

Conditions for Empathic Solidarity¹

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Abstract

Empathic solidarity -- a reciprocated sense of merged consciousness and alliance, with faith in other's commitments to shared purposes -- is proposed to arise when people take on the same identity, experience the same event with regard to an outside figure, and thereby observe each other emoting the same and performing collateral actions. This formulation is discussed with regard to a number of social phenomena -- e.g., love relationships, rituals, staged dramas, crowds. A verbal formulation of the model is offered, along with suggestions about the kinds of manipulations and measures that could be used to test the formulation.

Fararo and Doreian's (1996) essay presents solidarity as a construct that relates a number of different social phenomena, including empathic alignment of individuals, emergence of shared identity, and containment of members by a group that serves their needs. This note focusing just on the first of these phenomena extends some of their ideas in the context of the sociology of emotions. I will attempt to specify how specific events induce emergence of what I call "empathic solidarity." This term is intended to combine the meaning of *empathy* -- "Identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives; the attribution of one's own feelings to an object" -- and *solidarity* -- "A union of interests, purposes, or sympathies among members of a group; fellowship of responsibilities and interests" (definitions from the *American Heritage Dictionary*).

Fararo and Doreian (1996) proposed that solidarity among individuals is engendered by the individuals' common relation to a central figure. This seems a useful insight, but the Fararo-Doreian proposal that individuals infer their relation with each other from the common relation to the central figure seems oriented around "cold cognition," and a model of empathic solidarity needs to bring back some of their expressed concern with affect (as in their discussion of Collins' model, their critique of Hechter for eliminating sentiments, and their attention to sentiment in discussing Homans). I will sketch a provisional description of the key features of empathic solidarity wherein emotional and motivational phenomena are central. My speculative formulation might be wrong, but it at least can suggest empirical studies to start assembling useful data on empathic solidarity.

To begin I first reproduce the Fararo-Doreian formulation of a solidarity relation, with adjustments to facilitate my own discussion. The focus is on individuals *a* and *b*. According to Fararo and Doreian (1996), solidarity can arise when *a* and *b* each has a relation *S* with a central figure outside the *a-b* dyad. I will refer to

the central figure as a pivot, symbolized by p . Then if aSp and bSp , a may infer solidarity with b by virtue of their mutual allegiance to p . The inferred relation, SS^{-1} , is the solidarity relation.

Fararo and Doreian characterize the pivotal figure, p , through the example of a and b being subjects of a king. However, p need not be an individual and in fact p could be different individuals who are "regularly equivalent" {2}. For example, husbands can feel solidary by virtue of discussing some common aspect in their relations to their respective wives. In this case, the pivot, p , is the spousal identity to which both a and b relate. Moreover, it seems that a solidarity pivot can exist in any emotionally laden symbol or stimulus that becomes an object of mutual relation. For example, on July 4 disparate Americans gain solidarity from their allegiance to a flag passing in an Independence Day parade.

Reformulation

In the Fararo-Doreian formulation, solidarity arises as an inference about the SS^{-1} relation, and as such it is a cognitive product of reasoning. However, it is arguable whether such a cognition is sufficient for empathic solidarity, even when it emerges. For example, diners a and b have the same relation to their waiter and they may become aware of that when competing for his attention, but diners rarely develop empathic solidarity unless the scene becomes emotional somehow.

Restricting S to a relation of allegiance makes it easier to imagine empathic solidarity arising from SS^{-1} inferences. Yet under some conditions the inference still seems insufficient for the development of empathic solidarity. For example, a newcomer to a group of devotees may report her own record of allegiance to the pivot, yet she does not gain solidarity ties immediately. Intellectually everyone understands the mutual allegiance, but the sense of empathic solidarity awaits joint experiences with others in the group. Moreover, empathic solidarity can arise from a relation other than allegiance. Indeed, Marx supposed that solidarity of the Working Class would arise from the antagonistic relations of workers with capitalists. Though that has yet to happen on a wide scale, there are numerous instances of solidarity arising from a shared antagonism. For example, newsletters of an Indiana environmental group, *Protect Our Woods*, describe the group's emergence as "a landowner uprising" against National Forest administrators.

