Girls’ and boys’ pathways to norm-breaking behavior: A critical review of an old issue

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ABSTRACT
Historically, youths have always been engaged in norm-breaking behavior (NBB), with adolescents being the most criminal active group in society. The behavior, however, seems to differ in aspects of gender. This study investigates the pathways to NBB, emphasizing the influence of interpersonal relationships. The aim is also to examine what characterizes gender-specific treatment in literature, and furthermore to bring a critical feminist view on reviewed research results. The study is based on a literature review design to enable a whole picture of the topic. In the review different pathways to NBB is described, followed by the role of interpersonal relationships and characteristics of gender specific treatment. In essence, evidence seems to show that the pathway to NBB is a process where several different factors contribute jointly in shaping such behavior. However, interpersonal relationships seem to play an important role in influencing the behavior of the adolescent, though the influence appears to differ in aspects of gender due to the socialization process where girls and boys are brought up differently, which in turn is reflected in gender-specific treatment. Research indicates that treatment in general is based on stereotyped gender assumptions, which might be disadvantageous for both girls and boys.

Keywords: juvenile, gender theory, norm-breaking behavior, interpersonal relationships

Introduction
Throughout history, youths have always been engaged in norm-breaking activities (Ohlsson & Swärd 1994). Norm-breaking behavior (NBB) is rare in childhood, peaks in adolescence (Moffitt et al. 2001; Loeber et al. 1998), and recedes in adulthood (Moffitt 1993). Accordingly, statistics show that youths are the most criminally active group in society (Andershed & Andershed 2005:20; Sarnecki 1981:84). The empirical evidence presented in a body of research, mainly psychological, give several “truths” about this topic. However, there is reason to view this research in a theoretical and critical sense, to bring further knowledge as to what extent the stated empirical data also relates to complex structures in the society as whole.

The term NBB is a variegated definition ranging from delinquency to psychosocial
problems (Andershed & Andershed 2005:32f; Andreassen 2003:27f). The type of NBB adolescents engage in seems to differ in aspects of gender. Thus, girls are more depressed (Keenan & Shaw 1997), more engaged in prostitution, and have often experiences of sexual abuse (Chesney-Lind 2001; Covington 2000:177; Lane 2003; Pelissier & Jones 2005; Young & d’Arcy 2005), whereas boys tend to be more antisocial, characterized by criminality and violence (Andersson 1998:21; Ehrensaft 2005; Keenan & Shaw 1997; Moffitt et al. 2001:37).

The pathway to NBB is a complex process where several different factors interact. There has been great interest to study the development of NBBs in order to prevent the behavior to manifest itself in adulthood. The research focus has been on identifying risk factors as well as protective factors in the developmental process (Andershed & Andershed 2005:55; Andreassen 2003:27; Moffitt et al. 2001:6; Sundelin Wahlsten 1991:16f). One of the strongest predictors identified for future behavior problems is experiences of problematic and disruptive relationships in early childhood (Bowlby 1994; Andreassen 2003:30ff; Reis et al. 2000; Scheff 1997:73). Relationships with significant others are the constructor of values and expectations through which accepted norms and behavioral patterns are taught (Nilsson 1995:16; Andershed 2002:16). The experiences of relationships with care givers are reflected in social contexts beyond the family (Cooper 1992:83). Therefore, when trying to reduce NBB in treatment it is important to work with the youths’ social network, considering the role relationships play in shaping the adolescent. Focusing solely on the youths’ social network is not sufficient for bringing about a successful behavioral change (Andreassen 2003:316ff; Covington 1997).

Treating norm-breaking adolescents is difficult since these categories of young people are a complicated and heterogenic group, particularly when taking gender-related issues into account. It is not easy to target and cope with every individual’s specific psychosocial shortcoming during treatment, and the prevalence of relapse among these youths is high (Armelius et al. 1996:13). The motivation for changing the NBB is connected with good reasons for ending the behavior, and those reasons are found in the youths’ social context: the relationships with other people (Berglund 1998:6). The need for adequate and working treatment is important for both the youths themselves and for society as a whole (Ohlsson & Swärd 1994).

The present study
Historically, involvement in norm-breaking behaviors is a predominately male reserve (Andersson. 1996:190; Giordano & Cernkovich 1997; Moffitt et al. 2001:3). Hence, the
research focus has been on males’ pathways to crime. Females, on the other hand, show
different behavior problems characteristics, e.g. by depression and eating disorders, which
also increases during adolescence (Calvete & Cardeñoso 2005; Moffitt et al. 2001:1; Winter
1997). Thus, society has not acknowledged behavioral problems in girls, mainly because the
girls’ more “unobtrusive” psychosocial problems generally do not impact on other people in
the way that boys “acting out” do. Statistics from the past decade show an increasing number
of girls involved in the legal system (Veysey 2003), and in Residential Treatment Centers
(RTC)s (American Bar Association & National Bar Association 2001). This has lead to an
increased interest in research on norm-breaking girls and gender differences, but there are still
questions that remain to be answered. The trend in reducing norm-breaking behavior in
adolescents is creating gender-specific treatments, meaning programs designed specifically
regarding behavior change and satisfactory treatment is connected to focusing on building
nondestructive relationships (Covington 1997, 2000), but there are reasons to be critical of
this trend, since focusing on gender could lead to a greater stereotyping of gender specific
behavior and recreation of gender roles (Goodkind 2005).

The aim of the study is to review the existing research on the pathways of boys and girls to
norm-breaking behavior with focus on interpersonal relationships. A second aim is to
investigate how gender differences between the sexes are taken into account when developing
treatments for norm-breaking youths. The following questions were posed: a) What
characterizes pathways to norm-breaking behavior for girls and boys, b) Are there gender-
specific similarities or differences as regards to how interpersonal relationships with
significant others (family, relatives, and friends) contribute to psychosocial shortcomings, c)
What characterizes the discussion of gender-specific treatment in literature, and d) How can
these empirical findings be interpreted from a feminist theoretical perspective?

Disposition

This study is based on a literature review design, beginning with an introduction to the
research area, followed by the present study including its purpose and posed questions. The
review continues with a presentation of the research method used in this review where the
research process is described and where the validity and the reliability of this study is taken
into consideration together with scientific requirements. In the following section the
theoretical framework is presented. It consists of feminist theory and social bond theory. A
description of the theories is needed in order to enable an analysis of the empirical findings of
the review. In the following sections the empirical findings of the study are presented in the form of three themes connected to the posed questions. The first theme presents an overview of different pathways to norm-breaking behavior in terms of gender. The second theme investigates whether and how significant others influence the development of norm-breaking behavior. The last theme consists of gender-specific treatment and reviews what characterize the treatment content. Finally, the findings are discussed and analyzed in light of feminist theory and social bond theory.

