

**Moral Imagination and Working Conditions: Experiences of Managers and Union  
Stewards in the Kenyan Tea Industry**

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## ABSTRACT

### MORAL IMAGINATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS: EXPERIENCES OF MANAGERS AND UNION STEWARDS IN THE KENYAN TEA INDUSTRY

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Moral questions surrounding businesses' labour practices and the ethical management of working conditions in developing countries are gaining increasing attention. This dissertation is an exploratory investigation on moral imagination amongst managers and union stewards involved in the management of working conditions in the Kenyan tea industry. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate information from participants on their thoughts and experiences as they managed potentially morally-laden issues related to working conditions of lower-tier workers. Thematic analysis was used to examine the accounts participants shared, in order to uncover the deliberative processes participants engaged in as they strived to make sense of these issues. The use of a qualitative approach facilitated a comprehensive examination of the context in which these organizational stakeholders are embedded. The moral imagination framework allows for an examination of how individuals attend to contextual cues as they deliberate on situations of moral import in the work environment.

Overall, the findings of this research show that there are diverse patterns of analysis of moral situations among organizational stakeholders. The findings provide empirical support for Bartlett's (2003) argument that there are many, yet unexplored, intervening processes between problem perception and action when it comes to moral deliberation and decision-making. Among

the managers in the study, they were found to include processes of attribution of agency for observed harm, analysis of individual, organizational and social consequences, reflection on conflicts of interest and values, as well as creative imagination in envisioning and enacting actions that could address perceived problems. Among the stewards, they included reflections on principles of justice and human rights, reflection on opportunities for self-development, as well as creative imagination. In addition, the findings suggest role-related differences in the nature of individuals' moral deliberations. Managers often appealed to an ethics of care in their deliberations on their employees' working conditions. Union stewards appealed to both an ethics of care and an ethics of justice.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Moral questions surrounding the working environments of workers across the globe are gaining increasing attention. Whereas working conditions in both the North and South have raised concerns, there is growing awareness about the adverse working environments of workers in the developing world, many of whom are involved in producing goods for consumption in the Western world (Arnold & Hartman, 2006). Additionally, research presents convincing evidence for the impact of working conditions on employee health and wellbeing. Working conditions with high physical and psychological demands are linked to increased incidence of high blood pressure and heart-disease (Fox, Dwyer & Ganster, 1993; Karesek, Gardell, & Lindell, 1987). self-reported sickness, anxiety and depression (Rusli, Edimansyah, & Naing, 2008) and injury (Niedhammer, Chastang, David & Kelleher, 2008). Occupation-related health concerns are a growing problem, particularly in developing countries (see Arnold & Bowie, 2003). Consequently, there are questions about the moral obligations that organizations have to create working environments that do not adversely impact the health and wellbeing of workers. Most contemporary research engages these questions at a societal level, by studying political, economic and structural factors. In contrast, this research situates the moral discussion on working conditions of lower-cadre workers at the individual level; the focus is on the moral experiences of organizational stakeholders involved in the management of working conditions. It draws on philosophical and psychological theory on moral deliberation to evaluate how managers and union representatives contemplate moral factors as they manage working conditions of plantation and factory workers in the Kenyan tea industry.

Disputes concerning labour practices are at the core of many contemporary debates regarding globalization (Arnold & Hartman, 2006). There are varying contentions as to the

extent of obligation that a corporation's management has toward ensuring the health and wellbeing of its workers. Classic economic theorists argue that business managers' principle obligation is to generate profits for their stockholders. Whereas this does not preclude taking into account the interests of other stakeholders, all such consideration should be undertaken with the goal of maximizing shareholder value (Friedman, 2002; Windsor, 2001, p. 226). There are also contentions that the maintenance of poor working conditions (e.g., sweatshops) is well supported by economic theory. Proponents of this perspective argue that the exploitation of cheap labour supplies allows developing countries to expand export activities, and consequentially improve their economies (Maitland, 2004). Economist Paul Krugman (1998) has termed the sweatshop-like working conditions in developing countries as a 'terrible' but 'inevitable' outcome of global market economies. The impetus for profit maximization and hardnosed competition realities in the global marketplace are often at odds with a commitment to improve working conditions for low-level worker

These arguments have been criticized on several grounds (Arnold & Hartman, 2006). First, they implicitly discount any notion that developing country workers have a human right to labour in conditions that allow them to maintain basic standards of health and wellbeing. They also defend deplorable working conditions by holding the assumption that businesses, and their management, have no moral obligations to workers (Arnold & Hartman, 2006). Critics of this position contend that whereas managers have an ethical obligation to make profits for the owners of their enterprises, this obligation does not automatically trump other ethical obligations. Business practices should be subject to the same rationally justifiable moral norms as any other human activity; this would thus include not causing undue harm to others impacted by one's business operations. As such, the perpetuation of conditions that lead to adverse health effects

among one's workers is arguably a violation of basic human moral norms. The maintenance of a healthy working environment for one's workers should consequently be a key ethical consideration for an organization's management.

Several societal institutions are involved in the issues driving the debates on labour practices, not the least of which are labour unions. Unions are vehicles through which workers can exercise their power in the workplace. They have historically drawn upon their power for collective action to bargain for better wages for their members and establish mechanisms for fair treatment in the workplace (Freeman & Medoff 1984). The efforts to improve the financial standing of workers can be effective because of collective activities such as negotiations, work actions, strikes, and corporate campaign to raise awareness amongst workers (Dawkins, 2010) Workplace democracy is achieved by continually negotiating the collective bargaining agreement through the grievance and arbitration procedures (Dawkins). Indeed, labour unions are associated with achievement of milestones such as the "8-hour work day," the "weekend" and workers' compensation benefits. Unions' collective bargaining and workplace governance activities align with objectives of economic equity, workplace democracy, and social justice (Dawkins, 2010). Institutions ranging from national governments to the United Nations (United Nations, 2008) and religious institutions such as the Catholic church (Paul XXIII, 1991; Thomas, 2009) support labour unions as vehicles for the improvement of working conditions. The International Labour Organization (ILO) identifies workers' unions as a critical to its agenda of realizing decent conditions at work, and its constitution recognizes collective bargaining as a fundamental right (ILO, 2011)

The support that union receive is often based on the perceived morality of labour union appeals for economic equity and fair treatment (Dawkins, 2010). Unions have secured moral

legitimacy (among some) because of the belief that their activities promote social welfare (Chaison & Bigelow, 2002; Suchmaan, 1995). Indeed, issues surrounding the treatment of workers are related, to a large extent, to moral questions. Proponents of improved welfare of developing-country workers argue that society has a moral imperative to ameliorate working conditions for low-level workers. Citizen and worker advocacy groups often express moral outrage against corporations that engage in unfair labour practices (see Louie, 2001; Ross, 2008, Van Dyke, Dixon, & Carlon, 2008). For example, some corporations (e.g., sport apparel manufacturer Nike) have encountered damage to their public image as a consequence of perceived labour abuses including the use of sweatshops (Ross, 2008). There is, however, significant variation as to what is individually (and/or culturally) perceived as imperative with regard to one's moral obligations toward other members of society. Little is known about the moral experiences and/or deliberations of organizational stakeholders involved in the management of working conditions for those who labour under difficult conditions. In addition, the processes involved in individual deliberation on moral issues in the workplace are not well understood. This reflects the general paucity of research on adult moral reflections in real-life settings.

This research employs a qualitative design to studying the moral reflections of organizational stakeholders who are actively involved in the management of working conditions of workers in the lower cadre of the Kenyan tea industry. The organizational stakeholders of interest in this study are managers and union stewards<sup>1</sup>. Managers are agents of their employing organizations' proprietors. Their role involves overseeing the activities of their subordinates as they work to execute their business stockholders' strategic vision. Though managers are frequent

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<sup>1</sup> The term union steward and union representative will be used interchangeably.

subjects of research on ethical decision-making in the workplace, their moral deliberations on questions relating to working conditions have yet to be examined. Union stewards also serve the proprietors of their employing organizations. However, they are at the same time agents of labour unions whose primary objective is to represent workers' interests in the workplace. Although tenets of moral duty and justice form the ethos of the labor movement (Dawkins, 2010), there is scant research on moral deliberation among individual union leaders and representatives. This research thus seeks to further our understanding of moral deliberations on working conditions by examining the experiential accounts of these two key populations of organizational stakeholders.

This study draws on extant psychological research and philosophical theory to analyse the experiential accounts of managers and union stewards. The conceptual framework that guides this research is that of moral imagination. Moral imagination is a concept derived from the pragmatist ethics philosophical tradition that sees moral deliberation as rooted in individuals' social and cultural experiences (Jacobs, 2004). In this view, moral deliberation involves prospective and/or retrospective reflection upon the moral elements of a given situation by drawing upon resources available to us in our socio-cultural context (e.g., ideals, moral exemplars, cultural myths, stories, principles, etc.) and the exploration of possibilities for constructive action (Johnson, 1993, p. 180-181; Kekes, 1991). Patricia Werhane, a philosopher, introduced the concept to ethics research as a framework for understanding deliberation and action on issues of moral import in the business environment. She presents moral imagination as a process that involves recognition and understanding of issues of moral import, as well as the generation of alternatives for action (Werhane, 1998; 2002). Werhane's framework includes analogous psychological constructs and is discussed in greater depth in Chapter three. By

analyzing the experiential accounts of a group of managers and union representatives, this study will provide insight into how these organizational stakeholders think about issues of potential moral import in their work environment. It will be necessary to evaluate whether organizational stakeholders experience aspects of the management of working conditions as moral events. This will be a necessary pre-condition for most of the subsequent analysis on moral content. The primary research questions are as follows. First, this research aims to identify contextual factors that may facilitate, or constrain engagement in a morally imaginative process. These are labelled affordances. (Affordances are general environmental factors that facilitate, constrain, and/or inhibit the development and behaviour of organisms over time (Cronshaw, Ong, & Chappelle, 2006; Gibson, 1979)). Second, it will explore how moral deliberation is reflected in the real-life experiences of organizational stakeholders who manage workers labouring under difficult working conditions.

The theoretical and methodological approaches of this study take a significant departure from contemporary psychological and organizational behavioural approaches to studying moral deliberation in organizations. Consequently, in the second chapter of this dissertation I engage in a critical review of contemporary research on moral reasoning and ethical decision-making in organizational settings. This includes a critical review of existing models of moral reasoning and ethical decision-making, a discussion on the shortcomings of conventional methodological approaches to studying moral reasoning in organizational contexts, and a justification of the proposed qualitative methodology. The third chapter provides a detailed review of the theoretical framework of moral imagination that is employed in this research. I discuss the philosophical underpinnings of the concept and review related psychological research on moral imagination. I also review the proposed application of moral imagination to

organizational settings and discuss the relevance of moral imagination to deliberations on working conditions. As understanding the research context is critical in any qualitative endeavour, a description of the Kenyan tea industry is provided in chapter four. The methodological approach to this research is outlined in detail in chapter five. The research results and discussion are presented in chapter six and seven respectively.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON MORAL REASONING AND ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

The investigation of morality-related issues in the working environment has provided a potentially promising stream of organizational research that is informed by different disciplines. Morality and ethics have an extensive tradition in philosophy, which provides well-developed ethical theories. Psychologists and other organizational researchers have more recently dedicated attention to questions surrounding moral deliberation because of the presumed link between moral reasoning and moral decision-making and action. Correspondingly, educators and organizational practitioners are interested in how ethical decision-making can be improved among organizational stakeholders. The development of ethical decision-making skills requires an understanding of the processes involved from the perception of a moral problem to the determination of an ethical resolution to the problem. Rest et al. (1986) proposed that at least four basic processes are involved in the translation from moral reasoning to ethical action. They include: (i) moral sensitivity, which involves interpreting situations in terms of their effect on the self and others; (ii) moral judgement, which involves making judgments about what course of action is morally right; (iii) moral motivation, which involves giving priority to what is morally right over other considerations; and (iv) moral character, which involves skill, determination, and intention to behave morally and/or follow through with the execution of intentions.

Developmental psychology has been at the forefront of empirical research on moral reasoning for several decades. It has historically focused primarily on moral judgement, specifically on the development of individual capacities with regard to making judgements about what course of action is morally right. Correspondingly, organizational research on moral deliberation directed significant attention to moral judgement. Moral judgment is extensively



discussed as an important component of ethical decision-making models in organizational settings (see Trevino, 1986; 1992). The bulk of this research focuses on managers' ethical decision-making in business settings. Managerial work involves exercising discretion in dealing with issues that are potentially ethically charged as managers' decisions impact a wide range of stakeholders including stockholders, workers, suppliers, and customers (Loviscky, Trevino, & Jacobs, 2007). Their ability to understand the implications of various issues and make judgments on the moral implications of alternative courses of action should thus be an important determinant of whether individuals exercise their discretionary decision-making power in an ethical fashion.

