PERCEPTIONS OF WORKER SOLIDARITY IN A CONTEXT OF LABOR FLEXIBILITY.
A QUALITATIVE STUDY AMONG MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF INDONESIAN GARMENT AND TEXTILE TRADE UNIONS.

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Abstract

Labor flexibility has increased in recent years in Indonesia due to the introduction of a new labor law facilitating the use of short term contracts and outsourcing, especially in labor intensive industries such as the garment and textile industry (Beerepoot, Keijser, & Tesorio, 2013; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009). This study analyses perceptions of worker solidarity in this context of labor flexibility and attempts to reveal mechanisms behind these perceptions by analyzing 20 qualitative in-depth interviews with members and employees of Indonesian garment and textile trade unions. In this industry, workers have different statuses - permanent, contract, outsourced and daily work – associated with inequality, with permanent work generally perceived as the most desirable and secure. Perceptions of solidarity among workers, especially those with different statuses, were remarkably diverse, ranging from rather positive to rather negative views. This study argues that these varying perceptions can be interpreted as different ways of dealing with the different worker statuses. Some respondents considered status differences to be a factor limiting solidarity, while others seemed to minimize status differences and their impact on solidarity. Common interests were mentioned across these differing perceptions: some framed its construction as a deliberate strategy to limit the impact of status differences, while others seemed to construct imagined common interests as part of their positive perception of solidarity. Moreover, solidarity was constructed as located in the trade union organization, rather than in the workplace where status differences might be most visible, which could be interpreted as another way of dealing with status differences. In sum, this study argues that trade union members and employees have several ways of dealing with status differences and their potential challenges for solidarity: constructing positive perceptions of solidarity, constructing common interests among workers with different statuses, and constructing solidarity as located in the trade union.
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1. Introduction

Globalization has been associated with increased precariousness, inequality and flexibilization in labor markets, in more developed industrialized countries as well as less developed ones (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012). This flexibility goes together with an increase in temporary labor (Boyce, Ryan, Imus, & Morgeson, 2007), which has been associated with vulnerability in terms of job security (Burgess, Connell, & Winterton, 2013). In literature on labor markets, various explanations for this increase in precarious work are given, among others the high levels of competition in globalized markets. Also, a decline in trade union density and therefore a lack of representation for workers might have further enlarged these issues. Arnold and Bongiovi (2012) defined labor flexibility as “employers’ ability to hire or fire workers, or increase or lower their wages according to business needs and worker performance” (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012, pp. 294-295). Tjandraningsih and Nugroho (2009) however distinguish between macro level flexibility, i.e. at the labor market level, and micro-level flexibility at the enterprise level. The former is a “strategy where an enterprise can adjust the number and type of workers it employs, alongside wage levels, as market conditions change” (Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009, p. 2) while the latter refers to a dynamic labor supply where both workers and companies are free to make decisions based on the best wage or profit opportunities.

Proponents of labor flexibility, usually the neoliberal and neoclassical schools of thought, claim that flexibility enhances job creation (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009; ul Haque, 2004). By letting capital work freely in the labor market and eliminating restrictions, competition between workers increases. This is assumed to have a positive effect in reducing unemployment and therefore also boost economic growth and development (ul Haque, 2004). However, opponents of labor flexibility, such as trade unions, certain scholars, activists and workers, consider it to be a strategy that exploits workers, leading to increased insecurity and unemployment, and lower wages. Therefore, the increasing labor flexibility could be considered to be a societal issue, possibly deemed problematic by trade unions.

In Indonesia, the policy of labor flexibilization was recommended by the ILO in 1997-98 during an economic crisis (Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009). Caraway (2004) argued that Indonesia’s labor laws are protective of workers, which is why they formed a defense against flexibilization that took place in other countries. However, in 2003, Law No. 13 on Manpower was forged in Indonesia, which allowed labor flexibility in the form of short term contracts and outsourcing through third parties (Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009). Consequently, this law lead to large scale use of contract and outsourced work in Indonesian industries, especially in labor intensive industries with low skilled labor, such as the garment industry. Beerepoot et al. (2013) also argued that in the Indonesian context, contract labor is most common in the garment and textile industry. Studies focusing on garment work in different workers have associated it with human rights violations (Hall, 2000), and have focused on practices of exploitation and resistance to this exploitation (Dunnecker, 2000), meaning that garment workers often seem to be considered as finding themselves in a precarious or vulnerable situation.

The new Indonesian labor law includes some limitations as to which jobs can be outsourced, since this is not allowed for the companies’ core activities but the government has not been enforcing these
limitations (Beerepoot et al., 2013; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009). Moreover, the increased use of contract and outsourced labor instead of permanent labor in Indonesia might have weakened trade unions because joining a union became a threat to job security on the one hand, and because it increased the fragmentation of workers on the other hand. These recent developments have notably changed the landscape of trade unions, workers, companies and the government in Indonesia, but seem to not have been studied that often. Therefore, workers and trade unions in the Indonesian garment and textile industry are considered to be an interesting case to study.

This study will attempt to contribute to understanding how the increased labor flexibility in this context impacts workers and trade unions by using the concept of solidarity. Despite the importance attributed to this concept in sociological literature (Cramer & Champion, 1975; Doreian & Fararo, 1998; Hechter, 1988; Lindenberg, 1998), most research on social movements and trade unions seems to focus on structural factors, while paying less attention to cultural factors or social relations such as solidarity (Dixon, Roscigno, & Hodson, 2004; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Therefore, approaching the impact of labor flexibility through analyzing the ways in which it might influence solidarity among workers brings a new perspective to this topic. According to Tjandraningsih and Nugroho (2009), flexibility comes with fragmentation among workers, because it creates three categories of workers: permanent, contract and outsourced workers. The existence of these different statuses is then assumed to impede workers’ collectivism and solidarity. However, research on sectionalism in labor movements has shown that increased division of workers into sections or groups does not necessarily lead to a lack of collective identity and solidarity, as is often assumed, but that it depends on the ways in which their interests are formulated, in opposition to or compatible with others (McBride, 2011). Therefore, this study attempts to study the mechanisms behind the potential impact of flexibility and the existence of different worker statuses on solidarity.

Sociological literature on solidarity as a concept has defined solidarity in various ways (Cramer & Champion, 1975), and has approach it in different ways, among others by discussing whether it is based on interdependence, internalized norms or common interests (Fantasia, 1988; Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Hechter, 1988). Another discussion questions whether solidarity can be seen as moral altruistic behavior, or rather as a rational choice (Fantasia, 1988; Hechter, 1988). However, literature seems to be more focused on which factors influence or constitute solidarity, rather than the mechanisms behind the processes of creation, strengthening or limiting solidarity, which is what this study attempts to do by focusing on respondents’ perceptions of solidarity among workers, and the ways they themselves explain these perceived levels of solidarity. When considering literature on solidarity in trade unions, it appears that little research considers the interplay of solidarity and organizations (Dixon et al., 2004; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Moreover, those who do consider this interplay seem to mostly argue that trade unions can use pre-existing solidarity, forged among workers in the workplace, rather than the trade union organizations forging or strengthening solidarity among workers themselves (Dixon et al., 2004; Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Hirsch, 1986). Therefore, this study also considers the trade union’s involvement in the creation and strengthening of solidarity, and questions whether they use pre-existing solidarity or create solidarity themselves.
In sum, the dynamics behind enhancing and limiting solidarity among workers in a context with different statuses are central in this study, while also considering the ways in which trade union organizations can influence these dynamics. This will be studied by analyzing how union employees and members perceive solidarity among workers in a context with different worker statuses, questioning to which extent they perceive solidarity to be challenged, and who is in- and excluded from solidarity. Moreover, this study also questions how union employees and members explain the perceived levels of solidarity among workers in this context, and in what ways they perceive the different worker statuses to be a factor influencing solidarity among workers. Finally, this study also questions the role of trade union organizations, and how they influence these perceptions of solidarity among workers.

This study uses a qualitative research design, collecting data through in-depth interviews with union members and employees of three Indonesian trade unions. The part about methodology discusses how access to the research settings was negotiated, the sampling, some ethical considerations, the ways data was gathered and analyzed. Moreover, it pays attention to the challenges that were encountered in each of these steps. The analysis of this study then considers the ways respondents perceive solidarity, the ways they explain these perceived levels of solidarity, and the ways the trade union organization is involved in these perceptions. Finally, the conclusion of this study presents a summary of the results, answers the research questions and discusses the ways in which this study contributes to sociological literature.

2. Literature study

2.1 Solidarity

Solidarity is an important and recurring concept used in sociological research and literature (Cramer & Champion, 1975; Doreian & Fararo, 1998; Hechter, 1988; Lindenberg, 1998). Hechter (1988) constructed a theory of group solidarity, which he defined as the “groupness” of a group, or “the group’s capacity to affect the member’s behavior” (p. 8). Since groups are often considered sociology’s central unit of analysis, he argues that solidarity as a concept is fundamental to the discipline of sociology. Despite the attention solidarity has received, the concept seems to suffer from a lack of clarity, since it has been defined in different ways and applied in various contexts (Cramer & Champion, 1975). Moreover, solidarity’s relation to concepts that are closely related, such as collective identity (Hunt & Benford, 2004; McBride, 2011) and cohesion (Cramer & Champion, 1975), sometimes remains ambiguous. Therefore, this literature overview will focus on defining solidarity first, after which different approaches to the concept will be discussed. Afterwards, boundaries to solidarity will be discussed, including solidarity in a context with different subgroups. To conclude, the interplay between solidarity and organizations will be addressed.

2.1.1 Defining solidarity

Sociological studies and theories have defined solidarity in various ways (Cramer & Champion, 1975), but it was Hechter (1988) who distinguished between affective definitions of solidarity, focusing on group sentiments, love and brotherhood, and behavioral definitions. He argues in favor of the latter because
behavior is easier to measure than sentiments. However, rather than considering this to be a choice between two approaches, this study will take into account both an affective component of solidarity, i.e. the feelings about a group, and a behavioral component, i.e. the actions based on these feelings, as was also done by Hodson (1997) when they study solidarity among coworkers in the workplace. When approaching the study of solidarity in a more positivistic way, it might make sense to choose a definition based on its measurability, but since this study favors a constructivist approach and focuses on respondents’ perceptions of solidarity, it seems more comprehensive to consider perceptions on both feelings and behavior concerning solidarity.

2.1.1.1 Affective aspect of solidarity

Besides Hechter (1988), several other scholars have mentioned the affective aspect of solidarity, which they describe in various ways. Some descriptions root solidarity in the relations between people, calling solidarity “the configuration of relationships linking the members of a group to each other” (Fireman & Gamson, 1979, p. 22), or defining it as “the degree of positive affective relationship existing among a group of two or more individuals, characterized by sentiments of “weness”” (Cramer & Champion, 1975, p. 293). Applied to the context of families, solidarity has been defined as the closeness between family members (Jansen, 1952), while in the context of the shop floor, it was associated with “social attachments between workers” (Dixon et al., 2004, p. 9). These definitions of solidarity do not just focus on the relations between individuals, but also mention an affective aspect of these relations, described as closeness or attachment.

Besides focusing on relations between individuals, some also focus on identity when defining solidarity, when for example associating solidarity with a “sense of common identity” (Fireman & Gamson, 1979, p. 22). McBride (2011) even seems to nearly equate solidarity with collective identity. A clear illustration of the affective aspect in connecting solidarity to identity can be found with Hunt and Benford (2004), who were inspired by Blumer’s concept of esprit de corps when defining solidarity. They argue that besides a corpus, or identification of a collectivity, solidarity also requires a spiritus, or individual’s identification with and feelings of belong to a collectivity. This feeling of belonging could be based on the feeling that those part of the collectivity share a common cause and fate (Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Hunt & Benford, 2004). Moreover, defining solidarity as a shared identity sometimes comes with an emphasis on the boundaries of the collectivity that one identifies with (Hunt & Benford, 2004), or in other words “a sense of “us” and “them”” (Dixon et al., 2004, p. 9). These group boundaries will be discussed more in-depth later.

What these definitions have in common, is that they bring attention to an emotional dimension of solidarity. However, the extent to which these scholars consider this component a central part of solidarity’s definition differs. Cramer and Champion (1975) for example argue that this affective aspect is the only dimension that solidarity consists of, and that no other aspects of group relations should be included when defining or empirically measuring solidarity. Other scholars on the other hand consider this affective dimension as just one aspect of solidarity, and mention other aspects, such as the identification of a collectivity in Hunt and Benford (2004)’s definition, or a behavioral aspect in other definitions.
2.1.1.2 Behavioral aspect of solidarity

Besides the affective aspect of solidarity, several authors also mentioned a behavioral aspect, meaning that solidarity does not solely consist of emotional ties, but also of behavior according to these feelings of belonging. Hechter (1988) for example considers solidarity to be a function of members’ compliance with group obligations, favoring behavioral definitions because of the measurability of behavior in empirical studies. Lindenberg (1998) then built on Hechter’s approach when he considered solidarity to be a behavioral pattern that consists of contributing individual resources to the group and that involves sacrifice. He proceeded to describe five situations with solidary behavior: contributing to a common good despite the option to free ride, sharing costs and benefits fairly, helping others in need, not hurting others despite the costs, and correcting unintended negative consequences of intended solidary behavior. Another proponent of this behavioral approach, Fantasia (1988), who studied cultures of solidarity among workers, argued against solely studying workers’ attitudes or abstract ideas, and instead favored approaches paying attention to workers’ actions and practices.

Some authors called the behavioral dimension of solidarity, which they emphasized, ‘mutual defense’ when they conducted research (Dixon et al., 2004; Hodson, Welsh, Rieble, Jamison, & Creighton, 1993). Mutual defense as a concept means “the extent to which workers defend one another in the face of authority or abuse” (Dixon et al., 2004, p. 9), and has been used to empirically study solidarity since it is considered to be highly visible (Dixon et al., 2004; Hodson et al., 1993). In other words, the concept describes a situation where workers collectively end up in a conflict with the company management in order to defend their colleagues. Besides workers helping or defending each other, the behavioral aspect of solidarity has been for example described as “people acting together in pursuit of common interests” (McBride, 2011, p. 304). Hodson et al. (1993) mention some more behavioral aspects of solidarity as well: cohesion, or the social contact among workers, leadership, which is necessary for the continuity of solidarity, group discipline enforcing group norms, and group boundaries. Based on their analysis, they argue that mutual defense and group discipline might be more important aspects of solidarity. Fireman and Gamson (1979) also described solidarity as comprising several behavioral factors, such as participation in organizations or sharing techniques for solving daily problems.

Contrary to most of these works prioritizing the behavioral aspect of solidarity when studying solidarity, others might consider it to be just one part of the definition, for example mentioning a “general commitment to defend the group” (Fireman & Gamson, 1979, p. 22), while also describing other elements such as a shared identity or feelings of belonging. Hunt and Benford (2004) definition also did this when they said willingness to participate in order to protect or improve the well-being of the collectivity or its members is part of solidarity a well. To conclude, most of these views on the behavioral aspect of solidarity have in common that they center around people contributing to the group while possibly making some sort of sacrifice, helping and defending each other, or acting collectively to improve their situation. However, their views on the extent to which the behavioral aspect is central to the definition of solidarity differ.
2.1.2 Different approaches to solidarity

When trying to understand the dynamics enhancing or diminishing feelings of solidarity and solidary behavior among workers, it is interesting to discuss several ways sociology has approached solidarity, as Hechter (1988) did when attempting to explain the variations in group solidarity.