**Method**

When conducting a study it is of great significance to choose the most suitable method for answering the research question (Holme & Solvang 1991:84). Qualitative research emphasizes depth whereas the goal of quantitative research is to be able to generalize data from one sample to a whole population (Marlow 2000:8). A review research design, on the other hand, is based on analysis of earlier studies, and the purpose is to elucidate issues through processing and summarizing existing data (Bem 1995; Neuman 1997 in Thyer 2001:402). Hence, the summary generates a source of knowledge in which new ideas for further research can be found and also serves to identify inaccuracies in existing research (Thyer 2001:402). Many research studies have focused on NBB in only girls or boys and a critical gender perspective is seldom used; studying only girls is as meaningless as studying only boys (Anglin & Hser 1987). Furthermore, focusing on treatment alone is pointless without considering the context in which the problem arose. Therefore, the aim of this review is to present an analysis of existing research on the characteristics of girls and boys with psychosocial shortcomings focusing on pathways, interpersonal relationships and treatment. Furthermore, the authors discuss the research implications of the findings in light of a feminist theoretical approach with the purpose of giving a coherent, critical picture of the topic.

**Gathering of material**

International literature searches were conducted in the following on-line databases: PsycInfo, ELIN@orebro, Google and Sage publications. Combinations of keywords such as _adolescent, relations, relationships, boys, girls, residential care, youth, gender, sex, teenager, gender differences, treatment, norm-breaking behavior, antisocial, institutional care, residential treatment, delinquency, gender-specific, social bond_ were used. Corresponding keywords in Swedish were _ungdomar, relationer, pojkar, flickor, behandlingshem, ungdom, kön, tonåring, könsskillnader, behandling, antisocial, institution_. The keyword gender-specific generally
yielded articles focusing on girls and females in specific. The combination of words antisocial, adolescent, delinquency generated many matches whereas norm-breaking behavior did not result in any relevant matches. To enhance the search, additional studies were sought in the reference lists of the collected articles. Nordic research has mainly been conducted in the Voyager library catalog at Örebro University, since databases exclusively including Nordic research are not available (see Andreassen 2003:22).

**Sample and criticism of sources**

The wide range of literature on the topic requires accurate preparation and systematic sorting of the collected material (Thyer 2001:403). It would be optimal to consider all material in order to draw any conclusions. However, a comprehensive approach is impossible considering the time limit. One must be aware that a distorted result might occur if the exclusion and inclusion criteria are controlled by chance (Holme & Solvang 1991:142). A selection of the collected material ought to be made on the basis of the relevance of the literature if conclusions are to be drawn on the basis of the material (Yegidis & Weinbach 1996 in Thyer 2001:406) and further, to conclude whether the methodological concerns of the literature are fulfilled (Andreassen 2003:22). It is also important to consider the trustworthiness when assessing data (Holme & Solvang 1991:146). Since this review is based on already existing studies, the trustworthy appraises in accuracy of how well the scientific approach agree with defined requirements of reviewed studies. Independent reviews also need to agree and be comparable to each other (Holme & Solvang 1991:146ff). A considerable number of reviews in this study have been assessed to elucidate the common results. Thyer (2001:407) stresses that old research ought to be excluded to reduce the risk of utilizing irrelevant information. The exceptions made in this study are vindicated by research frequently referred to and therefore still considered valid. It’s preferable to refer to primary sources, because secondary sources generate a second interpretation (Holme & Solvang 1991:147f). In this study, secondary sources have been used if the primary source has not been accessible. This review includes studies with an identifiable research design and reviews published in scientific journals and books. To be able to include exclusively those reviews considered relevant, essential *themes* considered fundamental to the questions at issue were elaborated. The themes essential for the study are *pathways* to NBB, *interpersonal relationships* with respect to how they contribute to NBBs, and *gender-specific treatment*. The themes are illuminated in the context of a feminist theoretical perspective. Within the themes, focus is exclusively on issues related to adolescents engaged in NBB.
This study aims to highlight issues related to *adolescence*, which is here defined as the lifespan between the ages of twelve and eighteen, as adolescents are the common target group treated in Residential Treatment Centers working with norm-breaking youths (Andreassen 2003:21). Even if this review mainly focuses on adolescence, it is still fundamental to consider early childhood experiences in the development of psychosocial shortcomings, since poor relationships in childhood are correlated with future behavioral problems (Andreassen 2003:30; Bowlby 1994; Reis et al. 2000). Research on adults in treatment has also been included in those cases that they agree with research on youths. The term *norm-breaking behavior* is essential for this review. This term is ambiguous and arbitrarily referred to. For example, antisocial, offender and delinquency is used in English literature without further specification, although delinquency refers to more serious behavior problems. Conduct disorder is also a commonly used term which is included in the norm-breaking concept, referring to a psychiatric disorder. In order to get a diagnosis three different NBBs need to be present for at least six months (Andreassen 2003:26f). To enable integration of research results from a range of disciplines, including psychiatry, criminology, sociology, social work, and developmental and clinical psychology, this review is not limited to conduct disorder, delinquency or antisocial behavior: all are included. Moffitt et al. (2001:7) also acknowledged that many adolescents show more than one problematic behavior and are involved in different systems, for example both psychiatry and criminology. All the different terms used above share common characteristics, such as that the problem is behavioral deviances from norms and laws in the society the individual live in (Andershed & Andershed 2005:17). NBB in this review includes stealing, disobeying parental rules, aggressive and non-aggressive behavior directed at other people or animals, delinquency, conduct problems, and assault (Andershed & Andershed 2005:17; Stoff 1997).

**Disposition of material and analysis**

When conducting a literature review, the analysis of selected material is a compilation of text. Holme & Solvang (1991) describe how to implement “text analysis” in studies with a qualitative design (Holme & Solvang 1991:119) which the authors of this study find applicable also to the literature review design. The “text analysis” distinguishes between “part analysis” and “whole analysis”. “Part analysis” categorizes the collected material into tables whereas the method of “whole analysis” considers an overall picture of the collected material (Holme & Solvang 1991:119). Hence, this review is conducted in accordance with the “whole analysis”.

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The “whole analysis” is divided into three parts. In the first part, the themes within the topic are shaped (Holme & Solvang 1991:119). A survey of the literature resulted in themes regarding pathways of girls and boys, interpersonal relationships and treatment with respect to their psychosocial shortcomings. The purpose of this study progressed by discussion between the authors of this thesis. Questions of relevance were revealed in accordance with the aim process which constitutes the second part of the “whole analysis”. In the third part that follows, a systematic analysis of the collected material relevant to the questions was implemented. Information relevant to the research focus was highlighted and divided within the posed themes. Subsequently, the relevant material within the themes was analyzed (Holme & Solvang 1991:119f). The relevant material within the themes (pathways, interpersonal relationships and gender-specific treatment) are emphasized and summarized. The gender aspect is permeated throughout the study with the aim to illuminate the differences that might occur. Therefore reviews containing a gender perspective are preferred. In this study process, the wide range of information necessitated further categorization within the defined themes. Holme and Solvang (1991) explain how this progress resembles assembling pieces of a puzzle, since it might be necessary to “move” the different categories within the themes before a coherent picture emerges (Holme & Solvang 1991:119). A theoretical framework generates a context by which the research questions are analyzed. Thus, theories contribute to highlighting the problem (Winter 1992:25). Feminist theory is used in this study since the goal is to interpret its findings in light of a feminist theoretical perspective. Goodkind (2005) states that feminist theory generates a base wherein the history of service for girls in the juvenile system can be comprehended. When analyzing NBB among adolescents within an interpersonal perspective, social bond theory is an established approach (see e.g. Junger-Tas et al. 2004; Svensson 2004). This study emphasizes the influences of relationships in accordance with the youth’s psychosocial shortcomings. Therefore, social bond theory also is considered fruitful.

