

Reputation Enhancement and Involvement in Delinquency among High School Students

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Running head: DELINQUENCY AND REPUTATION IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The present research explored the relationship between high school students' self-reported delinquency and the importance of their social reputations. The prevalence of self-reported delinquency was investigated in a sample of 965 (467 males, 498 females) Years 8 to 12 students attending high schools in Brisbane and Perth. The results revealed that males are significantly more prone to all forms of delinquent behaviour than their female peers. Most forms of delinquency appeared to peak at Year 9, with the exception of drug use which increased with age. A cluster analysis was performed on the prevalence data and students were separated into two groups: students with high and low involvement in delinquency. The reputations of students with high and low delinquency involvement were investigated. Students identified as having low involvement in delinquency desired a more conforming reputation than those with high involvement. Females also desired a more conforming reputation than their male counterparts. In relation to year level, junior high school students were less conforming than senior high school students. Ways to address the powerful nature of adolescent reputations and their link to involvement in delinquent activities are highlighted.

Reputation Enhancement and Involvement in Delinquency among High School Students

At-risk and delinquent behaviour refers to a continuum of behaviours that deviate from mainstream social standards in ways that could result in serious disciplinary or adjudicatory consequences (Lorion, Tolan, & Wahler, 1987). According to Lorion et al. (1987), the continuum includes behaviours that are simply socially unacceptable to school authorities (e.g., disrupting the classroom, rejecting teacher support, poor motivation), that are illegal and problematic by virtue of the age of the offender (e.g., status offences such as truancy, running away, substance use), and that are illegal criminal acts independent of the offender's age (e.g., assault, vandalism, arson, robbery, rape). The outcomes of these at-risk and delinquent behaviours can lead to disciplinary consequences ranging from school suspension and expulsion to legal convictions and incarceration.

Why adolescents engage in at-risk and delinquent behaviours has been investigated by numerous researchers (e.g., Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Hirschi, 1969, 1986; Miller, 1958; Sutherland & Cressey, 1970). More recently, the social psychological processes used by young people contemplating, or participating in criminal conduct (e.g., Carroll, Houghton, Hattie, & Durkin, 1999; Emler & Reicher, 1995) has been the focus of investigation, with findings indicating the powerful nature of peer reputation. Accumulating evidence now exists which demonstrates that many adolescents find successfully engaging in illegal activities to be rewarding in terms of the social status it affords them among their peers (Agnew, 1991; Carroll et al., 1999; Emler & Reicher, 1995; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). While much of this research has focussed on male incarcerated youths, little is known of the relationship between high school students' self-reported delinquency and the importance they place on their social reputations. The

purpose of the present research is to examine self-reported rates of delinquency for male and female high school students and to identify the differences in the social reputations of students reported as having high and low delinquency involvement.

At-risk and Delinquent Behaviour

Adolescents may be designated as at-risk of beginning on a negative life pathway if they engage in delinquent activities but have not had these activities officially recorded by a caution or warrant or have not been incarcerated in a juvenile institution. According to self-report data, approximately 50% of individuals engage in delinquent activities at some time during their adolescent years and as much as 98% of adolescent delinquent behaviour is not reported in official data (Dryfoos, 1990; Dunford & Elliott, 1982; West & Farrington, 1977).

In Western societies, youth crime rates have increased substantially over the past 10 years. For example, in the USA, arrests for assault of individuals under 18 years of age have increased 98%, for property offences 23%, and for drug offences 120% (Stahl, 1998). In Australia, the Australian Institute of Criminology (2002) cites the offending rate for persons aged 15 to 19 years to have been more than five times the offender rate of the remainder of the Australian population in 2000-2001. Although offender rates have remained relatively stable for the juvenile population from 1995 to 2001, there has been an increase in the percentage of female juvenile offenders from 21% in 1995 to 25% in 2001 (Brewster & Cook, 2002). The delinquent activities in which individuals most frequently engaged include burglary and theft offences (50.9%), driving offences (16.6%), good order offences (9.6%), property damage (5.5%), offences against the person (8.9%), and drug offences (4.6%) (Fernandez & Loh, 2001).

A recent longitudinal study conducted over a three-year period with 249, Year 8 to 10 Western Australian high school students has revealed a number of trends pertaining to the

delinquency rates and developmental trajectories of young persons at-risk during this critical period when many young persons begin their offending (Houghton & Carroll, 2002).

Specifically, individuals at risk of dropping out of school were significantly more involved than their not at-risk counterparts in all categories of delinquency with the exception of assault.

Furthermore involvement in delinquency increased from Years 8 to 10. For example, from Year 8 to Year 10 there was a six-fold increase in purchasing alcohol, almost a four fold increase in drinking alcohol in public places, and a three fold increase in using marijuana. For more serious delinquent activities there was nearly a three fold increase in driving a car at high speeds in the city, while peddling drugs increased over 2.5 fold.

Social Reputations

Recent theory and research has revealed that many adolescents resort to illegal methods to obtain their goals (Carroll, 1995; Carroll, Durkin, Hattie, & Houghton, 1997; Carroll et al., 1999; Emler, 1990; Emler & Reicher, 1995; Houghton & Carroll, 1996; 2002). Success through these illegal methods is reinforcing to nonconforming reputations and so involvement in at-risk and delinquent behaviours to achieve goals is often maintained or enhanced. From his research, Emler (1984; 1990) concluded that delinquency is a form of communication, and a means of seeking approval from the immediate peer audience. The long-term goal of these adolescents is to establish a delinquent reputation and maintain this reputation within the peer group.