2.1.2.1 Solidarity based on interdependence

Solidarity as a concept goes back to Durkheim, who has been called “the major sociological theorist on solidarity” (Lindenberg, 1998, p. 65). He discussed the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity and connected it to the historical transition towards more complex industrialized societies and the division of labour (Durkheim, 1984). According to him, organic solidarity is based on individuals depending on each other, since they have different but complementary tasks, as opposed to mechanical solidarity, which occurred in less complex societies and was based on similarity between individuals (Doreian & Fararo, 1998; Durkheim, 1984). Lindenberg (1998) however argues that this interpretation does not do justice to Durkheim’s theory, since similarity does not directly create mechanical solidarity. Instead, the mechanism behind it is that individuals seek out sentiments similar to their own and avoid those opposite of their own, with a preference for collective sentiments over individual sentiments, since the former are usually stronger. This way, similarity produces solidarity because of individuals’ dependence on others’ sentiments, and their preference for collective sentiments similar to their own. According to this interpretation, solidarity is brought about by interdependence, due to the division of labor in organic solidarity and due to the inclination towards similar collective sentiments in mechanical solidarity.

2.1.2.2 Solidarity based on internalized norms or group survival

Rather than emphasizing interdependence, some approaches discussed by Hechter (1988) focus on the internalization of group norms and the urge for group survival as factors enhancing solidarity. The first one, a normativist perspective, argues “that some groups, such as families, are more solidary than others, such as choruses, because the members of families have internalized more extensive norms” (Hechter, 1988, p. 8), meaning that internalized norms strengthen solidarity. An example is Hodson et al. (1993), who mention the enforcement of norms among workers, such as productivity or safety at work, as one aspect of solidarity. However, Hechter (1988) points out that this approach does not explain the dynamics behind why certain groups internalize more extensive norms than others. The second is a functionalist approach, reasoning that solidarity is created and strengthened because it advances group survival. Here, the consequence of solidarity, i.e. a bigger chance of group survival, is considered the cause of its existence. Hechter’s critique of this approach is that this argument is connected to the concept of natural selection, which we cannot assume to be applicable in social sciences.

2.1.2.3 Solidarity based on common interests

Another way to address solidarity, as mentioned by several scholars, is focusing on common interests and the ways they could enhance solidarity. This structuralist approach argues that individuals’ interests originate from their position in social structures, implying that groups share interests if they share similar positions, or applied to workers, that they have common interests based on their relations with the company management (Hechter, 1988). According to this approach, solidarity is enhanced through the
existence of common interests and people’s awareness of them, combined with competition with opposite interests in different groups. Hechter then proceeds to liken solidarity to workers’ class consciousness that Marxists use to distinguish a *Klasse für sich* from a *Klasse an sich*, since it is similarly forged by workers’ relation to the means of production, the interests they therefore have in common and their struggle with other classes. Fantasia (1988) makes this connection as well when choosing to study cultures of solidarity instead of class consciousness because he considers the latter concept to be too preoccupied with ideas and attitudes rather than practices. In sum, this perspective perceives common interests to be a factor that might enhance or forge solidarity, through its existence, consciousness of its existence, and the opposition to groups with different interests.

A reverse line of reasoning has however been presented by Fireman and Gamson (1979), arguing that solidarity might strengthen people’s inclination towards pursuing common interests by participating in collective action. Their argumentation is a response to Olson (1965), who argues that it is not necessarily rational for individuals to pursue common interests, unless there are ‘selective incentives’, or additional personal advantages, connected to this behavior. Fireman and Gamson (1979) then argue that one cannot solely assume behavior to be based on self-interest, since solidarity connects an individual’s fate, self-concept and way of life to the group. This entwining of the individual and collective, which “blurs the distinction between individual and collective goods” (Fireman & Gamson, 1979, p. 44), can then facilitate mobilization to pursue common interests. In short, a mutual relation between common interests and solidarity might exist, with common interests possibly strengthening solidarity in groups, while solidarity could increase groups’ inclination to pursue common interests.

### 2.1.2.4 Solidarity based on rational choice

Finally, another discussion regarding solidarity focuses on whether it is based on rational choice. Olson (1965) distinguishes altruistic behavior, which might involve disregarding one’s own welfare, from rational behavior, focused on one’s own interests, and argues that the latter is often assumed to be the norm, while altruism is considered an exception. Applied to the concept of solidarity, Fantasia (1988) argues that workers perceive solidarity to be something mutual, instead of considering it to be solely based on moral altruism. Assuming that solidarity could be based on rational choice, it is interesting to question why individuals do not choose to free ride, if that is considered the most rational behavior (Hechter, 1988; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). If solidarity is considered to be based on common interests, it could be questioned whether pursuing common interests is rational behavior. According to Olson (1965), this is often thought to be the case, but he argues that it is not necessarily rational for individuals to pursue common interests, unless there are additional personal incentives connected to this behavior. Hechter (1988) also approaches solidarity from a rational choice perspective, but mentions a different mechanism behind it, namely the ability to control behavior of group members. According to him, solidarity requires contribution of individual resources to the group, but this is not rational behavior, meaning that control is required to limit free riding behavior. In sum, it is interesting to consider the mechanisms behind solidarity, and whether they are based on altruism or rational choices. Moreover, it can be questioned whether what is considered rational behavior is connected to workers’ status, as was argued by (Dixon & Roscigno, 2003).
2.1.3 Boundaries

As mentioned before, Hunt and Benford (2004) suggest that solidarity requires a *corpus*, which means that there should be “a body of confederates” (Hunt & Benford, 2004, p. 439) or a collectivity that can be identified, sometimes using visual boundary markers. Since the main focus of this research is workers’ different statuses and the way they affect solidarity, collectivities and their boundaries are central to answering the research questions. In social movement literature, constructing boundaries is considered a central part of collective identity construction (Gamson, 1997; Hunt & Benford, 2004; V. Taylor, Whittier, & Morris, 1992), and consists of “constructing both a collective self and a collective other” (Hunt & Benford, 2004, p. 443). In other words, boundaries clarify what makes movement members different from others (Gamson, 1997; Hunt & Benford, 2004; V. Taylor et al., 1992). In this context, boundary construction seems to be mostly understood in terms of a social movement constructing its identity by distinguishing itself from its opponents, (Gamson, 1997; Hunt & Benford, 2004), often when subordinate groups or minorities oppose a dominant group (V. Taylor et al., 1992).

However, aside from these boundaries between movements and its adversaries, internal boundaries exist too, such as when conflicts between different factions in one movement occur (Gamson, 1997; Hunt & Benford, 2004). As Gamson puts it: “The us is solidified not just against an external them but also against thems inside, as particular subgroups battle to gain or retain legitimate us standing.” (Gamson, 1997, p. 180). These internal boundaries have generally received less attention, with literature about factions in the women’s movement as an exception (Gamson, 1997). Therefore it is interesting to further explore internal boundaries and its link to solidarity.

Since this research focuses on workers with different statuses and the ways in which these statuses influence solidarity among them, it will further explore internal boundaries, specifically applied to the context of Indonesian garment and textile workers. This way, it can be researched whether there are boundaries between workers with different statuses and boundaries within trade unions, and what the dynamics between possible subgroup collectivities and collectivities on the level of all workers or the entire trade union organization are like. The trade union’s external boundaries, namely the way they construct collective others such as the government or companies, can be interesting when studying the collectivity identity constructed in the trade union, but would lead us too far in this study, since it chooses to focus primarily on internal dynamics.

2.2 Worker solidarity in flexible contexts

Studies on labor flexibility have argued that it has weakened trade unions (Allen, 1990; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009). Tjandraningsih and Nugroho (2009) explain this by pointing to the fact that joining a union became a threat to job security on the one hand, and that it increased the fragmentation of workers on the other hand, which is assumed to lead to a lack of solidarity among them. Moreover, Galenson (1994) illustrated the importance of unity for trade unions when he said that a lack of unity brings along costs for the organization, for example when they attempt to deal with existence of various groups of workers who find themselves opposed to each other due to the involvement of the company. The importance of internal solidarity and cohesion for trade unions was also emphasized by Wood and Psoulis (2001), who said that fragmentation in the workforce has been increasing during recent years.
because of more diversity among workers. However, research on sectionalism in labor movements has shown that increased division of workers into sections or groups does not necessarily lead to a lack of collective identity and solidarity, as is often assumed (McBride, 2011). Whether sectionalism increases or decreases solidarity, whether it is integrative or divisive, could be considered a question of how one groups’ interests are formulated and perceived in interaction with the other groups, for example in an oppositional or compatible way.

2.3 Organizational perspective

2.3.1 Interplay of trade union organizations and solidarity
Considering literature on social movements and labor insurgency, different approaches to explain social movements’ emergence, success and mobilization can be distinguished: resource mobilization and political process theorists focus on organizational resources and structural shifts that make action possible, while identity theorists emphasize collective identities and interpersonal connections (Dixon et al., 2004; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Specifically applied to trade unions, this means that one approach emphasizes the importance of the trade union organization when mobilizing people, while the other points to solidarity among workers in the workplace (Dixon et al., 2004). On the one hand, they consider the possibility that this interplay between social movement organizations (SMO’s) and solidarity consists of SMO’s using pre-existing internal solidarity and identity, in this case among workers and originating in the workplace, in order to recruit activists on a large scale (Dixon et al., 2004). On the other hand, solidarity among workers might be created or enhanced by SMO’s, or trade unions in this particular case. Based on their empirical study, they concluded that “unions may facilitate strike activity, but only to the extent that they build on solidarities already realized by workers on the shop floor” (Dixon et al., 2004, p. 4).

Despite most work acknowledging both factors’ influence on social movements and SMO’s, it has been argued that little research considers the joint impact of organizational aspects and social relations or solidarity in the workplace (Dixon et al., 2004; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Moreover, these studies assert that in research about workers and trade unions, worker solidarity is often “either neglected or treated as nonproblematic” (Dixon et al., 2004, p. 6), and that literature “typically accords causal priority to organizational structure above and beyond social dynamics occurring on the shop floor” (Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Polletta and Jasper (2001) seem to agree when they describe this tendency in broader terms, not just focusing on the context of trade unions. According to them, cultural processes, such as the construction of collective identities, and structural processes, such as those described in research mobilization models, should be both taken into account in research, exploring the relations between them without “a priori assumptions about causal mechanisms” (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285). In an attempt to add to the literature on solidarity and trade unions, this study focuses primarily on solidarity among workers, as it has been neglected in literature, but takes into account the roles of the trade unions and its interplay with workers’ solidarity.

2.3.1.1 Organizations using pre-existing solidarity
As mentioned before, one way in which relations between organizations and solidarity can play out is by the organizations using pre-existing solidarity, as mentioned by several authors (Dixon et al., 2004;
Polletta & Jasper, 2001). As Fantasia (1988) stated, “it should not be overlooked that efforts to organize unions, however limited and uneven, from the nineteenth century to the present have had to rely on, or have at least been informed by, the values and practices of mutual solidarity” (p. 27). This reasoning assumes that solidarity originates in a context separate from the organization, for example among workers on the shop floor or through conflicts with the company management (Dixon et al., 2004; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Organizations such as trade unions can then use this already existing solidarity among workers when recruiting members or participants (Dixon et al., 2004; Polletta & Jasper, 2001), because the social ties and loyalty that come with solidarity might make individuals more inclined to participate (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Fireman and Gamson (1979) add to this that organizers who want to mobilize people often look for groups where solidarity already exists and has historically developed in the long run. According to them, creating or strengthening solidarity in the short run, in a context where there is little to no solidarity to begin with, is difficult, which is why pre-existing solidarity is considered to be so important. In sum, organizations might use pre-existing solidarity among individuals, which implies that solidarity might be important or useful for organizations such as trade unions.

2.3.1.2 Organizations creating or strengthening solidarity
Several studies have argued or assumed that organizations such as trade unions might use pre-existing solidarities, but that it is difficult for them create solidarity themselves (Dixon et al., 2004; Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Hirsch, 1986). Moreover, there seems to be little research focused on whether organizations, such as trade unions, forge or enhance solidarity (Hirsch, 1986). However, some studies do mention ways in which trade unions can create or strengthen solidarity, for example through collective action such as strikes (Fantasia, 1988; Fireman & Gamson, 1979). Organizers who want to attempt to create solidarity in an environment with little pre-existing solidarity can use a strategy that consist of bringing groups together through those people who are central to various already existing social networks (Fireman & Gamson, 1979). Other strategies for enhancing solidarity mentioned in their study center around organizing cultural and social activities or rituals. Also, Saunders (2008) have argued that social movement organizations can influence solidarity if individuals' commitment to the organization goes together with a sense of collective identity connected to this organization. Because of the limited attention that has been paid to this topic, this study will analyze whether trade unions forge worker solidarity by looking at potential strategies connected to the various aspects of solidarity as defined before.

2.3.1.3 Locus of solidarity
Several studies have assumed or argued that worker solidarity originates in the shop floor or out of conflict with the company management (Dixon et al., 2004; Fantasia, 1988; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Fantasia (1988) for example argued that solidarity is forged and strengthened through interactions with the opposition, which in the case of workers means the company management. These ideas are reminiscent of a Marxist conception of class consciousness, where the consciousness and struggle is based on their status of being workers and their relation to the means of production (Hechter, 1988). However, this study takes place in a context where workers have different statuses, implying that they might have varying interests as well. It could therefore be interesting for this study to not assume that
worker solidarity solely originates in the company, where the differences between their statuses are at play, and focus on solidarity located in trade unions as well.

2.3.2 Top-down and bottom-up organizational processes

When considering the involvement of trade unions in the solidarity among workers, it could be interesting to take internal processes in these trade unions into account. Lammers (1993) distinguishes between top-down and bottom-up organizational processes, and argues that both usually can be found in organizations. In short, top-down processes originate among the organizations’ leaders, who perceive the organization ‘from above’, and bottom-up processes originate among the organizations’ members, who might have different perspectives due to their different positions. These different perspectives might result in different and sometimes opposite organizational initiatives. Lammers then describes four parties that can be found in organizations: the top leaders, who manage the organization, the loyal elite, who support the top leaders, the regular members, and an indigenous elite that arises among the regular members. Those part of the indigenous elite are members of the organization who end up as leaders of these members, which is where their loyalties lie. They are the ones leading informal processes at the bottom level and are considered key to bottom-up processes, seeing as their legitimacy is derived from the members, and not the organizations top leaders.

