Social solidarities

Theories, identities and social change

GRAHAM CROW

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Series editor's foreword

Collectively, the social sciences contribute to a greater understanding of the dynamics of social life, as well as explanations for the workings of societies in general. Yet they are often not given due credit for this role and much writing has been devoted to why this should be the case. At the same time, we are living in an age in which the role of science in society is being re-evaluated. This has led to both a defence of science as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and an attack on science as nothing more than an institutionalized assertion of faith with no greater claim to validity than mythology and folklore. These debates tend to generate more heat than light.

In the meantime the social sciences, in order to remain vibrant and relevant, will reflect the changing nature of these public debates. In so doing they provide mirrors upon which we can gaze in order to understand not only what we have been and what we are now, but to inform possibilities about what we might become. This is not simply about understanding the reasons people give for their actions in terms of the contexts in which they act and analysing the relations of cause and effect in the social, political and economic spheres, but also concerns the hopes, wishes and aspirations that people, in their different cultural ways, hold.

In any society that claims to have democratic aspirations, these hopes and wishes are not for the social scientist to prescribe. For this to happen it would mean that the social sciences were able to predict human behaviour with certainty. One theory and one method, applicable to all times and places, would be required for this purpose. The physical sciences do not live up to such stringent criteria, whilst the conditions in societies which provided for this outcome, were it even possible, would be intolerable. Why? Because a necessary condition of human freedom is the ability to have acted otherwise and thus to imagine and practice different ways of organizing societies and living together.

It does not follow from the above that social scientists do not have a valued role to play, as is often assumed in ideological attacks upon their place and function within society. After all, in focusing upon what we have been and what we are now, what we might become is inevitably illuminated: the retrospective and prospective become fused. Therefore, whilst it may not be the province of the social scientist to predict our futures, they are, given not only their understandings and explanations, but equal positions as citizens, entitled to engage in public debates concerning future prospects.

This new international series was devised with this general ethos in mind. It seeks to offer students of the sciences, at all levels, a forum in which ideas and topics of interest are interrogated in terms of their importance for understanding key social issues. This is achieved through a connection between style, structure and content that aims to be both illuminating and challenging in terms of its evaluation of those issues, as well as representing an original contribution to the subject under discussion.

Given this underlying philosophy, the series contains books on topics that are driven by substantive interests. This is not simply a reactive endeavour in terms of reflecting dominant social and political preoccupations, it is also proactive in terms of an examination of issues which relate to and inform the dynamics of social life and the structures of society that are often not part of public discourse. Thus, what is distinctive about this series is an interrogation of the assumed characteristics of our current epoch in relation to its consequences for the organization of society and social life, as well as its appropriate mode of study.

Each contribution contains, for the purposes of general orientation, as opposed to rigid structure, three parts. First, an interrogation of the topic that is conducted in a manner that renders explicit core assumptions surrounding the issues and/or an examination of the consequences of historical trends for contemporary social practices. Second, a section which aims to 'bring alive' ideas and practices by considering the ways in which they directly inform the dynamics of social relations. A third section then moves on to make an original contribution to the topic. This encompasses possible future forms and content, likely directions for the study of the phenomena in question, or an original analysis of the topic itself. Of course, it might be a combination of all three.

Graham Crow's book is written with this ethos in mind. In charting what may be characterized as the causes, contexts and consequences of social solidarity, he provides us with an insightful account of how and under what circumstances, with what effects and utilizing what resources, groups exhibit particular characteristics in their relationships. In a world that appears fragmented into compartments formed by modes of consumption that are indifferent to their effects, the conditions for social solidarity appear to be diminishing. Yet it is those very conditions that provide for the possibilities of freedom and security.

In the face of these seemingly contradictory pressures – the demand for freedom based on a limited individualism and that of security based upon

collective notions of solidarity – there are still systematic forms of social co-hesion that exist within communities. Here we find practical/political issues mixing with key themes in classical social theory: for example, individual-ization, democratization and industrialization. Durkheim, in particular, was concerned with the evolution of society in terms of its propensity towards an individualism that was nothing more than egoism. What peace, he was to ask, could be derived from such a situation? Instead he was to argue that a form of individualism was not in tension with solidarity and brought the two together in terms of society being an active, moralizing force. A re-trieval of the potential within this legacy, as Graham Crow notes, is a core theme informing this book.

For this reason he starts with an overview of contemporary issues in rela-tion to social solidarity and then moves on to examine the productive legacy that emerges from classical social theory. A basis is then given for an inter-rogation of contemporary theoretical concerns via the works of those such as Bauman, Beck, Bellah, Castells, Etzioni, Giddens, Melucci and Sennett. For some, the answer to social solidarity lies in communities. Here we find the tension between a celebration of difference as manifest in individual freedom from constraint, mixing with a recognition of difference that is seen to neces-sitate the exercise of a group's power to limit freedom. From this latter point of view individual rights may be tempered in the name of collective survival. As Zygmunt Bauman has expressed it in his book *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, both liberalism and communitarianism represents dreams that have been born 'in the plight of autonomous individuals'. Bauman thus re-gards solidarity as episodic, contingent and short-lived. However, as William Beveridge understood during the period in which the British welfare state was born, one must act in the name of the liberty of all, not just those who can exercise freedom. Why? Because free choice and fear and anxiety coexist.

An illuminating discussion of such issues provides the author with a basis upon which to ground these arguments via a sociological interrogation of three case studies. They are families, solidarity in mining communities and the Polish *Solidarity* movement. We are then furnished with a detailed under-standing of the basis of solidarity according to the different circumstances through which it arises, as well as the forms of its manifestation, dynamics and consequences. Here we see mixes of economic interest and symbolism, consent and coercion, inclusion and exclusion and the demands for intimacy and community, producing particular outcomes. As he notes, taken along-side lines of alliance around class, gender, sexuality and disability, we see changing forms of solidarity with self-help groups, for example, moving apart as quickly at they might come together. Solidarity should thus be seen as the result of conflict and change, as well as order and consensus.

Graham Crow shows a persistence in certain forms of solidarity despite a change in the original conditions in which it emerged. At the same time he also notes that new forms of solidarity should be examined in order to add to how thinking sociologically can contribute to greater understanding and tolerance. This requires a sensitivity to the conditions in which people find

themselves and a recognition of the relations that exist between those conditions, forms of identity and actions and beliefs.

When governments seek conditions in which peace and security in a society may flourish, whilst also promoting policies that are in tension with such aspirations, a clear gap in understanding the dynamics of social relations is apparent. It is to an understanding of this gap that Graham Crow has turned his analytic gaze. Therefore, this book should be read not only by social scientists, but politicians, business people and all those concerned with the trajectories of the societies in which they live for that informs their dispositions, aspirations and actions.

Tim May

Acknowledgements

Introduction

This book is concerned with how people strive to come together and act as a coherent, united force. Social solidarity is important in many areas of our lives, or at least in how we wish our lives to be. Family and kinship relationships, community life, trade union activity and the identity politics of new social movements are just a few of the many ways in which solidarity can feature in contemporary social arrangements. There is, of course, no inevitability that these or other collective activities will be characterized more by unity than by division. Indeed, it is a central theme of the book that social solidarities are often precariously based and difficult to sustain over time; there is nothing 'natural' or automatic about people's ability to achieve and maintain solidarity in their social relationships. As the historical sociologist Moore (1978: 507) observed, 'fissiparous tendencies exist in all societies and cultures of any size . . . Where cooperation exists, it has to be created and continually re-created'. The forms through which social solidarity comes to be expressed are diverse and range from the spectacular to the mundane. This remarkable diversity and the consistency of the underlying patterns that produce it help to explain why the causes, contexts and consequences of its presence, and also its absence, have been the subject of extensive and sustained investigation over the years.

There is certainly no shortage of current interest in social solidarity. Governments concerned to tackle 'social exclusion' are immediately confronted by the difficulties of promoting solidarity among citizens (Jordan 1996; Lister 1997; Levitas 1998; Byrne 1999), and similar sentiments underpinned the United Nations 'Year of the Elderly and Solidarity between the Generations' (Laslett 1996: viii). Such developments can be considered to be the latest phase of what Baldwin (1990), in his study of welfare state histories, refers to as *The Politics of Social Solidarity*. Welfare states continue to be confronted by the age-old problem of reconciling 'conflicting claims of self, family and

community' (Lees 1998: 1) and by the related issue of whether (and, if so, under what circumstances) solidarity extends to strangers. Solidarity is equally important for communitarians, who share with the architects of the welfare state the same broad objective of social inclusion but who regard the State as being unable to deliver it. Their task is to provide an alternative account of how a supportive social environment can be attained and sustained. The term 'community' undoubtedly conveys a sense of solidarity built around some common purpose, but many critics have identified as problematic the way in which such language may be used to smuggle in romanticized notions of informal social relationships (Frazer and Lacey 1993; Hoggett 1997).