The theory of Reputation Enhancement emerged from Emler's (1984) research into male delinquency. According to Emler, reputations are a social phenomenon arising from social processes within a community of individuals. Reputations link people to particular social identities, and it is upon these social identities that an individual's attributes and status are

acknowledged and their needs met (Hopkins & Emler, 1990). All socially visible behaviour can enhance or threaten an individual's reputation.

Emler (1984) found that delinquents' group membership was never stable, as their position in the group was consistently being challenged by others and/or their reputation was jeopardised by incongruent behaviours. Delinquents were constantly claiming support and proving themselves to their delinquent peers by engaging in highly visible delinquent activities. The primary purpose of these actions being to maintain their position in the group, and thus maintain their reputation as a delinquent (Reicher & Emler, 1988).

During adolescence, peer groups play a fundamental role in the development of social reputations and exert a great deal of influence over the type of reputation an individual manifests. Delinquent adolescents have been documented to be concerned with establishing and maintaining their delinquent credentials to the in-group, and establishing and maintaining a bad reputation to outsiders. Accordingly, Carroll et al. (1997) found that the goals of delinquent and at-risk participants were consistent with a non-conforming reputation (e.g., engaging in illegal behaviour), whereas the not at-risk participants set goals that were congruent with a conforming reputation (e.g., educational achievement). Thus, it appears, that different adolescents are concerned about maintaining different types of reputations. While recent longitudinal research has revealed that at-risk high school students are significantly more involved in delinquency than their not at-risk peers, little research has investigated whether students identified as having high involvement in delinquency desire a more non-conforming reputation than those with low involvement.

Method

Participants

A total of 965 students (467 males, 498 females) aged 12 to 18 years, attending ten state high schools in Brisbane (Queensland) and Perth (Western Australia) were surveyed. Brisbane and Perth were specifically chosen because we wished to capture a representative sample of Australian high school students. With Queensland being the third largest state by population and Western Australia being the fifth largest state by population, the capital cities of these two states provided us with a representation of social and contextual milieus of Australian cities and provided an east-west coast dichotomy. Four schools were located in low socio-economic status areas, three were in middle socio-economic status areas, and three were in high socio-economic status areas.

Participants completed the *Adapted Self-Report Delinquency Scale* (Carroll et al., 1996) and a K-means cluster analysis separated participants into two groups: high involvement in delinquent behaviours and low involvement in delinquent behaviours. Six participants were unable to be classified and were dropped for all subsequent analyses. The distribution of students by year level, gender, and delinquency involvement is shown in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, 83 participants (62 males, 21 females) were classified as having high involvement in delinquent behaviours and 876 participants were classified as having low involvement in delinquent behaviours. These data are in line with Dryfoos (1990) who indicated that 10% of adolescents are at high risk of maladjustment and delinquency.

Insert Table 1 about here

Settings

All questionnaires were administered by the researchers to participants in their regular classrooms. Furniture layout in the classrooms was comparable to examination conditions and instructions for administration were consistent across administrations. Participants were informed that if they encountered any difficulties with the questionnaire, they were to raise their hand to obtain assistance from the researcher.

Instrumentation

Two scales were administered to all participants. *The Adapted Self-Report Delinquency Scale* (Carroll et al., 1996) comprises 46 items covering a wide range of frequently occurring delinquent acts in Australia with wording consistent with adolescent usage. Responses relate to the number of times delinquent acts were engaged in during the last 12 months, using a six-point scale with the following anchor points: never, 1-3 times, 4-6 times, once a month, more than once a month, and more than once a week. Factor analysis of the 46 items revealed seven internally homogenous subscales from the scale. These subscales and their reliability coefficients are Stealing Offences, $\alpha = .90$; School Misdemeanours, $\alpha = .86$; Soft Drug Use, $\alpha = .88$; Vehicle-Related Offences, $\alpha = .94$; Abuse of Property, $\alpha = .91$; Physical Aggression, $\alpha = .88$, and Hard Drug-Related Offences, $\alpha = .89$ (Carroll et al., 1996).

The Reputation Enhancement Scale (see Carroll et al., 1999) comprises seven dimensions that relate to friendliness, how adolescents view themselves and their peers in terms of conforming or non-conforming behaviour, how they would like to be viewed and the communication of positive and negative events to others. Friendliness is made up of eight items ($\alpha = .84$) that relate to how one feels about friends and being with friends. It is scored on a 6-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Admiration comprises 36 items and

has two sub-factors with the following reliability coefficients: Law-Abiding Admiration, $\alpha = .89$; Law-Breaking Admiration, $\alpha = .92$. Respondents indicate the extent that they, and other people, might admire particular conforming and non-conforming behaviours. Scores are obtained on a 6-point scale that consists of the following points: not at all, very little, somewhat, quite a bit, very much, and completely. Self-Perception consists of 15 items measuring how participants think others view them, and has three sub-factors with the following reliability coefficients: Non-conforming Self-Perception, $\alpha = .91$; Conforming Self-Perception, $\alpha = .66$; and Reputational Self-Perception, $\alpha = .77$. Ideal Public Self has the same 15 items as the Self-Perception subscale, however on this scale, participants respond as they would ideally like others to view them. It also has three sub-factors with the following reliability coefficients: Non-conforming Ideal Public Self, $\alpha = .93$; Conforming Ideal Public Self, $\alpha = .83$, and Reputational Ideal Public Self, $\alpha = .65$. Scores are obtained on a 6-point scale with the following points: never, hardly ever, occasionally, sometimes, often and always. Self-Description and Ideal Private Self is measured by 24 items and has four sub-factors with the following reliability coefficients: Activity Self-description, $\alpha = .73$; Power/Evaluation Self-description, $\alpha = .73$; Activity Ideal Private Self, $\alpha = .83$ and Power/Evaluation Ideal Private Self, $\alpha = .73$. Responses are made on a 6-point scale, with semantic differential anchor points ranging from one extreme of a relevant variable (e.g., “I think I am a leader”) to the other extreme (e.g., “I think I am a follower”). Communication of Events comprises of 56 items and has three sub-factors with the following reliability coefficients: Peer Communication, $\alpha = .91$; Adult Communication, $\alpha = .84$; and Prosocial Adult Communication, $\alpha = .89$. A 4-point response format is used to indicate which group of people the respondents would disclose information to regarding different events. Namely, these points are “friends”, “parents”, “other adults” and “I would not want anybody to know”.