The interplay of top-down and bottom-up processes in trade unions have been discussed regarding various topics. Focusing on union government, A. Taylor (1989) explained that union leaders could govern the union organization, but that they always depend on union members, since this is where the organization derives its legitimacy. Smid (1988) studied ‘member approaches’ of trade unions, or trade unions’ relations with and activities directed at their members. He discusses the process of consensus building in trade unions, a term he says was first used by Etzioni, which consists of bottom-up as well as top-down processes. The top-down process of consensus building, where organization leaders impose a perspective on those with lower positions in the organization, was called consensus mobilization, while the bottom-up process, where perspectives of those with lower positions are picked up by the leaders of the organization, was called consensus formation. The process of consensus mobilization has been discussed before, but Smid does not consider it sufficient to assume that these perspectives are created by union leaders before they convey them to the rest of the organization, without taking into account the union members’ influence on these perspectives.

In sum, internal processes in trade unions can be considered to consist of top-down as well as bottom-up processes. Depending on their position in the trade union organization, individuals might have different loyalties and be part of top-down or bottom-up processes. The concept of consensus building can be linked to solidarity if it is assumed that solidarity is based on common interests, an approach that has been discussed earlier. Therefore, it is interesting to consider the roles of trade union organizations in the creation and strengthening of common interests and solidarity among workers in general, and their members more specifically, taking into account both top-down and bottom-up processes and individuals’ position in the union organization.
2.4 Research questions

This study attempts to contribute to understanding how the increased labor flexibility in the context of the Indonesian garment and textile industry impacts solidarity among workers. Therefore, the first main research questions in this study is how members and employees of trade unions in this context perceive solidarity among workers. In order to answer this research question, this study will attempt to answer (1) how union employees and members define solidarity, (2) to which extent they perceive solidarity to be challenged, (3) and who is in- and excluded from solidarity, or in other words, where they situate boundaries related to solidarity. The second main research question then inquires how union members and employees explain these perceived levels of solidarity themselves. Answering this research question will be done by analyzing (1) in what ways they perceive the existence of different worker statuses to influence solidarity among workers and (2) what other explanations they give for these perceived levels of solidarity. Finally, the third main research question focuses on the relation between trade unions and solidarity when it asks in what ways trade unions as organizations influence these perceptions of solidarity among workers.

3 Methodology

3.1 Qualitative research design

This study wants to explore how union members and employees perceive different worker statuses and solidarity among workers with different statuses. Moreover, it attempts to study the ways in which union members and employees explain these perceived levels of solidarity, and the ways they themselves, and more generally the organization they are part of, might influence these perceptions. Because of the nature of these research questions, a qualitative research design was chosen, with constructivism as the underlying paradigm.

In constructivism, it is assumed that each person has their own perception of reality, and that reality is a social construction (Mortelmans, 2007). Research in this tradition therefore focuses on people’s experiences or realities and the ways these experiences or realities are constructed, as is the case in this study, since it focuses on respondents’ perceptions, the explanations they themselves bring up, and the ways their realities are constructed. The constructivist paradigm seems suitable for this study, since departing from respondents’ realities might add to previous research on this topic by revealing complexities that would otherwise not be visible. Moreover, studies applying a constructivist perspective pay attention to the roles of the researcher and the way they might influence the study by constructing realities in interaction with the research object (Mortelmans, 2007). This is especially important in this study, since I was a foreigner and outsider in the research setting, which might have influenced the interactions with the respondents. This will be discussed more in-depth later.

3.2 Negotiating access

Several steps were taken in order to gain access to the research setting before and during my stay abroad. In march 2016 two Belgian NGO’s were contacted because they were involved with social
movements in the global south, which was the general theme that was decided upon by then. In the introductory e-mails sent to them (see appendix on CD-ROM) I asked whether they would like to meet to discuss research themes, and whether they would be prepared to introduce me to their partner organizations abroad. This resulted in an introductory meeting with the contact person who worked for one of these organizations¹, where I learned more about their work with partner organizations who focus on garment and textile workers in the global south. The choice to meet this contact person before narrowing down the research topic was made because I wanted to take their experiences and knowledge about the context into account, and because I hoped that this study might be of some use for this NGO. This meeting ended up strongly influencing my research topic, since the issue of labor flexibility in the garment industry was first brought to my attention back then.

After the meeting, this contact person helped gaining access to the research setting by discussing my research plans with Andri, the Indonesian person based in Jakarta who coordinates the Belgian NGO’s programs in the region of South-East Asia. Moreover, they sent him a letter I wrote him to introduce myself and my research proposal (see appendix on CD-ROM). In May 2016, Andri agreed to help me before and during my research if I would conduct it in Indonesia. He eventually became the main contact point for all practical arrangements made pre-departure, and he introduced me to a partner organization of the Belgian NGO: the garment and textile trade union where the majority of interviews were conducted. For practical purposes, this trade union will be called ‘union A’ in this study. Upon my arrival in Indonesia, my first contact point was the national office of union A in Jakarta, since Andri introduced me to them. Arrangements for most interviews with members and staff from union A were therefore made through this national office, and more specifically mainly through Elsa, Rahmad and Timur. These three staff members, who later participated in interviews themselves, were often present in the national office of union A and were some of the only union employees that knew English, which is why they became my main contact persons. Access to union B and C, two more unions out of which a few employees and members were interviewed, was gained through staff members at union A’s national office as well, because they personally knew some people in these unions.

In union A and B’s structure, three levels can be distinguished: at the national level they have an office based in Jakarta, at the branch level they consist of several regional offices, and at the company or plan level they consist of the many local departments per company. When negotiating access, a general distinction can be made between arranging interviews with union staff part of the national level and union staff and members part of the branch and company level: the former were more directly accessible, since I could often ask them myself whether they would like to participate in the study, while the latter were more difficult to access. Despite some attempts to avoid this and arrange interviews myself, the language barrier and the advantage of easily finding respondents through them resulted in me usually asking union A’s national staff whether they could arrange interview opportunities for me. Moreover, respondents, and especially those who are union members, often found themselves in vulnerable positions and might have been cautious towards an outsider asking them to be interviewed. Approaching

¹ The names of this Belgian NGO as well as the names of the Indonesian trade unions involved in this study will not be mentioned in this study in order to protect respondents’ anonymity. They can however be obtained on request.
them through someone part of their own organization might have made it easier to gain their trust. The fact that access was gained through these contact persons part of union A’s national staff, which made somewhat dependent on them, is considered both beneficial and limiting. On the one hand, it made arranging interviews and gaining access easier in a pragmatic way, but on the other hand, it might have caused some limitations for this study, since it might have made it possible for the national union’s staff to select respondents they preferred. This selection issue will be discussed more in-depth in the next section about sampling.

3.3 Sampling

As is usual in qualitative research designs, this study opted for purposive sampling (Mortelmans, 2007). Generally, the research population for this study can be defined as workers who are trade union members and trade union employees\(^2\) in Indonesian garment and textile trade unions. The decision to focus on this specific industry was made because it has high levels of labor flexibility (Beerepoot et al., 2013; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009), while the decision to conduct research in Indonesia was based on pragmatic reasons, since Andri as a contact person facilitated negotiating access to the research setting.

The most important criterion for sampling was respondents’ position in the trade union organization, which changed throughout the research period. In the beginning, the goal was to interview as much union members as possible, since I preferred to study workers’ own perceptions on their situation. Interviews with union employees were supposed to be used in support of findings from interviews with union members. However, throughout the research period it became clear that the interviews with union staff were more interesting than expected, since they seemed to bring additional perspectives to the topics that were discussed. Moreover, interviews with workers turned out to be more challenging than expected due to possible social desirability. Because of these reasons, the objective changed to having one half of the respondents be union members, while the other half were supposed to be union employees. Near the end of the research period, another adjustment was made when I decided to distinguish between union employees at the national and at the branch level, and subsequently added a few more interviews with those part of the branch level. This way, the sample became more heterogeneous, possibly bringing new insights because their different positions in the organization caused more variation (Mortelmans, 2007).

Regarding the criterion of the organization that respondents were part of, the majority of the respondents were part of union A because of pragmatic reasons of negotiating access, as described earlier. However, a few respondents deviate from this criterion: those part of union B and C, and Andri, who worked for the Belgian NGO. The decision to involve those respondents part of union B was made because I thought interviewing participants part of a different organization might bring interesting variations in the data, thereby increasing the heterogeneity of the sample (Mortelmans, 2007). Union C however became unintentionally involved in the study, since a national staff member of union A arranged these interviews for me without specifying that they were not part of union A. Finally, Andri was interviewed because of

\(^2\) In this study ‘union employees’ is used to indicate those who work for the trade union organization itself, both as part of the staff and as the leaders, on national and branch level of the organization.
his experience with Indonesian trade unions and workers, even though he is not a part of the research population.

Eventually 23 respondents were interviewed, out of which 20 interviews were used, as can be seen in the table displaying background information on respondents (see appendix: respondent information). Two interviews, those with F4R and Bunga, were left out of the analysis because the respondents decided to stop the interviews early on, which meant not all topics were discussed. Moreover, the interview with Robby was omitted from the analysis because it was unexpectedly translated by a friend of one of the union members who did not seem to know a lot about the context or the specific terms used by union members, which lead to many misunderstandings and negatively affected the quality of the interview. 20 respondents were included in the analysis, of which 19 are part of trade union organizations, while one, Andri, is employed by a Belgian NGO and works at what can be considered the international level. Out of the 19 respondents part of trade unions, 7 are workers and union members, and 12 are union employees. When considering their positions in the union, 7 respondents were part of the company level, since it consists of union members only, 5 were part of the branch level, and 7 were part of the national level. Moreover, the fact that all union members that participated in the study were some sort of leaders in their plan level union should be noted. Regarding the organizations that these respondents are part of, 15 were part of union A, with all kinds of functions, 3 were part of union B and worked in their national office, and 1 was a member of union C.

Regarding sampling challenges, the process of negotiation access as described before might have had implications for the selection of respondents: my dependence on union staff for arranging interviews might have made it harder to select respondents myself. In practice however, usually when union staff arranged interviews with union members, it turned out to be situations with groups of ten to fifteen members from a certain company level or branch, possibly because their meeting was already planned and I was invited, or because the local union leaders used my visit as an opportunity to organize a meeting. I also conducted a few interviews during a training organized by the union. In sum, when trying to interview union members, there were often a group of union members present, while I only had time to interview a few of them, meaning that I usually introduced myself and my research project to the group, after which I searched for volunteers that wanted to participate. Therefore, I estimate that union A’s staff’s influence on the selection of respondents should not be considered as an insurmountable problem. The dependence of others for arranging interviews did require a more pragmatic approach towards taking interview opportunities, but I also had the possibility to influence the sampling myself when asking union A’s staff about interviewing respondents according to the criteria described above.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Since this study involves trade union members and employees that might find themselves in vulnerable situations due to the nature of their jobs and possible conflicts with companies, governments or other actors, it is important to consider certain ethical issues. One of them is the principle of informed consent, meaning that respondents should voluntarily agree to participate in the study while having received sufficient information about the research project (Mortelmans, 2007). Therefore, before respondents were asked whether they would like to participate in the study, I introduced myself and my research
project, and informed them about the general research topic, i.e. the consequences of labor flexibility and short term contracts for trade unions and workers in the Indonesian garment and textile industry. Moreover, I repeated this information during the introductory part of the interviews. Before as well as at the beginning of the interviews I emphasized that participation in the interviews is voluntary, and that they could stop the interview in any moment. One more aspect of obtaining informed consent was that I explained them that I would like to record the interview in order to be able to write it down correctly later, and I asked them whether they agreed with the recording, before I started the recording and one more time during the interview introduction.

A possible challenge for this principle of informed consent were the power relations when negotiating access with respondents: as explained before, company level union members or branch level union employees were often asked whether they would like to participate in the study by those part of the national level of the union. Therefore, it could be that social desirability played a role in the decision to participate for certain respondents, especially for those who are part of the company or branch level and were asked by those part of the national level, who are higher in the hierarchy of the organization. The possible challenge lies in the fact that I could not control the way they were asked this question, and due to the language barrier also have no way of evaluating this. In one case however these mechanisms were rather clear: when I attended a training organized by the union, I was introduced by one of the union leaders to all training participants, and he decided to single out two participants of the training in front of the whole group, asking them to participate in my interviews. I attempted to counter this by having a private conversation with these persons, emphasizing that I was searching for volunteers, that I could find other people to participate if they were not interested, and when they agreed to participate, that they could stop the interview in any moment if they did not want to continue, for whatever reason. This resulted in one of these respondents, F4R, deciding to stop the interview after more or less 20 minutes.

Another important ethical issue is the protection of privacy and anonymity of respondents (Mortelmans, 2007). In order to reach this goal, pseudonyms were used instead of real names for all respondents. Moreover, I decided to not mention the names of the trade union organizations involved in this study, since there are not many people working in the national or branch offices of these unions, meaning the identity of respondents part of the national level, and to a lesser extent the branch level, could otherwise be easily uncovered. The name of the Belgian NGO that helped me gain access is not mentioned for the same reasons, since information about their partner organizations can be easily found. The names of the organizations could be obtained on request. Finally, I also explained respondents that access to the recording of the interview would be limited to me and my professors at my university, which also serves to protect their anonymity.

3.5 Data gathering

During this study, data was mainly gathered through conducting in-depth interviews, while some less important methods of data gathering, such as informal introductory conversations, observations and an attempted survey, also played a role in this study.
3.5.1 Introductory conversations, observations and surveys

During the first weeks of my stay in Indonesia, I visited union A’s national office in Jakarta several times, introducing myself to some of the people working there and engaging in informal conversations. These informal conversations (see appendix: overview data gathering) consisted of me asking them questions about trade unions in Indonesia generally, union A more specifically, problems experienced by workers, and labor flexibility. Most of them happened with people part of union A’s national staff, who were later interviewed as well, while one of them was with a company level leader. During and after these meetings, notes were taken, and some of them were recorded as well, of course with the consent of the those I talked to. The goal of these exploratory conversations was on the one hand to increase my understanding of the context, and on the other hand to verify whether the research topics and questions that I had in mind at this point, focusing on labor flexibility and its impact on trade unions, were relevant to the specific context. Since solidarity between permanent, contract and other workers was mentioned a few times during these conversations, sometimes as a challenge for the trade union, these conversations helped shape the research in the sense that they seemed to confirm that it could be interesting to focus on the roles of collective identity and solidarity in impacting the recruitment and commitment of trade union members.

My understanding of the research setting was also enhanced through some observations I did when I attended a two-day training organized by the trade union. Company level union leaders from different companies were all together invited to participate in this training, where they learned about government regulation and how to apply it to their situations, and where they also had some time to get to know each other and learned about their experiences. These observations were not directly incorporated in the analysis, but they did influence the topics that were discussed during the interviews. An example of such an observation was that at the beginning of meetings during these training, the participants all together yelled a slogan while raising their fist, and that they were wearing trade union uniforms. In the subsequent interviews, questions about this slogan and uniform were added to further understand these traditions.

