

Isabela Kent

Mrs. Reis

SUPA ETS 192

26 February 2019

Reading Response 2: Synthesis of *Ma Vie en Rose* & Lorber

Not everyone feels that they belong to the gender they have been assigned since birth, and an individual faces a constant struggle to explain one's self in a world constantly searching for labels. In the French film *Ma Vie en Rose*, this topic is addressed through the perspective of a seven-year-old boy named Ludovic, who faces scrutiny by his family, neighbors, and classmates when he wishes to dress and act like a girl. As Ludovic grapples with his identity in a strictly gendered environment throughout the film, we as an audience can make connections and apply Lorber's theory of gender as a social construct to the film's plot.

One key flashpoint I discovered in Lorber's "Paradoxes of Gender" under the subheading "Components of Gender" is where she outlines how gender takes on many forms as a social institution. She describes, "Gendered social control, the formal and informal approval and reward of conforming behavior and the stigmatization, social isolation, punishment, and medical treatment of nonconforming behavior" (Lorber 30). What this means and what the author makes her project is to argue that those who defy gender norms often suffer when pressured to conform to socially acceptable conventions. To cite an example from the film, Ludovic's parents bring him to numerous sessions with a psychologist, as they have turned to medical treatment as a means for "fixing" their son. Ludovic's parents additionally punish him with their actions and words after facing the neighborhood's backlash, including the father losing his job working for

one of their neighbors. Ludovic's mother, Hanna, cuts his hair short to look like the other boys out of frustration with Ludovic for creating so much trouble in their new life. All of the suffering Ludovic endures, as Lorber would point out, is caused solely by people in his environment being uncomfortable with a child defying the gender norms they have constructed.

An additional flashpoint from the text acknowledges another component of gender, as the author writes, "Gendered sexual scripts, the normative patterns of sexual desire and sexual behavior, as prescribed for the different gender statuses" (Lorber 20). She presents the idea that another component is the societal expectations of one's sexuality. Typically, men are expected to be attracted to females, and vice versa. Nonetheless, Ludovic breaks society's rules once again when it comes to his sexuality in the film. He expresses to his mother and grandmother that rather than marry a girl, he wants to marry Jerome, the son of his father's boss who also lives in the neighborhood. In one scene, Jerome and Ludovic, wearing a dress, have a play-pretend wedding, much to the dismay of Jerome's mother. This event, as well as most of the film's plot, dramatically portrays Lorber's theories as to how deep-rooted society's gender norms have become, so much so that people ostracize their own neighbors, friends, and family just for expressing who they truly are.