Nor is concern with the issue of solidarity confined to discussions of welfare states and communities. At the more intimate level of personal life, much attention has been paid to the question of what it is that holds members of families together in an age frequently characterized as one of 'individualization' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Silva and Smart 1999). On a more global level, the rise of new social movements in the South has generated growing interest not only in the nature but also the limitations of their solidarity (Wignaraja 1993; Scott 1994). Appeals to 'transnational collective solidarity' have, for example, been criticized by Hoogvelt (1997: 243) for their reliance 'on some magic wand that waves away the fragmentation of class, gender, ethnic and nationalist loyalties'. Equally instructive are developments in post-communist societies, about which Castells (1998: 64) argues that an important part of the transitions taking place involves coming to terms with 'the mockery that the Communist state made of the values of human solidarity'. Such histories make all the more difficult the project of strengthening the 'feelings of solidarity and mutual obligation' (Offe 1996a: 49) that many commentators have identified as having been eroded by disenchantment with communist regimes.

This revival of interest in the place of social solidarity in contemporary social relations has been accompanied by renewed engagement in recent years with solidarity as a theoretical problem. Beck's (1992: 49) analysis of *Risk Society* suggests that it is possible to discern in contemporary societies a fundamental shift 'from the solidarity of need to solidarity motivated by anxiety', while his later work pursues the theme of 'the withering away of solidarity' (Beck 1998: ch.3). Parallels can be drawn between this perspective on 'individualization' and Melucci's interpretation of 'individuation', since this too emphasizes the link between the growth of choice and anxiety. According to Melucci (1996a: 130), '[w]hen human relations are almost entirely governed by choice, the foundation of solidarity is undermined and the social bond is dangerously weakened'. Likewise, Offe (1996b: 96) refers to individualization as 'drying out . . . the seedbed of solidarity'. These ideas run counter to the pioneering thesis developed by Durkheim (1984) over a century ago that individualism and solidarity are intimately connected rather than being in tension with one another, and the retrieval of this legacy constitutes an important part of this book.

A rather different concern with solidarity underlies Maffesoli's (1996) writings, in which he directs attention to the way in which contemporary

solidarities are in important respects coming to be tribal in their defining characteristics. For Maffesoli, what stands out about current developments is that the tension between individualism and tribalism is being resolved in favour of the latter, and with it the emotional dimension of social life is displacing more rational arrangements. Maffesoli's work illustrates the more general point, that what Elias (1991) refers to as 'changes in the we–I balance' are at the heart of many contemporary debates. A key matter of contention between the different positions is the question of whether contemporary solidarities are better understood as innovative or traditional – that is, as forward-looking or backward-looking – an issue that lies at the heart of what Giddens (1994a) identifies as 'the problem of solidarity'. Giddens is critical of the notion that what he calls 'damaged solidarities' can be repaired by the revival of 'civil society', but others attempting to analyse contemporary solidarities have given this idea a more positive endorsement (Keane 1998).

Informed by these and related debates, Misztal (1996, 2000) has sought to specify why it should be that solidarity has so much importance attached to it. She suggests that particular attention deserves to be paid to the association of solidarity with trust, and an absence of solidarity with lack of trust. The desirability of enhancing trust between individuals is a familiar theme in a range of literatures, including both those that have direct policy-relevance and others that are more abstract and theoretical. Much of the impetus behind the current engagement with the issue of solidarity can, therefore, be attributed to the understandable concern to grasp how social relationships come to be solidary in character and how this process can be reinforced for the common good. The current focus of attention on the causes of solidarity derives to an extent from concern to enhance their capacity to bring people together in ways that are mutually beneficial. In turn, this has led to the recognition that certain contexts are more favourable than others to the development of solidarity. An illustration of this point is provided by the transformation of the ethos of community work in recent decades, as top-down, state-centred initiatives have given way to 'looser and more flexible networks' (Taylor 1995: 109) and new forms of political alliance that more readily embody the spirit of solidarity.

There is, however, another dimension to the problem of solidarity, as both Misztal and Taylor recognize when noting that solidarity is not universally regarded as an ideal. Although the absence of solidarity is more often regarded as problematic than is its presence, nevertheless there are standpoints from which solidarity appears to pose a threat to individuals' autonomy, creativity and scope for being different. Misztal (1996) refers to communities in which this outcome occurs as inward-looking and marked by 'sectarian solidarity', resting as they do on hostility to outsiders. In like fashion, Bauman (1999) has warned of the dangers of solidarity that is rooted in 'parochial sentiments', while Albrow (1999: 25) has noted that '[t]he ideal of solidarity is utopian, but also in an important sense anti-social'. How people come to distinguish between those with whom they have solidarity and others to whom they have no such obligations is a complex process of classification that has serious

consequences, and it is in this light that Sennett's (1998) description of 'we' as 'the dangerous pronoun' makes sense.

Questioning the desirability of solidarity may arise out of recognition that a tension exists between the solidarity of a group and the individualism of its members, or it may be prompted by the existence of tensions between the solidarities of competing groups. Wrong (1994: 185) describes as a sociological commonplace the observation that '[s]olidarity based on shared norms, commitment to collective goals, and the maintenance of a system of differentiated roles, are defining criteria of *all* stable organized groups, including groups whose *raison d'être* may be conflict with other groups' (emphasis in original). It is, indeed, widely acknowledged that solidarity among members of a group can be heightened by emphasizing the group's distinctiveness, and it is only superficially paradoxical that 'solidarity . . . may be strengthened by antagonistic relations with other groups' (Wrong 1994: 201). For example, urban sociologists have long recognized that 'conflict from without creates solidarity within' (Pahl 1970: 102). Put another way, solidarity with some people may commit an individual to rivalry with others if competition exists between the two groups. Where solidarity extends only as far as the boundaries of the group to which an individual regards herself or himself as belonging, the nature of that solidarity will be influenced by whether others beyond these boundaries are considered to pose a threat (Johnsen 1998). The trust on which solidarity between group members is founded may be regarded as forced if it arises against a background of uncertainty and mistrust in other relations. If Douglas (1987: 1) is correct in her characterization of solidarity as something which 'involves individuals being ready to suffer on behalf of the larger group and their expecting other individual members to do as much for them', the forced nature of some solidarities may help to explain why individuals behave in this way rather than in a more narrowly individualistic fashion. Of course, Douglas (1996: 33) is aware of the existence of alternative perspectives that emphasize 'good will, kindness and self-denial', but altruism is as much of a puzzle as self-interested behaviour and it remains the case that '[s]olidarity always needs explaining'.

It is apparent, therefore, that social solidarity is open to many different expressions, and this is the reason for entitling the book *Social Solidarities* in the plural. In addition to the distinction between inward-looking and outward-looking solidarities and the distinction between backward-looking and forward-looking solidarities, it is also possible to distinguish between solidarities that have rational foundations and those that are founded on affect or emotional attachments (Doreian and Fararo 1998). Of course, analytical distinctions such as these rarely translate neatly into concrete examples, but they do provide a framework through which the 'messiness' of empirical reality can be investigated. The importance of considering social solidarity analytically was recognized by many of the founding figures of sociology. Durkheim's (1984) celebrated distinction between 'mechanical' and 'organic' solidarity has unquestionably been the most influential of early attempts to theorize social solidarity, but valuable contributions were also made by other classical figures

and these are considered along with Durkheim in the opening chapter of the book. This lays the foundation for consideration in Chapter 2 of contemporary theorists of social solidarity, many of whom take the ideas of the classics as their starting point, even if they seek (with varying success) to go well beyond this legacy.