Finally, I attempted to conduct written surveys (see appendix on CD-ROM) in order to gather statistical data on the companies where union A was present. The questions asked in this survey mainly focused on topics such as the number of workers in the company, the number of these workers that are union members, and the division of the different worker statuses among these workers and union members. This survey was translated to Indonesian and sent to the different branches of union A, in the hopes that they could provide me with more information about the number of permanent, contract and other workers in the industry and among union members, and whether the proportions of workers with a certain status differed when comparing the industry in general and the trade union more specifically. However, this did not work out since I did not obtain the completed surveys. Moreover, I tried to verbally ask the survey’s questions in a few interview situations, but this sometimes seemed to result in confusing situations since respondents would for example contradict themselves, or various workers part of the same company would give contradicting answers. This lead me to believe that it would be challenging to draw reliable conclusions from statistical data obtained through surveys in this research setting.
3.5.2 In-depth interviews

The data for this study were mainly obtained through 23 in-depth interviews with trade union employees as well as members (see appendix: overview data gathering). Out of the 21 interviews that were completed, the shortest interview took 49 minutes, and the longest 2 hours and 17 minutes. This method of data collection was chosen because it allows gaining a deeper understanding of respondents’ story, and because it allows placing their story at the center of the study while influencing them as little as possible (Mortelmans, 2007), which is important if this study wants to understand respondents’ perceptions on worker solidarity and the mechanisms behind these perceptions.

The interviews started with a short drop-off, which consisted of questions about general demographical information, as well as questions about their past and current jobs, and their position or tasks in the trade union (see appendix on CD-ROM). This was done at the beginning of the interviews, since these questions were relatively easy to answer and might have given respondents some time to become used to the interview setting. Afterwards, questions were asked with a list of topics and possible questions (see appendix: interview topics and questions) as the guideline to make sure that all important topics were discussed. However, the advantage of collecting data through qualitative interviews is that it allows for flexibility during the interviews, for example by switching up the order in which these topics and questions were discussed (Mortelmans, 2007). This flexibility was especially important in this study, since there were several situations where I learned that respondents only had a limited amount of time for the interview, meaning I had to shorten the interview in that moment.

The questions asked during interviews were adapted depending on whether they were conducted with union members or union employees. An example is that several union employees were asked about the trade union’s history, while union members usually were not, since data on this topic served as background information and was not meant to be used for a comparison of respondents perceptions. Moreover, the task of arranging cards about which groups the respondent does and does not belong to (as described in the appendix: interview topics and questions) was used in several interviews with union members as a tool to facilitate questions about these topics, since asking certain questions without the visualization proved to be challenging during the first interviews with union members.

The list of interviews and topics in the appendix is the one used in the last few interviews that were conducted, but these topics and questions did change during the research period. An example is the question about what permanent workers would do if the trade union would organize a strike or demonstration about the problems of contract workers. Based on the first interviews that were conducted, I had the impression that respondents considered permanent workers to be more privileged and safe than other workers, and that some respondents considered solidarity from permanent to contract workers to be challenged. Therefore, I posed this question as a hypothetical situation, to find out what other respondents’ views on this topic would be. Moreover, the questions about the trade union’s slogan and uniforms were added later on in the data collection period since I observed that they were used during a training organized by the union that I attended.
Interviews in qualitative research often use the Grounded Theory approach, which implies that the data collection happens in several cycles (Mortelmans, 2007). Ideally the interviews conducted in a first interview round would be analyzed first, after which the interview questions for the next round of interviewing would be adjusted based on the findings. However, because of the limited time I had to conduct the interviews during my research period in Indonesia, I did not have time to transcribe and analyze interviews while I was there. This is why I based the adjustments I made to the interview questions and topics on notes taken during or after the interviews. Occasionally, I also listened to recordings of interviews for additional insights. This also means that I did not split up the data collection into several rounds. The question about permanent workers’ reaction to collective action about contract workers’ problems was for example first asked in the fourth interview that was conducted, while other questions, for example about union strategies for creating solidarity and about the trade union’s slogan and uniforms, were first asked in the seventh interview. Adjustments to the interview questions were constantly made throughout the research period.

Because this study was in a context where I was a foreigner, using interpreters during interviews was almost always necessary, with the exception of a few respondents part of the national level of trade unions. During the first two interviews, Elsa, the national level vice chairperson of union A, acted as interpreter because she was one of the only people in the trade union that spoke English. However, this was not ideal, both because of her position in the organization being one of the top leaders, which might have increased socially desirable answers among interviews with others part of the same union, and because she had her own opinions on the topics discussed during the interviews, meaning I did not know to what extent these views influenced her translations. This is why I mainly used two interpreters who did not have connections to these trade unions, Dina and Anisa, for the remaining interviews. I got in touch with them through some of my housemates that stayed with me in Jakarta, and they agreed to help me in exchange for a compensation. They were not professional translators, but one of them was an English teacher, and the other had interpreted for others occasionally. Before I conducted the first interview with them, I met with them to give them more information about the topic of research project, the interviews and certain interview techniques, such as posing neutral questions and avoiding suggestions. This information and the instructions for interviews were also extensively described in a document (see appendix on CD-ROM) that was handed to them. Finally, I also gave them my list of interview topics and questions in English before the interview, so they could prepare beforehand.

### 3.5.3 Challenges related to social desirability

During these interviews, several challenges were experienced that might have influenced the results of this research, with social desirability possibly being the most important one. On several occasions it seemed to be challenging to connect with respondents, which might have had to do with the context of the research, and the fact that I was a female foreigner conducting scientific research. Firstly, I felt like a high social status was ascribed to foreigners, and especially European foreigners. One of the indications for this feeling was that often, when I had conducted an interview, respondents and other union members or employees asked me to take a picture with them afterwards. Moreover, gender might have also played a role: I am female and the interpreters helping me the most were female, while the
majority of respondents were male. This often resulted in situations where we were two females interviewing a male. Finally, the fact that respondents were asked to participate in an interview connected to university research did seem to make some respondents nervous.

During interviews with male workers, this sometimes resulted in men being shy, avoiding to look at us, or looking at the Indonesian interpreter rather than at me, which made connecting to them and creating a comfortable atmosphere for the interview challenging. Several times respondents told me they were nervous, or asked for a friend to stay in the neighborhood during the interview. During the few interviews conducted with women, it felt easier to connect to them, and I did not experience the same level of distance between us. Also, during interviews with men working for the national offices or the branches of these trade unions, it felt like there was less distance. In these situations, the fact that I was a female foreigner conducting research might have been an advantage, as people seemed to be curious and keen on helping me. If shyness or distancing is clearly noticeable, this might imply that the answers given during these interviews could be more biased because of social desirability.

Moreover, social desirability might not only have played a role when answers were adjusted to please me as a researcher, but also to please other people that were sometimes present during interviews. Respondents were usually asked whether the interview could take place in a separate room or place, with only the respondent, the interpreter and the interviewer present. However, sometimes respondents did ask whether a friend or someone from the union could be present, so they would feel more at ease. As the well-being and comfort of the respondents was a priority, this was allowed, but the possibility that the presence of other persons created some social desirability should be taken into account. This is certainly true for the occasions where someone with a higher position in the trade union, for example someone working for the branch or national level, was present during interviews with workers. Exceptionally these people with higher positions in the organization were the ones that seemed to insist on their presence during interviews with people with lower positions, which made the likelihood of socially desirable answers even higher.

3.6 Data analysis

After finishing the data collection in Indonesia, the recordings of the conducted interviews were used to transcribe the interviews (see appendix on CD-ROM). The transcription conventions used in these transcriptions can be found in the appendix as well (see appendix on CD-ROM). The first step in analyzing the data was that a few interview transcriptions were coded on paper, after which the main codes such as ‘workers’ or ‘relations between workers’ were distinguished (see appendix: codes structure). These main codes and the codes part of these main codes were then used to structure the data of the remaining interviews as well. This coding process resulted in tables per code, in which the data about a certain topic from all interviews was collected (see appendix on CD-ROM). Each open code in these tables was labeled with a combination of numbers referring to the place in the interview where the original data connected to this code could be found. This way, it was easy to go back to the original data when writing the analysis.
At the time when the code structure in the appendix was constructed, the aim of the research was to study the impact of labor flexibility on the recruitment of new members in the trade union on the one hand, and on members’ participation in trade union activities and collective action on the other hand. This was supposed to be done by studying solidarity and collective identities among workers. During the process of writing the analysis of this study, it was decided to focus on one part of this initial idea, namely the solidarity among workers in a context of labor flexibility, since this would allow to discuss the processes and mechanisms more in-depth. The choice to focus on this specific part of the data was made because of the remarkable variation in the perceptions of worker solidarity, which made it seem interesting to try to explain these differing views. This way of analyzing the data could be considered as coinciding with the Grounded Theory approach, since it started with open coding, letting the codes originate in the data itself, after which the data was organized in tables, which could be called axial coding (Mortelmans, 2007). During the final process of writing the analysis, selective coding in order to construct the theory was mainly done through the writing itself. Occasionally, matrices were used to arrange the data and further my understanding of it. Moreover, the decision to focus the analysis on a specific part of the data, namely solidarity, could be considered as part of the Grounded Theory approach as well, since it followed from an inductive analysis of the data.

4 Analysis

4.1 Perceptions of solidarity

The acquired data on the solidarity among workers, their relations and attitudes towards each other is key to answering the research questions that have been asked. In order to analyze perceptions of solidarity, the way solidarity among workers is perceived will be described, based on respondents’ definition of solidarity and the sensitizing concept of solidarity brought forward by the literature study. Moreover, the boundaries that respondents have drawn to determine who is in- or excluded when it comes to solidarity will be studied.

4.1.1 Defining solidarity according to respondents

Solidarity among workers will be analyzed by looking at the data about the different aspects of solidarity determined by the sensitizing concept: an affective aspect and a behavioral aspect. In addition to this, 13 out of 20 respondents explicitly discussed solidarity among workers, using the concept themselves spontaneously or when asked about it. Therefore it is interesting to start this analysis by looking at how these respondents themselves define solidarity, to consider in what ways it corresponds or differs from the sensitizing concept that was used.

One category of aspects mentioned by the majority of these respondents when defining solidarity consists of feelings of togetherness, good relationships and shared experiences and goals. According to a few respondents, solidarity is the feeling of togetherness when facing problems, of having a common struggle and facing it together, of not walking alone. This is illustrated by Abah in the following quote.
“INT: So basically we [embed] some kind of euh you know, we, we kind of like euh keep in their mind that whenever we are facing problem between, whenever there's problem between euh the workers and the euh, and the euh factories, * yeah we embed the feeling of togetherness and the solidarity." (Abah, union A, branch level chairman)

Solidarity has been interpreted as an emotion, something you can ‘feel’ in your ‘heart’. Additionally, a few respondents pointed out the importance of good relations between workers for solidarity, saying that solidarity is easier if they want to “be with each other”, do not have any problems with each other and even consider each other to be friends or family members. Andri also connects solidarity with a feeling of being part of a family, who are behind you if you encounter a problem. Finally, solidarity was also associated with shared experiences and goals when respondents talked about common interests or a common struggle. Ical suggested that solidarity is based on common interests when saying that it is created by taking different interests and constructing it as something they have in common. Also, some respondents implied that status differences or differentiating between workers with a different status could hinder solidarity among them, meaning that unity and shared experiences are important for solidarity.

Indicating another recurring theme when analyzing respondents’ definition of solidarity, the majority of these 13 respondents gave examples that could be categorized as ‘helping others’, from personal problems to problems directly connected to their work and the trade union. According to some respondents, solidarity means helping union members who find themselves in a difficult situation, for example by helping them if something is broken in their house, visiting them or collecting money for them if they fall sick, or paying for their funeral if they pass away. Regarding problems related to their work, respondents mentioned some examples of workers with a different status helping each other, for example when union members ask their company to hire outsourced workers as permanent workers, or when permanent workers send letters to their company management to help contract workers. Also, when talking about solidarity, some respondents thought of colleagues in the same factory helping and supporting each other, for example doing something if their friend is dismissed, or union members helping members from a different company or area if they have a problem. According to several respondents, solidarity can concretely manifest itself through workers participating in collective action when it is not about their own issues. Examples are permanent workers joining a strike about contract or outsourced work, union members participating in a strike in a different factory, or different company level unions joining together in a demonstration when a local union leader is imprisoned. An example is Elsa, who defined solidarity as workers joining a strike in a different company.

“UNID: Yeah, solidarity, if let's say Union A has euh five factories in Serang, one factory dis-, euh will dismiss by employer, these four euh factory euh the shop steward will send some workers join strike yeah the, the dismiss, euh yeah. That is euh we call solidarity.” (Elsa, union A, national level vice chairperson)

In short, according to these respondents solidarity means actively helping others who face a problem, even if this problem is not yours or does not directly affect you, such as when it happens in a different company or to workers with a different status.
Based on these findings, solidarity could be defined as a feeling of togetherness and/or unity among people who have good relationships with each other, and who perceive their experiences and goals as something they share with others. Besides these feelings and perceptions, solidarity also consists of acting in accordance to these feelings by actively helping others, even when the problems others experience do not necessarily affect themselves. According to some respondents, the trade union plays a central role in the creation of solidarity among its members. When comparing this definition to the sensitizing concept of solidarity, the first part of the definition is similar to the part of the literature focused on the affective aspect of solidarity. Moreover, the part of respondents’ definition about actively helping others corresponds to the concept of mutual defense mentioned in the literature focused on the behavioral aspect of solidarity. These definitions of solidarity, based on respondents’ perceptions, will be taken into account when further analyzing solidarity among workers.

4.1.2 Perceptions of worker solidarity

Remarkably, perceptions of solidarity among workers vary greatly among the respondents that were interviewed. Their views can be imagined as scattered across a continuum, ranging from respondents asserting that there is solidarity among workers while not mentioning any limitations or boundaries, to one respondent claiming that there is no solidarity among workers whatsoever. For this analysis, the respondents will be divided into three groups: 8 respondents share rather positive perceptions of solidarity among workers, generally mentioning little to no limitations, while 4 respondents have rather negative perceptions of solidarity, mainly emphasizing limitations and arguing that solidarity among workers is rather difficult. Finally, 8 respondents find themselves in between, arguing that both positive and negative things can be said about solidarity among workers, that sometimes there are difficulties, boundaries or limitations to solidarity, and sometimes there are not. Also, some argue that solidarity among workers depends on the context or issue at hand. In sum, perceptions of solidarity are notably diverse, which makes it interesting to try to describe and explain these variations.

4.1.2.1 Affective aspect

In order to analyze respondents’ differing perceptions of solidarity, its affective aspect, referring to feelings of togetherness and belonging, will be discussed first.

Out of those respondents with rather positive perceptions of worker solidarity, some explicitly stated that there are no problems with solidarity among workers, while others called the relations among workers “very cohesive”, emphasized the importance of unity or togetherness among them, and described them by stating that they are “all friends”.

However, among those respondents who did mention some limitations to solidarity, namely those with rather negative perceptions and those who find themselves in between, most emphasize that there is variation in whether or not the relationships between workers are good, and whether or not there is solidarity among them. Generally, most of these respondents mention some positive aspects of the relations among workers, saying that there is harmony, solidarity and good interactions between them. Union members were described as a family who are all part of the union. However, all of them also said that sometimes there are difficulties with solidarity among workers, depending on the circumstances,
the issue at hand or the workers involved. An example is Andri, who discusses challenges for solidarity between permanent and outsourced workers.

