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Solidarity exclusions: Problematizing kinship and humanitarianism from the perspective of transnational adoption

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Abstract

What is, or should be, the role of solidarity within the (transnationally adoptive) family? In Spain, *solidaridad* is a prized value in family life, political organization, and humanitarian action, yet adoption professionals actively discouraged its use as a motivation for transnational adoption. This article offers a genealogy of the concept of *solidaridad*, a consideration of its enduring currency in kinship discourse in Spain, and a critical analysis of case studies from our respective research projects. We show that kinship and humanitarianism are considered very differently in terms of their temporalities and entailments—the terms, and specificities, of their engagements. We argue that *solidaridad*'s multivocality within the transnational adoptive family context has broader significance for kinship, both adoptive and nonadoptive, as well as for social and political engagement across inequality. *Solidaridad*'s exclusions from transnational adoption reveal how kinship and humanitarianism both involve the work of identifying, accommodating, and resolving social difference. [*adoption, humanitarianism, kinship, law, Spain*]

Resumen

¿Cuál es, o debería ser, el rol de la solidaridad en la familia (adoptiva transnacional)? En España, la solidaridad es un preciado valor familiar, político y humanitario, pero se desaconseja como motivación para adoptar transnacionalmente. Este artículo ofrece una genealogía del concepto de solidaridad, evidencia su permanencia en el lenguaje del parentesco y analiza críticamente casos provenientes de nuestras investigaciones. Así, constatamos que parentesco y humanitarismo son considerados diferentes por sus temporalidades e implicaciones -y por los términos y especificidades de sus compromisos. Una multivocalidad de la solidaridad evidente en la familia adoptiva transnacional que confiere, a través de la desigualdad, un significado más amplio al parentesco, adoptivo y no adoptivo, y a los compromisos sociopolíticos. Asimismo, la exclusión de la solidaridad de la adopción transnacional revela cómo el parentesco y el humanitarismo requieren de un trabajo de identificación, acomodación y resolución de la diferencia social. [*adopción, humanitarismo, parentesco, legislación, España*]

Riassunto

Qual è o quale dovrebbe essere il ruolo della solidarietà all'interno della famiglia (adottiva transnazionale)? In Spagna, "solidaridad" è un prezioso concetto familiare, politico e umanitario, ma viene scoraggiata come motivazione per l'adozione transnazionale. Questo articolo offre una genealogia sul concetto di "solidaridad", la sua forte presenza nel linguaggio sulla parentela in Spagna e un'analisi critica di "case studies" tratti dalle nostre ricerche. Così riscontriamo che parentela e umanitarismo sono considerati molto diversi per la loro temporalità e implicazioni—oltre che per la durata e la specificità dei loro obblighi. La nostra convinzione è che le diverse definizioni di "solidaridad" per quanto riguarda la famiglia adottiva transnazionale offrono un significato più ampio alla parentela, sia adottiva che non, e agli obblighi sociopolitici assunti contro l'ineguaglianza. Allo stesso modo, l'esclusione della "solidaridad" dall'adozione transnazionale rivela come parentela e umanitarismo richiedano un lavoro di identificazione, armonizzazione e risoluzione delle differenze sociali. [*adozione*, *settore umanitario*, *parentela*, *legislazione*, *Spagna*]

Résumé

Quel est, ou devrait être, le rôle de la solidarité dans la famille (adoptive transnationale)? En Espagne, la solidaridad est une importante valeur familiale, politique et humanitaire, mais elle est déconseillée comme motivation pour l'adoption transnationale. Cet article propose une généalogie du concept de solidaridad, une réflexion sur sa pérennité dans le discours de la parenté et une analyse critique des études de cas issus de nos recherches. La parenté et l'humanitarisme sont différenciés dans leurs temporalités et leurs implications—et dans les termes et spécificités de leurs engagements. Nous soutenons qu'une multivocalité de la solidaridad dans le contexte de la famille adoptive transnationale confère une signification plus large à la parenté, adoptive ou non, ainsi qu'à l'engagement politique et social face aux inégalités. L'exclusion de la solidaridad de l'adoption transnationale révèle que la parenté et l'humanitaris'e nécessitent l'identification, 'accommodation et la résolution de la différence sociale. [*adoption, humanitarisme, parenté, loi, Espagne*]

Resum

Quin és, o hauria de ser, el rol de la solidaritat en la família (adoptiva transnacional)? A Espanya, la solidaritat és un preuat valor familiar, polític i humanitari, però no és aconsellable com a motivació per adoptar transnacionalment. Aquest article ofereix una genealogia del concepte de solidaritat, evidencia la seva permanència en el llenguatge del parentiu i analitza críticament casos provinents de les nostres investigacions. Així, constatem que parentiu i humanitarisme són considerats molt diferents per les seves temporalitats i implicacions -i pels termes i especificitats dels seus compromisos. Una multivocalitat de la solidaritat evident en la família adoptiva transnacional que confereix, a través de la desigualtat, un significat més ampli al parentiu, adoptiu i no adoptiu, i als compromisos sociopolítics. A més, l'exclusió de la solidaritat de l'adopció transnacional revela com el parentiu i el humanitarisme requereixen d'un treball d'identificació, acomodació i resolució de la diferència social. [*adopció, humanitarisme, parentiu, legislació, Espanya*]

INTRODUCTION

In a government-supported publication instructing Spanish adoption professionals how to evaluate transnational adoption applicants, the author—psychology professor Jesús Palacios (2007, 34)—recommends assessing whether a couple "demonstrates capacity to address difficult and demanding situations or conflicts with togetherness and *solidaridad*." The term *solidaridad*, which is glossed in English as "solidarity," currently has a double meaning in Spanish: "situational alliance or association with the cause or interest of others" and "responsibility *in solidum*," that is, "for the whole."[1] In Palacios's text, *solidaridad* represents (positive) collaboration and mutual support in a family context. However, Palacios's document later warns professionals that one sign of risk is if prospective parents present "motivations for [transnational] adoption that are centered in . . . humanitarianism and/or feelings of *solidaridad* to save a child by removing him/her from his/her country" (Palacios 2007, 93; see also Berástegui 2003, 94). Here, *solidaridad* is (negatively) regarded as a synonym for humanitarianism. Rather than a disagreement between different perspectives, this document reveals an unresolved tension emerging from the ambiguous, though critical, weight placed on *solidaridad* as a factor used to determine a family's suitability.

