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Rainbow nation discourses among Black millennial history teachers in relation to post-apartheid South African history

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Generational experiences create unique contextualised meanings for society. This is the case with millennials in South Africa, many of whom use social media to organise their lives and engage with issues pertinent to them, such as South Africa being a rainbow nation. Some of these millennials are history teachers who, when at work, have to teach an official history which may contradict some of their social media engagements. This motivated this article of which the aim was to identify the dominant conversations when relating to the rainbow nation among a selected group of Black millennial history teachers. In this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) we used a qualitative approach in which 10 participants were involved in photo elicitation, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions. Data were thematically analysed. The findings reflect millennials mainly engaged with violence, coloniality, victory, unity, and identity. The findings further suggest that the discourses were both contending and overlapping. We argue that millennial history teachers in South Africa hold different views about the rainbow nation: even though they paint the notion with predominant negativity, there is evidence of underlying positivity about it.

Keywords: history teacher; millennials; rainbow nation

Introduction

The aim with this article was to identify and understand the dominant rainbow nation discourses in relation to post-apartheid South Africa among Black millennial history teachers. These teachers are part of a generation born in the digital age. They have, therefore, been exposed to considerable official and unofficial information, including conversations and debates on the concept of the rainbow nation. However, teachers are expected to teach this concept from the perspective of official history. Hence, it is worth identifying the discourses that Black millennial history teachers hold of the rainbow nation in relation to post-apartheid South Africa.

Background to the Study

The official end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994 is normatively termed the dawn of democracy or freedom. However, it is contented that the negotiations for the transition to democracy, officially conducted through the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in 1991, did not markedly compromise the previously advantaged White elite (Banerjee, 2003; Sibanda, 2017; Vanden, Funke & Prevost, 2017). One of the most contentious items from CODESA was the Sunset Clauses, through which the negotiators agreed to leave certain vestiges of apartheid untransformed. Consequently, while political power was ostensibly shifted to the majority, those who had held power over the past few centuries managed to retain some of their privileges (Banerjee, 2003).

The task of building the nation after 1994 was enormous, considering the centuries of colonial rule followed by apartheid. Reconciliation was a conscious step toward the rainbow nation, a metaphor coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and subsequently embraced by the political elite (Buqa, 2015; Evans, 2014; Habib, 1996; Ramsamy, 2007). Former president, Nelson Mandela conceptualised the rainbow nation under various policies and actions. His term in office was marked by some "rainbowisms" such as the Government of National Unity (GNU), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), sentiments of Ubuntu and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (West, 2016). These rainbowisms assured the White minority of their place in the new South Africa, while also promising the Black majority emancipation and full economic participation (Naidoo, 2017). This created an optimistic mood in the country, but a generation later there has been increasing dissent. Some of the manifestations of this dissent were seen in the #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall protests. These protests gripped the country, beginning in 2015, revealing the orientations of some of the generation to which the millennial history teachers belong.

History teachers in post-apartheid South Africa teach a subject that promotes the values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (hereafter, the Constitution) (Kallaway, 2012). In fact, the foreword of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for history cites the preamble of the Constitution and infuses it into the subject objectives (Department of Basic Education [DBE], Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2011). The CAPS also contains many content themes, one of which is, "The coming of democracy in South Africa and coming to terms with the past" (DBE, RSA, 2011:30). While this theme does not explicitly mention

the rainbow nation, its nature and content allude to the concept as a framework for guiding the teachers' pedagogy. This creates tension for some of the millennial history teachers, who are also exposed to alternative views on the rainbow nation, particularly on social media. This tension motivated this study, based on the assumption that the history teachers' views of a phenomenon inform the way in which they teach it.