“UNID: The problem is euh normally when we, when the permanent workers have CBA, Collective Bargaining Agreement, most of the time they don't include the outsourced workers, so that's become, [euh gap, gap] between permanent and outsourced.” (Andri, Belgian NGO, coordinator South-East Asia)

He also said that permanent workers do not consider outsourced workers to be their colleagues or part of their company because of the differences between them. Dira, part of the staff in the national office of a trade union, even argues that there is no solidarity among union members whatsoever.

In terms of how workers feel about each other, some varying statements were found. According to Timur, some permanent workers are concerned about contract workers. Rather negative feelings were mentioned too, such as permanent and contract workers not wanting to meet each other because of the status difference, or permanent workers not wanting to be aware of contract workers’ problems. Moreover, two respondents mentioned that contract workers are jealous of permanent workers because of the advantages they get. To conclude, perceptions of feelings of togetherness, unity, and belonging vary remarkably among respondents.

4.1.2.2 Behavioral aspect
As part of the behavioral aspect of solidarity, this part will focus on workers helping and supporting each other, and joining collective action as solidary behavior. Out of those respondents with rather positive views on solidarity, the majority emphasized that workers want to help and support each other. Some respondents explicitly called this a part of solidarity, but for those who didn't, it can be argued that this is part of how solidarity manifests itself based on the way solidarity has been defined. When talking about workers helping and supporting each other, some respondents mentioned that all workers support each other. Additionally, most of them focused on permanent workers helping or supporting workers who have a different status, such as contract or outsourced workers. Jati, a national trade union chairman, illustrated this by saying that permanent workers help outsourced workers by asking the employer to change their status to permanent workers. Another example was given by Pakod, a branch level trade union employee, who explained that permanent workers encourage contract workers to fight for their rights, or in other words support them.

Among those respondents with rather negative perceptions of solidarity, and those who find themselves in between, several respondents have mentioned situations where workers help and support each other. If a union member falls ill, or something is broken in their house, other union members all together help them, for example by visiting or gathering money from them. Also, sometimes union members help members from a different company if they have a problem, for example by joining a demonstration. Regarding permanent workers helping contract workers, two respondents explained that permanent workers usually do not feel the urge to help contract workers and that solidarity between them does not happen quite often, as illustrated by Timur in the following quote.
“INT: Yeah (laughs).* Yeah, yeah euh because euh the permanent workers euh feel comfort in the factory so doesn’t want to join, to fight for the contract, but if the permanent also has problem, they will follow the, the, the struggle of the union.” (Timur, union A, branch level staff)

However, some exceptions were mentioned, such as when Timur says he wanted to fight for contract workers when he was a permanent worker, or when Sohib argues that permanent workers are willing to help contract workers under condition that they are union members.

When asked whether they thought permanent workers would join a strike or protest about the problems of workers with a different status, such as contract or outsourced workers, nearly all of those with positive perceptions on solidarity responded that permanent workers would join even though the strike is not focused on their problems. Joining a rally or strike can be a way of supporting other union members, and therefore showing solidarity towards them, as some respondents said. However, among those with rather negative perceptions and those who find themselves in between, opinions were divided. A few respondents argued that most permanent workers would participate, but more respondents said that it can be difficult to convince them to join. More generally, Surya suggested that a lack of participation in union activities, such as workers who do not want to join trainings organized by the union, can also challenge solidarity among workers.

4.1.3 Boundaries

When considering respondents’ perceptions of solidarity applied to their own specific context, one can notice that they did draw some boundaries, explicitly and implicitly, indicating who is in- and excluded from solidarity among workers. The boundaries mentioned by respondents can be arranged into two categories: boundaries concerning workers’ statuses, and boundaries connected to the trade union.

The eight respondents who share rather positive perceptions of solidarity among workers and generally do not focus on its limitations do not mention many boundaries to solidarity. Regarding workers’ status, nearly all of these respondents stated that solidarity extends to all workers, including both permanent and contract workers. The one exception to this was mentioned by Jati, who seemed to suggest that solidarity extends to outsourced workers, but that it might be challenged from time to time because of how different outsourced workers, who are employed by a third party, are. Concerning the trade union, some respondents seemed to suggest that those under the ‘umbrella’ of the trade union are included when it comes to solidarity among them. Elsa specified that this includes solidarity among those union members who work in different factories or live in different regions. A few respondents discussed the trade union itself as one of the only boundaries mentioned, when describing membership almost as a necessary condition for solidarity, implying that those workers who are not part of the trade union are excluded from solidarity. Ujang even stated this explicitly, explaining that he does not want to be involved in the problems of non-union members because they do not pay member dues. In sum, those respondents who emphasize the presence of solidarity among workers only mention a few boundaries to solidarity, and if they do, it mostly focuses on solidarity being limited to the trade union, and barely focuses on in- or excluding workers with certain statuses.
With regard to the eight respondents who do not lean towards a more positive or negative view on solidarity among workers, instead recognizing that solidarity sometimes is difficult, and sometimes is not, there are some boundaries to be discussed. There were differing views on workers’ statuses as a boundary for solidarity. A few respondents seemed to suggest that solidarity extends to both permanent and contract workers, while the majority of them were of the opinion that there sometimes is less solidarity between permanent and contract workers. Various explanations were given for this lack of solidarity, with most of them pointing to permanent workers, arguing that they might not always be willing to show solidarity towards contract workers. Some respondents ascribed this to permanent workers feeling comfortable and confident, thinking that they already have a better life, as illustrated in the following interview excerpt.

“RES: Ah, yeah, and euhm if they say no, if they do not want to participate, the permanent workers, euh why do you think that they say no? *
INT: They feel they enjoy euh for the, their life, for their work, they do not care about others.
RES: Hmm. So euh, can you explain this a bit more? *
INT: The the the worker, permanent workers feel confident, feel enjoyable euh with the work, with their life so euh they feel that they euh do not join the euh strike.”

(Budi, union A, company level leader)

Here, Budi explains that permanent workers, according to him, sometimes choose not to participate in a strike or protest organized by the trade union because they enjoy their work and life in general, and do not care about other workers. Sohib adds that permanent workers ‘do not like to be aware’ of contract workers’ problems. This can be interpreted as an example of boundary demarcation, since these permanent workers are not considered part of those who show solidarity towards others, seemingly going for a more individualistic approach instead. Besides, one respondent refers to contract workers as well, arguing that sometimes they are jealous of permanent workers and the advantages that come with their status, which might challenge the extent to which they show solidarity towards permanent workers. Additionally, a few respondents did not attribute difficulties with solidarity specifically to either permanent or contract workers, instead reasoning that solidarity can be difficult when they have different interests, because they would be less inclined to show solidarity if others’ issues do not directly affect themselves, or when they have a rather negative relationship with each other.

Most respondents however also mention some contexts or situations in which there still is solidarity between permanent and contract workers, despite the challenges previously mentioned. An important factor that enhances solidarity according to a few respondents is when they ‘share the same concerns’ or ‘build the same issues between workers’. Therefore the process of constructing common interests, seemingly attempting to reduce the effects of the differences between permanent and contract workers, will be discussed more in-depth later on. Finally, a few respondents suggest that the difficulties with solidarity between permanent and contract workers occur less among those who are members of the same trade union, which brings us to the next boundary to be discussed.
Regarding the trade union as a possible boundary, some respondents did discuss solidarity among union members, and a few mentioned union membership as a factor that enhances solidarity among workers with different statuses. Sohib explains this in the following quotation.

“INT: So if we talk about euh under the Union A, you know the, you know, if we talk about un-, under the Union A, if there are a lot of euh contract workers who are still euh work as a contract, if their status as the contract, the permanent workers are willing to help them. Yeah, if you talk about Union A, in Union A level we will, I mean we will eager to help the contract workers. That's the kind of solidarity.” (Sohib, union A, branch level secretary)

Earlier in the same interview, Sohib argued that solidarity between permanent and contract workers can be difficult, but here he adds that in the context of the trade union, if they are all union members, permanent workers are willing to show solidarity towards contract workers by helping them. Furthermore, a few respondents explicitly mentioned that there is solidarity among union members from different companies or areas, meaning that solidarity extends beyond members’ own company level union. This clearly indicates that according to these respondents union members show solidarity towards each other, meaning it could be interpreted as a collectivity on which solidarity is based, even though none of the respondents explicitly stated that non-union members are excluded from solidarity.

In short, these respondents did assert some boundaries to solidarity among workers, both concerning workers’ statuses and union membership. According to them, workers’ statuses can be boundaries to solidarity when permanent and contract workers are less inclined to show solidarity towards each other, but despite this, there are some circumstances in which there is solidarity among them. They paint a complex picture of the circumstances in which workers’ statuses can or cannot be perceived as boundaries regarding solidarity, in- or excluding permanent or contract workers. Their perceptions of union membership as a boundary on the other hand is not as complex, with most respondents seeming to agree that union members do show solidarity towards each other.

Finally, the four respondents who share a rather negative perception of solidarity among workers, mainly focusing on its limitations, also did assert some boundaries delineating who is in- and excluded when it comes to solidarity among workers. Workers’ statuses were presented as a boundary by all of these respondents when they argued that solidarity between permanent, contract and outsourced workers can be difficult. Similar to the examples mentioned before, some respondents point to permanent workers when explaining these difficulties, saying that they feel comfortable and safe, do not care about other workers, do not consider outsourced worker as their colleagues because they are employed by a third party, and sometimes do not understand that the trade union wants to help temporary workers. One respondent also argued that it is not interesting for them to fight for other workers’ rights. Once more one respondent brought up that contract workers can feel jealous of permanent workers, which might hinder solidarity. Moreover a few respondents did not point to one specific group of workers when explaining solidarity, giving more general explanations such as solidarity being more difficult when workers discuss their status, or when they do not have time to talk with each other due to high pressure at work.
Concerning solidarity within the trade union, opinions were divided among these respondents. Some respondents emphasized solidarity among union members, with one respondent arguing that solidarity among them is easier when these union members know each other. However, two respondents also mentioned that solidarity between members from different company level unions is more difficult, thereby indicating an internal boundary to solidarity in the trade union. One respondent even argued that there is no solidarity among union members whatsoever, because gatherings or activities are rare in company level unions, but it should be taken into account that this respondent, part of the national level staff in a trade union, generally was quite critical about the functioning of her trade union. To conclude, these four respondents who mention quite some limitations to solidarity all perceive workers’ statuses to be boundaries to solidarity in different ways, with most of them pointing to permanent workers as the ones who are less inclined to show solidarity towards workers with a different status. Regarding solidarity within the trade union, they do mention an internal boundary, namely between different company level unions.

When comparing the boundaries drawn by these three groups of respondents, divided based on their perceptions of the extent to which there is solidarity among workers, some differences can be found. Those respondents who had rather negative views on solidarity and those who can be situated in between provided several examples of workers’ statuses as boundaries to solidarity, with mostly permanent workers being less inclined to show solidarity towards workers with other statuses, while those who had rather positive views on solidarity mainly did not perceive workers’ statuses as a boundary, instead arguing that all workers are included when it comes to solidarity. Moreover, most respondents seemed to suggest that solidarity extends to members of workers’ own trade union, with some respondents part of those who share more positive views on solidarity considering union membership itself to be a boundary for solidarity, excluding those workers who are not part of it. The only ones who mentioned a boundary within their trade union, namely between different company level unions, were some respondents who had quite negative views on solidarity. In sum, those who had more positive perceptions of solidarity among workers seemed to assert less boundaries in- or excluding workers with certain statuses, and did not focus on boundaries to solidarity within their own organization, while those who generally mention more limitations to solidarity brought up more boundaries indicating challenges for solidarity between workers with different statuses and within their own trade union organization.

4.2 Explaining perceptions of worker solidarity

As has been described in the previous part of this analysis, the respondents that were interviewed had differing perceptions of worker solidarity, ranging from very positive views, barely mentioning any challenges for worker solidarity, to rather negative views mainly emphasizing its limitations. This part of the analysis however will attempt to explain the mechanisms behind both the more positive and negative views on solidarity, by exploring the ways respondents themselves explain the perceived levels of solidarity, as well as approaching these views through an organizational perspective, focusing on the roles of the trade union in constructing these perceptions.
4.2.1 Explanations given by respondents

4.2.1.1 Status differences

Respondents explain the levels of solidarity among workers in various ways. One of the research questions wants to examine in what ways respondents perceive the existence of different worker statuses to influence solidarity among workers. When looking at the ways they explain solidarity among workers by pointing to their statuses, different lines of reasoning regarding the effects of status differences can be distinguished. The first part of the analysis will focus on those respondents arguing that differences between permanent, contract and outsourced workers do not negatively affect solidarity, while the second part will focus on those respondents arguing that status differences can limit or challenge solidarity among workers.

Status differences not limiting solidarity

Several respondents reasoned that solidarity is not negatively affected by the different statuses because there are little to no differences between permanent and contract workers. In two interviews, the statement that there are 'no differences' was used when talking about a specific context, such as a trade union training or an informal meeting, and might be interpreted, not in a literal way, as the respondents stating that permanent and contract workers are equal in these situations. Ujang provided the same reasoning in a more general way, stating that there are no differences between permanent and contract workers.

"INT: Ok euh they have the same, * euh same, same thing happened euh to both of them, either the contract workers or euh permanent workers, they have the same [...]. * Ok, euh all of them euh support each other. There is no difference." (Ujang, union C, company level member)

In his explanation, permanent and contract workers share the same experiences, which leads them to support each other and therefore to more solidarity among them. This line of reasoning can only be found among those with positive perceptions of solidarity who, as described before when discussing worker statuses as boundaries, almost entirely agreed that all workers are included when it comes to solidarity, meaning that they do not perceive workers' status to be a boundary to solidarity.

Contrary to these former viewpoints, several other respondents seem to assume that there are differences between workers with a different status, but argue that this does not influence the relations or solidarity among them. An example is Pakod, who does not deny that there is a difference between workers with different statuses, but who also argues that there are no problems with solidarity among workers.

"RES: Euh can you give examples of situations where you can notice that their euh priorities of the permanent workers and the contract workers are different? *
INT: Yeah, it's kind of confused because we cannot euh see the difference from the surface. Yeah, we cannot notice the difference just judged by the surface, from the surface.
RES: Ok, yeah."
He reasons that the only difference between contract and permanent workers is their status, which is not very noticeable from the surface. Another respondent, Yanti, mentions several differences between permanent and outsourced workers such as having different rights, salaries and company uniforms, but emphasizes that these differences are only relevant in the company. According to her, workers can put their different status aside outside the company, which means that there is solidarity among them in trade union gatherings. Finally, Didi describes how permanent, contract and outsourced workers have some differing priorities, but he argues that they do not influence solidarity among workers because they still share common interests.

What both of these explanations seem to have in common, whether they assume that there are differences between worker statuses or not, is that they argue that potential differences do not have the ability to negatively affect the solidarity among workers in a considerable way, because these differences are not that extensive or important, or because their impact seems to be countered by common interests among workers with different statuses. This reasoning can mainly be found among those with rather positive perceptions of worker solidarity, with Didi being the one exception. He is part of those respondents mentioning limitations as well as positive aspects of solidarity, but explains these limitations by pointing to other factors that cause workers to differ from each other, such as preferences for certain political parties or cultural differences due to having various backgrounds, instead of considering status differences to be the cause.

