

Solidarity and its Sources (Harvard version)¹

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I

In this chapter, I try to answer some basic questions about social solidarity: its nature, causes and consequences. In order to do this, we need to be clear about the phenomenon we are trying to discuss, and not confuse solidarity itself either with the forces that may help to create it, or with the social policies through which it may be expressed. I take solidarity to be a feature of relationships between persons. We often say of a group of people that they display a high degree of solidarity, a low degree, or none at all. When we say this we are saying something about the way group members regard and interact with one another. What exactly we are saying is something that I shall attempt to pin down shortly. Having done this, we can then go on to ask why different groups display different levels of solidarity. Is it, for example, something to do with their individual characteristics – say whether or not they have the same skin colour or belong to the same religious denomination? Or is it a matter of the way they have interacted in the past, for example whether the members have a long history of co-operation? Or perhaps again whether they have been exposed to particular social or political institutions, for instance those we associate with the welfare state? We can also ask about solidarity's value, and its consequences. Does it actually matter whether we enjoy relations of solidarity, either within small groups, or across large societies? Does personal life go better for those who are attached to one another by bonds of this kind? Or is solidarity's importance to be found in the way that it enables groups and societies to achieve goals that they could not realise otherwise – for example large-scale economic redistribution? Might solidarity also have its downsides: might it imply too much monitoring and control of our behaviour by those we are in solidarity with, for instance?

These are all large questions, and it may be necessary for certain purposes to define solidarity either in a more limited or a more expansive way than I am proposing. Some of the contributors to this book do precisely this. In their Introduction, for example, Banting and Kymlicka offer a wide definition that encompasses three 'dimensions' of solidarity – civic, democratic and redistributive

¹ This chapter was originally prepared for the workshop on the 'Strains of Commitment: The Political Sources of Solidarity', European University Institute, 20-21 February 2014. I should like to thank the participants in that event, and especially Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, for helpful suggestions about how to revise it for publication.

(Banting and Kymlicka 2015, ??). These, it seems to me, are best understood as sets of attitudes that we would hope to see adopted by citizens of modern liberal states as a consequence of their solidarity with one another. In other words these dimensions should be read as *expressions* of solidarity that are appropriate to societies like ours (I don't suppose that Banting and Kymlicka would believe that solidarity among Amazonian Indians, say, would be expressed in the same way). In contrast, Rothstein understands solidarity more narrowly as 'the sum of political practices that increase equality in people's life chances (that is, the welfare state broadly understood)' (Rothstein 2015,??). Here the focus is on institutions and policies that are conventionally understood as both expressing social solidarity and (as Rothstein goes on to argue) helping to maintain it. The definition has been shifted from the phenomenon itself to its main vehicle, in contemporary societies. Such contrasting definitions reflect the particular normative and explanatory interests of each contributor, and need not be a source of confusion so long as we are clear about their status.

Here, I begin, in section II, by identifying the features that characterise solidarity as a general social phenomenon, without at this stage raising questions about how widely or narrowly it can extend. Then in section III I explore solidarity's value, asking in particular whether it has intrinsic as well as instrumental value. Section IV addresses the question of how society-wide solidarity might be achieved, and critically explores five theories that have sought to explain this. Section V offers a brief conclusion.

II

It does not take long to discover that 'solidarity' is a term that can be used in a variety of different ways without doing violence to the English language. So we need to identify the sense that concerns us by engaging in a bit of conceptual analysis. A good place to start is the distinction alluded to by Onora O'Neill when she separates solidarity *among* a group of people from solidarity *with* a group of people (O'Neill 1996, 201). Experiencing solidarity with a group of people – for example a group that is suffering hardship at the hands of an oppressive regime – means identifying with them emotionally, trying to imagine what it must be like to be in their place, and then taking symbolic or practical steps to help them. Thus in 1970s Britain, the Chile Solidarity Campaign, set up in response to the military coup led by General Pinochet, acted in support of those Chileans victimised by the new regime, holding demonstrations, lobbying the British government, offering practical aid to refugees from Chile, and so forth. This illustrates 'solidarity with'. It is a one-way relationship.² One group, here the CSC, shows solidarity towards another, the oppressed Chileans, without any

² This is emphasized in Rippe 1998, who describes 'solidarity with' as 'project-related solidarity'.

expectation that their expressions of solidarity will be reciprocated. We can presume that the Chileans welcomed these expressions and the efforts made on their behalf, though this does not seem to be essential to 'solidarity with'.