By the end of the first part of the book, it will be evident that it is possible to approach social solidarity in various ways. Some of these approaches are particularly concerned with solidarity at the micro-level of interpersonal relations, while others focus on the broader canvas of solidarity at the macro-level of national and international social forces. For this reason, Part two is devoted to three case studies in which social solidarity is explored at different levels, ranging from the micro-level of step-family households to the macro-level of the Polish *Solidarnosc* movement. The case study of mining communities is at an intermediate level between these two ends of the spectrum. The choice of these three case studies has been guided by other considerations in addition to the contrasts between solidarity at different levels that they allow. One of these is that they are all cases in which it is useful to consider the issue of contention in contemporary debates noted above, the relative importance of the rational and emotional foundations of solidarity. Family relationships have often been treated as part of the private sphere in which rational calculation is subordinate to the expression of emotions, but closer inspection of the evidence considered in Chapter 3 reveals that this is a questionable assumption. The related assumption that rationality rules in the public sphere is equally open to question in the light of studies of work organization and political processes, as Chapters 4 and 5 show. Political actions are governed by emotional loyalties as well as by calculations of advantage, despite the fact that these two influences may be in conflict with each other.

Another consideration regarding Part two of the book is that the case studies are all ones in which it is possible to explore the complex connections that exist between solidarity and hierarchy. Solidarity does not necessarily require members of a group to be equal, as Torrance's (1977) distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' solidarity and Runciman's (1989: 97) comment that 'collective action frequently arises out of vertical rather than horizontal cooperation' are designed to demonstrate. Indeed, the difficulties encountered in attempts to create 'communal solidarity' suggest that there may be an inherent tension between solidarity and equality (Abrams and McCulloch 1976). Certainly, the pursuit of solidarity involves individuals in 'an attempt to reconcile difference and similarity' (Touraine 2000: 153), and this is particularly challenging where differences are expressed hierarchically. The hierarchical nature of families is readily apparent, although there is extensive debate about whether inequalities between generations and between genders are being eroded by a process of 'democratization'. Step-families provide a particularly interesting reference point for the exploration of these ideas. Communities are in many ways the converse of families in this respect, since closer inspection of community relationships reveals several dimensions of inequality that are masked by the superficial appearance of community

members being equal. Mining communities illustrate in particularly stark form the presence of hierarchies relating to gender, class, length of residence and a number of other variables, and they provide further insights in relation to the process of industrial decline and the transition to post-coal futures. The combination of solidarity and hierarchy in the third case study, the Polish *Solidarity* movement, reinforces these points and in addition serves to highlight the rapidity with which 'leadership' and the solidarity of supporters can change in volatile political environments.

The presence of hierarchies among members of solidary groups brings into sharp focus the importance of considering what it is that forms the basis of social solidarity. The specification of what it is that people have in common that leads to their social relationships being characterized by solidarity presents a notoriously difficult definitional problem. The range of phenomena to which the term 'solidarity' may be applied means that definitions are necessarily somewhat general. Reflecting this, Llewelyn-Davies (1978: 206) defined solidarity as 'a commitment to some kind of mutual aid or support, based upon the perception, by those who are solidary, that they share certain characteristics, or that they are equal with respect to some social principle'. On the basis of this definition, she goes on to note that solidarity constructed around some shared characteristics may have the effect of reproducing existing inequalities in contrast to solidarity constructed around more abstract principles like 'equality', which has greater potential to be subversive of things as they are. This is a significant observation because it highlights the point that the effects of solidarity are open, sometimes contributing to continuity in social relationships, while at other times promoting change. Part three of the book will consider such issues in the light of the material covered in the preceding parts, with a view to clarifying what might be concluded about the key matters of contention with the benefit of the case study analyses. The discussion there pays particular attention to how solidarity connects with both social inclusion and social exclusion, and to how solidarities are routinely hierarchical. It also revisits the central sociological dichotomy of social order and social change, mindful of what is argued in the preceding chapters about the importance of the time dimensions of social solidarities.

Writing this book has been sustained by the belief that social solidarity continues to matter, and that therefore the study of social solidarity continues to occupy an important place on the agenda of social scientific research. A number of prominent thinkers have suggested that solidarity is an increasingly elusive goal, among them Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995: 46), whose interpretation of the individualization process is that 'each of us is both expected and forced to *lead our own life* outside the bounds of any specific community or group' (emphasis in original). One of the objectives of the book is to arrive at a judgement about how far evidence relating to contemporary social relationships supports such contentions, and how far it is consistent with alternative perspectives such as that offered by Scott (2000), in which greater potential for the development of new forms of community solidarity is identified. There is no shortage of empirical evidence available to be drawn upon

to arrive at a judgement about the place of social solidarity in contemporary societies, and it will be the argument of this book that pronouncements on the demise of social solidarity are not only premature but are likely to continue to be confounded by events. There are good social scientific reasons for believing that social solidarity will persist as a necessary feature of social relationships at all levels, even if the forms in which solidarity is embodied are subject to profound change in an age of individualization. Chapter 6 explores further the idea that 'traditional' solidarities are under pressure from various unsettling forces besides individualization, but it develops the argument that these forces are countered (more or less effectively) by other processes that have the potential to bring people together in new ways.

The task of charting the changing nature and force of social solidarity is approached mindful of the long history that the 'loss of community' perspective has, at least in Western cultures. Many versions of this influential idea have rested on dubious foundations, among which is the pervasive belief that the historical record supports a pessimistic interpretation of social change in which social relations in the past are treated as having been somehow better than they are now (Lee and Newby 1983; Crow and Allan 1994). Awareness of the dangers presented by myths of a golden age of solidarity now disappeared is due in no small part to the fact that the problem of solidarity has engaged the attention of some of the most powerful minds in the history of sociology, who have been concerned to challenge such thinking. The early sociologists were not the first people to identify the problematic nature of solidarity, but they were responsible for reformulating conceptions of the problem in ways that, well over a century later, continue to provide a productive starting point for contemporary investigations into this fundamentally important question.

PART ONE

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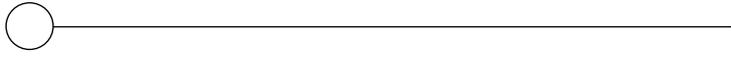
Classical theories of
social solidarity

Introduction

Concern with social solidarity has been present in sociology from the outset, and it features as prominently in the work of the discipline's founding figures as it does in contemporary sociological writings. It has even been suggested that 'it is primarily as the study of the causes of solidarity and schism that sociology . . . has its *raison d'être* as an autonomous discipline' (Lockwood 1992: 3). There are echoes here of Durkheim's (1984: 27) claim that 'the study of solidarity lies within the domain of sociology'. Although the issue of social solidarity has the potential to pose difficulties for many other subjects in the social sciences and beyond, it is in sociological works that the problem is confronted most frequently and directly. The fundamental sociological question about what makes 'society' possible necessarily raises the issue of solidarity, as does the equally basic sociological concern with explaining patterns of social change. One of Durkheim's main messages was that social arrangements that are not underpinned by solidarity between the individuals involved are vulnerable to fragmentation. In similar vein, Marx emphasized that the likelihood of success of efforts to steer social relations in particular directions is affected by the extent of solidarity among both those pushing for change and others involved in resisting such efforts. These ideas have proved to be important points of reference for many subsequent contributions to debates about social solidarity.

  Sociology's founding figures showed that social solidarity can be approached from several different angles. One approach is particularly concerned to investigate the foundations of social solidarity by asking questions about what it is that people have in common that makes it possible and desirable for them to act in unison. Within this tradition, Durkheim was concerned to emphasize that, in modern societies, common interests alone are not enough

to secure social cohesion and collective endeavour. His observation that 'if mutual interest draws men closer, it is never more than for a few moments' (Durkheim 1984: 152) leads directly to the conclusion that social solidarity between people (women and children as well as men!) requires shared understandings and beliefs if it is to be sustainable. For Durkheim, people need to be integrated into orderly social classifications with definite boundaries, and his work can be read as a warning against the dangers of 'declassification' that the absence of such a framework threatens to generate (Lockwood 1992). A distinct but related approach sets out to identify different types of social solidarity on the basis of the argument that the forms in which solidarity is expressed can vary significantly. Durkheim's distinction between 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity' is the best known example of such thinking, but he was by no means the only author to have followed this pattern of thought. Rival typologies to that of Durkheim are to be found in the writings of several classical sociological figures, for example Spencer and Tönnies, and it is important to acknowledge that Durkheim's ideas developed in part as a response to these. A third approach involves consideration of the dynamics of social solidarity. This line of inquiry is exemplified in Marx's analysis of what Torrance (1977) calls 'negative solidarity' – that is, the collective actions and reactions of social classes seeking to consolidate their strength relative to other social classes with which they have antagonistic relationships. Marx was especially interested in the extent of solidarity among workers and employers, since he saw this as having a crucial bearing on what he referred to as 'the respective powers of the combatants' (Marx and Engels 1969b: 73). These approaches are not mutually exclusive, but they do illustrate an important theme of the book, that a different angle of vision is gained according to whether the principal concern is with social solidarity's causes, contexts or consequences.

