



Paternalism in Service

Who Knows Best



Kahoot!

<https://create.kahoot.it/details/e7b31e48-4bc8-42a6-a75c-ff713b02f1ef>

How did you decide where to give?

- Do you think it is the most worthy?
- Have you been personally affected by the cause?
- Do you have relationships with the staff or other volunteers?
- Does it align with your interests/hobbies?
- Do you think your gift would be most effective there?
- Do you have skills that would benefit this organization?

Our lived experiences shape the way we decide to give. When those with the most to give share similar backgrounds, aid is concentrated amongst the causes that mean most to them.

So What is Paternalism?

- Paternalism is the policy or practice on the part of people in positions of authority of restricting the freedom and responsibilities of those subordinate to them in the subordinates' supposed best interest.
- When helping people there is a power imbalance between those who are helping and those who are being helped.
- Within service and charities we make decisions on what we think is best for the people we are trying to help.
- This has been a part of philanthropy since it's very beginning.

The Origin Philanthropy

- Andrew Carnegie is often credited as the father of modern philanthropy.
 - Philanthropy is defined as the desire to promote the welfare of others. (Oxford Languages)
- After amassing a large fortune through industry and investment, Carnegie began giving his money away by building public libraries.

“The result of my own study of the question, What is the best gift which can be given to a community? is that a free library occupies the first place.... It is, no doubt, possible that my own personal experience may have led me to value a free library beyond all other forms of beneficence.”

- Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth*

Where and How

- Paternalism is present when you choose where to give and how you will give.
- By deciding where to give, you choose where you think the most help is needed.
- By choosing how you will give you can restrict the freedom of those you are helping.
- Examples of Overt Paternalism
 - Buying can goods to donate to a food pantry instead of just money.
 - Giving items to people experiencing homelessness over cash.

“The Paradox of Helping”

- People who receive help prefer it to be agentic—they want to choose.
- When aid is paternalistic, recipients are more likely to resent the help, less likely to accept it, and less likely to reciprocate.
- People tend to believe that they have greater mental fortitude—are more sophisticated, agentic, and rational—than an average person (lesser minds problem).

Read more about the research behind the helping paradox here:

<https://behavioralscientist.org/paradox-helping-endorsing-others-oppose/>

TEDTalk

https://www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen?language=en#t-391032

Moving from Paternalistic Giving to Agentic

- Ask yourself why/be cognizant of your motives.
- Choose to aid organizations that take an agentic rather than paternalistic approach.
 - Food Not Bombs vs. Mid Ohio Food Bank
 - GiveDirectly vs. American Red Cross
- Support organizations whose staff and board include members of the communities they serve.
- Donate cash over in-kind gifts when possible. If donating in-kind, check with the organization to see if they are helpful first.
- Don't restrict your gifts.
- Support mutual aid.