I propose the following. An empathic bond arises when a observes his own emotional response to p mirrored in the emotional response of b to p . Seeing one's own emotions resonating in another person creates a unification in which self and other seem to be experiencing events with the same consciousness. Moreover, when a and b experience resonating emotions in response to p , they may experience consonant impulses to action with regard to p . Then a may act toward p in a way that fulfills b 's motives, paralleling b 's own actions toward p with either identical or equivalent behaviors. Collateral action by a offers observable evidence to b that a and b are allies.

Empathic solidarity is established for a when a unifies consciousness with b through emotional resonance, and a also infers from b 's collateral actions that the two of them are allied. In general, this happens when both a and b have the same relationship with the pivot, and they are experiencing the same emotional event involving the pivot. Then a and b merely have to observe each other for emotional resonance, and their personally motivated acts toward the pivot are collateral, each thereby providing evidence to the other of alliance. The solidarity bond is established for both. Non-emotional events with a pivotal figure would not induce solidarity, according to this formulation.

This formulation depends on the existence of two interpersonal phenomena -- empathic consciousness from emotional resonance with another, and induction of alliance from observing collateral action. I will offer some justification for believing that such phenomena are plausible and then examine some aspects of this formulation of empathic solidarity in more detail.

The work of Paul Ekman and his associates (1972; Ekman and Friesen, 1975) lends credibility to the notion of emotional resonance as a basis for empathy. Their research program demonstrated that the human face is a refined emotion display system, and different emotions are reflected in specific facial expressions that

have cross-cultural currency in terms of recognizability. Everyone is empathic about others' emotions in the sense of being able to "infer the specific content of another interactant's ... feelings" (Ickes *et al*, 1990: 731), as long as the other is not masking her or his emotions, and in general an observer can determine when another shares the same emotions as the observer is feeling. The emergence of a unified consciousness as a result of emotional resonance corresponds to the dictionary meaning of empathy as "identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives."

Another program of research by Tajfel (1981) and others (see Brown, 1986, Chap. 15) offers some credibility for the notion that alliance can emerge from collateral action. They found that any basis of collective segmentation, even a form so trivial as random assignment to different aggregates by coin toss, produces group identification to the extent that members give each other preferential treatment. Parallel action is a powerful stimulus for aligning characters into differentiated sets (Heider, 1967). Thus it is possible and indeed likely that a person will partition out those who are acting collaterally with the self and consider them allies.

Elaboration

This formulation of empathic solidarity between *a* and *b* requires that they share a relationship with a pivotal figure whereby they experience parallel emotions and motives with regard to *p*, that they are situated so that they can observe each others' emotions and actions, and that their experiences with *p* are synchronized so that they can resonate emotionally and ally through observation of collateral action. Thus empathic solidarity has relational aspects, location aspects, and temporal aspects.

Relational Aspects

Computer analyses based on affect control theory (Heise, 1979; Smith-Lovin and Heise, 198; MacKinnon, 1994) suggest that emotional asymmetry is common in social interactions; for example, a judge sentencing a thief might feel relieved while the thief feels apprehensive. Specifically, it seems that dyads where participants differ in power will not resonate emotionally but rather will have distinct emotions from their joint interaction. Since people's emotions so often are different in ordinary dyadic encounters, the interactants do not get the chance to resonate emotionally, and dyadic encounters typically do not generate empathic solidarity. That is why solidarity generally involves two people relating to a pivotal external figure. In that particular interactional structure the two people can be emoting similarly to each other even though they are emoting differently than the pivot.