Literature Review

Millennials in South Africa

Various generational labels can apply to the South African youth. For instance, those with no experience of apartheid are sometimes referred to as born-frees (Maseti, 2018). However, this was not the appropriate label for the subjects of interest in this study since most of them were not yet old enough, at the time of the conception of this study, to be qualified, practising history teachers. In addition, the born-free notion creates limitations for this inquiry because it politicises the participants' positionality, and by default, the whole inquiry. According to Chikane (2018), born-frees are indentured to the rainbow nation motif, suggesting acceptance of the rainbow nation. Yet, there is evidence that these born-frees tend to display some indignation towards the notion of the rainbow nation (Maseti, 2018). The label of millennials, being less politicised, therefore, seemed appropriate for this study. We also considered focusing on novice history teachers. Nevertheless, this label is also not adequately appropriate, since it is determined by limited teaching experience, rather than age.

Although we settled for the millennial cohort, its delineation is still contentious. However, many scholars identify millennials as born between 1981 and 1996 (Duffet, 2015; Rodriguez & Hallaman, 2013; Sago, 2010). The definition of millennials is also contextually informed (Duffet, 2015; Rodriguez & Hallaman, 2013). In the case of South Africa, millennials are acknowledged not to have had adult lived experiences of apartheid.

A second characteristic of millennials is their technological savviness and reliance on information and communication technology (ICT) (Chelliah & Clarke, 2011; Duffet, 2015). This means that millennials can be characterised as digital natives (Prensky, 2001). However, this label is also contentious. Studies have shown that, of the South African university students born in the digital age, the term "digital natives" could only be applied to a small, elite group of students; while the rest could be referred to as digital strangers or digital immigrants (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2010; Prensky, 2001). In fact, there are millennials who "are neither native (immersed in ICTs) nor immigrants (new to ICTs), but strangers who had not had access to computers before coming to university" (Czerniewicz & Brown, 2010:860). Furthermore, "while the group of digital strangers were strangers to computer-based technology, they were not strangers to all digital technology" (Czerniewicz & Brown, 2010:860). Nevertheless, the foregoing discussion shows that millennials were born in the information age, and are, therefore, likely to be exposed to various historical narratives.

The teacher of school history

Teachers are individually unique, however, society also tends to define what they know and do (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Carrim, 2017). Teacher identity is also informed by the nature of the subject they teach. Contrary to their traditional standing, history teachers' roles go beyond the classroom (Haupt, 2017). This relates to school history being used to assert values of certain groups (Maposa, 2015; Wassermann, 2017; Weldon, 2010). The predicament is that history teachers are diverse "in aspects such as age, ethnicity, cultural background and intellectual training" (Husbands, Kitson & Pendry, 2003:85). It is, therefore, important to understand their situated personal and professional realities, since personal biographies, experiences and interpretations filter down to their teaching (Carrim, 2017; Van Eeden, Warnich & Golightly, 2018; Wassermann, 2017; Weldon, 2010).

As revealed earlier, millennial history teachers in South Africa are a unique generational cohort. Cohort research to understand generational shifts is popular in fields such as economics, marketing, and business (Deeter-Schmelz, 2021). We apply it qualitatively to understand how Black millennial history teachers relate to the core ideals of reconciliation that post-apartheid South Africa has labelled the rainbow nation.

Theoretical Framework

Since the 1960s there has been a shift in the study of discourses from only analysing "…the abstract structures of words, clauses, sentences of propositions" to "an integrated account of socially and culturally situated and cognitively based multimodal as interaction and human communication" (Van Dijk, 2008:2–3). This means that understanding of discourses has spread from the field of linguistics to other humanities such as sociology, anthropology, and history (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Locke, 2004). Through cross-disciplinary inquiry, discourses can now be understood beyond text and sentences to the meaning of symbolic behaviour. This study was, therefore, framed within the discourse theory. We assume that discourses are: "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people … They are, thus, always, and

everywhere social and products of social histories" (Gee, 2007:3).

Using Gee's understanding, we argue that all social phenomena, the rainbow nation included, are embroiled in competing discourses. We used this framework to identify the dominant rainbow nation discourses among the millennial history teachers, and to understand their attitudes through tone and words. We also acknowledge that this communication is contextually situated, and is informed by power and domination (Holland, 2013). Therefore, discourses refer to how we think and communicate about people, things, the social organisation of society, and the relationship among all three.

