

# Solidarity, Fate-Sharing, and Community

Michael Zhao

*New York University*

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A prisoner-of-war is secretly offered early release by his captors, who know that his father is an important figure in the military. He decides to remain in captivity in solidarity with his platoon mates.

A young girl is undergoing chemotherapy for leukemia, which has caused her hair to fall out. Her parents and older siblings shave their own heads in solidarity with her.

Workers at an equipment factory go on strike to protest an upcoming round of layoffs. At another factory in the same town, workers whose jobs are not in danger go on strike in solidarity with them.

Marie is a young woman living in East Germany in the late 1980s. On the night of November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall opens, reuniting East and West Germany after 44 years of separation. A group of young people from both countries have climbed atop the wall and spontaneously begin singing the *Deutschlandlied*, a song of German unity. Marie, watching from her own home, sings in solidarity with them.

Solidarity is at once widespread and puzzling. The examples above show that it's a ubiquitous human phenomenon: The idea of "being in it together" with others, of suffering what they are suffering or rejoicing in what they are rejoicing in, is instantly intelligible, and seems to have its roots somewhere deep in the human psyche. But questions arise once we start to theorize about solidarity. In this paper, I'm going to focus on three questions: What motivates acts of solidarity, what unifies acts of solidarity, and what values does one respond to in acting in solidarity?

First, why do people act in solidarity with others? Acts of solidarity *can* be directed toward social change, but (as the example of Marie shows) they need not be. They *can* have a function of signaling certain attitudes toward a group, but (as the prisoner-of-war example shows) they need not.

Second, many different kinds of acts can count as acts of solidarity. One can act in solidarity with others by doing something that they are doing (as Marie or the strikers do), or by choosing to undergo what they are undergoing (as the prisoner-of-war or the young girl's family

do). But acts of solidarity do not require this kind of sympathetic action: One can act in solidarity with the oppressed by marching in protest, by wearing paraphernalia associated with them, or by making a verbal declaration of support. So the question arises of what makes all of these acts instances of a single kind of act, one of solidarity.

Finally, many of us find many acts of solidarity admirable. We might think that the subjects in the examples above are responding correctly to some value. This raises the question of which values their actions are responses to. Of course, many might have instead a neutral or even negative reaction to many putative cases of solidarity. We might think that, in many cases, the agents are doing something narcissistic or otherwise self-regarding, trying to impress others or themselves with their own virtue. But even if we think many putative acts of solidarity are simply attempts at virtue-signaling, that requires that we think (or at least think that the agents think that others think) that there are more-or-less genuine acts of solidarity that do exhibit some virtue, which the virtue-signaling cases are piggybacking on.

In this paper, I want to offer an account of solidarity that will answer these questions. This paper has five sections: In §1, I start by looking at a subclass of solidaristic acts, which I'll call *self-depriving* acts of solidarity; I'll argue that many existing accounts of solidarity cannot account for these acts. In §2, I provide my own diagnosis of these acts, arguing that they embody a commitment to *sharing the fates* of others. In §§3–5, I answer the three questions that I posed above: In §§3–4, generalizing from the diagnosis in §2, I give an explanation for why people engage in acts of solidarity, and give a partial account of acts of solidarity; §5 answers the question of what makes solidarity valuable.

Let me make one preliminary point before I go on. The term 'solidarity' and its cognates have a long history; the earliest use is in Roman law, to describe joint responsibility for repaying or recovering a debt. More recently, a fairly regimented use of the term has arisen in sociology and neighboring disciplines, deriving from Émile Durkheim's discussion of solidarity, on which the term means cohesion that

arises from interdependence between the members of a group.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, I'm going to focus on the non-academic, colloquial use of the term: what ordinary people have in mind when they describe people as "acting (being, standing) in solidarity" with others. This usage is admittedly less regimented, and an account of it will be partly stipulative, neglecting some cases while emphasizing others. Nonetheless, my account will capture at least an interesting core of the range of cases that ordinary speakers describe as cases of solidarity.

### 1. Self-Deprivation

I want to start by drawing attention to one feature present in many acts of solidarity, including some of the examples I gave above. Consider the prisoner-of-war's acting in solidarity with his platoon mates by remaining in captivity, or the young girl's family's acting in solidarity with her by shaving their own heads. Both of these acts consist in the agents' voluntarily depriving themselves of something that is available to them (freedom, hair), but that the objects of their solidarity (the other members of the platoon, the young girl) are deprived of. I'll call acts like these *self-depriving* acts of solidarity.

Of course, not all acts of solidarity involve self-deprivation. In a solidarity protest, the protestors are not depriving themselves of anything that the objects of their solidarity are deprived of by protesting. And in the Berlin Wall example, Marie certainly isn't depriving herself of anything that other Germans are being deprived of by singing. Nonetheless, I want to focus first on self-depriving acts of solidarity because they are particularly puzzling for existing accounts of solidarity.

