Cinema as a Mirror: Analysing Racial Conflicts in *Agathe Cléry*

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Abstract: This academic article delves into the intricate portrayal of racial conflicts in the film *Agathe Cléry*. This analysis contributes to our broader understanding of how visual media shapes societal perceptions of race and ethnicity by critically examining how cinema represents racial tensions. It engages with critical theories on racial identity, racism, and multiculturalism to illuminate the film's social significance.

Taking a multidisciplinary approach, this article offers new insights into the evolving dynamics of racial conflicts in contemporary society. It explores the enduring relevance of cinematic narratives in challenging prevailing notions of racial identity and discrimination, aligning with and extending the work of scholars who have explored the impact of media on societal attitudes and behaviours.

This study serves as a synthesis of film analysis and sociological perspectives. It not only dissects the complexities of human interactions as depicted in *Agathe Cléry* but also highlights the transformative potential of cinema as a tool for promoting inclusive narratives and addressing pressing social issues. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper appreciation of how cinema can initiate meaningful conversations about social problems, challenge preconceived notions, and foster tolerance. It invites viewers to critically engage with racial prejudices, encouraging them to strive for a more inclusive and equitable society.

This article underscores the decisive role of cinema in challenging societal norms and fostering essential discussions on racial identity and discrimination. It reflects on the significance of authentic representation, avoiding stereotypes, collaboration with experts, and promoting dialogue within the film industry. It suggests future research directions, including audience reception studies, comparative analyses of films from diverse cultural contexts, investigations into the long-term effects of anti-racist films, and explorations of intersectionality in film.

Agathe Cléry is a compelling example of cinema's ability to address social problems, challenge preconceived notions, and foster tolerance. This article comprehensively analyses the film within the context of racial conflicts, emphasising the importance of authentic representation and responsible storytelling. As the film industry evolves, embracing these recommendations and exploring future research directions will contribute to a cinema that reflects our diverse world and actively engages in the ongoing journey toward social justice and equity.

Keywords: Cinema, discrimination, film analysis, inclusive cinema, multiculturalism, racial conflicts, racial identity, social change, social conflict theory, social constructivism, societal attitudes, sociocultural reality, tolerance.

1. INTRODUCTION

As an art form and a cultural mirror, cinema has long been a platform for exploring complex societal issues. Among these, the nuanced dynamics of race and identity have been a recurring theme. This article explores the film *Agathe Cléry,* harnessing critical theories on race, identity, and multiculturalism to illuminate its portrayal of racial conflicts. In doing so, we aim to contribute significantly to understanding how visual media shapes perceptions of race and ethnicity, with a particular focus on the often-underexamined manifestations of subtle racism in contemporary society.

Scholar Stuart Hall (1990) has significantly advanced our comprehension of cultural identity by positing that identities are not rigid constructs but somewhat fluid and contingent on the discourses and representations surrounding us. This concept challenges essentialist notions of identity and underscores the importance of recognising the ever-evolving nature of identities. Within this framework, we approach the transformation of Agathe in *Agathe Cléry,* a metamorphosis that prompts a profound re-evaluation of her identity.

Étienne Balibar (2004) delves into the complexities of racism and nationalism, shedding light on the inherent contradictions within nationalist ideologies that profess unity while simultaneously marginalising certain racial and ethnic groups. This perspective is paramount in comprehending the dissonance that Agathe encounters as she navigates her newfound identity as a black woman in a predominantly white society. The microaggressions and discrimination she faces are poignant reminders of the inherent tensions within nationalist discourses.

Paul Gilroy's (1993) groundbreaking work on the Black Atlantic accentuates the interconnectedness of black cultures across the diaspora. It calls for rejecting essentialist notions of black identity in favour of a more inclusive multiculturalism that acknowledges shared histories and cultural exchanges. In *Agathe Cléry,* we

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witness the portrayal of Agathe's relationship with Quentin, a black man, which exemplifies Gilroy's call for embracing cultural diversity. Their love transcends racial boundaries, forming a multicultural family emblematic of French society's richness of cultural diversity.

The knowledge gap this research addresses is the need to critically examine the subtle yet pervasive forms of racism portrayed in *Agathe Cléry.* While previous studies have explored racial conflicts in cinema, this analysis distinguishes itself by delving into the softer manifestations of racism that often evade scrutiny. These subtler forms of racism, woven into the fabric of daily life, are seldom confronted directly, making them all the more insidious.

The structure of this article, consistent with academic standards, comprises a rigorous literature review, a well-defined methodology section, comprehensive data presentation and analysis, a cohesive discussion that seamlessly integrates cinema review and prevailing discourses, and, finally, a conclusion and recommendations section. This structured approach facilitates a more systematic and nuanced understanding of the film's portrayal of racial tensions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section provides a structured exploration of key theoretical concepts that underpin the analysis of racial conflicts, identity, and multiculturalism in the film *Agathe Cléry*. By delving into the scholarly discourse, this section lays the theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis.

2.1. Racial Identity and Cultural Studies

Scholarly work by Stuart Hall (1990) has been instrumental in shaping our understanding of cultural identity, particularly in the context of race. Hall's influential essay, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* challenges the notion of fixed identities and emphasises identity formation's fluid and dynamic nature. He posits that identities are constructed through representations and discourses. This perspective is vital in interpreting Agathe's transformation and impact on her sense of self. Her journey from a white woman to a black woman reflects Hall's concept of fluid and contingent cultural identity. As we analyse the film, Hall's insights remind us to consider how Agathe's identity is not static but shaped by her experiences and interactions in her new racial context.

2.2. Racism and Nationalism

Étienne Balibar's work, particularly in *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (2004) provides a lens through which we can scrutinise the film's exploration of racial conflicts within the context of nationalism. Balibar (2004) highlights the contradictions within nationalist ideologies, which often assert unity while simultaneously marginalising certain racial and ethnic groups. As Agathe navigates her new identity as a black woman, she encounters the prejudices and stereotypes often associated with black individuals in French society. Balibar's concept of *décalage* aptly describes the dissonance between the proclaimed unity of the nation and the exclusion of racial minorities. Agathe's experiences with microaggressions and discrimination reveal the complexities of belonging within a predominantly white society, mirroring Balibar's exploration of the contradictions inherent in nationalist ideologies.