Furthermore, discourses emerge from different structures. According to Van Dijk (2008, 2015), discourses manifest in different spaces, such as everyday conversations, debates, scholarly articles, the media and social media. The powerful structures are evident at the macro-level of discourses, and the least powerful are at the micro level of the average citizen (Van Dijk, 2008). As average citizens, the millennial history teachers engage with the rainbow nation discourses on informal communication platforms such as social media, while having to purvey the official discourses in the classrooms.

Methodology

This research was conducted in the Pinetown district of the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Gatekeeper permission was granted by the DBE (ref: 2/4/8/1808) and ethical clearance was approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) (HSS/039/019M). This study was qualitative in nature, meaning that we set out to understand the meanings of individuals' views on a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Lichtman, 2012). The study was located within the interpretivist paradigm for the subjective nature of the experiences that each participant would have. The methodology of choice was the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) which allowed for a holistic exploration of the phenomenon (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2021). Through IPA, participants could interpret and provide meaning for their own experiences.

We purposefully sampled 10 Black millennial history teachers as supported by IPA and phenomenological research. This suggests a range of five to 10 participants who have had direct experience with the phenomenon in question (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Rudolph, 2018; Smith et al., 2021). The 10 participants were selected from different schools within the district.

Data were generated over three stages. Stages 1 and 2 consisted of semi-structured interviews with photo elicitation in the form of mini photo albums. Photo elicitation was useful for enhancing the semi-structured interviews; participants shared far more than they would have had they been restricted to verbal questions only (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). As part of the photo elicitation, we provided a wide range of photos representing post-apartheid South Africa. The photos were first selected by one researcher and went through an intersubjective process of piloting in a seminar comprising eight fellow researchers for comments and suggestions. From these photos the participants chose five which, in their opinion, were the best representation of post-apartheid South Africa. Participants were also allowed to provide their own photos. They then collated them to create mini photo albums with captions, which were used to elicit open-ended interviews on the rainbow nation. The semi-structured interviews were video-recorded, and the recordings were played in the focus group to elicit discussion. Only three of the participants consented to their videos being shared in the focus group.

The data obtained from the captions of the mini photo albums and transcriptions of the semi-structured and focus-group interviews were thematically analysed. Using INVIVO 12 software, the codes from data were categorised into emerging themes.

Results

Six themes emerged from the analysis of data, namely: discourses of victory, discourses of coloniality, discourses of identity, discourses of unity, discourses of violence, and discourses of hope.

Discourses of Victory

The first finding is on the discourses of victory. Participants identified political victory as marked by the 1994 democratic elections and their outcome. Participant 6 chose the picture of a long queue of voters in 1994, writing the caption: "*it did not come easy*." When elaborating on the same picture in the focus-group discussion, Participant 5 stated: "*our parents fought hard for this country*." Furthermore, links were made between the results of the 1994 elections and post-apartheid freedoms. This was pointed out by Participant 7 who noted: "*the previous generation would be happy … to see black students expressing themselves. That is what they also fought for.*"

The participants also expressed discourses of victory in the social sphere, particularly in sport. Participant 3 stated: "*1995 Rugby World Cup was an amazing win for South Africa*." Referring to the same picture, Participant 7 had the caption: "*Moving forward: Bokke Unity*" and further argued: "*we cannot say the rainbow nation does not exist when we see some good that it has done after 1994*." This was further elaborated on by Participant 2 who commented: "*seeing the children*

who have a painting of the South African flag on their face shows that at their young age the rainbow nation does exist." The participants viewed this as a special victory, South Africa having been sanctioned from global sport just prior to that time. Therefore, this was a double victory in terms of being able to participate, and then in winning the competition. In fact, Participant 5 averred: "*Siyaya 1998,* [and] *even World Cup 2010*" were victories in the sense that they sold the rainbow nation to the rest of world even though there was no on-field success. While eight participants agreed with this view, Participant 5 paradoxically seemed to question the victory, retorting: "*How can we say victory when Blacks are still poor?*" This questioning of victory is further revealed under the theme of disappointment with the rainbow nation.