Affect control theory posits that emotion is a function of a person's interactional identity and of the event involving that person at the moment (Smith-Lovin, 1990). The identity carries a fundamental sentiment that defines how good, potent, and lively the person should be. The event creates a transient impression of how good, potent, and lively the person actually is in the circumstances. The person's emotion is an internal and interpersonal signal that registers the transient impression and how it compares to the identity sentiment. Consequently, if two people feel the same emotion with regard to a pivotal figure, then most likely the two people have the same identity with respect to the pivot and they are experiencing the same event with the pivot. In fact, parallel emotions are so unlikely under any other conditions, that sharing relational identities and events with respect to the pivot are virtual prerequisites for empathic solidarity. Thus, the Fararo-Doreian formulation of solidarity in terms of an unspecified relation, *S*, can be interpreted more specifically in terms of identities. Persons *a* and *b* both have an identity *I* that is foregrounded in an event with the pivot, and experiencing the same event with the pivot from the viewpoint of that common identity provides the empathy and alliance that lead to empathic solidarity.

People might experience the same event with a pivotal figure either as objects or actors. A pivotal character sometimes acts on a set of people collectively and thereby creates a solidarity opportunity for the joint objects of action -- for example, a judge could collectively sentence political mavericks, a president could collectively honor a unit of warriors, or "regularly equivalent" police officers could attack the members of a crowd. People also can orchestrate their behavior so all are equivalent actors engaging in equivalent actions toward a pivot. That is the essence of ritual (e.g., a congregation worshipping God), and ritual is an

especially effective opportunity for empathic solidarity because orchestrated action demonstrates collaterality of purpose at the same time as it generates emotional resonance.

Although emotional responses in dyadic interaction ordinarily are asymmetric so that an external pivot figure is needed to achieve empathic solidarity, analyses with affect control theory indicate that relationships do exist in which emotional resonance can arise as participants enact their roles with one another. For example, two people enacting the role of sweetheart might laugh with, caress, and make love to each other, and as these acts happen both might feel affectionate and appreciative. If additionally the other's behaviors are understood as fulfilling one's own motives, then the two parties are engaging in collateral action, and they fulfill the conditions for empathic solidarity with each other. In essence, two people in a passionate relationship serve as regularly equivalent pivots for each other, allowing them to develop emotional resonance and alliance without a third party.

The relational identity, *I*, that people share with respect to the pivot is a cognitive self classification that remains in the background of the self even when the participants are not involved in an event with *p*, and *I* could be foregrounded apart from an engagement with a pivot. Humphreys and Berger (1981) suggested that people encountering each other for the first time (e.g., people conversing on a plane) search for related identities that offer a basis of discrimination between them. Doing so provides distinctive roles for each during the encounter. However, because we organize identities in abstraction hierarchies, finding a basis of discrimination also offers an awareness of some similarity. For example, one person on a plane may be a tourist on vacation and the other a businesswoman flying between offices, but both of these are kinds of travelers. "Having found their difference, people also have their basis of identification with each other -- the next higher category of identity where they are the same" (Heise, 1987, p. 4). That raises the question of whether identification in terms of a shared identity induces a sense of empathic solidarity.

When people discover a shared identity, they might imagine a solidarity-generating scene and then presume they are solidary on the basis of this imaginative production until evidence indicates otherwise. To illustrate, suppose that the vacationing traveler and the business traveler are talking and one of them gets a flash of herself and the other coping together at the baggage claim, with the two of them sharing the same emotions and helping one another. Thereby she gets a provisional sense of empathic solidarity. This provisional solidarity is fragile in the sense that there is no real event with remembered emotions and collateral activity to recall if a chasm begins opening between the two, so the grounds for solidarity are easily undermined by future events indicating disparity. Nevertheless, the provisional solidarity could be a basis for preferential treatment of the other in the manner described by Tajfel (1981).

Another way that assignment of a single identity to self and other could lead to empathic solidarity is through an interaction in which each helps the other within the role defined by their mutual identity. The travelers, for example, might help each other as travelers by exchanging information about ground transportation and hotels. If this collateral action led to shared emotions, the two would experience empathic solidarity in the same way that two sweethearts do. The crucial elements in this case are that they act collaterally to evidence alliance and that their interaction generates emotions that are the same for both parties in order to support the sense of merged consciousness.