These acts draw our attention to a few points. First, acts of solidarity need not be public, directed toward the object of solidarity or some third entity. Neither the prisoner-of-war nor the young German woman intends that anyone know about what they are doing. Second,

1. Sally Scholz (in her "Seeking Solidarity") calls this the descriptive sense of "solidarity", in contrast to the normative sense, which she takes to refer to a set of obligations among members of a group. There are also similar uses in the trade union movement and in Catholic social doctrine, on which solidarity has to do with mutual support.

solidarity need not presuppose any goal or interest that the agent and object of solidarity share, which the act of solidarity advances. What exactly, for example, is the goal shared by the young girl and her family, which is furthered by their shaving their heads? In fact, acts of solidarity can often have an *anti*-consequentialist or leveling effect, making the agent worse off without making the object of solidarity (or anyone else) better off. Take, as another example, a gay couple who live in the United States, who have the legal right to marry, but decide not to in solidarity with gay people around the world who cannot. Gay people in other countries are not better off as a result of this couple's decision; it's not as if they're comforted by that decision, since they don't even know about it. The couple's act makes no one better off, yet we still recognize it as an act of solidarity.

Third, there need not be anything both the agent and object of solidarity are standing together *against*, as is sometimes presupposed: what exactly, for example, are the young girl and her family jointly opposing? And fourth, the objects of solidarity need not be victims of wrongdoing: perhaps the platoon is being held unjustly, but the young girl with leukemia is not necessarily the victim of any wrongdoing.

Now, it's not clear that existing accounts of solidarity accommodate our observations about these cases. Andrew Mason, for example, takes as a necessary condition on solidarity that members of the group assign one another's interests intrinsic weight in their practical reasoning.<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, Michael Sandel uses 'solidarity' to mean a sense of mutual obligation that members of a group have toward one another.<sup>3</sup> If I feel obligation toward you and feel that you have obligations to me, then I am motivated to advance your interests in the same way that I am mine, and expect the same from you. And in a recent paper, Andrea Sangiovanni writes that I am in solidarity with you only when we share some goal that I am committed to realizing, even at

2. Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity, and Belonging: Levels of Community and their Normative Significance* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).
3. Michael Sandel, *The Case against Perfection* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

significant cost to my own interests.<sup>4</sup> As I mentioned, though, acting in solidarity with others does not require that I intend to advance *any* shared goals or interests.

Jean Harvey, in her discussions of solidarity, writes that the paradigmatic cases of solidarity are with the oppressed. As she puts it, "A great deal of injustice is found in this world and much of it is sweepingly systematic. Were this not so, we would probably hear far less about solidarity."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, on an account recently proposed by Avery Kolers, to be in solidarity with a group is to take sides with that group against some third party on that basis of some agent-neutral reason, such as the fact that the group is being treated unjustly.<sup>6</sup> Kolers's account thus allows for the possibility that solidarity is not directed toward any goal: To put things in his terms, solidarity is *agonistic*, directed against a hostile third party, rather than teleological. This account captures the phenomenon of solidarity as a form of political action, which is Kolers's focus. But as the examples above show, there are many instances of solidarity that fall outside the header of political action, and those that one acts in solidarity with need not be victims of injustice or oppression.

One account that does accommodate the observations we made above is a recent one proposed by Nicolas Bommarito.<sup>7</sup> Bommarito focuses on *private* acts of solidarity, those in which one acts in solidarity with others without intending that they know — think about the prisoner-of-war or the gay couple. As he writes, "The key to understanding what is virtuous about acts of private solidarity is seeing that they are ways of *manifesting* concern for others and also of *developing*

4. Andrea Sangiovanni, "Solidarity as Joint Action", *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2015).
5. Jean Harvey, "Moral Solidarity and Empathetic Understanding: The Moral Value and Scope of the Relationship", *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2007): 22.
6. Avery Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity* (Oxford University Press, 2016).
7. Nicolas Bommarito, "Private Solidarity", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 19, no. 2 (2015): 445–455.

such concern.<sup>8</sup> So according to Bommarito, private acts of solidarity, when they are virtuous, are motivated by a sense of concern on the agent's part for the object's wellbeing: The prisoner-of-war shows his concern for the plight of his platoon mates by deciding to forgo early release, and the gay couple show their concern for gay people in other countries by deciding not to get married.

I grant that many acts of self-deprivation are motivated by concern. I might deprive myself of sleep to stay up making a gift for a close friend, or deprive myself of a considerable amount of time to help my child on his science project. But it seems unclear how *private* self-depriving acts of solidarity — those in which I deprive myself of something in solidarity with someone else, and in which I don't intend that that person be aware of my act — could be motivated by concern. First, acting out of concern for someone often manifests in trying to make that person better off: I imagine that my friend will appreciate my gift, and that my child will do better in school as a result of my help. But again (as Bommarito himself notes), private acts of solidarity make the object of solidarity no better off, but rather make the agent worse off.