Discourses of Identity

Another set of rainbow nation discourses relates to identity. Regarding issues of national identity, Participant 3 referred to the picture of the national identity (ID) book, questioning: "*It all starts with our identity, who are we?*" Participant 3 captioned the same picture: "*my inheritance from democracy*." This showed participants' pride in their South African identity.

However, views on national identity in the rainbow nation were not uniform among the participants. Participant 1 voiced his frustration about the ID book, commenting:

> *Being a born-free is a joke when the identity book still has Afrikaans and English. A language that my grandparents still do not understand. I am free because I can read and respond to White people's language while we stay poor, my family and I.*

The preceding quotation reflects the participant's views on national identity, however, it also overlaps with issues of racial identity. Others questioned the rainbow as a framework of racial identity labelling inherited from the apartheid era. Participant 4 maintained: "*when social cohesion was proposed, only Blacks were expected to reach out while other people moved on with their lives*."

Issues of racial identity also intersected with linguistic identity. Participant 1 claimed to be poor because of language, and, inversely, contended that some races were privileged by virtue of their language. Participant 1 further expressed: "*the 1976 youth failed us; they only hated Afrikaans and not English*." Evidently, the participants had marked misgivings about language diversity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Discourses of Unity

Discourses of unity also emerged from the data. In some cases, these discourses also overlapped with the discourses of identity and victory.

The participants raised issues of national unity in relation to the rainbow nation. For instance, Participant 8, referring to a political cartoon by Zapiro depicting the truth and reconciliation dichotomy, asserted: "*the truth … hurts, it fuels anger … it is almost inconceivable to believe that the truth could unite nations which have never been united, at least in the sense as the concept of reconciliation sought to achieve*." He further added: "*So the truth was told, but the country remains divided, divided by differences in culture, heritage, history, and fundamentals on social order, economics and politics*." Evidently, the participant was convinced that the truth and reconciliation process was a futile exercise. Participant 6 concurred, affirming: "*Biko said this … that Blacks are the only ones willing to reach out to the Whites*." This shows that some participants did not believe that the rainbow nation had fostered national unity.

However, the same participants had not lost hope in national unity. For instance, Participant 8 expressed: "*rainbow nation was limping …, but not dead*." For Participant 5, unity was not possible if people were not true to their own culture. This notion was supported by Participant 6, who argued that there was a need for a conscious effort to promote "*diversity in cultures and religion but united as a nation*." In a further conversation, Participant 8 advocated the need to "*go for an Afrikaner braai and understand what it means for them and visiting the Zulus and understand what the Zulu dance means for them*."

Although the participants seemed to hint at aspects such as culture, the main form of unity that they felt was important for post-apartheid South Africa was racial unity. However, many participants seemed sceptical about such. As Participant 2 affirmed: "*the youth in South Africa are not what the media portrays. It is what the streets, the offices, the corporations, the universities, the residents, the parks and the restaurants portray.*" His argument was that racial unity was simply a media fallacy. In contrast, Participant 10 bemoaned the portrayal of racial unity in the media. He argued that, according to the media "*everything that is Black is corrupt, that is how the rainbow nation is sold for Whites to buy into it.*" Participant 1 suggested an image of Malcom X, concurring: "*In South Africa today, the media gives the verdict of guilty or innocent, before you even go to court*."

Further evidence of the difficulty of racial unity was demonstrated in the participants' failure to empathise across racial divides. For instance, Participant 2 asked: "*why would a White person be begging on the streets?*" Participant 8 even found it amusing that affirmative action had compelled some White people to become beggars. Similar sentiments were shared by Participant 3 who refused to sympathise with a White beggar on the street, asking: "*why is it not okay to see him*

hungry, is he special?" The lack of empathy was not reserved for poor White people, as was clear from Participant 5 captioning the picture of musician Johnny Clegg in Zulu attire, as "*confusion based on culture*." She cynically explained: "*it is ok to be Black, if you are going to get something out of it, like the picture of this man* [Johnny Clegg]." She therefore did not consider it a case of sincere racial integration, but rather cultural appropriation.

