

Reputation Enhancing Goals: Integrating Reputation Enhancement and Goal Setting
Theory as an Explanation of Delinquent Involvement

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Abstract

There are a number of conditions to which youths are exposed that predispose them to involvement in delinquent activities. Not all adolescents who are exposed to adverse conditions, however, necessarily engage in delinquency. This article provides an alternative explanation of delinquency via a model entitled “Reputation Enhancing Goals” (REG) which integrates reputation enhancement theory and goal setting theory. An overview of the theories of reputation enhancement and goal setting is presented with discussion of how the two theories are integrated. Elaboration of the elements of the integrated model with empirical support for their inclusion is provided. The integrated model is based on the premise that delinquency is a relatively common alternative chosen by adolescents because it serves to provide critical feedback about their own self-image and status and it assists them to interpret the image and status of others. The model comprises four major facets (individual's resources, personal goals, peer influence, and reputation management) and four self-regulating mechanisms (presence of audience, feedback, commitment, and challenge). Implications for prevention and intervention with at-risk adolescents are discussed.

Adolescent involvement in delinquency is a major societal problem causing severe disruptions to families, schools, and communities (Glick & Goldstein, 1987). During the past decade in the United States of America - USA, there has been a significant increase in juvenile crime with arrests of individuals under 18 years of age having risen 60.1% compared to a growth of only 5.1% for individuals over the age of 18 years (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1991). The proportion of arrests of individuals under the age of 18 since 1986 has increased 98% for offences against persons, 23% for property offences, and 120% for drug offences (Stahl, 1998). According to the National Institute of Justice in the USA (1995), juvenile crime accounts for a large proportion of the costs that society contributes to federal, state, and local criminal justice. In the early 1980s, the USA spent more than \$1 billion per year to maintain its juvenile justice system and this has increased substantially in the 1990s.

Research conducted in Australia has indicated a similar trend. Australian figures indicate that juvenile incarceration rates have increased from 34.1 per 100,000 juveniles for 1991 to 38.8 per 100,000 juveniles for 1996 (Ferrante, Loh & Maller, 1998). The most frequently engaged delinquent activities include burglary and theft offences (42.3%), driving offences (17.4%), good order offences (15.3%), property damage (6%), offences against the person (8%), drug offences (4.9%), and sundry other offences (5.9%) (Ferrante et al., 1998).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (1996) categorizes delinquent behavior by index offences (criminal offences regardless of the age of the offender, such as assault, vandalism, arson, rape, robbery) and status offences (offences that are illegal and problematic by virtue of the age of the offender such as running away, truancy, under age drinking, sexual promiscuity). While delinquency is commonly defined by the arrests and convictions of persons under the age of 18 recorded in official crime reports and statistics, also of great concern is the number of juvenile offences committed each

year which are not processed in the court system (Dryfoos, 1990). 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 behavior is not reported in official data (Dryfoos, 1990; Dunford & Elliot, 1982; West & Farrington, 1977). The involvement of adolescents in delinquent behaviors is much greater than the court records indicate (Carroll, 1994).

In their efforts to explain delinquent behavior, researchers in the fields of criminology, psychology, and sociology have developed several theoretical models (e.g., Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Hirschi, 1969, 1986; Miller, 1958; Sutherland & Cressey, 1970). Of these, the most dominant in the early literature are cultural deviance theories, strain theories, control theories, and learning theories (Colvin & Pauly, 1983; Dussich, 1989). These have focussed on subcultures, the working class, group processes (cultural deviance theories; Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Sutherland & Cressey, 1970), disparities between middle-class goals of material success, lack of opportunities (strain theories; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Merton, 1939, 1957), lack of attachment to others, lack of commitment to conventional goals (social control theories; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969, 1986), and modeling observed behavior (social learning theories; Bandura, 1977, 1986). While these theories have made significant contributions, a number of issues still remain. One of the principal limitations is that while most of these theories point to factors which are associated with greater likelihood of delinquency (e.g., lower socioeconomic status, stressful family, ethnic minority status) no one (or combination) of these factors necessarily gives rise to delinquency. Few of the theories address the question of which features of young people's lives precipitate actual involvement in crime (Emler & Reicher, 1995).

The findings from recent contemporary criminology theories and the more recently proposed developmental and individual trajectory theories have been

particularly influential in explaining delinquent behaviors among young persons. Of importance in the criminological literature have been social control theory, rational choice theory, and symbolic interactionist theory. According to social control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1993; Hirschi, 1969), people weigh the costs and benefits of legal and illegal lines of action and select the ones they consider most likely to maximize their pleasure. When making this decision, individuals take into account such things as attachment to people or institutions, commitment to conventional lines of action, involvement in noncriminal activities, and belief in the moral validity of norms. In pure control theory, the assumption is that all people are capable of crime if the product of the crime is beneficial and the likelihood of detection is reduced (Hirschi, 1986).

In rational choice theory (Cornish, 1993; Cornish & Clarke, 1986; Kiser & Hechter, 1998), crime is viewed as outcomes of choices that are influenced by a rational consideration of the efforts, rewards, and costs involved in alternative courses of action. The roles of self-interest and rationality are maximized (Boudon, 1998). This is consistent with the view that cooperation is maintained by rational individuals who have the expectation of reciprocity, but this cooperation is not stable, and deviant behavior overthrows cooperation (Kondo, 1990). One criticism of this theory is that the emphasis is always placed on the offender rather than the criminal event or situation.

Symbolic interactionist theory (Matsueda & Heimer, 1997) highlights the importance of symbolic meanings to the unfolding of role transitions across the life course. Symbolic interactionists view transactions between two or more individuals as the important mechanism by which individuals influence each other through role-taking. This consists of projecting oneself into the role of other persons and appraising from their standpoint, the situation, oneself in the situation, and possible lines of action (Matsueda, 1992). With reference to delinquency, individuals confronted with

delinquent behavior as a possible line of action take each others roles through verbal and nonverbal communication, fitting their lines of action together into joint delinquent behavior (Mead, 1934). This dynamic process of reciprocal role-taking where one person initiates action, and another person takes the role of the other and responds, then the first person reacts to the response, builds the transaction. Once the jointly developed goal is reached, a new goal is initiated or the transaction fades.

