



Understanding theory of Gender Development

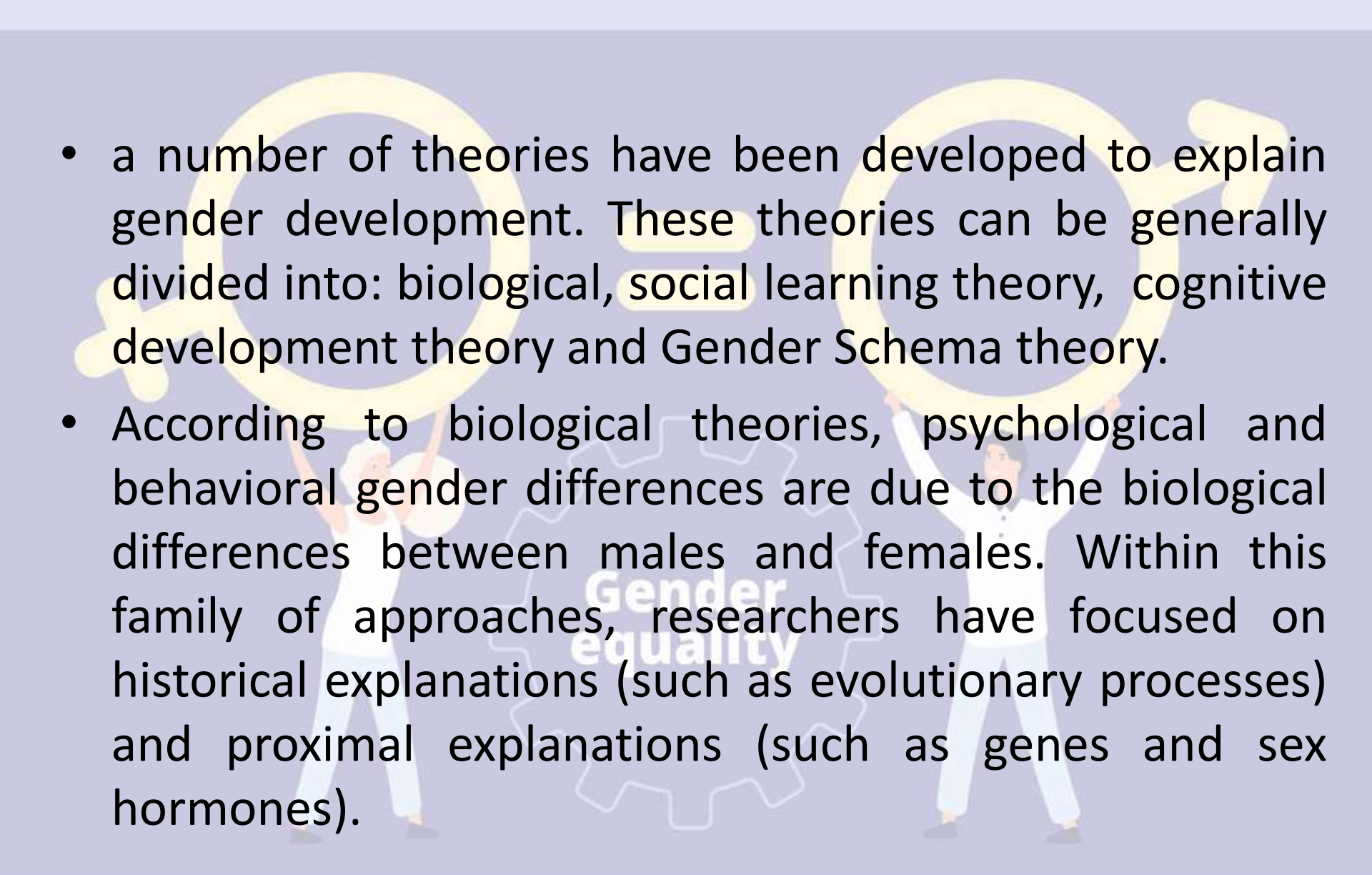
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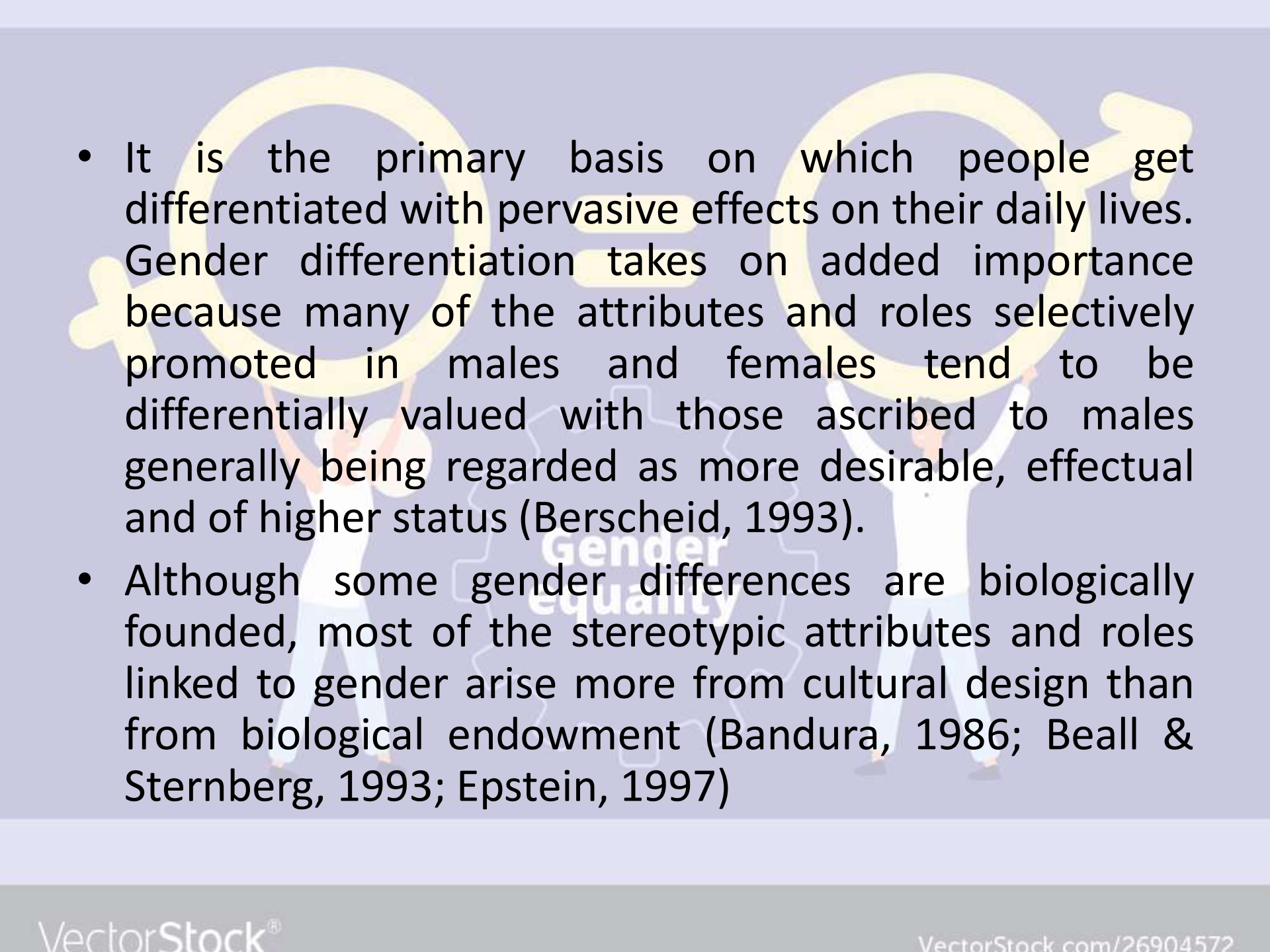
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Introduction

The background features a light blue gradient. In the center, there is a large yellow equals sign (=) positioned between two large yellow symbols: a female symbol (a circle with a vertical line) on the left and a male symbol (a circle with an arrow) on the right. Below these symbols, two stylized human figures, a woman on the left and a man on the right, are shown from the waist up, holding the bottom of the female and male symbols respectively. In the background, there are faint, light blue outlines of gears and the text 'Gender equality'.

Gender development is a fundamental issue because some of the most important aspects of people's lives, such as the talents they cultivate, the conceptions they hold of themselves and others, the socio-structural opportunities and constraints they encounter, and the social life and occupational paths they pursue are heavily prescribed by societal gender-typing

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- a number of theories have been developed to explain gender development. These theories can be generally divided into: biological, social learning theory, cognitive development theory and Gender Schema theory.
 - According to biological theories, psychological and behavioral gender differences are due to the biological differences between males and females. Within this family of approaches, researchers have focused on historical explanations (such as evolutionary processes) and proximal explanations (such as genes and sex hormones).

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- It is the primary basis on which people get differentiated with pervasive effects on their daily lives. Gender differentiation takes on added importance because many of the attributes and roles selectively promoted in males and females tend to be differentially valued with those ascribed to males generally being regarded as more desirable, effectual and of higher status (Berscheid, 1993).
 - Although some gender differences are biologically founded, most of the stereotypic attributes and roles linked to gender arise more from cultural design than from biological endowment (Bandura, 1986; Beall & Sternberg, 1993; Epstein, 1997)

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

- Socialization theories of gender development view gender differences as a byproduct of the differential treatment girls and boys receive from the people in their lives and the pervasive gender stereotyped messages that children are exposed to in their environment.