The guiding framework for much of the work on moral judgment in organizational settings is the theory of cognitive moral development (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969). Cognitive moral development theory proposes six stages of moral reasoning that are usually divided into three broad categories: Pre-conventional, Conventional, and Post-conventional. At the pre-conventional level, one reasons about morality using self-interested motives and externally imposed rules. Moral decisions are explained and justified in terms of one's own hedonistic interests and particularly in terms of rewards and punishments. As such, actions are engaged in either to gain reward for the self, or to avoid punishment. At the conventional level, the individual has internalized the shared moral norms of society or some sub-group of society, (e.g., family, peer or religious group). What is right is explained in terms of living up to the expectations of relevant others, and following rules and laws. Fulfilling agreed upon duties becomes important, and moral judgments consider the rules and laws of social, legal or religious systems that are designed to promote the common good. At the post-conventional level the individual has gone beyond identification with others' expectations. He/she sees beyond law for

law and order's sake and is aware of the relativism of personal values. Post-conventional thinking would include considering the possibility of changing the law for socially useful purposes. The individual is guided by self-chosen ethical principles of justice and the rights of human beings. These principles may be consistent with society's expectations but they are not selected for that reason.

Conventional measures of moral judgment use cognitive moral development theory to guide their assessment of one's moral reasoning ability. They include the widely cited Defining Issues Test (Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz & Anderson, 1974; 1999), the Moral Judgment Interview (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) and the Managerial Moral Judgement Interview (Loviscky et al., 2007) that was designed specifically for managerial assessment in organizational settings. Higher scores are intended to reflect the use of higher levels of moral judgment. Individuals with high scores tend to employ more judgments associated with post-conventional reasoning and low-scorers tend to employ more pre-conventional judgments. There is some, albeit limited, support for these findings. For example, moral judgment has been linked to ethical decision-making (e.g., Brabeck, 1984; Trevino & Youngblood, 1990) and meta-analytic reviews of studies on moral judgment have found a pervasive, albeit moderate, positive correlation between moral judgment and moral action (e.g., Blasi, 1980, Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2007). The bulk of this evidence, however, comes from survey and/or lab-based research. This raises some questions about the external validity of the findings, as it is difficult to replicate the complexity inherent in real-life decision-making settings in laboratory experiments or self-report surveys.

There are several questions as to how much the cognitive moral development-based approach to understanding moral reasoning adds to our knowledge of the ethical decision-making process and whether it can contribute significantly to the improvement of ethical

decision-making and organizational practices. First, there are criticisms about the applicability of cognitive moral development theory to diverse populations. One of the earliest critiques was from Gilligan (1982) who rejected Kohlberg's taxonomy as exclusively male-oriented. She argued that women emphasize the notion of "caring" in the cognitive handling of ethical dilemmas whereas male values centre on a "justice" concept. Care involves ongoing attention to the emotional concern and wellbeing of others (Ciulla, 2009). Care ethics places a premium on traits such as sympathy, compassion, and friendship (French & Weis, 2000). This perspective emphasizes empathic association with others and individuals are seen as connected in relation to others (Pettersen, 2008, p. 8). Within this perspective, one resolves moral problems through care by promoting the welfare of others, preventing harm from coming to them, and/or by relieving their burdens or suffering (Pettersen). An ethics of justice places a premium on individual autonomous choice and equality. This conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights, rules, and principles (French & Weis). The ethics of justice perspective aligns with deontological ethics. Deontological ethics focuses on the inherent rightness or wrongness of behaviours (Driver, 2006, p. 80). The core of morality is assumed to be a matter of rights, duties, and prescriptions; moral problems are resolved by invoking impartial rules, principles, or standards (Pettersen, 2008, p. 6-8).

Some researchers have proposed that whether or not individuals appeal to an ethics of care versus an ethics of justice is likely influenced by social, political and cultural contexts (e.g., Siegfried, 1989). Habermas (1990) argues that moral discussion cannot be successful without an understanding of underlying cultural values, which may include a cultural predisposition toward an ethics of justice or an ethics of caring. There are research findings to support the cross-cultural applicability of an ethics of justice in moral reasoning. Meta-analytic research findings

(Snarey, 1985; Thoma, 1984) have found, for example, that all six stages outlined by cognitive moral development theory were represented in diverse cultures. These findings have been used to support the assertion that the prevailing grounding for moral judgments is an ethics of justice (Rest, 1986). French and Weis (2000) argue that this position is dated. Their research found that both an ethics of care and an ethics of justice were reflected in people's moral judgments across six nationalities. Though there is limited comparative research, their findings suggest that a singular focus on an 'ethics of justice,' approaches (such as cognitive moral development) might preclude valuable information on other approaches to moral deliberation.

Another challenge to the application of cognitive moral development theory is the finding that in applied settings, individuals' moral judgment operates within a range of stages. There is empirical evidence that, within a business context, people generally rely on lower levels of moral judgment than they would in other settings. Weber (1990) presented 37 managers with three ethical conflicts, one taking place outside of the business context and two within a corporate context. He found that conventional moral judgment dominated in the business context dilemmas whereas post-conventional moral judgments were employed in the non-corporate dilemmas. Elm and Nichols (1993) found that older managers and those with longer tenure had lower moral judgement scores than younger managers. This suggests that, over time, managers may tend to adopt the predominant modes of moral reasoning within their context. Carpendale and Krebs (1995) found that, on a dilemma about free trade, participants directing their responses to a business oriented audience made lower stage moral judgments than those directing their responses to an academic audience. There was much less variation in the moral judgments employed in reasoning about the business related dilemma than the non-business related dilemma. Overall, it appears that people involved in business display lower moral reasoning

scores than other populations (e.g., Armstrong, 1987; Fraedrich, Thorne, & Ferrell, 1992; Marnburg; 2001; Weber, 1990). This may be interpreted to mean that they have lower moral reasoning abilities than other populations. An alternative explanation is that moral judgment is, at least in part, a fluid rather than static capacity, that can be employed differentially depending on contextual cues and constraints.

Contemporary literature on moral deliberation in the organization setting also boasts a large body of research that presents characteristics of individuals and organizations as predictors of ethical decision-making and behaviour. Ford and Richardson (1994) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature and identified a multitude of variables that had been hypothesized as predictors of ethical decision-making. Individual difference variables included demographic factors (such as age, sex, and nationality) as well as factors that are the result of socialization and development (such as personality, religion, attitudes, values, etc.). Findings on the impact of these variables on ethical decision-making and behaviour are mixed. For example, of the fourteen studies identified by Ford and Richardson (1994) that evaluated the role of sex in predicting ethical behaviour, half found situations where females held more ethical perceptions than men whereas half found no significant gender differences. Similarly, mixed findings were reported for age, and education type and length. More recent literature on individual differences in ideology (measured using Forsyth's 1980 taxonomy of relativism and idealism) also presents conflicting findings. For example, whereas Winter, Stylianou, and Giacalone (2004) found positive effects of ideology on ethical decision-making among computer programmers, other researchers failed to find similar significant effects among physicians (e.g., Eastman, Eastman, & Tolson, 2001) and accountants (Marques, & Azevedo, 2009). The role of individual differences in personal values has also been explored, albeit under different conceptualization of values.

Some researchers have employed Rokeach's (1973) conceptualization of values as instrumental (preferred modes of conduct) and terminal (desirable end state of existence) values to predict ethical behaviour. Finegan (1994) found that people's ranking of the instrumental value honesty was the best predictor of people's judgments about the morality of work behaviours (that included nepotism and account padding). Their ranking of the instrumental value ambition was, however, the best predictor of their behavioural intentions. Using the same value measure, Palermo and Evans (2007) found that values related to honesty and equality predicted ethical decision-making among Australian law students. In a study of working professionals, Fritzsche (2007) found that ethical decision-making was positively related to altruistic values and negatively related to self-enhancement values. Generally, the literature confirms that some antecedents of ethical decision-making are grounded in individual differences. There is, however, no consensus on specific variables, and existing research does not provide much insight into the mechanisms by which the variables impact behaviour.

There is also a significant, albeit smaller, body of work on situational antecedents of ethical decision-making. Situational variables can include situation-specific, organizational, and general environmental factors and can be much more difficult to study empirically. The Ford and Richardson (1994) review identified peer group and top management influence, codes of conduct, organizational level, and industry type as some of the situational variables that have been hypothesized to predict ethical decision-making and behaviour. Findings on the impact of many of these variables are also mixed. With regard to top management behaviour, for example, Posner and Schmidt (1984) found that junior managers believed that their ethical behaviour was directly dependent upon their supervisors' ethical behaviour. Akaah and Riordan (1989) found that the absence of top management actions against unethical behaviour resulted in stronger

approval of unethical practices among marketing professionals. On the other hand, Murphy, Smith and Daley (1992) found that top-management leadership had little influence on the ethical behaviour of employees in a US service industry.

More recent research has looked at the role of organizations' ethical work climate in predicting ethical decision-making and behaviour. The term ethical climate refers to prevailing perceptions of typical organizational practices and procedures that have ethical content (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Victor and Cullen proposed that corporate ethical climates can evolve over time. They classify organizations into distinct climate types (Caring, Law and Code, Rule, Instrumental, and Independence) and argue that climate types influence managerial decisions with regard to what ethical conflicts are considered and the process by which the conflicts are resolved. Some studies have linked poor ethical climates to ethically questionable behaviours such as workplace bullying (e.g., Bulutlar & Oz, 2009), firm's risk-taking propensity (Saini & Martin, 2009) and employee deviance and misconduct (e.g., Peterson 2002; Vardi 2001). Conversely, Forte (2004) found no significant relationship between managers' level of moral judgment and ethical climate. She, however, found that senior managers tended to perceive their organizations as having more unethical climates. This suggests that there may be socialization effects on individual perceptions of ethical climate. Overall, the literature on situational antecedents of ethical decision-making and behaviour provides some evidence that organizations' general practices do have an impact on the (un)ethical behaviour of their employees.

Some researchers have developed ethical decision-making models that integrate individual and organizational characteristics. A brief summary of some of these models is presented here. The most widely cited model of ethical decision-making in organizations is

presented by Trevino (1986; 1992). The model puts forward that the relation between moral reasoning (conceptualized as individual's cognitive moral development level) and ethical action is moderated by three individual factors (ego strength, field dependence, and locus of control) and three situational factors (job context, organizational culture, and work characteristics).

Dubinsky and Loken (1989) presented an ethical decision-making model based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Their model begins with behavioural beliefs, outcome evaluations, normative beliefs, and motivation to comply. In their model, behavioural beliefs and outcome evaluations affect attitudes toward (un)ethical behaviour. Normative beliefs and motivation to comply affect subjective norms toward (un)ethical behaviour. Finally, attitude and subjective norms predict intentions to engage in (un)ethical behaviour which, in turn, affect actual behaviour. Two other models come from marketing ethics. Hunt and Vitell (1986) propose a general theory that consists of several stages. Environmental factors (cultural, industrial, and organizational) and personal experiences affect perceptions of the existence of an ethical problem, alternatives, and consequences. In turn, these perceptions, along with deontological norms and an evaluation of consequences, lead to both deontological and teleological (based on consequences) evaluations which, in turn, lead to ethical judgments. Judgment affects intentions. Intentions and situational constraints affect behaviour. There is a feedback loop that leads from behaviour to actual consequences and back to personal experiences. Ferrell and Gresham (1985) proposed a contingency framework for ethical decision-making in marketing. In this model, an ethical issue or dilemma emerges from the social or cultural environment. The contingent factors that affect the decision maker are both individual (knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions) and organizational (significant others and opportunity to behave unethically). The decision that



emerges from this process leads first to behaviour and next to evaluation of behaviour, which, in turn, is the starting point for a feedback loop to individual and organizational factors.

The models outlined above are intended to be applicable across a variety of situations. They do not take into account the fact that individuals encounter moral problems of varying relevance and significance. Indeed, some researchers have argued that models that do not include a specific ethical issue as a primary phenomenon of interest are incomplete (e.g., Jones, 1991; Weber, 1996). This is because of the underlying implication that people will engage in similar deliberative processes no matter what the issue. Jones (1991) argues that there is in fact an issue-related moral imperative in every situation, which he labels moral intensity. The construct is defined as the extent to which an issue, event, or act has characteristics that make it subject to moral consideration, moral judgment, and moral action. Jones (1991) presents a model of ethical decision-making that situates moral intensity as a predictor of each of the four components of Rest's (1986) ethical decision-making model. Though Jones (1991) conceptualized moral intensity as comprising of six factors (social consensus, magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, temporal immediacy, proximity, and concentration of effect), subsequent research suggests that there are two principal factors that influence the intensity of moral issues. The first involves harm and the second involves social expectations or social norms of behaviour (e.g., May & Pauli 2002; Singhapakdi, Vitell, & Kraft 1996). Though it can vary in myriad ways, harm can be broadly defined as the extent to which an individual or group is injured physically, psychologically, or economically (Collins, 1989). The concept of harm occupies a core position in moral theory and is in some cases synonymous with moral behaviour (Reynolds, 2006). Norms are indicative of the social consensus, obligations or pressure on "appropriate" behaviour and they designate a particular shared frame of reference for those embedded within a given

social context (Gibbs, 1965). There is empirical evidence for the impact of moral intensity on ethical decision-making. Barnett (2001) found that social consensus and seriousness of consequences predicted ethical decision-making among a sample of students. Singhapakdi, Vitell, and Franke (1999) found that perceived moral intensity was negatively related to intentions to behave unethically; this relation was partially mediated by perceptions of ethical problems. Weber's (1996) research among managers enrolled in an MBA program demonstrated that an individual's moral reasoning (measured using individuals cognitive moral development level) declined as the nature of the harm changed from physical to economic to psychological. Moral reasoning also declined as the magnitude of the consequences declined (e.g., from life/death issues to job termination). Such findings highlight the importance of considering specific moral issues in research on moral cognition. It is, however, important to note that although there are socio-cultural commonalities, various issues will not necessarily be perceived as having the same level of moral intensity across participants. People will disagree on what constitutes a moral issue as well as on its moral intensity. Nevertheless, researchers would be wise to consider issue-related contingencies in organizational ethics research.