However, some participants believed that racial unity was possible, even if sometimes intermittent. An example is the sports victories discussed earlier. Participant 5 pointed out that these victories seem to distract the nation from how divided South Africans were on issues of culture and religion. Participant 6 elaborated: "*in schools, malls, streets, shops, Black and White are just divided*", while in a school that he worked for, they had teambuilding football matches and everyone was involved. He added that, while they played the sport: "*Mark* [his principal] *was not Mr. Mark to me, it was 'Mark pass the ball' and Mark knew that we had a goal to score and a match to win … I was not Black and led by a White man, but we were a team.*" This seemed to suggest that, whenever there was a common goal, even if it was a social goal, racial unity was possible in post-apartheid South Africa.

Discourses of Coloniality

The findings also show that discourses of coloniality permeated the engagements about post-apartheid South Africa. The majority of the participants decried coloniality with reference to South Africa's colonial and apartheid past. They credited the present conditions in the country with what Participant 7 referred to as "*bad legacies*" which ought to be removed. One such legacy, according to Participant 3 is the hostels – an urban housing scheme which was created for migrant workers. Linked to this legacy, is Participant 6's statement: "*all we want is to own land*." These sentiments were echoed by Participant 2 who added: "*White people can never see themselves equal to us, which is why they don't want to release the land*." This view was corroborated by Participant 4 who confirmed that *"back home when you are working, they call you 'umlungu Omnyama' (White Black)*." This showed how Whiteness was still associated with wealth, while Blackness was associated with poverty.

Another colonial legacy which was questioned is that of language in education. Referring to the youth of 1976, Participant 4 asked: "*Why did the uprising only focus on Afrikaans and not English?*" The participant categorised both languages as colonial languages, lamenting that English seemed to have escaped the demonisation that was attached to Afrikaans. Participant 1 added: "*the Blacks are the ones who are expected to reach out, we are always trying to fit in*." The argument is that their indigenous languages are not recognised in many official spaces.

To show that they linked the rainbow nation with coloniality, the participants rejected the label of being "born-free." This was expressed by Participant 3 who complained that she felt as though she had no voice: "*My historical consciousness is loud inside but I did not know I would be silenced in this democracy*." In addition, Participant 6 articulated: "*I am not a born-free when I still live in a township and have to give reasons to why I dream big dreams, like having wanted a Jaguar for my first car*." Therefore, the discourses of coloniality were not limited to politics, but also extended to socio-economic issues.

Discourses of coloniality were not restricted to relations with the West. Participant 7 chose a picture showing South Africa and China represented by two shaking hands. Participant 7 wrote a caption questioning the authenticity of this relationship, asking: "*how deep is this relationship, or is it new colonisation?*"

Discourses of Disappointment

The data also reveal discourses of disappointment, showing that participants may, at some point, have believed in the rainbow nation. Participants are, therefore, disappointed with what the rainbow nation has become, rather than what it was supposed to be. One of the disappointments noted by the participants is the corruption that has blighted post-apartheid South Africa. Participant 3 claimed: "*everything is corrupted*" and: "*Black leaders and others steal from Black people*." In a scathing critique of the current government, Participant 5 went as far as declaring: "*the people of 1976 were for recognition by the White race, … they were fighting …. but it was never for freedom.*" Participant 9 even called out his parents' generation for not taking the current government to task for the disappointment of unfulfilled dreams.

To show further disappointment with those in power, Participant 7 lamented the Marikana massacre, referring to it as: "*the remaking of Sharpeville in our democracy*." Evidently, the participant was disappointed that experiences expected of a colonial state still occurred in the post-apartheid dispensation. This finding overlaps with the discourses of coloniality. Participant 7 further complained: "*Unemployment is very high especially the youth and adults those who are Black*" and that most of the available employment was substandard. Participant 1 reflected on how she would accompany her mother who was a domestic worker over the holidays. She hated doing so because "*I felt like she was working in a house that she should be owning, and I was helping her in a*

house that I must work for 25 years before I can own."