This tension surrounding *solidaridad* as a key motivation for transnational adoption in Spain emerges not only in the discourse of adoption professionals but also in contrasting prospective parents' narratives against those of adoption specialists. *Solidaridad* is discursively disallowed as a motivation to adopt by professionals whose job it is to assess potential transnational adopters in Spain (Jociles 2013). In conversations with Marre, psychologists who evaluated the suitability of prospective transnational adoptive parents described their view as: "If you want to be solidary with kids from the Third World, contribute to Vicente Ferrer's NGO." Ferrer was a Catalan Jesuit and

humanitarian, well known in Spain; the website of his NGO states, "If you'd like to get to know our work in person, we invite you to visit Anantapur [India] and discover the result of your commitment and solidarity."[2] In accordance with this view, adoption workers in Spain coach applicants to "exclude [*solidaridad*] from their speech" (Jociles and Charro 2008, 115) in an attempt to formally de-link transnational adoption from "rescuing."[3]

At the same time, as we found in separate ethnographic research projects, many prospective transnational adoptive parents in Spain express motivations to adopt that can be glossed as *solidaridad*. They want to "help" through adoption, often saying so obliquely, as did one mother who expressed to Marre that abandoned children are a result of poverty, or another mother who told Marre that "When you're there [in Ethiopia], and you see everything you see there, you think: 'Why not adopt an older child?'" More broadly, "helping" through adoption is positively regarded across Spain. When sociologist Maria José Rodríguez Jaume (2018) speculatively surveyed a random sample of over 3,700 Spanish people about what could motivate them to adopt, 95.4 percent indicated a desire for "helping children have a different life." And Thoilliez Ruano (2010), who analyzed "solidarity stories" solicited for a contest from children across Spain, found that children consider solidarity to be actual, personalized help to real persons—and that adoption was figured as a "happy ending" (see also Efe 2009).

As anthropologists, we view this tension as a question: What is, or should be, the role of *solidaridad* within the (transnationally adoptive) family? To resolve this question, our article examines *solidaridad* (and its absence) as an ethnographic object, while also engaging with the ways scholars have turned toward the concept for analytic purchase. By bringing together a genealogy of the concept of *solidaridad*, a historical account of *solidaridad*'s enduring currency in discourses

surrounding transnational adoption in Spain, and a critical analysis of relevant case studies drawn from our respective research projects, we argue that *solidaridad*'s multivocality within the transnational adoptive family context results in adoptive families being measured by a different standard than nonadoptive families. This reifies a distinction that can potentially harm adoptive families and exclude *solidaridad* as an active resource for producing kinship. But we also show that *solidaridad*'s multivocality has broader significance for kinship, both adoptive and nonadoptive, as well as for social and political engagement across inequality. An analysis of *solidaridad*'s exclusions from transnational adoption reveals how kinship and humanitarianism both involve the work of identifying, accommodating, and resolving social difference.

Solidaridad's multivocality has been particularly remarked upon in the Southern European context. For example, in Greece, ethnographers report tensions between a class-based concept of horizontal solidarity and liberal-humanitarian notions of aid expressed as solidarity (e.g., Theodossopoulos 2016, 167; Fassin 2012, 3). Similarly, in Italy, Muehlebach (2012, 180) identifies "a free labor regime that extracts solidarity as one of its most precious resources." In these contexts, as "structural transformation, anti-imperialism, and revolution have, in many instances, been erased from the meaning of solidarity" (Gill 2009, 668), something new has resulted: a bundle of contradictory expressions, a "blur[ring] of semantic boundaries" (Theodossopoulos 2016, 170), a concept that refers to both horizontal support and humanitarian provision. In short, across Southern Europe and perhaps farther afield, solidarity is "a highly mobile trope that circulates across various social and political domains" (Muehlebach 2012, 171).[4]

In its reproductive iteration, from the 1990s to the present, transnational adoption is not officially promoted as a solidarity initiative. However, it regularly draws from the motivations and

discourses that popular solidarity movements do. Indeed, the Spanish press often frames celebrity transnational adoptions as a form of *solidaridad*. In 2008, *Tiempo de Hoy* featured eight Spanish public figures who adopted transnationally in a piece titled "The *solidaridad* of the stars" (Parra 2008; see also Bystrom 2011; Willing 2009; van Wichelen 2018, 3). This trope of *solidaridad* is criticized in more prosaic noncelebrity international adoptions, as illustrated in Berástegui's (2010, 25) assessment that international adoption solidarity is "impulsive . . . sentimental . . . a solidarity that renounces structural solutions."

We argue that *solidaridad* is excluded from motivations for transnational adoption because its humanitarian overtones of temporary amelioration of suffering clash problematically with kinship's temporalities of permanence (Ouellette 2009). The premise behind this opposition is that kinship is (or should be) permanent because it is (or should be) unconditional. Participants in adoptive kinship often understand it to be patently produced, and hence regard it as more tenuous and less "natural" than biogenetic kinship (see McKinnon 2015, 465; van Wichelen 2018, 22). As a result, they are careful to firmly distinguish adoption from anything considered temporary, like (humanitarian) *solidaridad*. The bonds of adoption are understood to be so precarious and contrary to the nature of "real kinship" that motivations grounded in a temporary orientation of circumstantial affiliation cannot sustain them. In short, the weight of kinship's "enduring" solidarity is particularly pressing in adoptive kinship, where the fault lines of kinship are heightened: there is a sense in which adoptive kinship requires other (birth) kinship relationships to falter. It also requires deliberate and explicit "kinning" (Howell 2003) to appear "given" and "natural."