Of course, in response, acting out of concern for another can manifest itself in other ways, too. If I hear about a terrorist attack in London, and know that my friend lives in London, I might text her out of concern, just to make sure that she's okay. My motive for that consists simply in a desire to make sure that nothing bad has happened to my friend, and does not involve a desire to make her better off. Similarly, if my child has been taken to the emergency room, I might pace around the waiting area in the hospital anxiously, frequently asking the doctors about his condition; I do all of this out of concern for my child, even though I intend none of these acts to make him better off.<sup>9</sup> But private self-deprivation seems relevantly different from all of these cases: In these cases, I am motivated by a desire to know how the other is doing, which is related to the paradigmatic cases of concern to

8. *Ibid.*, 449.

9. Thanks to Tienmu Ma for suggesting this line of objection to me.

the extent that such knowledge is a prerequisite for deliberating about how to make the other better off. Unlike these cases, there is no clear connection between private self-deprivation and the desire to make the other better off.

Perhaps I have no decisive considerations to offer against Bommarito's account; I'll just note that self-deprivation seems quite different from paradigmatic acts of concern. It is possible that Bommarito is using 'concern' in an expansive sense, to include a range of attitudes toward others that could motivate private acts of self-deprivation. In that case, though, the account loses some of its informativeness: what are these more specific attitudes? My argument against his account, aside from what I've already said, will simply be the rival account that I have to offer.

## 2. Sharing Fates

In giving my own account of acts of solidarity, I'll start by considering what the motive for self-depriving acts of solidarity could be. (I'll focus for now on the private cases, those in which the object of solidarity is unaware of the act, since these cases exclude the possibility of some expressive or signaling function.) What I say about these cases won't itself generalize to all cases of solidarity; nonetheless, it will point us to something more general whose presence explains both these cases and other cases of solidarity.

Think about the case of the prisoner-of-war. He might have many reasons for rejecting the enemy's offer of early release. One reason might be a reluctance to play into enemy propaganda by accepting their offer; another reason, if he is the platoon leader, might involve the thought that he has an obligation to protect his men, one that he will be unable to discharge if he is not with them. But I take it that, in addition to these, he might also have the following motivating thought: "We're all members of the same platoon. If my platoon mates don't get to be released, then I won't accept release either." Think of general expressions of this thought: "If they don't get to have it, then I won't have it either," or, "If not all of us can have it, then none of us will."

In these cases, concern for others' well-being does not play a direct role, as we've already discussed. Rather, my suggestion is that, because the agent identifies with a group that both he and the objects of solidarity belong to, he feels bound to other members of that group in particular ways. Among these ways is in having the thought that, in certain ways and to certain extents, *what happens to part of the group should happen to the entire group*. If certain members of my group are undergoing something bad, and I cannot make it so that they no longer undergo that thing, then I should undergo it with them. I'll call this thought a commitment to *fate-sharing*, and I'll argue in this section that such commitments motivate self-depriving acts of solidarity.<sup>10</sup>

I'm taking the term from a line in John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*: "In justice as fairness, men agree to share one another's fate."<sup>11</sup> Rawls thus suggests that members of a society ought to be animated by a willingness to face outcomes as a unit, accepting inequalities only to the extent that they benefit all. I want to propose that, in addition to just societies (on Rawls's conception), there are many groups membership in which generates a commitment to sharing at least part of the fates of other members.

First, there might be an explicit agreement made by the members of some group to share fates. The rules of a labor union, for example, may stipulate that no subset of the union should enjoy benefits that result

10. I want to distinguish a voluntary *commitment* to fate-sharing — a commitment to undergoing what other members of the group are undergoing — from *involuntary* forms of fate-sharing, in which certain mechanisms might make it so that outcomes between the members of a group are correlated. This latter form of fate-sharing is sometimes called "common fate" or "common lot". Joel Feinberg writes, for example, "the parties share a common lot insofar as their goods and harms are necessarily collective and indivisible" ("Collective Responsibility", 677).

11. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971), 102. Rawls is not entirely clear on what he means by "sharing one another's fate", so I'll simply appropriate the term for what I have in mind, aware that it may be somewhat different from the intended meaning. I should mention that Sandel (in his *Case against Perfection*) also talks about fate-sharing in the context of solidarity. By "fate-sharing", however, he seems to mean a sense of mutual obligation, rather than what I have in mind.

from their collective efforts unless those benefits are extended to all; so they may, for example, forbid a subset of members from arriving at an independent bargaining agreement with the employer. As another example, the traditional wedding vows in many English-speaking countries include a commitment from both partners to sharing each other's lives, for better or for worse. And men in sworn brotherhoods might similarly vow to follow each other's fortunes; take, for example, a scene in the classic Chinese novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, in which the three protagonists make an oath to be blood brothers: "Although we are from different families, we come together as brothers. Although we were not born on the same day, in the same month, in the same year, we seek to die on the same day, in the same month, in the same year."

In addition to explicit agreements to share fates, there are many important fate-sharing commitments that are unspoken and often vague about the ways in which and extent to which members should share fates. I may feel guilty if I enjoy my dinner too much, knowing that my wife, sick with food poisoning, cannot have any; I might think that if she is suffering, then to some extent, I should be too. Similarly, I may feel as if I am doing something wrong by immigrating to a wealthier country, where I will enjoy a higher standard of living, leaving my parents to relative poverty in our home country. In the same vein, survivor guilt can result from the thought that the survivor violated (however involuntarily) some commitment among members of the group to sharing fates: In surviving, she did not suffer the fate that those around her did.