**Reliability**

“Reliability indicates the extent to which a measure reveals actual differences in the phenomenon measured, rather than the differences inherent in the measuring instrument itself. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure” (Marlow 2000:181). Hence, a study characterized by reliability should provide reproducible answers (Holme & Solvang 1991:167; Svensson 1996:210). According to the quantitative study, the result must emerge from a representative sample of respondents to avoid the influence of chance. When a study is
reproducible, it is also regarded as reliable (Thurén 2000:22).

An accurate description of the research process is a prerequisite for reliability. The description should include the reasoning of the authors regarding choice of research design, theoretical framework, criteria of samples and the analysis process (Rafuls & Moon 1996 in Thyer 2001:275). The requirement of reliability is in this study considered as achieved, as the method section has been accounted for in detail; arguments for implementing a literature review design, feminist and social bond theory as perspective and a description of the sample process has been made. The method section provides the reader with the reasoning of the authors. Furthermore, most of the research articles utilized use an identifiable research design and reviews published in scientific journals and books.

Validity

Validity implies that you measure what you intend to measure (Marlow 2000:185; Svensson & Starrin 1996:210; Thurén 2000:22). The concept not only includes the validity of the result and the instruments of measure, but also the progress of the research method (Svensson & Starrin 1996:210). All dimensions reflecting the purpose of the study must be taken into consideration if the posed questions will be answered (Thyer 2001:57). When conducting a qualitative study, the author’s biases involving previous knowledge and beliefs might affect the result. Answers of the respondent which are not compatible with any biases might be disregarded (Thyer 2001:280). Even though no respondents are taken into consideration when using a literature review design, the authors of this study are aware that their own biases might cause misinterpretations when analyzing the collected material. However, the advantage of having two authors decreases the risk. Discussions help to illuminate bias throughout the process.

Silverman (2005) points out the importance of processing all information collected and not to rely on a small number of good sources (Silverman 2005:211). In this study, the requirement of validity has been taken into consideration by describing the reasoning of the authors when sampling material of relevance for the purpose of justifying criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Further, by including a theoretical framework in the study the substantive findings will be placed in a context. Accordingly, this increases the validity when the results are viewed in relation to a theoretical approach (Winter 1992:25). This study analyzes the collected data in the context of social bond theory and feminist theory, which in all likelihood increases the validity.
Methodological concerns

Since this study mainly includes previous reviews using a quantitative research design, the benefit of depth in accordance with qualitative studies is omitted. However, the purpose of this study is to present a general and coherent picture of the problem area to be able to review the result from a feminist theoretical perspective. Also, a literature review of quantitative research generates more information than a questionnaire. The disadvantages of studies based on literature review design are connected to the interpretations that the authors of the reviewed material have already made. The issues related to this do not have to imply vagueness, since the charge of the authors of a literature review is to report the foundation of current research during analysis. Furthermore, the readers are able to verify the arguments by following the reasoning of the authors (Winter 1992:24). The advantage of doing a review article is that there is no need of finding willing respondents since this design is based on analysis of current research (Thyer 2001:439). Nor must ethical issues related to respondents be taken into consideration (Thyer 2001:432). However, the ethics here is connected to the authors’ interpretations of the gathered material in order to present a trustworthy study. To claim trustworthiness the intentions of the authors have been to highlight an important and pressing issue through accurate documentation of references with the aim to facilitate the readers’ appraisal of the sources used. The authors are making reservations against any distorted interpretations that might occur due to the wide range of sources and research within this topic (see Gustafsson et al. 2005).

The review articles that are sampled are exclusively based on samples gathered in the West, which means that the cultural aspect has not been taken into consideration. This study involves both girls and boys and therefore a gender perspective is noticed. Furthermore, the result is interpreted in the context of a feminist approach. The authors hope to illuminate the topic from a new perspective.

Theoretical framework

Feminist theory

Feminist theory is central to understanding the history of services provided for norm-breaking girls. Changed treatments reflect how the definition of gender changes and how the struggle against gender inequity has been redefined (Goodkind 2005). The first wave feminism characterized by liberation, started through the American women’s movement in the 1800s (Pillow 2002). The watchword of the liberal feminists involved equality with males founded on sameness (Pillow 2002; Weedon 1999:14). During the 1960s, radical and cultural
feminism viewed women as different from men which lead to real predicaments in terms of equality versus difference within feminism (Goodkind 2005). A debate also grew regarding disparities within the category of women (Pillow 2002; Goodkind 2005). New groups within feminist theory evoked and influenced existing thoughts (Pillow 2002). Post-structural feminism brought out gender as a phenomenon, socially constructed through discourse (Goodkind 2005; Thompson 2001:6). Lesbian and working-class feminists argued for sexuality and class differences among women (Goodkind 2005). Race-based feminism highlighted issues related to race and Third-world feminism advocated the race and class difference (Goodkind 2005; Harasym 1990 in Pillow 2002).

The fact that females are a heterogenic group gives rise to the question whether feminism is still considered valid (see e.g. Pillow 2002; Magnusson 2005; Junger-Tas 2004). Some critics also stress that the feminist struggle identifies issues of a small part of the group of females; the white, middle-class women (Collins 1990:8). However, Pillow (2002) states that feminism is the only term which exclusively emphasize gender issues and provides a tool for analyzing the complex relations between gender, class, sexuality and race in dominant patterns of supremacy (Pillow 2002). Further, Thompson (2001) holds that “once male domination is identified as the main problem addressed by a feminist politics, it can be acknowledged that women experience male domination differently, depending on where they are situated in relation to race, class, or any other social location” (Thompson 2001:93).