Developmental theories (Harris, 1998; Moffitt, 1993; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1998) distinguish between delinquents who show aggression in their families from an early age and those who show normal early development, but take to delinquent activity in adolescence. According to Harris (1998), untangling the causes of delinquency requires an understanding of the culture, the age and peer group within the culture, and the individual. Furthermore, Harris (1995, 1998) has argued that it is the neighborhood or peers who influence teen delinquency rather than family factors. It is recognized that aggressive young people who are attracted to excitement and danger find others like themselves for peer affiliation and support in these activities (Harris, 1998).

Developmental researchers using the life-course perspective on delinquency (Moffitt, 1993; Patterson et al., 1998) have suggested that trajectories, pathways and transitions are important and that theories of crime should incorporate a life-course view. Moffitt (1993) suggested that two groups make up the delinquent population, namely life-course persistent offenders and adolescent-limited offenders. Life-course persistent offenders show an early onset of antisocial behaviors and perseverance of these behaviors over the life course. Difficulties in early temperament (Caspi, Henry, McGee, Moffitt, & Silva 1995) and impulse control in situations that contain strong motivational inducements (White, Moffitt, Caspi, Bartusch, Needles, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1994) have been strongly associated with externalizing behaviors and

delinquency in pre-adolescence and adolescence. Recent personality research has also shown that impulsivity, poor self-control, opportunism, and sensation seeking are strong predictors of delinquency, with excitement seeking (a facet of extraversion), being related to vandalism and theft in adolescents (Heaven, 1996). Childhood onset of delinquent behavior tends to be associated with severe and chronic delinquency that persists into adulthood (Weiner, 1992). Conversely, adolescent-limited offenders engage in delinquent behaviors only during adolescence, and offending develops as a result of social mimicry and peer influence (Fergusson, Horwood, & Nagin, 2000). Generally adolescent-onset of delinquent behavior is likely to be associated with transient and trivial types of misconduct (Weiner, 1992).

Patterson et al. (1989, 1992, 1997) developed an account of early and late onset delinquency. They proposed that early-onset delinquency is mainly shaped by a series of family processes through which children learn that coercive and antisocial behaviors have an adaptive value. This pattern of early learning leads to a longer-term predisposition to antisocial behaviors that persist over the person's life course. For those individuals, however, who show late (after 14 years) onset offending, marked family difficulties are absent while affiliations with delinquent peers act to encourage, reward, and sustain tendencies to antisocial behaviors (Fergusson et al., 2000).

The delinquency research to date tells us much about the developmental psychopathology of antisocial behavior and also individual differences that contribute to delinquent behavior. Few of the theories, however, address the motivational determinants for involvement in crime (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Self-presentation theory (Baumeister, Hutton, & Tice, 1989; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker & Weigold, 1990; Tice, 1992) incorporates this idea and proposes that individuals are the architects of their own presentations. That is, the presence of others activates a need to present a desired self-image to others (Geen, 1995; Goffman, 1959;

Trower, Gilbert, & Sherling, 1990). The degree to which people are motivated to regulate impressions of themselves to others varies greatly across situations and depends on people's goals (Leary, 1993; Rhodewald, 1998). The relevance of self-presentation theory to delinquency research is apparent in that self-esteem, self-consciousness, and self-monitoring have been found to have importance with regard to behavior (Doherty & Schlenker, 1991; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Tice, 1992). Moreover, people habitually use different self-presentation strategies with different audiences, relying on favorable self-enhancement with strangers but shifting towards modesty when among friends (Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995). Self-presentation theorists have emphasized the power of public behavior in committing individuals to a consistent future course of action (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980). According to Goffman (1959), the goal of all public action is self-presentation. Actions are managed in an attempt to induce others to credit us with particular qualities of character. The idea of reputation enhancement extends Goffman (1959) by taking into account the likely nature of the audience (Emler & Reicher, 1995).

The extensive research conducted by the present authors (drawn from the earlier literature) has led to the development of a theoretical model that provides powerful evidence that many young persons become involved in delinquency to meet personal autonomy goals and to enhance their reputations with peers. The purpose of the present review is to describe this theoretical model which is entitled "Reputation Enhancing Goals" (REG). The model provides an alternative analysis of delinquency using a social-psychological approach by integrating elements of reputation enhancement theory and goal setting theory. Reputation enhancement theory (see Emler, 1984; Emler & Reicher, 1995) posits that individuals choose a particular self-image they wish to promote before an audience of their peers, and this audience then provides feedback so that the adolescent develops and maintains this social identity within a community.

Although Emler and Reicher (1995) proposed that delinquency was motivated by social goals and purposeful reputation enhancing strategies, their account of the nature of these goals and the relationships between goals and behavioral choices remains to be detailed. How do delinquents formulate their goals? Are they aware of them, and do they monitor their performance in relation to them? Do they adjust their behavior as some goals are met? Goal setting has of course been studied extensively in respect of other areas of human behavior, such as educational and career attainment. In this article, we apply one of the most productive theories of goal setting, namely that of Locke and Latham, to the study of delinquents' motivation. Goal setting theory (see Locke & Latham, 1990) assumes that conscious goals regulate human actions and influence performance levels.

In our review, we first present an overview of the REG model based on the established theories of reputation enhancement and goal setting. We then separately review these two theories before elaborating on our integrated theoretical model which argues that adolescents who become delinquent deliberately choose nonconforming social goals on which to base their reputations.

The Reputation Enhancing Goals (REG) Model: An Overview

The integrated model (shown in Figure 1) is based on the premise that adolescents experience and have access to many resources and opportunities, that can influence the types of goals they choose. For example, these resources include socioeconomic status, age, family, ethnicity, and gender. The two major types of goals are based on academic and/or social goals, and the social goals can be further divided into: conforming or nonconforming social goals. The choice of these academic, conforming social, and/or nonconforming social goals is critical in the orientation, development, and management of adolescents' peer reputations. These reputations are

publicly displayed and maintained, deliberately chosen and promoted, and are more likely to be long- than short-term oriented. Whereas goals can be defined as a generic concept encompassing the essential meanings of such terms as intention, task, purpose, aim, and objective, reputations are different from goals in that they can be conceived of as the outcome of goals which have been set by individuals and achieved, in most cases, through high levels of commitment. Adolescents regulate their self-identity and self-presentation in ways such that others will perceive them in a certain desired manner. Adolescents who choose nonconforming social goals on which to base their reputations are those most likely to become delinquents.