What To Know About Social Learning Theory



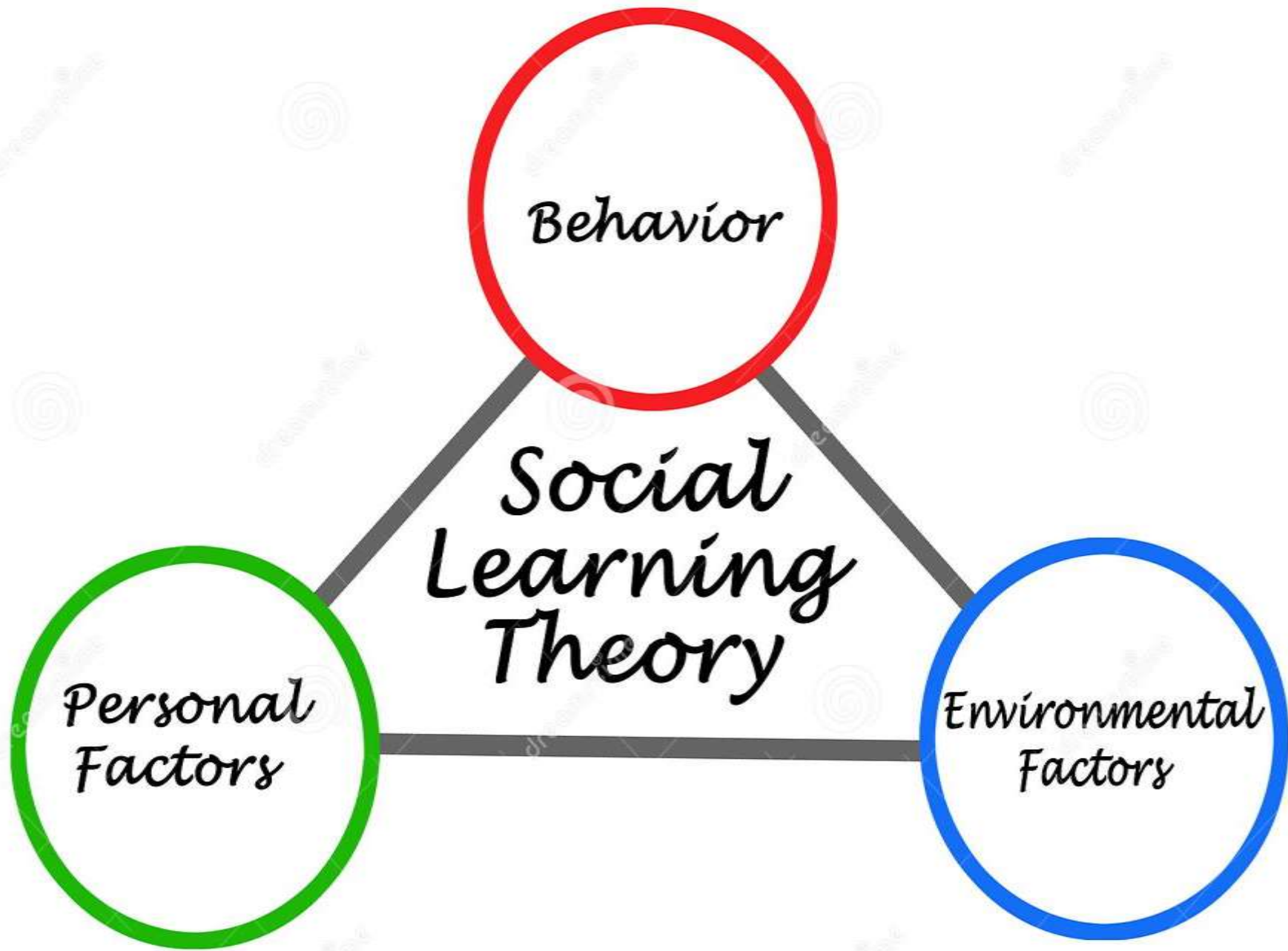
1. People can learn through observation



2. Mental states are important to learning



3. Learning does not necessarily lead to behavior change



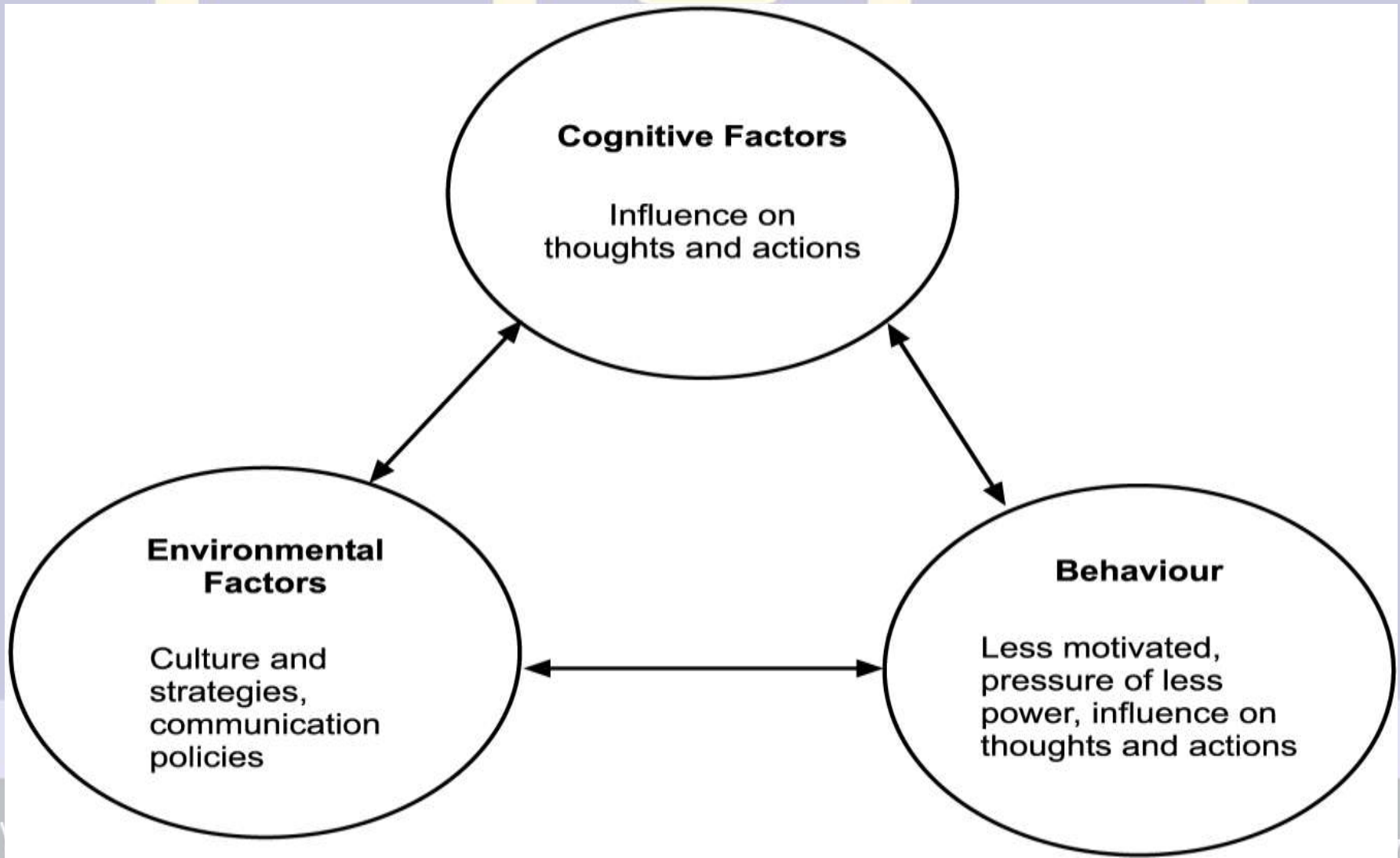
- Social Learning theory is based on outward motivational factors that argue that if children receive positive reinforcement they are motivated to continue a particular behavior.
- If they receive punishment or other indicators of disapproval they are more motivated to stop that behavior. In terms of gender development, children receive praise if they engage in culturally appropriate gender displays and punishment if they do not.
- When aggressiveness in boys is met with acceptance, or a “boys will be boys” attitude, but a girl’s aggressiveness earns them little attention, the two children learn different meanings for aggressiveness as it relates to their gender development. Thus, boys may continue being aggressive while girls may drop it out of their repertoire.

Social Cognitive Theory



- Social cognitive theory was originally proposed by Neal Miller and John Dollard in 1941. This theory is also known as the **social learning theory**. This theory focuses on the cognitive, behavioral, individuals and environmental factors that affect how people behave and how people are motivated.
- There is no single reason that can determine our thoughts or behaviors. Social cognitive theory is also referred to as a theory of theories, or a meta theory. It is primarily divided into four processes of goal attainment: 1) self-observation, 2) self-evaluation, 3) self-reaction, and 4) self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy Theory