The definition of the patriarchy and how to combat it differs with respect to feminist alignment (Pillow 2002) although the key issue still involves gendered power relations wherein females are defined as a gendered category subordinated to male dominance (Eduards 2002:144). The male domination is due to a hierarchical social categorization in which the man constitutes the human norm (Hirdman 2001:59; Thompson 2001:12f). Connell (1996) describes male dominance in terms of the hegemony of masculinities, where hegemony refers to cultural dynamics providing a certain group with societal superiority. The hegemony of masculinities is defined as the pattern of gender practice accepted and legitimizied by the patriarchy, which accordingly assures male domination (Connell 1996:101). The male norm exists at the expense of the female as human (Thompson 2001:13). The intention of feminism is therefore to reveal the male dominance while fighting for women’s right to be treated as equal human beings (Thompson 2001:8ff). Male superiority is maintained as long as women and men accept their status, incorporate it as natural, unchangeable and apprehend its collapse (Thompson 2001:22). Although, one should be aware of that the terms of feminism is subject for debate and, the definition also is changeable (Thompson 2001:6).
To illustrate and clarify the meanings of the concept of patriarchy, Hirdman’s description of the woman in terms of an incomplete man is presented. Hirdman propose the formula $A-a$ wherein $A$ refers to the man and $a$ to the woman. Although, this relation generates anxiety since $A$ might become $a$ and vice versa. Therefore $A$ must act continuously with the purpose of not losing masculinity (Hirdman 2001:29, 52f). The subordination of women is defined in terms of the logical separation: women and men are expected to remain separate from each other. Yet a woman who breaks the conventional separation and trespass into the male domain is forced to change in order to adjust to the new domain. A man entering a context dominated by females, on the other hand, does not have to adjust since the new context will adjust itself to him (Hirdman 2001:65ff). Moreover, Hirdman highlights the stereotyped gender contract.

The biological difference between the sexes decides to whom the social duties belong. Thus, the woman as birth-giver is steered towards the household whereas the man is seen as the provider (Hirdman 2001:77ff). Weedon (1999) discusses this further by stating how biological theories of women’s disparity justifies maintaining women’s primary role as mothers and housekeepers (Weedon 1999:99). Women and men perceive relations differently. Autonomy is fundamental for boys in order to incorporate the gender identity and therefore the separation from the mother is significant when developing as a male. However, the female identity is not tied to separation from the mother. Since masculinity is defined through autonomy and femininity through relations, the male identity is threatened by closeness whereas the female identity is threatened by separation (Gilligan 1982:13).

**Social bond theory**

Essential for social bond theory is the significance of interpersonal relationships as a predictor of basic behaviors. Interpersonal relationships are complex processes with the main purpose of creating human coexistence and maintaining social bonds (Scheff 1997:1). The theory suggests that secure social bonds in childhood decrease the chances of committing norm-breaking acts in adulthood (Hirschi 2001/1969; Scheff 1997:73). The more strongly bound an individual is to conventional society, the more she stands to lose in terms of approval from significant others. In *Causes of Delinquency* Hirschi proposes a social bond theory that consists of four elements: attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief (Hirschi 2001/1969:16ff). *Attachment* is defined as the affective identification the youth has with significant others: parents, school, teachers, and peers. This has been criticized since Hirschi does not include the potential for the individual to bond with other institutions in society (Shaw 1996 in Weber et al. 2001). However, a secure social bond is distinguished by a
“substantial mutual understanding for each other’s thoughts, beliefs and feelings” (Scheff 1997:65). Social bonds are maintained through dialogue between human beings. The verbal dimension is only one part of the interaction. In addition, there are continuously invisible exchanges which are important aspects of the interaction (Scheff 1997:65). When the interaction or attachment to law-abiding conventional others is high, the individual is less willing to risk losing love and respect of people close to her/him. The youth who involves the parents in his or her psychological life are more eager to get their approval when attending activities (Hirschi 2001/1969:90). Youths who are strongly attached to their parents are also less likely to spend time with delinquent friends (Hirschi 2001/1969:100; Scheff 1997:73).

Social bonds influence men and women in different directions, since upbringing is considered gender related. Boys are encouraged to develop a career through independence whereas girls are raised to become family orientated. A family characterized by alienation force boys and girls into separate tracks where the boys shape relations characterized by isolation. Shame is taught to be restrained towards the subconscious. This kind of emotion constitutes a base for concealing shame behind patterns of aggressiveness. Girls, on the other hand, develop an “engulfed” style of relating to significant others. The shame of girls appears visibly and tangibly. Their socialization in “overt shame” drives them towards being rather reserved than aggressive (Scheff 1997:86f). Accordingly, a youth who is attached to his or her parents tends to hesitate committing a delinquent act to avoid evoking any shame (Hirschi 2001/1969:90; Scheff 1997:73).

The second element in Hirschi’s social bond theory, involvement, refers to the time an individual spends in engaging in conventional activities (Hirschi 2001/1969:21). Hirschi acknowledges the fact that committing a crime is an action which can be performed within a minute; he points out that involvement in conventional activities is insufficient as the only factor predicting deviation (Hirschi 2001/1969:190). Doing “premature” activities, e.g. smoking and drinking, constitutes a factor for delinquent behavior, since “premature” adolescents are not engaging in conventional activities to the same extent as youths of the same age (Hirschi 1969/2002:196). The third component of social bonds is commitment to a conventional life and conventional activities (Hirschi 2001/1969:20). Hirschi suggests that adolescents participating in adult activities affect the involvement in delinquent acts unlike youths who are committed to hard work and achievement (Hirschi 2001/1969:168f). The last dimension is belief, which represents the youths’ support of general societal norms and public laws (Hirschi 2001/1969:23).

Social bond theory has its critics. Hirschi states that he is using a diverse sample in his
study of delinquents including both boys and girls (Hirschi 2001/1969:35f); however, girls are never mentioned in the results (Chesney-Lind 1998:17). Hence, it is important to be critical of this theory with respect to gender specific patterns, and therefore Scheff is also included in the theory because he includes both boys and girls in his works.

**Literature review**

*Boys and girls pathways to norm-breaking behavior*

The pathway to NBB has been explained by many different theories, and each theory emphasizes different explanations for developing such a behavior. The pathway is a complex process where genetics, environmental and social factors interact (Andershed & Andershed 2005:55; Andreassen 2003:30; Junger-Tas et al. 2004; Raine 2002). A genetic predisposition is not enough when predicting future problematic behaviors (Andershed & Andershed 2005:55; Andreassen 2003:18), although the genetic disposition could make an individual more sensitive for developing NBBs (Andershed & Andershed 2005:68). The different factors each influence the individual differently and also depends on what behavior the youth is engaged in (Andreassen 2003:30f). In addition, several research results state that developing NBBs is associated with individual characteristics, family and friends, school and environment (Andreassen 2003:30).