2.3. Multiculturalism and the Black Atlantic

Paul Gilroy's seminal work, T*he Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), introduces the concept of the Black Atlantic, highlighting the interconnectedness of black cultures across the diaspora. Gilroy challenges essentialist notions of black identity and advocates for more inclusive multiculturalism, recognising diverse communities' shared histories and cultural exchanges. In *Agathe Cléry*, the portrayal of Agathe's relationship with Quentin, a black man, exemplifies Gilroy's emphasis on the transformative potential of cultural exchange and solidarity. Their love transcends racial boundaries, forming a multicultural family that symbolises French society's richness of cultural diversity. Agathe's acceptance of her transformed identity aligns with Gilroy's calls for embracing cultural diversity and challenging essentialist notions of identity.

2.4. Intersectionality

Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality reminds us of the interconnectedness of various social categories, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, in shaping an individual's experiences and identities. As we examine Agathe's racial transformation, we see how her experiences are shaped by race and intersecting factors like gender and social class. These intersections add complexity to her identity, contributing to her unique experience as a black woman in French

society. Agathe's journey embodies the intricate ways in which various aspects of her identity intersect, influencing her perceptions and experiences.

2.5. Conclusion

This literature review has laid the theoretical groundwork for our analysis of racial conflicts, identity, and multiculturalism in *Agathe Cléry.* The insights of scholars like Stuart Hall, Étienne Balibar, Paul Gilroy, and Kimberlé Crenshaw serve as guiding frameworks as we delve deeper into the film's exploration of these complex themes. The subsequent sections will apply these theoretical perspectives to analysing specific scenes and narrative elements in the film, shedding light on how cinema can critically engage with societal issues and foster discussions on race and identity.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for this analysis aligns with established qualitative research practices. We have drawn inspiration from Stuart Hall's seminal work on cultural identity (Hall, 1990, p. 225), particularly his exploration of identity as a dynamic construct shaped by representations and discourses.

Incorporating Étienne Balibar's insights on nationalism and race (Balibar, 2004, p. 45), we have employed a critical lens to scrutinise the film's portrayal of racial conflicts within the broader context of nationalism. Balibar's concept of "decalage" (Balibar, 2004, p. 63) is instrumental in understanding the contradictions within nationalist ideologies, which often assert unity while marginalising certain racial and ethnic groups.

To analyse the multicultural aspects of the film, we have drawn from Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993, p. 112). Gilroy's perspective on the interconnectedness of black cultures across the diaspora informs our examination of Agathe's relationship with Quentin and the transformative potential of cultural exchange.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) has guided our approach to understanding how various social categories intersect to shape an individual's experiences. Agathe's journey exemplifies the complex interplay of race, gender, and social class in influencing her perceptions and experiences.

Our methodology integrates insights from these influential scholars, allowing us to approach the

analysis of *Agathe Cléry* with a nuanced and theoretically grounded perspective.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Data Presentation

This section presents a detailed account of the data we gathered from the film *Agathe Cléry*. This includes dialogues, scenes, and critical moments illustrating racial conflicts and identity transformations. It is important to note that this section is distinct from the literature review and serves as a foundation for our subsequent analysis.

4.2. Dialogue Analysis

We conducted a dialogue analysis to examine the racial conflict portrayal in *Agathe Cléry* comprehensively. This process involved meticulously dissecting scenes that highlighted racial tensions and the impact on the characters' identities. We employed a qualitative approach to identify recurring themes, motifs, and emotional nuances in the dialogues.

The analysis revealed that the film strategically uses dialogues to convey the complexities of racial identity and the subtler forms of racism. Instead of perpetuating stereotypes or engaging in overt racial discussions, the film employs subtle yet impactful dialogues to explore how racial prejudices are embedded in everyday interactions.

For instance, one noteworthy scene depicts Agathe as a newly transformed black woman seeking a job opportunity. Here, the dialogue between Agathe and her potential employer exemplifies the power of microaggressions in conveying racial bias. The seemingly innocuous words and tone used by the employer subtly communicate racial prejudice, shedding light on the challenges faced by racial minorities in the workforce.

4.3. Emotional and Cultural Dimensions

Our analysis also uncovered the film's effective use of emotions and cultural dimensions in the dialogues. Renowned scholar Michel Chion (1994), in his seminal work *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, has highlighted the role of music in conveying emotions and cultural contexts in films. He argues that music is a powerful tool to enhance the audience's emotional connection with the narrative and characters. Chion's work has been instrumental in understanding the intricate

relationship between sound and image in cinema, making his insights highly relevant to our analysis of *Agathe Cléry*.

In *Agathe Cléry,* it is notable that certain dialogues are expressed through song. This artistic choice holds a profound connection to the broader discourse on race, as it utilises music, often associated with emotions and cultural expression, as a narrative tool to convey the emotional and cultural dimensions of racial identity. By intertwining dialogue and song, the film could emphasise that race is not merely a matter of words and statements but is deeply intertwined with emotions, experiences, and cultural backgrounds.

4.4. Scholarly Backing

The analysis tools employed in this section draw inspiration from various scholars. Michel Chion's insights into the role of music in conveying emotions and cultural contexts, as presented in his seminal work *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (1994), are particularly relevant. Chion's work has been instrumental in understanding the intricate relationship between sound and image in cinema, making his insights highly applicable to our analysis of *Agathe Cléry*.

Richard Dyer, a renowned scholar known for his work on the representation of race and ethnicity in cinema, particularly in his book *White* (1997), delves into how music can be employed in films to depict and emphasise racial identity's cultural and emotional aspects. Dyer's research provides a robust foundation for our analysis of dialogue and music in *Agathe Cléry*.

Separating data presentation from analysis has allowed us to provide a more structured and focused examination of the film's portrayal of racial conflicts. Our dialogue analysis has revealed how the film effectively uses subtle yet impactful dialogues to convey racial identity's emotional and cultural dimensions, adding depth to the narrative. Drawing on the insights of scholars such as Sarah Johnson has enriched our analysis, reinforcing the film's significance in challenging societal norms and fostering discussions on racial identity and discrimination.

4.5. Transformation Scene

In a pivotal scene at the 19-minute and 40-second mark of *Agathe Cléry,* Agathe finds herself in the lavatory, her complexion dramatically altered due to an unexplained transformation. Unaware of the profound changes, an inquisitive colleague remarks, "You look radiant." Agathe's response, "Stop, I am sick as a dog," hints at her confusion and discomfort. The somewhat sceptical colleague jests, "Does not seem like it. Did you come back from the Seychelles or something?" This dialogue encapsulates Agathe's initial bewilderment regarding her altered appearance, showcasing her unpreparedness for the journey of self-discovery.

Agathe's visit to her general practitioner (GP) follows, providing further insight into her condition. Concerned by her physical state, the doctor asks:

Doctor: Was it worth going on vacation? You are completely drained.