The unfolding agenda around the problem of order

The concept of social solidarity has come to be associated first and foremost with Durkheim's writings, but it is important that these writings are placed in their appropriate intellectual setting and that they are recognized to have left important issues unresolved. Durkheim was not the first person to engage with the problem of social solidarity and many of his most significant ideas were developed as part of a critique of earlier writers' theories that he regarded as deficient in their explanations of what holds people together. In addition, there are numerous parallels between Durkheim's ideas and those of other writers that make it appropriate to consider them together rather than separately. According to Barbalet (1983), for example, Durkheim's famous point about the potential of the whole to be greater than the sum of its individual parts was already present in Marx's view of class as more than 'a conglomeration of individuals'. The argument that there is considerable overlap between what Marx and Durkheim have to say about social solidarity has been made several times (Torrance 1977; Alexander 1982; Lockwood 1992). Similarly, it

is possible to find interesting parallels and instructive differences between Durkheim and other writers, for example Simmel (Frisby and Sayer 1986; Craib 1997). In the light of these points, Durkheim's ideas will be examined alongside those of others who shared his concern to illuminate the nature of social solidarity and grappled with the difficulties involved in its analysis.

The first thing to note about Durkheim's analysis of social solidarity is that he did not provide a ready definition of this key term. Poggi (1972) regards it as 'somewhat surprising' that, despite its centrality to Durkheim's argument, 'nowhere does he define solidarity itself'. Torrance's (1977: 106) explanation of this omission is that 'Durkheim was reluctant to venture a general definition of solidarity, which he feared would only be taken as an invitation to substitute philosophical or psychological speculation for sociological inquiry'. Certainly, it would be difficult to exaggerate the sense that Durkheim sought to convey of the distinctiveness (and superiority) of sociological standpoints; one of the ways in which he did this was by contrasting sociology with other disciplines. In Durkheim's view, a sociological approach needed to leave behind the speculative and a-historical generalities to which philosophy was prone, and it also needed to avoid the danger of reducing social phenomena to the mental states of the individuals involved, which he regarded psychology as doing. Solidarity for Durkheim involved much more than simply sentiment (Watts Miller 1996), although in making his case Durkheim was guilty of exaggerating the extent to which sociology and psychology are distinctive, as Ray (1999: 98) notes by observing that 'he actually grounds his account in a theory of human psychology'. It was also necessary, in Durkheim's opinion, for sociologists to go beyond the approaches of political scientists and economists that tended to privilege explanations framed in terms of people's interests. As Worsley has noted, Durkheim embodied the confidence shared with many of his late nineteenth-century contemporaries that sociology promised to add 'another dimension to the explanations of social solidarity – or lack of it. A whole range of *cultural* institutions and forms of association – non-economic and, as we would say to-day, "non-governmental" – were also crucial: not just the state, the party and the market, but institutions which expressed a conception of society as a cultural community too' (Worsley 1997: 269, emphasis in original). Durkheim's objective of improving on previous accounts of social solidarity was thus a highly ambitious one, involving as it did a direct challenge to the conventional wisdom of his day.

The relationship of the individual to society had long been recognized as an intellectual problem, but Durkheim argued that a properly sociological approach to the bases of social solidarity was distinctive from all previous attempts to resolve 'the problem of order', as Parsons (1968) later named it. What stands out in particular about Durkheim's approach is his identification of two complementary ways in which individuals come to be socialized, one involving regulation of behaviour through institutional controls and the other involving integration of individuals through their shared experience of interaction (Hornsby 1998). Previous attempts to account for social solidarity generally lacked the depth and subtlety of Durkheim's approach. One of the

intellectual traditions which Durkheim sought to challenge was exemplified in the writings of the seventeenth-century political philosopher Hobbes, who famously described the state of nature as a war of all against all in which an individual's life would be 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes 1968: 186). In the light of this argument that no natural basis for a harmonious social order existed, Hobbes's explanation of solidarity was framed in terms of social order being imposed from above by a powerful state. The *Leviathan*, as Hobbes called it, stood above competing individual interests and passions. Without such a restraining force, society would be predominantly an arena of mistrust and fear. Human nature dictated that, 'except they be restrained through fear of some coercive power, every man will dread and distrust each other' (Hobbes 1949: 11), and it was therefore necessary for order to be imposed by the state before trust could be established between individuals. Hobbes's great innovation was to question the assumption that people were 'born fit for society' and to demonstrate that individuals acting rationally in pursuit of their ends do not necessarily generate outcomes that are orderly or beneficial to others.

By the nineteenth century, Hobbes's location of the basis of social order and solidarity in a sovereign who could secure the interests not of particular individuals but of 'Man-kind' as a whole had been questioned on several grounds. Among the various representatives of the emerging discipline of sociology, Comte accepted Hobbes's belief that force exercised by the state underpinned social unity, but differed in expressing the view that people's actions were not necessarily selfish. Comte's introduction of the concept of altruism has significance in the history of analyses of social solidarity not only because it challenged the assumption of egoism, but also because it played an important role in making the study of solidarity more dynamic and comparative. Comte's idea that societies progress from one stage to the next in a law-like fashion contained the suggestion that, as industrial societies replaced earlier stages of social development, so people's moral attachments broadened out from the family to 'the whole of the human species' (in Thompson 1976: 119). In his view, social evolution (and the growth of cooperation between specialized elements of society that it brought) opened up new opportunities for altruistic behaviour in widening arenas. As he expressed it, the general point was that 'civilization leads us on to a further and further development of our noblest dispositions and our most generous feelings, which are the only possible basis of human association' (in Thompson 1976: 154). Comte did not regard this as a matter of personal choice, since the development was the result of changes over which individuals had little control. The basis of the shift towards a more altruistic society lay beyond the individual in broad social forces that, as they unfolded, progressively restrained egoism and sponsored cooperation. Material forces were prominent among these. One such force was the development of the division of labour, about which the thrust of Comte's thinking was that 'separation of functions' was necessarily connected to 'combination of efforts' (Aron 1968: 97). Put another way, what Comte suggested was that '[s]ocial solidarity is enhanced in a system in which

individuals are dependent upon others' (Ritzer 1992: 90), and this interpretation of the division of labour had a significant effect on subsequent writers.

The work of Spencer shows that it is possible to set off from many of Comte's starting points and arrive at quite different conclusions. Like Comte, Spencer emphasized the importance of 'human variability' in his criticism of any approach which 'assumes the character of mankind to be constant' (1868: 49, 44). He also shared the belief that social change had the potential to be beneficial in its effects, but his argument placed much greater emphasis on the growth of individuality and what he referred to as 'the law of individuation' (1868: 479). In Spencer's account, 'human progress is toward greater mutual dependence, as well as toward greater individuation' (1868: 483), a belief which he argued for by use of an analogy with other species in the natural world. The development of society from the militant type to the industrial type was linked by Spencer to the foundation of each type of society on different principles. In drawing this distinction, he made much of the contrast between 'the compulsory co-operation which military activity necessitates' and 'the voluntary co-operation which a developed industrial activity necessitates' (1971: 172–3). Spencer suggested that there was a diminishing role for the state as societies evolved towards the industrial type, and it has been commented that his 'ideal is a society in which the government is reduced to a minimum and individuals are allowed maximum freedom' (Ritzer 1992: 109). In such a society, people would be brought together by common interests, and these shared interests lie at the heart of Spencer's explanation of the increasing integration and coherence of social groups which he believed he had identified. Voluntarily entering into contracts to their mutual benefit, individuals in industrial society had little need of coercive state activity beyond the provision of a legal and political framework that ensured individual freedom to take appropriate advantage of the opportunities that the developing division of labour generated. And while Comte concluded that people would continue to need some form of religion to provide them with moral guidance, Spencer's (1868: 29) view was that 'the moral forces upon which social equilibrium depends, are resident in the social atom – man'.