The prevalence pattern of the NBB peaking in adolescence (Loeber et al. 1998; Moffitt et al. 2001) is the same for boys and girls, although the number of boys involved in NBB always have exceeded the number of girls (Andershed & Andershed 2005:20; Junger-Tas et al. 2004; Moffitt et al. 2001:37; Svensson 2004/2:25). Boys in residential treatment centers are exclusively involved in criminal activity, whereas the corresponding statistics for girls was fifty percent who had committed crimes (Andersson 1998:21; Andersson 1995:103). Girls are statistically more often arrested for status offences (Chesney-Lind 1997:13), which are defined as acts committed by under-aged perpetrators such as cutting school, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and running away from home (Andreassen 2003:28; Andersson 1996:187). In contrast, boys are arrested in larger numbers for criminal offences, characterized by infringement of the law (Andersson 1996:187). Norm-breaking girls are subjected to sexual abuse in greater numbers than norm-breaking boys, consequently arrests or care for girls have often been motivated in terms of the girls’ need for protection (Andersson 1998:7; Chesney-Lind 1998:4f; Covington 2000). Another aspect is that the sexual behavior of girls is considered a problem, whereas the sexual behavior of boys is never mentioned or viewed as problematic (Andersson 1998:50; Andersson 1995:138).
Risk factors
Moffitt et al. (2001:103f) suggest a theory for the fact that more boys engage in norm-breaking activities. Boys are more exposed for risk factors related to a possibility of developing conduct problems compared to girls (Moffitt et al. 2001). “Risk factor” is a term in research referring to a characteristic, incident or process which increases the risk or possibility of NBBs (Andershed & Andershed 2005:55). However, it is not possible to predict whether the specific factor is the cause of the behavior or not, rather it is a factor interacting with the problematic behavior (Andershed & Andershed 2005:55). The risk factors identified in boys are neurobiological and neuropsychological deviances, lower pulse frequency, hyperactivity and problematic peer relationships. Why boys and not girls show these risk factors is still unclear (Moffitt et al. 2001:103f). The research on risk factors have dominated the field, but now the focus is also on studying protective factors (Andershed & Andershed 2005:192; Andreassen 2003:34). Protective factors inhibit the effect of the risk factors, which decreases the severity of the problems. For example, parental engagement and involvement in alternative activities have been noted to be protective factors (Andreassen 2003:34).

Girls are in general diagnosed for disorders associated with neurodevelopmental impairment (i.e. early-onset conduct disorder or antisocial personality disorder) in lower numbers than boys (Keenan & Shaw 1997; Moffitt et al. 2001:236), and this is supported by studies from different countries (Moffitt et al. 2001:236). It is not yet clear how neurological brain problems and developmental neurological problems are related and how they interact at the level of the nervous system (Moffitt et al. 2001:238). Norm-breaking girls suffer in greater numbers from depressive disorders (Ehrensaft 2005) continuing into adulthood (Moffitt et al. 2001:7) compared to boys. Youths also show more than one problem behavior, for example simultaneous mental illness and substance abuse (Ehrensaft 2005; Loeber et al. 1998; Moffitt et al. 2001:7) more often compared with adults (Moffitt et al. 2001:7).

One explanation for girls being diagnosed in lower numbers is that in order to be diagnosed the behavior needs to be of long duration. Girls show a more disruptive pattern of NBBs than boys (Junger-Tas 2004; Moffitt et al. 2001:80), considering both disorders (Moffitt et al. 2001:80) and delinquent careers (Junger-Tas 2004). Other researchers have suggested that girls who start their NBB, which could be diagnosed as antisocial or as conduct disorder in adolescence, are in a worse condition than boys making the debut in adolescence. Silverthorn and Frick (1999) compare those girls with early-onset boys, and argue that they have the same aetiological background or, worse, as early-onset norm-breaking boys (Silverthorn & Frick 1999). This is not supported by the results of the Dunedin longitudinal
Study (Moffitt et al. 2001:158), however. The smallest gender differences in NBB make themselves known in the use of alcohol and drugs (Moffitt et al. 2001:37), which has been linked to the fact that girls mature earlier than boys. Girls look older than they are and socialize with older peers, who in turn introduce them to norm-breaking behaviors (Moffitt et al. 2001:53; Stattin & Magnusson 1990). This is also linked to earlier sex experiences of girls (Junger-Tas 2004). Girls’ norm-breaking behavior is limited to adolescence and often does not persist into adulthood (Andershed & Andershed 2005:20; Junger-Tas 2004). Adolescents showing early NBBs in childhood are the ones at risk of developing a more persistent criminal behavior in adulthood compared with those making their debut in adolescence (Andershed & Andershed 2005:20; Moffitt 1993; Patterson et al. 1998). Moffitt (1993) suggests in his study that onset of NBBs in childhood is linked to genetics more strongly than NBB in adolescents. NBB beginning in adolescence is suggested to be more strongly linked to peer influence than early onset norm-breaking behavior (Moffitt 1993).

Aggression
According to several studies, aggressive and non-aggressive norm-breaking behavior show different developmental pathways in adolescence. The aggressive path is more related to genetic differences in temperament, whereas non-aggressive behavior is linked to environment including parenting, delinquent peers, neighborhood area (Eley et al. 2005). Further, one study found correlation between aggressive norm-breaking behavior in both boys and girls and their genetic disposition. A correlation was also found between genetic disposition in girls and non-aggressive norm-breaking behavior, but not in boys (Eley et al. 2005). Physical aggression is more common among boys, but for relational aggression there is little gender difference (Crick 1997; Tomada & Schneider 1997). Relational aggression refers to rumor spreading, manipulating and controlling in social contexts. Girls engage more in relational aggression than in physical aggression (Crick 1996; Crick & Grotpeter 1995; Moretti et al. 2001). Relational aggressive behavior in girls is linked to higher rates of physical aggression and assault (Moretti et al. 2001). In one study, Crick (1997) found evidence of boys and girls having more tolerant attitudes toward physical aggression by boys and relational aggression by girls, and that non-normative aggression (e.g. physical aggression by girls) predicts maladjustment in both sexes (Crick 1997). Others also propose that boys and girls express their distress in stereotyped ways (Keenan & Shaw 1997).
**Interpersonal relationships**

Interpersonal relationships are the foundation of human life. Almost all human action is performed in a social setting with other people present. Research shows that reactions differ depending on context, and to enable prediction and understanding human behavior these relationship contexts need to be taken into consideration. Experiences within relationships influence the individual mentally and physically and the developmental course. In addition, past experiences are reflected in present relationships (Reis et al. 2000). The first established relationship is usually the parent-child relation, and this relationship has a strong influence on the child’s development (Bowlby 1994; Hwang et al. 1992:79). The child is socialized through relations, and during upbringing, behavioral patterns and personality traits are developed (Andershed 2002:16).

**The parent-adolescent relationship**

Several researchers have acknowledged that girls and boys are socialized and brought up differently. Parents respond in different ways depending on the sex of the child (Bjerrum Nielsen 1991; Hwang et al. 1992:79; Junger-Tas 2004; Scheff 1997) Girls and boys learn different ways to handle troublesome situations and feelings. Boys have a tendency to be more aggressive and act out compared with girls, who are socialized to be more introvert and quiet (Hwang et al. 1992:81). In addition, boys are encouraged to be independent whereas girls are reinforced to care for others (Gilligan 1982). Many studies suggest that NBB is associated with the relationships with parents and peers (Claes et al. 2004). The parents’ goal is to enhance a positive development for the child, but if parents use ineffective raising methods this in turn could become a risk factor for NBB (Andershed & Andershed 2005:95).