And finally, consider a scene from an episode of the TV show *Black Mirror*.<sup>12</sup> In that episode, set in the 2040s, humanity has the technology to upload the consciousness of the dying into a virtual reality, thereby prolonging life indefinitely. A woman recounts that her daughter died at a young age, before the technology became available; her husband later passed up the offer of technologically-aided immortality because

12. Charlie Brooker, "San Junipero", *Black Mirror*, series 3, episode 4 (2016).

their daughter never got it, choosing to die naturally as well. The man thus had the sense that he would violate some important fate-sharing commitment by availing himself of an important opportunity that was denied to his daughter. (He is quoted as saying, “How can I? When she missed out, how can I?”)

To see how this relates to self-depriving acts of solidarity, consider cases in which certain members of a group are deprived of certain important things, while other members have them. This includes the case of the prisoner-of-war, who is offered freedom while his platoon mates are deprived of it; and the case of the gay couple, who have the legal right to marry while gay people in other countries are deprived of that right. In these kinds of cases, the commitment to fate-sharing amounts to a commitment either to making it so that the others are no longer deprived of that thing, or (if there is no way of doing that) to forgoing oneself what the others are deprived of. I claim that this specific form of a commitment to fate-sharing provides the motivation in private self-depriving acts of solidarity. In choosing to remain in captivity with his platoon mates, for example, the prisoner-of-war agrees to share the fate that has befallen his group as a whole.

Now, this might not seem like the right diagnosis of the chemotherapy case, in which the family of a young girl with leukemia shave their own heads in solidarity with her. After all, what the young girl’s family voluntarily deprive themselves of, their hair, is only one (fairly unimportant) part of what the girl is deprived of, her overall health. The family is thus not sharing in her fate in any important sense. But even in this case, the girl’s family is sharing her fate symbolically: Their decision to shave their heads expresses to the girl that her family supports her, and that she isn’t going through her ordeal alone. I’ll return to the case of symbolic acts of solidarity in §4.

### 3. Community

To sum up the discussion in the last section, we noted that in private self-depriving acts of solidarity, the agent accepts a commitment to sharing the fate of the members of some group that she identifies with:

a commitment to (in certain ways and to certain extents) undergoing what the rest of the group is undergoing. Because the rest of the group is deprived of something important, she follows through on this commitment by forgoing that thing herself.

Now, ideas about fate-sharing don’t account for all cases of solidarity. After all, there are many *non*-self-depriving acts of solidarity, in which they don’t seem to play a role. Think about the solidarity strike case, in which workers at one factory go on strike in solidarity with workers at another factory, who are striking to protest the possible loss of their jobs. If the agents are depriving themselves of anything in this case, it’s not what the objects of their solidarity are at risk of being deprived of, and the fate-sharing account doesn’t seem to explain why *they’re* doing what they’re doing. Rather, the agents seem to be motivated by a sense of identification with the other workers: perhaps as factory workers, or as friends, or as residents of the same town. On the basis of that shared identity, they are willing to jeopardize their own interests in order to promote the interests of the others. Or think about the young German woman who sings in solidarity with other Germans when the Berlin Wall falls. What seems to motivate the young woman is a sense of unity with a larger entity, one that attenuates the sense of being a separate individual, and so motivates her to do whatever the group as a whole is doing. So the question now is whether we can give a unified account of what motivates acts of solidarity, which explains both the self-depriving and these diverse non-self-depriving cases.

One strategy for doing so is to appeal to something more general than the commitment to sharing fates, the treatment of the interests of other group members as one’s own, and the tendency to act together with the group. Perhaps a certain way of relating to the other members of a group generates, in different contexts, *each* of these more specific motives. If this is so, then using that kind of scheme in interactions with others will explain both cases of solidarity that involve self-deprivation and other cases, and we can give a unified explanation of acts of solidarity.

In this section, I want to pursue this strategy by positing a kind of attitude toward others, which I'll call an attitude of *community*.<sup>13</sup> When one has an attitude of community toward other members of a group, one focuses on certain important features shared by members of the group — like blood, locale, or profession — and overlooks the ways in which they are different. So I might think that, because we are both members of the same family, or both philosophers, or both citizens of the same country, we are in an important respect no different from each other.

In focusing only on the similarities among the members of the group, one comes to relate *in a first-personal way* to the other members. By this, I mean that one regards the self/other distinction between members of the group as, for certain purposes and to a significant degree, practically irrelevant. In doing so, one takes there to be little or no practical difference between one's interests and the interests of others (for a range of interests), or between what happens to one and what happens to others (for a range of events). When I have an attitude of community toward others, I ask not for whom the bell tolls, giving the interests of the others the status that my own have in practical deliberation, and sympathetically responding to what befalls them.