The range of identities for which both of these conditions are liable to be fulfilled in *I-I* interactions could be examined mathematically through analyses of affect control theory's mathematical model (Heise, 1987; 1992). Studies with a computer simulation program that implements the model suggest, for example, that if both parties have the same good, potent, lively identity (like sweetheart) then they will engage in collateral activity and experience intense similar emotions. If both parties have a good, impotent, and passive identity (perhaps like traveler) then they will engage in collateral activity but may not experience enough emotion to induce a sense of merged consciousness. If both parties have a bad, potent, lively identity (like gangster) then their interaction together yields similar intense emotions but no collateral activity. Thus the fundamental sentiment attached to an identity acts as a parameter setting the likelihood that empathic solidarity will emerge from interactions of people enacting that identity with each other.

The simulations suggest that solidarity achieved through mutual identification apart from engagement with a pivot occurs only with identities that are attached to certain kinds of sentiments. Maintaining such solidarity requires maintaining the sentiments. That would be accomplished in rituals, which not only produce solidarity directly through shared experience with a pivot, but also produce immediate situational feelings that conform to the ideal identity sentiment, thereby

strengthening the sentiment and counteracting any decay in the sentiment. Thereby ritualists maintain a sentiment resource that can be used to produce solidarity with each other through identification later on.

Location Aspects

Empathic solidarity emerges as people observe others' emotions and behavior, so it quintessentially is a small group phenomenon. Accordingly solidary groups mainly should be localized and scattered, spotting a population rather than stratifying it. However, there are several factors that can increase the expansiveness of solidarity bonding.

Rituals not only are an effective means for producing empathic solidarity, they also can increase the size of the bonded group by arraying individuals so that each person observes the emotions and actions of many more people than ordinarily is possible. For example, rituals sometimes organize people in a circle where each person can see everyone else, and rituals also may march and mill people around in a way that increases the number of observed others. Rituals held in coliseum-like structures with raised, circular tiers of seats can increase the number of people who are experiencing solidarity conditions. Choreic vocalizations and choreographed activities can create legions of participatory clones, and an individual might emotionally resonate and ally with all in the uniform multitude, even though observing only a fraction of the total participants. Leni Riefenstahl's 1934 propaganda film, *Triumph of the Will*, documents how such factors were used to achieve vast solidarity rituals in Nazi Germany.

An examination of the social psychology of staged dramas refines our understanding of solidarity. Dramas frequently are effective at establishing the viewer in a relationship with a pivotal figure which parallels the relationship of a character in the drama; pivotal characters in dramas typically epitomize some communal virtue or repugnance. Then the viewer experiences emotional resonance as that dramatic character encounters the pivotal figure -- for example, members of the audience sob and cheer as they watch the misfortunes and triumphs of the hero. A sense of alliance or identification arises as the dramatic character's actions fulfill the observer's motives. Yet a drama does not produce empathic solidarity between the audience and a stage hero. Most likely this is because the audience understands that stage actors are unauthentic in their emotions and uncommitted to their actions, so the actors are neither empathic nor allied with the audience. This suggests an additional condition for empathic solidarity beyond those defined above: *a* achieving empathic solidarity with *b* requires that *a* finds emotional resonance and alliance in the *a-b* relationship, and additionally *a* believes that *b* also finds emotional resonance and alliance in the *b-a* relationship.

Even though members of an audience do not achieve solidarity with the actors, it seems like their sustained emotional resonance while watching a drama could create an opportunity for empathic solidarity with each other. Interestingly, audiences usually are kept in the dark (literally) concerning each other's emotional responses, as if to discourage emotional resonance. Moreover, each member of the audience has to suppress whatever motivations that arise toward the pivotal figure on stage in order to sustain the observer role, and the collective passivity keeps members of audiences from acting collaterality with each other. Thus the physical environment of theaters and the nature of the observer role prevent dramas from becoming solidarity rituals.