Which aspects of the method the parents use that are more correlated with NBB is an open issue in research results, although relationships with parents during upbringing characterized by emotional bonding, support, and closeness have positive effects on the individual’s psychosocial abilities. This in turn could prevent both boys and girls from engaging in norm-breaking activities (Barrera et al. 2001; Moffitt et al. 2001:103f).

Stat tin & K err (2000) have acknowledged the importance of parental monitoring. Research on parental monitoring usually refers to the information parents have about their children. The results indicate that children who spontaneously inform their parents about their lives are less likely to be involved in norm-breaking behaviors (Stat tin & K err 2000). In addition, it seems that the ability of the parents to monitor their children has to do with their ability to create a family communication pattern which encourages the children to talk about what they
experience in their lives, rather than controlling and questioning the children (Kerr & Stattin 2000; Stattin & Kerr 2000). However, research results indicate that girls are more closely supervised by parents than boys. This is true for adolescents who have used drugs and those who have not (Svensson 2004:24f.). Poor parental supervision is also correlated with drug use for both sexes (Blackwell & Piquero 2005; Junger-Tas 2004). NBB in boys has shown to be strongly linked to parental monitoring (Junger-Tas 2004). On the other hand, NBB in girls is thought to be influenced not only by parental control but also by factors such as family composition, negative events in life and psychological state (Junger-Tas 2004). In contrast, the results of Moffitt et al. (2001) indicate that boys who had a negative and critical mother, was brought up with harsh and unpredictable discipline and conflicts within family, had many different caregivers, or grew up with a single parent ran a higher risk of developing NBBs compared with those who did not experience these risk factors (Moffitt et al. 2001:103f). Girls did not seem to be as affected by these factors as boys, although the gender difference was small (Moffitt et al. 2001:103f). Another important aspect of the parent-child relation is how parents choose to punish or discipline their children. Research suggests that norm-breaking adolescents are faced in a higher extent with harsh and inconsequent discipline compared with non-norm-breaking adolescents (Kim et al. 2003). As previously mentioned, past experiences of relationships (e.g. the parent-child relationship) are reflected in present and future relationships (e.g. peer relationships) (Reis et al. 2000).

**Peer and partner relationships**

In adolescence, peers become more important and more time is spent with peers than with parents (Collins 1997; Collins & Repinski 1994; Fuligni 2001). Involvement with antisocial peers during adolescence is consistently and strongly correlated with delinquency such as drug use and theft (Vitaro 2000; Liard et al. 2005). Fuligni et al. (2001) show the consequences of extreme peer orientation on NBB and poor academic achievements. Extreme peer orientation refers to adolescents who are willing to disobey parental rules, sacrifice important things in their lives in order to maintain relationships with peers, and remain popular in the peer group (Fuligni et al. 2001). Boy and girl peer groups seem to differ in several important aspects (Moffitt et al. 2001:118; Maccoby 1998:37ff). In groups of boys, the interaction is acknowledged to be more about domineering and bragging. In addition, boys in group also tend to engage in more risk-taking and limit-testing activities. The groups are larger with a stronger hierarchy and more activity-oriented (Maccoby 1998:37), whereas girls are more exclusive and intimate in their relationships (Reis et al. 2000). Accordingly, boys are
exposed to deviant peer influences to a higher extent than girls (Svensson 2004:24f). It is contended that the quality of relationships is more important for the development of girls than boys (Cross & Madson 1997). The research on female group culture is limited compared with the great amount of research performed on the peer group culture of boys.

Research has found that norm-breaking adolescents often form intimate relationships with opposite-sex norm-breaking adolescents (Moffitt et al. 2001:196), often referred in research to as assortative mating (Ehrensaft 2005). This increases the norm-breaking behavior in both parties as well as the likelihood of becoming a teen parent and being subjected to domestic violence (Moffitt et al. 2001:7f). Involvement in peer groups characterized by NBB does not present many possibilities of supportive and “prosocial” partners. In addition, relationships with norm-breaking partners offer few opportunities to learn and practice “prosocial” relationships, which would lead to more stable, positive sexual relationships over the lifespan (Ehrensaft et al. 2003). It does seem, however, that the behavior of girls is more affected by social influences and especially by male peers or partners (Calvete & Cardeñoso 2005; Moffitt et al. 2001:f; Pawlby et al. 1997). Girls with substance abusing boyfriends might also start using the same drugs in order to adjust themselves to the relationship (Covington 2002).

**Gender specific treatment**

The purpose of incorporating gender specific treatment is to illuminate the special needs of girls and boys (Acharyya & Zhang 2003; Morgan & Patton 2002). However, when gender is taken into account it often refers to only girls (Bartholomew et al. 2000; Goodkind 2005). Treatment addressing both sexes is not studied on the basis of a gender perspective, for the most part, compared with program services provided for females (Trulsson 2002:89). Many programs which expressly are gender neutral actually address traditionally male needs (Kaschak 1992 in Covington 2002; Morgan & Patton 2002). The reason is the historical acknowledgement of the psychosocial shortcomings of boys, characterized by aggressiveness and criminal offence (Covington 1998; Morgan & Patton 2002). The specific needs of girls have been disregarded since they suffer from “quiet” psychosocial problems that do not disturb society (Alder 1995 in Chesney-Lind 2001; Covington 2001, 1998; Morgan & Patton 2002). Covington (2002) suggests that reasons for only acknowledging boys are the stereotyping of boys and girls and unawareness of the need for gender-sensitivity. Treatment addressing boys is given more resources as boys constitute a risk for society, whereas girls do not and therefore get less help (Covington 1998; Morgan & Patton 2002). Furthermore, policy makers and others who direct treatment services are mostly males who might disregard the
female perspective (Covington 2002). Thus, gender-specific treatment is significant in order to highlight the needs of girls (Chesney-Lind 2001; Covington 1998). However, treatment exclusively focusing on girls should not be an image of male orientated services (Covington 1998; Morgan & Patton 2002). Disadvantages of gender-specific treatment might occur if the needs of girls are not clearly defined. Biases about gender generates program designs that are based on stereotyped genders, rather than realizing prevailing gender hierarchies which are the creator of how norm-breaking girls are being defined (Belknap et al. in Covington 1998; Covington 2002; Chesney-Lind 2001; Goodkind 2005). Therefore, gender-specific treatment content should challenge prevailing norms and gender expectations rather than maintaining stereotypes. Gender is not innate and consistent but a perpetually changing process (Goodkind 2005).