Insert Figure 1 about here

A powerful influence that informs both goal choice and peer reputation is the feedback received from peers. The degree of feedback about goals and reputations provides evidence to adolescents that their reputations are being recognized. The peer audience is extremely influential because friends often generate and facilitate expressions of shared behavioral inclinations (Emler, 1984; Emler & Reicher, 1995). Like their nondelinquent peers, delinquent adolescents have much commitment to build publicly and maintain a reputation. Following the findings in the management research (Locke & Latham, 1990), we argue that the more specific the goals then the higher the probability of feedback, and thus many delinquents choose to build and maintain their reputation by selecting and accomplishing very specific and challenging goals (which for reasons elaborated below happen to be nonconforming).

Some adolescents are vulnerable to delinquency but have not yet acquired the status of delinquent. These at-risk adolescents are distinguishable from delinquents in that they are in an intermediate transitional state whereby high levels of commitment to

age-related developmental goals are diminishing, and the setting of and commitment to alternative goals (i.e., delinquency goals) are becoming more attractive to them.

Irrespective of whether individuals are delinquent or at-risk of becoming delinquent, they set goals to achieve a particular reputation. As is evident from this introductory overview, the REG model integrates reputation enhancement theory and goal setting theory to explain the motivational and social determinants of delinquent behavior. We will now provide a detailed account of these theories prior to presenting the research evidence in support of the integrated model.

Reputation Enhancement Theory

According to reputation enhancement theory, delinquency is viewed as self-presentation that establishes a nonpathological and rational social identity (see Emler & Reicher, 1995 for a full description). Reputation enhancement theory posits that individuals carefully choose the image or social identity they wish to present and promote in their community, going to great lengths both to develop and maintain this image (Emler, 1984). Reputations, therefore, are not just the impressions that individuals hold of themselves, but rather collective phenomena and products of social processes (Emler, 1990). In order to have a reputation, people must be connected to others in a relatively stable community of mutually acquainted and conversing individuals (Hopkins & Emler, 1990).

In order to persuade others that they belong to a particular social category, individuals communicate their social identities through intentional, visible behavior (Emler, 1990). An integral argument of reputation enhancement theory is that individuals have public reputations; this is the social goal of their conduct (Emler, 1990). Social visibility can occur in a number of ways: by directly witnessing the acts of others, by gossip and exchange of information about the activities of others, and by

self-disclosure either in conversations, or in self-report measures (Emler, 1984). That is, according to Emler (1984), individuals are both students of reputations and promoters of their own reputations. This promotion is important because of the credit it attributes to individuals within their social community (Emler, 1990). It is this credit that strongly influences individuals' abilities to attain goals and secure material benefits. As a consequence, Emler (1990) claimed that it is necessary to establish and maintain a certain reputation as this serves to either promote or constrain social interactions with peers and affects one's ability to achieve goals.

Individuals generally choose to be defined in terms of one specific kind of social identity rather than another (Emler, 1984). For example, adolescents may wish to define themselves as law-abiding, as athletic, as an academic, or as a delinquent. The choice to base reputations on both academic and social endeavors can be culturally influenced. Steele (1992; Steele & Aronson, 1995), for example, has argued that whenever African American students perform an explicitly scholastic or intellectual task, they face the threat of being judged by a negative societal stereotype about their group's intellectual ability and competence. Such a reputation influences the academic functioning of these students, particularly during standardized testing. Steele claimed that this reputation "may have the further effect of pressuring these students to protectively disidentify with achievement in school" (p. 797), such that school achievement is neither a basis of self-evaluation nor a personal identity. Steele suggested various effects of this cultural reputation (such as spending more time answering fewer test items) that can reinforce the reputation. As performance falters because of the reputation, and as the reputation frames that faltering as a sign of a group-based inferiority, the individual's expectation about his or her ability and performance drops. This cycle then undermines motivation, effort, and self-efficacy (see also Osborne, 1995, 1997; Osborne, Major, & Crocker,

1992; Hansford & Hattie, 1982). Osborne (1997) demonstrated that this negative academic reputation is particularly powerful among African American males.

Involvement in delinquency is a prime example of where social visibility is acquired through the presence of a regular audience who provide feedback (e.g., Becker, 1963; Emler, 1983, 1984, 1990; Goffman, 1972; Gold & Petronio, 1980; West & Farrington, 1977). To claim a delinquent identity, adolescents must be seen to break rules and regulations (Hopkins & Emler, 1990); that is, become deliberately nonconforming. Public proof of character is provided when delinquents accept risks and keep their composure in the face of dangerous, challenging, and daring feats (Goffman, 1972). A delinquent identity requires an audience that shares a subculture (Gold & Petronio, 1980), and an important source of visibility is that delinquent activities are not committed alone but in company (Reicher & Emler, 1986).

A delinquent or nondelinquent reputation is hard to sustain without the social support of a peer group (Reicher & Emler, 1986), although the nondelinquent often has other social support and feedback from families and teachers (Hopkins & Emler, 1990). Delinquents often do not use parents or teachers to sustain their reputations, and thus they seek alternative audiences such as peers (Emler, 1984; Farrington & West, 1990; Junger-Tas, 1992).

A reputation for bad behavior is a deliberate choice by adolescents because delinquent action is not only a means of creating a certain (tough) reputation amongst outsiders, but it also provides the condition for group membership (see Emler & Reicher, 1995 for a review). Research by Reicher and Emler (1986) concluded that chronic rule breakers do not miscalculate the visibility of their conduct or the damage it will do to their reputations; to the contrary, they foster this reputation. Similar conclusions are prompted by several studies of delinquents (e.g., Campbell, 1993; Carroll, 1994; Goldstein, 1994; Lagree & Fai, 1989), and of youths engaging in other

problem behaviors such as substance abuse (Houghton & Carroll, 1996; Houghton, Odgers, & Carroll, 1998; Odgers, Houghton, & Douglas, 1996). These studies have found that young people who are at risk profess that they actively seek events and situations in which they can initiate highly visible problem behaviors (such as conflict with teachers, aggression, damage to property, dangerous use of drugs) and thereby gain or consolidate peer status.

According to reputation enhancement theory the steep rise in delinquency for many at the onset of adolescence and gradual decline at early adulthood occurs because individuals move beyond the supervision and protection of their home, from small to big schools, and from parent to peer relationships (Emler, 1984). The increased and routine contact with like-minded peers during the high school years provides the necessary audience by which to enhance a reputation. According to Reicher and Emler (1986), in early to mid-adolescence, delinquents are extremely active and employ many positive strategies of offending to achieve status and enhance their reputations, whereas in late adolescence, offending is seen more as maintaining credit or status within the group. In fact, individuals' places in the group are never stable because they are either being sought after by others in the group or else continuously in the process of being reconfirmed (Reicher & Emler, 1986). Males admit to a greater number of delinquent acts and have a more negative attitude to authority, in turn affecting choice of reputation for males and females (Reicher & Emler, 1986).