Contemporary research on moral reasoning and ethical decision-making in organizations has also been criticised from another angle: its disconnect from practice. Jamieson (1993) observes:

Moral theories are used to make sense of actions, to categorize moral agents, and to engage in reflections, analysis and the further development of theory; . . . what we almost never use them for is making moral decisions (p. 480).

Though Jamieson (1993) goes on to say that such theories may be used in an intuitive/implicit fashion, his statements reflect the frustration among practitioners and educators that literature on organizational ethics fails to recognize the complexity of real-life business practice. As such,

organizational ethics research does not have much influence on business decisions and policies (Cornelius & Gagnon 1999; Frederick, 2000). According to Frederick (2000), part of the explanation for this may lie in the fact that the analysis employed in conventional research is not rooted within the realm of the practitioner experience. As such, it is not useful for practitioners in terms of helping them successfully manage activities within their roles. For research to be of consequence to practitioners, it must be situated within a framework that mirrors the reality of their experience. Research frameworks also need not revolve around the point of decision-making. They can begin before, and extend beyond the point of moral judgement to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of what is involved in moral deliberation and action. In a critical discussion on business ethics for educators, MacLagan (1995) laments the singular focus on ethical decision-making, which he labels 'misleading and reductionist' (p. 159). He argues that ethical decisions are not necessarily separate from the main task of management and that management practice involves processes of interaction and discourse. These processes are in part political and they include negotiation, persuasion, influence, rule-setting, sanctioning, and behavioural rationalization (p. 169). These processes also merit attention in the study of the moral experiences of organizational practitioners.

Yet another critique of contemporary research is that it fails to provide convincing descriptions of the actual processes in which individuals engage when making decisions about ethical issues (Bartlett, 2003). Bartlett argues that contemporary frameworks consist of "little more than a list of variables which may influence an unexplicated process" (p. 226). Weber (1993) also observed that researchers often make a leap from individual characteristics to values without emphasizing the important intermediary step of reasoning. As such, they fail to fully capture the cognitive processes which constitute ethical decision-making in the workplace.

Studies that focus on the cognitive moral development level of moral reasoning do not provide explanations as to why certain moral judgments are made (Bartlett, 2003). Bartlett thus argues that there is a need for the development of research that addresses the moral reasoning process directly and provides a comprehensive description of the constituent cognitions of the ethical decision-making process (Bartlett, 2003).

The conventional methodologies employed by researchers who study moral reasoning in organizations have also faced criticism. A review of methodologies employed in 94 business ethics research studies found that researchers predominantly (81%) used survey methods of data collection (Randall & Gibson, 1990). Survey research used either a direct question format or scenarios. Randall and Gibson criticized both formats for vagueness and generality. Several scales and measures were not well grounded theoretically. This is in part because theoretical insight in organizational ethics to date is not at a level commensurate with a mature field of research (Bartlett, 2003). Many of the constructs under investigation are not uniformly understood, whether by researchers or by research subjects (Bartlett, 2003; Crane, 1999). Without a commonly shared understanding of what ethical behaviour means in a given study, terms are ultimately defined by participants and their definition and understanding of terms is unknown to researchers (Randall & Gibson 1990). Bartlett (2003) recommends that researchers steer away altogether from the construction of scales or instruments for measuring constructs that are not well established theoretically. In the case of scenario-based research, problem situations can also be defined too briefly for the respondent to evaluate or for the researcher to ascertain within-subject reliability<sup>2</sup> (Randall & Gibson 1990). When limited contextual information is provided, participants' only defensible response as to what action they would take can be, "it

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<sup>2</sup> Researchers (e.g., Frederiksen et al. 1972) have recommended methods of improving the reliability of scenario-based measures.

depends” (Frederiksen, Jensen, & Beaton, 1972). The hypothetical examples for moral dilemmas also fail to capture the complexity of issues faced by real-life managers and additional information is often required to develop more realistic scenarios (Randall & Gibson, 1990). MacLagan (1995) takes issue with the limited range of moral issues explored by conventional measures. For example, the widely used Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1999) has questions that address ethical dilemmas. The limited scope of issues covered in these questions fails to capture the breadth of the managerial moral experience.

Randall and Gibson (1990) criticize the heavy use of closed-ended questions in survey research methodology. Research participants are often asked to respond to closed-ended questions in ‘deciding’ what they would do in a given situation. Rather than devise a solution, they evaluate and select among options presented to them (Frederiksen et al. 1972). This does not mirror real-life decision-making where it is often necessary to invent a solution rather than rely on choosing among pre-selected alternatives (Frederiksen et al. 1972). Closed-ended questionnaires also make an a priori determination of the dimensions of moral thinking that are worthy of observation. As such, they are also not likely to reveal processes that underlie contextual and cultural variation in moral cognition. Free-response questions and in-person interview methodologies may be superior alternatives to typical survey research (Randall & Gibson, 1990). Free-response formats were, however, used in only 5 of the 94 articles reviewed by Randall and Gibson. In-person interviews are another alternative to survey methodology that allow for the collection of richer data. They are not widely used. Only 4% of the studies reviewed by Randall and Gibson employed in-person interviews as the sole method of investigation.

Bartlett (2003) argues that because organizational ethics research lacks a coherent theoretical base, efforts at theoretical integration are still required. Correspondingly, researchers have advocated a move toward more experiential and exploratory methods in the study of organizational ethics (e.g., Bartlett, 2003; Crane, 1999). Quantitative survey methodology may not be ideal for facilitating a broad integrative coverage of the processes of moral thinking adopted during decision-making (Bartlett, 2003). It is necessary to develop research designs and methods that allow for a detailed and contextual examination of individual orientations toward a given issue. The depth and richness of qualitative data could allow for the exploration of the cognitive processes that intervene between reasoning and action. Further justification for focusing upon qualitative methods concerns the nature of the subject matter given that personal value systems and ethical reasoning are inherently subjective and experiential (Bartlett, 2003). When confronted with an ethical dilemma, no two individuals will think exactly the same way about what the right thing to do is (Blake & Carroll 1989). Crane (1999) argues thus that the nature of ethical decision-making prescribes the use of more experiential techniques, which provide a valuable but underutilized way of closing the theory-practice gap. Qualitative methods also provide a mechanism for addressing concerns about external validity in ethics research as they are sensitive to how people use various accounts of their decision-making to justify or understand their own ethical position. People continually engage in moral sense-making, reflection, and theorizing (Jamieson, 1993). In-depth qualitative interviewing can allow researchers to gain insight into these sense-making, reflective processes.

Given the discussed limitations of the existing body of quantitative research, I adopt a critical realist orientation and employ qualitative methods in this study. The epistemology of critical realism treads a middle way between realism and constructivism. Critical realism

acknowledges a ‘real’ world while acknowledging the inevitable constructive, meaning-making processes in research; it contends that the way we perceive facts, particularly in the social realm, depends partly upon our beliefs and expectations (Bunge, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994). In line with a realist perspective, I hold the position that mental events and processes are real phenomena that are relevant to explanations of individual and social phenomena, and that social and physical contexts have an influence on individual beliefs and perspectives (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). There is, however, an interpretive nature to how these phenomena can be understood. In this research, organizational stakeholders’ moral imaginative processes and the context of their work environment are studied by examining participants’ descriptive accounts of their thoughts and feelings across various situations they encounter in their work environment. In line with a constructivist perspective, it is acknowledged that participants’ accounts are embedded in a broader social context which includes the individuals’ perceptions, interpretations, and assessment of consequences (Braun & Clark, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thematic analysis is used to examine in-person interviews with organizational stakeholders and is discussed in greater detail in the results section.

I conducted in-person interviews with two groups of organizational stakeholders who are directly involved in the management of employee working conditions: managers and union representatives. Extant research on moral deliberation in business organizations focuses, for the most part, on managers and other mid-senior level professionals. Few researchers have delved into understanding the moral deliberation processes of other organizational stakeholders. For this reason, I opted to include union stewards in my research. Because the aspirations of their members are closely linked to the financial wellbeing of their employing organizations, unions are at once both critical corporate partners and mediums through which workers can exercise

their power in the workplace (Dawkins, 2010). As such, as union stewards advocate for workers' interests, they must also address the interests of employers. This research is designed to make inroads into the development of a better understanding of moral deliberation processes in organizational settings. It is thus important to explore potential differences in perspective between these two group of stakeholders who are both involved in the management of working conditions.

I adopt the framework of moral imagination for this research. Moral imagination is drawn from a pragmatic conceptualization of moral understanding. Pragmatist ethics focuses on ordinary life-experiences of inherently socially and historically embodied human beings (Fesmire, 2003 p. 58). The emphasis is on understanding and resolving problems rooted in experience; this approach speaks to the problem-oriented needs of the business practitioner (Frederick, 2000) and organizational stakeholders. This is in contrast to the deontological perspective of cognitive developmental research on morality that focuses on abstract moral principles. This approach allows for the fact that there are multiple factors at play in moral situations, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. By focusing on specific practical issues (related to working conditions) within a clearly defined context, this research allows for a depth of information that would not otherwise be possible. In asking individuals to reflect on their experiences in the working environment, we allow them to make sense of the experience on their own terms; their accounts can then serve to introduce other factors (not previously considered) that may have an impact on their moral deliberation. This work also introduces into the literature research from a developing country context, which may serve to inform future cross-cultural research.



### CHAPTER THREE: MORAL IMAGINATION

*Imagination is the chief instrument of the good.* (Dewey, 1958, p. 358).

Several scholars have argued for the application of philosophical pragmatism in the construction of a framework for organizational ethics (e.g., Margolis, 1998; Frederick, 2000, Jacobs, 2004). Rosenthal and Buchholz (2000), for example, argued that pragmatism offers a fruitful way to view the corporation and its relationship to society by fusing economic and social policies. A pragmatist ethics requires that individuals consider the manifest and budding consequences of their (or their organization's) behaviour, exercise moral choice on this basis, and continue to learn from experience (Jacobs, 2004). A pragmatist interpretation of moral deliberation in business settings would acknowledge both the validity of business' economizing impulses, and other human impulses that are essential for well functioning societies of people including cooperative impulses, consensus building, altruistic caring, social exchanges and the forging of community ties (Frederick, 2000). Though Dewey's (1920) pragmatist ethics calls for thorough iterative analysis of moral situations, it legitimates emotion as just one component of the experiential context in which the business practitioner attempts to resolve problems by intelligent means (Frederick, 2000; Jacobs, 2004). In his description of a moral situation, Dewey (1920) provided a sketch of decision-making according to a pragmatist ethic:

A moral situation is one in which judgment and choice are required antecedently to overt action. The practical meaning of the situation – that is to say the action needed to satisfy it – is not self-evident. It has to be searched for. There are conflicting desires and alternate apparent goods. What is needed is to find the right course of action, the right good. Hence inquiry is exacted, observation of the detailed makeup of the situation, analysis into its diverse factors, clarification of what is obscure, discounting of the more insistent and vivid traits, tracing the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves regarding the decision reached as hypothetical and tentative until the anticipated or supposed consequences that led to its adoption have been squared with actual consequences. This inquiry is intelligence (Dewey, 1920, pp. 163-164).

It is from the pragmatists' school of thought that moral imagination has emerged as a framework for the study of moral reasoning and ethical decision-making in organizations.

Philosopher Mark Johnson (1993) frames moral reasoning as a "basically imaginative activity." When we deliberate, we envision various scenarios in our imagination and 'tell stories' to ourselves to consider the implications of our choices. Alternatives for action are tested in thought. Johnson (1993) defines moral imagination broadly as:

An ability to imaginatively discern various possibilities for acting within a given situation and to envision the potential help and harm that are likely to result from a given action (p. 202).

According to Johnson, this involves developing an intimate knowledge of our own and others' moral understanding including as well as:

the ability to imagine how various actions open to us might alter our self-identity, modify our commitments, change our relationships, and affect the lives of others . . . and the ability to imagine and to enact transformations in our moral understanding, our characters, and our behaviour (p. 187).