Bandura Social Cognitive Theory

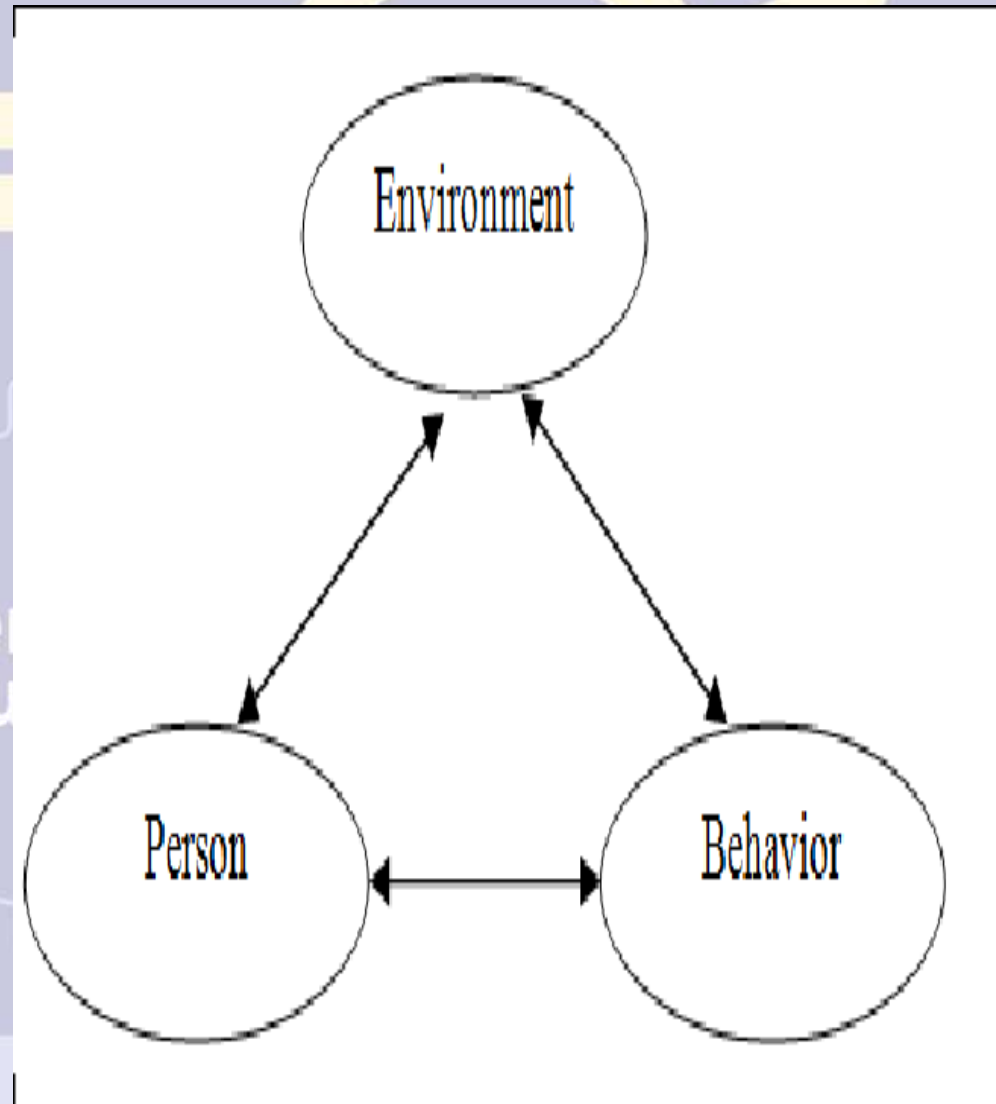
- Bandura modified his theory and in 1986 renamed his Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), as a better description of how we learn from our social experiences.
- Social cognitive theory acknowledges the influential role of evolutionary factors in human adaptation and change, but rejects one-sided evolutionism in which social behavior is the product of evolved biology, but social and technological innovations that create new environmental selection pressures for adaptiveness have no effect on biological evolution (Bandura, 1999).

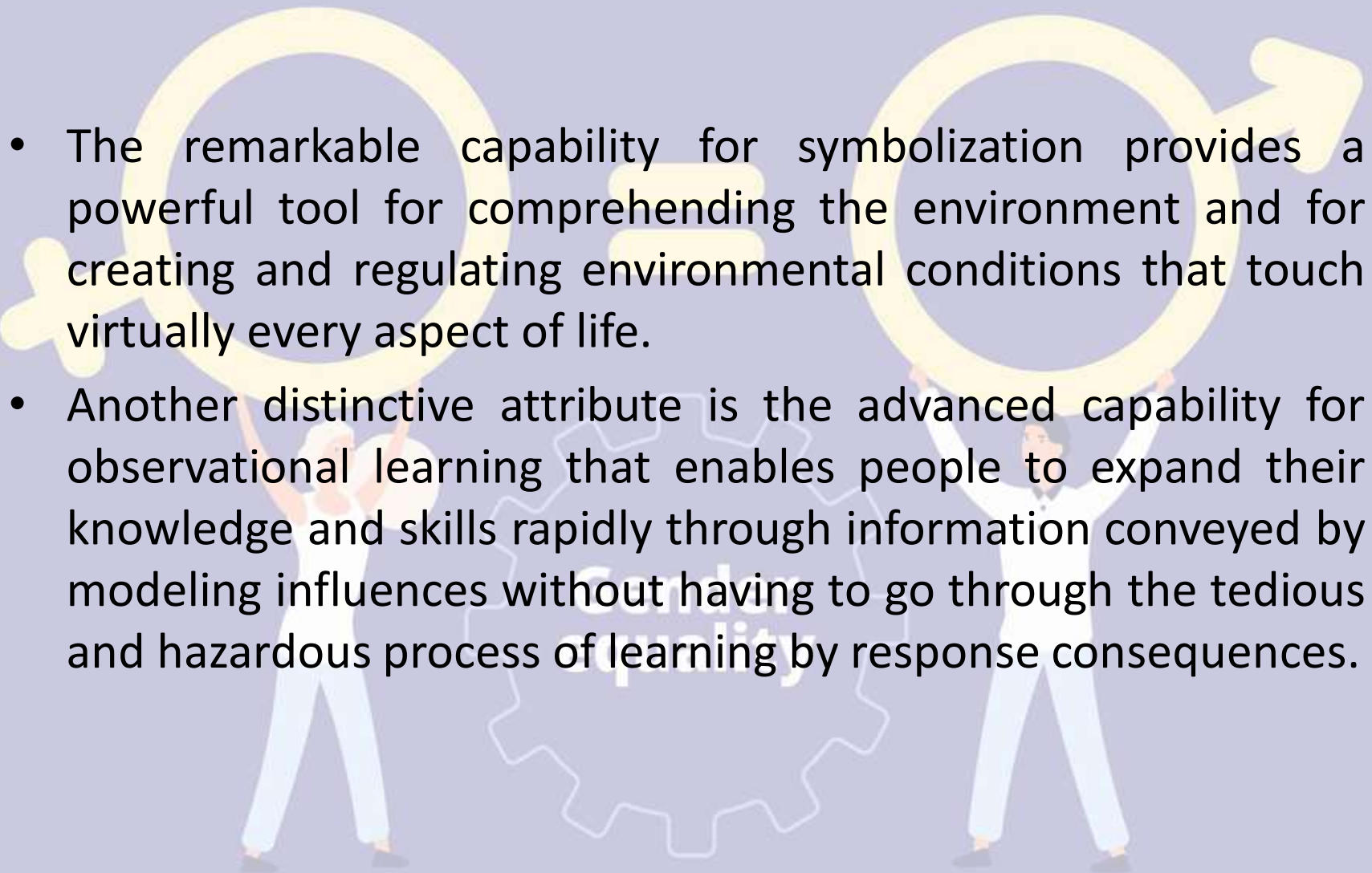
- In the bidirectional view of evolutionary processes, evolutionary pressures fostered changes in bodily structures and upright posture conducive to the development and use of tools, which enabled an organism to manipulate, alter and construct new environmental conditions.

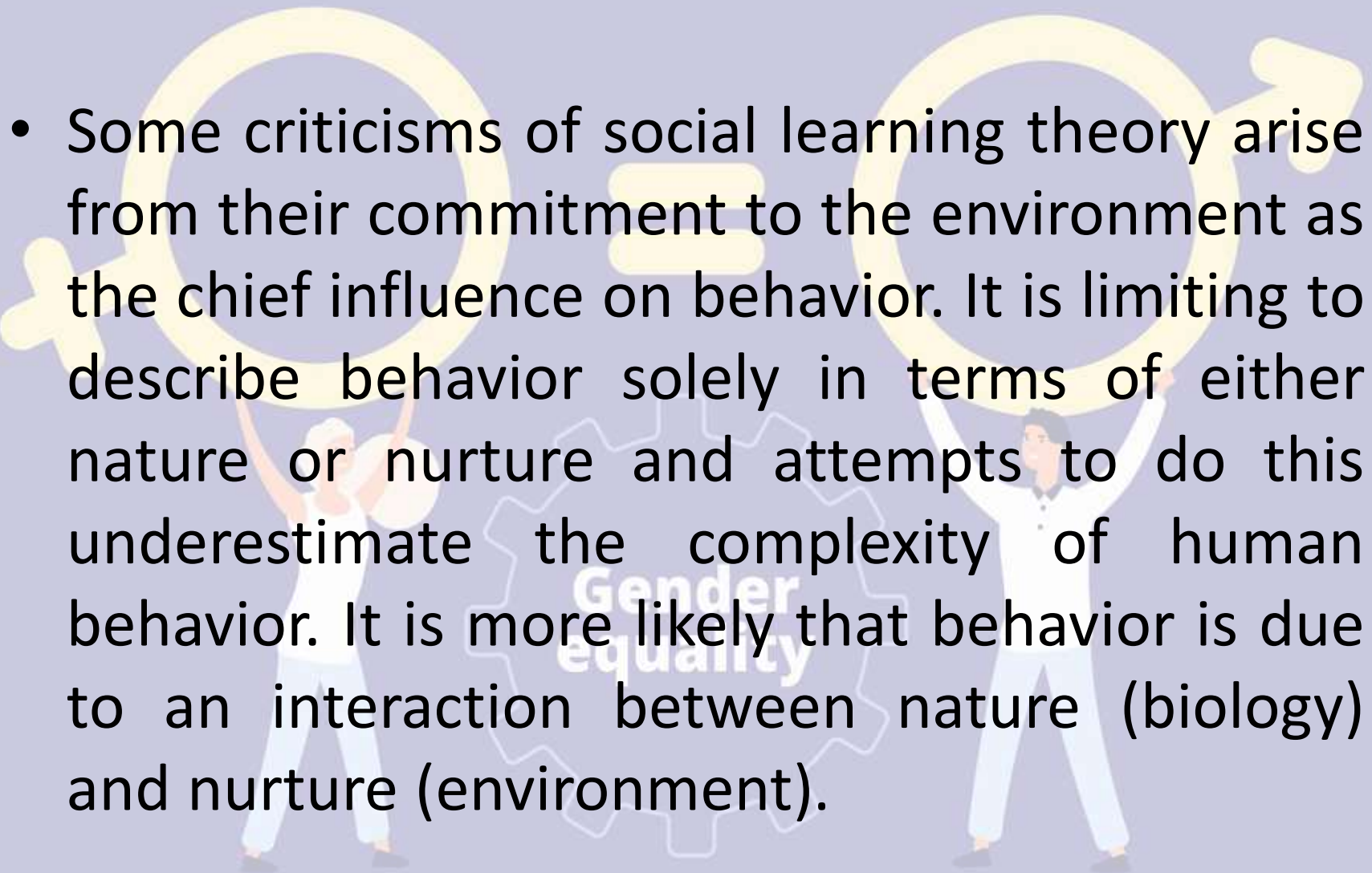
An illustration on a light blue background. In the center, a large white gear contains the text "Gender equality" in bold white font. To the left of the gear, a woman in a white top and light blue pants holds up a large yellow female symbol (a circle with a vertical line and a horizontal crossbar). To the right, a man in a white shirt and light blue pants holds up a large yellow male symbol (a circle with a vertical line and an arrowhead).