In sum, according to reputation enhancement theory, the enhancement and maintenance of a reputation is vital to all adolescents. The visibility of actions to others are key elements on which reputation is built. Equally important is the audience to whom actions are visible, as well as the perceptions and descriptions of selves and others which foster self-image. Delinquency is a deliberate choice of identity for some adolescents because it is a criterion for group membership, a means to impress peers

and gain their approval (Agnew, 1991), and it is a strategy of self-protection and redress for the individual and for the group (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Delinquency provides a self-concept that can be challenging to maintain, involves self-enhancement, and provides self-verification.

Goal Setting Theory

Much of human behavior is goal-directed (Ford, 1992; Lewin, 1952; Locke, 1991). Social-cognitive theories of goal setting (Ames, 1992; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Locke, 1991; Nicholls, 1989) agree that individuals set or respond to goals with reference to their self-perceptions ('How good am I at this?'), values ('Is it important to me to achieve in this activity?'), and social contexts ('What will significant others think of my performance in this activity?').

Most educationalists and developmentalists concur that adolescence is a crucial period for the formulation of personal goals. Important processes of identity formation, decisions about educational opportunities, the consolidation of developing social values, and the construction of plans for one's future are all very salient during this phase of life, and directions taken here have long-term implications (Durkin, 1995; Hechinger, 1992; Henderson & Dweck, 1990; Nurmi, 1991a; Offer, Ostrov, Howard, & Atkinson, 1990). During this crucial phase of educational and personal development, however, there are considerable individual differences in the clarity of young people's goals and the importance they attach to them. There are also mismatches between institutional and individual goals.

While some young people embrace goals congruent with those of the school, others appear to reject or devalue them, and sometimes appear to have only diffuse, vague, or unchallenging goals. Delinquents have often been portrayed as being limited in their goals and as lacking a sense of direction (Kerr & Nelson, 1989; Thilagaraj,

1984). These accounts, however, tend to appraise young people's goals from the perspective of the educational system itself or, more generally, from the standpoint of mainstream, middle-class values. We maintain that delinquents are highly goal oriented and that this orientation is clearly demonstrated in their strong commitment to establish a particular reputation. While studies of goal setting have been prolific, almost all of these studies have been conducted in the field of management (Locke & Latham, 1984, 1990).

Goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1984, 1990), based on the proposition that conscious goals regulate human behavior, provides a linkage between adolescents' reputations and goals. In this article, we examine a number of the key elements of goal theory (goal difficulty or challenge, goal commitment, goal feedback, goal type,) which have been shown to be important to adolescent's goal directed behavior (Carroll, 1994; Carroll, Durkin, Hattie, & Houghton, 1997). Furthermore, the challenge that these goals present to individuals and the composition of the audience who witness the individual's actions in the pursuit of these goals, are key influences in fostering the types of reputations an individual strives to establish and subsequently maintain.

Goal Difficulty or Challenge

There is a linear relationship between the degree of goal difficulty and performance, with performance levels increasing as the goal becomes more challenging (Locke & Latham, 1990). More challenging goals lead to greater performance as individuals are thought to be more motivated and prepared to try harder to attain the goal. Locke and Latham (1990) report summaries of five meta-analyses comparing the effects of specific, hard goals versus "do your best" goals, or no assigned goals. The number of studies involved ranged from 17 to 53 with sample sizes ranging from 1278 to 6635 (Chidester & Grigsby, 1984; Hunter & Schmidt, 1983; Mento, Stell, & Karren,

1987; Tubbs, 1986; Wood, Mento, & Locke, 1987). The minimum effect size was .42 and the maximum effect size was .80.

The reason that specific, hard goals result in higher performance than "do your best" or vague goals is related to the ambiguity inherent in vague goals. This ambiguity allows individuals to justify to themselves that they have tried hard enough at a point that falls lower than the performance level of someone who is trying for a specific and challenging goal (Locke & Latham, 1990). Specific goals contain more information and serve as a clearer focus for behavior, for seeking and receiving feedback, and they provide a measure by which to evaluate performance. This evaluation process allows individuals to change strategies if satisfactory progress towards a goal is not being obtained (Locke & Latham, 1990). For delinquents, specific difficult goals provide extra challenges and risks that will assist them to further enhance and/or maintain their reputations and hence continue to build their identity.

Goal Commitment

Goal commitment refers to one's attachment or determination to reach a goal and has direct impact on goal performance; the more commitment to a goal, the better the performance. Studies have consistently shown that specific, challenging goals lead to high performance, particularly when individuals are committed to them (Locke & Latham, 1984, 1990). Goal commitment is affected by several factors, for example, authority figures, peers, peer pressure, role models, valence, publicness of the goals, and ego involvement (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Earley & Kanfer, 1985; Hollenbeck, Williams, & Klein, 1989; Latham & Lee, 1986; Locke & Latham, 1984; Salancik, 1977; Wright, George, Farnsworth, & McMahon, 1993). Peers influence goal commitment through pressure, modeling, and competition (Earley & Kanfer, 1985) and public commitment to goals has a greater effect than private commitment (Hayes, Rosenfarb, Wulfert, Munt, Korn, & Zettle, 1985; Hollenbeck et al., 1989; Salancik, 1977). Levels

of goal commitment of delinquent adolescents are influenced by peer pressure because association with like-minded peers translates inclination (goal setting) into action (goal performance) (Emler, Reicher, & Ross, 1987).

Goal Feedback

A further critical moderator of goal setting theory is feedback. Feedback can be defined as actions taken by others to provide information regarding aspects of the adolescent's performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). Information concerning feedback, which has been considered as social cognitions (Bandura, 1991), is a critical aspect of control theory and multiple-cue probability theories (Balzer, Doherty, & O'Connor, 1989). Under control theory, when there is a discrepancy between performance and goals, it is hypothesised that individuals are motivated to reduce the discrepancy by changing behavior which changes future feedback and thus reduces or eliminates the discrepancy. In contrast, under goal theory, the aim is to eliminate the discrepancy and maintain or enhance the goals. Most important is that there appears to be various options available: the adolescent can repeat the task and thus eliminate the discrepancy, reject the feedback, or abandon commitment to the goal. When individuals reach the goal, they can aim to maintain the standard for the performance or raise the standards.