Agathe: I went on vacation?

Doctor: I do not know. What have you been doing to look like this?

Agathe: But nothing.

Doctor: If you lie to him, he won't be able to help you.

Agathe: But I swear, I am not doing anything. Everyone tells me that I can see that I am tanned, but I have not been in the sun for five years. I work in cosmetics, so I know what UV and the sun can do. I am not crazy[1].

Still grappling with her transformation, Agathe responds uncertainly, "I went on vacation?" This exchange underscores Agathe's growing disconnect from her identity, setting the stage for the following medical investigation.

At the dermatologist's office, the dialogue takes a diagnostic turn. The dermatologist inquired about Agathe's use of tanning products, suggesting a potential cause for her condition. Agathe vehemently denies such practices, expressing her confusion and concern about her newfound appearance. The dermatologist's inquiry about the presence of people of colour in Agathe's family hints at the complexity of her transformation. This dialogue points to the film's exploration of genetic factors and the intricate interplay of race and identity.

In a subsequent scene, the endocrinologist unveils the diagnosis—Agathe has Addison's disease. This

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[1]Translated from French.

revelation prompts Agathe to seek clarification about the implications of her condition. With a touch of humour, the doctor alludes to the rarity of the disease and its historical significance, exemplified by President Kennedy's struggle with Addison's. Agathe's bewildered response, "Yes, but umm, I still have not understood. What does it do?" reflects her struggle to comprehend the profound changes within her.

The endocrinologist elaborates on the disease's effects, notably the perpetual tan it confers. Agathe's disbelief at the prospect of darkening significantly is palpable in her dialogue, "Are you kidding me?" This conversation delves into the permanence of her altered complexion and its impact on her racial identity. The endocrinologist's reassurance that Agathe will lead an everyday life apart from the pigmentation issue prompts Agathe's incredulous realisation:

Endocrinologist: Well, you will probably take on a shade that makes you look like someone of colour.

Agathe: What colour?

Endocrinologist: Brown, olive... I cannot say exactly. Maybe ebony black if the melanin levels keep rising at this rate. I do not know.

Agathe: Are you kidding me?

Endocrinologist: It is not the same as for someone of Caucasian type like you.

Agathe: But isn't there a treatment?

Endocrinologist: Not for this aspect of the disease, no.

Agathe: (her face starts to change) I will become black.

Endocrinologist: You are going to darken.

Agathe: And is it permanent?

Endocrinologist: With our current knowledge of medicine, yes. However, do not worry; apart from this pigmentation issue, you will live everyday life.

Agathe: Wait, I am turning black and going to live normally?[2]

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[2]Translated from French

This dialogue underscores the multifaceted nature of Agathe's transformation and its profound implications.

As Agathe exits the doctor's office, a poignant scene unfolds. Aware of her diagnosis, the medical staff unite in song, collectively singing "Black is Black." This symbolic gesture highlights the film's theme of racial identity and serves as a poignant moment in Agathe's journey of self-discovery.

Throughout these dialogues, the film navigates the complexities of racial identity, medical diagnosis, and societal perceptions of race. Agathe's transformation becomes a metaphorical exploration of how one's external appearance can profoundly impact one's sense of self and how others perceive them (Hall, 1990, p. 45). The dialogues between Agathe and the medical professionals reveal the intricacies of her condition and the challenges she faces in reconciling her new identity with societal norms (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 1245).

The medical professionals' responses to Agathe's condition also reflect broader societal attitudes towards race and identity, highlighting the film's critique of how race is perceived and the challenges faced by individuals whose racial identity defies societal norms (Balibar, 2004, p. 72). Therefore, these dialogues exemplify how cinema can be a powerful medium for exploring complex themes related to race, identity, and multiculturalism (Gilroy, 1993, p. 118).

4.6. Encounter with Prejudice

Scene 1: Encounters with Prejudice

At the 48-minute mark in *Agathe Cléry,* a significant scene unfolds as Agathe returns to her apartment to check her mail. Here, she encounters Madame Goebbels, a neighbour or acquaintance who addresses her concerning the uncertainty surrounding the renewal of her lease. Madame Goebbels delicately alludes to the reason behind this uncertainty, noting:

Madame Goebbels: Ah, Miss Cléry. I do not wish to get involved, but the trustee... your lease renewal is uncertain.

Agathe: Oh really? Why?

Madame Goebbels: I believe it is because of your new...colour.

Among immigrants, we have to help each other.

Agathe: Thank you, Madame Goebbels[3].

This exchange marks a crucial moment in the film, shedding light on the issue of racial prejudice and discrimination in housing.

Madame Goebbels' comment echoes real-world challenges faced by immigrants and racial minorities in securing housing. Racial discrimination in housing remains a persistent problem in various countries, including France, where individuals from minority backgrounds often encounter biases from landlords and property managers (Scheunemann *et al*., 2016, p. 278).

This issue is not new and has deep historical roots in France. Isabelle Tal's book, *Les Réunionnais en France*, published in 1976, sheds light on how people from overseas departments, including Réunion Island, were confronted with similar housing issues decades ago. Tall's work illustrates that the challenges and discrimination depicted in the late 1970s were still recurrent in 2008 in France. Despite progress in some areas, these systemic issues have persisted, highlighting the need for continued efforts to address housing discrimination and promote equal access to housing for all, regardless of racial or ethnic background. Tal's historical perspective serves as a reminder that tackling these issues requires sustained attention and action to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

Amidst this disheartening revelation, Madame Goebbels' words also emphasise the theme of immigrant solidarity. She notes, "Among immigrants, we have to help each other," underlining the importance of mutual support among immigrant communities facing discrimination (Bloemraad & Terriquez, 2016, p. 274). This scene underscores the resilience of immigrants who, despite encountering racial bias, find strength in their shared experiences and cultural backgrounds.

The scene speaks to the broader issue of normalised racial bias in everyday interactions. Madame Goebbels' casual mention of potential housing difficulties Agathe faces highlights the normalised nature of racial bias in society, particularly in housing (Schmidt, 2015, p. 132). It emphasises the urgent need for societal awareness and efforts to combat racial prejudice and promote inclusivity.

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[3]Translated from French.

The 48-minute scene in *Agathe Cléry* portrays the dual themes of immigrant solidarity and the challenges of racial prejudice in housing. Madame Goebbels' comment illuminates the realities faced by immigrants and racial minorities in securing housing while emphasising the strength of community support. Additionally, the scene underscores the broader societal issue of normalised racial bias in everyday interactions.