**Gender
equality**

- Environmental innovations of increasing complexity, in turn, created new selection pressures for the evolution of specialized biological systems for functional consciousness, thought, language and symbolic communication.
- Social cognitive theory addresses itself to a number of distinctive human attributes (Bandura, 1986).

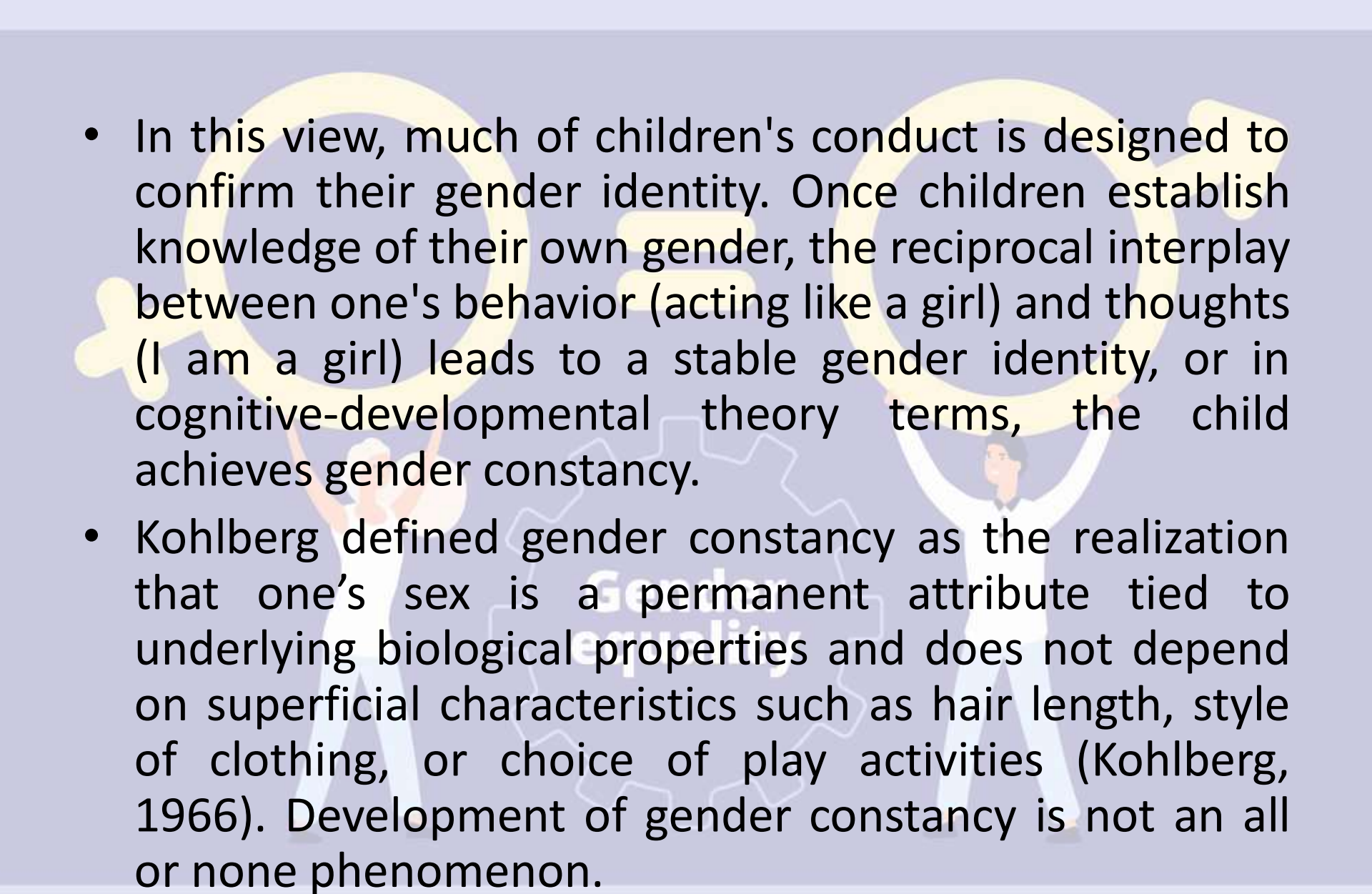


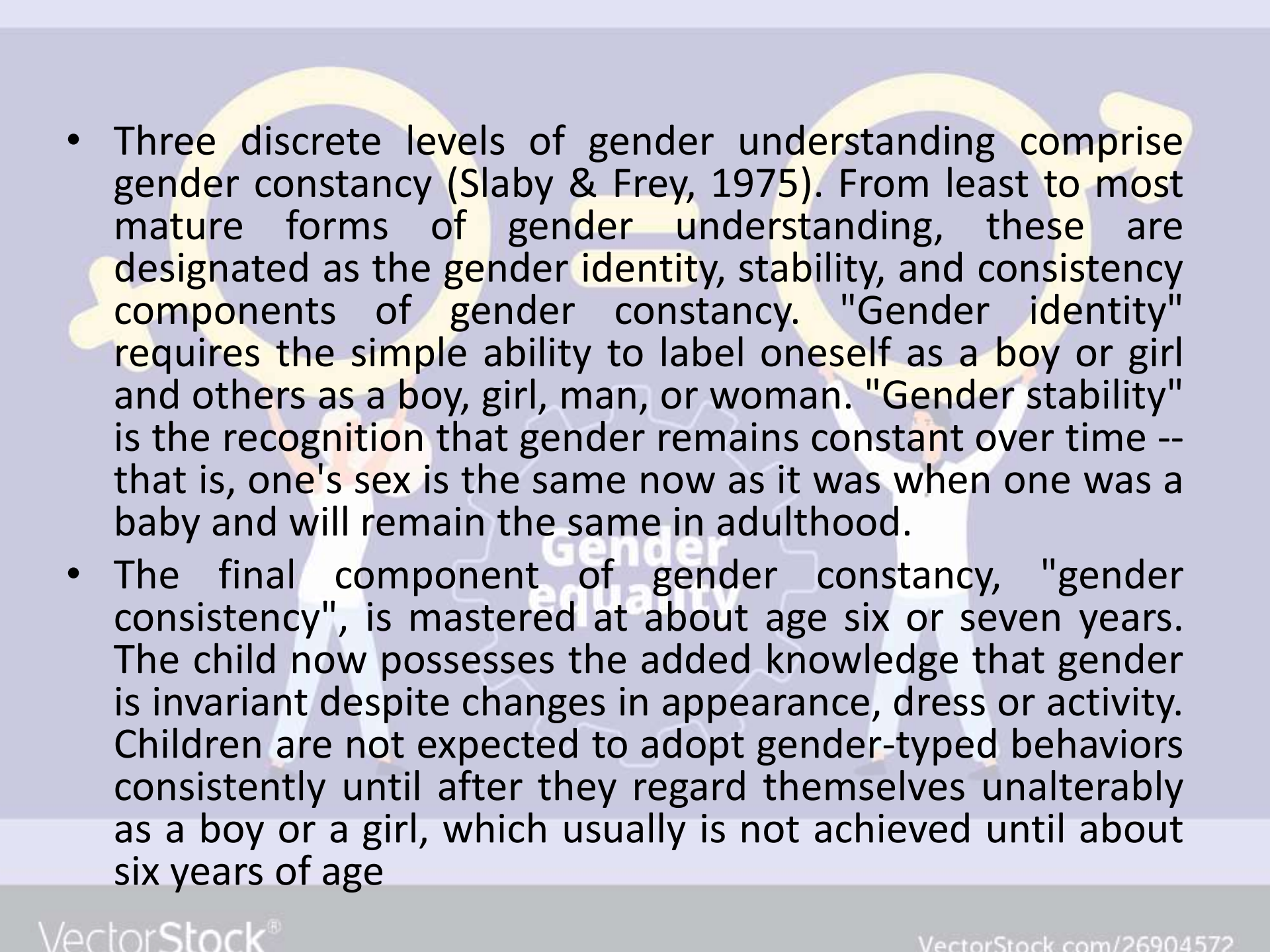
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- The remarkable capability for symbolization provides a powerful tool for comprehending the environment and for creating and regulating environmental conditions that touch virtually every aspect of life.
 - Another distinctive attribute is the advanced capability for observational learning that enables people to expand their knowledge and skills rapidly through information conveyed by modeling influences without having to go through the tedious and hazardous process of learning by response consequences.

