



A Few Lessons Learnt in Decolonising Sexual/Reproductive Health Work with Youth of Color who also identify as Sexual/Gender Minorities (LGBTQ+)

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Lesson: Positionality matters

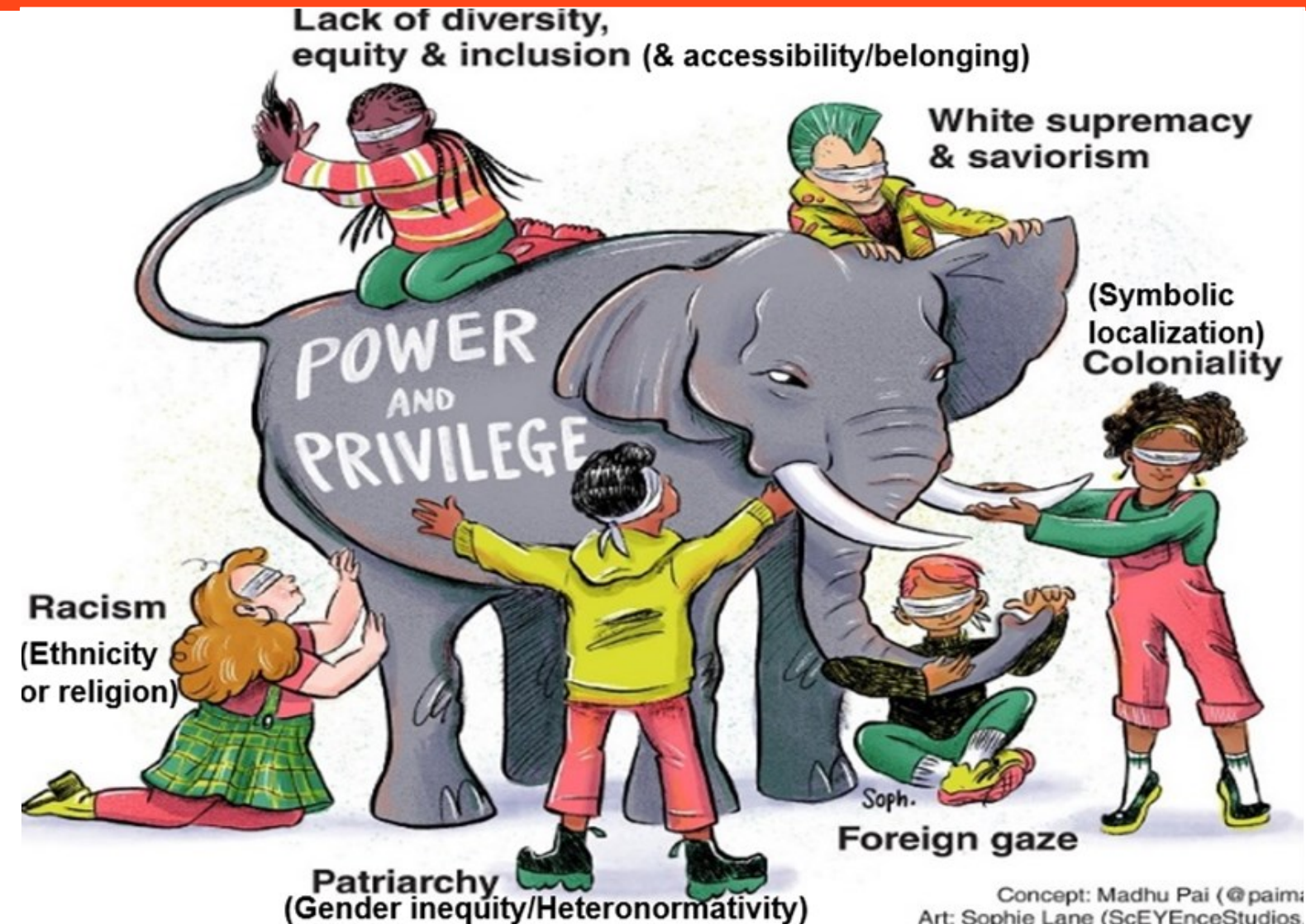
- Objectivity and neutrality are almost impossible to have
 - Who you are and how you move through the world colors your work (e.g., positionality)
- Recognizing this is a critical step to recognizing your biases and moving towards understanding the intersectionality of the communities in which you work. Questions to ask:
 - Am I only focusing on the needs of youth in this work?
 - What is different for youth or color in this context?
 - How might this work best include youth directly as decision-makers? How can I track my accountability to *them rather than funders*?



Key facets of my positionality

- Scientist at US-based INGO
- Faculty appointments at 4 major US universities
- First-generation Jamaican-American
- Cisgender, able-bodied, heterosexual woman
- English native speaker but also multilingual
- Raised in racially and culturally diverse area of US

Lesson: History is past, present and future



- Global health and development has a legacy built on colonialist power structures that marginalise many groups. Our global fates are tied to each other AND to these systems of power and privilege.

Lesson: speak differently → act differently

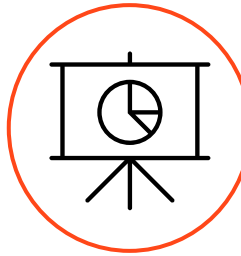
- Language is the starting place for addressing biases. Interrogate the language you use and assumptions you have on ways of knowing, being, and doing. Questions to ask:
 - Are these groups actually ‘vulnerable and/or ‘minorities?’
 - Is ‘LGBTQ+’ a term that resonates? Is ‘Queer’ preferred? Is ‘youth’ inclusive?
- We all have many spheres of influence. Use your privileges to center and include those without these privileges. Questions to ask:
 - As an individual, how can I best manage my biases and gaps in understanding of the needs of youth of color who are LGBTQ+?
 - In my work, how can I center youth of color who are LGBTQ+ in decision- making? Resource allocation? Sustainability planning?
 - What historical legacies and power imbalances are affecting this community that I need to acknowledge and rectify?



Lesson: Decolonise data!

History is written by the victor. The same is true with data.

- Data can tell very different stories with different perspectives
- Who owns the data has everything to do with who collects it, funds it, publishes it, and how it is shared. Questions to ask:
 - Is this 'problem' being defined by the youth themselves? Where is the power to make decisions?
 - How are communities benefitting from involvement long-term?
 - How would my results differ if others were doing the interpreting?
 - Who needs access to these findings in order for real change to happen?





**Are there ways you can/will advocate
for youth of color who identify as
LGBTQ?**

THANK YOU!

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