Electronic media mainly vary some of the elements that are involved in classical staged dramas with audiences. However, electronic media can allow people to have audio-visual experiences with others at a distance, and in principle the expansiveness of solidarity rites could be magnified through multimedia displays of collective behavior at multiple sites. For example, New York protestors could emotionally resonate with Los Angeles protestors whom they see imaged on a wall and hear through loudspeakers, and they might gain a sense of alliance by interpreting the pivotal authorities in Los Angeles as regularly equivalent to authorities in New York. Such situations would overcome the usual distance constraints on empathic solidarity.

Temporal Aspects

People must assemble at the same time in order to emotionally resonate and display collateral purpose with each other, and societal schedules can preclude or foster the required synchronicity. The business day, for example, effectively keeps workers from assembling at sites where they could relate jointly to legislating politicians as pivotal figures, thereby preempting one potential basis for worker solidarity. Meanwhile, the work day forces workers to congregate in small groups

where either they achieve solidarity through their mutual relation to objects of production or else they have their individuality emphasized in divided labor without a shared pivotal figure. The disjunctive scheduling in Western societies of students, members of the work force, and retirees suggests that solidarity groups mostly will not intermingle the three age grades of youths, adults, and the elderly, except in family, leisure, and religious groups that are constituted on evenings and weekends.

Empathic solidarity diminishes with time. For example, soldiers who have achieved solidarity in a combat zone lose it after the war is ended; and a community's solidarity in the wake of a natural disaster dissipates within weeks. Also, the periodic scheduling of church services, athletic contests, conventions, etc. suggests that the effects of solidarity rituals decay and require regular renewal. Dissipation of empathic solidarity must be rooted in the loss of emotional resonance or in the breakdown of alliance, according to the formulation presented here.

At first thought, the emotional basis of solidarity seems to be the most likely locus of solidarity dissipation since emotions are such transitory phenomena. However, emotions reintegrate in conversations and daydreams, and emotional resonance can be reproduced over and over through such imagery. For example, reintegration of emotion seems to be what is involved when grief over loss of a loved one continues for a year or two. Thus, inability to reconstitute emotional resonance through reminiscences might only set an outer time limit on the order of months or years for maintenance of solidarity.

The other basis of solidarity -- the inference of alliance from perceiving collateral action -- seems more vulnerable to rapid disruption. Once the joint relationship with a pivot is gone, members of a solidarity group must return to other relationships, and those relationships can give evidence of competition and conflict that undermines a sense of alliance. Indeed, the frequency of solidarity rituals may be an indicator of how often members of a solidarity group interact with each other in competitive or conflictual ways.

Recapitulation

I have proposed that a solidarity bond is established for *a* when *a* unifies consciousness with *b* through emotional resonance, and *a* also infers from *b*'s collateral actions that the two of them are allied. To explain why solidarity does not arise between dramatic actors and an audience, I further proposed that *a* additionally has to believe that *b* finds emotional resonance and alliance in the *b-a* relationship. The latter proposition requires some elaboration.

Let us assume that emotional resonance is an automatic process, so that observing another person emoting the same as oneself invariably produces a sense of unified consciousness with the other. It follows that if *a* is emotionally resonating with *b*, then *a* can infer that *b* also is emotionally resonating with *a*, providing that *a* knows that *b* is perceiving *a*'s emotions. If *a* sees *b* looking at *a*'s face, that would be reason enough for *a* to believe *b* is emotionally resonating with *a*. Clear transmission of *a*'s emotions through other senses also would work; e.g., *a* could believe that *b* is experiencing reciprocal emotional resonance if *b* is in earshot of *a*'s cheers or sobs or angry growls. Moreover, *a* can force reciprocal emotional resonance by projecting expressions of emotion into *b*'s perceptual field -- say, by facing *b*, or by vocalizing so *b* hears.