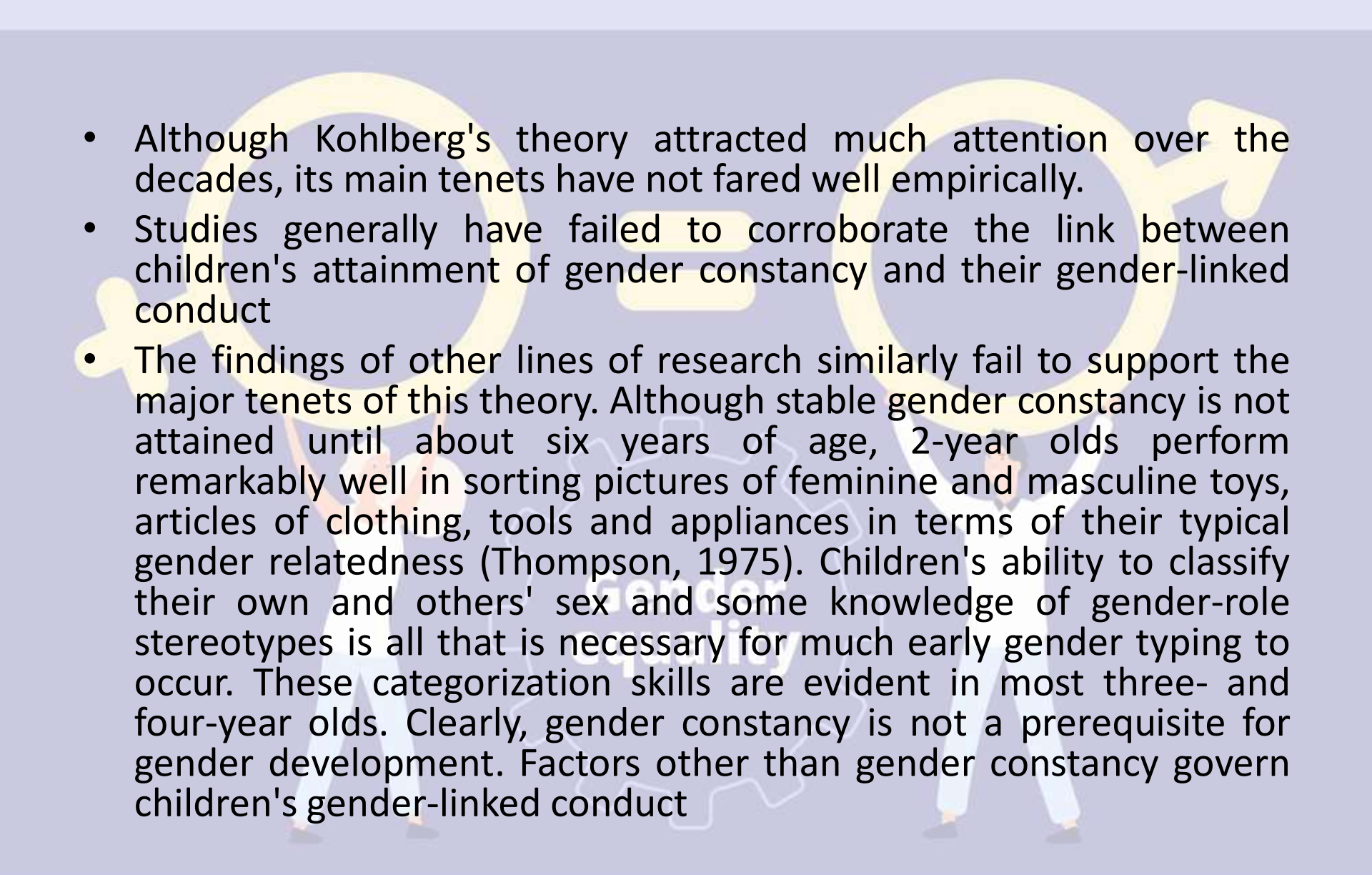
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- Some criticisms of social learning theory arise from their commitment to the environment as the chief influence on behavior. It is limiting to describe behavior solely in terms of either nature or nurture and attempts to do this underestimate the complexity of human behavior. It is more likely that behavior is due to an interaction between nature (biology) and nurture (environment).

Cognitive Developmental Theory

- According to cognitive developmental theory, gender identity is postulated as the basic organizer and regulator of children's gender learning. Children develop the stereotypic conceptions of gender from what they see and hear around them.
- Once they achieve gender constancy -- the belief that their own gender is fixed and irreversible -- they positively value their gender identity and seek to behave only in ways that are congruent with that conception. Cognitive consistency is gratifying, so individuals attempt to behave in ways that are consistent with their self-conception.
- Kohlberg posited the following cognitive processes that create and maintain such consistency: "I am a boy, therefore I want to do boy things, therefore the opportunity to do boy things (and to gain approval for doing them) is rewarding".

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- In this view, much of children's conduct is designed to confirm their gender identity. Once children establish knowledge of their own gender, the reciprocal interplay between one's behavior (acting like a girl) and thoughts (I am a girl) leads to a stable gender identity, or in cognitive-developmental theory terms, the child achieves gender constancy.
 - Kohlberg defined gender constancy as the realization that one's sex is a permanent attribute tied to underlying biological properties and does not depend on superficial characteristics such as hair length, style of clothing, or choice of play activities (Kohlberg, 1966). Development of gender constancy is not an all or none phenomenon.

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- Three discrete levels of gender understanding comprise gender constancy (Slaby & Frey, 1975). From least to most mature forms of gender understanding, these are designated as the gender identity, stability, and consistency components of gender constancy. "Gender identity" requires the simple ability to label oneself as a boy or girl and others as a boy, girl, man, or woman. "Gender stability" is the recognition that gender remains constant over time -- that is, one's sex is the same now as it was when one was a baby and will remain the same in adulthood.
 - The final component of gender constancy, "gender consistency", is mastered at about age six or seven years. The child now possesses the added knowledge that gender is invariant despite changes in appearance, dress or activity. Children are not expected to adopt gender-typed behaviors consistently until after they regard themselves unalterably as a boy or a girl, which usually is not achieved until about six years of age

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- Although Kohlberg's theory attracted much attention over the decades, its main tenets have not fared well empirically.
 - Studies generally have failed to corroborate the link between children's attainment of gender constancy and their gender-linked conduct
 - The findings of other lines of research similarly fail to support the major tenets of this theory. Although stable gender constancy is not attained until about six years of age, 2-year olds perform remarkably well in sorting pictures of feminine and masculine toys, articles of clothing, tools and appliances in terms of their typical gender relatedness (Thompson, 1975). Children's ability to classify their own and others' sex and some knowledge of gender-role stereotypes is all that is necessary for much early gender typing to occur. These categorization skills are evident in most three- and four-year olds. Clearly, gender constancy is not a prerequisite for gender development. Factors other than gender constancy govern children's gender-linked conduct

- In response to the negative findings, the gender constancy measure was modified to demonstrate that the assessment procedure rather than the theory is at fault for the lack of linkage of gender constancy to gender conduct. The modifications included altering the inquiry format, the use of more realistic stimuli, and less reliance on verbal responses (Bem, 1989; Johnson & Ames, 1994; Martin & Halverson, 1983; Siegal & Robinson, 1987).
- Although some of these modifications showed that children understand gender constancy earlier than Kohlberg had suggested, most children under 4 years do not fully understand the concept of constancy regardless of the form of its assessment (Bem, 1989; Frey & Ruble, 1992; Slaby & Frey, 1975).
- More importantly, there is no relationship between children's understanding of gender constancy and their preference for gender-linked activities, preference for same-gender peers, or emulation of same-gender models, regardless of how gender constancy is assessed (Bussey & Bandura, 1984, 1992; Carter, 1987; Carter & Levy, 1988; Huston, 1983; Martin & Little, 1990)

- **COGNITIVE LEARNING THEORY**

- **Cognitive Learning** Unlike Social Learning theory that is based on external rewards and punishments, Cognitive Learning theory states that children develop gender at their own levels. The model, formulated by Kohlberg, asserts that children recognize their gender identity around age three but do not see it as relatively fixed until the ages of five to seven. This identity marker provides children with a schema (A set of observed or spoken rules for how social or cultural interactions should happen.) in which to organize much of their behavior and that of others. Thus, they look for role models to emulate maleness or femaleness as they grow older.
- Cognitive theories of gender development view children as active constructors of knowledge who seek, interpret, and act on information in an effort to match their behavior to their understanding of gender.

Gender Schema Theory

- Several gender schema theories have been proposed to explain gender development and differentiation. The social psychological approaches advanced by Bem and Markus and her associates have centered mainly on individual differences in gender schematic processing of information (Bem, 1981; Markus, Crane, Bernstein, & Siladi, 1982).
- Martin and Halverson's (1981) approach emphasizes the developmental aspects of schema development and functioning.