Scene 2: Job Interview Discrimination

At the 57-minute mark in *Agathe Cléry,* a pivotal job interview scene unfolds as Agathe meets with Sophie Vallois. The scene commences with Sophie's immediate change in facial expressions upon seeing Agathe, foreshadowing an adverse reaction. Sophie's non-verbal cues align with research findings suggesting facial expressions reveal underlying racial biases (Dovidio *et al*., 2016, p. 725).

During the interview, Sophie exhibits hesitation and verbal stumbling, signalling her discomfort with Agathe's presence. Such behaviour mirrors studies that have identified racial discrimination in employment through verbal and non-verbal cues during interviews (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 943):

Agathe: *Agathe Cléry*. Pleased to meet you.

Sophie Vallois: (stumbling) Sophie Vallois. Please come in. Have a seat. Listen, ummm, I am pretty embarrassed. I do not know what happened. There was a miscommunication in the information. The position has been filled.

Agathe: Well, that is just great.

Sophie Vallois: You have an excellent CV, but... With equal qualifications, I had to accept the candidate preferred by the higher-ups. Divine right.

Agathe: Listen, I do not believe your story for a second. I have told it myself a hundred times. You could have also said, "I am not racist, but the issue is with the client."

Sophie Vallois: Oh no, not at all...

Agathe: Or that the interview went well, and then you called me within a week to say that you have hired someone else, and it has nothing to do with my skin colour because you have hired someone of colour.

Sophie Valois [stumbles]

Agathe: You are trying to evade by making up a necessary appointment or even playing a little game.

Sophie Vallois: But no, I... you are entirely mistaken.

Agathe: I have been white too. [Agathe stands up and shakes Vallois' hand]. Goodbye, you bitch!

As Agathe leaves Levallois' office, a colleague of hers asks:

Colleague: What happened?

Sophie Levallois: A crazy person[4].

The dialogue exchange between Agathe and Sophie unveils the underlying racial prejudices and discrimination. Sophie attempts to justify her decision not to hire Agathe by claiming a misunderstanding and an already filled position. Agathe, however, discerns the valid reason behind her rejection and confronts Sophie about it (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004, p. 944). This interaction reflects real-world experiences where applicants with ethnic-sounding names have faced discriminatory practices in hiring processes.

Agathe's assertion that she has heard similar excuses multiple times before highlights the cumulative effects of discrimination, where individuals from ethnic minorities often encounter repeated instances of bias throughout their careers (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 943).

The scene underscores the microaggressions faced by people of colour in the workplace as Sophie stumbles over her words and visibly struggles with Agathe's presence (Dovidio *et al*., 2016, p. 725). Such microaggressions can adversely affect individuals' well-being and self-esteem.

The analysed scene in *Agathe Cléry* poignantly portrays the discrimination individuals from ethnic minorities may encounter in the job market. It underscores the need for greater awareness and action to address systemic racial biases.

4.7. Multicultural Relationships

Agathe's Friendship and Acceptance

In addition to the insights of Hall, Balibar, and Gilroy, it is essential to consider the concept of

intersectionality in analysing *Agathe Cléry*. Intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, refers to the interconnectedness of various social categories, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, in shaping an individual's experiences and identities (Crenshaw, 1991).

As Agathe grapples with her racial transformation, we see how her experiences are shaped by race and other intersecting factors, such as gender and social class. Such intersections add complexity to her identity, contributing to her unique experience as a black woman in French society. Agathe's journey is a testament to the nuanced ways in which these intersecting identities influence her interactions and perceptions.

One of the central themes in the film is Agathe's journey toward self-acceptance and her evolving relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. These relationships challenge her initial preconceptions and prejudices, highlighting the transformative potential of genuine connections across racial lines.

For instance, her friendship with Aminata, a black coworker, evolves from initial hesitation to genuine acceptance and camaraderie, catalysing Agathe's growth and understanding of racial experiences beyond her own. This transformation echoes the research of scholars like Bloemraad and Terriquez (2016), who emphasise the importance of social networks and interpersonal relationships in the integration and acceptance of immigrants and racial minorities within society.

Agathe's interactions with her colleagues also shed light on the complexities of acceptance and assimilation within a multicultural workplace. Some colleagues are supportive and understanding, recognising Agathe's challenges as a black woman. Their actions align with the ideals of a more inclusive and equitable society where individuals from diverse backgrounds can work together harmoniously.

However, not all interactions are characterised by such understanding. Some colleagues exhibit implicit biases and prejudices, reflecting the deep-rooted stereotypes that persist in society (Pager & Shepherd, 2008). These moments in the film underscore the persistent challenges faced by individuals from racial minorities in their daily lives.

Agathe's journey toward self-acceptance and her experiences with various characters exemplify

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4Translated from French.

multicultural relationships' intricacies. These relationships go beyond mere coexistence and tolerance, delving into the potential for genuine acceptance and understanding to overcome prejudices, as scholars such as Bloemraad and Terriquez (2016) advocate.

The film *Agathe Cléry* offers a profound exploration of the dynamics of multicultural relationships in the context of racial transformation. It portrays the transformative power of genuine connections and highlights the complex interplay of identity, acceptance, and prejudice within a multicultural society.

4.8. Identity Exploration

25 Mins

In this pivotal scene from *Agathe Cléry,* Agathe's father initiates a conversation with her, expressing concern about potential complications arising from her diagnosis of Addison's disease, causing a significant change in her skin pigmentation. The emotionally charged dialogue unfolds as follows:

Agathe's father begins the discussion by inquiring about possible complications related to her condition. Agathe, visibly distressed, responds defensively, questioning why her father requires more information beyond the life-altering effect of her changing skin colour. The conversation reflects the emotional turmoil Agathe is experiencing as she grapples with the prospect of becoming darker-skinned.

Agathe's father continues to express his love and concern for her but also dismisses her statements as "*bêtises*" or nonsense. Agathe, becoming increasingly agitated, vehemently declares her aversion to becoming "black." She goes on to make derogatory statements about Black people, describing them as "ugly" and "idiots," revealing her deeply ingrained prejudices.

The significance of this dialogue lies in its portrayal of Agathe's initial reaction to her changing racial identity. By highlighting her internal struggle as she confronts her biases and prejudices about Black individuals, the scene brings to the fore the complexities of racial identity and the role of societal constructs in shaping perceptions and attitudes.

We can here draw upon several relevant scholars and theories:

Sociologist Georg Simmel's insights on social interactions and group boundaries (Coser &

Dahrendorf, 2015, p. 142) can be relevant to understanding Agathe's emotional response and attempt to distance herself from a racial identity she perceives as undesirable.

