. She used a knife as a weapon. Current studies have observed that despite biological and psychological factors, another factor such as a sociological factor can affect the mind of a child.

According to differential association, most crimes can be acquired during adolescence. The theory states that when a youngster has association with felons, it can raise the crime rate in society.

## References

1. Adedoyin O.B. Qualitative Research Methods // Journal of Near East. 2020. No. 1. P. 1-8.
2. Arya A. An Overview of Textual Analysis as a Research Method for Cultural Studies // International journal for innovative research in Multidisciplinary Field. 2020. Vol. 6. Issue 3. P. 173-177.
3. Brazil W. Criminology. – Luxemburg: SpringerLink, 2019.
4. O'Brien M., Yar M. Criminology: The Key Concepts. – Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.
5. Dubey A. Literature and Society // IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science. 2013. No. 1. P. 84-85.
6. Euripides. Electra. Translated by E.P. Coleridge. – New York: Random House, 1938.
7. Gillani S.Y., Rehman H., Gill, A.R. Unemployment, Poverty, Inflation and Crime Nexus: Cointegration and Causality Analysis of Pakistan // Pakistan Economic and Social Review. 2009. Vol. 47. P. 79-98.
8. Hitchler W.H. The Definition of Crime // Dickinson Law Review. 1934. Vol. 38. P. 207-208.
9. Michaelides A. The Maidens. – New York: Celadon Books, 2022. – 352 p.

**Мухаммад Ашраф Калой, Аднан Магси**  
(Пакистан, Джамшоро)

### РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ КРИМИНАЛЬНЫХ ПРАКТИК В РОМАНЕ АЛЕКСА МИХАЕЛИДИСА «ДЕВУШКИ»

*В настоящей статье проводится анализ причин преступного поведения Зоуи, а также то, каким образом Зоуи овладела техниками преступления в романе Алекса Михаелидиса «Девушки». Изучение эмпирического материала проводится на базе метода текстологического анализа.*

**Ключевые слова:** *техники преступления, отвлечение внимания, поведение, социальное обучение, художественный дискурс.*