In the remainder of this article, written in the shadow of the "bust" of transnational adoption in Spain (Selman 2012), we first present the context of transnational adoption in Spain in

its relation to principles of *solidaridad*. Second, we review *solidaridad* more broadly within the ethnographic context of contemporary Spain, drawing on anthropological kinship theory and scholarship on humanitarianism. Finally, we examine our ethnographic and textual examples from fieldwork in Spain at the turn of the twenty-first century to demonstrate how and why transnational adoption is at different moments linked to and de-linked from *solidaridad.* Our ethnographic analysis shows that kinship and humanitarianism are conceptualized to unfold along very different temporalities (long versus short term) and entailments (specific and personalized versus generalized and anonymous). The result is that as humanitarianism and selfishness are formally opposed in the sphere of parenting, a parent's personal desire for a child is foregrounded over any form of solidarity toward the child (and by extension, their birth kin, community, or nation). When kinship and humanitarianism are overlaid through transnational adoption's problematized "rescue" history and complex forms of family making, the ideological prioritization of enduring (kinship) ties over ephemeral (humanitarian) ones both produces family connection and excludes *solidaridad* as a resource for its reproduction.

In mapping the contours of *solidaridad*, we draw on our analysis of texts produced and used in the world of transnational adoption and on our many years of ethnographic research about transnational adoption in Spain. The two of us have conducted research on transnational adoption in Madrid and Catalonia, the two regions of Spain with the largest numbers of transnationally adopted people. Although we recognize that Spain is a contested term, and that many of Marre's Catalan participants do not identify as "Spanish," each region handles transnational adoption in substantially similar ways within the administrative and legal framework of the Spanish state. Leinaweaver's research focuses on adoption in Madrid of Latin American children within a context of Latin

American migration to Spain (Leinaweaver 2013a, 11–14). Marre's research examines assisted reproduction in Catalonia, comparing assisted reproductive technologies, transnational adoption, and surrogacy (Marre, San Román, and Guerra 2018). For this article, we have selected the most illustrative quotes from interviews, studies, and news sources. These quotes are therefore not directly representative of the fuller samples; however, our analysis shows that the absence of the term *solidaridad* in much of the rest of our data is not indicative of its unimportance as a theme. As some of the quotes below show, our respondents spoke about actions and sentiments they align with *solidaridad* without necessarily using that term. This might be (in part) because, as we have suggested, the term itself is considered problematic, and in extreme cases, its use can even jeopardize the much-desired assignment of a child in adoption.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION IN SPAIN

Transnational adoption's emergence as a global phenomenon, and more recently in Spain, has drawn on notions of solidarity in ways that at times are seen as problematic and other times as productive. Transnational adoption is often said to have begun after World War II, in response to a new population of children at risk: the progeny of European and North American soldiers and Asian women (Oh 2015).[5] This moment was "characterized by an internationalist mood that moved the imagination of cosmopolitan solidarity into formal international law and global governance" around child welfare (van Wichelen 2018, 2–3). A second key period was the "boom," a time of growth in the 1990s that saw both the fall of Ceaușescu, sparking multiple adoptions from Romania (Kligman 1992), and the opening of China's adoption program shortly thereafter, associated with its population policies (Dorow 2006). Transnational adoption's growth is related not only to global

politics and national policies but also to a larger history of fertility decline across the European Union and farther afield (cf. Sobotka 2004), a "trend of fertility postponement [that] has occurred at the same time that parenting has become increasingly intensive" (Marre, San Román, and Guerra 2018, 160; Alvarez and Marre 2021).

However, in Spain, transnational adoption's appearance as a method of family formation was "delayed" due to almost 40 years of dictatorship, during which secrecy predominated in politicized and weaponized forced adoptions (Marre and Gaggiotti 2021; Marre and Leinaweaver, forthcoming). Shortly after Franco's death and the transition to democracy, in the 1980s, a flurry of important changes to family law occurred; subsequently, transnational adoptions to Spain began only in the mid-1990s. It peaked in 2004, when Spain had one of the highest transnational adoption rates in the world, as well as one of the world's lowest birth rates (Leinaweaver and Marre 2022, 620–21; Marre 2011). This peak was followed by a sharp and dramatic decline, as was the case for transnational adoption worldwide (Selman 2012).

The 1993 Hague Convention (Article 6) regulating transnational adoption requires that state parties designate a "central authority" but allows federal states to appoint more than one such authority.[6] The extreme regional autonomy that characterizes the Spanish political context, in part a reaction against Franco-era centralism, resulted in nearly two-dozen "central authorities"—one per "autonomous community" (Leinaweaver 2013a, 32)—loosely held together by communication with the national government's social services bureau. Transnational adoptions also work in accordance with the government's "central authority" in the child's origin country, and if desired, with private agencies.[7]

Participants trace the origins of transnational adoption in Spain to the October 19, 1995 Spanish broadcast of Channel 4's documentary *The Dying Rooms* (Blewet and Woods 1995), which used hidden cameras to reveal the living conditions in Chinese orphanages (Marre 2004).[8] The film's broadcast activated the "moral sentiments" that, per Fassin (2012, 1), "link affects with values [and] sensitivity with altruism" and that are "an essential force in contemporary politics." In 2000, recalling the broadcast of this documentary, the president of a Catalan association of China-adoptive families described how their phone lines were overloaded by the sheer number of families calling to ask how to adopt "one of those girls." Transnational adoption in Spain originated alongside that intense yearning to help vulnerable children. Twenty years later, the journalist Myriam Redondo (2015) wrote that "the most notable effect of the Channel 4 documentary was that it generated a wave of *solidaridad* in the form of international adoptions." In Spain, then, transnational adoption was initially conceptualized as a form of "helping," or *solidaridad*.

This framing was facilitated, if not ensured, by its demographic and sociological elements. Firstly, transnational adopters in Spain are always at least middle class, a conditioned imposed by the requirement to be able to economically support an adopted child. Adoption legislation interpellates adoptive parents as middle class through phrases like "financial suitability" or the presumption that one has a home available for the requisite "home study" (Leinaweaver, Marre, and Frekko 2017, 567). Reproduction is seen as desirable but prohibitively expensive in Spain (Marre, San Román, and Guerra 2018, 158). Consequently, by the time financial stability permits parenthood, assisted reproduction—including transnational adoption—is often the only pathway to an already costly parenthood, and it is a costly pathway. Thus, adoption becomes an index of the transnational adopters' financial security, among other class indicators. The urgency of disentangling economy and

affect requires that this element of adoption be downplayed, which is one possible explanation for the exclusion of solidarity as an index of inequality across relatedness.