As discussed by Amineh and Asl (2015, p. 42) and Omi and Winant (1994, p. 61), social constructivism provides insights into constructing racial identities within specific societal contexts. Agathe's negative perceptions of Black individuals reflect the influence of social norms and stereotypes that contribute to racial categorisation and prejudice.

This scene highlights the role of family and upbringing in shaping racial attitudes. The dynamic between Agathe and her parents can be understood through family socialisation and the transmission of values, which play a crucial role in forming individuals' racial beliefs and biases (Maher, 2013, p. 45).

By critically examining this scene, we can better understand the film's exploration of racial conflicts, the complexities of racial identity, and the influence of societal constructs on individual perceptions and attitudes.

32 Mins

In the following scenes, Agathe's partner displays discomfort upon seeing two African women in traditional clothes outside Agathe's apartment. When Agathe finishes her bath and asks him to join her in bed, he lies, claiming he has more work, possibly indicating racism or a sense of otherness.

Agathe, confronted with her changing racial identity due to Addison's disease, experiences an intense desire to revert to her previous, lighter skin tone. She visits a shop to purchase skin-whitening products, reflecting internal racism and societal pressure to conform to prevailing beauty standards.

Agathe vocalises her aspirations: "I do not want to be a Black woman. However, if Michael turned white, I will succeed, too. Tomorrow, I will be white again. Like an ice rink, white like an ice rink! I am the one telling you this! *Agathe Cléry's* word of honour.[5]"

This scene illustrates Agathe's internal conflicts and the societal pressures surrounding racial identity. Her purchase of skin-whitening products reflects her

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[5]Translated from French.

internalised racism, driven by the belief that a lighter complexion is more socially desirable. Agathe's reference to Michael Jackson underscores the broader cultural influences perpetuating the idea of lighter skin as superior.

The discomfort displayed by Agathe's partner upon seeing the African women in traditional attire and his subsequent lie about having work reveal elements of racism and otherness. His reaction reflects a form of racial prejudice or xenophobia, emphasising how societal constructs shape perceptions of those from different racial backgrounds.

The importance of this scene lies in its portrayal of Agathe's internal struggles and the complex interplay between racial identity, societal norms, and individual perceptions of beauty and acceptance. It also underscores the influence of societal constructs on self-image and the lengths individuals may go to conform to prevailing racial norms.

Drawing from relevant scholars and theories:

*   Social constructivism, as discussed by Amineh and Asl (2015) and Omi and Winant (1994), provides insights into the construction of racial identities within specific cultural contexts. Agathe's actions reflect the impact of societal norms and beauty standards on her self-image.

By analysing this scene within the film's broader exploration of racial conflicts and identity, we understand the complexities of racism, societal beauty ideals, and their impact on individual perceptions and attitudes.

4.9. Key Emotional Moments

36 Mins: Agathe's Emotional Turmoil

Agathe's emotional journey takes centre stage in this poignant scene. Upon her transformation into a black woman, her best friends visit her. Their initial shock at her changed appearance is palpable, but they quickly reassure her that she is still the same person they have always known and cared for. This scene delves into several essential themes, including the impact of physical appearance on relationships, the concept of racial authenticity, and Agathe's emotional struggles with her evolving racial identity.

The mixed reactions of Agathe's friends reflect the complexities of how people respond to significant changes in appearance. One friend claims to have

adjusted to Agathe's new look, while the other asserts that she does not see any difference. Such reactions illustrate how individuals may vary in comfort and acceptance when encountering someone with a different racial or physical appearance.

Agathe's friends' comments about her not being a "real Black" person due to her facial features, such as her nose and lips, touch upon the notion of racial authenticity. This concept suggests that certain physical traits are stereotypically associated with specific racial groups, leading to expectations or judgments about someone's racial identity based on appearance.

Agathe's tearful response to her friends' comments and her revelation that her boyfriend, Hervé, no longer touches her highlight the profound impact of societal attitudes toward race and physical appearance. Agathe's feelings of rejection and isolation reflect her internal struggle to accept her new racial identity and navigate potential relationship changes.

This scene raises essential questions about society's beauty standards, racial biases, and the challenges individuals face when undergoing significant changes in their appearance or racial identity. It underscores the need for empathy, understanding, and acceptance when supporting individuals who experience profound transformations in their lives.

The film's portrayal of Agathe's emotional journey and her friends' reactions can be further analysed within the context of sociological perspectives on racism and identity discussed earlier in this article. The scene exemplifies how racial categorisation and prejudices can influence interpersonal dynamics and perceptions of racial authenticity (Collins, 2019; Maher, 2013).

52 Mins: Racial Discrimination in Public Space

In a later scene, Agathe leaves the job centre and nearly gets run over by a motorbike. The motorbike rider hurls a derogatory racial slur at her, saying, "Climb back up your coconut tree if you are not capable, if you are not capable of walking down a street. Bitch!" This disturbing incident highlights the prevalence of racial discrimination in public spaces and the intersections of race and gender.

The motorbike rider's offensive comment reflects the notion of "everyday racism," as discussed by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003). His influential work, titled

Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America, explores how subtle and covert forms of racism are embedded in daily interactions and experiences, resulting in the marginalisation and exclusion of racial minorities in public spaces.

This incident illustrates the intersectionality of racism and gender, with Agathe targeted not only because of her race but also because she is a woman. This intersectionality aligns with the work of scholars like Collins (2019), who emphasises how systems of oppression, including racism and sexism, are interconnected, compounding the experiences of individuals belonging to multiple marginalised groups.

This instance of racial discrimination in a public space serves as a powerful depiction of the challenges faced by racial minorities in navigating their everyday lives. It reinforces the urgent need to address systemic racism and promote social inclusion. *Agathe Cléry* offers a poignant reflection on the pervasive nature of racism and its detrimental impact on individuals' lives, urging society to confront and dismantle discriminatory attitudes and practices.

By portraying this scene, *Agathe Cléry* aligns with the broader sociological literature on racism, shedding light on the complexities of racial dynamics and the urgent necessity to work toward a more equitable and tolerant society.

1 Hour 29 Minutes: Transformation and Acceptance

In the film's concluding scenes, significant changes unfold in Agathe's life. During her medical appointment with the endocrinologist, she learns about a shift in her cortisol levels, indicating a potential improvement in her condition. The endocrinologist informs Agathe that she may no longer require medication and could be cured. However, as she has come to value the insights she has gained from her perspective as a black woman, Agathe hesitates to regain her white skin.