The scales have a readability at a Year 5 level, with a reading ease score of 91 which indicates that less than six years of schooling is required to successfully read the questionnaire (Flesch, 1948). In addition, information pertaining to the student's age, gender, year level at school, origin of birth and languages spoken at home was also gathered.

Procedure

The principals of each of the ten high schools were approached for permission to undertake the research. All principals agreed and a consent form and information sheet pertaining to the purpose and nature of the study were given to all students in each class (approximately 30) in each of the schools. The students and their parents were required to give written consent to participate. There was a response rate of approximately 70 percent. The scales were administered to students in groups of approximately 20 during class time in a room specifically set aside for the purpose of the research. Students were informed about the nature of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity by the researcher, prior to the dissemination of the scales. Participants completed the scales in approximately 30 minutes in the presence of at least one researcher and one school staff member. Those students who were identified by school personnel as experiencing literacy difficulties were administered the scales in small groups, where the researcher read the scales aloud, verbatim.

Results

Four multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted. The first two-way MANOVA explored the seven dependent variables of self-reported delinquency for year level (8, 9, 10, 11, 12) and gender (male, female). The second two-way MANOVA investigated the effect of the independent variables of gender (male, female) and delinquency involvement (high, low) on the dependent variables i.e., the subscales of the Reputation Enhancement Scale. The

subscales of the Reputation Enhancement Scale were also investigated in relation to the independent variables of year level and gender in a third two-way MANOVA. The final two-way MANOVA investigated the relationship between the dependent variables for reputation and the independent variables of delinquency involvement by year level (junior, senior). Since the cell sizes for year level were small, the five year levels were condensed to represent junior (year 8 to 10) and senior year levels (11 and 12). Wilk's lambda was used to evaluate multivariate significance. Univariate F tests were conducted when significant multivariate results were obtained. F values were determined to be significant at $p < .01$ to control for type 1 errors. Effect sizes and power estimates are reported. Scheffé post hoc comparisons were also conducted to explore mean differences and are reported where there were significant differences among the means. The numbers vary slightly across analyses due to missing data.

Gender and Year Level Differences in Self-Reported Delinquency

The results of the 2 x 5 (Gender by Year Level) MANOVA based on the seven dependent variables of self-reported delinquency revealed no significant interaction effects, however, there were main effects for both Gender $F(7, 943)=10.94, p<0.001$ and Year Level $F(28, 3401.46) = 5.76, p < 0.001$. The follow-up Univariate F tests revealed significant differences for the seven dependent variables for the main effect of gender. An examination of the observed means in Table 2 shows that males reported higher involvement than females on all seven variables of self-reported delinquency.

Insert Table 2 about here

The results of the Univariate F tests and observed means for Year Level presented in Table 3, reveal significant differences for two of the seven variables, namely school misdemeanours

and soft drug use ($p < 0.001$). Scheffé post hoc comparisons conducted revealed that for school misdemeanours, significant differences were evident between Year 8 and Years 10, 11, and 12 students, with Year 8 students reporting less involvement than Years 10, 11, and 12 students. For soft drug use, significant differences were found between Year 8 students and all other year levels. Year 8 students reported lower usage of soft drugs with soft drug use increasing with age.

Insert Table 3 about here

Reputation Enhancement: Gender and Delinquency Involvement

The results of the 2 x 2 (Gender by Delinquency Involvement) MANOVA conducted on each of the 16 Reputation Enhancement variables revealed no significant interaction effect, but there were main effects for Gender $F(16,891) = 8.04, p < 0.001$ and Delinquency Involvement $F(16,891) = 23.89, p < 0.001$. The Univariate F-tests and observed means for the main effect of gender which are presented in Table 4 revealed that 10 of the 16 reputation variables were significant. Females scored higher than males on the variables of friendliness, admiration of law abiding activity, conforming self-perception, conforming ideal public self, activity self-description, power/evaluation self-description, activity ideal private self, and prosocial communication. Males scored higher than females on the variables of admiration of law-breaking activities and nonconforming ideal public self.

Insert Table 4 about here

The Univariate F-tests and observed means for the variable of level of involvement in delinquency is reported in Table 5. Ten of the 16 reputation variables were significant. Students with high involvement in delinquency reported the highest scores on the variables of admiration of law breaking activities, reputational self-perception and nonconforming self-perception, nonconforming ideal public self, and peer communication. Students with low involvement in delinquency scored highest on the variables of conforming self-perception, conforming ideal public self, activity self-description, activity ideal private self, and prosocial communication.