Significantly, transnational adoption has been used as a proxy for a regional or national ethos of *solidaridad*. In 2003, at the height of Spain's transnational adoption boom, Catalan regional president Jordi Pujol inaugurated an adoption conference that Marre attended. At the conference, Pujol pointed to Catalonia's transnational adoption rates as evidence of its people's *solidaridad*:

> Adoption in Catalonia is twice that of Madrid, it's also greater than in Sweden, which is also a very open country. . . . We haven't paid enough attention to family, it isn't modern but it is an extremely important element of cohesion and *solidaridad*. Unemployment in Spain is twice that of England but is more bearable here because the family helps sustain you. It is the site of *solidaridad*. Even if you're a slacker [*vago*] you'll still have food, a bed, and care in your household. . . . We are very grateful to the countries that give us their children and we want to help them in return.

This lengthy excerpt illustrates how in public discourse during the transnational adoption boom in Spain, *solidaridad* as humanitarian or foreign aid could be held closely alongside *solidaridad* as a core element of kinship.[9]

Pujol's contention that the family "is the site of *solidaridad*" aligns with scholars who identify *solidaridad* as an important element of intergenerational relations in Southern Europe. For example, demographer David Reher (1998, 216) notes that "in Spain, the essential mechanisms of familial solidarity stipulate that the family group protect its members from the vagaries of economic and employment cycles, and thus the social implications of unemployment tend to be hidden, at

least in part, within the family." The Spanish sociologist Gerardo Meil Landwerlin (2011, 134) shows that the forms family solidarity take include high levels of co-residence and "residential proximity" among generations, drawing on surveys from the 1990s that found that 75 percent of the Spanish population over the age of 30 saw non-coresident relatives at least once a week. A more recent representative sociological survey of households across Spain found that 75 percent of respondents asserted that they had received economic aid from a family member (Martínez Virto 2014, 4). Meil Landwerlin (2000, 148) also observes that, particularly in moments of precarity, "family solidarity has acted as a powerful instrument of social stabilization, and an institution of social protection on a large scale, or, in the words of Julio Iglesias de Ussel (1998), as Spain's best Ministry of Social Affairs." Indeed, the ongoing economic crisis in Spain (2008–present) has been an opportunity for Spanish scholars to reflect on the role of family solidarity, noting, for example, that families in Spain have survived on the pensions of grandparents (Bazo 2008, 76; Bayona 2017).

This notion of *solidaridad* as central to kinship is also present in statements such as a comment made in an internet forum by an adoptive mother from Asturias (recorded by Marre in 2003), which states that the family is made "not of genes, blood, and roots, but rather the love, respect, and solidarity that each member gives and receives." Interestingly, while Pujol seasoned his speech with a local theory of kinship as an element of *solidaridad*, he also implicitly conflated gratitude for a child with an openness to provide foreign aid through the statement "We are very grateful to the countries that give us their children and we want to help them in return." Pujol's observations regarding internal family *solidaridad* and his discursive linking of transnational adoption to external political *solidaridad* articulate *solidaridad*'s multivocality. That is, as we trace in

the next section, *solidaridad* can be aligned with kinship and humanitarianism simultaneously, a slippage with significant implications and outcomes.

MULTIPLE SOLIDARITIES: KINSHIP AND HUMANITARIANISM

Solidaridad is a feminine noun in Spanish. The philosopher Alicia Villar Ezcurra (2004, 120–21) explains that the word comes from French, where it appeared in the seventeenth century. An early definition from the mid-nineteenth century aligns it with *mancomunidad*, defined as joint or common participation in carrying out something (Domínguez 1853, 1118). The term appears for the first time in the Real Academia Española (RAE) dictionary in 1869, in its eleventh edition; there, it is defined in the legal sense as "responsibility *in solidum*," that is, "for the whole." Not until 1914 does the RAE add a second definition, that of "situational alliance or association with the cause or interest of others." In 1992, this latter definition became the primary definition, as it still is today.[10] The double meaning of *solidaridad*, referencing both similarity/wholeness and alignment with others, also has conceptual roots in the Catholic "brotherhood of men," on one hand, and social charity, on the other (Muehlebach 2012, 170–71; Pérez Rodríguez de Vera 2007).

A central element of *solidaridad* is its reference to group identification (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 19) and common interests (Mohanty 2003, 522). This sense of the term is particularly evident in the way solidarity has been prized as a virtue in international leftist workers' associations over the past two centuries: relations of horizontality with others who share one's class identity, against exploitative owners (Gill 2009, 667; Maza Zorrilla 1997, 102). In such contexts, solidarity

suggests a feeling of similarity or mutuality against a common opposite. It is thus a powerful source and token of relatedness: a basic ingredient for kinship.

Anthropologists working in new kinship studies often signal the works of David M. Schneider, who drew on Lévi-Strauss, Durkheim, and Mauss to ground his discussion of interdependence and sociality. Schneider (1995, 220–21) wrote that, for anthropologists examining family life, "the bonds of solidarity are presupposed: 'kinship' is in its nature necessarily a solidary bond." He found a similar theme animating kinship in the United States: "enduring, diffuse solidarity" (Schneider [1968] 1980, 52). As he writes:

> Solidarity because the relationship is supportive, helpful, and cooperative; it rests on trust and the other can be trusted. Diffuse because it is not narrowly confined to a specific goal or a specific kind of behavior. . . . Two members of the family cannot be indifferent to one another, and since their cooperation does not have a specific goal or a specific limited time in mind, it is enduring (Schneider [1968] 1980, 52; see also Bloch 1973, 86).[11]

Schneider's intervention is often seen as having cleared the stage for the so-called new kinship studies to document, in conversation with feminist anthropology and science and technology studies, how the makings of family, which may or may not include solidarity as a central resource, are nonetheless always contextual, political, and emergent (e.g., Bamford 2019; Franklin and McKinnon 2001; McKinnon and Cannell 2013, 13).[12] While for Schneider solidarity invoked similarity, trust, and community, we find the process of producing those elements of kinship is often tense, fraught, and contested—as it is in humanitarian solidarity, as well.