Some researches suggest that gender-specific treatment also involves settings exclusively comprising females (Chesney-Lind 2001). It might be productive for males to be treated in mixed-gender settings, whereas females benefit from women-only groups. In mixed-gender groups, females tend to keep quiet in order to let the males voice their issues. Also, females are socialized to fight for the favor of the males when they are present, whereas women in female-only settings support and listen to each other (Aries 1976 in Covington 1998). Female-only settings should be characterized by safety (Covington 2002; Covington 1998; Koons 1997 in Andreassen 2003:266; Morgan & Patton 2002) and a non-confronting approach (Pelissier & Jones 2005). An unsafe environment could harm the girls and re-evoke traumas (Covington 2002; 1998). Despite the above findings, only one tenth of residential treatment centers provide services exclusively for girls (SOU 1994:28 in Leissner & Hedin 2002:11).

**Girl orientated services**

In the literature, girls are often described as relationship orientated (Goodkind 2005). Consequently, their behavior is more affected by social influences (Calvete & Cardeñoso 2005; Moffitt et al. 2001:8). Working with relations is thus fundamental in services towards girls (Covington 2001; Belknap et al. 1997 in Covington 1998; Fridell 2002:158; Koons 1997 in Andreassen 2003:265; Morgan & Patton 2002). Addressing sexual and physical abuse is also mentioned in the literature when the needs of girls are noticed, since a large part of norm-breaking girls have experiences of violence (Covington 2002; 1998; Goodkind 2005; Koons 1997 in Andreassen 2003:265; Morgan & Patton 2002; Pelissier & Jones 2005). Treating girls as victims might contribute to the view of females as passive. The victimization of girls complicates the recovery, since passivity is detrimental to empowerment. Therefore, a history
of abuse should not constitute their sole identity (Goodkind 2005). Instead of emphasizing their victimization, the treatment staff should rather help the girls to view themselves as survivors (Morgan & Patton 2002). Girl-specific treatment also must emphasize components as sexual risk taking, pregnancies (Ehrensaft 2005) and child care skills (Covington 1998; Ehrensaft 2005). Research has revealed that pregnancy and parenting at a young age affect conduct disordered girls more than it does boys suffering from conduct disorders. The focus is important in view of the girls’ potential contribution to transferring behavioral issues to the next generation (Moffitt et al. 2001:196). Traditionally, mothering has been essential for changing one’s behavior within a parenthood perspective and therefore seen as particularly fruitful for girls (Ehrensaft 2005). Further, vocational training is deemed significant when treating girls (Covington 1998; Morgan & Patton 2002), as well as teaching girls housekeeping skills (Pelissier & Jones 2005:344).

**Boys orientated services**

Male youths benefit from an environment that works on the basis of a linear perspective (Morgan & Patton 2002) with clear rules (Belknap et al. 1997 in Covington 1998; Morgan & Patton 2002). Goodkind (2005) states that boys often are described as independent in the literature. Boys prefer solving problems independently, although they communicate within teams. Competing is described as natural for boys (Morgan & Patton 2002) and they benefit from services helping them to advance within the institution to a more powerful position (Belknap et al. 1997 in Covington 1998). But some researchers stress that this appears simplified when drawing conclusions on what is working best for either boys or girls. Components that are seen as fruitful when treating girls are also advantageous for boys (see e.g. Bartholomew et al. 2000; Goodkind 2005; Pelissier & Jones 2005). The use of a non-confronting perspective is preferable when treating females (Pelissier & Jones 2005), even though studies have reveled that the use of a confrontational therapeutic approach when dealing with substance abusing males is also disadvantageous (Miller et al. 1993). Further, boys struggle with similar problems as girls (Pelissier & Jones 2005). Norm-breaking boys are commonly unemployed and lack education (Pelissier & Jones 2005). Parenting is an important component even for boys since they are potential fathers (Goodkind 2005) to make them assume more responsibility for their children (Goldstein et al. 1996). A study of adolescents in juvenile justice system in Ohio found that norm-breaking boys are considerably more likely than girls to become parents (Holsinger et al. 1999 in Goodkind 2005). However, the importance of emphasizing fatherhood while in treatment has not been the subject of
research (Trulsson 2002:89). Goodkind (2005) suggests that relationships are important for both boys and girls, and therefore relational issues should be addressed whether the treatment focuses on girls or boys (Goodkind 2005). An evaluation was implemented in order to emphasize the subjective opinion of male clients after participating in the gender-sensitive intervention Out! For Men, for male substance abusers. The program addressed issues related to relational and sexual contexts, gender-roles and vocabulary skills. The result revealed that the majority of the clients involved expressed satisfaction after participating. Also, acknowledgement within the topic increased (Bartholomew 2000). Goodkind (2005) advocates working with traumas as a treatment component even for boys, since experiences of abuse is a subject placed under strict taboo among males. However, Andreassen (2003) found that focusing only on dimensions of relations and working with insight, without interrupting criminal actions, appears disadvantageous, particularly when addressing high risk clients (Andreassen 2003:193).

**Discussion**

This review highlights some important issues. In essence, the viewpoint has been that norm-breaking adolescents have developed their behavior in a context of relationships and a society where gender plays a role in shaping behaviors. Boys and girls are brought up differently (Junger-Tas 2004; Scheff 1997:86). Consequently, they handle and show their distress differently, which statistics repeatedly demonstrates (Chesney-Lind 1997:13). Boys are involved in NBB in greater numbers than girls (Andershed & Andershed 2005:20), and boys are mainly involved in criminal activities (Moffitt et al. 2001:37). Thus it could be argued that crime is a domain reserved for males, but regarding the increasing number of girls involved in the criminal justice system (Veysey 2003) and in RTCs (American Bar Association & National Bar Association 2001), females are entering this domain, which could be a sign of changes in gender roles. Research points in the direction to boys being exposed to more risk factors than girls (Moffitt et al. 2001:103f), although when considering the prevailing patriarchal society one could argue that being born female is directly linked to being at risk. In addition, the high number of girls subjected to sexual abuse (see e.g. Chesney-Lind 1997:13f) could also be correlated to the power of the patriarchy. The male norm exists at the expense of the female position as human being (Thompson 2001:13). Boys are not subjected to sexual abuse to the same extent as girls. The risk factor in boys is discussed in terms of genetic deviances which are not seen in girls to the same extent (Moffitt 1993). These neurological impairments lead to higher numbers of boys being diagnosed for disorders. Although there are
reasons to be critical of the role of genetics in developing a NBB, research is often focused on genetics, but research results seem to indicate that many factors interact and the role of genetics might be overrated.

Aggressive behavior is also linked to genetics (Eley et al. 2005). Both boys and girls engage in aggressive behavior, although boys use physical aggression more than girls (Tomada & Schneider 1997). Girls are socialized to express their anger differently (Scheff 1997:86f). The research refers to relational aggression when it comes to girls, which includes rumor spreading and exclusion from social groups (Crick 1997). Girls expressing anger in terms of relational aggression seems logical when considering the different socialization process where girls are brought up to be more relational-oriented (Gilligan 1982:13). Research indicates that girls and boys engaging in non-normative aggression are socially punished for that behavior (Crick 1997). A girl using physical aggression is often immediately told that she did not behave appropriately.