The participants' disappointment with post-apartheid South Africa was not only directed to those in power. Participants also bemoaned the lawlessness of the citizens, referring to a picture of two high school learners assaulting a teacher. Participant 10 remarked: "*so much for being a born-free*" while Participant 4 asked, "*what is democracy for them?*" As teachers the participants felt equally attacked when they saw such an image, and showed disappointment at how freedom and democracy seemed to be misunderstood and taken advantage of. However, the participants still attributed the disappointing actions of the citizens to those in power. For example, xenophobia was linked to poverty and the weak economy. In addition to blaming the government for these vices, participants also deplored government's lack of action in response to the same social ills. Participant 5 stated: "*government is silent in women abuse, xenophobia … silence means what's happening is okay*."

According to the participants, the disappointment is evidenced by the protest action in post-apartheid South Africa. This is why Participant 2 maintained: "*today we still have to ask for #Rhodesmustfall and our parents killed for wanting a raise* [referring to the Marikana massacre]." Participant 2 added that disappointment is manifested by political apathy. Referring to the queue in the 1994 elections, the participant reflected: "*the voting lines alone show how much everyone wanted to vote, but we don't do that anymore*."

Discourses of Violence

The participants also linked the rainbow nation to discourses of violence. This overlaps with the issues already presented above, such as school learners assaulting teachers, gender-based violence (GBV), xenophobia, and protest action.

While condemning some forms of violence, the participants seemed to condone others, linking them to the desperate socio-economic situation in the country. Participant 5 claimed that the violence of the protest action was caused by a "*lack of employment and poverty*." Participants 3 and 6 shared the same sentiments. Participant 4 expounded this argument saying: "*If you want to meet with your government, you go to the streets … violence is the only language well responded to*." Therefore, the participants linked the rainbow nation to violence, whether justifiable or not.

Discourses of Hope

Despite much of the negativity in the rainbow nation discourses, there was also evidence of discourses of hope. Participant 8 suggested a picture showing a canvas of paint and paint brushes. He captioned this: "*an unfinished painting*", elaborating that it represented that South Africa "*is not complete*."

The hope was largely projected on the young generation. Participant 6 pointed out the following: "*As teachers of history we are responsible for conscientizing the learners about the democracy they play with*." Participant 3 added: "*Once young South African learners understand multiple perspectivity, we will have good stories they are the only hope for us to do better and make the better South Africa we imagine*." This explains why he selected a picture of two children – one Black and the other White – with South African flags painted on their faces, averring: "*Seeing the kids with the colour of the flags shows that we can be one until they teach us to see differences*." The participants' hope was reserved for the children because they deemed the older generations to have already been socialised as prejudiced.

The data also reveal that some participants had hope in the competencies of South Africans. For instance, Participant 6 asked: "*Why is it that in South Africa people cannot be asked to do things that they are good at to better the whole country?*" This question posed by Participant 6 reveals that he believed that South Africans could accomplish some of the activities which they have not been allowed to participate in.

Discussion

The findings presented above show the participants raising competing discourses on the rainbow nation. Pertaining to the discourses of victory, the findings reflect that the participants accepted the rainbow nation as a victory over the previous apartheid regime (Gqola, 2001). They also appreciated the difficult nature of the victory, meaning that they did not take it for granted.

However, it was telling that participants had more to say about sports-related victory than about political victory. This shows the symbolism that has been attached to the rainbow nation, just as Chikane (2018) linked the euphoria of the 1995 Rugby World Cup to evidence of the possibility of building the rainbow nation. The symbolism is shown in that South Africa can now host world events, doing so successfully, even performing well, as seen by the on-field victories. This was evidence of the discourses of victory filtering through the social structures from the macro level to the micro level of society (Van Dijk, 2008). As Evans (2014) points out, the media was key in promoting the concept of the rainbow nation, after it had been coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and adopted by the South African political elite. In other words, the victory is symbolic, but not representative of the reality on the ground. The participants' emphasis on symbolic victories could be interpreted in two ways: either their limited

historical understanding blurred the realisation that these victories belied deeper problems, or they had reservations on the nature of post-apartheid victory. The latter explanation could explain the other discourses that compete with victory.