Feedback can also lead to increased attention to the task, more effort to attain the goal, rejection of the feedback message, and attention to the self. Leary and Downs (1993) proposed that others' reactions exert such a strong influence on self-esteem because "the self-esteem system itself is a subjective monitor or gauge of the degree to which the individual is being included and accepted versus excluded and rejected by other people" (Leary, Haupt, Strausser, & Chokel, 1998, p.1290).

Goal Type or Content

The content of goals varies qualitatively (such as when people have career goals, educational goals, personal goals, or sporting goals), and quantitatively, for example,

when individuals have either a single goal or multiple goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). A range of related studies have identified a diversity of interests, activities, relationships, and images which are important to adolescents and which are concerned with future developmental tasks (e.g., Goldsmith, Throfast, & Nilsson, 1989; Nurmi, 1989a, 1991a; Wentzel, 1989). Specifically, various educational and career goals have been identified in previous research as focal for many young people (Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985; Nurmi, 1989a, 1991a, Wentzel, 1989). Interpersonal, reputation, and self-presentation concerns have also been found prominent among adolescents' goals (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Goldsmith et al., 1989; Hoge, Andrews, & Leschied, 1996; Hopkins & Emler, 1990; Nicholls et al., 1985). Other goal contents include freedom/autonomy goals (Goudas, Biddle, & Fox, 1994; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; "to get my own way", "to be able to do whatever I want"), and physical goals (Duda, 1989; Duda & Nicholls, 1992; Goudas et al., 1994; "to be a member of a sports team", "to be good at sport").

Some young people have goals relating to illegal activities (e.g., "to break the rules/law"; "to have money for drugs"; Carroll, 1995; Goldsmith et al., 1989; Hoge, Andrews, & Leschied, 1994; Houghton & Carroll, 1996). As discussed earlier, involvement in delinquency can be considered as self-presentation in which a message of defiance is conveyed to, and consequently rewarded by delinquent peers (Blackburn, 1993; Emler, 1983, 1984). For some individuals, breaking the rules or the law appears attractive and motivating, while for others, delinquent behaviors are necessary or convenient as means of attaining other ends: for example, stealing provides the funds to meet material desires (Carroll, 1995).

Differences in the types of goals of high achieving young people and those of their low achieving, problem behavior, and delinquent peers have been identified in previous research (Goldsmith, et al., 1989; Salmela-Aro, Nurmi, & Kinnunen, 1991;

Wentzel, 1989). Even so, little is known about the importance that different groups of young people (e.g., delinquent, at-risk, not at-risk) attach to their goals. Since the realization of personal goals is important to the kinds of reputations that individuals wish to achieve, the content of adolescents' goals is extremely important to uncover and investigate.

As individuals progress through adolescence into late adolescence and early adulthood, the nature of the challenges and goal content change. Late adolescents begin to consider future educational, occupational, family, and property-related issues. Young adults expect to finish their education, get a job, get married, and acquire materials for later life (Nurmi, 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1991a, 1991b, Nurmi & Pulliainen, 1991; Salmela-Aro et al., 1991). It is not surprising then, that there is a decline in delinquency as adolescents reach the age of 18 years. Boyfriends or girlfriends, more so than groups, become important audiences in the lives of young adults and influence decisions in terms of personal goals and subsequently reputational choices. The stages of reputation enhancement (Reicher & Emler, 1986) can be seen to be influenced by changes in adolescents' goals as they grow older and this will be discussed further below.

The Importance of a Peer Audience to Goal Setting

Recent theory and research points to the possibility that the goals which adolescents set are motivated by the desire to present the self to the peer community in a particular way (Agnew, 1991; Emler & Reicher, 1995; Hoge et al., 1996). Emler (1984) argues that a peer audience is extremely important to adolescent goal setting because companions, whether in crime or conformity, often generate and facilitate shared expressions of interest. Researchers have found that young people who are at risk profess that they seek actively, events and situations in which they can initiate highly visible problem behaviors (such as conflict with teachers, aggression, damage to property, dangerous use of drugs) and thereby gain or consolidate peer status. The peer

audience is an important component in the formation and enhancement of a reputation as qualitative judgements about the individual's behavior influences subsequent behavior, and hence reinforces or leads to modification of the desired self-image.

In summary, according to goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) when individuals set specific, challenging goals, rather than vague goals, the outcome is higher performance levels. The level of commitment individuals have to their goals also has a direct, positive effect on performance. Feedback, particularly from peers and authority figures, is a critical element in goal setting, as it is used to evaluate performance relative to individuals' goals. The choice and content of goals varies among groups of individuals according to their interests, activities, relationships, and images. Finally, the presence of a peer audience is paramount in helping the individual to achieve their goals; this then translates into the attainment of the desired reputation.

Reputation Enhancing Goals – Research Evidence for the Integrated Model

The REG model integrates elements of reputation enhancement theory and goal setting theory to understand the motivational and social determinants of delinquent behavior. This integrated model proposes that many adolescents deliberately choose delinquency in order to pursue a delinquent reputation as an alternative identity. Adolescents base their reputations on academic, conforming social, and/or nonconforming social goals which often relates to the resources and opportunities that they have experienced or to which they have access. Peers who comprise the immediate audience provide essential feedback, which not only confirms the individual's choice of his/her own self-image, but also emphasizes to the individual the importance of visibility of actions. By making actions public, individuals commit themselves to achieving a certain reputation among peers. Inextricably linked to commitment is the degree of difficulty associated with the task in hand which in turn influences the reputation an individual acquires. For example, Carroll (1995) in a study of delinquents

demonstrated that with car theft, youths admit to first being the look-out when their mates are stealing cars, then actually starting the stolen car and driving it, followed by baiting and out-racing police in high speed chases, and then having police chase them while their peers ram the back of the chasing police car. Over time, the degree of difficulty of the task is raised, making the task more challenging, and thus providing very visible goals on which to enhance their reputations among their peers.

In the following discussion, each element of the proposed model will be examined, namely the importance of peer audience, challenge, commitment, and feedback. Relevant findings will be highlighted to substantiate the inclusion of elements within the model. The findings from many studies have demonstrated that adolescents are well aware of the negative consequences of specific delinquent behaviors and that they deliberately set goals related to participation in such behaviors to establish and maintain nonconforming social reputations (Carroll, 1994; Carroll et al., 1997; Carroll, Durkin, Houghton, & Hattie, 1996; Carroll, Houghton, Hattie, & Durkin, 1999).