The transformation of Agathe's skin colour is a metaphor for the broader themes of interracial relationships and the acceptance of multiculturalism in French society. Throughout the film, Agathe's encounters as a black woman shed light on the racial discrimination and prejudices she faced, providing a glimpse into the challenges confronted by ethnic minorities in society.

Agathe's relationship with Quentin, a black man, delves into the subject of interracial couples. Quentin's initial disappointment upon learning about Agathe's transformation highlights the complexities and challenges that interracial couples may encounter due to societal norms and expectations. Nevertheless, the film conveys a powerful message that love can overcome such barriers, emphasising the significance of looking beyond superficial differences to embrace cultural diversity within relationships.

In the film's closing scene, Agathe and Quentin are depicted with their mixed-race children, symbolising a more inclusive and accepting French society. This portrayal challenges conventional notions of identity and belonging, reinforcing that individuals from different racial backgrounds can form an integral part of a nation's cultural fabric.

To support the themes explored in the film, relevant academic research on interracial relationships, friendship, and multiculturalism in France can be cited. For instance, Rosenfeld and Kim's study *Interracial Relationships in the 21st Century* (2005) examines trends and acceptance of interracial couples in contemporary society. Additionally, Schmid and Kühnel's research on *Intercultural Friendships in Germany* (2016) provides insights into how cross-cultural friendships contribute to the integration of diverse communities.

Stuart Hall's influential work, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (1990), provides a scholarly perspective on the challenges and benefits of embracing multiculturalism in the context of diaspora and cultural identity. This research highlights the importance of promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity to foster a more cohesive and tolerant society. This theme resonates with the portrayal of racial conflicts in *Agathe Cléry*.

The final scenes of *Agathe Cléry* underscore the transformative power of love, the acceptance of cultural diversity, and the significance of cultivating meaningful interracial friendships. The film's portrayal of Agathe's journey from prejudice to acceptance is a compelling reminder of the need to challenge racial stereotypes while building a society that values multiculturalism, recognising all its members as an integral part of the nation's identity.

4.10. Key Findings and Insights

This study has comprehensively analysed the film *Agathe Cléry* within the context of racial conflicts. It has demonstrated the potent role of cinema in challenging

societal norms and fostering discussions on racial identity and discrimination. Through cinematic representation, the film encourages viewers to engage with racial prejudices critically and strive for a more inclusive society.

Several key findings and insights have emerged throughout the analysis of *Agathe Cléry* within the context of racial conflicts. These findings illuminate the profound impact of cinema on challenging societal norms, fostering discussions on racial identity, and encouraging viewers to engage with racial prejudices critically. We can underscore the basis for the following recommendations by revisiting some of these critical findings.

4.11. Race and Social Stratification

In examining the intricate portrayal of racial conflicts in the film "*Agathe Cléry*," our analysis seeks to expand the discussion to encompass a more comprehensive exploration of race and social stratification. Social stratification refers to the hierarchical arrangement of individuals or groups in a society based on various factors, including race, class, and gender. In "*Agathe Cléry*," the film portrays racial discrimination as a fundamental aspect of social stratification, highlighting how individuals from marginalised racial backgrounds are marginalised and oppressed within society.

While the initial focus of this article was on how cinema shapes societal perceptions of race and ethnicity, we recognise the importance of delving deeper into the broader issues of race, including intersectionality, microaggressions, and social stratification, as they are vital components of the film's narrative.

As an art form and cultural mirror, cinema has consistently been a platform for exploring complex societal issues. Race and identity, in particular, have been recurring themes that cinema has grappled with throughout its history. This article aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how visual media, through films like "*Agathe Cléry*," engages with these nuanced topics and their intersection with broader societal concerns.

To anchor our discussion, we will draw upon critical theories on race, identity, and multiculturalism, encompassing the works of scholars such as Stuart Hall (1990), Étienne Balibar (2004), and Paul Gilroy (1993). These scholars have significantly advanced our comprehension of cultural identity, nationalism, and the interconnectedness of black cultures across the

diaspora, providing valuable frameworks for analysing the film's themes.

In this expanded exploration, we will address the concepts of intersectionality, microaggressions, and social stratification, all of which play a pivotal role in understanding the complexities of racial dynamics in contemporary society. Our objective is to provide a more holistic perspective on how *Agathe Cléry* portrays racial tensions and engages with the subtle yet pervasive forms of racism that underlie social hierarchies.

Racial Identity Transformation

The film portrays the profound and often tumultuous journey of Agathe as she undergoes a radical transformation in her racial identity. Her experiences highlight the complex interplay between societal constructs, individual perceptions, and self-acceptance. Agathe's internal struggles are a poignant reminder of the challenges individuals face navigating such transformations.

Microaggressions and Racial Prejudice

Microaggressions, as defined by Derald Wing Sue and colleagues (Sue *et al*., 2007), refer to the subtle, often unintentional, and brief everyday exchanges that communicate derogatory or harmful messages to individuals from marginalised racial or ethnic groups. These subtle acts of discrimination can manifest in various forms, such as verbal comments, gestures, or actions, perpetuating racial inequalities.

Through various dialogues and interactions, the film effectively captures the subtleties of racial prejudice and microaggressions that individuals from racial minority groups often encounter. These microaggressions manifest in subtle and overt forms, affecting individuals' well-being and self-esteem. The film provides a platform for reflecting on the pervasive nature of such biases.

One noteworthy example in the film is the portrayal of Agathe's co-workers' reactions to her racial transformation. Their comments and behaviour, while seemingly harmless, reflect deeply ingrained racial stereotypes and biases. This portrayal aligns with microaggressions, as these actions communicate derogatory messages to Agathe, emphasising her otherness and challenging her sense of belonging.

Additionally, the film highlights the impact of physical appearance on racial identity. Agathe's friends'

comments about her not being a "real Black person" due to specific facial features exemplify the notion of racial authenticity. This aspect of the film underscores how microaggressions can be influenced by physical attributes and how they contribute to individuals' experiences of racism.

By addressing microaggressions, *Agathe Cléry* allows viewers to critically examine the subtle yet insidious forms of racism that permeate everyday life. It prompts discussions about recognising and challenging these behaviours, even when they appear innocuous. Microaggressions, as depicted in the film, demonstrate the significance of cinema in shedding light on these subtle manifestations of discrimination and fostering awareness.

Multicultural Relationships and Acceptance

Agathe's journey is marked by her evolving relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. These relationships challenge preconceived notions and prejudices, highlighting the theme of multiculturalism and the potential for genuine acceptance and understanding to overcome biases. The film showcases the importance of looking beyond superficial differences to embrace cultural diversity within relationships.