The broad optimism that characterized the account of social development for which Spencer is best remembered gave way to a more pessimistic tone in his later writings. Peel (1971) interprets the changing fortunes of Spencer's ideas as part of the more general shift away from liberal thinking which marked the final quarter of the nineteenth century. It is certainly the case that the equation of the rise of individualism with social progress became increasingly difficult to sustain. Spencer's Social Darwinism, encapsulated in his phrase 'survival of the fittest', carried with it a harsh message about the limits of solidarity, particularly when it was applied to those sections of the population referred to by Spencer (1969) as 'the incapables' and 'good-for-nothings'. Other observers of the social problems that accompanied industrialization were less sanguine about the potential of individualism to provide a feasible basis on which social solidarity could flourish, and conveyed more of a sense of loss when comparing the present with the past. Among these writers, the

position of Tönnies is particularly instructive, since he states explicitly that his sociology grew out of an engagement with the ideas of Hobbes, Comte and Spencer. Tönnies (1971: 122) felt that modern society could be 'conceived of as a mere aggregate of individual households, each pursuing its own interest, maybe at the cost of all the others'. The biological analogy that Spencer had used to analyse the basis of contemporary social relationships was one which Tönnies felt did not stand up to scrutiny, not least because its key notion of a 'social body' suffered from being 'indefinite'. Referring in 1905 to the idea that a social body evolves, he asked '[i]s it England that has taken a development of this kind? Or is it England and Wales? Or are Scotland and even poor conquered Ireland to be included?' (Tönnies 1971: 123). By approaching the question in this way, Tönnies highlighted the need to be clear about two things on which previous writers like Spencer had been unhelpfully vague, namely specifying what it is that the members of a social group have in common and identifying the boundaries of the group.

Tönnies sought to bring greater clarity to the issue of social solidarity by insisting that social entities are held together not only by individual members having rights in common, but also by what he referred to as social 'bonds' or 'ties'. Whereas Spencer had emphasized the voluntary and free nature of cooperation in industrial society, Tönnies (1955: 8) stressed that interdependence involved 'being bound to others', which 'is the exact opposite of freedom, the former implying a moral obligation, a moral imperative, or a prohibition'. Like Comte and Spencer had before him, Tönnies employed a simplified distinction between different types of social order, which he designated *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. These terms translate imperfectly as 'community' and 'association', given that the latter term can also be read as 'society' or 'organization' (Lee and Newby 1983: 44). For Tönnies, *gemeinschaft* involved people being held together by 'real and organic life', while *gesellschaft* links people through an 'imaginary and mechanical structure' (1955: 37). In the former, a dense web of relationships connects people in on-going ties of interdependence, at the heart of which is the family, 'the general basis of life in the Gemeinschaft' (1955: 267). These relationships have an enduring emotional dimension in which attachment to place is important. In *gesellschaft*, the bases of social solidarity have become weakened by greater geographical mobility and by the rise of urban, industrial capitalism, processes which, if taken to the extreme, reduce social relationships to an 'act of exchange . . . performed by individuals who are alien to each other, have nothing in common with each other, and confront each other in an essentially antagonistic and even hostile manner' (1971: 76–7). Tönnies employed a deliberate echo of Hobbes in his suggestion that 'the modern, urbanized, *Gesellschaft*-like civilization . . . represents a concealed war of all against all' (1971: 60). Tönnies regarded 'unconditional self-affirmation' and 'unfettered economic competition' (1971: 61) as more likely to lead to conflict than to cooperative collective endeavour, since the latter requires an enduring sense of common purpose and common identity with which individualism and the inequalities it generates are ultimately incompatible.

Tönnies's writings represent an advance on previous accounts in several important respects. First, he was more concerned to ground his sociological analysis in relation to observable evidence, being rightly sceptical of approaches that used ill-defined concepts in support of speculative pronouncements. He was particularly mindful of the 'enigmatic contradiction' whereby in *gesellschaft* it is presumed that 'all individuals are equal insofar as they are capable of engaging in exchange and entering into contracts' (Tönnies 1971: 78), while it is all too apparent that in practice social relationships are distorted by employer–employee inequalities. Tönnies's awareness of how the societies of his day were divided by social classes allowed him to link various social problems with 'the monopoly of wealth of the few'. His reference to widening inequalities as the 'social question' flagged up his concern with the practical outcomes of the shift from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*. Confronting this issue made it imperative to ask whether it was more appropriate to consider people as belonging to 'society' or some other social entity. Whereas the organic analogy took as given the integration of societies and the functional equality of their members, Tönnies drew on Marx's thinking to distinguish between the positions of the working and capitalist classes, referring to the latter as 'completely free' but the former as only 'semi-free'. Tönnies (1955: 270) suggested that such inequality promotes among the masses a movement 'from class consciousness to class struggle' which threatens to 'destroy society', and he looked to the revival of a more *gemeinschaft*-like culture to counter this threat and restore concord to social relationships. Tönnies was thus by no means optimistic about the course that social development was taking, and his concerns provided an important corrective to those approaches which simply assumed the progressive nature of social change. Furthermore, by highlighting that, in principle, *gesellschaft* is 'boundaryless', Tönnies drew attention to the way in which market forces worked to undermine the ties which formerly bound people together as members of discrete social entities such as families and local communities. The unity of *gesellschaft* is precarious because it is founded on what Tönnies called 'convention', where individuals are guided in their actions by their calculation of what is useful to them. By contrast, the *gemeinschaft*-like principle of 'tradition', where individuals follow the 'sacred inheritance of the ancestors' (Tönnies 1955: 87), offers a more stable basis for social order.

Durkheim's thesis concerning social solidarity can be seen as a reaction against the various ideas of Comte, Spencer and Tönnies, even though he sought to answer the same intellectual problem as they did. Lukes (1975: 141) sums up this problem as two related questions: 'if pre-industrial societies were held together by common ideas and sentiments, by shared norms and values, what holds an industrial society together? Or is it perhaps not being held together at all, but rather in the process of disintegration?'. Lukes goes on to show that Durkheim objected to the role Comte allocated to the state as a regulator of social life, which he regarded as impractical because solidarity could not be imposed from above in the context of a modern division of labour. Durkheim's objections to Spencer were that common interests provided only

a tenuous basis for social solidarity, and that he overlooked the importance of the wider social framework that made economic exchange possible. In turn, Tönnies's ideas were rejected because Durkheim questioned the portrayal of *gesellschaft*-like relations. Durkheim (1972) regarded these as no less 'organic' than those of *gemeinschaft*, and thought therefore that their portrayal as 'mechanical' was inadequate. As if to emphasize this point, Durkheim's depiction of pre-industrial societies as founded on mechanical solidarity and industrial societies as founded on organic solidarity turned Tönnies 'on his head' (Kivisto 1998: 95). In making his distinction between mechanical and organic solidarities, Durkheim advanced the deceptively simple argument that the former was based on similarity among individuals and the latter on difference. When stated this bluntly, Durkheim's central thesis appears to be just as speculative as many of his contemporaries' ideas that he sought to criticize. It is, however, an argument that he elaborated on extensively and, in doing so, went well beyond speculation about the bases of social solidarities to consider how these different types of society actually functioned.

Durkheim's developing account of social solidarity

Social solidarity was the subject of Durkheim's first lecture course and of his first book, *The Division of Labour in Society*, and it remained a central issue throughout his career. It has been said of Durkheim that he regarded solidarity as 'the highest social and moral good, the *raison d'être* of society' (Lehmann 1994: 48–9). The approach that he adopted was characteristically broad in scope. He took as his subject matter nothing less than 'the totality of bonds that bind us to one another and to society, which shape the mass of individuals into a cohesive aggregate' (Durkheim 1984: 331). The contrast between the two broad types of solidarity that he identified, mechanical and organic, underpinned a bold theory of the evolution of societies in which interdependence grew as the latter replaced the former. Equally characteristic was the style in which he delivered his argument about social solidarity, establishing it by use of propositions that appear in common-sense terms paradoxical. The relationship between individuals and society was introduced by Durkheim as a puzzle: '[h]ow does it come about that the individual, whilst becoming more autonomous, depends ever more closely on society? How can he become at the same time more of an individual and yet more linked to society?' (p. xxx). When posed in this way, the shortcomings of alternative explanations of solidarity framed in terms of either compulsion by the state or the pursuit of self-interest were highlighted, since neither could account satisfactorily for the connection between the growth of individualism and increasing interdependence. Furthermore, Durkheim sought to go beyond these approaches by being more rigorous in methodological terms. He argued that 'generalities' had the capacity to produce only 'a very incomplete explanation' of solidarity, and that what was necessary for analysis to be scientific was greater attention to detail. As an empirical sociologist, Durkheim

was sensitive to the fact that '[w]hat exists and what is really alive are the special forms of solidarity – domestic, professional, national, that of the past and that of today, etc. Each has its own special nature' (p. 27). It followed that comparisons between them needed to be undertaken systematically and methodically.