Insert Table 5 about here

Gender and Year Level Differences in Reputation Enhancement

A 2 x 5 (Gender by Year Level) MANOVA performed on the 16 Reputation Enhancement variables revealed no interaction effects, however, there were significant main effects for both Gender $F(16,889) = 15.99, p < 0.001$ and Year Level $F(64,3482.55) = 2.48, p < 0.001$. Table 6 presents the Univariate F-tests and observed means for the main effect of gender when the main effect of year level is removed.

Insert Table 6 about here

As can be seen in Table 6, 13 of the 16 reputation enhancement variables were significant with females scoring highest for the variables of friendliness, admiration of law-abiding

activities, conforming self-perception, conforming ideal public self, activity self-description, power/evaluation self-description, activity ideal private self, and prosocial communication. Generally, females tended to strive for a more socially acceptable reputation than their male peers. Males on the other hand reported greater admiration of lawbreaking behaviour and scored significantly higher on reputational self-perception, non-conforming self-perception, reputational ideal public self, nonconforming ideal public self, and nonconforming ideal private self.

The Univariate F-tests and observed means for the main effect of Year Level which are shown in Table 7 revealed that 6 of the 16 reputation enhancement variables were significant. Admiration of law-breaking activities and nonconforming self-perception were greatest for Year 9 and 10 students, while conforming ideal public self was greatest for Year 8, 11 and 12 students. Prosocial communication was greatest for Year 12 students. Year 8 students scored significantly higher than other year levels on activity self-description.

Insert Table 7 about here

Reputation Enhancement: Year Level (Junior/Secondary) and Delinquency Involvement

A 2 x 2 (Year Level by Delinquency Involvement) MANOVA was performed on the 16 Reputation Enhancement variables using the independent variables of Year Level (junior, senior) and Delinquency Involvement (high, low involvement). A significant interaction effect for Year Level by Delinquency Involvement was found $F(16,891) df = 3.34, p < 0.001$, and significant multivariate main effects were evident for Year Level $F(16,891) = 3.76, p < 0.001$ and Delinquency Involvement $F(16,891) = 23.81, p < 0.001$.

The Univariate F-tests and observed means for the interaction effect which are presented in Table 8 revealed that 3 of the 16 reputation variables were significant. Participants who were highly engaged in delinquent behaviour regardless of year level scored higher than those with low involvement on the variables of nonconforming self-perception and non-conforming ideal public self. Those with low involvement regardless of year grouping scored higher than those with high involvement on the variable of conforming self-perception. Junior students highly involved in delinquency scored higher than senior students highly involved in delinquency on all of the reputation variables, significantly influencing the interaction effect.

Insert Table 8 about here

The results of the Univariate F-tests and observed means for the main effect of Delinquency Involvement presented in Table 9 show that 14 of the 16 reputation variables were significant. Students who had a high level of Delinquency Involvement reported higher admiration for law-breaking activities, reputational self-perception and nonconforming self-perception, nonconforming ideal public self, and adult and peer communication. Participants with a low level of Delinquency Involvement scored highest on the other remaining variables (friendliness, admiration of law-abiding behaviour, conforming self-perception, conforming ideal public self, activity self-description, power/evaluation self-description, activity ideal private self, and prosocial communication).

Insert Table 9 about here

The Univariate F-tests and observed means for the main effect of year level (senior, junior) with reputation as the dependent variable are presented in Table 10. The junior participants scored higher than seniors on the variables of admiration of law-breaking activities, non-conforming self-perception, and nonconforming ideal public self indicating a high concern for their reputation. Participants in the senior year levels scored higher than their junior counterparts on activity ideal private self, and prosocial communication.

Insert Table 10 about here

Discussion

Results pertaining to delinquency involvement support other research (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Houghton & Carroll, 2002) that males are engaged in all types of delinquency at a higher rate than females. The types of delinquent behaviour engaged in by high school students varied with year level. Drug use (hard and soft) increased with year level which supports other research that drug use increases with age (Odgers, Houghton, & Douglas, 1995; 1997). The delinquent behaviours of stealing, school misdemeanours, vehicle-related offences, and property and person damage were greatest among Year nine students. Previous research has found that delinquency reaches its peak between the ages of 14 and 15 and in the present research Year nine students were approximately 15 years of age (Blackburn, 1993; Emler & Hopkins 1990). After Year 9 there is a gradual decline in these activities. As most of the research relies on school populations, this may be a result of students involved in these activities being expelled from school or incarcerated for their behaviour. Alternatively, young people may leave school after this age and reorient themselves to adult responsibilities such as finding a career path or paid employment.

The present research identified significant differences among the desired reputations of male and female high school students. Females placed more value on friendship and group membership, admired law-abiding behaviour more than males (returning what they have borrowed, obeying parents, receiving good grades), perceived themselves to be more conforming (get along well with others, have a good reputation), would ideally like to be perceived by others as conforming (trusting, good), described themselves with positive attributes (kind, friendly) and communicated more with adults and parents than did males. Thus, females reported a higher desire than males for a conforming reputation and were more likely to participate in activities that supported this reputation.

In comparison to their female counterparts, males were identified as having a higher admiration for law-breaking activities (e.g., dealing drugs, stealing, truancy, taking drugs), perceived themselves to be nonconforming (e.g., breaking rules, getting into trouble), and reported informing their peers of their nonconforming behaviour. Males would ideally like to be perceived as tough, leaders and popular. It can be concluded therefore, that males in this study were more interested than females with attaining and sustaining a nonconforming reputation. Since the males in this study reported a significantly higher degree of delinquent behaviour these results suggest a relationship between delinquency and a nonconforming reputation.