The sense of alliance arises from collateral action in which *a* observes *b* acting toward the pivotal figure in a way that fulfills *a*'s goals. Again, assume that the process is automatic, at least when *a* has a sense of unified consciousness with *b*. (Emotional resonance may be a prerequisite of automatic allying, in which case empathic solidarity is attained through a "value added" collective process, as described by Smelser, 1963, p.14). In other words, when *a* sees *b* acting toward the pivot in a way that fulfills *a*'s desires, then *a* invariably feels allied with *b*. Accordingly, *a* will know that *b* also feels a sense of alliance if *a* sees that *b* has observed *a* acting in accord with the motives of their unified consciousness. Checking to assure that *b* has seen or heard *a*'s action toward the pivot provides *a* with all the evidence required to believe that *b* feels allied with *a*. Moreover, *a* can jockey so as to make sure that *b* perceives *a* acting toward the pivot.

Overall, then, a typical emergence of empathic solidarity occurs as follows.

- *a* and *b* invest identities that put them in the same relationship with a pivotal figure, *p*;

- *a* and *b* experience the same event with *p*, resulting in the same emotions and the same impulses to action with regard to *p*;
- *a* and *b* observe each other's emotions, whereby each obtains a sense of unified consciousness with the other, and they observe each other's behavioral reactions to *p*, whereby each obtains a sense of alliance with the other;
- *a* and *b* each assures that the other perceives the self's emotions and actions, whereby each believes the other is reciprocating a sense of unified consciousness and a sense of alliance.

An interesting aspect of this formulation is that it helps in understanding some kinds of social interaction that do not produce solidarity.

Panics ordinarily do not induce solidarity but rather are a condition "arising out of and expressing collective demoralization" (Lang and Lang, 1961, p. 97). Open flight from a pivotal figure produces emotional resonance and perhaps even a sense of collateral purpose, as long as the escapees can see and hear each other. However, the centrifugal movements of fleeing individuals may cause successful escapees to move beyond each other's perceptual fields, whereupon they no longer can observe each other's emotional displays or actions, and they lose the bases for experiencing either a unified consciousness or a sense of alliance. Additionally, flight through passages with limited capacity leads to clear indications of competition instead of alliance. Thus panics initially fulfill the conditions for empathic solidarity, but then they interfere with mutual observation, and may induce competition, so solidarity fails to emerge. On the other hand, groups of intimates typically flee together from a threatening situation (Feinberg and Johnson, forthcoming), staying within each other's perceptual fields and providing continuing evidence of collateral action. Thus we can expect panicked flight to increase the solidarity of pre-existing primary groups within a collectivity even though solidarity fails to emerge in the collectivity as a whole.

The formulation also helps to account for non-occurrence of solidarity in romantic triangles. In a romantic triangle, two admirers each give allegiance to the same pivotal third party, and the outcome generally is antagonism between the two admirers. This is problematic for the Fararo and Doreian proposal that solidarity corresponds to the relation, SS^{-1} , since that proposal leads to the conclusion that the two admirers would be in a state of solidarity rather than antagonism. (Antagonism in a romantic triangle also is problematic for balance theory in social psychology, which Fararo and Doreian review.) The formulation presented here includes a non-intuitive hypothesis -- that the two admirers would emotionally resonate and attain a unified consciousness, if their feelings of affection for the pivotal third party are synchronized and mutually observable. However, the formulation additionally proposes that solidarity arises only when a sense of alliance is achieved as well as unified consciousness. Alliance will not arise from the admirers seeing each other's actions toward the third party. The situation is zero-sum in the sense that romantic actions by one admirer pre-empt fulfillment of the other's motives, and therefore the actions of the two admirer's are not collateral. Rather one admirer's actions frustrate the motives of the other admirer. The two admirers are in a state of conflict rather than solidarity. (Perhaps the conflict is especially profound when the admirers have attained unified consciousness with one another.)