The first issue in the discourses of identity related to the national ID book. Some participants were proud of what the book represented, while some did not identify with it. Those who acknowledged the importance of the ID book, took cognisance of Black South Africans being allowed to hold one during apartheid.

Those who could not identify with the ID document argued that the languages in the book did not represent them. For them, this was an example of the rainbow meeting the needs of White people over those of others. The issues of identity were thus discussed within the frame of nationality, race, and language. While the participants acknowledged their national identity, they did not believe that their racial and linguistic identities were catered for in the rainbow nation. The differences in views were expected considering that history teachers are diverse even if they seemed to belong to the same cohort (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Brookbanks, 2014; Carrim, 2017; Husbands et al., 2003). This is a reality which post-conflict countries such as South Africa experience (Wasserman, 2017).

Ideally, the concept of the rainbow nation entails unity in diversity. The quest for national unity was the main reason that South Africa opted to use the concept (Habib, 1996). However, the participants had negative discourses on unity, showing their reservations about the truth and reconciliation process and its promotion of a rainbow nation. Participants ascribed the lack of unity to fundamental differences in society, and a lack of commitment to reconciliation by the White population and the media. These findings confirm the argument that the myth of the rainbow nation creates the image of a false unity, while racial and class differences are maintained (Blaser, 2004; Gqola, 2001).

Further evidence of the difficulty of racial unity was demonstrated in the participants' failure to empathise across racial divides. They could not feel for poor White beggars, and accused White people who embraced African culture of cultural appropriation. The participants evidently put the quest for socio-economic justice ahead of nation-building (Mbembe, 2015). The reference to Malcolm X's views on the media suggests that the participants did not only feed on the discourses from above; they were using discourses from elsewhere to critique the concept of the rainbow nation.

However, some participants had not lost hope in national unity. They proposed honesty towards cultural differences, and promotion of diversity through active interaction. They also lauded the power of sport and other social gatherings in promoting racial unity, albeit intermittently. However, this acknowledgement still suggests the rainbow nation concept as an opiate which temporarily numbs the reality (Evans, 2014).

The findings also reveal that participants considered the vestiges of colonialism and apartheid very evident in post-apartheid South Africa. In fact, the misgivings over identity and unity discussed earlier related to issues of continued coloniality. This explains why participants believed that there was still a link between Blackness and poverty, as is manifested in poor housing, a lack of land, and unfulfilled dreams. This view tallies with scholarly criticism of the rainbow nation metaphor for reproducing the inequalities of colonialism and apartheid (Gqola; 2001; Mamdani, 2002, 2018; Mbembe, 2015).

The students also considered post-apartheid South Africa to be colonial by virtue of the continued prioritisation of Afrikaans and English over indigenous languages. Afrikaans has, for a long time, been demonised as the language of the oppressor because of it being imposed during apartheid. However, the participants argued that English was equally a language of the oppressor. The rejection of the "born-free" notion suggests that the participants did not consider freedom to have been realised in the rainbow nation. Rather, they blamed capitalism and neo-colonial ideas as weapons of oppression (Mbembe, 2015). The participants further considered both the Western world and China to be perpetuating a form of present-day colonialism. This shows that they, unlike previous generations, do not limit the colonial label to only Western countries.

The discourses of disappointment emphasised that participants did not necessarily completely abhor the concept of the rainbow nation, but were disappointed that it did not accomplish its intended mission. Participants were disappointed by the way in which former freedom fighters had been converted from heroes to corrupt government officials. They were also disappointed that their elders, whom they respect, have let the country down by supporting a government, which, according to them, has not done much to dismantle the massive structural inequalities wrought by the apartheid system (Evans, 2014).