Our interest here, however, is in 'solidarity among'. What does it mean for a group of people to be united by relations of solidarity?³ First, there has to be a sufficiently precise, and shared, sense that they *are* a group. There must be some feature or set of features that binds them together. To say this is not to take sides on the question whether it is possible for solidarity to extend so widely that it covers the whole of humanity. In this case 'being human' would be the relevant feature that provides the focus of solidarity. Clearly, however, the scope of solidarity is often much narrower than this in practice: it can exist among family members, occupational groups, co-religionists, compatriots, and so forth. There must, in other words, be a 'we' that feels and practises solidarity, and this relationship is reciprocal in the sense that each member recognizes and is recognized by the others as belonging to this 'we', in contrast to cases of 'solidarity with' as outlined above.

Second, the attitude adopted towards fellow-members of the group is one of concern and support. A person in a relation of solidarity with another is saddened when the latter runs into trouble, and glad when she does well. And this translates into obligations of mutual aid, so solidarity is shown by defending and assisting the person who has got into difficulties. This is done on the basis that *in principle* the person being helped would offer help in return were the situation reversed. But solidarity is not reducible to simple reciprocity. It does not assume that the person in question will actually be able to reciprocate. Suppose in a small neighbourhood one family's house catches fire. The neighbours show solidarity by offering accommodation to the family that has been burnt out and helping to put their house back together, e.g. by donating furniture. The family who have been rescued may be in no position to offer similar help even if the opportunity should arise. But where genuine solidarity exists, this is not important: what matters is that the family should 'show willing', that is be prepared to help others within the group in ways that are within its capacities. So solidarity is distinguishable from simple reciprocity – the returning of favours in kind – on the one hand, and from unconditional altruism – helping people in need with no expectation of return – on

³ I assume here that solidarity is primarily a property of groups of various kinds, rather than a relationship between two individuals. This is not to say that it is grammatically wrong to speak of one person displaying solidarity with another – as I noted above, the term itself is quite imprecise. For a definition that focuses on the relationship between agent and recipient, see Wildt 1999, 217-18. Wildt notes, however, that historically the term evolved primarily within the working class movement, where it 'was always a concept that *both* articulated a combative group-consciousness *and* anticipated a corresponding form of social relations for all people' (214). Understanding solidarity as primarily a property of groups allows us to bring out features (such as collective responsibility – see below) that would be overlooked if we narrowed our attention to relations between individuals.

the other. This is sometimes expressed by saying that solidaristic groups are ‘communities of fate’ meaning that their members implicitly agree to protect one another from accidents and losses that are outside their control. Of course the extent of such protection – how much members of the group are willing to do for one another – will vary according to the degree of solidarity that exists within it.

This is related to the third aspect of ‘solidarity among’, which is that the group accepts collective responsibility for what its members do. If we look back to the origin of the term ‘solidarity’, we find it in the provision of Roman law whereby members of an extended family or *gens* were held collectively liable for debts incurred by one of their number – so that a creditor unable to reclaim from the person indebted to him could launch a claim against any member of the association chosen at will.⁴ This was referred to as *obligatio in solidum* (Buckland 1931, 246). Although this legal provision is no longer generally applicable, its moral equivalent persists, in the sense that those who belong to solidaristic groups are expected to assume responsibility for the actions of individual members, insofar as they are acting in a group-related capacity. If they cause damage for which they cannot make redress, fellow-members will feel a responsibility to offer compensation on their behalf.⁵

Fourth, solidarity has some implications for the way in which resources are distributed within the group. At the very least it implies that the group is responsible for ensuring that no member should fall below some locally-defined threshold of neediness. But solidarity usually means in addition that there should be limits on inequalities within the group, though it is less clear how stringent these limits are.⁶ In increasing order of stringency, we have the following principles: no member should get more where the effect of this is that other members get less; no member should get more unless other members also benefit to some extent from the inequality that is thereby created⁷; no member

⁴ See Hayward 1959, 270. Hayward traces the way in which solidarity as a political idea rose to prominence in France as it changed its meaning over the course of the century. See also Metz 1999.

⁵ An additional feature of collective responsibility is that members will experience either pride or shame as the case may be for group successes or failures. Indeed Joel Feinberg has suggested that ‘there is perhaps no better index to solidarity than the occurrence of vicarious pride and shame’ (Feinberg 1968, 677). See, however, May 1996, 32-3 for a dissenting view.

⁶ For further discussion of the relationship between social solidarity and equality, see Weale 1990.