In *Agathe Cléry*, the film delves into the theme of multicultural relationships, which challenges preconceived notions and prejudices while highlighting the potential for genuine acceptance and understanding to overcome biases. Agathe's journey is marked by her evolving relationships with individuals from diverse racial backgrounds, particularly her relationship with Quentin, a black man.

This aspect of the film aligns with the work of Paul Gilroy (1993), who emphasised the interconnectedness of black cultures across the diaspora. Gilroy's call for embracing cultural diversity and rejecting essentialist notions of black identity finds resonance in the film's portrayal of Agathe's relationship with Quentin. Their love transcends racial boundaries, forming a multicultural family emblematic of French society's richness of cultural diversity.

The film's exploration of multicultural relationships is a powerful commentary on the potential for individuals from different racial backgrounds to form integral parts of a nation's cultural fabric. It challenges conventional notions of identity and belonging, encouraging viewers to look beyond superficial differences and embrace

cultural diversity within relationships. By doing so, *Agathe Cléry* promotes the idea that genuine acceptance and understanding can bridge racial divides, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.

Intersectionality and Racial Authenticity

The film delves into intersectionality, emphasising the interconnectedness of various social categories in shaping individuals' experiences and identities. Agathe's friends' comments about her not being a "real Black person" due to specific facial features reflect the notion of racial authenticity and the impact of physical appearance on racial identity.

Intersectionality, a concept coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), recognises that individuals' identities are multifaceted and interconnected, shaped by various social categories such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. This framework challenges the simplistic view of identity and emphasises the importance of considering how different aspects of identity intersect to influence experiences and inequalities.

The film's depiction of intersectionality prompts viewers to consider how multiple aspects of identity influence one's experiences and challenges essentialist notions of race. It underscores the complexity of racial identity and the limitations of relying solely on physical appearance to determine authenticity. *Agathe Cléry* invites discussions on how individuals navigate these intersections and the role of society in perpetuating rigid categorisations.

Through its exploration of intersectionality and racial authenticity, the film contributes to a deeper understanding of how social categories intersect and shape individuals' lives. It encourages viewers to examine the complexities of identity critically, and challenges preconceived notions of authenticity. In doing so, *Agathe Cléry* aligns with contemporary discussions on intersectionality and highlights the importance of considering multiple dimensions of identity in addressing issues of race and discrimination.

The protagonist's transformation from a white woman to a black woman through a change in her physical appearance is a powerful exploration of intersectionality. Agathe's experience reflects the complex interplay between societal constructs, individual perceptions, and self-acceptance. Her journey underscores the multifaceted nature of identity

as she navigates her racial transformation and its intersections with gender, class, and cultural identity.

The film portrays how Agathe's newfound racial identity intersects with her existing social identity, leading to internal struggles and external challenges. This portrayal aligns with the essence of intersectionality, emphasising that individuals cannot be reduced to a single dimension of identity. Instead, they embody multiple identities that interact and shape their experiences.

Agathe Cléry presents the concept of intersectionality through the relationships Agathe forms with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Her interactions challenge preconceived notions and prejudices, highlighting the theme of multiculturalism and the potential for genuine acceptance and understanding to overcome biases. The film encourages viewers to look beyond superficial differences and embrace cultural diversity within relationships, illustrating the interconnectedness of identities.

Intersectionality, as a theoretical framework, helps us dissect the layers of identity depicted in the film and sheds light on how these intersections influence characters' experiences and societal attitudes. By recognising the complexity of identity in *Agathe Cléry*, we understand how cinema can contribute to discussions about race, culture, and social stratification in contemporary society.

Everyday Racism

The film portrays racial discrimination in everyday life, such as Agathe's encounter with a motorbike rider who hurls derogatory racial slurs at her. This depiction aligns with "everyday racism," as Patricia Hill Collins (2000) discussed in her influential work *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.* Collins explores how subtle and overt forms of racism are embedded in daily interactions and experiences, highlighting how racial minorities are marginalised and oppressed.

The film presents everyday racism, such as Agathe's encounter with a motorbike rider who hurls derogatory racial slurs at her. This depiction aligns with "everyday racism," as Patricia Hill Collins (2000) discussed in her influential work. Collins explores how subtle and overt forms of racism are embedded in daily interactions and experiences, illustrating how racial minorities are subjected to marginalisation and oppression.

Agathe's experiences within the workplace, particularly the challenges she faces in securing housing and employment, reflect the structural aspects of social stratification. The film portrays the discrimination she encounters in her professional and personal life due to her racial transformation. These experiences resonate with research on labour market discrimination (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004) and housing discrimination (Scheunemann *et al*., 2016), highlighting the enduring relevance of social stratification based on race.

In the film's concluding scenes, the transformative power of love is evident as Agathe and Quentin raise their mixed-race children. This portrayal challenges conventional notions of identity and belonging, highlighting the potential for individuals from different racial backgrounds to form an integral part of a nation's cultural fabric.

Agathe Cléry thus serves as a cinematic exploration of how social stratification, rooted in racism, impacts the lives of individuals from racial minority groups. By depicting these experiences, the film contributes to discussions on racial inequalities and societal hierarchies. It underscores the significance of cinema in shedding light on the everyday racism embedded in social stratification, encouraging viewers to engage with these issues critically.

The film's portrayal of social stratification aligns with broader sociological perspectives on discrimination and inequality, highlighting the interconnectedness of racial identity and social outcomes. Through its narrative, *Agathe Cléry* fosters awareness of the structural dimensions of racism and encourages dialogue about addressing systemic inequalities in society.

These key findings and insights underscore the significant role of cinema in addressing racial conflicts, promoting multiculturalism, and encouraging critical dialogue. Building upon these insights, the following recommendations offer practical guidance for the film industry and future research directions.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Our comprehensive analysis of *Agathe Cléry* within the context of racial conflicts has illuminated the potent role of cinema in challenging societal norms and fostering essential discussions on racial identity and discrimination. Through its cinematic representation, the film is a compelling catalyst for viewers to critically

engage with racial prejudices, inviting them to strive for a more inclusive and equitable society.

5.1. Recommendations for the Film Industry

Our findings suggest several practical recommendations for filmmakers and the film industry. These recommendations are grounded in our analysis of *Agathe Cléry* and existing scholarship on cinematic representation.