Conclusion

The idea of merged consciousness in collective behavior was presumed by Le Bon (1893), and by McDougall (1920) in his book *The Group Mind*. Later, though, Floyd Allport (1924) critiqued the notion of group mind, and recently McPhail (1991) argued from empirical evidence that most crowds lack behavioral alignment, let alone mental alignment. Despite the later work, I suggest that Le Bon and McDougall discerned something useful. However, the unified consciousness that I introduce above is not group mind. It is a mental state close to what Lang and Lang (1961, p. 221) call *rapport*: "a focusing and narrowing of attention, a mutual sensitivity to feelings and behavior of others, and the exclusion of other stimuli that interfere." The causal sequence that I propose also is different from early formulations, which proposed that mere massing caused a unified consciousness and that emotionality spread by contagion. The formulation presented here proposes that the (sometimes fortuitous) occurrence of resonating emotions is the source of unified consciousness.

Influenced by McPhail's empirical work (reviewed in his 1991 book), I have tried to offer a formulation of empathic solidarity in which the lack of polarization of most crowds is beside the point. Unified consciousness and collateral action are presumed to occur only in the relatively few collectivities that achieve solidarity. In fact, the formulation presented here leads us away from crowds and towards rituals as the hotbed of solidarity and other collective phenomena. Many rituals

are meant to produce resonating emotions, unified consciousness, collateral action, and alliance -- they are intended to be re-generators of empathic solidarity. Thus ritualistic scenes are where we are most likely to find these processes, either the grand rituals of major social institutions or the petite rituals of everyday interaction to which Collins (1981) drew attention.

The affect control theory perspective on solidarity leads to the view that emotional resonance arises out of culturally-given forms of relationship implemented in definitions of situations. This means that people must define their situation with the pivot in the same way if they are to achieve emotional resonance. Moreover, the same meanings must be attributed by all to the pivot, to the self identity in relation to the pivot, and to the actions involving the pivot, or else emotional convergence will not occur. The overall implication is that people must share culture in order to achieve emotional resonance, and the eddies of empathic solidarity in a society are culturally grounded, arising as a product of various kinds of culturally-given relationships. Whenever emotional resonance and solidarity occurs across cultures, it must be because some meanings are cross-culturally invariant. (Fararo and Doreian propose that solidarity can be a basis for new group identifications that expand culture; I suspect that this occurs only rarely, and when it does occur, it involves event-driven identifications like victim, victors, or vanquished being transmuted to labels that reference some induced common feature of the collectivity that attained solidarity.)

The formulation of empathic solidarity that is presented here could be examined in laboratory studies that team subjects in an encounter with an outside pivotal figure -- e.g., another team. The amount of collateral activity that arises within a team is manipulatable through explicit instructions or through reward structures that make it more, or less, sensible to favor one's partners in exchanges. The intensity and kind of shared emotion that is experienced within a team can be influenced by controlling the character and results of interaction with the pivot. For example, inter-team relations could be defined as cooperative or competitive and the researcher could provide success or failure outcomes. The observability of emotions and actions can be varied by controlling what passes over real-time multimedia linkages between group members. The general hypothesis to be tested is that teammates who observe more collateral action and more shared emotion end up with more empathic solidarity.

Empirical studies will require a measure of empathic solidarity. Such a measure would assess the sense of unified consciousness (e.g., "How well do you know what your partner's thinking?"), alliance (e.g., readiness to distribute resources preferentially to the partner), and faith in the other's commitment to common interests and purposes (e.g., conviction that the other is a useful, meaningful person). These three aspects of empathic solidarity do not fit a latent trait model with the components being intercorrelated. Rather, the three aspects together are an induced variable in which the combination of unified consciousness, alliance, and faith in other constitutes the essence of empathic solidarity.

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 2. Quoting from Fararo and Doreian (1996): "actors are regularly equivalent if they are equivalently connected to equivalent others. (Two jurors on the same jury are structurally equivalent; two jurors on different juries are regularly equivalent.)"
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