A growing body of qualitative and quantitative research now exists on the importance of reputations to adolescents and how reputations are actually chosen. Carroll, Houghton, et al. (1999) developed a Reputation Enhancement Scale to establish whether individuals at different levels of risk for delinquency would have different orientations towards aspects of peer reputation. This study consisted of 260 participants: 80 incarcerated delinquent, 90 at-risk, and 90 nondelinquent adolescent males ranging in age from 12 to 18 years who completed the Reputation Enhancement Scale. Three second-order factors (Conforming Reputation, Non-conforming Reputation, Self-presentation) were derived from 15 first-order factors. Significant differences were found between the reputational orientations of delinquent, at-risk, and nondelinquent participants, while the self-presentation second-order factor did not differentiate the three groups.

Members of the delinquent and at-risk groups saw themselves as nonconforming (e.g., one who breaks rules) and wanted to be perceived by others in this way (e.g., getting into trouble with the police, doing things against the law). They also admired law-breaking activities (e.g., drug dealing, stealing). For the incarcerated delinquents, participation in car theft, police encounters, using drugs, fighting, and the resultant notoriety helped establish their status in peer groups. The adolescents who are at-risk seek to attain a nonconforming reputation within the school setting. This is supported by qualitative in-depth interviews (Houghton & Carroll, 1996) that adolescents at-risk utilize teacher behavior management strategies (e.g., reprimands, names on board) and school-based management systems (e.g., time out, detention, suspension) to enhance their reputations amongst peers. Conversely, members of the nondelinquent group saw themselves as conforming and wanted to be perceived by others in this way (e.g., a good person, trustworthy, getting along well with others). This particular group develop public reputations through friendship and loyalty to their peers, support from their family, and obedience to the rules of society.

An important qualification concerns the self-presentation second-order factor which did not differentiate among incarcerated delinquent, at-risk, and nondelinquent adolescents. There are certain archetypal masculine attributes such as being tough, a leader, good looking, powerful, and popular to which most young males appear to aspire, irrespective of their delinquency status. Although these attributes are in common, the way in which they are expressed differ for different types of adolescents. For example, a powerful nondelinquent may manifest his strength on the sports field, on a debating team, or as a school prefect whereas his delinquent peer may assert his power in the streets or the subway.

In examining the reputations of adolescents, what is apparent is that adolescents choose to stake their reputations generally around two themes: an Academic Image and

a Social Image. This was further explored by examining the content of adolescent goals. A series of studies conducted by Carroll et al. (1997), compared and examined the goal orientations of delinquent, at-risk, and not at-risk adolescents. A hierarchical model of goals was developed whereby goals related to a Social and Academic Image tended to explain most of the goals aimed for by adolescents. That is, differences do exist amongst groups of adolescents in the level of importance attached to various types of goals associated with an Academic Image (educational, interpersonal goals) compared to the level of importance associated with a Social Image (delinquency, freedom/autonomy goals). Furthermore, the level of importance which adolescents attach to various types of goals in some way assists them in attaining a particular reputation. Not at-risk adolescents, who wish to attain a more Academic Image, attached greater importance to education and interpersonal goals in particular. That is, not at-risk adolescents attached importance to goals associated with knowledge, study skills, schooling, and maintaining good relationships. In contrast, at-risk and delinquent adolescents attached greater importance to delinquency and freedom/autonomy goals, goals associated with law-breaking activities, exemption from adult control, and independence. These goals are more related to attaining a Social Image. Carroll et al's. (1997) findings indicate that at-risk adolescents as young as 12 years are attaching high levels of importance to goals related to delinquency and freedom/autonomy, and lower levels of importance to goals related to education.

There are two major influences that lead to adolescents choosing goals related to an academic image, namely, family influences and self-efficacy. Family influences were found to be important for choice of educational goals in investigations into the quality of family interaction of male and female adolescents (Nurmi, 1987; Nurmi & Pulliainen, 1991). Adolescents aged 10 to 11, 14 to 15, and 17 to 19 years, described their family climate in a positive manner and had more educational plans than those

who described their family climate in a negative manner. A negative family climate was found to be negatively related to adolescents' planning for the future, indicating that family support is important for the realization of adolescent goals (Nurmi, 1987). Furthermore, the more intelligent the adolescents, and the higher their self-esteem, the more they were interested in their future education (Nurmi & Pulliainen, 1991). Those who reported a high level of family discussion, more frequently expressed hopes concerning future family and marriage compared to those reporting a low level of family discussion. Those adolescents who reported having high levels of imposed parental control, also expressed more interest in setting leisure goals and less interest in setting educational goals.

Judgement of one's efficacy in different domains is also shown to be a strong influence over human development and adaptation by shaping goals and levels of motivation in both social and task domains. In the academic domain, the self-efficacy beliefs that children have about their academic, social, and self-regulatory capabilities have been shown to predict aggressive, prosocial, and delinquent behaviors as well as academic achievements (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to behavior in schools through a range of paths. Children and adolescents who doubt their capacities for self-regulation or academic and social success at school, are more likely to lower their academic goals, and are more likely to engage in goal setting characterized by antisocial and problem behaviors (Bandura et al., 1996).

Given the lack of family influence and the self-efficacy beliefs held by some individuals, many adolescents stake their images or reputations on social goals. Of course, academic and social sets of goals are not mutually exclusive, and not all adolescents who do not value academic goals become delinquents. Nevertheless, there are two alternative propositions concerning consequences that may be applied to

delinquents. First, these individuals may fail to achieve their academic goals and thus become dissatisfied, resulting in job avoidance, drug abuse, and/or aggression. Second, these individuals may not desire to achieve academic or community accepted social goals, but set alternative goals and challenges for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a specific delinquent reputation. These individuals use a similar system to achieve goals and satisfaction, and to accept new future challenges. The integrated model developed by Carroll and colleagues supports the latter proposition and a growing body of evidence (see Emler & Reicher, 1995; Goldsmith et al., 1989; Schlenker, Britt, & Pennington, 1996; Tice & Baumeister, 1990; Wentzel, 1989) exists to support the notion that the social goal of a delinquent adolescent is to have a nonconforming social reputation.