⁷ John Rawls claims that his difference principle ‘does seem to correspond to a natural meaning of fraternity: namely the idea of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is to the benefit of others who are less well off’ (Rawls 1971, 105). Rawls connects fraternity with social solidarity, but one might think that fraternity is actually the stronger notion, and points directly to the third option above, namely wanting any benefits accruing to the group to be enjoyed equally by all members, rather than the second. For a fuller discussion of which of these positions best expresses the fraternal element in solidarity, see Segall 2004, ch. 1.

should get more unless other members benefit to the same extent. These principles appear to correspond to different degrees or strengths of solidarity. Thus if a group of workers refuse to accept a pay rise from their employer unless the same increase applies to every worker (the third principle), this would express a high level of solidarity within that group.⁸

Having now listed four defining features of group solidarity – a distinct ‘we’, mutual concern, collective responsibility, and limits on inequality – it is worth commenting briefly on two features that may be present but are *not* definitive.⁹ First, a solidaristic group need not be a face-to-face group. Some obviously are – families, factory or office workers, small congregations. But in other cases solidarity may exist among those who never meet but nonetheless feel themselves bound together as belonging to the same religion, or profession, or social class. So we should treat direct contact as a possible *source* of solidarity, rather than as one of its constitutive features. Second, it is often assumed that solidarity requires a consensus on values among the relevant group. In one sense this is true, since the group must internalise the norms that constitute solidarity itself: mutual concern, collective responsibility, certain limits to inequality. There would be something paradoxical about rampant individualists attempting to form a solidary group. But apart from that it does not seem that there must be convergence in values. In some cases – solidarity among co-religionists – shared values will be an important criterion of membership, but in other cases it may be a shared interest or a shared predicament that brings people together. There is nothing paradoxical in contemplating solidarity among disabled people, for instance, but there is no reason to suppose that people with disabilities share any values other than those that directly reflect their disadvantaged position within the wider society. Again the sharing of values is better seen as a source than as a feature of solidarity.

III

I turn next to ask why (and when) solidarity should be regarded as valuable. Again it may be useful to start with a distinction, between solidarity as intrinsically valuable, and solidarity as instrumentally valuable for some of the social effects it produces. Why might we think that

⁸ Another manifestation of solidarity within a group is reluctance to be seen performing common tasks at a higher level than other members. Thus observers of solidaristic work groups have recorded instances where faster workers either deliberately slow down their performance, or surreptitiously donate part of their output to fellow-workers. See Sherif and Sherif 1966, 206.

⁹ There may be others as well. Andrew Mason suggests that solidarity is sometimes interpreted to mean ‘a commitment to other members of a group to abide by the outcome of their collective decision-making’ (Mason 1998, 23), though his own preferred use is to make it synonymous simply with ‘mutual concern: minimally this means that members must give each other’s interests some non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning’ (Mason 2000, 27). The latter characterisation appears to me to be too weak, however.

solidarity, as a form of human relationship, was valuable in its own right? A possible answer is that it corresponds to a human need. As a result of their distant origins in small hunter-gatherer bands, it might be argued, humans need to have the sense of closeness and mutual support that solidarity gives them. Without it they feel a sense of despair at their inevitable exposure to the vulnerabilities of the human condition. They need to be able to count on others (when they fall ill, for instance) and this reassurance that they are not alone is what solidarity can provide. However it seems to me that talk of a universal human need for solidarity is dubious. Partly this is because human beings array themselves on a spectrum in terms of how far they wish to be interdependent with others, with one extreme point being occupied by those who prefer a life of almost total self-sufficiency. Partly also it is because people can protect themselves from vulnerability in other ways – by taking out various forms of insurance, for example, or by supporting institutions that provide the necessary protections. Solidarity may still be defended as the best way to ensure that various needs are met – I return to this below – but this is not the same as the claim that solidarity is *itself* a human need.

A different answer is that solidarity is a moral imperative. The focus here shifts to the needs not of the agent herself but of others. These needs impose moral obligations on us, and the way to respond to them is to enter into relations of solidarity with the potentially vulnerable, it is claimed. This answer too looks unconvincing. In general our obligations to the needy can be discharged by acts of altruism, or by combining with others to set up institutions that cater to needs. Given that solidarity requires an emotional identification with the rest of the group – what I described above as a ‘we’ feeling – it cannot be presented as a moral imperative (since ‘ought’ implies ‘can’ and we cannot will feelings into existence). Having said that, there may be circumstances in which a person is unavoidably caught up in relations of solidarity. For example, his job security and livelihood may depend on the willingness of his fellow employees to engage in collective action. In those circumstances, the person concerned should certainly behave *as if* he felt solidarity with his workmates, and maybe should try to cultivate feelings of solidarity as far as he is able to. However the reason for this is not so much that solidarity within the group is intrinsically valuable as that it has valuable effects – in this case securing the livelihoods of many employees.