**I am a boy so I
must act like a boy**

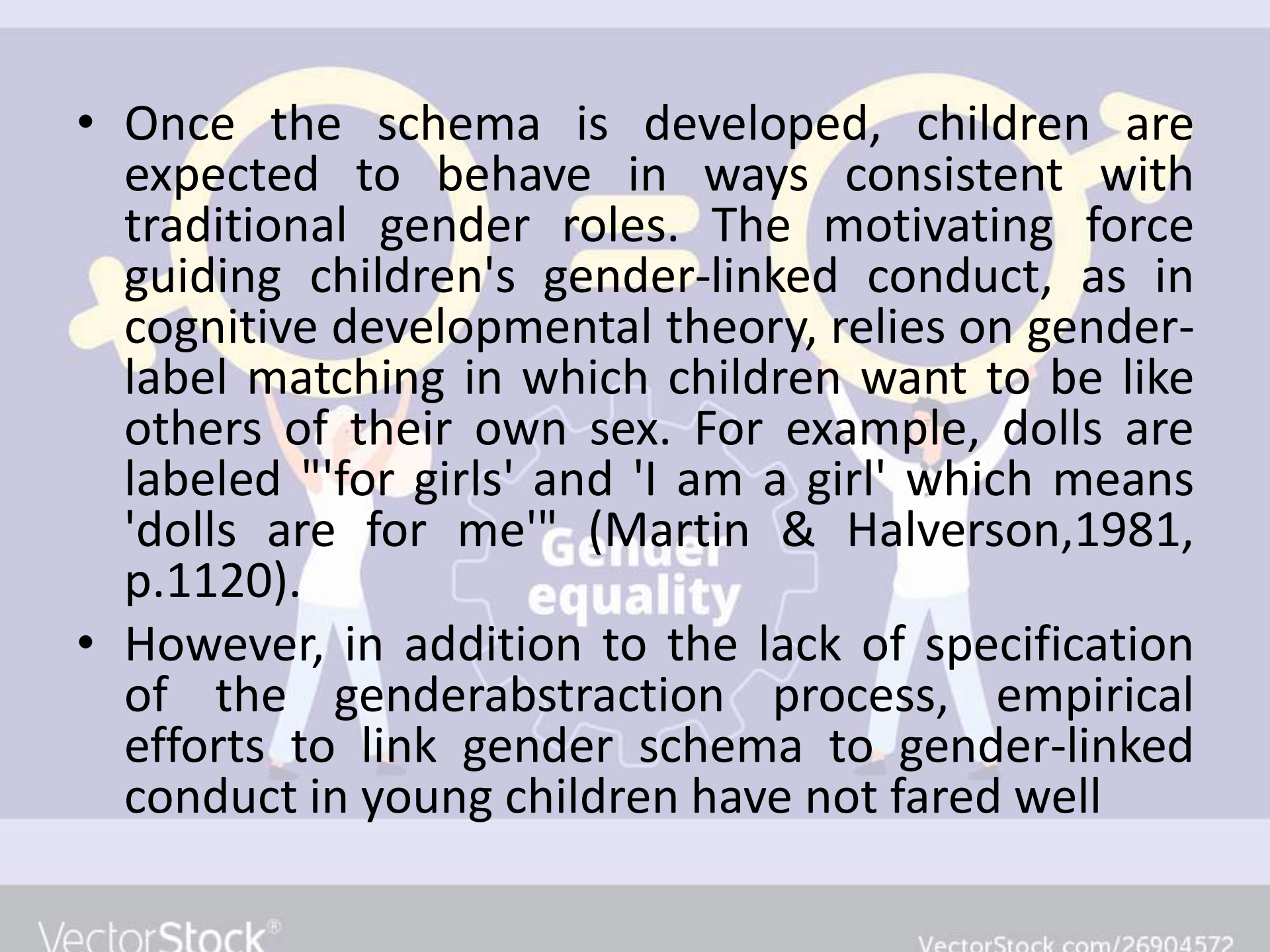


**I am a girl
so I must
act like a
girl.**



Gender Schema Theory

- This theory has many similarities to cognitive-developmental theory, but departs from it in several ways. Rather than requiring the attainment of gender constancy for development of gender orientations, only the mastery of gender identity, the ability of children to label themselves and others as males or females, is considered necessary for gender schema development to begin (Martin & Halverson, 1981). Once formed, it is posited that the schema expands to include knowledge of activities and interests, personality and social attributes, and scripts about gender-linked activities (Levy & Fivush, 1993; Martin, 1995; Martin & Halverson, 1981). The schema is presumably formed from interactions with the environment, but the process by which gender features that constitute the knowledge structure of the schema are abstracted remain unspecified

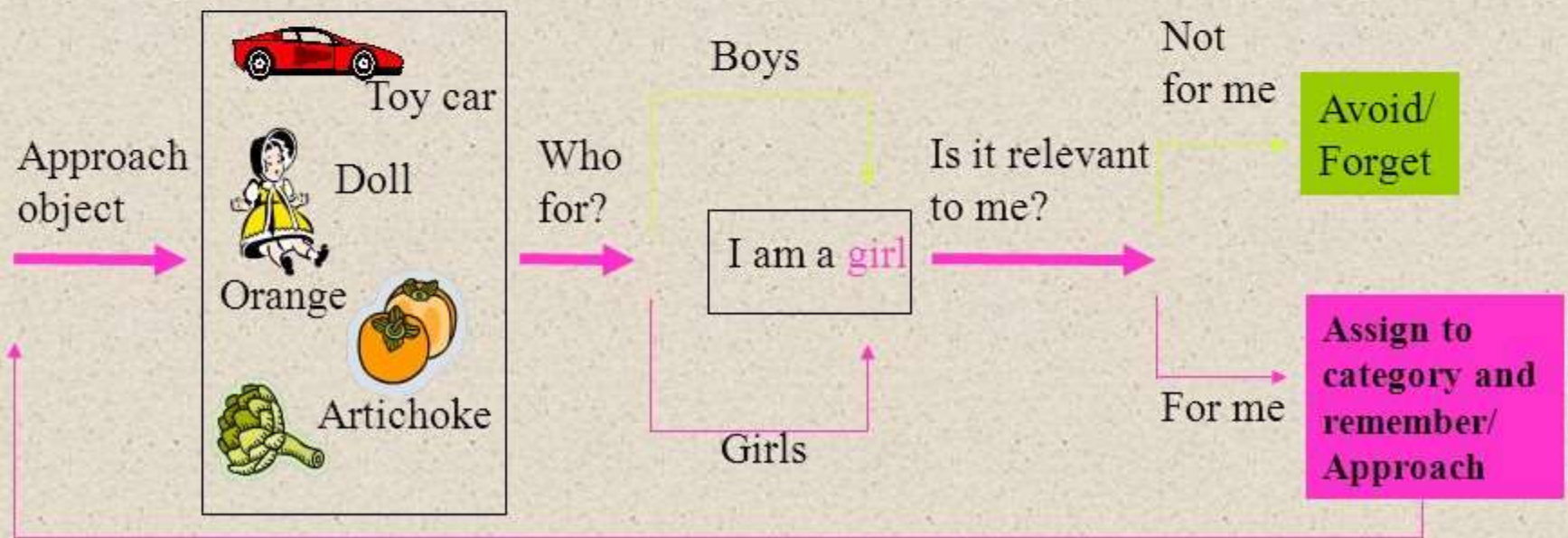
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- Once the schema is developed, children are expected to behave in ways consistent with traditional gender roles. The motivating force guiding children's gender-linked conduct, as in cognitive developmental theory, relies on gender-label matching in which children want to be like others of their own sex. For example, dolls are labeled "'for girls' and 'I am a girl' which means 'dolls are for me'" (Martin & Halverson, 1981, p.1120).
 - However, in addition to the lack of specification of the gender abstraction process, empirical efforts to link gender schema to gender-linked conduct in young children have not fared well

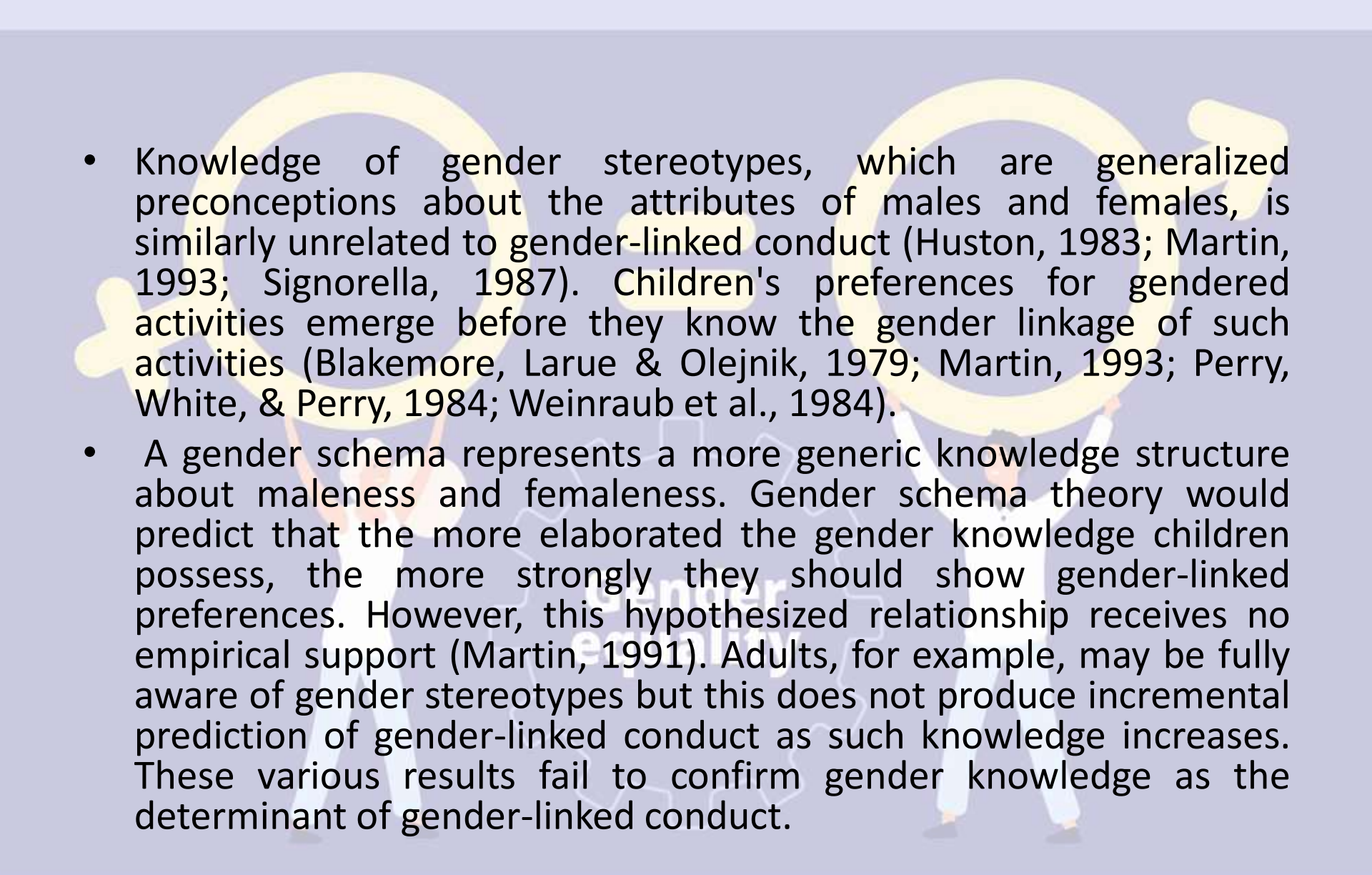
- Results of empirical tests call into question the determinative role of gender schema. The evidence linking gender labeling to activity and peer preferences is mixed at best. A few studies have found a link (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989), others report conflicting results across different measures of gender-linked conduct (Martin & Little, 1990), and still others have failed to find any link at all (Fagot, 1985; Fagot, Leinbach, & Hagen, 1986).
- Even in the studies that report a relationship, it remains to be determined whether gender labeling and gender-linked preferences are causally linked or are merely coeffects of social influences and cognitive abilities.
- Parents who react evaluatively to gender-linked conduct have children who are early gender labelers (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989). Hence, gender labeling and preference may both be products of parental influence.