For example, Wentzel (1989) found that high achieving and low achieving students did not pursue the same goals in the classroom. The goal setting patterns of high achieving students were similar to those of the educational institutions and were concerned with pursuing social responsibility and learning goals. In contrast, low achieving students placed priority on goals of the social interaction type that were more likely to be attainable for them and that were not congruent with the goals of the academic institutions. Findings by Goldsmith et al. (1989) supported the hypothesis that giving a high priority to moral and self-esteem goals is associated with a tendency to abstain from delinquent acts, and that a high priority to group loyalty and pleasure and freedom goals is associated with a tendency to participate in delinquent acts.

Importance of Audience, Challenge, Commitment, and Feedback

Individuals choose reputational goals based on what they think they can achieve, what they would like to achieve, and what they can achieve in the presence of a peer audience. High self-efficacy and expectancy are necessary because they affect the

challenge of goals, levels of goal commitment, and individuals' responses to feedback concerning their progress (Wood & Bandura, 1989).

Support for the importance of an audience and feedback as crucial moderators of goals and reputations was provided by Carroll (1995) in studies conducted to develop and test the proposed integrated model. Incarcerated adolescents were interviewed at length concerning their goals and reputations. Not only was the presence of peers important to delinquent action but the feedback provided by peers was vital to delinquents' acceptance as members of the group. A hierarchical structure exists within the delinquent population in which individuals have to commit crime, many of which are committed in public, and also be competent at committing crime to be accepted into a group. Experience in crime is pertinent to goal difficulty, and the goals of delinquents become more challenging as they progress upwards in the hierarchical structure of the delinquent population.

In testing the integrated model, Carroll (1995) established that delinquents set specific and challenging goals, to which they have commitment, to achieve their desired outcomes and consequently accept future challenges. Furthermore, delinquents set these goals for immediate gratification of resources and materials, which they are unable to obtain through law-abiding means. Delinquents set goals which are achievable, and as they become proficient at tasks, they set more challenging goals. Achievement of goals is on an immediate and spontaneous basis, as delinquents respond instantly and almost impulsively to their wants or needs. There is commitment to the goals that delinquents set and they report trying the same task in many locations until accomplished (Carroll, 1995).

The Role of Individuals' Resources in the Management of Reputations

On reaching adolescence, individuals have had differential experiences and opportunities and vary in the natural resources they possess. These opportunities and

resources often play a critical role in determining whether reputations are based on academic, conforming and/or nonconforming social goals. For example, in examining the influence of age on the choice of goals and reputations, Carroll, Baglioni, Houghton, and Bramston (1999) replicated early studies conducted by Carroll et al. (1997) and Carroll, Houghton, et al., (1999) with at-risk and not at-risk primary school-aged children. While findings indicated that two second-order factors existed (Social and Academic Image), any distinction between at-risk and not at-risk children was related mainly to the Academic Image, with very few of the reputational and self-presentation (i.e., Social Image) variables being significantly different between the two groups. This supports the hypothesis by researchers (e.g., Emler, 1984; Hopkins & Emler, 1990) that reputation and social status development tends to occur around early adolescence which coincides with the onset of secondary school education. It is possible, therefore, that Social Image variables while not significant at this primary school age are gaining importance and that this is subsequently reflected during early adolescence.

With reference to gender, qualitative research has established that males and females engage in different behaviors in order to enhance their reputations and that the consequences of certain activities are interpreted differently by peers (Martin, O'Donoghue, & Houghton, 1998). Female adolescents were found to be more covert in their delinquent behavior, compared to boys, and could identify a point in their behavior beyond which they would not transgress. Smith (1997) examined the relationship between social bonds, reputation enhancement, and delinquent involvement providing evidence that the strongest and most consistent predictor of girls' delinquent involvement is self-perception (i.e., the extent to which girls think their friends view them as having a nonconforming reputation), followed by bonding to peers. Overall, girls' perception of their reputation in combination with social bonds provides the most powerful explanation of girls' delinquent involvement (Smith, 1997). It would appear

that girls' bonds to others and institutions may be important insofar as they allow for or create a social context in which a particular social identity and reputation are developed.

Associated Regulating Factors in the Management of Reputations

As with their more conforming peers, delinquents use various processes of self-regulation to maintain their reputations (e.g., self-concept, social skills, moral reasoning, future time perspective). Given the proposed, integrated model of delinquency that involves adolescents seeking specific, challenging goals to which they are committed, it is expected that delinquent and nondelinquent adolescents will vary in their interpersonal or social skills, future time perspectives, moral insight (with respect to their goals), and self-esteem. It is thus not necessary to assume that delinquents are deficient in these attributes. Ample research exists demonstrating that the most successful delinquents often have adequate levels of proficiency on these attributes (see Bandura, 1986, 1991; Emler & Hopkins, 1990; Goldsmith et al., 1989; Henderson & Hollin, 1986; Lösel, 1975; Trommsdorf & Lamm, 1980; Ziemann & Benson, 1983). In the research conducted to date, the variable of reputation has been found to be one of the most significant factors in why adolescents indulge in at-risk and delinquent behaviors (Carroll, 1994, 1995; Carroll, Baglioni, et al., 1999; Carroll, Houghton, et al., 1999; Carroll, Houghton, & Baglioni, 2000; Houghton & Carroll, 1996; Odgers et al., 1996).

To summarize, the REG model has been presented and empirical evidence has been provided to substantiate the integration of the two theories on which this model is based. According to the REG model, many adolescents pursue a particular kind of reputation, for some this is nonconforming, while for others it is conforming. The goals which individuals set themselves and the manner in which they engage in behaviors (public or private) to attain these goals allows them to develop a reputation valued by themselves and others. For some individuals, a delinquent reputation is a desired

alternative identity for which they have high levels of commitment and which is moderated by the feedback they receive from peers who more often than not comprise the immediate audience.