Students with high involvement in delinquency admired law-breaking behaviour (e.g., fighting, stealing, drug taking) more so than those with minimal delinquency involvement. Furthermore, those with high involvement perceived themselves as nonconforming (e.g., breaking rules, bad reputation) and ideally wanted to be perceived in this manner. They informed peers of their behaviour, but not adults. Conversely, students with low delinquency involvement perceived themselves and ideally wanted to be seen as conforming (trustworthy, likely to

succeed, get along well with others). They described themselves in terms of power/evaluation attributes (e.g., leaders, good looking) and activity attributes (kind, friendly). Ideally they wanted to be described as people who do not break the rules, are smart, and kind. They communicated prosocial behaviour (e.g., receiving a certificate, a good grade) to others (e.g., peers, parents, and other adults), and admired law-abiding behaviour (e.g., obeying parents, good grades). These results support Emler (1990) and Carroll (1995) who found that male delinquents desired a nonconforming reputation, participated in activities that supported a nonconforming reputation and communicated behaviour supporting their reputation to peers.

When year levels were dichotomised into junior (8, 9, and 10) and senior (11, 12) groupings, junior participants were identified as most concerned with their nonconforming reputations. Compared to the senior group, junior students admired law-breaking activities, perceived themselves to be tough, leaders, popular, and nonconforming (e.g., trouble makers). There were some junior students, however, who perceived themselves as conforming (e.g., having a good reputation). Since most junior students are in the early stages of adolescence, the choice of a conforming or non-conforming reputation assumes increasing importance. The results of the present research therefore add support to Emler's (1990) findings that reputations become highly important at the onset of adolescence.

Cotterell's (1996) claim that students attending large high schools may have a greater need to be affiliated with crowd types to find their place in the school system (i.e., social categorisation) provides further support for the current findings. Crowd types may serve the same purpose as reputations (but may not be as long lasting), by providing an identifiable reference group for students, whereby individual needs (e.g., friendship, identity) are met and virtues acknowledged. In the early years of high school, crowd types and thus reputations may be more

important than in the later years when friendships are established and less energy is needed to ensure one's virtues are acknowledged.

Reputational differences were found among year levels. Year 12 students, for example, ideally liked to be described in terms of power/evaluation attributes (e.g., leaders, powerful) more so than other year levels which is not totally unexpected since at this age leadership roles are adopted. Year 12 students reported high prosocial communication (e.g., would tell others if they received a certificate, good grade) which again is associated with an achievement-oriented year.

Year eight students reported least concern for a nonconforming reputation and preferred to be seen by others in terms of activity attributes (e.g., kind, smart, and friendly); they also described themselves in this way. As students new to the high school, they may be finding their place in the system and doing their best to conform to the socially accepted norms promoted by the school. Additionally, they may not have been exposed to forms of nonconforming behaviour because nonconforming behaviour such as delinquency involvement increases during high school (Emler, 1984).

Year nine participants scored the highest on nonconforming self-perception and ideal public self and on levels of involvement in delinquent behaviour. This is consistent with Emler's (1990) claims that individuals engaging in delinquency desire and strive for nonconforming reputations. Peer communication of nonconforming behaviour was greatest for Years 9, 10 and 11 students. Consistent with this finding is the propensity for delinquent behaviour. In the present study delinquency in a variety of forms increased from Year 9, along with an increased desire for a nonconforming reputation. According to Emler, to sustain a nonconforming reputation, one must behave in a manner consistent with this reputation and/or communicate this behaviour to others. The results here suggest that students who are striving for a nonconforming

reputation are acting in the manner described by Emler in order to sustain their nonconforming reputation.

To date, many intervention strategies have targeted delinquency and other risk taking behaviours by focussing on information pertaining to the risk factors associated with engaging in such behaviours. Other strategies have involved teaching assertiveness skills such as “saying no to drugs”, while the idea of raising self-esteem and self-efficacy has also been popular (Odgers et al., 1995; 1997). The present research findings, coupled with the extensive previous research evidence, clearly highlights the need for a strategy that incorporates a reputation component. For example, such interventions might provide opportunities for adolescents to explore different types of social identities and promote the desirability of more conforming reputations. Obviously for some adolescents, nonconforming reputations are attractive and the behaviours affiliated with this reputation meet their needs. Too often, students who engage in delinquency are identified under a deficit model. These students have skills, however, which are commensurate with their needs, albeit that such needs often involve a more dangerous means of achieving desired outcomes. For many students who engage in delinquency, this may be the easiest option for them. Thus, it may be advantageous to create opportunities whereby students can meet their needs through an alternative option within the school system.

Although the behaviours associated with acquiring a conforming reputation (e.g., doing well at academics, sports, communicating with adults about prosocial activities) are conventional, for some students such behaviours may not fit with their needs. The school environment with its focus on conformity, means that students who lean towards unconventionality may find it difficult to meet their needs through typical school activities. Intervention programs should therefore focus on supporting these students by designing programs that embrace and make use

of skills held. Moreover, if we are to engage these young people in the school system, we need to strengthen ways that schools actually cater and support all young people in their education. A range of measures need to be considered to allow for more flexibility so that young people are better equipped for the demands of our society (e.g., offering programs of workplace learning and community activities, providing school to work transition programs, using mentors for young people at risk of disengaging from school).