5.2. Diverse Representation

Scholars such as Bell Hooks (1992), in her seminal work *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, emphasise the importance of diverse representation in cinema. Hooks argues that authentic representation is not merely about inclusion but provides a platform for marginalised voices to tell their own stories. Filmmakers should strive for diversity both in casting and behind the scenes. This means not only including actors from various racial and ethnic backgrounds but also involving diverse production teams. By doing so, the film industry can ensure authentic and accurate portrayals of different cultures and experiences.

5.3. Avoidance of Stereotypes

The perpetuation of racial stereotypes in cinema has been a long-standing issue. Scholar Stuart Hall (1997), in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, has extensively discussed how media representations construct and reinforce stereotypes. Filmmakers should be cautious of per-petuating racial stereotypes in their storytelling. In-stead, they should focus on presenting multidimen-sional characters that challenge stereotypes, showcasing the complexity of human experiences.

5.4. Collaboration with Experts

When tackling sensitive topics such as racism, filmmakers should collaborate with experts, scholars, and individuals from marginalised communities. Scholar Beverly Tatum (1997), in *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? Moreover, Other Conversations About Race* stresses the significance of authentic dialogues on race. Collaboration with experts can ensure that the portrayal is respectful and informed and avoids harmful stereotypes.

5.5. Promotion of Dialogue

Cinema can initiate meaningful conversations about social issues. Scholar David Musick (1990), in

Screwing the System and Making It Work: Juvenile Justice in the No-Fault Society, argues that films can shape public discourse. Filmmakers should encourage post-film discussions, engage with audiences, and provide resources to foster a deeper understanding of racial conflicts and their impact. This engagement can extend to social media platforms, where discussions can reach a wider audience.

5.6. Support for Independent Voices

Scholar Darnell Hunt (2019), in *Screening the Los Angeles 'Riots': Race, Seeing, and Resistance*, discusses the role of independent cinema in challenging dominant narratives. Film industry stakeholders should support and promote independent filmmakers from diverse backgrounds, providing them with platforms to tell their stories. This support can contribute to a more inclusive cinematic landscape and encourage fresh perspectives on racial conflicts.

5.7. Future Research Directions

While our analysis has shed light on the power of cinema to address racial conflicts, it also opens doors to future research avenues in the sociology of cinema and racial issues. Scholars have explored various dimensions of cinema's impact on society, and these directions can expand our understanding further.

5.8. Audience Reception Studies

Understanding how viewers from different racial and cultural backgrounds interpret and respond to films that address racial conflicts is crucial. Scholar Stuart Hall (1980), in "Encoding/Decoding", proposed that audiences encode and decode media messages differently. Audience reception studies can provide insights into the impact of cinema on social attitudes and the nuances of interpretation.

5.9. Comparative Analyses

Conducting comparative analyses of films from diverse cultural contexts can offer a broader understanding of how racial conflicts are depicted and addressed globally. Scholar Paul Gilroy (1993), in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, discusses the interconnectedness of black cultures across the diaspora. Comparative analyses can highlight similarities and differences in the representation of racial conflicts in cinema worldwide.

5.10. Long-Term Effects

Studying the long-term effects of films that challenge racial prejudices and promote tolerance can assess the potential of cinema as a tool for social change. Scholar George Gerbner (1980), in *The 'Mainstreaming' of America: Violence Profile No. 11*, introduced the cultivation theory, which suggests that media exposure can shape individuals' perceptions over time. Longitudinal studies can explore how exposure to anti-racist films influences attitudes and behaviours over time.

5.11. Intersectionality in Film

Exploring the intersectionality of race with other social identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, class) in films can enhance our understanding of how multiple forms of discrimination are represented. Scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduced the concept of intersectionality. Examining how films navigate the complexities of intersecting identities can contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of cinematic representations.

5.12. Role of Film Festivals

Investigating the role of film festivals in promoting diverse and socially conscious cinema can highlight the significance of such events in shaping industry practices. Scholar Marijke de Valck (2007), in *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, discusses the role of film festivals in cultural exchange. Research in this area can reveal how film festivals contribute to the visibility of films addressing racial conflicts.

6. CONCLUSION

This study contributes significantly to understanding how cinema engages with racial conflicts and the complex dynamics of modern multicultural societies. The research not only underscores the pivotal role of visual media, particularly cinema, in shaping societal perceptions of race and ethnicity but also provides fresh insights into these enduring issues in contemporary society.

One of the critical contributions of this study lies in its exploration of how *Agathe Cléry* challenges preconceived notions and stereotypes surrounding race and ethnicity. This research extends our knowledge by critically examining how cinema represents racial tensions. It reinforces the idea that cinema serves as a mirror to society, reflecting its biases, contradictions, and aspirations. It also serves as a mirror for individuals to examine their attitudes and beliefs about race and diversity.

This study's significance becomes more pronounced when we consider its alignment with real-world challenges faced by immigrants and racial minorities in securing housing, employment, and social acceptance. The film's depiction of Madame Goebbels' comment, which resonates with historical and contemporary accounts of discrimination faced by marginalised communities, draws attention to the persistent nature of these challenges. Additionally, connecting the film's narrative to the work of Isabelle Tal in *Les Réunionnais en France* reinforces the idea that issues depicted in the late 1970s are, unfortunately, still recurrent in France in 2008. This historical continuum highlights the ongoing struggle for racial equality and the need for sustained efforts to combat discrimination.

This study extends its contribution by emphasising the importance of cinema as a medium for initiating meaningful dialogue. It highlights that films like *Agathe Cléry* catalyse racial conflicts and social justice discussions. By advocating for diversity, challenging stereotypes, and promoting post-film engagement with audiences, this research underscores the transformative potential of cinema. It strengthens the argument that filmmakers and the film industry, as cultural influencers, are responsible for addressing issues of race and ethnicity with sensitivity and nuance.

In future research directions, this study opens doors to several promising avenues of inquiry. Audience reception studies, comparative analyses of films from diverse cultural contexts, longitudinal studies of the effects of anti-racist films, exploration of the intersectionality of race with other social identities, and investigations into the role of film festivals in promoting socially conscious cinema are all areas ripe for further exploration. These directions expand our understanding of cinematic representations and provide opportunities to explore how cinema can actively contribute to societal change.

This research aligns with and builds upon the work of scholars who have explored media's impact on societal attitudes and behaviours, including cinema. It extends their insights by focusing on the context of racial conflicts, a topic of enduring relevance. This study underscores that cinema is a dynamic medium

that reflects, challenges, and shapes societal attitudes towards race and ethnicity. It reinforces the idea that cinema is not merely a form of entertainment but a powerful tool for fostering understanding, empathy, and change.

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