Furthermore, in blurring the distinction between individuals, having an attitude of community toward the other members of a group can also create a strong sense of the group as a collective entity, one that can subsume the agency of the individuals that make it up: In feeling "at one" with others, one can also feel that there is something larger than one and the others make up. Community thus embraces both identification with the other members of a group, and identification with the group as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

13. I'm drawing on a number of ideas from different disciplines for inspiration, like Ferdinand Tönnies's concept of *Gemeinschaft* (usually translated as "community"), Émile Durkheim's concept of mechanical solidarity, and, more recently, Alan Fiske's concept of communal sharing relations. (See Tönnies's *Community and Civil Society*, Durkheim's *Division of Labor in Society*, and Fiske's "Four Elementary Forms of Sociality" for detailed accounts of these concepts.)

14. Note that I'm using "community" as a term of art, without intending it to

I say "for certain purposes" because, in having an attitude of community toward another, I might not regard the distinction between myself and the other as normatively irrelevant in every respect. In the context of a platoon, I might think that there's little normative difference between my being released and my buddy's being released — the latter is as good as the former. At the same time, I might think that there's a large difference between his writing his mother a letter and my writing his mother a letter: the former is appropriate, while the latter would be bizarre.<sup>15</sup>

Now, to some, the idea of regarding the self/other distinction as normatively irrelevant might sound morally repugnant. The idea that it makes no difference whose interests are at stake or whom an event befalls seems (like utilitarianism) to violate the separateness of persons. But many of our most important relationships regularly violate, in one way or another, the separateness between self and other. One way is through the natural operation of sympathy with those whom we identify with. When my parents are recognized for an important accomplishment, I feel proud, even if I am in no way responsible for what they did. When my partner feels down, I feel down. When my friend succeeds, I feel happy for him. In all of these cases, I relate to the experiences of others in a first-personal way, and I think that it is almost as good or bad that these experiences are happening to my friends or family as they would be if they were happening to me. What could be more mundane and unobjectionable than that?

Similarly, consider the collective sharing of burdens and resources in certain contexts. G. A. Cohen, for example, presents the case of

coincide with ordinary usage. There is no requirement, for example, that one can have an attitude of community only toward others who belong to the same community, in the ordinary sense of "community": I can have that attitude toward people living elsewhere, citizens of another country, members of other racial groups, and so on, even if there is no community that we can properly be said to belong to. More generally, members of a community (in the ordinary sense) typically have a sense of mutual concern and recognition, whereas one can have an attitude of community (in my sense) toward others even if that attitude is not reciprocated.

15. Thanks to Arden Koehler for this example.

friends on a camping trip, who operate on the communist maxim of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need”.<sup>16</sup> In this scenario, it is largely practically irrelevant *who* is contributing to the collective tasks, putting aside differences in skill: Each contributes to the tasks at hand, without expecting that what he receives from the labor of others will exactly match what he contributes. In other words, the friends treat the self/other distinction as normatively unimportant in the context of dividing up shared labor. Such a way of organizing tasks in the context of a small, close-knit group seems appropriate to most of us, whatever we can say about extending that system to larger groups.<sup>17</sup> If community violates the separateness of persons, it need not do so objectionably.

One might think that having an attitude of community toward another entails relating to the other as an equal in some important sense. After all, if your interests have the same status for my deliberation as my own do, then I treat our interests on an equal footing in some sense, and might be said to treat you as my equal. But treating others as equals, at least in the familiar sense used by relational egalitarians, is neither necessary nor sufficient for having an attitude of community toward them. First, I can treat you as an equal in ways that do not require my sympathetically allowing your interests to enter my deliberations. As Samuel Scheffler writes, the constraint that relational egalitarianism imposes on deliberation is only on *joint* deliberation, deciding what we will do together: In relationships of equality, participants give each other’s interests equal weight in making joint plans.<sup>18</sup>

16. G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

17. For similar reasons, many cultures consider it off-putting to thank close friends or family members for performing favors. After all, in a family or circle of friends, it is expected that members will sympathetically adopt one another’s interests and be naturally motivated to promote them. Thanking someone for performing a favor implies that performing it was not expected of him, and that the relationship is less familiar than it really is.

18. Samuel Scheffler, “The Practice of Equality”, in Carina Fourie, Fabian Schupert, and Ivo Wallimann-Helmer (eds.), *Social Equality: On What It Means to be Equals* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

And given that separation, simply refusing to do anything together, is a legitimate way to satisfy this constraint (or avoid it in the first place), I need not engage with your interests in any substantive way at all to treat you as an equal; thinking “that’s nothing to me” about your troubles is consistent with treating you as an equal, one whom I do not care very much about.

Conversely, I can have an attitude of community toward you without thinking of you as my equal. Paternalism is a specific form that the communal attitude can take: I care intensely about your interests but believe that you are poorly suited to advance them, so I curtail your autonomy and do various things on your behalf. I believe that you, my child, cannot properly make your own decisions about your diet, so I feed you what I think is good for you rather than what you would prefer to eat. But paternalism is a feature of hierarchical relationships rather than a relationship between equals. Community and equality are two distinct ways of relating to others.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Community and Solidarity

How does all this relate to solidarity? I propose that having what I’ve called an attitude of community toward others is what ultimately motivates acts of solidarity with them, and that what acts of solidarity have in common is that they are motivated by such an attitude. When I act in solidarity with another, I am ultimately acting out of a sense of identification with the other on the basis of shared features and with the larger group that we both belong to.

