Introduction: Exploring the Various Dimensions and Manifestations of Solidarity

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Drawing from the scholarly literature, I define solidarity as a certain type of relationship that has the following components: the relationship is seen by its participants as being one of interdependence and unity, in which there is shared identity, interests, feelings of belonging (a “we feeling”) and mutual obligations. One way to determine with whom we see ourselves in solidarity is to answer the questions: “Should we support them?” and “Should we support us?” The “us” is our solidarity group, or “in-group.” The “them” is an “out-group” with which we do not share solidarity. Exactly who and what “them” is, and what, if any, obligations we have to “them” is often a topic of debate within solidarity groups (see Reicher and Haslam, 2010). Another important aspect of solidarity groups is how exclusive or inclusive they are -- who can be a member. The phenomenon of solidarity includes attitudes, emotions, values/norms, behavior, and structures that foster solidarity. We find solidarity at various levels of social organization, from the micro level of the family, to the macro level of global society -- how groups at various levels of social organization relate to each other varies, and the human capacity for an inclusive solidarity, up to the level of a global solidarity, is debated -- how far can the boundaries of the group be expanded for an inclusive solidarity? By what means can groups join with other groups to form a supra-group identity, as in nationalism or a shared identity of global citizenship? What are the possible boundaries of the "we"? How can groups develop solidarity with out-groups? Indeed, how can solidarity be extended to non-human beings and the natural environment in our increasingly interdependent world? And how can we build solidarity after divisive conflicts? (see Battaly, 2022; Bayertz, 1999; Gaertner and Dovidio, 2012; Gichure and Pagnucco, 2022; Ignácz (2021); Mauro Basaure and Mascareño, 2021; Özkan, 2023; Scholz, 2019; Hechter, 2015; Laitinen and Pessi, 2014; Dobrzanski, ed., 2011; Scholz, 2008; Tönnies, 1887; Durkheim, 1893).

Positive and Negative Solidarity
As Heather Battaly wrote in her essay "Solidarity: Virtue or Vice?:" any analysis of solidarity will need to account for a simple datum: groups of ‘bad actors’ can have solidarity. Nazis can have solidarity, as can Mexican drug cartels, Russian troll-factories, and American tobacco-industry executives. What this shows is that solidarity won’t always be a virtue. It won’t be a virtue in groups whose aims are bad—morally bad in the case of Nazis and drug cartels, epistemically bad in the case of troll-factories and tobacco-industry executives (whose aim is to sow doubt)” (Battaly, 2022, p. 304).

The groups Battaly notes are examples of what we can call "Negative Solidarity" since, while they may provide some form of benefits to the in-group members, they often have harmful impacts on other groups and society at large. Conversely, groups that provide benefits to in-group members and that are not harmful to, or make positive contributions to, other groups and society at large, can be called examples of "Positive Solidarity." As a further example, what is called "Negative Ethnicity,” as described below, is an example of Negative Solidarity.
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As Dan Kidha notes in his essay in this volume, many ethnic groups live together relatively harmoniously. In his classic book, *Negative Ethnicity: From Bias to Genocide*, Koigi Wamwere also notes that ethnicity can be positive. However, his concern is with the potential, and actual, destructiveness of negative ethnicity (see also Chagema, 2020; Kivoi, et al., 2022; Wamwere 2015a; 2015b). As he wrote: “Assumed ethnic superiority leads to negative ethnicity in many people, from Kenya, to Nigeria to South Africa" (p. 22). According to Wamwere: “Negative ethnicity manifests itself when we begin to imagine that we are superior to others because our religion, food, language, songs, culture or even looks are better" (p. 22). Wamwere goes on to say: "Negative ethnicity starts as an attack upon those whose brotherhood, [sisterhood, and personhood] in humanity we deny, and ends as an attack upon those whose brotherhood, [sisterhood, and personhood] in blood we acknowledge. Eventually all biases come home to roost" (p. 25). Negative ethnicity is a form of negative solidarity. What Wamerere describes is a major part, though not the only part, of negative ethnicity/negative solidarity. And we join Wamwere in asking how negative ethnicity/negative solidarity can be overcome. In the essays in this volume, we will see studies of negative solidarity, as well as positive solidarity, and explore some ways of overcoming negative solidarity and broadening the boundaries of the "we."

The Essays on Solidarity in this Volume
The essays on solidarity in this volume address many of the issues noted above.

The essay by Mawa Mohamed shows how the relations of solidarity and the support groups formed by women in an Internally Displaced Person's (IDP) camp in Darfur, West Sudan enhances their well-being and helps them to face the challenges unique to women in the camp. This case study shows how in-group solidarity can be very positive.

Julie Matthaei and Matthew Slaats discuss the values, practices and structures of a solidarity economy that is inclusive and beneficial for all and that is environmentally sustainable. This essay helps us see clearly how economic structures impact solidarity in society and with the natural environment.

Ambrose Esigbemi Umetietie focuses on ecological solidarity, discussing the values and social structures that bring together people and their natural environments in mutually beneficial ways. This essay should help us expand our understanding of an inclusive solidarity and the social structures that include the natural environment as a vital component.

Dan Kidha's essay richly describes a Kenyan case of negative solidarity in the form of negative ethnicity and discusses a theological approach to overcoming it. The essay shows a way that religion can help bring groups together.

Farhia Abdi describes the challenges facing a Somali community in Canada as it tries to maintain its identity, cohesion, and solidarity in a new and different land. This case study helps us understand the challenges in maintaining a positive in-group solidarity.

Pat Mische discusses the life and work of Benjamin Ferencz, the prominent advocate of the International Criminal Court and the use of international law to provide a global structure that
fosters peace, justice, and solidarity. This essay spurs us to think about what structures are needed for global solidarity.

Dan Philpott explores ways of bringing together groups divided by conflict through reparations, transitional justice, and reconciliation. This essay contributes to our thinking about how to integrate justice, reconciliation, and the establishment of solidarity between and among groups.

John Radanao shows us ways that the Christian ecumenical movement is trying to heal historic divides among Christians and trying to work together for the global common good. This essay provides a good example of efforts to build a form of global solidarity.

Jim Malarkey's review essay looks at what the religious thought and practice of the world's religions can contribute to global solidarity, while John Merkle's review essay discusses the elements of religious thought and practice that are threats to solidarity, and how those threats can be addressed constructively.

John Sniegocki focuses on food and solidarity, on how what we eat impacts the lives of other humans as well as animals and the environment. By focusing on food, an essential component of our everyday lives, the essay invites us to think about the challenges and benefits of a broad, inclusive solidarity.

Magnus Haavelsrud discusses how novels can help us develop empathy for others, a crucially important emotion for peace, justice, and solidarity. This essay helps us think about how we can build positive solidarity.

Linda R. Tropp and Trisha A. Dehrone provide us with a very helpful guide to bridge-building and solidarity-building among groups, based on decades of research on the Contact Hypothesis and Intergroup Contact Theory. The Journal of Social Encounters (JSE) thanks the American Immigration Council for making this excellent guide available as an open-access document. (The JSE will publish more on Intergroup Contact Theory and Peacebuilding in a future issue.)

We thank the authors of these essays on solidarity for their excellent, informative contributions to this special issue.
References