Much has been written about Durkheim's distinction between mechanical and organic solidarities, and several commentaries have questioned how far he practised what he preached concerning methodological rigour when developing his argument in *The Division of Labour in Society*. Abrams (1982) describes Durkheim's account as 'an extremely general framework' that is 'notably unhistorical', while Thompson (1982) suggests that 'Durkheim's own moral and political preferences creep back in' as the book proceeds. There are indisputably major difficulties with Durkheim's designation of certain forms of the division of labour as 'abnormal' or 'pathological', since this entails specification of a 'normal' pattern which is not as objective as it is presented as being (Bryant 1976). His choice of the law as an indicator of how patterns of social solidarity have changed is equally problematic. To argue that mechanical solidarity is associated with laws that have 'repressive' sanctions designed principally to punish transgressors, whereas organic solidarity is reflected in legal codes that are less punitive and more 'restitutory' (described by Durkheim as, 'restoring the previous state of affairs'), is, as Aron (1970) puts it, 'rather over-simplified'. It is also, as Parkin (1992: 26) has noted, 'quite out of character for Durkheim to have posited a close connection between something so eminently social as solidarity and the administrative process of the central political power, a body whose impact upon society he is usually at pains to minimise'. The additional observation that Durkheim did not employ the terminology of mechanical and organic solidarity in his writing subsequent to *The Division of Labour in Society* might lead us to suppose that these various difficulties led him to abandon it as an analytical framework. It is, however, more appropriate to see Durkheim's work that followed as engaging with these difficulties and developing this framework rather than abandoning it.

Several elements of Durkheim's discussion of the division of labour remained central to his later analyses of social solidarity, even though the language that he used to discuss them and the phenomena on which he focused left behind 'the massive and cumbrous concepts of organic and mechanical solidarity' (LaCapra 1985: 79). The first of these common threads is that Durkheim continued to proceed from the proposition that social collectivities are composed of more than simply the aggregate of the parts that make them up. In *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Durkheim (1982: 129) insisted that 'society is not the mere sum of individuals'. He used the example of crowd phenomena to illustrate the point: 'an outburst of collective emotion in a gathering does not merely express the sum total of what individual feelings share in common, but is something of a very different order . . . It is the product of shared existence, of actions and reactions called into play between the consciousness of individuals' (Durkheim 1982: 56). It follows from this

that the study of solidarity requires that attention be paid to what Durkheim called the 'conscience collective', a term which neatly captures the group and moral dimensions of the phenomenon by meaning both collective consciousness and collective conscience (Craib 1997). When he wrote *The Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim was already aware of the existence of powerful objections to using the law as an indicator of the 'conscience collective'. His argument that laws are normally in harmony with custom and tradition merely compounded the problem by raising the difficulty of identifying what is 'normal'. Durkheim subsequently found his attention shifting towards the way in which religion integrated people into society, and he described his discovery of 'the capital role played by religion in social life' as 'a revelation' and 'a watershed in my thinking' (Durkheim 1982: 259). This line of reasoning led ultimately to Durkheim's last great work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1976), in which he elaborated on the unifying force that shared beliefs about what is sacred exert on members of a collectivity. This work develops a point of view already present in embryo form at the outset of Durkheim's career, that the explanation of social life needs to take into account not only its 'material foundation' but also the 'whole world of sentiments, ideas and images' which shape individual behaviour.

Related to this is a second continuity in Durkheim's work revolving around his rejection of explanations of solidarity as something that is purely rational. Durkheim continued to argue that common interests are not enough to sustain cohesion among group members, who need to be committed to a moral code for more than instrumental reasons. His later work suggested that people's commitment to shared values requires periodic revitalization through gatherings which constitute an 'effervescent social environment'. Ritual gatherings have the capacity to renew solidarity by transporting people beyond everyday routines and, Durkheim (1976: 210) argued, '[t]his is why all parties, political, economic or confessional, are careful to have reunions where their members may revivify their common faith by manifesting it in common'. Durkheim thus recognized that modern societies continue to have a need for such 'collective effervescence' because, as Torrance (1977), Pickering (1984), Hornsby (1998) and Pope (1998) have all noted, he was acutely aware of the place of emotion in reinforcing people's commitment to solidary modes of behaviour. Sentiments of solidarity with others were in Durkheim's view strengthened where social relationships were more intense, and the element of renewal that gatherings involve helps to explain why it is that traditions have the force that they do. Networks of social relationships link individuals to the broader collectivity and, where these relationships are only weakly maintained, the individual is less regulated by tradition and more at risk of becoming detached from the wider society. In the extreme, weak ties to the collectivity make the individual vulnerable to suicide, as Durkheim's (1970) celebrated study argued. Campbell (1981: 157) interprets such ideas as an indication that what Durkheim offered was not a stark opposition between organic and mechanical solidarity as alternatives, since 'the latter can exist without the former but the former cannot exist without a measure of the latter'.

The recognition in his later works that the distinction between mechanical and organic types was insufficiently subtle to capture the complexity of social solidarities did not lead Durkheim to abandon comparison altogether. A third continuity in Durkheim's work was his firmly held belief that the form which social solidarity takes has to be seen in its appropriate social structural context and classified in this light. Social solidarity was in his view open to being expressed in several forms, depending on whether the social structure functioned by promoting people's similarities or their differences. He regarded historical sociological comparisons as demonstrating that different societies operated with different moral orders, and he was aware that the 'conscience collective' had tended over the course of social evolution to give way to a moral order in which individualism was more prominent. He held to the belief that the specialization inherent in the division of labour meant that 'solidarity by similarities' became increasingly difficult to sustain, and that as homogeneity gave way to heterogeneity, so 'the cult of the person and individual dignity' (Durkheim 1984: 333; frequently translated more simply as 'the cult of the individual') grew in importance.

The idea that individualism could be the basis of solidarity in modern societies was not contradictory to Durkheim, since he attached great importance to the distinction between individualism and egoism, as a number of commentators have noted (Bryant 1976; Cladis 1992; Ritzer 1992). Durkheim's view was that the development of the division of labour promoted the process of individuation, whereby 'the individual no longer shares the same characteristics as all other individuals in his society' (Giddens 1972: 9). Individualization in the sense of growing awareness of individual differences was regarded by Durkheim as a development to be welcomed where it embodied 'glorification not of the self but of the individual in general', but it was an entirely different matter when it took the form of 'infatuation with oneself' (Durkheim 1973). According to Dawe (1979: 391), Durkheim was centrally concerned 'with the creation of a truly moral individualism, as the necessary basis for moral solidarity, out of the egoistic individualism in terms of which he saw the society around him'. The former reinforced solidarity through the growth of awareness among people of their interdependence and mutual obligations in complex societies. The latter, by contrast, was the antithesis of altruism and other-regarding behaviour, and by taking the process of individuation too far was destructive of solidarity. Durkheim's view was underpinned by his belief that every person confronts 'a permanent tension between the demands of social life and those of his individual, organic nature' (Lukes 1985: 286) and that the latter needed to be kept in check.