Consider the non-self-depriving cases of solidarity that we discussed. First, think about the solidarity strike case, in which workers at a second factory strike in solidarity with those striking at the first. As

19. And, given what I will say about the connection between solidarity and an attitude of community in the next section, another counterexample to the idea that community implies equality is that solidarity can occur in deeply hierarchical relationships. During the Blitz, for example, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth decided to remain in London, thereby putting their own lives in danger, in solidarity with ordinary Britons who could not flee. But the king and queen certainly did not think that they were the *equals* of their subjects.

we've mentioned, what motivates the workers at the second factory is a sense of identification with the workers at the first, on the basis of shared identity, which causes them to relate to the interests of those other workers as their own. When those interests are threatened, they are willing to risk their own interests in order to protect those interests. Second, take the Berlin Wall example, in which Marie sings in solidarity with other Germans. Here, the agent is swept up by the sense of the group as a collective entity: She feels "at one" with the group, and loses the sense of being a separate agent, which motivates her to do what the group as a whole is doing. In both these cases, the agents have an attitude of community toward the others with whom they act in solidarity.

What about the self-depriving acts, which we focused on in §§1–2? As I argued in §2, what explains these acts most proximately is a commitment to sharing the fate of other members of the group, to undergoing what they are undergoing. In particular, if other members of the group are deprived of certain things, one follows through on this commitment by forgoing those things oneself. What is left to explain is the connection between having an attitude of community with others and forming this commitment to sharing their fates.

Now, in having the attitude of community toward other members of a group, one thinks of the group as a collective entity, and consequently, one values a sense of belonging to and identification with the whole. Some level of *commonality of experience* is necessary for maintaining this sense of unity, since, without that commonality, the grounds for identifying with the entire group will disintegrate. Unshared fates — outcomes that differ drastically across different members — can threaten that unity, since they mean that the experiences of the members will be quite different. Unshared fates harm unity in an obvious way in the case of the prisoner-of-war: He will physically be thousands of miles away from the rest of his platoon if he accepts early release. But they also harm unity in the sense that how he will feel (relief at being free again, joy at being reunited with his family, perhaps guilt at leaving his platoon mates behind) will be quite different from

the collective mood of the rest of his platoon. The drastic differences between his experience and the experience of the rest of the platoon will undermine a condition on identifying with the platoon in the first place, the sense that what the platoon members share forms a strong enough basis for identification.

Part of the function of fate-sharing commitments, then, is to ensure some baseline level of commonality in the experiences of the members of the group, which is a condition on its members' having a sense of group unity. So as a result of valuing that sense of group unity, members of the group might be motivated to form a commitment to sharing the fate of other members of the group: to undergoing whatever they undergo. Now, this doesn't imply that when someone engages in a *particular* self-depriving act of solidarity, he does so with the intention of preserving the sense of group unity. Rather, once one has formed a fate-sharing commitment, the reason for performing a particular act of self-deprivation (like the decision to forgo early release) is simply that it follows from a general commitment that one has undertaken.

In each of the cases of solidarity that we considered, then, what explains the act of solidarity ultimately is having what I've called an attitude of community toward the objects of solidarity. Having such an attitude toward the others can motivate one to treat their interests as one's own, or to act in unison with them, or to commit to undergoing what they are undergoing, and each of these more particular motives is responsible for a class of acts of solidarity.<sup>20</sup>

20. What about purely *symbolic* or *expressive* acts of solidarity, those through which one intends to signal that one has certain attitudes toward the objects of solidarity? The fact that (1) there is a convention that certain acts of self-deprivation are acts of solidarity and that (2) there is common knowledge (at some level) of the attitudes that motivate solidarity is what makes these acts possible. Consider a case (like the case of the young girl's family) in which agents publicly deprive themselves of something fairly inconsequential in solidarity with someone deprived of much more. In doing so, they can communicate to their audience that they have certain attitudes toward her because (1) she understands that their act of self-deprivation is one of solidarity, and (2) she understands that solidarity is typically motivated by those attitudes.

This answers the psychological question that we posed at the start of the paper, that of what motivates acts of solidarity. Next, I want to argue that part of what *makes* an act one of solidarity is that it is motivated by what I've called an attitude of community toward others. As one piece of evidence for this claim, consider variants on some of the cases that we described, in which the agents are not motivated by any attitude of community: Suppose that Marie sings in unison with the other Germans not out of any feeling of unity, but simply because she likes singing along to songs; or suppose that the prisoner stays in captivity not out of a desire to share his platoon's fate, but simply because he doesn't want to play into enemy propaganda. We don't regard *these* acts as acts of solidarity, even though the acts themselves (when not individuated by motive) are the same as before. My account would explain this by citing the fact that the acts no longer have the motive required for them to count as acts of solidarity.