In conclusion, the present research has further extended the work to date pertaining to the importance of reputation enhancement among young persons. Furthermore, it has provided valuable evidence about the relationship between reputation and delinquency involvement. What is now required is for practitioners to juxtapose the research findings with current programmes so that young persons involved in or at risk of involvement in delinquency might achieve success through more conventional means.

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Table 1

The Sample Distribution of Students for Gender, Year Level, and Delinquency Involvement

	Male		Female		Low Involvement in Delinquency		High Involvement in Delinquency	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male					399	(86.6)	62	(13.4)
Female					477	(95.8)	21	(4.2)
Year 8	101	(21.6)	104	(20.9)	196	(95.6)	9	(4.4)
Year 9	112	(24.0)	116	(23.3)	204	(90.3)	22	(9.7)
Year 10	137	(29.3)	132	(26.5)	240	(89.9)	27	(10.1)
Year 11	57	(12.2)	57	(11.4)	103	(91.2)	10	(8.8)
Year 12	60	(12.8)	89	(17.0)	133	(89.9)	15	(10.1)
Total	467	(100)	498	(100)	876	(91.3)	83	(8.7)

Table 2

Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the Self-Reported Delinquency Variables (df = 1,949) with Gender as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Mean squares	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Effect size	Power estimate	Male		Female	
						<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Hard drug-related offences	17.63	26.05	<.001	.03	.99	1.40 _a	.04	1.12 _b	.04
School misdemeanours	46.57	29.05	<.001	.03	1.0	3.41 _a	.06	2.94 _b	.06
Soft drug use offences	11.12	6.87	<.01	.01	.75	2.19 _a	.06	1.97 _b	.06
Stealing offences	17.82	27.65	<.001	.03	1.0	1.50 _a	.04	1.21 _b	.04
Vehicle-related offences	18.91	29.87	<.001	.03	1.0	1.39 _a	.04	1.09 _b	.04
Abuse of property	19.34	29.66	<.001	.03	1.0	1.49 _a	.04	1.19 _b	.04
Physical aggression	54.41	59.73	<.001	.06	1.0	1.81 _a	.05	1.31 _b	.05

Note: Means within rows having no common subscript differ at $p < .01$.

Table 3

Univariate F-tests, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the Self-Reported Delinquency Variables (df = 4,949) with Year Level as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Mean Square	F-value	p-value	Effect Size	Power Estim.	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Year 11		Year 12	
						M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Hard drug offences	1.58	2.34	.05	.01	.68										
School misdemeanour	11.27	7.26	<.001	.03	1.00	2.77 _a	.09	3.11 _{abcd}	.08	3.20 _{bcd}	.08	3.42 _{bcd}	.12	3.37 _{bcd}	.11
Soft drug use offences	26.45	16.34	<.001	.06	1.00	1.52 _a	.09	1.96 _{bcd}	.09	2.10 _{bcd}	.08	2.35 _{bcdde}	.12	2.56 _{de}	.11
Stealing offences	.98	1.52	.19	.01	.48										
Vehicle-related offences	.71	1.11	.35	.01	.35										
Abuse of property	1.40	2.15	.07	.01	.64										
Physical aggression	2.37	2.6	.04	.01	.73										

Note: Means within rows having no common subscript differ at p<.05.

Table 4

Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the Reputation Enhancement Variables (df = 1,906) with Gender as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Mean squares	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Effect Size	Power Estimate	Male		Female	
						<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Friendliness	13.12	21.54	<.001	.02	1.00	3.65 _a	.06	4.15 _b	.09
Admiration of law-abiding activities	22.68	27.9	<.001	.03	1.00	3.00 _a	.07	3.66 _b	.10
Admiration of law-breaking activities	5.5	7.75	<.005	.01	.79	2.88 _a	.06	2.56 _b	.10
Reputational self-perception	.02	.001	.97	.00	.05				
Nonconforming self-perception	2.37	3.61	.06	.00	.48				
Conforming self-perception	4.92	7.59	<.006	.01	.79	4.44 _a	.06	4.74 _b	.09
Reputational ideal public self	5.44	3.78	.05	.00	.49				
Nonconforming ideal public self	17.12	20.84	<.001	.02	1.00	2.65 _a	.07	2.1 _b	.10
Conforming ideal public self	13.05	19.54	<.001	.02	1.00	4.63 _a	.06	5.13 _b	.09
Activity self-description	4.64	7.9	<.005	.02	.80	4.03 _a	.06	4.11 _b	.05
Power/evaluation self-description	8.27	13.25	<.001	.01	.95	2.81 _a	.06	3.21 _b	.09
Activity ideal private self	4.64	7.9	<.005	.01	.80	4.7 _a	.06	5.0 _b	.09
Power/evaluation ideal private self	.01	.12	.89	.00	.05				
Adult communication	.09	3.97	.05	.00	.51				
Prosocial communication	.40	11.35	<.001	.01	.92	.52 _a	.01	.61 _b	.02
Peer communication	4.87	.43	.51	.01	.50				

Note: Means within rows having no common subscript letter differ at $p < .01$.