In *The Division of Labour in Society*, the case for believing that '[v]ery often we happen to feel drawn to people who do not resemble us, precisely because they do *not* do so' (Durkheim 1984: 16, emphasis in original) is unconvincing. One of the reasons for this is that it is at odds with the extensive evidence of the weakness of solidarity in the 'abnormal forms' of the division of labour that are considered at the end of the book. Durkheim's discussion of the abnormal forms of the division of labour is an acknowledgement that it is by

no means inevitable that the emergence of new forms of social solidarity based on difference will replace the old ones based on similarity. Having recognized that the development of the division of labour could in practice be accompanied by social division, disorganization and conflict, Durkheim went on to devote much of the rest of his career to the analysis of how social solidarity might be promoted in the modern context. In the Preface to the second edition of *The Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim (1984: liv) flagged up the importance of civil society in this respect: '[a] nation cannot be maintained unless, between the state and individuals, a whole range of secondary groups are interposed. These must be close enough to the individual to attract him to their activities and, in so doing, to absorb him into the mainstream of social life'. He suggested, for example, that occupational associations that linked employers and employees in groups of related industries had the potential to act as a bridge between the individual and society as a whole. This role could be enhanced if they went beyond narrowly economic matters and adopted further responsibilities relating to such things as 'pensions, welfare, culture and recreation' (Bryant 1976: 86). He was careful to note, however, that on their own such associations would not reverse social disintegration if unfair inequalities between rich and poor people persist, since these produce a forced division of labour which runs counter to the ethos of individualism.

Durkheim saw occupational associations as in important respects similar to the family as an institution through which social solidarity could be effected. Family ties are an illuminating element of his account of social solidarity, since he represented them as relationships that need to be enduring if they are to be effective in directing and controlling individual members. Treating the family as a prime example of 'a group of individuals who have drawn close to one another in the body politic through a very specially close community of ideas, feelings and interests', Durkheim (1984) could describe it as 'a kind of complete society' in miniature. Among these family ties, the 'marital solidarity' present between spouses was attributed by Durkheim to the way in which their sexual division of labour embodied their 'mutual dependence'. He treated the sexual division of labour between spouses as mutually beneficial and also functional for the wider society, even though it was not an egalitarian arrangement but part of an 'order of domination' (Gane 1992: 85) in which men's position within the domestic hierarchy was superior to that of women. The most important characteristic of the division of labour for Durkheim (1984: 17) was that it serves 'to create between two or more people a feeling of solidarity', and he took the evolution of the sexual division of labour as a telling demonstration of this point. He was aware of the fact that family relations could in practice come to be 'maintained at the expense of women' (Sydie 1987: 24), but his account nevertheless treated a wife's subordination to her husband as 'a necessary condition of family unity' (Durkheim 1980: 20). The argument that there existed a 'natural' basis for such inequality was considered but it proved difficult to sustain, not least because it was at odds with what Durkheim wrote elsewhere about individualism. He was, however, reluctant to pursue the alternative explanation framed in terms of unequal

power which more radical writers of the time (including early feminists) promulgated. Organic solidarity for Durkheim involved a positive attraction between individuals conscious of their interdependence, and was quite distinct from the forced division of labour and forced solidarity to which powerless individuals would acquiesce only because of the absence of alternatives.

These debates over the family serve to highlight more general issues regarding social solidarity. Durkheim's approach aligned him with the tradition of thought that treated family solidarity as enduring to the extent that family members placed commitment to the group ahead of rational calculation of individual interests. Durkheim's work has some similarities to Tönnies's treatment of the family as the epitome of *gemeinschaft*, and neither writer was confident about the prospects of family solidarity surviving into the future. Durkheim (1970) was conscious of various social and economic forces that were working to undermine 'the indivisibility which was once the family's strength', and Tönnies (1955) was particularly mindful of the corrosive effects of women's employment that made them 'enlightened, cold-hearted, conscious'. Tönnies likened this development to the growth of class consciousness among the working class, and in this respect his position was closer to that of Marx than that of Durkheim. What is at issue here is the way in which Durkheim's approach prioritized the unity of the whole and played down the issue of subordination within the entity under consideration (be it family, society or any other collectivity). Lehmann (1993: 9) may be overstating the case to say that 'Durkheim does not discuss the differences of race, class and sex (or sexuality)', but she is correct in pointing to his approach having serious problems in its treatment of hierarchies within collectivities. Other writers of the time attached considerably more importance to internal divisions within families and societies, and their greater awareness of the potential for difference to generate conflict rather than consensus produced a contrasting perspective on social solidarity.

Social solidarity and social divisions

When considering the intellectual legacy bequeathed by Hobbes in the form of his problem of order, it is possible to trace several other lines of response besides that leading to Durkheim. McDonald (1994: 21), for example, has detailed the on-going engagement with Hobbes in the writings of 'the women founders of the social sciences', among whom there was a notable 'stress on positive social bonds', which she argues continues to inform contemporary feminism's support for collective welfare provision. In addition, by criticizing what Sydie (1987) has called 'the assumptions about the nature of human nature' as 'sex-blind', feminists posed in stark relief the question of whose solidarity was under discussion. The way in which the debate about the relationship between the individual and society was set up often overlooked important differences between the positions of men and women. This matters because taking men as a norm can transform women into 'minor subjects'

(Gane 1992: 106) in the analysis of social relationships, or it can even make them effectively invisible by treating them as an unacknowledged 'other'.

A similar point was made by Marx and Engels about social class differences, since it was evident to them that class position had a strong influence on how an individual fitted into relationships of solidarity. Solidarity entails different things depending on whether an individual occupies a superior or subordinate position within a mode of production, and they regarded it as misleading to refer to individuals as abstract entities, separate from their class situations that might endow them with distinctive interests. Such analyses led directly to questions about the desirability of solidarity where it reproduces systematic inequalities by stifling change, and much of Marx and Engels's work was devoted to the analysis of how solidarity comes to be channelled in particular directions. In turn, the focus on class solidarity rather than the solidarity of whole societies was subjected to critical scrutiny by Weber, whose research led him to regard 'status groups as agencies of collective action that serve as alternatives to class-oriented action' (Parkin 1982: 99). Simmel, too, questioned the merit of focusing on solidarity at the abstract levels of 'society' or 'class', and a major thrust of his analysis was that solidarities are often forged most intensely among smaller groups, especially where other individuals or groups constitute a recognizable enemy. In different ways, what all of these approaches emphasize is that social solidarity is frequently constructed around the domination or exclusion of others. What Weber (1978: 342) called 'the closure of social and economic opportunities to *outsiders*' (emphasis in original) is something which the method of looking beyond the generality of the individual–society relationship revealed to be an important aspect of social solidarity.

The recognition that the issue of solidarity concerns the individual's relationship not only to 'society' but also to other levels of social collectivity that may be in competition with each other broadens out the discussion of the Hobbesian 'problem of order'. Other classical sociologists attached greater importance than did Durkheim to what have been called 'the functions of social conflict' (Coser 1956), emphasizing in the process the unifying effect which having an opponent can have on a group. Marx and Engels (1969a: 63–5), for example, noted in *The German Ideology* that '[c]ompetition separates individuals one from another' and is corrosive of 'community', before going on to argue that '[t]he separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors'. Marx recognized that the extent to which individuals are united as members of social classes influences their capacity to control what happens in their lives, but he was well aware of how material circumstances can limit the scope for such unity. The analysis of the peasantry in mid-nineteenth century France that he offered highlighted that a common economic situation does not necessarily lead to effective class solidarity. As he described their situation in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, '[t]he small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations

with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse'. As a result, they form a collective entity only in the limited fashion that 'potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes'. All the while that 'the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class' (Marx and Engels 1969a: 478–9). The acknowledgement by Marx and Engels that class solidarity was not an inevitable outcome of people having class interests in common highlighted the need to explore what precisely solidarity is founded upon and what processes operate to sustain it.

Marx and Engels's identification of the potential for solidarity to emerge among the workers of the world is framed in terms of shared interests, but the specification of interests is by no means straightforward (Barnes 1995). Marx indicated as much by distinguishing between different types of interests (Barbalet 1983). Class consciousness tends to promote solidarity through the recognition that '[b]y acting together the members of a class can obtain more than they could by acting in isolation' (Elster 1985: 347), but there is no guarantee that individuals will put class interests first. Where people take a purely selfish stance, there is a constant danger that '[t]he common interest is appreciated by each only so long as he gains more by it than without it' (Marx 1959: 194). There are clear parallels here with Durkheim's point about the unstable basis for solidarity that interests provide and the need for some element of altruism or of the coercion inherent in forced solidarity if solidary relationships are to be sustainable (Pearce 1989). In addition, as Mills (1963: 113) has noted, 'the fact is that men are often concerned with temporary rather than long-run interests, and with particular interests, of occupational trades, for example, rather than the more general interests of their class'. Even when class interests are readily identifiable, it is not a foregone conclusion that people will put these ahead of other interests that they may have.