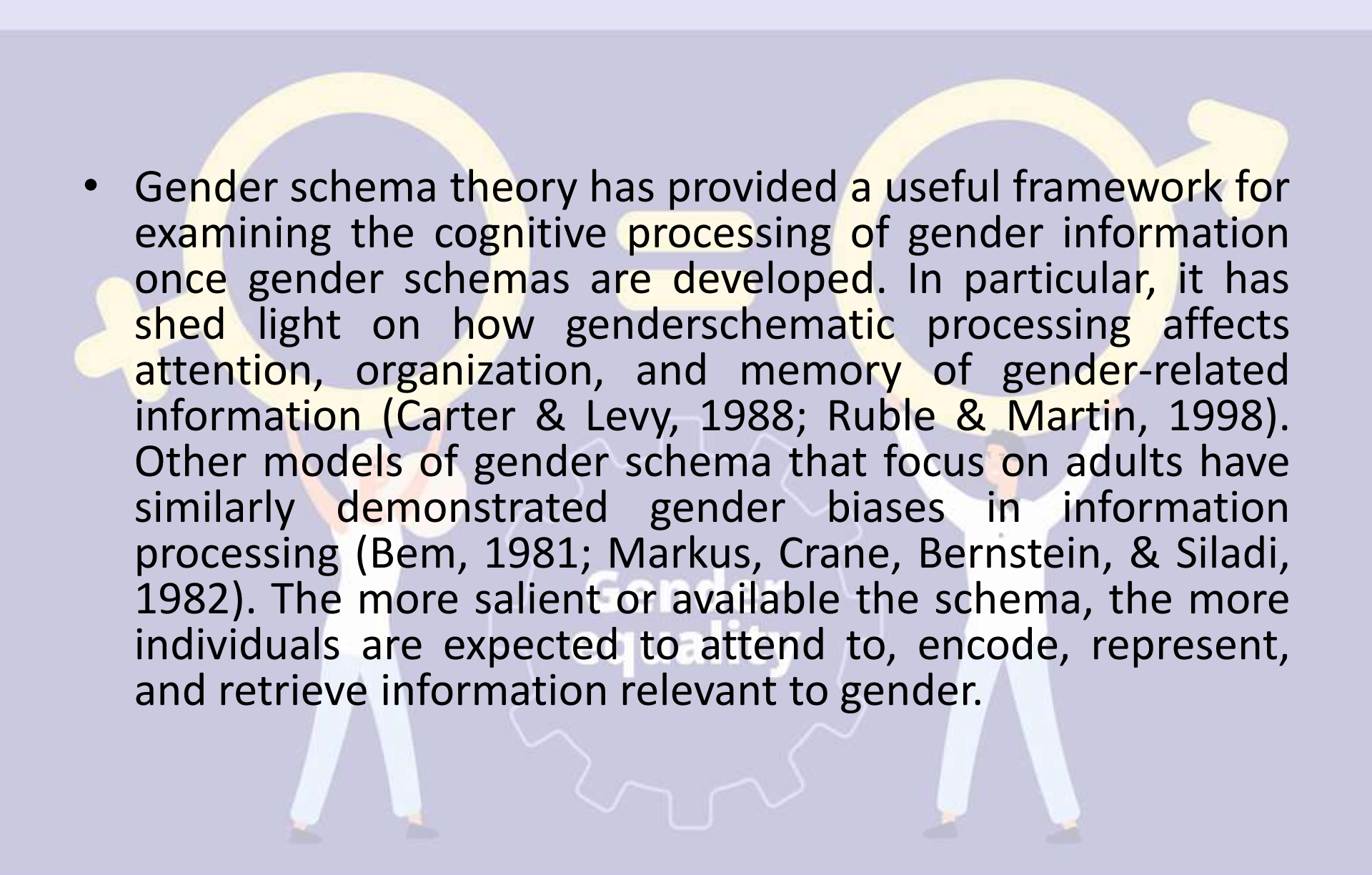
Gender Schema Theory

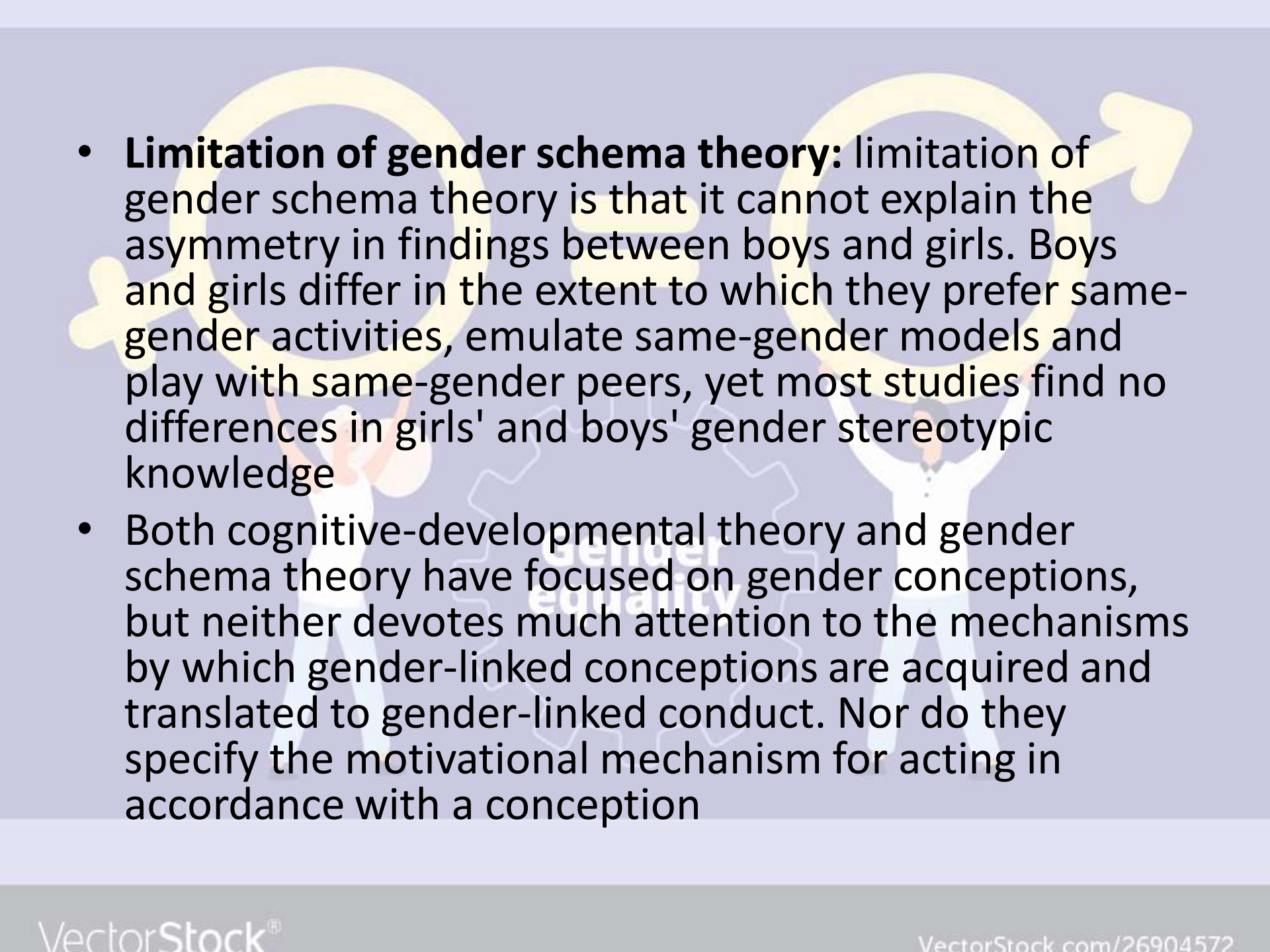
Gender-role development is influenced by the child's formation of schemas, or mental representations, of masculinity and femininity