Table 5

Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the 16 Reputation Enhancement Variables (df = 1,906) with Delinquency Involvement as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Mean Squares	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Effect Size	Power Estimate	High Involvement		Low Involvement	
						<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Friendliness	.41	.68	.41	.00	.13				
Admiration of law-abiding activit.	1.88	2.32	.13	.00	.33				
Admiration of law-breaking activit.	44.94	63.29	<.001	.07	1.00	3.17 _a	.11	2.26 _b	.03
Reputational self-perception	33.74	28.54	<.001	.03	1.00	4.01 _a	.14	3.21 _b	.04
Nonconforming self-perception	221.93	338.27	<.001	.27	1.00	3.83 _a	.11	1.79 _b	.03
Conforming self-perception	11.4	17.6	<.001	.02	.99	4.4 _a	.11	4.8 _b	.03
Reputational ideal public self	4.8	3.33	.07	.00	.45				
Nonconforming ideal public self	108.58	132.18	<.001	.13	1.00	3.08 _a	.12	1.65 _b	.03
Conforming ideal public self	10.64	15.94	<.001	.02	.98	4.65 _a	.11	5.1 _b	.03
Activity self description	80.76	142.47	<.001	.02	.99	3.45 _a	.11	4.69 _b	.03
Power/evaluation self-description	3.72	5.96	.02	.01	.68				
Activity ideal private self	53.22	90.81	<.001	.91	1.00	4.34 _a	.10	5.34 _b	.03
Power/evaluation ideal private self	.08	.01	.91	.00	.05				
Adult communication	.08	2.84	.09	.00	.39				
Prosocial communication	.99	28.03	<.001	.03	1.00	.50 _a	.03	.64 _b	.01
Peer communication	1.96	18.10	<.001	.03	1.00	.57 _a	.03	.38 _b	.01

Note: Means within rows having no common subscript letter differ at $p < .01$.

Table 6

Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the Reputation Enhancement Variables (df = 1,904) with Gender as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Mean Squares	F-value	p-value	Effect Size	Power Estimate	Male		Female	
						M	SD	M	SD
Friendliness	25.04	41.27	<.001	.04	1.00	3.76 _a	.04	4.11 _b	.04
Admiration of law-abiding	65.37	80.95	<.001	.08	1.00	3.14 _a	.05	3.7 _b	.04
Admiration of law-breaking	17.32	22.74	<.001	.03	1.00	2.54 _a	.05	2.16 _b	.04
Reputational self-perception	9.02	7.43	<.007	.01	.78	3.36 _a	.06	3.15 _b	.05
Nonconforming self-perception	31.52	34.18	<.001	.04	1.00	2.13 _a	.05	1.74 _b	.05
Conforming self-perception	27.82	41.74	<.001	.04	1.00	4.6 _a	.04	4.97 _b	.04
Reputational ideal public self	26.21	18.05	<.001	.02	1.00	3.87 _a	.06	3.51 _b	.06
Nonconforming ideal public self	33.80	34.72	<.001	.04	1.00	1.96 _a	.05	1.55 _b	.05
Conforming ideal public self	32.99	48.89	<.001	.05	1.00	4.88 _a	.04	5.28 _b	.04
Activity self-description	8.04	12.27	<.001	.04	1.00	4.49 _a	.04	4.68 _b	.04
Power/evaluat. self-description	20.40	32.37	<.001	.04	1.00	2.96 _a	.04	3.27 _b	.04
Activity ideal private self	10.87	16.57	<.001	.02	1.00	5.16 _a	.04	5.38 _b	.04
Power/evaluat. ideal private self	3.53	5.89	.02	.01	.68				
Adult communication	.11	4.35	.04	.01	.55				
Prosocial communication	.74	20.42	<.001	.02	1.00	0.6 _a	.01	0.66 _b	(.01)
Peer communication	.55	5.01	.03	.01	1.00				

Note: Means having no common subscript differ at $p < .01$

Table 7
 Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the Reputation Enhancement Variables (df = 4,904) with Year

Dependent Variable	Mean Square	F-value	p-value	Effect Size	Power Estimate	Year 8		Year 9		Year 10		Year 11		Year 12	
						M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Friendliness	.32	.52	.72	.00	.18										
Admiration of law-abiding activ.	1.59	1.96	.10	.01	.59										
Admiration of law-breaking activ.	3.0	3.95	<.003	.02	.91	2.23 _{ad}	.06	2.38 _{ab}	.06	2.47 _b	.08	2.33 _{ad}	.08	2.14 _d	.08
Reputational self-perception	1.77	1.46	.21	.01	.46										
Nonconforming self-perception	3.9	4.27	<.002	.02	.93	1.77 _a	.07	2.08 _b	.07	2.04 _c	.06	2.00 _d	.09	1.79 _a	.08
Conforming self-perception	.82	1.23	.3	.01	.39										
Reputational ideal public self	1.07	.74	.57	.00	.24										
Nonconforming ideal public self	3.81	3.91	<.004	.02	.90	1.63 _a	.07	1.95 _b	.07	1.85 _{dc}	.06	1.74 _{ad}	.09	1.61 _{ac}	.09
Conforming ideal public self	2.15	3.19	<.01	.01	.83	5.18 _a	.06	4.93 _b	.06	5.00 _c	.05	5.14 _{ac}	.08	5.13 _{ac}	.07
Power self-description	.37	.58	.68	.00	.19										
Activity self-description	4.04	6.17	<.001	.01	.94	4.84 _a	.06	4.48 _b	.06	4.56 _c	.06	4.52 _d	.07	4.53 _e	.07
Activity ideal private self	1.93	2.95	.02	.01	.79										
Power/evaluation ideal private self	1.86	3.11	.02	.01	.82										
Adult communication	.04	1.71	.15	.01	.83										
Prosocial communication	.06	4.32	<.002	.02	.93	.62 _a	.01	.59 _b	.01	.62 _a	.01	.64 _d	.12	.67 _c	.12
Peer communication	.14	1.31	.27	.01	.70										

Level as the Independent Variable

Note: Means within rows having no common subscript differ at $p < .01$.