Hume (as cited by Ferreira, 1994) emphasises the critical role of sympathetically taking the point of view of all those affected by a decision. His student, Adam Smith, stresses the importance of the social nature of moral rules and moral judgments in "The Moral Sentiments" (Smith, 1759/1796). Smith theorizes that each of us has an active imagination that enables us to mentally recreate others' feelings and perspectives. This imaginative sympathy is critical to moral judgment because it enables us to (a) understand others' feelings, and (b) engage in self-evaluation of our own emotions in deliberating on our intentions and actions (Werhane, 1998). Thus framed as an imaginative activity, moral reasoning is a creative and open-ended endeavour (Coeckelbergh, 2007) that consistently engages social and emotional input. Moral principles may still play a role; however, this role is a guiding role rather than a prescriptive one (Fesmire 2003). Kekes (1991) argues that moral imagination has both an exploratory and corrective function. The

exploratory function allows us to acquaint ourselves with both the conventional modes of action prescribed within our context, and with possibilities for action that exist outside our own cultural context. The corrective function allows for retrospective imaginative recreation of past situations, allowing individuals to explore alternative courses of action that were not possible at the time.

Werhane's (1998) introduces moral imagination from philosophy to organizational ethics. She argues that moral imagination is a critical facilitator of ethical decision-making:

In managerial decision-making, moral imagination entails perceiving norms, social roles, and relationships, entwined in any situation. Moral imagination requires developing heightened awareness of contextual moral dilemmas, and their mental models, the ability to envision and evaluate new mental models, that create new possibilities, and the capability to reframe the dilemma and create new solution in ways that are novel, economically viable, and morally justifiable (p. 93).

According to Werhane, unethical decisions are in large part the consequence of a paucity of moral imagination. Werhane uses Kant's analysis<sup>3</sup> of the imagination to present a categorical distinction of the components of moral imagination. It includes reproductive imagination, productive imagination, and creative imagination. Reproductive imagination involves attaining an awareness of moral demands along with an understanding of relevant contextual factors, including role relationships, possible moral conflicts, and conventional modes of reasoning among those embedded in the context (Werhane, 1998, p. 103). Productive imagination involves reframing the identified problem from different perspectives. It involves a challenge to the conventional (or initial) framing of an issue to take into account alternative viewpoints (Werhane, 1998, p. 104-105). Creative imagination is the ability to envision and actualize possibilities for action that lie outside those prescribed by a given context (Werhane, 1994; 1998).

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<sup>3</sup> Kant identified three components of the imagination. However, Kant viewed imagination as an aesthetic rather than practical.

Werhane thus introduces an interesting avenue for future development of research and practice into organizational ethics. Her conceptualization, however, neglects the role of emotion, in particular empathy, in moral imagination. Empathy is a central component of other pragmatist writings on moral imagination. Werhane (1998) argues that a central tenet of productive imagination is the ability to cognitively understand the emotions of others without necessarily feeling them. She says, however, that it is distinct from empathy. This is contrary to psychologists' understanding of empathy. For psychologists empathy has both cognitive and affective components. Perspective taking is a component of empathy, and the likely role of both affective and cognitive empathy in moral deliberation will be discussed shortly.

Though they may be necessary for theory building, philosophers' conceptualizations of moral imagination are complex and unwieldy for empirical inquiry in the social sciences (Moberg & Seabright, 2000). It is critical to develop a workable definition that captures its critical elements and is also amenable to empirical inquiry. The critical aspect of moral imagination is that it is a deliberative process that is socially embedded. Those who engage their moral imagination are gathering information via social and emotional cues as they deliberate on moral issues. They may then make use of this information to generate possibilities for action that are different from those dictated by convention or by their prescribed context. As such, moral imagination can be broadly defined as a process of deliberation on moral issues that involves attending to social and emotional information and potentially generating possibilities for action.

This research aims to further our understanding on how moral imagination is reflected in the deliberations of those involved in managing difficult working conditions. Werhane's (1998) use of Kant's reproductive, productive, and creative imagination can still provide a useful conceptual framework for an exploratory investigation into the exercise of moral imagination in

the workplace. The facets of the framework have psychological analogues (e.g., Caldwell & Moberg, 2000) that add to our understanding of moral deliberation. Moral imagination provides a useful unifying structure for these psychological constructs and an avenue through which relevant psychological theory can be instantiated within business ethics research. The following discussion expounds on the framework that will be employed in this research, linking it to psychological theory.

#### Moral Awareness (Reproductive Imagination)

Reproductive imagination refers to one's awareness of moral demands in a prescribed context. This is partially dependent on material supplied by perception (Fesmire, 2003), which can be constrained by various contextual factors (Werhane, 1998). Reproductive imagination is analogous to the concept of moral awareness in psychological research. Reynolds (2006) defines moral awareness as a person's determination that a situation contains moral content and legitimately can be considered from a moral point of view. The moral implications of a given issue are not always apparent. Unless outcomes are dire, immediate and/or proximate, the moral implications of a given situation may not be part of an individual's understanding of the situation. The perception of issues or situations as having moral import is, however, critical to subsequent deliberation and action. Several theories of moral decision-making position moral awareness (or identification of the moral issue) at the beginning of multi-stage decision-making processes that culminate in moral behaviour (e.g., Ferrel & Gresham, 1985; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Jones, 1991; Trevino, 1986). Theorists have argued that although some people intentionally engage in unethical actions, others simply do not recognize the moral aspects of the situations in which they are involved (e.g., Werhane, 1998). They may fail to engage in resolving moral problems simply because they do not identify them. Without recognition of a moral component

form of counsel about how to best manage their lives in the tea estate. Mark also engaged in some advocacy work as illustrated by his accounts on his involvement in the education of girls in a particular estate.

A similar example comes from Pete who also talks about his involvement in the education of employees' children. Pete expresses concern about workers who do not take their children to school. He reflects on getting involved in the activities of his workers' children with hopes of ultimately influencing parents' attitudes toward education.

*Pete:* We provide the schools here and I keep saying that most of the teachers who teach at this school went to the same colleges as the ones who teach at the local private school. So maybe some facilities will be different, but they should be able to make the children pass. But if the parents are not bothering about the children going to school, some of them are not bothering about whether the children miss school or not. So, the other day, I had a talk with the primary school, I went and talked to the children, to the students. Some of the pupils there had qualified for national music festival. So I told the teacher there I wanted to come and listen, I wanted them to perform for me so I could listen. And they were very happy to do that, they were very very happy. So I went there after the performance I talked to them for about half an hour. We had a laugh, but I also wanted to discuss some issues with them. And what I could see is that they are yearning for attention. For them, the manager actually going there is a big thing.

Pete also expresses empathic concern about his workers' personal problems, and expresses his belief that employees' personal lives cannot be separated from their working lives. As such, he expends effort to resolving workers' personal problems.

*Interviewer:* Why did you think it was important to do this? Is it part of your job description?

*Pete:* It's not part of my job. I see it as part of my responsibility. There's a difference. Part of my responsibility is they are our children. It's my responsibility as a citizen of this country to make sure that children do well in school. We can't afford to have illiterate children, illiterate Kenyans. So I think of it as a responsibility. I could probably just ignore them and still get my pay. Now the parents were there. But if the parent knows that the manager is actually interested, that I went to talk to the children, he feels comfortable, he feels good. He will also think we cannot start playing around and having our children miss school because what will the manager think of me if he finds my child has missed school. So the fact that you care about their welfare I think really really matters to them. To me, you can't quite divorce somebody's personal life from their

working life. And it bothers me when there are issues in their lives, whether it's school, sickness or work, whether it's personal. I mean you will come to me with an issue, marital problem, school, I will help you solve it, as much as I can.

[later in the interview]

Pete: I don't want us to have a recycling system where these people put their children through school and they come back and work in here. For a very long time that's what happened. But you see now for the past 6-7 years, there's been very limited employment, so it's brought its own challenges. One, what it means is that some of the children who have left school just idle around in the camps where the parents leave because many of them don't have a proper rural establishment.

Pete emphasizes the importance of educating children, particularly in light of the increasingly limited employment opportunities in the tea estates. Whereas workers' children may have worked in the same roles as their parents, these positions are no longer available. Overall, the above reflections show that some managers perceived problems with the workers' overall life experiences outside of specific working conditions. As they perceived these problems, they found ways to get personally involved in activities that they thought would improve the lives of the workers and their children.

It must be noted that, notwithstanding managers' expressions of concerns about workers across this theme, there is a note of paternalism in the above accounts. Managerial paternalism has been referred to as a way of organizing the employment relationship along the lines of a parent/child, master/servant, or teacher/pupil configuration of authority (Fleming, 2005). Of particular importance is the influence of management outside the immediate work setting, shaping the local community, family dynamics, and moral values. The manager plays the role of nominally benevolent patriarch and paternity can be expressed through tutelage, succour, proto-religious deliverance or largesse (Fleming). Though some have labelled managerial paternalism as a viable method for governing workplace relations and ensuring compliant and loyal workers (Wray, 1996), paternalism has been framed as a form of class

control and domination because it involves a set of relationships in which an employer is in a position of intimate superordination and the employee in a position of profound dependence (Bendix, 1956; Newby, Bell, Rose, & Saunders, 1978). Subordinates come to accept these relationships as legitimate; though kindness and affection are demonstrated, they disguise fundamental conflicts of interest and help to perpetuate an unjust status quo (Newby, et al. 1978, p. 29). A more detailed theoretical discussion of paternalism is beyond the scope of this research. It is, however, important to note that paternalism is most likely to occur in work settings where the employer controls many aspects of the work and community life of workers (Padavic & Earnest, 1994). This is the case for the lower-tier workers in the tea industry, where the education, medical, and housing facilities are under the purview of the employer. In the above accounts, we see managers get quite involved in the personal lives of the workers. Julie, for example, provides succour and tutelage in the form of counselling on employees' personal issues. Mark and Pete provide guardianship to workers, especially in the areas of education, by actively promoting school enrolment. I do contend, however, that the noted paternalism does not necessarily preclude an ethics of care. These managers' rationale, misguided or otherwise, for getting involved in their employees' lives is to improve the lives of workers and their children.

*Identifying solutions: Here's how things could be better.* Several managers engaged in creative moral imagination as they pictured how things could be improved with regard to the working environment of the lower-tier workers. There were two types of creative accounts. The first involved general projections of how things could be, if a given issue was resolved. In these cases, the managers did not present specific actionable solutions. Rather, they presented their views of a more ideal working environment. For example, when asked about the changes that she would make to the working environment, Mary talked about ensuring that the company remained



free of political interference. In her view, such action would change the face of the working environment.

*Mary:* I would ensure that politics will not have an influence on the running of the affairs of the company. I would ensure that politics will not have any influence on the upward momentum of staff. This thing is just going down to politics. The issue of tribalism, the issue of nepotism. Tribalism and nepotism should not really come in as far as the running of the affairs of this company. I'll ensure that professionalism, fairness, and rewards on merit are the order of the day. If I can do what I have said, this would be a better place, it would be much easier for everyone who is coming in. You come in with one objective work, the other objective work.

Julie's projection of how things could be, involved addressing the issue of employee wages.

*Julie:* Given the opportunity to be in charge, some of the things I would address would be things like the employees' wages. Most of the things that happen here, most of the misunderstandings, the grievances that arise are as a result of the low earnings of employees. On the gender committee, we try to address many issues to do with women and many of them come back to low wages. If you come to grievances, most of them arise from low wages. Everything revolves around the way of life people experience here. So in my opinion a fixed figure could be given to them. It would be given to them and so many things that arise from them would actually be resolved. Women would move around with men say I did this because I needed food for my children or I was late for work because I needed to find food for my kids.

The second type of creative accounts involved the generation of more specific action alternatives that could change the face of the working environment for lower-tier workers. For example, Julie had several suggestions as to how different dimensions of the working environment could be changed for the better. Some of them involved dealing with problems of illiteracy among workers.

*Julie:* I was thinking we should be training our supervisors because they come from diverse areas and then a person who seems to be lost can be trained in their mother tongue by the supervisor. For safety issues we can even use signs. There's no need for that to be written out. Just like no smoking signs they can see the safety signs and picture what is happening. I think this would really be helpful to them with regard to them getting what we want to relay to them.

Julie's suggestion is simple and actionable and could help offset some of the problems experienced in communications with illiterate workers. Later in the interview, Julie also talked

about the need for improved recreational facilities for workers. Julie engages in perspective taking as she compares the facilities available for management to the facilities available for lower cadre staff.

*Julie:* I could mention introduction of better facilities for socialization. Most of what we have is of poor make-up. For management, we have guest houses, we have swimming facilities and gyms. But our workers down there only have a darts room and a shop. I would want that to really improve. It would make the place more enjoyable and comfortable and they don't have to worry about going all the way down to town. They need more recreational facilities.

Another manager, Tom, also presented alternatives for action with regards to improving employees' wellbeing. One possibility he mentions is investing in employee training.

*Tom:* I would increase their training because training is a very powerful tool. If you gave me more power if I am measuring here I would see how to raise their awareness, their competence. You need to train a person, empower him so that he understands what to do and can do it better. I need resources in time, in real time. Right now, I am relying on unorganized training. It's like, "Oh when will this guy come? In four months? Or not until next year?" If you have resources for training, you can champion a few fellows.

Tom presents other suggestions, including proposed improvements to recreational facilities and training on personal financial management. He engages his creative moral imagination as he generates several simple, actionable suggestions on how employees' lifestyles could be improved.