Awareness of points like this led Weber to reject the idea that class interests had the overriding significance as a basis for solidaristic action that Marx attributed to them. According to Barnes (1995: 173), 'Weber was content to take class as just one potential basis for collective action, and one that might or might not become actual'. Indeed, it might be regarded as less rather than more likely to occur given Weber's conception of economic action as 'the antithesis of solidarity, of collective action for a common cause or of altruistic self-sacrifice' (Albrow 1990: 265). Weber worked from the premise that people's conduct was directly governed by 'material and ideal interests' (in Gerth and Mills 1970: 280) and thus operated with a much wider sense of the potential bases of solidarity. His sociology of religion is replete with instances of how 'shared religious ideas' can 'serve as a bulwark of group cohesion' (Bendix 1966: 87), for example. Weber's analysis of 'communal and associative relationships' drew on Tönnies's distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, since the contrast between solidarity based on tradition and emotion and solidarity based on rationality was one that Weber sought to develop. Of the two, communal relationships derive their strength from the fact that

they are 'based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together'. In addition to noting that the family typified communal relationships, he cited an extremely diverse set of examples: 'a religious brotherhood, an erotic relationship, a relation of personal loyalty, a national community, the *espirit de corps* of a military unit' (Weber 1978: 40–41). Such relationships may be open or closed to outsiders, but it was the process of social closure that had greater significance in Weber's analysis of solidarity because of its greater relevance to his concern with the distribution of power and the reproduction of inequalities and domination (Parkin 1979; Murphy 1988).

Weber suggested that what Marx and Engels observed about solidarity among class members being strengthened by the identification of a recognizable opponent may be a feature of interest groups more generally. In any circumstances where competition exists for a scarce resource, it can be expected that one group will take an 'externally identifiable characteristic of another group of (actual or potential) competitors – race, language, religion, local or social origin, descent, residence, etc. – as a pretext for attempting their exclusion. It does not matter which characteristic is chosen in the individual case: whatever suggests itself most easily is seized upon'. In turn, such closure 'may provoke a corresponding reaction on the part of those against whom it is directed' (Weber 1978: 342), with the implication that collective identities may quite possibly be modified or reinforced over time. Social closure is thus a feature of 'categorical inequality' (Tilly 1998: 7) and class is but one of many potential categories around which solidarity may be mobilized. One of the things which led Weber to question how far social closure would take place around class differences was his awareness that people do not always perceive the world in terms of abstract notions like class, as Giddens (1971) has noted. Thus, Weber (1978: 931) observed, 'It is not the rentier, the share-holder and the banker who suffer the ill will of the worker, but almost exclusively the manufacturer and the business executives who are the direct opponents of workers in wage conflicts'. He therefore felt it more likely that collective identities would develop against opponents who are visible and confronted directly than they would against more abstract macro-level entities such as classes.

The move away from the problem of order couched in terms of the relationship between the individual and society was taken further still in the work of Simmel. In his analysis, Simmel stressed the diversity of social processes that unite people and of the social forms that this unity can take. He drew various instances from everyday life to illustrate the general point that a 'whole gamut of relations' exists 'that may be momentary or permanent, conscious or unconscious, ephemeral or of grave consequence', but which all 'incessantly tie men together' (in Wolff 1964: 10). The interests which bring people together were described in similarly broad terms by Simmel, yet despite being based on different foundations and expressed in different forms, it was quite possible to identify common patterns in the way that particular types of social relationships operated. Thus 'inner solidarity coupled with exclusiveness

toward the outside' could be found 'in the state, in a religious community, in a band of conspirators, in an economic association, in an art school, in the family' (in Wolff 1964: 22). By this reasoning, Simmel suggested that much could be learned about group dynamics from studying how any one of these operated. According to Simmel, group identity is particularly strong in secret societies because there one finds unusual clarity about the boundary between insiders and outsiders and about the mutual obligations of members. Although they constitute an extreme example of group solidarity, secret societies shed light on the more general processes by which people come to be socialized into behaving appropriately in relation to others within a group hierarchy. Reciprocity among members of a secret society is reinforced through rituals which heighten their consciousness of what they have in common and of the mutual trust which ensues from their shared secret (Misztal 1996; Watier 1998).

Collins's (1994: 117) assessment of Simmel's contribution to the study of solidarity is that it can be reduced to the propositions that '[c]onflict sharpens the sense of group boundaries' and that 'groups often search for external enemies in order to maintain internal order'. There is considerably more to it than that, however, since Simmel was at pains to explain why so much significance should be attached to group boundaries in this way. Like many of his contemporaries, Simmel was very much aware of how the growth of a more individualistic culture signalled the end of the old order and heralded a more uncertain future. His view of the development of a money economy was that it sponsored 'the feeling of individual self-sufficiency', but at the same time the benefits of this liberation from personal dependence had to be set against the alienating effects of 'the complete heartlessness of money' (Simmel 1978: 298, 346). As a result, social relationships come to be at risk of losing much of their meaning, and it is against this background of ambiguity and uncertainty that the attraction of exclusive social groups that offer a more positive identity must be seen. The impersonality and fragmentation of life which are inherent in modernity and which have been taken furthest in the modern metropolis represented a paradoxical development for Simmel because, as Coser (1965: 11) expressed it, '[s]ociety allows the emergence of individuality and autonomy, but it also impedes it'. The approach that Simmel adopted was distinctive in important respects, but the underlying problem that he addressed was a familiar one to the classical sociologists of his generation (Nisbet 1970).

The commonalities and differences to be found in what the classical sociologists wrote about social solidarity are worth drawing together at this point. All were aware that they were living through a period of transformation in which traditional social arrangements were being re-cast, and that this necessitated paying attention to the implications of these changes for social order. In their analyses of change, they frequently made use of stark comparisons such as those between militant and industrial societies, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, and mechanical and organic solidarities. The process of individualization is a common theme in these accounts, although important differences exist between explanations of how and why this has come about. The linkage

between individualization and the development of the division of labour is given prominence in several accounts, while others point to the influence of processes like secularization, urbanization, democratization, the development of the modern state and the development of capitalism. Assessments of the implications for social solidarity of these changes are correspondingly diverse, although they all in some way confront the tension between nature and rationality which Everingham (1994), in her discussion of Tönnies's work, identifies as 'the paradox of modernity'.

Opinions varied among the classical sociologists about whether individualization was better understood as liberation from oppressive constraints or herald of alienation, anomie and social fragmentation, although in general the mood of optimism was replaced by one of pessimism as the nineteenth century wore on (Hughes 1974). Opinions varied, too, on what might be done in response to these developments. Rose (1999: 79) has traced how sociological ideas fed into interventionist politics which 'tried to re-invent community governmentally' on the assumption that 'the bonds of solidarity could be rendered *technical*, that is to say, made amenable to a technique' (emphasis in original). He refers to Durkheim as 'intimately involved in the French politics of solidarism' (Rose 1999: 118), and while others have played down this association (Lukes 1975; Bryant 1976), Durkheim's work undoubtedly offers a rationale for the active promotion of civil society. Other positions were more backward-looking in seeking to restore elements of the old order, or more radical in their assessment of what needed to change, or sceptical of the role of political interventions. Underpinning these arguments lay more fundamental disagreements about the nature and purpose of social solidarity. Debates about whether solidarity is better regarded as a rational or non-rational phenomenon, the level at which it operates, and whether it is always desirable were by no means resolved by sociology's founding figures. Nonetheless, the power of their analyses is indicated by the influence that they continue to have on current thinking.

Social Solidarity. Durkheim was primarily interested in what holds society together when it is made up of people with specialized roles and responsibilities. In The Division of Labor in Society, Durkheim provides an answer by turning to an external indicator of solidarityâ€"the lawâ€"to uncover two types of social solidarity, mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Social Solidarity is how individuals feel connected and united with one another and to the society as whole. According to Emile Durkheim, social solidarity is based on, â€œsocial regulationâ€ and â€œsocial integrationâ€. Social regulation is based on three components, 1) number of rules; which individuals have to follow in the society it can be social, cultural and legal rules, 2) Enforcement of Durkheim, social solidarity needs to be underpinned by shared collective. representations. As the authors in the present Special Issue note, Durkheim (1898) drew on his. Â social solidarity through challenging the assumptions of self-protection imbued in. social representations. Finally, the link between social representations of an imagined.