Table 8

Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations (in brackets) for the Interaction Effect between Year Level and Delinquency Involvement for the Reputation Enhancement Variables (df = 1, 906)

Dependent Variable	Mean square	F-value	p-value	Effect Size	Power Estimate	Low involvement		High involvement	
						Junior	Senior	Junior	Senior
Friendliness	1.75	2.72	.09	.003	.38				
Admiration of law-abiding	3.72	4.24	.04	.005	.54				
Admiration of law-breaking	5.37	7.55	.01	.008	.78				
Reputational self-perception	6.82	5.78	.02	.006	.67				
Nonconforming self-perception	11.76	17.92	<.001	.019	.99	1.79 (.03)	1.73 (.05)	4.19 (.12)	3.21 (.17)
Conforming self-perception	8.12	12.20	<.001	.013	.94	4.8 (.03)	4.9 (.05)	4.5 (.12)	3.9 (.17)
Reputational ideal public self	2.61	1.79	.18	.002	.27				
Nonconforming ideal public self	14.58	17.64	<.001	.019	.99	1.17 (.04)	1.56 (.06)	3.64 (.13)	2.5 (.19)
Conforming ideal public self	2.47	3.55	.06	.004	.47				
Activity self-description	2.90	5.13	.02	.001	.99				
Power self-description	1.07	1.66	.20	.002	.25				
Activity ideal private self	3.80	6.45	.01	.007	.718				
Power/eval. ideal private self	.15	.24	.63	.000	.078				
Adult communication	.02	.72	.40	.001	.135				
Prosocial communication	.09	2.50	.11	.003	.352				
Peer communication	4.55	.42	.52	.001	.500				

Table 9

Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the Reputation Enhancement Variables (df = 1,906) with Delinquency Involvement as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Mean Squares	F-value	p-value	Effect Size	Power Estimate	Low involvement		High involvement	
						M	SD	M	SD
Friendliness	5.23	8.13	<.004	.01	.813	3.98 _a	.03	3.67 _b	.10
Admiration of law-abiding	12.93	14.74	<.001	.02	.97	3.5 _a	.04	3.02 _b	.12
Admiration of law-breaking	48.22	67.84	<.001	.07	1.00	2.21 _a	.03	3.14 _b	.12
Reputational self-perception	23.96	20.31	<.001	.02	.99	3.22 _a	.04	8.87 _b	.14
Nonconforming self-perception	211.70	322.48	<.001	.26	1.00	1.76 _a	.03	3.7 _b	.10
Conforming self-perception	25.55	38.42	<.001	.04	1.00	4.87 _a	.03	4.2 _b	.10
Reputational ideal public self	5.8	3.98	.05	.00	.51				
Nonconforming ideal public self	120.11	145.33	<.001	.14	1.00	1.61 _a	.03	3.07 _b	.12
Conforming ideal public self	26.12	37.52	<.001	.04	1.00	5.16 _a	.03	4.48 _b	.11
Power self-description	6.42	9.93	<.002	.01	.99	3.15 _a	.03	2.81 _b	.10
Activity self-description	76.78	135.64	<.001	.28	1.80	4.68 _a	.03	3.51 _b	.13
Activity ideal private self	57.98	98.42	<.001	.09	1.00	5.36 _a	.03	4.35 _b	.10
Power/evaluat. ideal private self	.05	.09	.77	.00	.06				
Adult communication	.19	7.96	<.005	.01	.81	.08 _a	.10	.14 _b	.02
Prosocial communication	1.38	39.35	<.001	.04	1.00	.65 _a	.01	.49 _b	.02
Peer communication	1.49	13.66	<.001	.03	1.00	.38 _a	.01	.53 _b	.02

Note: Means within rows having no common subscript differ at $p < .01$

Table 10

Univariate F Statistics, Observed Means, and Standard Deviations for the Reputation Enhancement Variables (df = 1,906) with Year Level as the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Mean Squares	F-value	p-value	Effect Size	Power Estimate	Junior		Senior	
						M	SD	M	SD
Friendliness	.60	.94	.33	.00	.16				
Admiration of law-abiding	.19	.22	.64	.00	.08				
Admiration of law-breaking	11.1	15.62	<.001	.02	.98	2.9 _a	.06	2.45 _b	.09
Reputational self-perception	4.7	3.98	.05	.00	.51				
Nonconforming self-perception	15.22	23.19	<.001	.03	1.00	2.99 _a	.06	2.47 _b	.09
Conforming self-perception	2.9	4.41	.04	.01	.56				
Reputational ideal public self	2.7	1.85	.17	.00	.28				
Nonconforming ideal public self	21.87	24.47	<.001	.03	1.00	2.65 _a	.07	2.03 _b	.09
Conforming ideal public self	.01	.05	.82	.00	.06				
Power self-description	.75	1.16	.28	.00	.19				
Activity self-description	1.08	1.91	.17	.01	.13				
Activity ideal private self	5.23	8.88	<.003	.01	.85	4.70 _a	.06	5.01 _b	.08
Power/evaluat ideal private self	.66	1.09	.3	.00	.18				
Adult communication	.01	.39	.58	.00	.09				
Prosocial communication	.48	13.67	<.001	.02	.96	.53 _a	.01	.62 _b	.02
Peer communication	7.59	.69	.41	.01	.93				

Note: Means within rows having no common subscript differ at $p < .01$