This brings us then to the instrumental value of solidarity. What benefits may flow from membership in a solidary group? The first of these is simply protection: other members can be expected to come to your aid when you get into difficulties of one sort or another. As noted above, protection can of course be provided in other ways, for example by taking out insurance. But insurance is always for the misfortunes that are specified in the policy document, not for unanticipated hardships. Moreover the cost of taking out the policy will typically vary from person

to person, because of the way that insurance markets work. Solidarity can avoid these pitfalls. Although as noted earlier, it assumes reciprocity within the group, this is not simple tit-for-tat reciprocity.¹⁰ It can encompass a good deal of redistribution in favour of those who are either hit by unexpected disasters, or have features that make them bad insurance risks. This provides the basis for the claim that welfare states rely on social solidarity for their support, if we assume that they will not survive, in democratic societies, unless citizens continue to vote for them. Although a good deal of what the welfare state provides could be justified by appealing to people's long-term interests under conditions of uncertainty, some of its features – such as offering assistance to for disabled people – make sense only if we assume that it is also grounded in solidarity.

A second instrumental benefit of solidarity is that it can provide a brake on inequality. Assume that opportunities exist for people to become very unequal, say through market competition. Those who feel some degree of group solidarity may be reluctant to take advantage of these opportunities unless they can see that other members of the group will gain as well. They will want others to share in their good fortune. As noted above, this provides one possible rationale for John Rawls' difference principle ('social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are....reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage.'¹¹). Groups with high levels of solidarity may go further and resist any inequality of material rewards (as in the case of the Israeli *kibbutzim*). So if we assume that large social inequalities have further problematic consequences (see, for example Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), solidarity can not only serve to limit inequality within groups directly, but also lend support to public policies aimed at curbing society-wide inequality, such as redistributive taxation.

Further instrumental benefits of solidarity can be seen by considering its relationship to *trust*. This relationship is quite difficult to disentangle. One interpretation is that solidarity is simply a manifestation of trust. Rothstein argues in his paper in this volume that where generalised social trust exists, the natural human tendency to reciprocate the behaviour of others will produce solidarity as he defines it, namely as policies aimed at promoting social equality (Rothstein 2015). But there are two problems with this analysis. One is that it sidesteps the question of how social trust is created, by assuming that it will arise naturally in response to well-functioning political institutions. I return to this later when discussing the 'institutional' theory of solidarity. The other is

¹⁰ See here Taylor 1982, 28-30 for the distinction between 'balanced reciprocity' which involves the strict exchange of equivalents, and 'generalised reciprocity' where 'the obligation to reciprocate is vague and diffuse'. (Taylor credits Sahlins 1974 as the source of the distinction.) See also Segall 2004, ch. 9.

¹¹ Rawls 1971, 60. Rawls formulates the principle in slightly different ways in different places, but this formulation like the one cited earlier highlights the principle's claim to be an expression of solidarity.

that the link between trust and equality seems fragile. Trust can exist between two very unequally placed persons – between master and servant, for example – in which case it is manifested in forms of behaviour that reproduce the inequality over time: the master trusts the servant to polish his boots, and the servant trusts the master to pay him his paltry wage. It is more illuminating to see trust as something that arises naturally in groups that manifest solidarity.¹² Because people identify with and show concern for each other, they are also likely to trust one another to reciprocate their behaviour. Indeed it is likely that where group solidarity exists, the trust that is created among the members will extend to areas of life that are not covered by the solidaristic relationship itself. The thought here is that whereas ‘academic solidarity’, for example, involves trusting my colleagues not to plagiarise my work, to review my papers fairly, and so forth, it also creates a spillover effect such that I will trust fellow academics to repay money they have borrowed from me, to look after my house if they lease it from me, etc., even though these transactions have nothing strictly to do with the professional tie that unites us. Now we know that trust within a group has a wide range of beneficial consequences (for evidence, see Uslaner 2002). For example, it makes it easier for the group to solve collective action problems, since members can usually be relied upon to comply voluntarily with rules that benefit the group as a whole; it reduces the need for coercive measures to ensure that agreements and contracts are carried out; and so forth.

But are these positive consequences of solidarity not accompanied by others that are negative? What are the possible downsides of group solidarity? I shall consider two charges: one is that solidarity is inimical to individual liberty because it involves forcing people to conform to the group’s stereotype; the other is that solidarity inside the group inevitably translates into not merely indifference but active hostility towards outsiders.

The first charge is implicit in Jacob Levy’s critique of solidarity as the basis of political association (Levy 2015). As he points out, correctly, solidarity on a large scale requires a way of identifying the ‘we’ who are going to be its subjects. If this is done by reference to a shared culture, as nationalists would have it, this means that cultural minorities will be excluded. If instead it takes a political form – subscription to a set of constitutional principles, for example – then political dissenters will be excluded. In either case the excluded group will be put under pressure to fall in line with the majority’s self-conception.