*Tom:* I would change their lifestyles. Then I would bring them to understand how to move to the next level, to enjoy their own life. Because you find people living miserably. When they are not on duty, they are just seated like this (*folds arms over chest and looks sad*). Or they just go drink and go to (*pause*). That's not life. Forgive me, but I don't understand that. You see if you empower someone they see how to even utilize their free time better. I push them to get out and do things. Let's go play sports. If you empower them, they will even want to read newspapers. I wouldn't mind offering them my journals. I wouldn't mind subscribing to dailies for their welfare centres. We are not doing that now. I wouldn't mind getting a DSTV satellite TV for their welfare centres. I'm not crazy. I'm not saying I want this place to be New York. But you see what I'm saying. I'm not ambitious. I'm just saying without the resources (*pause*) I have pushed for resources, to be assisted. It has helped me to help them better in the past. If you gave me that, I would change their lives. And you see when they are happy out there, they produce good results here. You have it very nice. I'm not saying I'm having challenges

but it would now take me to a higher level of not dealing with their problems. Like when they have problems like managing their finances, we could even invite personal financial management experts, even for us, so you improve yourself. We could see ways of helping them to help themselves. Give them that extra tool, the knowledge. I'm looking into it.

Tom's account further illustrates the relationship between instrumental motivation and creative moral imagination. Another actionable proposition comes from Jack. When asked about the changes he would make to the work environment, he proposed improvements to the current gratuities given to employees. Jack demonstrates engagement in morally imaginative processes. He is aware of the inadequacy of gratuity payments given the cost of living and engages in perspective taking as he acknowledges the likely indebtedness of the employee.

*Jack:* We could look at the issue of gratuity for the employees. You find that at times an employee is retiring, and somebody has clocked 10 years and you are going home with 50,000 kshs/<sup>19</sup>=. Surely. Okay I know there's this clause in the CBA about gratuity payments and that they should be attained upon 10 years of meritorious service, but then when you look at what the employee is taking home, really it's peanuts. That kind of money cannot sustain the employee for a long period. And also you find at that level the employee is also heavily indebted with the cooperative society, so you'll find the money will more or less be used to pay for the liabilities, so they may actually go home with nothing. So that is an issue that they may want to look into in terms of helping the lower cadre.

The above accounts illustrate the three components of moral imagination, as managers recognize harmful aspects of the working environment, can understand how workers are impacted by them, and propose specific alternatives for action with regard to improving the working/living conditions of workers.

#### Analyses and Discussion Part II: The Union Stewards' Data

This section provides an analytical discussion of the data obtained from the interviews with union stewards. The identified themes are illustrated in Table II.

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<sup>19</sup> This is approximately \$555 CDN

### *Situational Affordances*

Stewards identified several variables within their work environment that impacted their work. They readily identified contextual factors that served to limit improvements to working conditions and/or constrain efforts to advocate for workers. It is worthwhile to note that the identified factors related to internal organizational factors, rather than external pressures. Stewards were at pains to identify factors that positively enabled their stewardship efforts. As such, there are significantly more themes associated with constraining affordances than with facilitating affordances.

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Table II: *Data Organizational Structure Themes Derived from Union Stewards' Data*

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Situational Affordances

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Constraints

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Business Owners and Management Act in Poor faith

Fear of Backlash

Lack of Education and Training

Lack of Faith in the Union

Loss of Productivity and Income

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Facilitators

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Supportive Management-Steward Relationships

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Moral Deliberation Processes

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Taking a stand: It's about fighting oppression

Analysing benefits: It's an opportunity for personal growth

Feeling called to help: The coincidence of empathy and self-efficacy

Identifying solutions: Here's how things can be better

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*Constraining Affordances of Moral Imagination*

Union stewardship involves, in large part, negotiating with management on behalf of workers who may have grievances and/or be involved in employment-related disputes. It also involves engaging in more general union advocacy for improved working conditions for workers. By necessity, such advocacy often involves challenging the status quo and it is bound to be met with a myriad of difficulties. During the interview process, the participants in this study shared their observations and reflections about the impediments to stewardship efforts. They are reflected in the following discussions under various themes.

*Business owners and management act in bad faith.* There is a long-standing narrative of an entrenched hostility and distrust between unions and management (Sloane & Whitney, 2004). In many ways, the findings of this research are consistent with this historical depiction of antagonism between management and unions. Although some stewards had positive relationships with their unit managers, their overall perception of management and the business owners was quite negative. Most stewards distrusted their employers (and their management). As is demonstrated in the accounts below, they also tended to see them as uncaring, and even oppressive individuals, who were geared toward maximizing profit at all costs.

*Jacob:* The management of this company are like slave masters. They are not humane people. They are not people that want people to be well or care about the welfare of people. They only care about profit.

*Henry:* The problem here is that our supervisors behave like dictators. You know the supervisor can come in and set work hours that are contrary to what is stipulated in the CBA. When you try and talk to the workers about what their rights are according to the CBA, you get accused of incitement. This is really frustrating.

Jacob and Henry use strong negative terms, including ‘dictator,’ and ‘slave master’ to describe their management. Their accounts reflect a deep-seated resentment toward the managers of their organization that was shared by many other stewards. Most stewards identified specific instances

of behaviour among their employers/managers that fuelled their negative perceptions of them.

As illustrated by Joshua's and Jeremiah's accounts below, a recurrent problem was the company's treatment of workers who experienced illness.

*Joshua:* The employers do not treat us like workers with rights. They treat us like slaves of the old days. You can see, for example, when it comes to medical treatment. You can find a worker is sick and is heading to hospital. The manager can come ask this person to return to work. I mean, he can see that this person is clearly being attended to and yet he will ask the person to return to work. Sometimes the person is not physically able to work. You can find him sleeping at work. You look to the manager and the manager says "I am not a doctor." We see this kind of treatment as oppression. We think they abuse us. They do not look at us as partners in work.

*Jeremiah:* I don't know how our workers are being treated. It's like they are cows. Even cows are treated better. Someone can come in and complain about being sick. Perhaps he/she works 2-3 km from the dispensary. He/she will walk there to receive medical treatment. The treatment they receive is a panadol [*painkiller*] prescription and a note that they should return to work. The people administering treatment are dressers and sometimes nurses. You can only get to see the doctor if you have a reference from the dispensary. By that time, you can have collapsed. So the company is still not fully providing medical care though the CBA says that they should. They should have more qualified medical personnel at the dispensaries. They shouldn't only care about milking as much profit as possible from the worker even though he or she is sick. They should be concerned about their workers, treat them like human beings, perhaps give the worker some rest days and then see if he/she feels better later. Sometimes it appears like the management is under instructions not to give time off for sickness. I mean, would managers lose their jobs if they awarded employees sick days? If you find someone is given a day off that probably means he/she is close to his/her deathbed. I mean people get sick. Sometimes people are also just ill psychologically. But if you give them time, one or two days to rest, they can come back okay to report to duty. I don't think people come all this way to seek work so that they can then become malingerers and collect free money from the company. You know malingerers are rare and they are easy to catch. But they just treat everybody like malingerers.

According to the above accounts, managers are perceived to be particularly inconsiderate in their management of illness among workers. Workers are rarely given time off when ill, and are instead forced to work through their illness at jobs that are inherently physically demanding. Jeremiah questions the role of the company as a whole in this behaviour as he ponders whether managers are "under instructions not to give time off for sickness." There are also questions

about the adequacy of the medical qualifications of staff who serve at the dispensary. The overall failure of management to provide special accommodations for workers who are experiencing health concerns is cause for bitterness among stewards. It creates the perception among stewards that managers are oppressive people and inhumane. These negative perceptions were the result of other types of behaviour as well. For example, John complained about the fact that workers were not provided for during periods of drought and questioned how management could allow that to happen.

*John:* You know when there are extreme weather conditions, whether it's drought or excessive rainfall, workers are in trouble. Management can send us home on casual leave so we don't work. How do they think we are going to eat? Or they ask us to continue working picking through sticks because there's no tea. You can find someone picks two kilos a day. They go in a day pick one kilo, go another day pick two kilos. At the end of the week someone ends up with six kilos, so really they make close to nothing. People are at a loss about how to make ends meet. As a community leader such things really bother me and I feel increasingly estranged from management. I just can't accept that they allow this to happen.

Union stewards' general discontent with managers was also evident in how they responded to several management policies. For example, Jacob talks about how the stringent system of quality checking results in workers not meeting the quota (33.5 kilograms) that would allow them to make minimum wage.

*Jacob:* These quality checks on the plantation, in the sack, are really oppressive. Someone can work on the farm all day, from 6am and fail to get even twenty kilograms. The leaf counter can say, "this tea is bad, go pick more" or "this tea is bad, please pick out the good tea." You then start to pick through the tea. As you go through your sack, trying to pick out the good tea leaves, the leaves get damaged even further. You know, they want tea of a certain quality. Even if you have to pick tea all day and only get two kilograms at the end of the day. They do not care. They care about the success of the company. They do not care about the worker.

Stewards' distrust of their employers was particularly evident when they talked about the introduction of mechanical tea harvesting. The mechanization of tea picking represented a significant risk to workers' job security. The threat of loss of income was compounded by the



‘dishonest’ manner in which the organization’s management was perceived to be dealing with the issue. The company’s official policy was that employees would not lose their jobs as mechanized harvesting was introduced. Rather, they would implement the system slowly, relying on natural attrition to cut down the labour force. Universally, stewards did not believe that this pronouncement was made in good faith.

*James:* The biggest problem we have has to do with the machine. The workers have children and other dependents. You can find that since the machines came in, it has been very difficult for us to get enough work to sustain ourselves. Not many people are now picking enough to earn a full day’s pay. You can find that in only one or two units can workers pick 33.5 kilos. Many places where there was a high tea yield and you could pick lots of good high quality tea, are now being picked by machines. Now we are picking tea in low yield areas like among the trees. There isn't much tea to be picked in these areas, not to mention it is dangerous to work there. We don't understand. Is this just a backhanded way of them getting us to leave our jobs. You know the saying, "If someone wants you to leave their house, they are not just going to tell you to get out. They will start to change your living conditions so that you become really uncomfortable." So you start to see changes coming in. We have started to see such changes. Things aren't the way they were. We are not making enough money so we start to think of other ways of sustaining ourselves. So we might have to leave.

Jane’s account shows that she shares James’s position on the issue:

*Jane:* This company is just something else. It's like they've made a decision to mistreat workers. They've introduced mechanical tea harvesting. They told us the machines would pick 30% of the harvest. But that hasn't happened. The machines are probably harvesting 70% and the workers are doing 30%. This has really killed workers’ spirits. This is really oppressive. They are picking 10 or 20 kilos per day. They are not even making the minimum six thousand shillings in wages.

James’s account illustrates that he believes the company is covertly trying to get workers to leave their jobs, by reducing the amount of acreage available for the tea pickers. Jane too believes that the company did not honour its promises on the introduction of mechanization. The consequence is that workers are unable to pick enough tea to make minimum wage. Jeremiah goes even further. In his account, he believes that workers are then faulted for poor performance when they fail to pick their daily quota of tea leaves.

*Jeremiah:* You know they really try and find fault with workers. You know people come here to work. I'm sure you've heard about the MTH. They usually pluck all the tea on the flat tea tables because they cannot harvest tea where there are trees. Once the machine has plucked the tea, there is nothing left on the field. Then they tell the workers to go and harvest tea on the field, where the machine has just been and to get their daily quota from there. How can a person do that? You know they have to pick 33.5 kilos per day. You know they can work all day and fail to meet their quota because the machines have plucked everything. Can you not see that this is a clear case of trying to find fault with the worker? His performance is sub-target, simply because he has not hit 33.5 kilos. There is nowhere to pick tea. You know if the machine wasn't there, there would be no problem. Plucking 33.5 kilos is achievable and some would pick up to 100 kilos a day. But now because there is no acreage, they cannot achieve the goal. This is fault-finding.

Henry shares the same sentiments. Like Jeremiah, he notes that there is no longer sufficient acreage for the tea pickers to work on and that performance measures being enforced appear unfair given the reduced acreage. In addition, Henry also points to contradictions in company policies on health and safety with regard to machine operators and tea pickers.

*Henry:* Workers are really being oppressed. The laws of the CBA say we should work for 8 hours. Right now our workers are only working for about 5 hours per day because the mechanical tea harvesting has taken everything. There isn't much acreage left for the workers to pick tea. They have also introduced a new policy about sub-target performance. This means if you fail to pick 33.5 kilos you are accused of sub-target performance. It doesn't make sense to be accused of sub-target performance when there's no acreage for tea plucking. They are using this as a strategy to try and oppress and intimidate us so that we can leave work. They also tell us that it is not medically sound for the workers to carry more than six kilos of tea leaves at a time to the leaf counter. We question whether this is in fact a recommendation of doctors. If so, do these doctors only cater to tea pickers and not to machine operators? How many kilos does the machine they strap onto the back of the worker weigh? They have still not answered this question satisfactorily. The machines can weigh up to 30 kilos before you have picked any tea. Two to three people carry the unit as they pick the tea. Then add onto that the weight of the tea. You know a lot of the machine operators have had their lives ruined. The young men who had not married are now unable to. Men with wives at home are having their wives leave them. You know they cause impotence. It's a health and safety issue. They run on petrol and the workers inhale those fumes.

Jacob also pointed out the contradiction between health and safety policies for tea pickers and those for machine operators.

