Individualism

Looks like:

- Individuals have little experience or comfort working as part of a team.

- People often believe that problems and challenges are best handled alone. An individual might feel solely responsible, or there is an environment that generally lacks mutual support.

- In hierarchical organizations, **accountability is thought of in terms of top-down** relationships and is rarely oriented from the bottom on up. This can apply both to lateral relationships as well as in relation to the community the organization serves.

- Recognition is often done on an individual basis. Those in positions of power (both formal and informal) often get most or all of the credit, thus **leaving out other contributors**.

- Leads to isolation.

- Competition is more highly valued than cooperation. Where cooperation is valued, little time and few resources are devoted to developing these skills.

- Individualistic organizational culture creates a lack of accountability as the group values those who can get things done on their own without supervision or guidance.

- In individualistic organizations, people can be aggressive or reactive to persons whose group membership is important to them; for example, a person of color in white majority organization who offers their perspective as a racialized individual might be met with discomfort, defensiveness, or denial as a way to silence or minimize how race and racism operate within the organization.

Individualism (cont.)

Antidotes:

- Name teamwork and collaboration as an important personal and group value.

- Acknowledge that teamwork and collaboration take more time, particularly at the front end and yield a better result with higher buy-in and higher ability to take shared risks.

- Make sure the group or organization is working towards shared goals that have been collaboratively developed and named.

- Evaluate the ability to work in a team as well as the ability to get things done.

- Honor process as much as product (honor how you do things as much as what you do or produce).

- Make sure that credit is given to all who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make sure that when you are given credit, you distribute it to all those who helped you with whatever was accomplished.

- Create collective accountability (rather than individual accountability) Create a culture where people feel they can bring problems to the group; use meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities.

- Hold ourselves accountable to the principle of collective thinking and action.

- Develop the ability to collaborate and delegate to others.

- In workspaces or movement efforts, evaluate performance based on an ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals.

- Hold ourselves and each other accountable to a shared definition of leadership that assumes a collaborative and collective approach.