¹² I do not claim that this is the only way in which trust can arise. Clearly it can arise simply from the experience gained in working with others on collective projects of different kinds. However it seems to me likely that solidarity is a major source of trust towards others of whose behaviour one has no direct knowledge.

This is not the place to consider the viability of the rival picture of political order that Levy presents. The question that his critique raises is just how much uniformity of culture or belief is necessary for solidarity to flourish. As I argued earlier, no general consensus on values seems to be required. First, whether the unifying feature is taken to be a national culture or a thinner ‘purely political’ culture, in either case this is compatible with a kaleidoscope of private cultures pursued by individuals or groups within the polity. You do not have to enjoy apple pie in order to be an American. Second, even in the case of those cultural elements that fall within the public realm, political cultures – certainly democratic ones – are multistranded, so you do not have to sign up to everything in order to be included as part of the ‘we’. Loyal opposition is permissible, even encouraged, so long as it is clear that your loyalty to the political community itself is not compromised.¹³

Turning now to the charge that solidarity within the group comes at the expense of antagonism towards those who are outside, we need to consider the different psychological mechanisms that might come into play. If we ask, for example, how local solidarity relates to solidarity in the wider society, we are presented with two contrasting pictures. One, perhaps most famously associated with a passage of Edmund Burke’s about the sources of attachment, portrays solidarity as taking its strongest form within the family group and then extending progressively outward through wider social circles until it culminates in the nation. Burke writes:

We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass on to our neighbourhoods, and our habitual provincial connexions.....so many little images of the great country in which the heart found something which it could fill. The love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality (Burke 1967, 193).

Burke’s thought is that the feelings of affection (and solidarity, though our concept was not available to him) that we first develop in family settings train us to feel wider attachments – so there is no conflict but rather positive upward reinforcement between these different modes of connection.

The second picture is the one presented by those who see factional loyalties as destructive of a wider solidarity. The factions they have in mind often take the form of extended families, or clans, but the picture itself might apply to any form of solidarity based on features that are exclusively possessed by a subgroup. An extreme version of this is the ‘amoral familialism’ that pervaded the

¹³ It is arguably at least an advantage of the liberal nationalist position over its rival ‘constitutional patriotism’ that national identities are unavoidably fuzzy, so that there are no necessary or sufficient conditions for counting as a member – whereas political principles that acquire constitutional status allow for less latitude. On the flexibility of national identity, see my discussion in Miller 1995, ch. 2.

peasant village of Montegrano in Southern Italy in Edward Banfield's classic study. Here, the family circle extended only to parents and children, and pursuit of its interests destroyed any chances of a wider solidarity. Banfield writes:

In the Montegrano mind, any advantage that may be given to another is necessarily at the expense of one's own family. Therefore, one cannot afford the luxury of charity, which is giving others more than their due, or even of justice, which is giving them their due. The world being what it is, all those who stand outside of the small circle of the family are at least potential competitors and therefore also potential enemies. Towards those who are not of the family the reasonable attitude is suspicion (Banfield 1958, 116).

Consequently, associational life in Montegrano was virtually non-existent, and political office regarded simply as an opportunity to pursue private gain.

Solidarity brings its greatest beneficial consequences, then, when it exists and is practised on a society-wide level, and when smaller and more intense forms of solidarity act like Burke's 'little platoons' that 'serve as the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind' (Burke 1967, 44), rather than Banfield's 'amoral families' in which 'no one will further the interests of the group or community except as it is to his private advantage to do so' (Banfield 1958, 85). So now we must investigate more specifically the potential sources of solidarity across a large and diverse modern society, rather than of solidarity in all its many guises.

IV

In this section of the paper, I want to review critically five different theories that have been advanced to explain how solidarity can arise on a scale that is wider than a face-to-face group. Each theory points to a different mechanism, though it's also possible to envisage combined theories since the mechanisms involved don't appear to interfere with each other.

1. The expanding circle theory. This is in fact the theory that seems to be implicit in the passage from Burke I cited above. We learn the rudiments of solidarity by interacting directly with people on a very small scale, typically within a family. Then having done that we enlarge the circle by observing similarities between those inside and those outside – or inversely by coming to see the differences as irrelevant. To increasing social solidarity, therefore, what we must do is get people to regard those who are more distant from, or more unlike, those they are already close to, as essentially similar. How this is to be done may be disputed. Some would see it as simply a matter of overcoming prejudice, which makes us exclude people who we think of as different because we don't know them. Others would say that what is involved is a kind of imaginative stretching – in

other words, although it is natural and in a sense reasonable initially to confine solidarity to our immediate circle, we have good reasons for trying to widen it outwards. This is the view of Richard Rorty, who thinks it may be possible even to move towards *global* solidarity by this means:

.....solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of ‘us’ (Rorty 1989, 192).

