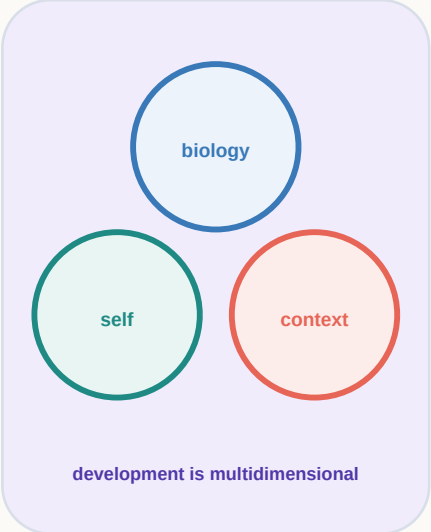
AP PSYCHOLOGY | UNIT 3

TOPIC 3.3

Gender and Sexual Orientation

Psychologists study how biology, identity, social expectations, and culture relate to development and lived experience.



A CAREFUL PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS

DISTINGUISH — define terms → **DESCRIBE** — use evidence → **CONTEXTUALIZE** — include culture → **RESPECT** — avoid stereotypes

BY THE END, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

1. Distinguish sex, gender, identity, expression, roles, and orientation.
2. Explain how socialization can shape experience and self-concept.
3. Evaluate sampling, measurement, ethics, and interpretation in research.

BIG IDEA

Group patterns can inform psychology, but they do not define every individual or prove a single cause.

1 Distinguish the concepts

Related terms describe different parts of biology, identity, expression, attraction, and social expectations.

KEY TERMS

SEX

Biological classification linked to traits such as reproductive anatomy.

GENDER IDENTITY

A person's internal sense of gender.

GENDER EXPRESSION

How a person presents gender outwardly.

GENDER ROLE

A cultural expectation about behavior associated with gender.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A pattern of romantic or sexual attraction.

ANDROGYNY

A mix of traits a culture may label masculine and feminine.

SOCIALIZATION SHAPES EXPERIENCE

FAMILY norms + feedback → **PEERS** norms + feedback → **MEDIA** norms + feedback → **CULTURE** norms + feedback

POSSIBLE EFFECTS Social expectations may influence opportunities, behavior, peer reactions, and self-concept without determining every person's outcome.

DO NOT CONFLATE

Sex, gender identity, gender expression, gender roles, and sexual orientation are related topics, not interchangeable labels.

2 Research identity responsibly

Strong studies protect participants and match their conclusions to the design, measures, and sample.

WHY NON-EXPERIMENTAL METHODS ARE COMMON

OBSERVE, SURVEY, COMPARE

Researchers cannot ethically assign or manipulate identity variables. Non-experimental evidence can show patterns and associations, not automatic causation.

FOUR QUALITY CHECKS

SAMPLE

Who participated, and who is missing?

MEASUREMENT

How were identity and experience defined?

PRIVACY

Were consent, safety, and confidentiality protected?

GENERALIZATION

How far beyond the sample can findings apply?

INTERPRET GROUP DIFFERENCES CAREFULLY

WEAK CLAIM

A group average proves every person in that group is the same.

STRONGER CLAIM

This sample showed a pattern; individual differences and context remain important.

CORRELATION IS NOT CAUSATION

If two identity-related variables are associated, the study must still consider direction, third variables, and social context.

AP RESPONSE CHECK

Define the term, use evidence from the scenario, state the design limit, and avoid stereotypes or universal claims.