I take this to be a necessary condition on acts of solidarity, but I don't see any way to give straightforward sufficient conditions. After all, not every act motivated by a sense of community counts as an act of solidarity. For example, seeing no practical difference between the self and others might motivate acts of altruism, self-sacrifice for the greater good. But if I throw my own body on the grenade to protect my comrades-in-arms, I'm not thereby acting in solidarity with anyone. So perhaps we might think that acting in solidarity requires doing or undergoing what those that one acts in solidarity with are doing or undergoing, and that this condition plus the last are jointly sufficient for acting in solidarity. But, as I mentioned in the introduction, acting in solidarity does not require doing or undergoing what the objects of solidarity are doing or undergoing. And not every instance of acting together with the group motivated by a sense of community counts as an act of solidarity. If all of my friends head outside the bar to smoke, I don't seem to be acting in solidarity with them by joining them and taking a puff myself.<sup>21</sup> We might explain the inability to give straight-

21. Although another possible necessary condition, one that would rule out the

forward sufficient conditions by hypothesizing that the class of acts of solidarity is vague and that, at the edges, acts of solidarity blend into other things one might do out of an attitude of community.

Now, what I have said might seem to preclude the possibility of some of the most paradigmatic cases of solidarity, solidarity in political contexts. After all, my account presupposes that the agent and objects of solidarity both belong to some group with which the agent identifies. But in political cases, one often stands in solidarity with groups that one does not belong to: People can be in solidarity with members of a racial minority, or immigrants, or citizens of an oppressive state, even if they themselves are not members of the relevant groups. How is this possible on my account?

Similarly, consider the phenomenon of expressing identification with a group that one does not belong to, seemingly for the purpose of signaling solidarity with that group. Think about JFK's declaration "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" or the *Je suis Charlie* hashtag that became popular after the terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, or (according to urban legend) King Christian X's decision to wear the yellow Star of David during the Nazi occupation of Denmark.<sup>22</sup> If solidarity is restricted to groups of which one is a member, what are we to make of these expressions if one is not a Berliner, a member of *Charlie*, or a Jew?<sup>23</sup>

My response is that these can be cases of solidarity, so long as the agent has an attitude of community toward a *larger* group that encompasses both her and the group that she acts in solidarity with. A white American, for example, might stand in solidarity with Americans of other races on the basis of identifying with Americans as a whole, and

smoking case, is that some threat to the group or to some of its members be salient to the agent.

22. This never really happened, as Denmark was able to retain a degree of autonomy during the occupation and never enacted anti-Jewish laws. The basis for this legend was a suggestion that the king made in a diary entry, that if the Nazis forced Denmark to enact such laws, all Danes should wear a Star of David in solidarity with the Jews.

23. Thanks to Sam Scheffler for raising this objection.

a non-Jewish Dane might stand in solidarity with Jewish Danes on the basis of identifying with Danes as a whole. Similarly, if one identifies with humanity as a whole, then one can be in solidarity with the down-trodden anywhere on the basis of shared membership in humanity: I might identify with all humans on the basis of our shared capacity to feel pain or humiliation, and feel myself the pain or humiliation that others suffer.<sup>24</sup>

One might object, however, that allowing for the relevant kind of identification with humanity threatens to make solidarity too *easy*. After all, even if people perform certain acts of solidarity with those with whom they have little in common (by protesting or making a verbal declaration), they usually reserve other, costlier acts of solidarity for those whom they are in real relationships with. The young girl's family acts in solidarity with *her* by shaving their heads; they probably wouldn't do the same in solidarity with a child whom they have never met before. The prisoner-of-war stays in captivity in solidarity with *his* platoon; he might not do that in solidarity with another platoon in captivity. But if one identifies with humanity in a communal way, never asking for whom the bell tolls, then wouldn't one act in solidarity with strangers to the same extent that one does with the near and dear?

The solution is to notice that, for most human beings, the *strength* of our attitude of community decreases as the social distance between us and the other increases. This is just the familiar Burkean point that we identify most strongly with the little platoons that we belong to — family, close friends, or an actual platoon — and less strongly with larger groups that count us as members, like our country or mankind. I might still treat the interests of strangers in a first-personal way, sympathetically adopting them as my own; but I assign them less weight than I do my own, or those of a close friend. As a result, it takes more to move us to act in solidarity with strangers, on the basis of shared membership

24. This is not to say that one has to *appropriate* in any objectionable way the plight of others to be in solidarity with them, shifting the focus from the victims of injustice to oneself. Rather, to feel oneself an injustice suffered by others is simply to respond sympathetically to that injustice, without necessarily thinking that one has suffered any injustice *oneself*.

in humanity, than it does to move us to act in solidarity with those closer to us. Note, for example, that we tend to act in solidarity with other humans as such only in fairly extreme cases, as when their basic human rights are being violated and when their numbers are large enough. Of course, we might act in solidarity with individual strangers or small groups of them, but usually only insofar as they are emblematic of a large group of people who are facing similar circumstances: We stand in solidarity with *Charlie Hebdo* as representatives of victims of terrorism; we stand in solidarity with Berliners as representatives of those threatened by authoritarianism.