An observation that might lend support to the expanding circle theory is Uslaner’s claim that a person’s disposition to trust others in general (as opposed to specific persons) is connected to a broadly optimistic world view that is formed early in life (Uslaner 2002, esp. ch. 4). The suggestion is that once the relevant disposition is formed, it will be applied to people about whom we have no direct knowledge. On the other hand the theory cannot tell us what to do about those whose early experience causes them to become ‘particularised trusters’ who ‘rely heavily upon their experience (strategic trust) or stereotypes that they believe to be founded in knowledge when deciding whom to trust; and who therefore ‘assume that people unlike themselves are *not* part of their moral community, and thus may have values that are hostile to their own’ (Uslaner 2002, 27). People like this do not simply lack the imaginative ability that Rorty describes; they think they have reasons, based on experience, not to attempt to exercise it. So the expanding circle theory can be faulted for being too deterministic. Even if it can show why enlarged solidarity is *possible*, it provides no social or political mechanism for bringing it about. Faced with a case such as Banfield’s Montegrano, which represents a kind of equilibrium in which no-one is willing to practise solidarity beyond their own family circle, it has no guidance to offer.

2. The interdependence theory. This holds that the key to solidarity on a large scale is recognition of the extent to which members of the relevant society depend upon one another to survive and prosper. Once they recognize that they are indeed a ‘community of fate’ they will begin to behave like one. This theory finds its classic expression in Durkheim’s theory of organic solidarity as presented in *The Division of Labour in Society* (Durkheim 1964). Durkheim’s claim was that in modern societies such as his own, what held people together were not similarities of belief or behaviour, but precisely their individual differences, provided these were organized in such a way that the contribution of each individual meshed with all the others. For this, contracts and markets were not by themselves sufficient. What was also needed was regulation by the state to ensure that ‘abnormal’ forms of the division of labour, such as antagonistic relations between workers and

employers, or under-employment of labour, do not occur. Durkheim's assumption was that where this was achieved, members of a society would indeed recognize their deep interdependence, and accordingly feel solidarity with one another.

There are a number of questions that one might raise about this theory, but the key one is perhaps whether interdependence of the kind that Durkheim describes, which still essentially relies on the market, albeit with extensive legal regulation, will necessarily produce genuine solidarity. After all market relations, even if mutually advantageous, retain their competitive character. In his discussion, Durkheim focuses on functional dependence between producers, say workers within a single factory, rather than on the relation between buyers and sellers of goods or between rival firms. The practical problem of solidarity is usually presented as a problem of how to achieve relationships that have the features outlined in section II above across a society with an economy that is largely market-based. Durkheim's claim that markets can be 'moralised' by regulation so that participants' understanding of their relationship is transformed from antagonism into solidarity looks unconvincing.

3. The associational theory. This view finds the source of social solidarity in people's participation in a range of civic and political associations. Its founding father is perhaps Tocqueville, for his laudatory comments on the consequences of associational life in America (Tocqueville 1954), but more recently it has been expressed in, inter alia, theories of social capital such as Robert Putnam's. Its starting point is the simple (and plausible) thought that people are likely to identify with and trust one another when they associate together on a regular basis, particularly if there is some common project or purpose that animates the association. This process begins, therefore, with face-to-face relationships, but the implicit idea is that there can be linkages such that if A enjoys relations of solidarity with B, and B with C, then A and C are linked, and so forth. It is important that the associations should produce 'bridging' as well as 'bonding' capital, to use Putnam's terms (Putnam 2000, 22-3). That is, they should not merely include people who already feel close to one another on some prior basis such as class or religion. Associational life should bring people together from different backgrounds who happen to share in the particular aims of the group. According to Putnam, the experience of civic engagement can strengthen democracy, as well as having other good effects:

Associations and less formal networks of civic engagement instil in their members habits of cooperation and public-spiritedness, as well as the practical skills necessary to partake in public life.....the more people are involved in networks of civic engagement (from club meetings to church picnics to informal get-togethers with friends), the more likely they are to

display concern for the generalized other – to volunteer, give blood, contribute to charity, and so on (Putnam 2000, 338-40).

This illustrates the associational theory's implicit claim to offer a general theory of social solidarity.