For *solidaridad* is also a shorthand for humanitarian concern or outreach on a vertical—not horizontal—plane (Theodossopoulos 2016, 167). Such *solidaridad* is widely valued across Spain in a tremendous variety of contexts, such as high rates of blood, organ, gamete, and embryo donation (Figure 1).[13] Headlines like "*Solidaridad* from Murcia to heal Senegalese eyes" (Gil Ballesta 2019), about an ophthalmology NGO, provide evidence of this common usage of *solidaridad*. In pandemic times, the national health ministry's communication strategy to reduce "vaccine resistance" invokes solidarity: "If people understand that with their shot they can protect others in a solidary way, it may motivate someone who's unmotivated" (Salas 2020). In this register, *solidaridad* can be glossed as humanitarianism, a project "to improve aspects of the human condition by focusing on suffering and saving lives in times of crisis or emergency" (Ticktin 2014, 274; see also Malkki 2015). This humanitarian sense of *solidaridad* conveys an imbalance between those who express solidarity and those to whom it is expressed (Fassin 2007, 512).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Scholars have demonstrated how "in the aftermath of the Cold War . . . liberal humanitarianism has become central to global governance" (Beckett 2019, 161; see also Fassin 2007, 508). For example, in Spain, the jurist Peces-Barba Martínez (1991, 17), one of the authors of Spain's 1978 constitution, described *solidaridad* as "that humanitarianism that is a key dimension of the modern world." Ticktin (2017, 581) shows that within this sphere of modern global governance, "innocence" is conceptually framed as "an uncorrupted space of action" where the "new humanitarianism" can unfold, unsullied by the frustrations of politics (Beckett 2019, 162–63; Fassin 2007, 501). This framing of innocence, Ticktin argues, requires "a class of saviors" that—with power and knowledge—controls outcomes for the guileless (Ticktin 2017, 583; see also Beckett 2019, 161,

164). That these "saviors" reject politics "ignores the privilege that allows them to act—it is a refusal to acknowledge the structural inequalities that allow them to be humanitarians, witnesses, or saviors" (Ticktin 2017, 583; see also Beckett 2019, 164; Theodossopoulos 2016, 178).

In contemporary adoption scholarship, humanitarianism is a problem. As several scholars have argued, humanitarian rescue and salvation imagery obscures the role of colonial, neocolonial, and geopolitical processes in creating the inequalities that lead to child adoption (Briggs 2012; Cheney 2014, 255; Fonseca and Marre 2019; van Wichelen 2018, 35). As historian Dubinsky (2010, 77) notes with regard to transracial adoptions in Canada, "predominant rescue narratives privilege adoption as the only way to help or support marginalized black families . . . adoptions across the colour line began to look less like solidarity and more like cultural annihilation" (compare Bystrom 2011, 215; see also Mariner 2019).[14] In other words, framing adoption as doing good is a discursive strategy that harmfully erases how loss or extraction of children is damaging to minoritized communities. *Solidaridad*'s multivocality means it is conceptualized both as grounds for kinship and the basis for saviorism—suggesting both the inequalities and dependences inherent in kinship and the spirit of community and oneness promoted in humanitarianism.

SOLIDARIDAD **AND THE TEMPORALITIES OF TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTIVE KINSHIP**

Adoptive family members explicitly and implicitly refer to the role of *solidaridad* in motivations to adopt. In a conversation with Leinaweaver, a domestic-adoptive mother in Madrid critically observed that transnational adoption has "a component of solidarity, another component of adventure or exoticism, another component of travel, leaving and returning—all things that

domestic adoption doesn't have" (Leinaweaver 2013a, 93). The perspective of a 20-year-old male member of a European organization of adult adoptees was more explicitly critical. As he explained to Leinaweaver, "I don't have to live my life with gratitude—what kind of attachment are you going to create that way? At school they say you should pray for your mother, but I always thought I should pray for the NGO. Why didn't she go to Vietnam and do something in *solidaridad* if that's what she wanted to do?" (compare Yngvesson 2010, 116).

These accounts point to the idea that *solidaridad* involves "going somewhere" (else) and "doing something" (different)—actions that are limited in time and place. They are (framed as) targeted and momentary rather than long term and enduring, so they contrast with biogenetic models of kinship conceptualized, in Spain, as long-lasting. Jociles (2013, 214) makes a point about gratitude similar to that of the young adoptee Leinaweaver spoke with: "the delegitimization [of solidarity as a motivation for adoption], rather than challenge the (unproven) risk of adoption failure, has to do with unlinking the parent-child link from the gift/gratitude link" (see also Cheney 2013, 258; Dorow 2006, 62; Leinaweaver 2013a, 104; 2013b). *Solidaridad* can leave children and their parents in an awkward relationship of indebtedness, which goes directly against current depictions of middle-class parenting as different from other kinds of families (Leinaweaver 2013b). In other words, its exclusion is revealing of just how, in middle-class Spain, children are, or should be, connected to their parents: not through gratitude or debt, nor compassion or kindness, but through givenness, unconditionality, and permanence. *Solidaridad*'s exclusion reveals a theory of what kinship is, or ought to be (Sahlins 2011).

This carefully elaborated contrast between (transnational) adoption as kinship and solidarity as donation or volunteering grounds our contention that adoption professionals' resistance to

solidaridad arises from humanitarian solidarity's association with conditional, circumstantial, or temporary affiliations. A lens of temporality reveals that solidarity as a short-term gesture of humanitarian work (Bornstein 2009, 622; Ticktin 2014, 273) contrasts with the view of kinship as a long-term (if not perpetual) commitment. The permanence is symbolically associated with biogenetic kinship, yet biogenetic kinship links also require "reproduction," as phenomena like absent fathers or disownment illustrate.