*Jacob:* They are teaching us about health and safety and yet they are bringing in the machines which people have to strap to their backs. The machine is spewing petrol fumes

and they are strapping it to people's backs so they can harvest tea. These machines are very dangerous.

Henry and Jacob question the intent behind new health and safety regulatory limits on how much tea the workers can carry to the leaf counter at any one time. There appear to be discrepancies between the company's health and safety rules on 'weight carried' for manual tea pickers and machine operators. This issue is further problematic because many stewards believed machine operators experience adverse health effects as a consequence of bearing the weight (and emissions) of the machines. For example, Jane and Musa said the following:

*Jane:* The machine harvesters have many respiratory problems. The machines are poorly designed. The way the worker has to carry the machine involves a lot of pulling and physical strain. They fall ill very soon after they begin this work.

*Musa:* You see the machine operators are having significant health problems. We find that after a few months, the operators are having all sorts of health problems. You know the machine is heavy and they inhale petrol fumes as they work and it causes respiratory problems. Their health is poor. There is no machine operator who looks healthy.

In another expression of poor faith in management, Jeremiah believed that the organization was capitalizing on the recent economic crisis in order to get workers to resign.

*Jeremiah:* Management is involved in spreading rumours to workers. They are telling people that the tea business is about to go under. They are recommending to workers that they tender their resignation, so they can receive termination dues. They are told to resign rather than to wait until the business collapses and then they might not get paid at all. They are being told that the economic crisis is bad. They are capitalizing on this crisis. They are saying that there is no future where they are heading. So people should just quit now, take their money and go and perhaps return as casual labourers. In reality, the work is still there. They are just looking for ways to get rid of the worker, and then rehire him at a lower pay. Recently I had 8 people who resigned from a single estate. They attained 10 years of service and management is telling them the future is bleak, hand in your resignation and go home. I know these people are going to come back here. They are going to come back as casual labourers at a lower rate. They are not making this decision on their own. It is due to deception on the part of management. Once you suggest resigning you know, the management will speedily pay you and have you leave. It's only 62,000<sup>20</sup>. Within maybe a month or two of being in the rural areas the money is finished. So they come back, you know. They remember being told that they could come back and

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<sup>20</sup> This is approximately \$900 CDN

get work as casual labourers. When they come back as a casual labourer, the terms of employment are very different.

These stewards' accounts demonstrate the extent of their limited faith in their employer/management on a wide range of issues. Stewards generally distrusted their employer and the management. This is unlikely to create circumstances that are ideal for engaging moral imagination in part because it hinders collaborative problem-solving. According to Musa, for example, improvements to working conditions depend upon pressure from the union; there is no expectation that the company will contribute to these efforts.

*Musa:* It has been very difficult for the company to effect improvements. I can't really see anything that the company has done for the workers. Anything that has happened has come from us pressuring them to do better. You know, perhaps I can talk about the bread and soft drinks that they may hand out at Christmas, but other than that there is nothing.

*Fear of backlash.* Many stewards stated that there was a general fear that advocating for better working conditions could result in backlash from the management. This fear existed not just among themselves, but also among the workers they represented. Their perception was that making grievances about worker maltreatment, or advocating for improved working conditions could be costly for the parties involved. For example, Jane tells a story about how a colleague of hers, who was a particularly vocal steward, lost his job.

*Jane:* Many shop stewards have been sacked over petty offences. We had this one steward who was really brave. You know, the team leader could say that a worker's tea was of poor quality and he would not just accept it. He would say, "no this tea is fine. I can't see anything wrong with it. Call the manager." So one time, he went upcountry and got held up with his family. He called his team leader and let him know there was a problem. However, the next thing we knew he had been sacked, summary dismissal for failing to report back to work on time. Telephone records showed clearly that he had called and he and his team leader had exchanged messages though the team leader denied it had happened. His case is still being handled by the union. He was evicted from his home immediately. The company sent over security guards. I asked the security guards if the steward had been given any notice and I was just pushed aside. So you see, shop stewards are afraid. When you speak the truth, you worry that it's only a matter of time before they find fault with you.

In Jane's opinion, shop stewards fear losing their jobs. They worry that if they "speak the truth" they could be targeted for termination. Joan echoes this perspective as she talks about her approach in dealing with management.

*Joan:* I have to be careful when I'm going to speak to the manager. The manager is still my boss. Even though I am a shop steward, the manager has the right to fire and hire me. So I humble myself so that I can keep my job.

The fear of backlash from management, if one was particularly vocal in expressing concerns about working conditions, was not unique to stewards. Workers were perceived to feel the same way. Henry, for example, shared the following account:

*Henry:* The workers are too scared to fight for their rights. You know, the other day in the new unit to which I had been assigned, I saw a leaf clerk insulting a worker. I asked the workers in the unit about this and they said, "That's just the way life is here. You can't do anything about it. The day you choose to complain about it may end up being your last day of work."

His account provides a specific example of a situation where workers accept ill-treatment from supervisory staff as 'part of the norm' due to fear that any statement otherwise could result in the termination of their employment. Joshua shares similar perceptions to Henry:

*Joshua:* People are afraid of losing their jobs. If you speak the truth in front of management, there are chances you will be harassed. They can easily find ways of getting you summarily dismissed. It is easy to find fault with a worker and get him/her terminated.

James provided a detailed account as to how managers and supervisory staff could use various methods to retaliate against workers who are outspoken about poor treatment in the workplace.

*James:* People are usually fearful. They are speaking up in front of their boss. Imagine speaking up in front of your boss and saying that he/she is being oppressive. You know the next day in the plantation there are many different methods that he/she can use to frustrate you. We have learned this through experience. Once you speak up, they can start plotting against you. The manager can want to have you sacked. When you take your tea to the leaf handler, he/she can look at your leaves and say they look horrible. He/she can ask you to take out certain leaves. They can work in coordination with the field assistant. You can have the field assistant complaining about your tea, telling you "I don't want to see leaves like this." When you go to weigh your tea, the field assistant is not too far

away. The leaf counter calls in the field assistant to let him/her know that you are weighing your tea. You can hear him speeding toward the leaf shelter on his/her motorcycle. The leaf counter is taking his/her time to slowly inspect your tea as the field assistant comes in to inspect your tea. Once the field assistant is there he looks at your tea and says "What is this? Pick through it. Is this the work you are doing? Come to the office at 2 o'clock." So you can find yourself being harassed by the leaf counter, field assistant, and manager.

Overall, the stewards' accounts demonstrate that speaking out against perceived wrongful treatment is a fear-provoking process for the workers. Managers and supervisory staff have power over workers' financial and other work-related outcomes. Stewards believe that management has used this power to strike back against outspoken workers by frustrating their work efforts and/or finding ways to terminate their employment. This makes them fearful and this fear can constrain moral imagination. As discussed earlier, one of the key instruments of the union is voice. Where harm to workers is perceived, union stewards can draw on moral imagination to voice objection and campaign for better working conditions. Where exercising voice is perceived to be costly, moral imagination can be constrained as self-preservation becomes a primary motivation. Consequentially, stewards accept the status quo and fail to envision or strive for better working conditions. As Joan put it, sometimes she needs to "humble herself" so she can keep her job.

*Lack of education and training.* Many stewards lamented the lack of education and training among their co-workers and other stewards. They argued that this lack of education was a barrier to self-advocacy, and a hindrance to smooth negotiations. Isaiah labelled this lack of education amongst workers as 'sickness.' In his opinion, this 'sickness' keeps workers from demanding their rights, and many accept ill-treatment from the employer and/or management as part of the norm.

*Isaiah:* You know, there is a sickness within the workers themselves. It is lack of education. The tea plantations are forgotten places or at least they were historically. Here,

you find the kind of people who do not think they have any rights. You know, in the early days during and even after colonization, people were brought here from their rural homes in lorries. They are brought there and put to work and they do not think they have any rights. They are people who have known that being yelled at work is normal. They thought that yelling at the worker was the employer's right. When the union started coming in, the plantation owners were fighting against it. The workers thought if you want to get along with the white man, you shouldn't join the union and if you have a problem do not report it, just keep it to yourself. We still have many workers, some of the old guard still in the plantations who still have this mentality. So it's something that we work on and something that will take time to resolve.

Isaiah touches upon the colonial history of the plantations, and suggests that there was a mentality among workers that they had no rights. According to Isaiah, 50 years after independence from colonialism, this mentality still exists among some workers and it keeps them from voicing legitimate concerns. The acceptance of an unjust status quo by the victims of the injustice can constrain moral imagination and action. Individuals who do not believe that they have rights worth defending may be less likely to engage in moral imagination. Such individuals may not conceptualize the experience of adverse working conditions as an injustice or moral issue. Ironically, they may lack moral awareness in situations where they themselves are the victims. The workers that Isaiah describes appear to value keeping the peace with the employer more than contributing to efforts to improve working conditions.

Stewards also raised concerns about the education and training of some of the stewards. They suggested that some stewards were not adequately trained to handle negotiations with management. Jeremiah argued that this portrayed the union in a bad light.

*Jeremiah:* You know the way we are dealing with things right now, anybody can be a unionist. What are we setting before the eyes of management? You know, managers are people who have received training. They have been educated, taken courses on how to best do their job. You know, they are educated people. When we send people who are not well educated to talk to management, the union is portraying itself badly. When you send someone into negotiations, for whom even basic communication is a problem, then you have a problem. For me, I would say we should look for people who can be presentable, with regard to their intelligence, their appearance, and you know, just their general demeanour. They can go and meet with people and represent unionists well.

James discussed the importance of training given the delicacy of negotiating with someone who is your superior under circumstances where he/she has done something wrong. He suggested that lack of training could cause stewards to 'run into problems' in their interactions with their supervisors.

*James:* As a trade unionist you work under the very same supervisor/boss that you have to challenge sometimes when he has done something wrong. It is the very same boss/supervisor that you have to call out when he/she has done something wrong who will call you out on mistakes you make. So problems arise among those leaders who are not trained. The language you use as you talk is sometimes even more important than what you do. When you receive a report from a worker, you should already have figured out the situation even before you talk to the person's supervisor. But if you are not trained, you will find that many stewards run into many problems.

Jeremiah and James both state that training is particularly important given the power differential between management and stewards. They acknowledge the challenge inherent in questioning the judgment of their superiors. Lack of proper education and training can limit the effectiveness of this process. Though they may be able to engage in moral imagination, stewards who lack training may be poor representatives of the union as they may be unable to communicate clearly or address problems in a sensitive manner.

*Lack of faith in the union.* Several interviewees voiced concerns about the ability of the union to deliver on its mandate to advocate for improved working conditions. This largely related to the delays in processing cases that were referred to the branch and head offices. Joshua argues that these delays were a source of frustration for workers. This weakened workers' faith in the union to the extent that some opt not to appeal to the union for help when they need it.

*Joshua:* We would like our branch office to be strong. When we bring issues to them, they should deal with them immediately. If they are unable to deal with them' they should be taken up speedily by the industrial court because if they take too long to deal with cases, it starts to look like the branch is in the pocket of the big company. So the union appears weak. If they dealt with cases faster, the union would appear to be stronger. Sometimes you want the workers to appeal a case and they don't have the will to



do it. They think about the amount of time it's going to take to appeal the case during which they will not be making any money and they just opt to return to their rural homes. Those left behind are also disheartened. They see such cases and lose faith in the ability of the union to adequately represent workers. They think that well so-and-so was in the union and he still got dismissed and didn't receive full pay so why should I join the union?

Isaiah voiced similar concerns as he talked about workers becoming disheartened by the amount of time it took to get certain cases addressed by the union.

*Isaiah:* Sometimes I can't work through the issue with the manager. Some of them hold on to their positions firmly once they've made a decision. So if it is irresolvable, I usually forward the issue to the branch office, either formally or informally, or to the union head office. You know, once the issue has been transferred to the head office, workers wait expectantly for feedback. I have had a case that has gone on for six years. I'm still waiting to hear back from the union head office. I have several cases that have taken very long to resolve. This makes the workers disheartened. They don't want to report their problems to the union because they think that they will take forever to resolve. How can management or even the workers have respect for the union when it cannot competently address even minor issues?

As Joshua's and Isaiah's accounts illustrate, the inability of the union to deal with cases efficiently is discouraging to workers. The consequence is that they opt not to seek redress when they encounter difficulties. Joan talked about the fact that she did not always feel like she had the power to do anything about the grievances that came to her.

*Jane:* I often don't feel like we stewards have a lot of power to act on the cases we receive. You know, my manager may be a woman but she is renowned for sacking people. She has sacked a lot of workers. You know, sometimes you speak to the managers and they laugh at you and at the union. They say what can the union do? Atwoli<sup>21</sup> is a nobody. They have learned that the power of the union is limited; they know that cases take forever to address. So they can terminate people unfairly and the cases will take so long that the claimants give up.

Jane's account conveys a sense of powerlessness in the union's ability to effect change. Such perceptions can constrain moral imagination if workers believe that any effort geared toward

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<sup>21</sup> The head of the Central Organization of Trade Unions.

redress for grievances or improvement of working conditions is an exercise in futility due to the limited power of the union.