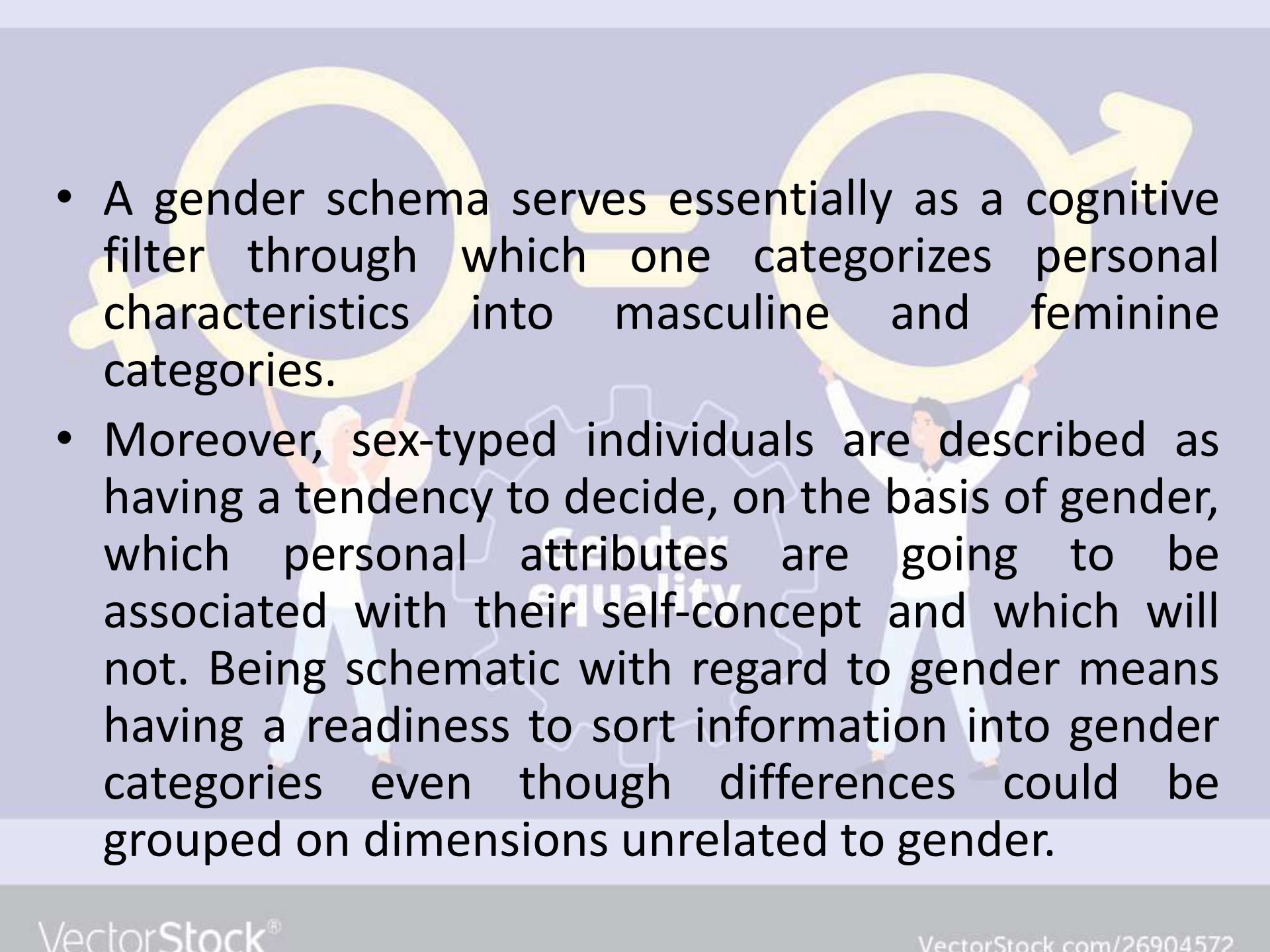
An example of how a child forms a schema associated with gender. A girl is offered a choice of 4 toys to play with.

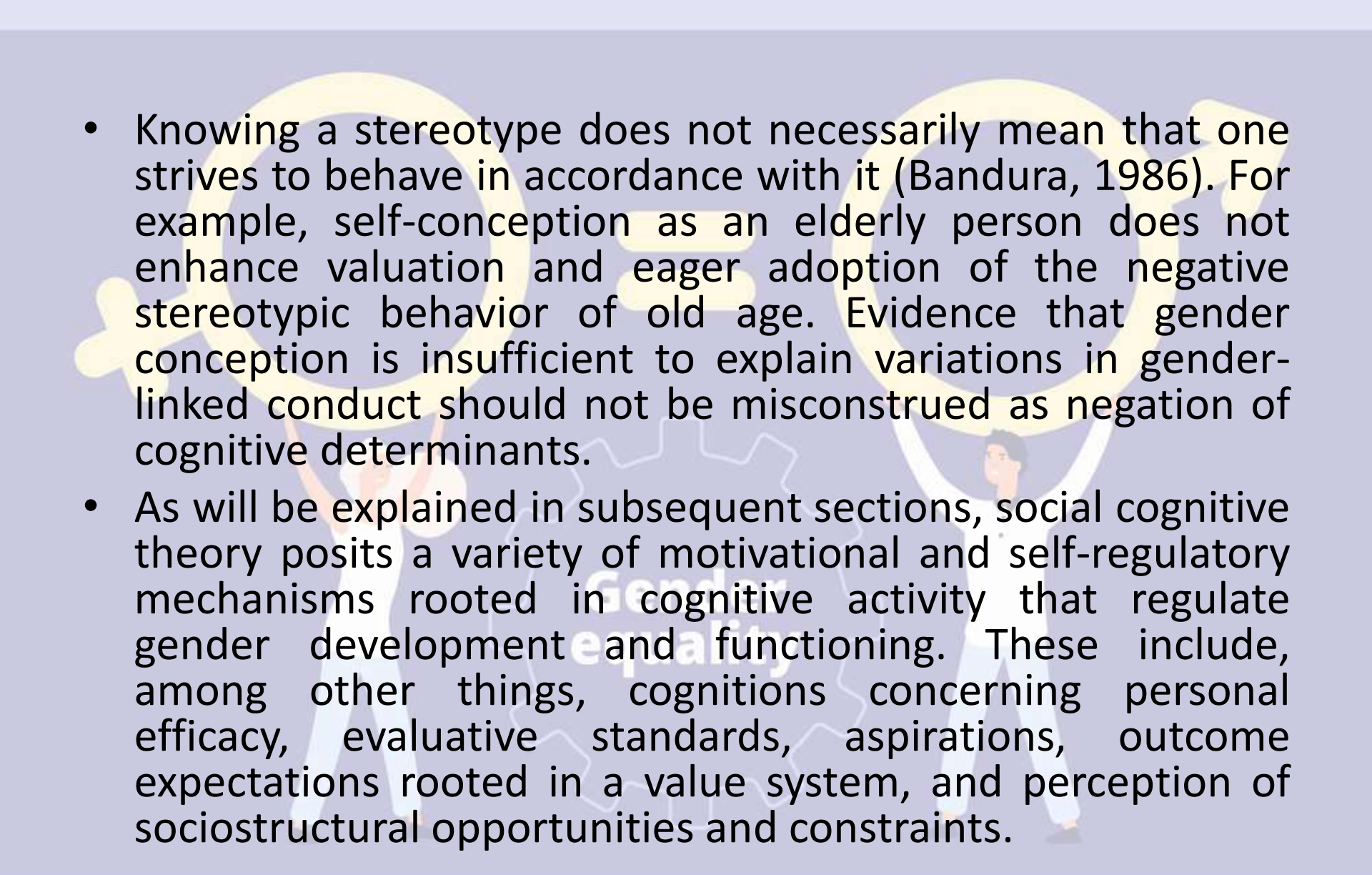


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- Knowledge of gender stereotypes, which are generalized preconceptions about the attributes of males and females, is similarly unrelated to gender-linked conduct (Huston, 1983; Martin, 1993; Signorella, 1987). Children's preferences for gendered activities emerge before they know the gender linkage of such activities (Blakemore, Larue & Olejnik, 1979; Martin, 1993; Perry, White, & Perry, 1984; Weinraub et al., 1984).
 - A gender schema represents a more generic knowledge structure about maleness and femaleness. Gender schema theory would predict that the more elaborated the gender knowledge children possess, the more strongly they should show gender-linked preferences. However, this hypothesized relationship receives no empirical support (Martin, 1991). Adults, for example, may be fully aware of gender stereotypes but this does not produce incremental prediction of gender-linked conduct as such knowledge increases. These various results fail to confirm gender knowledge as the determinant of gender-linked conduct.

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- Gender schema theory has provided a useful framework for examining the cognitive processing of gender information once gender schemas are developed. In particular, it has shed light on how genderschematic processing affects attention, organization, and memory of gender-related information (Carter & Levy, 1988; Ruble & Martin, 1998). Other models of gender schema that focus on adults have similarly demonstrated gender biases in information processing (Bem, 1981; Markus, Crane, Bernstein, & Siladi, 1982). The more salient or available the schema, the more individuals are expected to attend to, encode, represent, and retrieve information relevant to gender.

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- **Limitation of gender schema theory:** limitation of gender schema theory is that it cannot explain the asymmetry in findings between boys and girls. Boys and girls differ in the extent to which they prefer same-gender activities, emulate same-gender models and play with same-gender peers, yet most studies find no differences in girls' and boys' gender stereotypic knowledge
 - Both cognitive-developmental theory and gender schema theory have focused on gender conceptions, but neither devotes much attention to the mechanisms by which gender-linked conceptions are acquired and translated to gender-linked conduct. Nor do they specify the motivational mechanism for acting in accordance with a conception

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- A gender schema serves essentially as a cognitive filter through which one categorizes personal characteristics into masculine and feminine categories.
 - Moreover, sex-typed individuals are described as having a tendency to decide, on the basis of gender, which personal attributes are going to be associated with their self-concept and which will not. Being schematic with regard to gender means having a readiness to sort information into gender categories even though differences could be grouped on dimensions unrelated to gender.

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- Knowing a stereotype does not necessarily mean that one strives to behave in accordance with it (Bandura, 1986). For example, self-conception as an elderly person does not enhance valuation and eager adoption of the negative stereotypic behavior of old age. Evidence that gender conception is insufficient to explain variations in gender-linked conduct should not be misconstrued as negation of cognitive determinants.
 - As will be explained in subsequent sections, social cognitive theory posits a variety of motivational and self-regulatory mechanisms rooted in cognitive activity that regulate gender development and functioning. These include, among other things, cognitions concerning personal efficacy, evaluative standards, aspirations, outcome expectations rooted in a value system, and perception of sociostructural opportunities and constraints.



Thank you