

Paternalism

Looks like:

- Decision-making processes that are only understood by those with power and unclear to those without it.
- A paternalistic system acts on the premise that **certain people** are not capable of acting in their own interests and require the supervision of those in authority.
- Refers to a person or institution of authority **restricting the freedom of choice** of a person or persons because they believe its in their best interest.
- Those holding power:
 - control power and define things
 - assume they are qualified and often entitled
 - don't think its necessary to understand or engage with for who they are making decisions for
- Those without power:
 - understand they don't have and who does
 - are marginalized from decision making-processes and as a result have limited access to information on how decisions get made and who makes them
 - **very aware with the impact of those decisions on them**
 - they internalize the standards and definitions of those in power and act to defend them, assimilate to them, and collude with those in power to perpetuate them in the belief that this will help them belong or gain power, they may have to do this to **survive**

Key Questions to Help Y'all Reflect and Discuss:

- Does leadership share their motivations, processes, and structures with others?
- How do they let others in on their processes and decisions?

Paternalism (cont.)

- Who gets to be a part of decision-making?
- How are team members involved in the planning, outreach, implementation, and evaluation of projects, programs, or organizations?

Antidotes:

- Make sure that **everyone knows and understands** the decision-making hierarchy in the community and/or organization (transparency).
- Make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization.
- Avoid making decisions in the absence of **those most affected** by those decisions or, said more proactively, always include those most affected in the brainstorming and decision-making.
- Support people at all levels of power to **understand how power operates**, their level of power, what holding power responsibly looks like, and how to collectively resist and heal from internalized tendencies to hoard and defend power.