(Re)producing kinship's permanence is acutely important when producing adoptive kinship, which in Spain and throughout Europe and North America is oriented by the principle of "as if," in which adopted children are (or should be) treated "as if" they were a biological/genetic child (Modell 1994). However, the catch behind the "as if" is that family members and professionals are all supposed to know that it is "as if" and not "is." In other words, adoptive links are (or should be) understood to be produced and created in ways that emulate biogenetic kinship links regarded as simply "given." That is, despite being constructed, adoptive links should embody a sense of "givenness" because it is precisely this "givenness" that is regarded as evidence of kinship. Somehow paradoxically, the construction of adoptive kinship involves its withholding of its own construction.

Another related element of humanitarian solidarity that clashes with kinship ideology is its generalized focus on the "distant suffering others" (Beckett 2019, 162–3; see also Redfield 2005, 330) and a kind of care that "is thin, spreading far and wide . . . without depth or intrinsic meaning" (Beckett 2019, 169). By contrast, a parent's care should not be thin, far, or wide—it should be focused on a particular and specific child, not diffused (but rather diffuse, in Schneider's sense). Thus, (adoptive) kinship is produced as specific to a particular child, rather than generalized, and

long term rather than short term in nature. These forms of temporality and location clash uncomfortably with local models of *solidaridad*.

As a final example—the exception that proves the rule—we should consider the unauthorized but common practice of transnational adoptees or their adoptive parents providing support or remittances to birth family members (Yngvesson 2010). This is unauthorized in the sense that contemporary transnational adoptions are required by the 1993 Hague Convention to be plenary—that is, formally severing parental rights. Yngvesson (2010, 168) writes of a young Afro-Colombian man who was adopted in Sweden and who now sends money to birth family members; he told her that "it isn't because I feel some kind of obligation out of gratitude, or that I have a bad conscience. It is more that I know they are poor and I feel that they are my family." Similarly, one of Marre's research participants, an adoptive mother from Barcelona, traveled twice with her husband and daughter (in her mid-20s at the time) to her daughter's Asian birth country, bringing new warm clothes to birth family members. She also provided economic assistance to birth family members so that they could study or begin entrepreneurial activities. Such remittances to kin are more often studied within transnational migration circuits, but they can also align with problematized practices, such as child sponsorship (Bornstein 2001), that are glossed as solidarity. The way some transnationally adoptive kin loop birth kin into circuits of support and giving resembles a form of humanitarian solidarity where the privileged extend aid to the poor. The difference here is that these relationships—however uncharted and anxiety-provoking they may be—are (understood to be) enduring, not temporary.

As we have seen, transnational adoption in Spain seems to require a rejection of *solidaridad*'s humanitarian temporalities of brevity in order to build up presumed long-term kinship links. In so doing, however, other dimensions of *solidaridad*, such as mutual aid and support, are excluded. Moreover, as the following examples show, the rejection of *solidaridad* often leads to the promotion of selfishness as evidence of and grounds for (what is perceived as true) kinship. At a public presentation on adoption in 2010 that Leinaweaver attended, Adopchina president Angels Grau told attendees that she didn't adopt out of *solidaridad*: "I don't feel that kind of *solidaridad*—the kind that I feel every month when I send money to the children I've sponsored." Rather, Grau explained, "adoption is a selfish sentiment of wanting a child." Here, Grau was explicitly drawing a line between *solidaridad* (as aid) and selfishness (as desire) (see also van Wichelen 2018, 24, 35). This reified contrast between solidarity/help and selfishness/desire suggests that desire is (or should be) fostered as a productive counterweight to humanitarian tendencies because it is considered a longer-term resource. From this perspective, it seems as though (long-term) actions in one's own interest are preferred over (short-term) actions for the sake of others.

The tension between the desire to be a parent and the expression of *solidaridad* was explained to Leinaweaver by an adoptive mother in 2009. The mother adopted as a single woman and initially selected India to adopt based on the understanding that female infanticide is practiced there. As a single woman, she expected to be assigned a girl. Regrettably, Leinaweaver's response came across as flippant: "So you thought you could save a girl in the process?" The mother reacted firmly: "Don't use that word—it's important to choose the right words. It *wasn't* about saving. I didn't care about the child's color, about where the child came from, but I thought I might as well fuse my desire to be a mother with my gender solidarity [*solidaridad de género*]. The word 'save'

links this way too much with a religious theme. It's more accurate to say it's a selfish theme—being a mother—united here with *solidaridad*. But the main purpose is selfishness." Interestingly, this mother allowed herself solidarity feelings—aligned with gender—but she separated them from the specific and focused (selfish) desire to be a mother.

The opposition between selfishness and *solidaridad* embodied in these mothers' accounts is also recurrently present in professional texts on adoption. For example, a guide to transnational adoption in Madrid states that "adoption is intended to give a family, parents, to a child who needs them, so the desire for parenthood . . . must be the fundamental driver. All the motivations that aren't founded on the desire for parenthood put the adoption and the child's well-being . . . at serious risk" (Berástegui, Gómez, and Adroher 2006, 16). In a separate call-out box, the guide lists "some risk factors," and heading the list is "being solidary." As the guide states: "Of course adoption is a way to help a child without a family, but one can only do that by giving that child parents who have the sincere and deep-seated desire to be parents" (Berástegui, Gómez, and Adroher 2006, 16; see also Charro and Jociles 2007, 6; Jociles and Charro 2008, 114; Leinaweaver 2013a, 104–5; van Wichelen 2018, 21–22). In sum, adoption professionals (gatekeepers, psychologists, and social workers) also deem "selfish" reasons to adopt appropriate and necessary and "selfless" ones as unsuitable and dangerous (Frekko, Leinaweaver, and Marre 2015, 709).[15]

Spanish adoption authorities urge prospective parents to express "selfish" motivations of desiring a child because that is the kind of motivation that they understand to result in a middle-class family experience most like that of "intensive parenting" (De Graeve and Longman 2013) for the child. Such motivations are grounded in the fundamentally unequal and hierarchical age-graded parent-child relationship (Gay y Blasco 2012, 331) characteristic of Western European middle-class

families. Yet the promotion of "selfish" motivations consistently contrasts with the Mediterranean emphasis on intrafamilial solidarity, reviewed above; for example, a 2018 article (Lapuente 2018) about a Swedish documentary, published in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, describes solitude and loneliness (presciently?) as a "global pandemic," suggesting that nations invested in public care and solidarity as a state service paradoxically produce citizens who, because they do not need them, are disconnected from their kith and kin.