There is evidence that can be used to support the associational theory. A famous experiment conducted in the 1950s by Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif involved a group of boys at a summer camp who were initially polarised into two antagonistic sub-groups through activities that brought them into competition with one another. Having artificially created a position of intense inter-group hostility, the experimenters were able to re-establish solidarity between the two sides by presenting them with situations in which to achieve some important goal members from each had to work together (Sherif and Sherif 1988, ch. 7). Contact between group members (e.g. sharing communal meals) by itself was not enough to prevent in-group solidarity from turning into outgroup hostility. Nor was a single episode of co-operation:

.....intergroup antagonisms did not disappear in one stroke. At first, cooperative interaction involving both groups developed in specific situations in response to common problems and goals, only to be followed by a renewal of sharply drawn group lines and intergroup friction after the challenge had been met. Patterns and procedures for intergroup cooperation were laid down at first on a small scale in specific activities. Only during interaction in a series of situations involving superordinate goals did intergroup friction begin to disappear, and only then did the procedures for intergroup reciprocity, which developed in specific situations, extend spontaneously to widening areas of activity (Sherif and Sherif 1988, 212).

One can of course question whether the group dynamics that evolved among young boys in an engineered environment necessarily carry over into social life generally. But if such doubts are set aside, then the Sherifs' research supports the associational theory's claim that solidarity is produced by people collaborating together over time on some activity or project that they value. Those involved need to communicate with one another, find solutions to common problems, and take decisions. In doing so, they have to set aside prejudices they might initially feel against some of their associates.

However the associational theory needs to show that the internal solidarity thus produced can be extended beyond those who are directly involved in the co-operation. Here Putnam's distinction between bonding and bridging social capital becomes relevant. Putnam himself has a chapter in which he discusses 'the dark side of social capital', which refers to the possibility that the creation of bonding capital through the association of like-minded people may have the effect of increasing

inter-group exclusion and hostility (Putnam 2000, ch. 22). In this way association may become a motor of inequality rather than of solidarity. Since association is voluntary, there is no way to ensure that it generates only bridging capital. If the problem for which society-wide solidarity is the solution is one of ethnic division, for example, the corresponding difficulty is that we might expect associations to be formed mainly along ethnic lines, since they will have culturally specific aims. In later work (Putnam 2007), Putnam appears to place more emphasis on the creation of identities that can cross such divisions than on association as such, thus moving towards the fourth account of sources of solidarity than I want to consider.

4. The identity theory. This holds that the origins of solidarity lie in a shared identity which not only serves to mark out the 'we' among whom solidarity will be practised, but also helps to create the positive emotional disposition towards fellow members that solidarity requires. The theory relies on the simple psychological claim that we are disposed to sympathise with, help, trust, and take responsibility for those that we perceive to be like ourselves, and a sense of identity creates this feeling of likeness even with people with whom we are not in direct contact. There is ample evidence to bear this claim out, for example evidence from experiments in which participants are told that they are interacting with people with whom they share some common attribute, and this information influences their willingness to engage in various forms of helping behaviour (I have discussed some of these in Miller 2013). The nature of the attribute is not so important – it can be a style of dress, a political ideology or a skin colour. The important point is that merely knowing that someone shares your identity in a relevant respect is sufficient to trigger the disposition, even though you have never encountered them in person. Thus the identity theory, if valid, is well positioned to explain how solidarity is possible in large communities.

The problem, of course, is that the identity in question is likely to exclude as well as include; indeed it is plausible to assume that the solidarity-generating features of shared identity are enhanced when the identity also creates an opposition group against which the relevant 'we' can be defined. So the debate about identity as a source of social solidarity has revolved around the question of whether it is possible to have a society-wide identity that is strong enough to generate solidarity but accessible enough to different sub-groups that all are able to adopt it. More specifically, the debate has been between those who believe that a thinner 'citizen identity' is sufficient to the task, and those who think that a thicker 'national identity' is required – though it can also be recast as a debate about national identity itself, and the extent to which this needs to include cultural as opposed to more narrowly political elements. As one might expect, the evidence suggests that those who adhere to a richer, and therefore more exclusive, understanding of what it means to

belong to nation X are also more likely to identify more strongly with X – and therefore are more willing to display solidarity with other members of X, so long as these are regarded as members in good standing (see Miller and Ali 2014; Theiss-Morse 2009, esp. ch. 4). The corresponding problem, therefore, is how to ensure that those who are regarded at best as ‘marginal’ members by those who place themselves in the core are included in the collective ‘we’ when questions of public policy are at stake.

The identity theory faces other practical challenges. One is that it always involves distortion: members of the group rely on stereotypes to identify other members, but few if any actually live up (or down) to them. This however may be less serious than it first appears if, as I argued above, one recognizes that national identities are typically best understood as cases of ‘family resemblance’ – there are a number of features that typify those who belong to this particular nation, but not all of them need to be present in any one individual in order for us to say that she is a member (see further Miller 1995, 21-27). There might, for example be a national religion which many espouse, but dissenters and atheists can still be identified as co-nationals on the basis of other features that they share with the believers. Another challenge is that identities, although they are not rigid, are nevertheless not susceptible to conscious control, so that if we are interested in the sources of solidarity for practical reasons (we want solidarity to increase, or at least not to decline), identity does not give us the handle that we are looking for. But again this seems overstated. Governments, in particular, can and do shape the identities of their citizens. They do so when they design education systems, plan national days, choose which citizens to honour and which to vilify, which anniversaries to remember and which to forget, and so forth. So they also have resources and opportunities to deal with the problem of exclusion referred to in the last paragraph.