When approaching these argumentations as a construction, a possible mechanism behind this construction could be that respondents minimize the differences between worker statuses or the impact of these differences. This then allows respondents to construct positive perceptions of solidarity among workers with different statuses, for example by arguing that there are no important differences between them, emphasizing that the only difference between workers, their status, is not very noticeable at first glance, or by constructing the negative impact of status differences as being limited to a certain context. It could then be interesting to question whether this supposed construction of positive perceptions of solidarity, by minimizing the differences between workers’ statuses and the impact of these differences, could be interpreted as a way of dealing with the existence of different worker statuses, or even as strategy to strengthen solidarity among workers. This idea will be further explored throughout this analysis.

Seemingly the only exception among those who argue that status differences do not negatively influence solidarity is Abah, since he instead seemed to argue that workers recognize the differences between them, but still support and help each other, for example when he considers permanent workers joining a strike about contract workers’ problems as a part of solidarity. Another example can be found in this quote, where he explains that solidary behavior of permanent and contract workers towards each other consists of each of them supporting the other in their fights for their specific problems.
“RES: And euhm what is the solidarity like between euhm permanent workers and contract workers, [between] the two groups? * 
INT: They usually give like sort of spirits to each other, you know for, for a permanent worker how to, you know, you know fight their maybe welfare, and then for the contract workers euh the permanent usually like euh give spirit for them to, how to fight euh their, you know, status maybe.” (Abah, union A, branch level chairman)

Therefore, helping or supporting others when their problem does not affect you is considered part of the definition of solidarity here. While the former line of reasoning assumes that potential status differences do not cause major limitations for solidarity because the differences are not that extensive or important, Abah deviates from this by considering solidarity to take place between people who are different from each other.

Status differences limiting solidarity

Finally, the last line of reasoning attempts to explain the ways status differences negatively influence solidarity among workers, instead of aiming to do the reverse, as the previous arguments did. As is not surprising, these explanations can be found among those respondents who share more negative views on worker solidarity and those who find themselves in between, mentioning limitations as well as positive views on solidarity. As discussed before, in both groups workers’ statuses are mentioned as a boundary for solidarity, describing situations where solidarity between permanent, contract and outsourced workers is challenged, with the former emphasizing this more strongly than the latter. These respondents consider status differences themselves as the cause, limiting and challenging solidarity among workers.

Some respondents explained the negative consequences of status differences for solidarity by pointing to permanent workers, who they perceive to feel comfortable, already having a better life, which leads to them not wanting to be aware of contract workers’ problems or offer them help, as is illustrated by Sohib in the following quote.

“INT: Yeah, so euh we can like notice about the, the situation that they’re different is whenever euh both of them are, euh whenever the contract, maybe the contract workers is facing status, because the permanent workers thinks that they already like permanent, so they don’t need like euh to be, they don’t like to aware about the problem that the contract worker are facing.” (Sohib, union A, branch level secretary)

According to this reasoning, permanent workers have a better status which leads them to show less solidarity towards other workers with a different status. Reversing this argumentation, a few respondents say that contract workers’ jealousy of permanent workers, because of their better status, diminishes solidarity from contract workers towards permanent workers. Moreover, some respondents refer to the status differences in general as impeding solidarity among workers, such as when Rahmad argued that solidarity can be difficult if the union advocates changing contract workers’ status. This could be interpreted as the differences between contract and other workers causing tension between them when
the union decides to help one group of workers. Andri illustrates his view on the importance of status differences in the following quote.

“UNID: Euh if they have a same treatment like permanent workers, I think they, they, no problem with the outsourcing. It's not really a big problem. For example if you work euh in a garment factory in euh knitting for example, and besides you there is permanent workers who work the same, [because] it's same type of job.
RES: And you are euh?
UNID: And I'm, my salary is lower.
RES: Yeah. And you are a contract or outsourced worker?
UNID: Yeah, con-, contract, outsourced, that's also the same, euh I have lower euh salary, no allowance, for example he can get food allowance, attendance allowance, you know, and I have no social security, but he get social security, but we work in the same type of job, [...]” (Andri, Belgian NGO, coordinator South-East Asia)

He explains that the status differences between permanent, contract and outsourced workers are problematic because they are treated differently, with permanent workers getting certain advantages that others do not receive, all while doing the same work right next to each other. Later in the interview, he explains that permanent workers do not consider outsourced workers as their colleagues or as part of their company because of the many differences, such as different uniforms, between them, which implies that less solidarity among them could be a consequence.

In short, these respondents argue that solidarity among workers with different statuses can be difficult because of these differences, with some workers finding themselves in better and more comfortable situations, while others experience more difficulties and insecurity, depending on their status. When attempting to understand the mechanism behind these perceptions, it could be argued that these respondents do not just consider the existence of different statuses to cause the challenges for solidarity, but also, or even more so, the inequality connected to these statuses. The situation is that some workers have a permanent status, find themselves in a better position in the company, have advantages such as social security, and feel safe and comfortable about their job, while other workers experience more insecurity and problems related to their job. All the while these different groups do the exact same work in the same company, and work together. If approaching this argumentation as a construction, it could be interpreted as constructing negative perceptions of solidarity by constructing perceptions of workers with different statuses as unequal. This mechanism seems to be reinforced in situations where these differences and inequality are more noticeable or visible, such as when workers with different statuses do the exact same job right next to each other, or when the union organization decides to focus on helping workers with a certain status. Taman also states this when he was asked about the relations between workers with different statuses.

“INT: Euh, they [with friends-, friendship], but only friendship, but when we talk about the, the euh, the status, the permanent is seen only keep euh theirselve and also the contract also standing by theirselve and also outsourced. So they, they *, difficult to make solidarity." (Taman, union A, national level secretary)
Following this line of reasoning, solidarity is difficult when workers talk about their status, since those with different statuses tend to keep to themselves when they are confronted with their differences, and potentially the inequality connected to these differences. Moreover, another indication is Pakod’s argumentation that there is solidarity among workers with different statuses because the differences between them are not very noticeable, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, it could be suggested that some respondents consider status differences’ level of visibility to be a factor that should be taken into account, as contexts where status differences are visible might encounter more limitations to solidarity, while contexts where status differences are more noticeable might experience less challenges for solidarity among workers.

Conclusion

In an attempt to answer the research question of how respondents explain the perceived levels of solidarity among workers with different statuses, attention was paid to the variety of perceptions of worker solidarity, from rather positive to rather negative perceptions, and those in between. Status differences were used in explanations that do not consider them to negatively affect solidarity among workers, as well as those considering them to limit solidarity. In order to explain positive perceptions of solidarity among workers with different statuses, some assume that there are no important differences between workers with different statuses, while others argue that differences between them exist, but that they do not negatively affect solidarity. These respondents provided several arguments for why differences do not impede solidarity: because these differences are not that noticeable, because their impact is limited to certain contexts, or because their effect is countered by common interests among them. However, these same differences are considered to be the cause of limitations to solidarity among workers by those respondents explaining perceived difficulties with worker solidarity. The mechanism behind this is that these respondents consider permanent workers to have a better status than others, such as contract workers, meaning that the differences go hand in hand with inequality, which is then thought to cause division, especially in a context where status differences are more visible.

The dynamics of these opposite argumentations, with one side arguing that differences between worker statuses cause limitations and the other side arguing that they do not, will be further explored throughout this analysis. They are an indication in favor of McBride (2011)’s argumentation that sectionalism or the existence of different groups among workers does not necessarily lead to less solidarity among workers, but that it depends on the way these different groups and their interests are presented. Therefore, it will be questioned whether the arguments that explain why solidarity is not limited by status differences could be considered as a construction of positive perceptions of solidarity among workers with different statuses, while minimizing the differences between them and the impact of those differences. Moreover, arguments that explain why status differences challenge solidarity might be interpreted as a construction of negative perceptions of worker solidarity, by constructing workers’ statuses as unequal, with some categories of workers finding themselves in a better position than others.

4.2.1.2 Common and individual interests

Another recurring theme in the explanations for solidarity given by respondents are interests, and more specifically workers individual interests and the common interests shared with others. Several
respondents argued that common interests enhance solidarity, such as Ical who argued that there is more solidarity among workers if the topic discussed is a common interest for them, such as their salaries. Didi even considers workers’ status to be a shared concern for permanent and contract workers: contract workers want to change their status into a permanent one, while permanent workers can get laid off any time despite their status. Solidarity among them is then based on their shared concern for their status and their common interest in improving it. Three other respondents have argued that permanent workers show solidarity towards contract workers because they have common interests, which they remarkably explain by pointing to permanent workers’ family members. An example is Harum, who states the following when asked about whether they think permanent workers would join a strike about contract workers’ problems.

“RES: Yes. And euhm, what if euhm the permanent workers her abo-, hear about the reason for the strike euhm, and it is euh an issue euhm, and it is euhm about something for the contract workers. * 
INT: They want, they, they want to help, they want to join. * They, they, they think that euh they will help the contract euh workers because they assume that someday her family, I don’t know, perch-, perhaps he said about the, the brother, sister or or the family join for the euh contract workers.” (Harum, union A, company level secretary)

According to these respondents, common interests of permanent and contract workers are based on the possibility that permanent workers’ family members or they themselves might become contract workers at some point in the future. Even though contract workers’ problems might not affect permanent workers directly, it might one day affect others close to them, such as their family members. These common interests could be called ‘imagined’, because they seem to be constructions based on the possibility of something happening in the future. If several respondents construct imagined common interests to explain why solidarity between workers exist, it is interesting to question their reasons for doing this, and to extents to which other common interests are constructed, deliberately or not.

An indication for these reasons can be found when analyzing the trade union’s strategies for creating or strengthening solidarity among workers. As many as seven respondents mentioned emphasizing that workers have common problems, a common struggle or common interests as a strategy to enhance solidarity among them. Some of them, such as Ical in the following quote, even explicitly explain the creation of common interests.

“INT: Yeah, we build like the same issue between the workers, like you know, usually the workers have [two/too] euh different interests, yeah but we make it together like, to be one interest, like maybe for the contract workers, they fight for the status, and then for the permanent workers, euh they want to be like euh [enhancement] of their welfare, so like we, we, we make euh them into one and build the solidarity based on that.” (Ical, union A, branch level secretary)

Combining these union strategies of emphasizing and creating common interests with the construction of imagined common interests, it could be argued that the mechanism behind the factor of common interests as an explanation for solidarity might be constructing shared issues. It could then also be
suggested that this construction of common interests might be a way of dealing with a context where different categories of workers with different interests exist, with the possibly deliberate strategy to strengthen or create more solidarity among them.

When taking a closer look at the mechanisms behind the effects of common interests on solidarity, there seem to be two possible interpretations. On the one hand, the creation of common interests can be understood as causing solidarity among workers because of the shared interests themselves, for example because permanent and contract workers now share common goals. On the other hand, constructing common interests could be seen as enhancing solidarity among workers because contract workers’ problems become part of permanent workers’ individual interests, for example when they argue that these problems might happen to themselves or their family. This can be illustrated by Rahmad’s explanation about solidarity between workers depending on the issue at hand.

“UNID: Like I said, it’s according to the issue, [you know]. If it’s euh really euh global issue, something like euh they feel it will be impact with the others euh, with them, it, it will be impact them, [have an impact with them], they will, they will, they will [count] for the solidarity. But if some, if they feel, [ah it’s not really have an im-, other] impact for us, it’s, it’s difficult to, to involve them.” (Rahmad, union A, national level treasurer)

Following his line of reasoning, there is more solidarity when the issue at hand is more general, or in other words a common issue, because workers feel like it affects them personally, and the other way around. Besides Rahmad, two more respondents suggested that workers’ individual interests could affect solidarity among them, in the sense that workers’ interests can hinder solidarity among them if the issue at hand is not part of their own interests. Regarding permanent workers, they are of the opinion that they are less likely to participate in the trade union’s struggle for contract workers because they feel comfortable and do not face the problem themselves. They add that permanent workers would be more inclined to participate if they themselves have a problem, or if a strike is about a problem that is the same or similar to theirs. The question here is whether this kind of participation is solely based on workers’ own interests and the benefits they would gain by participating, or whether solidarity among workers has something to do with it, maybe because experiencing similar problems makes it easier to empathize with others. Common interests then lead to more or less solidarity depending on whether they are part of workers’ own interests, which means that solidarity could be assumed to be based on rational thought.

Conclusion

Connecting this part of the analysis to the part about status differences’ impact on solidarity, the mechanism behind the importance attributed to differences between workers could be understood as these differences going hand in hand with less common interests between them, which then in turn might limit solidarity. Constructing common interests can then be considered to be a strategy to deal with possible differences between permanent, contract and outsourced workers. If constructing common interests is considered to be a strategy used by trade unions to create or strengthen solidarity among workers, it could also be argued that positive perceptions of solidarity are being created, perhaps as a
strategy, or as an undeliberate consequence of defining situations in a certain way. It is remarkable that most respondents who mention common interests as an explanation belong to those groups of respondents that mention limitations to solidarity, namely those with rather negative perceptions of solidarity, and those who find themselves in-between. This strengthens the argumentation that creating common interests is a strategy among those part of the trade union. Literature that approaches solidarity as based on common interests mainly argues that common interests might enhance or create solidarity through their existence and people's consciousness of their existence (Hechter, 1988; McBride, 2011). However, it does not consider how these common interests can be constructions, created as strategies to enhance solidarity. This study therefore expands literature on this topic.

4.2.1.3 Sense of security

A different set of explanations, mentioned by quite some respondents, focuses on workers' sense of security and its connection to solidarity among them. Several respondents argued that workers who feel safe are less likely to show solidarity towards others. They focus on permanent workers and describe how they feel safe due to their status, as illustrated by Timur.

“INT: Yeah, yeah euh because euh the permanent workers euh feel comfort in the factory so does not want to join, to fight for the contract, but if the permanent also has problem, they will follow the, the, the struggle of the union.” (Timur, union A, branch level staff)

According to him, permanent workers do not want to participate in the union fights for contract workers' rights because they feel comfortable. The mechanisms behind this possible influence of a sense of safety on solidarity could be interpreted in various ways. It could be understood as the sense of safety itself, and the idea that they are more safe than others, making permanent workers less inclined to show less solidarity towards others out of a sense of self-preservation. Moreover, since permanent workers are perceived to feel more safe than other workers, it could be understood as the connection between workers’ sense of security and their status creating differences and inequality between them. This could affect the foundations for solidarity among permanent, contract and outsourced workers by causing distance between them or hampering their common interests.

However, a few respondents seemingly argue the opposite when they say that workers usually show less solidarity in situations that involve more uncertainty and risks, and that they are more inclined to show solidarity towards others when they face less risks. This was illustrated by Sohib in the following quote.