A second and related objection is that appealing to shared membership in humanity threatens to make the appeal to shared membership in other groups redundant. Why talk about shared membership in smaller groups like families or nations at all, if we can explain any act of solidarity in terms of the agent's identifying with humanity as a whole in the right way? In response, first note that not everyone *does* identify with humanity in the way required to act in solidarity with human beings as such: I may be clannish enough to care about how my family and friends fare, but be indifferent to the fortunes of the rest of mankind. Thus, I might act in solidarity with those close to me, but never with those farther away. To explain my acting in solidarity with my family members in terms of an identification with humanity would require positing attitudes that I simply lack. And second, the fact that most of us act more readily in solidarity with the near and dear than with strangers means that we cannot simply posit one level of communal identification that embraces everyone to the same degree. The only way to account for this fact is in terms of multiple levels of identification, some of which are stronger than others.

### 5. The Value of Solidarity

Thus far, the paper has been descriptive in its ambitions: I've offered an explanation for why people engage in acts of solidarity, as well as an account of what unifies these acts. On my view, both involve having what I've called an attitude of community toward others: relating

to them in a first-personal way on the basis of shared features, and identifying with the larger group that one and the others belong to. In this final section, let me briefly address a normative question: When an act of solidarity is admirable, in virtue of what is it admirable?

I'll quickly note that not every act of solidarity *is* admirable. There are at least two kinds of cases in which they can fail to be meritorious, at least all things considered. First, they can be directed toward morally bad causes. Many of us, for example, find racial solidarity — at least, among members of a dominant racial group — to be morally questionable. For that reason, we would not find acts of solidarity among members of the dominant group to cement their power admirable. And second (this concerns self-depriving acts of solidarity in particular), I can go too far in depriving myself of what those whom I feel close to are deprived of. It might seem appropriate if I forgo dinner in solidarity with my wife, who is sick with food poisoning; but it would be perverse if I decided to contract food poisoning in solidarity with her. Similarly, it might reflect well on the family of the young girl with leukemia that they shaved their heads in solidarity with her; but it would be excessive if they decided to contract leukemia somehow in solidarity with her. I want to leave it open, however, whether even in these cases there is still something *pro tanto* admirable about the act of solidarity. Maybe the value of the act of solidarity is only outweighed, and not entirely canceled out, by the fact that it is excessive or directed toward bad ends.

Similarly, I do not intend to give a blanket endorsement of the attitude of community, which motivates acts of solidarity. I take it that, alongside positive manifestations of this way of relating to others, there are many negative ones as well. The idea of the group as a collective entity, in particular, might have a sinister undertone, evoking images of unthinking conformity to the hive-mind, which can suffocate any sense of individuality. But the idea that there is no normative difference between the members of a group has a dark side, too: The thought that *we* are all the same can reinforce the thought that *they* are all the same, and can easily lead to morally worrying attributions of

collective responsibility. This is, after all, the stuff that ethnic conflicts feed on: Serbian troops kill Bosniak civilians; in retaliation, based on the thought that *they* are interchangeable, Bosniak troops massacre a Serb village. In citing a piece of human psychology as the motive for acts of solidarity, I don't mean to endorse that piece of psychology without qualification.

At the same time, however, no one would deny that many acts of solidarity *are* praiseworthy. Now, one might think that acts of solidarity are admirable only because (and when) there are *impartial* reasons for acting in solidarity: for example, when doing so promotes certain valuable goals, or when it constitutes opposition to injustice or other wrongdoing. Kolers, for example, takes the fact that injustice or oppression provides impartial reasons to be in solidarity with those unjustly treated or oppressed to provide one important contrast between solidarity and loyalty, obligations of which provide only partial reasons, to those who are already in a relationship.<sup>25</sup> But an act of solidarity with those who do not merit it on any impersonal standard can still be admirable, if one stands in a special relation to them. During the battle of Stalingrad in WWII, Soviet forces encircled the German Sixth Army and cut off its supply lines, slowly starving the invading Germans into submission. Back home in Germany, General Kurt Zeitzler, Chief of the General Staff, reduced his own rations to the levels of the men at the front in solidarity with them, losing 26 pounds in the following two weeks.<sup>26</sup> Now, I presume there were no impartial reasons to stand with the Sixth Army, which had committed numerous atrocities earlier in the war. But Zeitzler's act of solidarity with them seems appropriate, and we might be inclined to assess him more positively than the German generals who did nothing in solidarity with the men.

In contrast to the idea that acts of solidarity are admirable only when there are impartial reasons for performing them, I want to suggest that part of what makes them admirable is simply that they stem

25. Kolers, *Moral Theory*, ch. 2.

26. Thanks to Dan Waxman for drawing my attention to this example.

from a certain attitude, what I've called an attitude of community. After all, we might find it a good thing in general that someone is able to relate to his family members, his neighbors, his compatriots, or his fellow human beings in a communal way, treating their interests on a par with his own and experiencing their misfortunes as he would his own. Acting in solidarity with others indicates having a thick relationship with them, which we might regard as intrinsically good. On my account, the value of acts of solidarity derives partly from the value of a certain form of sociality.<sup>27</sup>

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