The participants also showed disappointment with ordinary citizens, who they felt had let the country down by perpetrating violence by means of xenophobia and gender-based violence. The choice of xenophobia and violence can be explained by, at the time of data generation, social media was being dominated by engagements on outbreaks of xenophobia, while GBV was making the headlines as demonstrated by the trending of #AmINextUyinene. This is evidence of the way in which the participants' discourses were heavily

influenced by the discourses at the micro level. However, the participants still attributed the disappointing actions of the citizens to those in power. They particularly considered GBV to have been promoted by the poor justice system. The participants' disappointment was also evidenced in society through political apathy and protest action such as #Rhodesmustfall and the Marikana massacre. The juxtaposition of apathy and protest action shows the paradoxical nature of the participants' engagement with the rainbow nation discourses.

Complementing the discourses of disappointment were the discourses of violence as was pointed out in relation to GBV, the 2012 Marikana massacre, and xenophobia. Participants also noted violence in protest action and in learners at schools. However, they did not raise any case of violence by teachers towards learners. While condemning some forms of violence, the participants seemed to condone others. They condoned violence that came with protest action, because they believed that this was a justified response to a corrupt and unresponsive government. Therefore, the rainbow nation was seen to have normalised violence. Such issues of violence are attributes of post-conflict societies, with some of it being inherited from the violent colonial past (Patel, 2016).

In spite of significant negativity in the rainbow nation discourses, competing discourses of hope were noted. The participants regarded the rainbow nation as a mission that could still be completed, if in the right hands. This complements some aspects of the discourses of disappointment, particularly in the older generation. Linking this hope to the learning of history shows the significance that the participants attributes to history education. As history teachers, they also accepted the responsibility of socialising a better generation. Admittedly, there was tension here, considering that these participants viewed the older generation to have already been socialised as prejudiced.

Conclusion

This study shows how Black millennial history teachers in South Africa think and communicate about post-apartheid South Africa, particularly people, things, the social organisation of society, and the relationship among and between all three. The findings show that the participants used their personal and professional identities to engage with the rainbow nation discourses (Masinga, 2009). This explains why they presented discourses that both complemented and competed with and within one another.

Since discourses manifest in different spaces; this study shows that the participants were influenced by discourses from both the macro and micro level. It can be argued that history teachers are at the micro level, especially as they have some experience of the rainbow nation and are exposed to everyday conversations and debates about it. This explains the overlapping ideas revealed across most of the discourses, especially a negativity towards to the concept of the rainbow nation. So prevalent was the negativity that even when discussing potentially positive discourses such as victory and unity, the participants still showed disappointment with the continuation of coloniality and their perceived failures of the post-apartheid government.

Yet, as purveyors of official history from curriculum documents and textbooks, these history teachers can also be considered being at the macro level. However, we regard millennial history teachers to be at the meso level of discourse, where the macro and the micro meet. They, therefore, work within power structures created by government, but by being government employees, they become part of the power structures themselves. However, the study shows that power of the discourses from the micro level should not be underestimated, as it challenges that from the macro level. This explains their complementing and contesting discourses. It also informs why the participants showed a tentative nature of engagement, in that the dominant discourses were driven by the popular issues of the time.

The tentativeness of their arguments also suggest a limited historical understanding. This implies that, although their discourses of the rainbow nation were informed by both macro and micro level discourses, their application of historical thinking was evident in the findings. These historical thinking skills can be considered a manifestation of their training as history teachers. Therefore, the training of history teachers has a role to play in stabilising the tentativeness of engagement with topical issues of the context, such as rainbow nation discourses. These teachers are already in the system, which suggests that there was a need for development programmes for history teachers to enhance their historical thinking skills, especially when dealing with content that they strongly connected with emotionally and affectively.

While the methodology used in this study was largely productive, our reflections show that our initial selection of visuals for elicitation infused our biases into the data. In order to limit the effects of researcher bias contamination, we used literature on rainbow nation discourses to guide us on the dominant discourses, thus informing the kind of pictures to choose. This was later strengthened by conducting the piloting described earlier. Admittedly, for further research of such nature, we would encourage involving participants in the selection of such visuals from the outset.

Authors' Contributions

FG collected the data. Both authors wrote the manuscript. Both authors reviewed the final manuscript.

Notes

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