“INT: Yeah, yeah, if you mean the solidarity among them during the strike, [...] frontally, of course it will be like, you will not see many, but euh the solidarity maybe euh with the diplomacy, the permanent also will help euh the contract workers by sending letters, yeah maybe helping them by sending letters to the management.” (Sohib, union A, branch level secretary)

Examples of high-risk situations that were given are demonstrations or strikes, because they are more confrontational so workers risk negatively affecting their relation with the company. Situations where diplomatic strategies are used are considered to be less risky and could lead to more solidarity, as was illustrated in the quote above. The underlying assumption here might be interpreted as workers wanting
to show solidarity towards others, but prioritizing their own job security by avoiding risky situations, which hinders solidarity.

What these seemingly opposed interpretations of the impact of workers’ sense of security on solidarity have in common is that they might both point to mechanisms of self-preservation. Both feelings of safety and a lack of safety might lead to less solidarity among workers, because these workers generally find themselves in contexts with uncertainty. Even if permanent workers feel more safe than others, the context where other workers experience less safety might make them more inclined towards self-preservation and prioritizing their own interests, and less prepared to take risks for other workers. If the way workers’ sense of security influences solidarity is considered in terms of their sense of self-preservation, it could be argued that workers’ individual interests seem to play an important role in these circumstances, and that their behavior could be interpreted as based on rational choices. This could then be adding to the literature that approaches solidarity from a rational choice perspective (Fantasia, 1988; Hechter, 1988), suggesting that people might be more inclined to prioritize their individual interests in contexts of insecurity, but if common interests are formulated including workers’ individual interests, solidarity could be considered to be a rational choice.

4.2.1.4 Other factors
Finally, some other factors influencing solidarity were mentioned by some respondents. A few respondents argued that solidarity among union members can be explained simply because they are part of the trade union. According to Jati, trade union members have a kind of solidarity mindset, while Pakod stated that contract workers’ problems are also permanent workers’ problems when they are part of the same trade union. Here, trade union membership is considered to create common interests, which enhances solidarity among workers. Moreover, some argued that the proximity between union members is connected to the solidarity between them, because solidarity is more difficult if they do not know each other. An example is that there is supposedly less solidarity between union members from different companies. Also, if union members rarely meet because there aren’t enough gatherings or activities, it was argued that there would be less solidarity among them. Another factor linked to solidarity is workers’ relation to the company where they work. One respondent states that workers who are more comfortable with the company show less solidarity towards other union members, while another person paints companies almost as opponents who are responsible for workers’ problems and cause limitations to solidarity. Furthermore, two respondents mention practical challenges that lead to less solidarity among workers, such as the long working hours, which result in workers not having time to discuss problems they experience, or cause workers to prefer resting during their free time instead of participating in trade union activities.

4.2.2 Organizational perspective
When analyzing the ways in which trade unions’ might create or strengthen solidarity among workers in general and union members specifically, various strategies can be recognized.
Organizing activities and meetings

When respondents were asked about this topic, a lot of them brought up organizing activities and meetings with members and leaders as a strategy. Most of these respondents focused on trade union meetings or gatherings where members and leaders discuss current problems faced in the companies and exchange experiences. Moreover, some also mentioned more informal or social activities directed at getting to know each other, such as doing sports or teambuilding games together. An example is Jati, who explained that the union builds solidarity through organizing recreational activities.

“INT: Yeah, it’s for example like you also, you know you joined the, the recreation to Anyer. It’s kind of example. * Yeah, there are actually like, there were actually like 40 you know representatives from different factories. * Yeah they, you know, most of them maybe know each other and they’re, euh most of them are not *, yeah and then euh in the end they will you know get along, and know each other and, through kind of activity.” (Jati, union A, national level chairman)

The example discussed here talks about a two-day training organized by union A, where the participants did have some free time in between activities and during the evenings for socializing, which was called a strategy for creating solidarity among them. These activities, focused on discussing current issues as well as recreation, were interpreted as creating or enhancing solidarity by respondents through the creation or strengthening of social ties, in the sense of union members and employees getting to know each other and getting along, and developing a sense of togetherness among them.

Use of symbols and traditions

Another aspect that could be interpreted as a strategy to create or strengthen solidarity are certain symbols and traditions used in the trade union, such as the union’s slogan and uniform. The trade unions included in this study all have uniforms that, according to several respondents, are usually worn during strikes or demonstrations and during trade union meetings, by everyone part of the trade union, from union members, branch and national level employees, to ‘even the chairman’. When asked about the reasons for wearing these uniforms, a lot of respondents say that it increases their visibility during collective actions, which makes it easier to recognize those part of their own trade union, and differentiates them from other trade unions’ members. This seems to be considered important internally, to know when someone is part of the same union, but also externally, for example making it possible to visually see each trade union’s number of participants when a strike is shown on television, as explained by Elsa. Moreover, quite some respondents mentioned another purpose of the uniforms, namely that it creates a sense of identity, because it is a visual sign of membership. Rahmad illustrates the importance of the visibility and identification that uniforms provide in the following quote.

“UNID: It’s euh] just to identify yourself. It’s euh more to the, to the identi-, identi-, identity of the organizations. So when you use the uniforms euh you will know which, euh where you’re from and you will see that’s euh, who, who will your friends, will, will from the, will euh, sometimes, because they don’t know each other, you know. They, people didn’t know each other, so when you have the same uniforms, it’s, you will, you will know that euh you, you are come from the
same organizations, you, you are family, part of the family, something like that." (Rahmad, union A, national level treasurer)

Besides the uniforms, the trade unions part of this study also each have their own slogan that is usually ‘yelled’ collectively during collective actions, and at the start or end of meetings, trainings and other activities organized by the trade union. Examples of these slogans translated to English are ‘Smart, brave and militant’ for union A, ‘One heart, one willpower, one aim’ for union B, and ‘The unity of the workers that cannot be divided’ for union C. While union A’s slogan focuses on certain values that respondents said are important when being part of this union, union B and C’s slogan seems directed at creating a sense of unity and togetherness among members. Moreover, several respondents argued that it is not just the message itself that brings their ‘spirit’ together, ‘binds members’ or motivates them, but also the act of yelling the slogan together, usually with raised fists, as discussed in the interview with Elsa.

“UNID: The fist, only the hand, yeah. Yeah, the power I think. Euh ‘Are you ready?’, ‘Yes, I'm ready!’, something like that. So euh we cannot say [slogan] but euh our hand still close like this, but ‘Are you ready friend?’, ‘Yes!’, that is the meaning, and should be with the left hand, yeah. (Elsa, union A, national level vice chairperson)

A few respondents explicitly called the use of uniforms and slogans a strategy to create solidarity, but for those who did not, it could be argued that it creates or enhances solidarity among members. Going back to the way solidarity has been defined in previous studies and by respondents, it includes feelings of togetherness, unity and a sense of belonging and identification with the collectivity, which are all elements mentioned by respondents connected to the use of uniforms and slogans. Moreover, since several respondents explained that the use of uniforms distinguishes them from those who are not part of their union, it could be considered as an example of boundary demarcation, which might be part of the creation or strengthening of solidarity.

Creating a sense of shared experiences, interests and struggle

Finally, as mentioned before when discussing common interests as a factor influencing solidarity according to respondents, quite a few respondents have pointed to creating a sense of shared experiences and interests as a strategy for creating and enhancing solidarity. An example of such a strategy, as mentioned by Surya, is emphasizing that members share a ‘common struggle’.

“INT: So whenever they feel like euh it’s euh, euh this is like the struggle they need to face together, it ca-, they cannot walk alone. So they need to be together to pursue their you know, [their dream], their aim?” (Surya, union B, national level head of organizing)

In this quote, he explains his reasoning behind this strategy influencing solidarity, namely that it might make them more inclined to cooperate and feel like they need each other. Moreover, a few respondents said that their strategy to increase solidarity consisted of using an argumentation in the sense of ‘their problems are yours too’, such as when they try to encourage permanent workers to show solidarity behavior towards contract workers. A few respondents said that their strategy in this situation was to use the argumentation that permanent workers’ family might become contract workers one day, as has
been discussed before. In sum, these union strategies seem to focus on constructing and enhancing perceptions of common experiences, interests and goals, which according to respondents might create and enhance solidarity.

Conclusion

According to literature on the interplay of organizations and solidarity, organizations such as trade unions might use pre-existing solidarity among workers that originates in their workplace or through conflict with the company management, but that it is difficult for them to create or strengthen solidarity themselves (Dixon et al., 2004; Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Hirsch, 1986; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). However, when looking at the trade union's strategies for creating solidarity mentioned by respondents, it could be argued they do attempt to forge or strengthen solidarity among their members. When organizing activities and meetings where social ties among those part of the organization are strengthened, when collectively yelling their slogan during these meetings to forge a sense of togetherness among them, and when promoting the use of a uniform as part of their identity, distinguishing themselves from those who are not part of their organization, they do seem to deliberately build or strengthen a sense of solidarity among their members.

Moreover, this sense of solidarity seems to coincide with the trade union as an organization, rather than with the category of ‘workers’. Indications for this suggestion are that some respondents emphasized that union members as well as employees wear the uniform, or that meetings build a sense of togetherness among members and employees. Also, the slogans do not seem to focus on a worker identity, but rather on certain attitudes that support the union members’ and employees’ activism and ‘struggle’. Therefore, it could be argued that these trade unions attempt to forge solidarity in their organization, while there seems to be no indications that they attempt to use pre-existing solidarity forged in the workplace. Their approach could then be considered to focus on solidarity located in their organization, rather than among workers in their workplace, as has been assumed in literature.

Also, the suggestion discussed earlier in the analysis that union members and employees might construct common interests in order to enhance and create solidarity is strengthened by several respondents explicitly mentioning this as a strategy of the trade union.

5 Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Summary and theoretical implications

In this study, solidarity among workers in a context of labor flexibility was studied by interviewing members and employees of trade unions in the Indonesian garment and textile industry. These qualitative research methods provided the opportunity of studying respondents’ perceptions on this topic, and their reasoning behind these perceptions. Workers in the Indonesian garment and textile industry can have different statuses, with the most common ones being permanent work, contract work, outsourced work and daily work. These statuses generally seem to be associated by respondent not only with differences between them, but also with some levels of inequality: being a permanent worker
is generally considered more desirable than other statuses, because of certain advantages and a higher sense of security compared to other statuses. Therefore, it could be questioned whether this inequality could pose a challenge for solidarity among workers. As stated by Tjandraningsih and Nugroho (2009), “It is difficult for a culture of cohesion and collective solidarity to grow when workers’ status and not differences in their type of work divides them” (p. 8).

The research questions in this study therefore asked how solidarity among workers is perceived in a context of labor flexibility, to which extent it is perceived to be challenged, and who is in- and excluded from solidarity. Remarkably, there appeared to be quite some variation in the perceptions of worker solidarity among union members and employees, which is why respondents were divided into three groups: those with rather positive views, those with rather negative views, and those in between. Eight respondents sharing rather positive views on the topic mentioned little to no limitations to solidarity and argued that all workers are included in solidarity, irrespective of their status. The only boundary some of them asserted was the trade union organization itself, arguing that the entire union is included in solidarity, while some also excluded those not part of the union from solidarity. Moreover, four respondents sharing rather negative perceptions of worker solidarity emphasized limitations to solidarity and argued that solidarity among workers with different statuses can be difficult. Regarding solidarity in the trade union, opinions were divided, with some arguing that there is solidarity when members know each other, while others said that solidarity between different company level unions can be difficult. Finally, eight respondents did not lean towards more positive or negative perceptions of solidarity, instead arguing that sometimes solidarity among workers is difficult, and sometimes it is not. Regarding solidarity among workers with different statuses, they had differing views, mentioning both situations where there is solidarity among them, while also mentioning challenges, and regarding the trade union they argued that solidarity extends to those part of the organization, while not explicitly excluding non-union members.

Secondly, this study analyzes how respondents explain these perceived levels themselves, and in what ways they perceive the existence of different worker statuses to be a factor influencing worker solidarity. Since the perceptions of solidarity appeared to vary from quite positive to quite negative, this study attempts to explain the mechanisms behind these varying perceptions. In order to do this, these differing perceptions are approached as ways of dealing with the existence of different statuses.

Among those who mention limitations to solidarity, meaning those respondents with rather negative perceptions and those who find themselves in between, attention is paid to status differences possibly impeding or challenging solidarity. The mechanism behind this process could be understood as these differences going together with less common interests between workers with different statuses. However, it could be argued that the factor of common interests is also considered to be part of the answer to these challenges, since several respondents have presented emphasizing shared experiences and interests as a strategy to create or strengthen solidarity among workers. Besides these status differences, the context of flexibility seems to go hand in hand with a general sense of insecurity, which can be especially noticed in the way more flexible statuses such as contract, outsourced and daily work are perceived, but also in the way some respondents perceive permanent workers as being
affected by general flexibility as well. This context of insecurity could lead to workers prioritizing self-preservation, thereby making them more inclined to act in accordance with their own interests. This could be the reason for several respondents arguing that workers show solidarity if it is in their own interest, or if the common interests contain their individual interests as well. In sum, these respondents mentioning limitations to solidarity related to the existence of different worker statuses might construct these perceptions focusing on the challenges as a way of dealing with perceived differences and inequality, since it can be connected to their strategy of creating or emphasizing common interests.

Those respondents with rather positive perceptions of solidarity among workers however do not focus on limitations to solidarity, and generally do not consider solidarity among those with different statuses to be problematic. It could be suggested that these respondents have constructed these positive perceptions as a way of dealing with the existence of different worker statuses. An indication for this is that several of these respondents have argued that there are little or no differences between workers with different statuses, or that these differences do not have the ability to hamper solidarity among them. This could be interpreted as ways of minimizing the differences between workers with different statuses, or minimizing their impact on solidarity, thereby possibly contributing to the construction of positive perceptions. Moreover, a few respondents pointed to common interests as the mechanism behind these processes, but it seems like these common interests are imagined. When it is argued that workers with different statuses have common interests because their family members might become workers in the future and might then experience the difficulties now experienced by those with different statuses, it can be argued that this kind of reasoning is a construction, possibly forged with a certain goal in mind, since it relies on the possibility of something happening in the future.

When looking at the ways these respondents assert boundaries to solidarity, it is remarkable that among them are the only respondents who explicitly seemed to exclude those not part of their union from solidarity, thereby limiting solidarity to the trade union organization. When attempting to explain this more explicit assertion of this boundary among these respondents, it could be questioned whether this might be a strategy to locate solidarity in the trade union organization instead of in the workplace, where differences and inequality between workers with different statuses might be more visible than in the trade union organization. Support for this reasoning can be found in the argumentation that the level of visibility of status differences is a factor that should be taken into account. A few respondents did argue that the effect of status differences challenging solidarity among workers might be exacerbated in contexts where these differences are more visible and noticeable. Moreover, union members mainly consist of permanent workers and – possibly to a lesser extent - contract workers, while outsourced and daily workers rarely become union members. This implies as well that potential challenges related to status differences and solidarity could mostly be situated in the company rather than in the trade union organization. This construction of the location of solidarity in the trade union organization could then be interpreted as a way of dealing with the potential challenge of status differences, by adjusting the boundaries to avoid internal fragmentation.