Implications for Practice

The integrated model proposed has been applied to different populations (at-risk and not at-risk primary and high school students, and incarcerated adolescents) in a variety of contexts including schools (Carroll, Baglioni, et al., 1999; Carroll et al., 2000; Houghton & Carroll, 1996), clinics and detention centers (Carroll, 1995; Carroll et al., 1997; Carroll, Houghton, et al., 1999), and wilderness programs (Houghton, Carroll, & Shier, 1996). These contexts within which adolescents operate provide important processes of identity formation, decisions about educational opportunities, the consolidation of developing social values, and the constructions of plans for one's future. Hence, they may indeed be a potential source for adolescents to develop their public delinquent reputations (Houghton & Carroll, 1996; Martin et al., 1998). For example, if adolescents are labeled as failures in school because of lack of commitment to, and poor performance toward their academic goals, then they may indeed perceive themselves as failures. They will have little reason to maintain or desire a conforming reputation, and subsequently will look for success elsewhere. The success is likely to be in the form of a competing reputation, a delinquent, nonconforming reputation, developed by highly visible actions, which is admired by like-minded others, and is developed by breaking rules, being noticed, and being reprimanded by authority figures. In this instance, delinquency is a relatively common alternative for adolescents, and schools especially provide the social settings and opportunities for the achievement of

alternative reputational goals, and for publicity and promotion of nonconforming reputations to occur.

School principals and staff therefore need to reflect on their current whole school discipline and classroom management programs that may provide the opportunity for adolescents to gain recognition for misbehavior thereby resulting in the adverse effect of enhancing nonconforming reputations rather than correcting the problem behaviors. Adolescents, by being disruptive in class, may achieve their goal of gaining a public audience to enhance their reputations.

Conclusions

Much is known of the contexts and correlates of delinquency. Yet the social psychological factors that underpin specific behavioral choices and sustain involvement in risk-taking and illegal activities have been relatively neglected. An important exception has been reputation enhancement theory (Emler, 1984; Emler & Reicher, 1995), which posits that delinquency is a deliberate choice, selected in order to achieve and maintain standing within a peer culture that values anti-establishment and tough behavior. It follows from this theory that delinquent adolescents should have goals - though these goals will in some respect be very different from those of their nondelinquent peers. Reputation enhancement theory alludes to these goals (e.g., Emler & Reicher, 1995), but has not elaborated on how they are formulated and how they develop in response to experience in illegal activity and peer feedback.

In this article, we have drawn upon goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) to propose an account of the salience of goals in the development of delinquent reputations. Goal setting theory holds that conscious goals regulate human behavior, and that individuals' progress towards meeting their goals depends on the specificity and commitment with which they address them, and the ways in which they respond to

feedback provided by the social environment. While most work in the goal setting tradition has been concerned with more conventional goals of educational or career attainment, we have argued that the same theoretical framework can be applied usefully to further our understanding of the goals of delinquent youths. Importantly, this claim departs from many traditional depictions of delinquents as goal-less and undirected.

Several examples from recent research support the thesis that delinquents do have goals, and that their goals regulate their behavior (Carroll, 1994; Carroll et al., 1997; Emler & Reicher, 1995; Goldsmith et al., 1989; Houghton et al., 1996; Wentzel, 1989). Evidence from young car thieves (Carroll, 1995) indicates that participants in this type of crime progress from relatively peripheral assistance (e.g., lookouts) during initial occasions to increasingly direct activity (e.g., breaking into vehicles) to extreme levels of commitment (e.g., multiple thefts, high speed races with the police). Analyses of the structure of nondelinquent, at-risk, and delinquent adolescents' reputation goals reveal reliable differentiating patterns. All of these groups value self-presentation, but they differ with respect to the kinds of reputation they value: in particular, nondelinquents are more likely to favor the goals of the school, while the other groups commit to nonconforming reputations (Carroll et al., 1997). At-risk and delinquent youths attach greater importance to delinquency and freedom/autonomy goals (Carroll, 1994; Carroll et al., 1997). Furthermore, individuals monitor the extent to which they meet their goals, and evaluate their progress and self-efficacy in the delinquent domain.

Regarding delinquent activity as purposeful and regulated may affront some lay perceptions, but may also offer a stronger basis for intervention and treatment. As we learn more about delinquents' goals and the ways in which these goals contribute to the organization of their behavior, we improve our understanding of the social psychological factors that need to be addressed if we are to redirect the activities of young people heading for criminal careers. A critical location - especially with regard to

preventative measures - will be the school, which we have suggested is the site within which many potential delinquents begin to discover the benefits of a nonconforming reputation.

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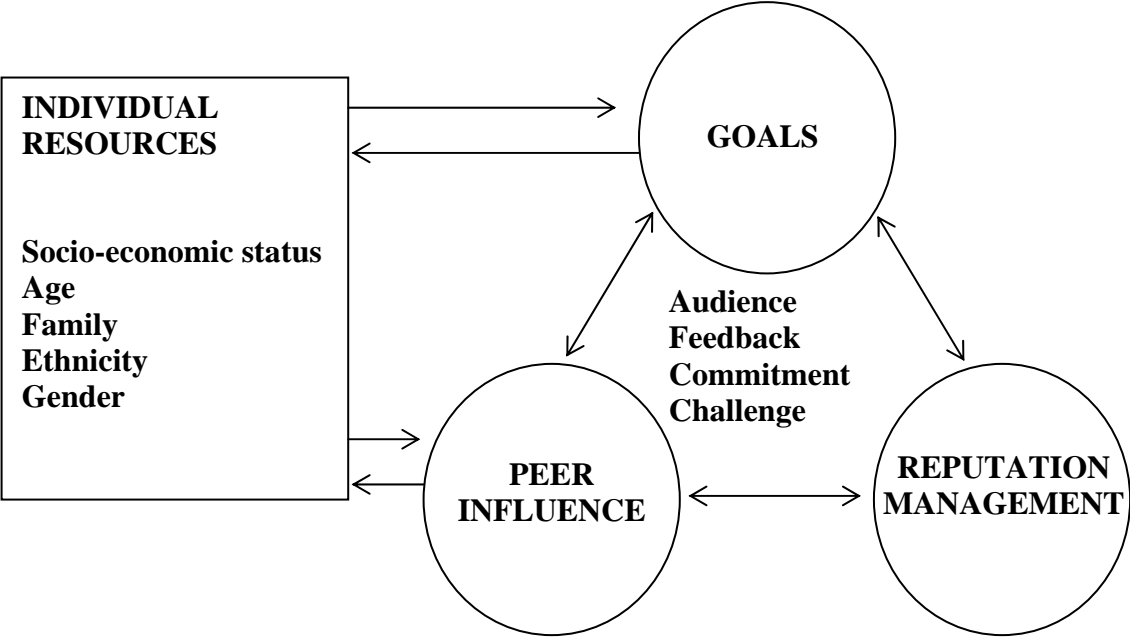


Figure 1. The integrated model of reputation enhancing goals.