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## In the Middle: Respect my existence

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Bailey Chavis

I was at somewhat of a loss for what to write for this piece. So I decided to go with a topic that has been the center of more than a few (heated) classroom debates.

Let's talk gender. How many genders are there? How do you address people of these orientations, and how can we put an end to the debate?

In order to have an intellectual and well-informed discussion about orientation, we must first define a few terms. Society tends to use the words gender and sex interchangeably. However, the assumption that these two words describe the same thing is inaccurate. Someone's sex is defined at birth by their anatomy. A person's sex can be one of three things: female, male, or intersex.

Furthermore, gender is defined (in Merriam-Webster's dictionary) as the "behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex." To elaborate on that definition; one's personality dictates one's gender.

So, sex equals anatomy, and gender equals personality. If this is true (and it is), why is there such a belligerent debate surrounding gender? Why do people feel so attacked when asked to respect someone else's existence? Society likes to say that everyone is welcome to the table, but when people of different orientations ask for a chair, there is miraculously no more room.

The answer to the question, "How many genders are there?": Anything with a personality is capable of having a unique and truly complex gender.

The answer to the question of how to address people with different gender orientations is much simpler. Ask them. Before assuming, offending, and ultimately belittling someone's journey to acceptance: Ask them!

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Bailey Chavis is a seventh-grader at Barker Middle School. In the Middle is a regular column by middle schoolers at Michigan City Area Schools.

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