Finally, this study also examined the interplay between solidarity and trade union organizations, and more specifically the ways in which these trade unions might influence solidarity among workers. Several
the trade union strategies for creating solidarity were discussed in interviews, among which organizing activities and meetings, collectively yelling the union’s slogan, promoting the use of the union’s uniforms and emphasizing and constructing shared experiences and interests. Therefore, it could be argued that the trade union does attempt to forge and strengthen solidarity in their organization. Moreover, their efforts to create and strengthen solidarity seem to focus on solidarity located in their own organization, rather than on solidarity among workers as a class, or workers in the workplace. As discussed before, this might be interpreted as a way of dealing with potential challenges related to the existence of different worker statuses.

Literature on solidarity has approached the concept in different ways, discussing whether solidarity is based on interdependence, internalized norms, or common interests, and whether it originates in rational choices or altruism (Fantasia, 1988; Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Hechter, 1988). This study confirms the importance attributed to common interests in constituting solidarity (Fantasia, 1988; Hechter, 1988), but adds that studies should take into account the possibility that common interests could be constructed as a strategy to create or strengthen solidarity, instead of only considering the existence of common interests and people’s consciousness of its existence as being able to influence solidarity (Hechter, 1988). Moreover, this study seems to suggest that rational choices and individual interests can play a role in solidarity, as has been argued in previous literature (Fantasia, 1988; Hechter, 1988; Olson, 1965). However, this study was conducted in a context with seemingly high levels of insecurity for workers due to labor flexibility, which might have made them more inclined to prioritize individual interests. This might also have made those constructing perceptions of common interests more inclined to formulate them in accordance with workers’ individual interests.

More generally, this study contributes to literature on solidarity by focusing on people’s perceptions of the topic, revealing mechanisms behind constructing perceptions of solidarity, which might influence actual feelings and behavior related to solidarity. In a context with different worker statuses and related inequality, solidarity might be challenged now and then, as indicated by the majority of the respondents mentioning some kind of limitations to solidarity. It could however be argued that union employees and members have ways of dealing with this, in the form of constructing their perceptions of solidarity in certain ways. Some of these respondents seem to identify potential challenges to solidarity while considering strategies to avoid these difficulties, while others seem to construct positive perceptions of solidarity as a strategy in itself, possibly with the goal of encouraging solidaary behavior among their members. This focus on the construction of solidarity and perceptions of solidarity adds a dimension to literature on solidarity beyond previous discussions of what factors constitute solidarity, by discussing the mechanisms behind these factors constituting solidarity, and how individuals and organizations can influence these mechanisms, deliberately or not.

Furthermore, this study adds to the limited body of literature that discusses sectionalism or the existence of different groups among workers and its impact on solidarity. Some literature assumes that the existence of different groups limits solidarity because of the fragmentation it causes, but others argue that this is not necessarily always the case, since it depends on the ways collective interests are formulated and perceived (McBride, 2011; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009). This studies’ results seem
to correspond with the latter reasoning, since it considers the construction of common interests and perceptions of solidarity, but adds to it by discussing the mechanism behind this construction.

Finally, literature on the interplay of trade union organizations and solidarity generally seems to assume that it is difficult for organizations to create or strengthen worker solidarity themselves, while arguing that they can use preexisting solidarity among workers originating in the workplace, out of conflict with their employer or because they belong to a class of workers (Dixon et al., 2004; Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Hirsch, 1986; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). However, this study argues that these trade unions do have various strategies to forge and strengthen solidarity among their members, while not presenting any indications for the organization using preexisting solidarity. This might be connected to the context of labor flexibility, since constructing solidarity located in the trade union organization rather than in the context of the workplace, where status differences could be more visible and present, might be a strategy to deal with the existence of these different groups. This finding is in line with Wood and Psoulis (2001)’s finding that a shared identity in the trade union can override fragmentation.

5.2 Limitations of study and recommendations for further research

This study comes with certain limitations that should be noted, and go hand in hand with some suggestions for further research. Since access to the research setting was gained through trade union organizations, respondents in this study were limited to union members and employees. This was beneficial, since it provided insight into the dynamics of solidarity construction in the trade union organization, but it also implies that this study did not include the views of those workers who did not become part of a trade union. Workers with certain statuses, such as outsourced and daily workers, seem to rarely be union members, which means that their perspectives also have not been included in this study. Since workers who are not part of a trade union might find themselves in more vulnerable positions, and since outsourced and daily work were considered to be the least desirable statuses, their perceptions of worker solidarity might be different from the perspective of those who are part of the trade union organization, who mostly have experiences as permanent and contract workers. Moreover, these workers might provide further insights into the dynamics of solidarity construction in the workplace, and the ways the existence of different worker statuses ties into this process. It could then be interesting to compare the solidarity construction in the workplace and in trade unions, and to study the interplay between these dynamics. Finally, it should also be noted that all workers that were interview had some sort of leadership position among members of their company level union, which might have come with different responsibilities, a different status in the organization and therefore also different interests. Therefore, it might be interesting for further research to incorporate views of those workers who did not become union members, those workers with the most precarious statuses, such as outsourced or daily workers, and those members who do not have any leadership position in their trade union. Another limitation is that the data collected in this study did not allow for an analysis taking intersectionality into account. It is for example somewhat remarkable that the majority workers in the garment industry are females, while among those interviewed in this study only 5 out of 23 were female, meaning that it could be interesting for future research to study the dynamics behind this possible
intersection between union membership or leadership and gender. Moreover, it could be interesting for future research to consider whether less desirable worker statuses are more common among workers with certain characteristics, such as being women, being migrants, or having certain ethnic backgrounds.

Furthermore, another limitation to this study is that it did not collect the data to provide an in-depth analysis of the top-down and bottom-up processes involved in construction solidarity in the trade union. There were some indications for the existence of both bottom-up and top-down processes, for example when it seems like the mechanism of constructing positive perceptions of solidarity while minimizing status differences and their impact on solidarity seemed to be more common among company level leaders, while mentioning common interests as a factor enhancing solidarity seemed to be more common among national level leaders. Moreover, it seemed like the union’s slogan was constructed by the national level of the organizations, while the branch levels might be the ones deciding about the design of the uniforms for their branch. However, it should be emphasized that these are only suggestions, since there was not enough data on these topics to draw conclusions, and since it was not possible to analyze the interplay of these bottom-up and top-down processes. Therefore, it could be interesting for further research to study the interplay of bottom-up and top-down organizational processes in the construction of solidarity, and to connect the different positions in the organization, namely the top leaders, loyal elite, indigenous elite and regular members of the organization (Lammers, 1993), to the construction of solidarity, to question whether these different organizational levels have different perceptions of solidarity or different ways of constructing solidarity.

Finally, it might also be interesting for further research that focuses on the organizational dynamics of solidarity construction to compare different organizations. In this study, most interviews were conducted in two trade unions that appeared to be rather similar in the ways they approach their work and members, for example both priding themselves on being a grass-roots organization, since almost all employees part of the national level used to be workers themselves in the past. The dynamics of solidarity and solidarity construction could be different in union organizations that are different in the way they approach their work and their members.

6 References


# 7 Appendix

## 7.1 Overview data gathering

### DATA GATHERING

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7.3 Interview topics and questions

About labor flexibility and worker statuses

Worker statuses

- Labor flexibility in the garment industry:
  - Can you tell me more about the situation of labor flexibility in the garment industry? What changes have you seen over the past 10 years in terms of flexibility?
  - Which worker statuses are the most common in the garment industry today?

- Describing worker statuses:
  - What are the different statuses a worker can have?
  - When do you call someone a permanent/contract/outsourced/daily worker?
  - What are the main differences between workers with these statuses?

Interests and experienced difficulties

- What difficulties do permanent/contract/outsourced/daily workers experience that they would like to change (the most)?
  - Can you give examples of situations when you can notice that their priorities are different?
  - Can you give examples of situations when you can notice that their priorities are similar?

- According to you, who is responsible for the difficulties that the workers experience? Who is responsible for solving their problems?

About relations between workers and solidarity

Contact between workers

- Can you tell me about permanent workers and contract workers meeting each other in the company/during their work? When and where? What do they talk about?

- Do permanent workers and contract workers meet each other outside of the company, when they are not working? If yes, when and where? What do they do?

Solidarity

- What is solidarity between workers generally like? What are possible challenges?
- What about solidarity between permanent/contract/outsourced/daily workers? What are possible challenges?
- What if the union would organize a strike or demonstration about the problems of contract workers: how would permanent workers react? Do you think they would participate, or not?

Union strategies:

- Does the trade union have strategies to create feelings of belonging/unity/togetherness among workers/union members? If yes, can you describe them?
• Does the trade union have strategies to create solidarity among workers/union members? If yes, can you describe them?

About trade unions

General information

• Can you tell me more about the history of your trade union, about how was it established?
• What are the differences between your trade union and other unions?
• Can you tell me more about the structure of the organization? The trade union consists of different levels: what are the tasks of each level?

Recruitment of members

• Can you describe the process of recruitment of new members in the trade union?
• What are possible challenges when trying to recruit new members?
• What are possible challenges when trying to recruit permanent/contract/outsourced/daily workers?

Participation in trainings

• Can you give me some more information about the trainings organized by the trade union? Who organizes them, when?
• What are possible challenges when organizing these trainings?
• Can you notice any differences between permanent/contract/outsourced/daily workers during these trainings?

Participation in collective action

• Can you give me some more information about collective actions organized by the trade union? Who organizes them, when?
• How does the trade union try to mobilize members to participate in these actions?
• What are possible challenges when trying to convince permanent/contract/outsourced/daily workers to participate?

Symbols and traditions

• Slogan
  o Can you tell me more about the trade union’s slogan?
  o What is your union’s slogan? What does it mean?
  o When do you use the trade union’s slogan? Why?

• Uniforms
  o Can you tell me more about the trade union’s uniforms?
  o What does your union’s uniform look like?
  o Who wears the trade union’s uniforms? When? Why?

• Are there any other traditions or symbols that are used in the trade union, for example in meetings?
Questions with cards

Instructions:

On the table you can see some cards. I want to ask you to arrange the cards on the table. If you feel like you are a part of the group or organization on the card, you can put the card on the left side of the table. If you feel like you are not a part of the group or organization on the card, you can put it on the right. There is also an empty card, so if you feel like there is a card which is important to you that is missing, you can use this one.

Can you now arrange the cards on the left, so the group which is the most important to you is on top, and the group that is less important to you is on the bottom? You can also put groups next to each other if you think they are equally important.

Can you now arrange the cards on the right? You can put the groups that you really don’t want to be part of, for whatever reason, on top, and the groups that you would like to be part of on the bottom. If you don’t know, you can put the card in the middle. Please take your time if you want to think about this.

Cards:

- Trade union: federation
- Trade union: confederation
- Company level union
- Branch level union
- Other trade unions
- Workers
- Workers who are union members
- Permanent workers
- Contract workers
- Outsourced workers
- Daily workers
- Government
- Company
- Blanco

Questions:

- You put this card here, can you explain this?
- According to you, when can you say someone is part of group x/organization x?
- You feel like you are part of both x and y, but x is more important, can you explain this?
- You don’t want to be part of group z, can you explain this?
  o What are your experiences with people from this group? How are people from this group different from people of group x, that you feel more connected to?
- You feel strongly/not strongly involved with the permanent/contract workers. Can you explain this? What are your experiences with people from this group?
- According to you, what are the differences between contract workers and permanent workers? What are the similarities?
  o How can you notice these differences when you meet them in the company/in the trade union?
7.4 Codes structure

**Code: Workers**
- Ascribed meaning
- Worker status
  - Permanent workers
  - Contract workers
  - Outsourced workers
  - Daily workers

**Code: Relations between workers**
- Contact
- Attitudes towards each other
- Union strategies

**Code: Own trade union**
- Ascribed meaning and characteristics
- Structure
  - General
  - National level
  - Branch/regional level
  - Company/plan level and union members
- Recruitment
  - Becoming a union member
  - Challenges
- Being a member: participation and commitment
  - Participation
  - Commitment
  - Meetings and trainings
  - Collective action
- Symbols and traditions
  - General
  - Uniform
  - Slogan
- History
- Relations with other organizations

**Code: Other unions**
- Ascribed meaning
- Comparison with own union

**Code: Company**
- Ascribed meaning
- Relation workers/union – company
  - Attitude of workers/union
  - Attitude of company

**Code: Government**
• Ascribed meaning
• Regulation

7.5 Abstract in Dutch
Arbeidsflexibiliteit is de afgelopen jaren toegenomen in Indonesië door de invoering van een nieuwe arbeidswet die het gebruik van korte termijn contracten en outsourcen faciliteert, in het bijzonder in arbeidsintensieve industrieën zoals de kleding en textiel industrie (Beerepoot et al., 2013; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2009). Deze studie analyseert percepties van arbeiderssolidariteit in deze context van arbeidsflexibiliteit en poogt de mechanismen achter deze percepties te tonen door 20 kwalitatieve diepte-interviews met leden en werknemers van Indonesische kleding- en textielvakbonden te analyseren. Arbeiders in deze industrie hebben verschillende statussen – permanent, contract, outsourced en dagelijks werk – geassocieerd met ongelijkheid, met permanente arbeid doorgaans gepercipieerd als het meest aantrekkelijk en zeker. Percepties van solidariteit onder arbeiders, en in het bijzonder onder arbeiders met verschillende statussen, waren opvallend uiteenlopend, van eerder positieve tot eerder negatieve visies. Deze studie argumenteert dat deze verscheidene percepties geïnterpreteerd kunnen worden als diverse manieren om met deze verschillende arbeider statussen om te gaan. Sommige respondenten beschouwen statusverschillen als een factor die solidariteit beperkt, terwijl anderen statusverschillen en hun impact op solidariteit lijken te minimaliseren. Constructie van gemeenschappelijke belangen werd genoemd doorheen deze verschillende percepties: sommigen kaderden het als een doelbewuste strategie om de impact van statusverschillen te beperken, terwijl anderen ingebeelde gemeenschappelijke belangen leken te construeren als deel van hun positieve visie op solidariteit. Bovendien werd solidariteit geconstrueerd als gevestigd in de vakbondsorganisatie, in de plaats van op het werk waar statusverschillen het meest zichtbaar zouden kunnen zijn. Dit zou ook geïnterpreteerd kunnen worden als een manier van omgaan met de statusverschillen. In het kort argumenteert deze studie dat vakbondsleden en werknemers verschillende manieren hebben van omgaan met statusverschillen en de bijhorende potentiële uitdagingen voor solidariteit: het construeren van positieve percepties van solidariteit, het construeren van gemeenschappelijke belangen onder arbeiders met verschillende statussen, en het construeren van solidariteit gevestigd in de vakbond.

7.6 CD-ROM with remaining appendix
7.6.1 Introductory e-mails to Belgian NGOs
7.6.2 Introductory letter to contact person Indonesia
7.6.3 Instructions for interpreters
7.6.4 Drop-off form
7.6.5 Survey
7.6.6 Transcription conventions
7.6.7 Transcriptions
7.6.8 Tables with coded data