Furthermore, the preference for selfishness over solidarity may be partly located in the increasing role of infertility as a motivation for transnational adoption (van Wichelen 2018, 21).[16] This results in the naturalization of reproductive desire and the legitimation of the belief in, and notion of, the "right to a child" (22).[17] Adoption researchers have demonstrated how, although humanitarian tendencies lurk silenced but not absent, the prescribed discourse for adoption strategies has shifted to a desire for, and emphasis on, family making (Dorow 2006; van Wichelen 2018, 27–28; Yngvesson 2010).

Paradoxically, however, the positive valuing of "selfish" reproductive desire clashes powerfully and interesting against another equally widespread pillar of adoption law and ideology: the belief that "the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration" (Article 21, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989). If transnational adoption is conceptualized within the international legal context as a form of child protection, and the prospective parent's motivation is secondary, then it feels both contradictory and circular to prescribe forms of discursive resistance against *solidaridad* as a motivation for adoption. That is, if left unchallenged, such prescription forces us to accept the (questionable) idea that capitalizing on "selfish" reproductive desire is the best way to "help a child without a family."

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages, we have charted points of contention in the complex relationship between solidarity and transnationally adoptive kinship. Our examples showed how and why transnational adoption is at different moments linked to and delinked from *solidaridad.* Our discussion of temporality proposed that the enduring "givenness" element of *solidaridad*-as-kinship is deemed a crucial counterweight to the fleetingness of (humanitarian) *solidaridad* that takes place far away and over a limited time. As we suggested, the production of "givenness" through emphasizing temporalities of permanence is particularly weighty in adoptive kinship and require it to be carefully kept distinct from tropes of impermanence in fleeting solidarity.

Using *solidaridad* to reflect on the affinities and dissimilarities of humanitarianism and kinship, we found that *solidaridad*'s multivocal range grounds at times unsustainable tensions for individuals in Spain negotiating difference within their families and across nations. Humanitarian solidarity reminds us that the temporalities of kinship's permanence must be produced and sustained, even as kinship solidarity appears as an ever-shakier barrier against deep structural and political inequities. That kinship and humanitarianism share *solidaridad* as an interpretive category has let us fruitfully retheorize Schneider and reconceptualize logics of relatedness within and beyond kinship. Kinship's solidarity is neither always nor uniquely diffuse or enduring. Its logics of relatedness stretch far beyond the household and encompass transnational connections and the politics of commitment.

Van Wichelen (2018, 27–28) refers to "the central paradox underlying international adoption today—that it needs to represent family making and humanitarianism at the same time." To exclude *solidaridad* from transnational adoption because it denotes a risky desire to "help," "save," or "rescue" foregrounds the humanitarian face of solidarity, and, as we have seen, there is substantial evidence that humanitarianism's frequent apolitical orientation prevents engagement with the inequalities that underlie it (Beckett 2019, 164; Malkki 2015, 203; Theodossopoulos 2016, 178; Ticktin 2017, 583). The "sincere and deep-seated selfish *desire* to be parents" (Berástegui, Gómez, and Adroher 2006: 16), in lieu of *solidaridad* as the prime sanctioned motivation to adopt, sidesteps the global political inequalities within which transnational adoption unfolds, downplaying the complicity of the powerful in creating young people who need "rescue." Like humanitarian aid (Redfield 2005), transnational adoption can thus operate through an ideology of choice while simultaneously obfuscating deep structural inequalities. However, the way in which contemporary Spain persistently links *solidaridad* with humanitarian charity has impeded its potential function as nourishment for kinship links, being replaced, at least for now, with its virtual opposite: enduring self-interest.

In this regard, the contested role of *solidaridad* within transnationally adoptive families in Spain speaks to its uncomfortable bridging of ostensibly distinct spheres of economy and affect—arenas that are unquestionably entangled yet produced as separate through paradigmatic discourses that establish the family as a uniquely noneconomic site of affection and mutual aid (e.g., Shever 2008; Strathern 1985, 193; Yanagisako 2013). The promotion of *solidaridad* as a positive value within the family in part contributes to understandings of the family as a private, apolitical sphere. Yet, as feminist scholars have shown, the distinction between economy and affect is a

central contradiction of capitalism. The insistence that the family is a key site of solidarity has had detrimental effects for women—in particular during the pandemic, as they took up homeschooling duties, brought groceries to aging parents to help reduce the latter's exposure, and quit their jobs at rates higher than men (Diamond 2021).

This contradiction is also perceptible in analyses of reproductive labor; for example, egg donation and surrogacy are deemed to be women's reproductive "exchanges of labor . . . [that] in the European Union are considered by law 'priceless,' 'not for sale,'" but that nonetheless entangle brokers, financial outlays, stratified reproduction, and myriad forms of care work (Marre, San Román, and Guerra 2018, 159; see also Colen 1986; Constable 2016; Fonseca, Marre, and Rifiotis 2021; Gimenez 1991; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995). Within these global hierarchies of reproduction, working-class women's "participation in relations of procreation is not freely chosen" (Gimenez 1991, 336; on kinship and global capitalism, see McKinnon and Cannell 2013, 20–21). When societal ills are (expected to be) managed through humanitarian intervention rather than structural or policy change, care is deemed a private concern, yet one that can also be privatized. This uneasy process is indexed in the tensions around *solidaridad* in the "conceptual imprecision [that] is reproduced by the coexistence of the concepts 'solidarity' and 'humanitarianism' in the same conversations, often in the same arguments or sentences" (Theodossopoulos 2016, 170).