*Loss of productivity and income.* As previously mentioned, union stewardship is a voluntary assignment. Stewards do not receive any form of remuneration for their work. Volunteerism can involve the sacrifice of certain personal goals, and this appeared to be the case for the stewards. Universally, stewards reported being pulled from their duties on several occasions to attend to their co-workers cases. As Joan attests, one of the consequences of these interruptions is a loss of productivity.

*Joan:* I am also an employee like the others. So sometimes I have been given a task to complete and an issue arises while I am at work. This means I have to leave my work to go and deal with the case and then return to my job. So you see my productivity is low.

Jerry talks about the dilemma stewards are faced with when their co-workers come to them with problems while they are on the job. He discusses experiencing a conflict between meeting his employers' demands and meeting the needs of co-workers.

*Jerry:* This job has many challenges. My work is often interrupted. Sometimes I can be working on something urgent that the manager has assigned me and someone comes to see me on the job. Sometimes they are shaking and very upset about something that just happened. This will mean I have to stop my work and attend to him. It's like I have to accept to be at fault in one way or another. If I leave my work, that's a problem and if I don't attend to the worker, he will think I am being dismissive of his concern. You know, you can talk to the worker and tell him, please just give me just time, let me finish what I am doing and I will get attend to you. Sometimes they don't understand. Sometimes you can have a worker who insults you if you don't attend to him immediately. This is something that we are used to as shop stewards. We are often insulted, but you can't take it to heart because if you do you will be of no use to the worker. Often, they come and apologize afterwards and say they spoke out of anger and they thank you for helping them nonetheless.

Both Joan and Jerry express discontent that their stewardship roles can lower their productivity.

Though they both demonstrate awareness of their co-workers needs, they acknowledge that they incur a personal cost in meeting those needs.

A secondary, and perhaps more dire, consequence of work interruptions was loss of income. Stewards who work as tea pickers are paid according to the amount of tea they pick. Work interruptions among these stewards thus results in lost wages. James and Joshua talked about this challenge.

*James:* Sometimes someone can be sacked for a petty offence. I have people like this come to me at work. It means I have to leave my plucking and attend to the person. I am the only one who can help them. There is no one else they can go to. This affects my earnings. You know, I have to pick enough kilos. So that's why I think if the union were able to give us a stipend, it would help us recover some of what we lose. In a month, we can be called to leave work about four times

*Joshua:* When I go to attend to another worker, it means I am leaving my own work to attend to them and I am not compensated for that time. For example, I could end up picking 20 kilos when I would have needed to pick 33 kilos in order to receive a full day's pay. This 20 kilos is not enough to feed me and my family. So I'm jeopardising my own income by volunteering my time to prevent my co-worker from losing his/her job. If there could be some way in which we could be compensated that would be good. Then I could feel free to leave my job to attend to my co-workers' cases knowing that my own income will not be jeopardised.

Yusuf shared that this loss of income caused some stewards to dislike their role:

*Yusuf:* This is volunteer work. You know once you are elected, there is no salary. There are some people who are elected and then they don't like the work because they realize you spend a lot of your time serving others when you could be picking tea and making money. For me, I volunteered for this position . . . But, you know, it would be great if we could be paid some sort of allowance, a small allowance.

These stewards say that they are often called upon to help manage grievances in the workplace. Given the piece-rate system of pay, taking time away from your own work to advocate for a co-worker automatically reduces your own earnings. A reduction in earnings is bound to have a significant effect on stewards' livelihood as their income is already low. The incurrence of such heavy personal costs can constrain moral imagination due to the heightened conflict between self (and kin) preservation and helping others. As Joshua puts it, if there were supplemental income he would "feel free" to attend to others' cases knowing that his livelihood is secure.

### *Facilitating Affordances of Moral Imagination*

Although the participants interviewed largely focused on constraining affordances, they identified positive relationships with individual managers as a factor that facilitated the smooth resolution of disputes and grievances in the working environment.

*Supportive management-steward relationships.* Several stewards believed that a supportive relationship with one's unit manager facilitated the smooth resolution of problems in the working environment. They shared accounts of positive relationships with individual managers that set the stage for collaborative problem solving. Isaiah, for example, talked about how his relationship with a manager in his unit who was proactive in bringing problems with employees to his attention. Isaiah appreciated being informed about such problems early on and believed the positive relationship made his role easier.

*Isaiah:* We work very well with some managers. Some of them understand that the union is not the enemy and we actually work really well together to resolve issues as they arise. In my unit, sometimes a manager will come to me with an issue before the employee themselves has reported it to me. When I am informed early like this, I can go seek out the worker early and investigate the issue before I have to go and work out how to resolve the issue with the manager. When you have a good relationship like that with management, it really helps make solving problems easier.

James believed that there had been fewer disputes in his unit because of his positive relationship with the manager.

*James:* In the unit I represent, I see that there are fewer conflicts. I had a good relationship with the former manager. Now a new one has come in.. We will see.

Yusuf and Jerry expressed similar sentiments. Jacob refers to his unit manager as his friend, and says that together they work to resolve issues without getting into win-lose situations.

*Yusuf:* One good thing about this job is that you can have an understanding with the manager. You can work cooperatively. I enjoy the relationship with my manager. Now, when your manager understands you and has become your friend, he likes you and you communicate well, and cases arise, it is easier to work things out. For example, we have cases where people have trouble with the leaf clerk. The leaf clerk can make a worker

pick through the tea he/she has harvested for the good quality leaves and whereas the worker may think the tea was just fine. A grievance can result from this. The manager knows that this dispute can escalate to a point where he/she will win and I, as the workers' representative, will lose. Alternatively, I can win the case and he/she loses. You do not want things to have to come down to win-lose situations. This means I must establish a good rapport with the manager so that when things happen, we can meet and discuss the issue civilly. I am very open with my manager. For example, I can tell him if the leaf clerk is a hostile or unfair supervisor. Sometimes the manager will accept my input and say that he will speak to the leaf clerk so that the picker can go on with his/her work. I enjoy my work when I can tackle many cases myself, when I deal with a case right there and then with the manager rather than having to push it forward.

Yusuf emphasizes in his account that he prefers to resolve problems within the unit, working with the manager. He goes on to discuss how this kind of collaborative problem-solving depends on the nature of the manager. If the manager is 'bad,' no compromises are made and the discussions on disputes are acrimonious.

*Yusuf:* If the manager is bad, if he doesn't listen, then you also go prepared for a fight. You go to see him armed. Some managers are really bad. They are hard headed. They don't want to make any compromises. So it's a battle. There is no attempt at conciliation with such managers. You fight and fight until someone gives in.

Jerry says he works easily with his manager to resolve the day-to-day concerns, often coming to a mutual agreement about how to resolve problems. He acknowledges that his manager is also 'an employee of the company' and may not have the power to address bigger issues such as the introduction of mechanization and the resulting job loss.

*Jerry:* My manager is an easy person to work with. We are usually able to work out things really easily. He knows I know and understand the CBA. Sometimes he even asks for my help in understanding the CBA laws. So with all the small day to day issues to do with workers concerns we usually come to a mutual agreement on how to resolve problems. The only thing that he can't help me with is the big things like mechanical tea harvesting. You know he says he is also an employee of the company just like me and so he also must follow the rules that the company dictates.

Overall, these accounts show that not only did stewards value having supportive relationships with their unit managers, they believed that such relationships facilitated collaborative problem solving, and minimized acrimony in dispute resolution. Indeed, these stewards generally

preferred resolving minor grievances and/or disputes at the unit level. Supportive managers, who were open to listening to and working collaboratively with stewards, made this possible.

### *Moral Deliberation Processes*

This research explored moral deliberation processes among union stewards with a focus on adverse working conditions. It was anticipated that, as both workers and worker-advocates, union stewards would demonstrate significant engagement in moral deliberation. Through the interviews, stewards universally reflected on moral questions with regard to their experiences of the working environment. They demonstrated moral awareness as they pointed out hardships within the working environment and discussed suspected injustices. As they, for the most part, experienced the same adverse working conditions as their co-workers, they readily engaged productive imagination. Their reflections showed they could easily empathize and adopt the perspective of their co-workers. Because stewards function as agents for improving conditions in the workplace, understanding their moral deliberation processes is intertwined with understanding why they take on the stewardship role. The themes associated with their deliberative analysis of moral situations are discussed below.

*Taking a stand: It's about fighting oppression.* As had been discussed, stewards generally demonstrated moral awareness in their recognition of harm amongst their co-workers in the lower-tier of the tea industry. A consistent theme through their accounts was that this harm was attributed to oppression at the hands of the management and business owners. This perceived oppression was something that they felt compelled to fight against in order to secure better working conditions. Joshua, for example, says that he was motivated to become a union steward because he saw workers being harassed. The desire to remedy this state of affairs fuelled his efforts to become a steward.

*Joshua:* Before I joined the union or became a workers' representative I would see how the workers were harassed by management. It made me want to volunteer to represent workers and maybe see if I could have an impact on the situation. I then campaigned for the votes of my fellow workers telling them that I would represent them and see if I could try and get as many of their problems addressed as I could. So I got involved in the union struggle. I know we can't get all of their problems addressed but if we can get 75% or 85% addressed, it's better than being at 30%.

Musa was similarly motivated to become a steward. He talks about his view that conditions were unfit for workers, when he first came to the organization. Musa believes his efforts, including the organization of strikes, have been effective at securing improved conditions.

*Musa:* When I first got into the union, I noticed many injustices. Wages were very low. I was very interested in unionizing so that we could increase our power and bargain for a meaningful salary. When I first came into this organization, we were being paid 1 shilling<sup>22</sup> per kilo. I saw this and said, "no." We wanted to have a meeting with head of the Central Organization of Trade Unions. If things weren't going to change we would go on strike. Once we went on strike, we got a pay increase. I have been involved in organizing strikes as a bargaining tool to get more pay. It has worked and people have seen that I am an effective union leader. There was a time the company had tent-like homes for workers. The roofs would leak. I saw this and said, "no". We are here to work. But if it comes down to being rained on through the night and being unable to sleep, there's no point of having a job. We need decent shelter where we don't have to worry about being rained on as we sleep. Now you see they are starting to do something about shelter.

Stewards appeared to appeal to principles of justice and human rights in discussing their advocacy efforts. Henry drew an analogy between his role as a union advocate and that of the Moses of the Old Testament who delivered Egyptians from slavery. Henry is inspired by tales of 'historical liberators' and sees himself in the same light:

*Henry:* You know I go back to history. I think about people who have fought for the rights of others. Many of them died for the cause. You know, think about Moses in the Bible. He fought so hard against the Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of slavery. He was really suffering, but he wanted to bring them to freedom from slavery. I am inspired by this. Even if it means I walk naked. Even if it means I go hungry. I must keep fighting to help liberate my fellow workers from oppression. So even if I have nothing, this mission keeps me happy with my work.

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<sup>22</sup> This is approximately \$0.01 CDN.

Musa links his stewardship role to ‘giving voice’ to the weak in advocating for the rights of those who are experiencing negative work conditions:

*Musa:* I volunteered for this position. I enjoy advocating for the rights of others who are too weak to do this for themselves. I was feeling really bad about conditions here. I really wanted workers to have a voice.

Isaiah describes the personal satisfaction he gets from seeing workers’ rights respected.

*Isaiah:* I told you from the beginning, my happiness comes from seeing other people get what is rightfully theirs. If I had the power to ensure every workers’ rights were respected, I would be ecstatic. Seeing a family living happily together, that brings me happiness. Even in my community, if I see people disagreeing I go and help them resolve their conflict. If I succeed, I feel very happy. Even if I am sitting at home eating some bland porridge, I still find joy in what I do and in having brought people together.

Along with references to ‘rights’ and ‘fighting oppression,’ some stewards made references to principles of equality and justice. James and John both talk about the disparities between how management employees and lower tier employees are treated. James focuses on the company’s approach to maintaining houses. He believes that the company should adopt similar approaches to the upkeep of staff houses, irrespective of their position in the organizational hierarchy, thus maintaining equality.

*James:* I know that the major problem is that there is major prejudice when it comes to building and designing houses. You see, the managers, assistant managers, and clerk’s houses, for example, are painted with oil paints. They have good paint jobs. When they get to our houses they use white wash. White wash does not last more than five months to one year. The paint jobs are really bad. They wear out really quickly. I see the prejudice. Why aren’t we treated equally? We are all employed by the same company. Why should our homes not be painted using the same quality paint? Why should I be denied that right? I think it’s wrong. There are many houses that are leaking. The chimney may look good from the outside, but they leak. There are many workers who live in such conditions.

John proposed that there should be equality in the system of remuneration for all staff. He argues that tea pickers should receive a fixed income, the same way managers do.



*John:* Management should be helping the workers. They should care for their workers in the same way that they care for themselves. There should be a fixed income for workers. If it's 10,000<sup>23</sup>, it should be 10,000 come rain or shine, just the way it is for them.

These accounts reflect principles of these stewards regarding the disparities in the management of working conditions of staff across the organizational hierarchy as unjust.