5. The institutional theory. The last approach I want to consider reverses the usual way of thinking about the causes and effects of solidarity by claiming that solidarity is actually an effect of a society’s institutions and policies rather than their (indirect) cause. This applies particularly to the relationship between solidarity and the welfare state. In place of the claim that solidarity provides the basis on which people are willing to support welfare state policies, especially predictably redistributive ones, the institutional theory holds that by virtue of being subject to these policies people will feel solidarity with others who also support and benefit from them. This is not just the claim that established welfare states ‘generate their own supportive constituencies among the providers and beneficiaries of social programs’, important as that no doubt is in explaining their persistence (Banting 2010, 802; see also additional references cited there). It is rather the claim that the way institutions perform and the incentives they generate may alter people’s perceptions of

their fellow citizens in ways that may either increase solidarity or reduce it. In the version of this argument presented by Rothstein and Stolle, two mechanisms are highlighted.¹⁴ First, people who are treated fairly and impartially by bureaucrats and officials will tend to generalise from that experience and assume that their fellow citizens at large can also be trusted to behave fairly. Second, programmes that are universal in coverage, as opposed to those that provide selective benefits, since they give no opportunities for cheating or making false claims, pre-empt any suspicion that beneficiaries are not to be trusted. Moreover they avoid the divisive disputes that selective policies generate about who should be eligible for benefits and how generous these benefits should be. According to Rothstein and Stolle, 'in their essence [non-universal] welfare states are designed to plot groups of the population against each other' (Rothstein and Stolle 2003, 197). By contrast, universal systems encourage generalized trust to flourish.

These claims are undoubtedly plausible, but one may wonder whether they are sufficient to give us a full theory of the sources of solidarity. They seem rather to be directed at institutions and policies that have the effect of undermining solidarity, on the assumption that it already exists: the negative claim that selective welfare systems (and corrupt officials) tend to destroy trust does not entail the positive claim that universal systems (and impartial officials) tend to create it. There is also the implicit assumption that institutional coverage is sufficient to identify the group among whom trust and solidarity can be expected to develop. That this assumption is somewhat shaky can be seen by thinking of cases in which subjection to common institutions, even well-functioning ones, fails to create sufficient solidarity to hold the constituency together (I am thinking of secessions from democratic regimes, and also the much-remarked-upon failure of the EU to engender any significant level of solidarity between ordinary citizens across national borders). In other words, the institutional theory seems incomplete, if it is treated (perhaps against the intentions of its sponsors) as a full explanation of the origins and persistence of social solidarity.

V

This brief (and probably non-exhaustive) review of theories about the sources of solidarity suggests that no one theory can offer a complete explanation of this phenomenon. The last three theories in particular – associational, identity and institutional – all seem to identify factors that plausibly contribute to society-wide solidarity, but they also seem to be more powerful where the mechanisms they identify operate in conjunction. For example the contrast between bridging and bonding capital becomes less sharp if potential associates all share an overarching identity which

¹⁴ Rothstein and Stolle 2003. Rothstein and Stolle take social capital, rather than solidarity, as their *explanandum*, but I think their claims can plausibly be reinterpreted as claims about the sources of solidarity, subject to qualifications that I shall enter shortly.

implies that *any* association will have a bonding as well as a bridging aspect. And the institutional theory can be seen as explaining how solidarity can be reinforced, by the design of appropriate institutions and policies, among people who are already disposed towards mutual attachment, and therefore support the setting up of these instruments. Nor do any of these theories try to explain the causal role that political agents may play in bringing about the conditions for solidarity to emerge – for example the historical contribution made by trade unions and social democratic parties to the creation of the welfare state, highlighted in Peter Hall’s contribution to this volume (Hall 2015). For the same reason they cannot tell us how to go about creating solidarity in circumstances where it is entirely absent (say in the aftermath of a civil war). Their role is more modest: they propose different ways in which solidarity can be sustained in societies that confront, simultaneously, both increasing economic inequality and deeper cultural fragmentation. Whether the main counterforce to these trends proves to be fostering civic activism, promoting inclusive national identities, or strengthening the institutions of the welfare state, understanding the nature and sources of solidarity remains a pressing task.

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