More research is needed to explore the outcomes and side effects of the exclusion of *solidaridad* we have documented in this article. For example, we might speculate that the rigidity of this exclusion could be linked to explicit "failed adoptions" (adopted children relinquished to state care) or disguised ones (adopted children sent to live with relatives or to boarding schools). Recent work conducted by Palacios et al. (2018) suggests that parents' overwhelming and sometimes

desperate "need" for a child is the strongest predictor of an adoption that will eventually fail.[18] In other words, might the negation of (feelings of) "solidarity" in favor of selfish desire lead to parents choosing to "cease to reside" with children who did not turn out the way parents "desired"?[19]

What we can say with certainty is that the requirement for "personal desire" as the primary motive for transnational adoption avoids the devalued *solidaridad* as humanitarianism motivation at the expense of weakening *solidaridad* as a basis of kinship or other forms of *solidaridad*¸ like political affinity, that are similarly potent. Adoption professionals work to delegitimize *solidaridad* as a motivation so that children are not positioned as indebted to parents who "rescued" them (Jociles 2013, 214). However, these efforts sidestep the idea (in both social science and contemporary practices in Spain) of solidarity as a key element of intergenerational kinship relations, which can lead to potential and significant consequences for the forging of adoptive and other kinship links and for the politics of parenting informed by an opposition between "selfishness" and "solidarity." The promising generosity *solidaridad* projects is inseparable from its risky multivocality, a finding with real, material consequences for both adoptive and other kinships.

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FIGURE CAPTION

Figure 1. Four everyday appearances of solidarity, clockwise from top left: "Let your solidarity flow" at a blood drive (2019); "Solidary dessert" at a Barcelona restaurant (2018); a mushroom pizza as "solidarity dish" at a Madrid restaurant (2019); and "The solidary ecoshop" at a cultural center in Madrid (2019). (Photos by Leinaweaver)

[1] https://dle.rae.es/solidario?m=form.

[2] https://fundacionvicenteferrer.org/es/movilizate.

[3] Adopters may, however, "flip the script" (Frekko, Leinaweaver, and Marre 2015; van Wichelen 2018, 35), refraining from mentioning a sense of solidarity that they do feel.

[4] *Solidaridad* is sometimes used in Spanish politics to describe the contributions of wealthier regions to the support of poorer ones, fusing the "humanitarian" understanding of support with the kinship-oriented notion of shared identity; see Article 2 of Spain's 1978 constitution (BOE-A-1978-31229, 29/12/1978).

[5] Europeans had, however, fostered and adopted children "victimized by the Nazis and by Franco" prior to World War II (Briggs and Marre 2009, 3; Marre and Leinaweaver, forthcoming).

[6] HCCH 1993. *Convention on Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption*. https://n9.cl/tijzo.

[7] Interestingly, our data reveals very little evidence of the Catholic Church's involvement in transnational adoptions, which is not to say that there was no involvement. The long history of domestic adoption and child theft (Marre and Gaggiotti 2021; Marre and Leinaweaver, forthcoming) suggests otherwise.

However, the brokers most commonly identified are representatives of governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

[8] The film is widespread in the imaginaries of Chinese-adoptive families more broadly; Dorow (2006, 361) quotes a North American interlocutor's offhand reference to "the thing on TV about the Chinese orphanages."

[9] Our focus in this article is transnational adoption (which outpaced domestic adoption annually from 1998 to 2015, according to government data), but we also note that some of the same elements of *solidaridad* are reproduced in domestic adoption, for example of children of immigrants (Leinaweaver 2013a, chapter 4).

[10] Interestingly, the "situational alliance" definition appeared not long after Durkheim's major works analyzing solidarity in its social role (for its role in kinship, see Durkheim 1933, 16). Since at least 1925, the adjective *solidario/a* similarly included a secondary definition "allied or associated with the cause or interest of others" (RAE U 1925, 1124), without mentioning any situational or temporary aspect. In 2014, the RAE added one more definition to solidary—a legal one, referring to joint and several ("solidary") debts (RAE [2014] 2019). See https://dle.rae.es/solidario?m=form.

[11] Schneider was influenced by Talcott Parsons's (1943, 31) analysis that the "common household, income, and community status" of the nuclear family caused it to become "a solidary unit in the sense in which the segregation of the interests of individuals is relatively meaningless." McKinnon and Cannell (2013, 7) have shown that Parsons's model of kinship erroneously presumed child socialization and personality stabilization to be separate from and untouched by economics and politics.

[12] For specific examples, consider work on surrogacy (Deomampo 2015; Twine 2011), alternative reproductive technologies like donor gametes (Inhorn 2003; Marre, San Román, and Guerra 2018) and adoption (Dorow 2006; Mariner 2019; van Wichelen 2018; Yngvesson 2010).

[13] In 2018, Spain registered 48 organ donations per million inhabitants, more than doubling the European average of 22.3 per million (Mosquera 2019). Spanish oocytes and embryos make up 62.4 percent of Europe's, due perhaps to "a strong tradition of donation reflected in the high rate of organ donation" (Shenfield et al. 2010, 1367).

[14] Cheney (2013, 255) observed that the "rescue narrative" is critiqued more broadly in Europe but continues to hold sway among evangelicals in the United States, who are an important constituency for international adoption.

[15] "Desire" is of course as abstract as "solidarity" (van Wichelen 2018, 28). There are no clear guidelines that psychosocial workers might use to judge the adequacy of an applicant's "personal desire" to "be a parent"; how an adoption professional might operationalize the distinction between "desire" and "helping" is unclear (Leinaweaver, Marre, and Frekko 2017).

[16] Compare Breuning (2013, 418, 422) on "Samaritans" versus "family builders."

[17] See the recent Verona Principles's warning that the "practice of surrogacy may create false expectations that adults have a right to a child. . . . Such expectations should be discouraged as they may reduce children to a means of fulfilling exclusively the intentions and desires of adults and would therefore be contrary to human dignity" (International Social Services 2021, 1.7).

[18] See Hoksbergen (1991) on the lack of correlation between solidarity and failure.

[19] Another potential area for research is special needs adoption, where motivations of "helping," solidarity, humanitarianism, and Christian charity are relatively more authorized. For example, Leinaweaver was told that the disparities between US and Italian, on one hand, and Spanish, on the other, rates of adoption of Peruvian "special needs children" (this category includes children with medical or psychological conditions, as well as children who are six or older, or who are part of sibling groups) stem from Italians' and United States citizens' relatively greater solidarity.