Gender Schema Theory:

- Children construct gender schemas
  - Organized mental representations incorporating information about gender
    - Include children’s own experiences and information conveyed by others, including gender stereotypes
    - Schemas are dynamic—change as children acquire additional information
Once children achieve basic gender identity, they are motivated to acquire gender-typed behavior and characteristics.

- Young children start with a simple “in-group/out-group” gender schema.

- Motivated to prefer, pay attention to, and remember more about others of their own sex.

  - Form an “own-sex” schema—detailed knowledge about their own gender.
Study 3:

– Children used gender labels given to toys to guide their behavior

• Ex: If a toy was labeled as a “boy” toy, girls reported that they were less interested in it and that other girls would also be less interested in it than if the toy was labeled as a “girl” toy (and vice versa for boys)

– True even if the toy was very attractive
• Children show biases in their memory for information about gender

  – More likely to accurately remember information that is consistent with gender stereotypes

  – More likely to forget or distort information that is inconsistent with gender stereotypes