According to social bond theory, the quality of the bond to others predicts the development of future behavioral problems (Hirschi 1969/2001; Scheff 1997). The importance of social bonds with others is illustrated by the results of many studies in this review (Andershed 2002:16; Bowlby 1994; Hwang et al. 1992:79; Junger-Tas 2004; Reis et al. 2000). Considering that all action is performed in a relational context (Reis et al. 2000), this review stresses the importance of considering interpersonal relationships and working with relationships when preventing and reducing NBBs in both boys and girls. The relationship with parents in early childhood influences the child. Negative experiences could lead to difficulties in relating to others outside the family context (Andreassen 2003:30ff; Bowlby 1994). Relationships which are recognized as emotionally bonded, supportive, and close can work as a protective factor (Moffitt et al. 2001:103f) according to the social bond theory proposed by Hirschi (2001/1969) and Scheff (1997:73). Thus, interpersonal relationships influence both boys and girls although the role of relationships differs in aspects of gender, as in the stronger parental monitoring of girls, for example (Svensson 2004:24f), or that the peer groups of boys and girls function differently. The interaction in groups of boys is characterized by a hierarchical structure. Boys socialize in larger groups that are activity-oriented with domineering and bragging (Maccoby 1998:10ff). Girls interact in smaller groups and the relationships are characterized by closeness (Reis et al. 2000). But when girls socialize in larger groups – especially when they pair off with a norm-breaking boy – this influences their behavior, and this is not the same for boys (Pawlby et al. 1997). The substance abuse of girls is affected by the drug their partner uses (Covington 2002). Girls use
the same drugs as their boyfriends. If they change boyfriends and they abuse another drug, the girls start using the same drug. This pattern can be explained by the logical separation wherein the subordination of women is maintained through the woman’s adjustment to the male norm (Hirdman 2001:65ff). A similar pattern can be seen in how treatment content for youths is formed, which for several reasons historically has been based on traditional needs of males (Kaschak 1992 in Covington 2002; Morgan & Patton 2002), although this has now been acknowledged when designing gender-specific services.

Gender-specific treatment in research is focused mainly on girls in particular (Goodkind 2005) with the purpose of highlighting the specific needs of females, which have previously been disregarded. Treatment focusing on girls ought not to be mirrored on male orientated services (Covington 1998) nor be created on the basis of stereotyped gender assumptions (Goodkind 2005). However, one can call into question how gender-sensitive treatment is directed according to the findings of this review. Research indicates that girls benefit from treatment settings excluding boys since girls tend to adjust themselves towards the boys in mixed-gender services. Instead of supporting and listening to each other they compete for the attention of the boys and keep quiet during sessions, whereas boys share their experiences to a greater extent (Aries 1976 in Covington 1998). Again, the adjustment to the male norm (Hirdman 2001:65ff) seems applicable to how girls in treatment adapt in order to fit the context of the boys. It is remarkable that even though girls benefit from women-only settings, only one tenth of residential treatment centers provide services exclusively for females (SOU 1994:28 in Leissner & Hedin 2002:11). Another component that has been shown to benefit girls is working with relationships (Covington 2001). Relationships are fundamental in their lives whereas boys often are referred to as autonomous (Goodkind 2005) and competitive (Morgan & Patton 2002). Taking this assumption for granted leaves a paradoxical condition in directing treatment. According to social bond theory, close interpersonal relationships are advantageous for both sexes (Hirschi 2001/1969; Scheff 1997) but social bonds steer boys and girls towards different paths: autonomy versus relationship orientation (Scheff 1997). Maintaining separate tracks which are based on stereotyped assumptions will reproduce the prevailing gender hierarchy (Thompson 2001:22), which is not the intention of gender-specific treatment (Goodkind 2005). Relationships are significant also for boys and therefore working with relations seems helpful despite of sex (Goodkind 2005). One study found that male substance abusers expressed satisfaction after participating in treatment addressing gender-sensitive components such as relational issues (Barthomolew et al. 2000). Notable is also the emphasis on the fruitfulness of motherhood in treatment (Ehrensaft 2005), as no
research has demonstrated whether males benefit from treatment within a parental context or not (Trulsson 2002:89). Male youths are also potential parents who ought to take greater responsibility for their children (Goldstein et al. 1996). Hence, it seems that research this far has focused on stereotyped gender needs and mostly disregards non-normative treatment components. Since the concept “gender-specific” actually refers to females in particular, the woman is acknowledged as specific and accordingly different from the man, the norm which constitutes the foundation. Thus, most of the treatment directed for males is processed without a gender-sensitive approach, even though research suggests that men might also benefit from non-normative treatment services usually provided for females (Bartholomew 2000).

In conclusion, the pathways to a NBB are influenced by many different factors which interact with each other. The development of NBB is a complex process, where it is difficult to pinpoint specific factors. In addition, it seems that there are small gender differences in the pathways to a NBB. Boys have a genetic sensitivity, and girls could be argued to be genetically sensitive since they are biologically female in a patriarchal society. Interpersonal relationships are repeatedly shown to have great influence on development. The influence of interpersonal relationships seems to affect girls slightly differently than boys due to differences in the socialization process. In addition, it could also be argued to be a consequence of a prevailing hegemony where girls adjust to men. If girls are socialized relationships-oriented they will care for others rather than compete with males for power in the society, which serves the interest of men. As gender-specific treatment focus on the needs of girls it seems that treatment in general is directed in an unreflective way due to a critical gender approach. One could argue that the traditional socialization process is repeated in treatment where adolescents learn how to behave as males or females ought to behave. This might neglect an alternative approach when designing treatment. Thus, the research results should be viewed and problemized from other perspectives and not be taken for granted.

Some limitations of this literature review should be noted. First, it does not take ethnicity or class into consideration. The study is limited to gender, which means differences within the female and male group could be disregarded. Second, due to the large amount of research on this topic some important studies might have been excluded. The research results would need to be incorporated into a second phase of a literature synthesis on gender issues among norm-breaking youths and gender-specific treatment. This review only includes one study which investigates how boys respond to treatment including components of working with relationships. No other similar studies were found and further research would serve to enhance the treatment of norm-breaking adolescents. Also, studies investigating the role of
parenting for males need to be addressed in future research. Considering the fact that boys engage in norm-breaking behavior in greater numbers than girls, would boys benefit from being brought up in the same way as girls? Worth noticing is also the fact that as far as the authors of this study know, review articles focusing on issues related to girls and women are written predominantly by female researchers. One can therefore call into question how previous research has been designed. This review encourages society and professionals working with people to challenge gender stereotypes since those stereotypes do not seem to benefit any gender.

References