*Feeling called to help: The coincidence of empathy and self-efficacy.* Some interviewees viewed their stewardship role as a vocation for which they had a special calling. They attributed significant meaning to this “calling<sup>24</sup>” as many said it fulfilled their need to help others, while allowing them to apply their skills and talents to a role they perceived to be socially valuable and important. When asked about why she serves as a union steward, Joan describes it as an “inner call” to assist those in need; she believes she is well suited to the role because of her skills in public relations.

*Joan:* I can say it is just an inner call. If I see someone with a problem, I go and try to fight for them. I might succeed, I might fail. But fighting for something does not mean I go and address the managers roughly. I must have the right tactics for approaching them so that we can discuss the issue and see if we can agree. It's just public relations – the method of approach is important. I just have the right skills for the job.

Joan's account reflects a moral awareness of others' experience of harm and need for help. She feels called to help those experiencing problems and believes she has the 'right public relation skills' to do so, even though she may not always succeed.

Isaiah and Jerry also see themselves as having a special predisposition for the job. Both of them give accounts that suggest that others 'saw something special in them,' that indicated they should serve in these roles.

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<sup>23</sup>This is approximately \$111 CDN

<sup>24</sup> In contemporary psychology, the term "calling" refers to a sense that people have of doing work they are meant to do; work that is their life's purpose (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003).

*Isaiah:* When the shop steward who served before me left, he told everyone that I should take over his place. He even handed over his files to me without having officially informed me that I was to take over. When I asked him why he had done this, he said he just saw something in me. Shortly after he passed away, we organized an election and I was elected. You know, I did not come in as a representative expecting to get some sort of benefits package. I do this voluntarily. In fact, I sacrifice some of the little money I earn to help my colleagues. If there is an issue that requires me to contact the branch office in Nakuru or here, I have never asked an employee to give me money for phone credit. I have never asked any employee for money for transport to come to the branch office in town. I really just feel that I have the heart for this job.

Isaiah emphasizes his voluntary sacrifices for the job saying that he has “the heart” for the job.

Jerry shares the story of his election in the account below and believes that his acceptance of this job was divinely inspired. He engages in ‘imagine-self’ perspective taking as he tries to put himself in the shoes those who experience problems in the workplace:

*Jerry:* I think that my neighbours saw that I had a special talent for doing this work. The day that the steward elections were being carried out, I stayed home. My neighbours and co-workers carried me, physically, they lifted my 85 kilos and carried me to where people were voting. When something like that happens I see it as a sign from God. Really, I had to volunteer. I am happy to help out my brothers and sisters. I always think about how I would feel it were me in their position. When I need help, I usually find that someone sacrifices to help me so I feel that I must do this for others.

Similarly, John described stewardship as community leadership that serves his inclinations to assist those in need.

*John:* You know, I've always been like this. When someone else is experiencing trouble, my heart doesn't feel settled. I feel like to I need to do something to help them. This is why I decided to become a community leader and advocate for workers.

These accounts suggest that these stewards derive significant meaning from their work. They strongly believe that they are doing the work they are meant to do. The stewards are morally tied to their work. There is a strong undercurrent of empathic concern and sacrifice for others in the accounts shared by the stewards, as there is in Yusuf’s account below.

*Yusuf:* Even if I haven't plucked anything, someone can come to me in the field with a problem and I will put my empty basket down and go and deal with his problem. Because I can't be happy going on with my work if it means my friend, co-worker will be

sacked. But, you know, it would be great if we could be paid some sort of allowance, a small allowance.

When stewards recognize others experiencing harm, they feel driven to help by empathic concern and/or perspective taking. For some, this desire to help others is further cemented by the perception that one has a ‘special talent’ for advocating for others that is valued by the community.

*Analysing benefits: It's an opportunity for personal growth.* Several stewards mentioned that their involvement in the union gave them opportunities for self-improvement and personal development. Joan, for example, discussed how the activities she engaged in as a steward enabled her to expand her horizons as she got to participate in novel activities.

*Joan:* My job as a shop steward gives me exposure. It introduces new activities to my life. Like now you see I have come to meet you here and we've never met. It gives me courage to speak publicly. I have gained courage. So if I'm sent anywhere or I encounter anything, I can explain myself. I can now say I am exposed. We have workshops occasionally. Through training, I can learn a lot. I can learn how to do things differently, and change where I have been going wrong.

In a similar account, Jerry mentions that stewardship provided him with an opportunity to develop leadership skills. He believes he benefits from the experiences that come with the steward role including those that involve receiving training and teaching co-workers.

*Jerry:* It's also a way for me to develop my leadership skills. I don't know what lies in store for me in the future. I also enjoy the work because it makes me enlightened. I have the opportunity to get training from workshops here and there and to meet different people. It really expands my thinking. When I am teaching my fellow workers, I feel like I also benefit.

*Jeremiah:* You know, this is a leadership role. Some stewards can start out here and then end up serving as councillors for their constituency.

Jeremiah suggests that stewardship work can serve as a stepping stone for individuals to pursue political careers as councillors. These accounts suggest that stewards' advocacy efforts also

function to serve their needs for self-development, either for their personal growth or potential political ambitions.

*Identifying solutions: Here's how things can be better.* Stewards' moral awareness and perspective taking were often accompanied by creative imagination as they presented ideas as to how workers' circumstances could be improved. Several of these suggestions dealt with changing the current compensation system from a piece rate method of pay to a fixed monthly salary.

*Henry:* You know, our salaries are indeed very low. They need to change the way we are paid. You know, tea picking is not the kind of job that offers a consistent wage. There could be really heavy rain today that affects the crop, and so the next day there's nothing to pick. Sometimes you can get 2 weeks of really poor leaf production and you make almost no money. We really should have a flat rate of pay. You know, sometimes people don't even earn the stipulated minimum wage because there has been no crop to pick and they haven't managed to pick the minimum 33.5 kilos per day. People really struggle. Sometimes you have taken out a loan and at the end of the month, even if you haven't made minimum wage, you still have to make payments on your loan. So you go home with nothing at the end of the month. You know, sometimes people's children get kicked out of school for failure to pay school fees. A flat rate would really help eliminate some of these problems.

Jacob suggested that the union had a role to play in this, and needed to change strategy by demanding a change in the system of pay, rather than pay increases on the piece rate system.

*Jacob:* Even if we were to get a per kilogram pay increase, even if the pay were to go up to 10 shillings per kilogram and the guidelines remain the same, the increase would be useless. This means we as the Union have seen that we should stop chasing after per/kg pay increases and instead have other conditions of the workplace improved. The union should get into the business of improving other aspects of the work environment, such as medical care and housing, and look at getting workers on a fixed income.

Also in relation to compensation, Joan proposed that the company find means of paying workers during periods of reduced production:

*Joan:* I know that the company is insured against drought. They get insurance benefits during drought. I think the workers should also get paid during the drought season. The employer never actually incurs a loss. They should remember that the workers are also providing a benefit to the company. Many times, I have thought that if civil servants are

paid during the weekend, we should also be paid during our off days. We have tried to give proposals to the branch so that we can be paid in the same way that teachers are. Any day that we are off, we are not paid, so in a month we get paid for only 26 days. I also think we should have special night allowances. When it gets to 6 pm and you are still at work, it is already dark and you can work up to 6 pm in the morning. There are those who work throughout the night. It is usually pretty cold in the night as well. Sleeping during the day is not as healthy as sleeping during the night so I think night-shift workers deserve some additional compensation.

Stewards also had suggestions about how the union and management could contribute to the efficiency of stewards' work. These involved the provision of meeting space for workers and stewards.

*James:* We would like the shop stewards of all units to have an office so that they can have some authority, some place where you can meet with people, even the manager can come to your office and meet you. We usually just meet with people on the road, or people come and find you when you are working. If we could have one day per week where the shop steward could be in an assigned office in a set place where the workers can come and bring you their reports. So you can write people letters then and there, you can sort things out at a specific time rather than having to take work home. Sometimes people come to visit you with their work-related problems in your home. I think we should have an assigned space. There can be some kind of agreement between the union and the management to provide an office space for the union stewards within each unit. This would be good.

Musa made the argument that the provision of meeting space for stewards would facilitate collaborative problem-solving, as stewards could find ways to address certain issues systematically rather than on a case-by-case basis.

*Musa:* You know we have common areas for socialization where stewards can come together. The union can make a request to management so that they can have use of the room and organize gatherings for stewards from different units. You know, if we were to get together we may find our problems are not as many as we think they are. We may be able to identify a few issues that we can deal with systematically. If every steward is dealing with a problem in their own way, then it appears as though our problems are worse than they appear.

Many stewards also proposed changes to the current approach to medical treatment in one of two ways. One would involve a significant attitude shift among management on how workers should be treated when ill. A second alternative was that the company should stop being a health care

provider and allow workers to seek health care privately (or publicly) given that they paid premiums for the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF).<sup>25</sup>

*Jacob:* The estate manager could leave the responsibility of tending to illness/injuries to the hospital department. Because the claims that the managers make about people taking time off, asking about the time that people have off: “Why did you give people time off?” “Why did you give this person so much time off?” “Why does this person have 10 days off?” “Why are ten people sick today?” “What kind of sickness does he have?” These questions intimidate the dresser and the medical staff. They should leave issues about medical treatment to the doctors. Health care should be left to the doctors. If not, the company should get out of the health care business. Right now, we have to pay NHIF. The amazing thing is that even though I am paying for NHIF and I go to the dresser who gives me the “medication and work” treatment, I see that I am still really unwell. He sends me to the medical centre where I get paracetamol. Then I think, “no, I should use my NHIF and go and get private treatment.” When I go there, the manager wants to know why I went to a private hospital and yet it is my own money that I am using to get treatment.

*Joshua:* It should also be made clear that workers can go anywhere to seek medical treatment as long as they provide sufficient medical documentation to explain their absence. They shouldn't be restricted to going to company hospitals. The company should also provide transportation for those who are sick so that they can go and access medical care in or out of company grounds.

*Joan:* I think that the union should help us negotiate different terms for medical treatment. I'm sorry to say but the union has in the past done a sham job.

There was a strongly expressed desire for the provision of additional training and education for workers. Stewards proposed training of different forms including, training on labour laws for workers, training for union stewards, and training to ensure plantation workers had transferable skills when they left the workplace. Isaiah suggested that the company set up committees to educate workers on labour laws and union regulations:

*Isaiah:* I do think though that the company should also take responsibility to educate the workers on the labour laws and union regulations. The workers really need to be educated. Perhaps they should form training committees in each unit to educate workers on their rights in the same way that there are committees for health and safety, gender, AIDS, etc. For example, I am the chairman of the AIDS committee. I would be happy to serve anywhere there is some kind of organized effort to make sure that workers know

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<sup>25</sup> NHIF provides all Kenyan workers with health insurance that they can use at accredited hospitals.

their rights. Workers can live in peace if they know their rights and they also know the rights of the employer.

Jane and James both suggested that the union provide more training for stewards.

*Jane:* The union should have more training workshops for the shop stewards. In addition, every steward should have their own copy of the CBA. Right now, many of us have to share and it takes a while before you can master all the rules and regulations in the CBA in addition to the labour laws.

*James:* In the plantations, there is one thing that maybe I shouldn't say. We have a problem among shop stewards. When you are elected there is only one thing that you are given: the CBA. Now I believe that in order to be a good teacher, you have to be trained. For any job, you need to be taught how you are to do your job. The problem we have in the plantation is that you are selected and that's it. All you have is your words and the CBA. It would be good if Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union had a plan so that after elections, shop stewards could go for training. When you are trained you develop some skills and knowledge about how to do your job. You know that you are a steward and you are going to be dealing with your boss. If you could have some brief education, even a two week training session, so that you could know how to deal with the boss and with the people that they represent. You find that it is difficult for us to lead because we are all self-trained. We receive no leadership training. So you find that sometimes we mess up and we have no idea that we are messing up. Sometimes you will make a mistake and find that someone has been sacked. Or you have used inappropriate language with your boss because you panic and lose your temper. Maybe he has treated an employee badly and you get really angry and bitter; that bitterness drives you to use rude language in speaking with your boss. After you have spoken, then you realize. oh, I acted inappropriately and it is too late to do anything about it. You can be sacked for using rude language. So you find that we work, but we sometimes work in fear because we have no training about the roles we are to play. If I was to be asked today what I wanted, it would be a leadership training institute where we can go for training, even if it is just two weeks, and get annual refresher courses so that we have leaders/stewards who understand their work. It would make our jobs much easier.

This final account by Jerry poignantly sets forth an argument for the necessity of ongoing skills training for workers, as it highlights the tragedy of the plantation worker.

*Jerry:* You know I have worked for this company for years. They profit from me. However, when I leave, I will leave with nothing. Workers pretty much go into retirement empty handed. It would be really good if they invested in providing workers with some form of training that would benefit them long after they have left the company. Perhaps give them some life skills. You know, we have lots of people who work for 8 hours, put in 3 hours over-time and then go home to bed and the cycle begins again. Can one really expand his/her mind that way? I don't think so. It would be good if they could set aside some time for worker education. Many workers who leave the plantations die

within 1-5 years of leaving this company. The stress just kills them. They have nothing and they don't know how to do anything else. Some training that can support workers post-retirement would really be useful. The company should really take it as their responsibility to train workers who work for them year after year. They also need to look at improving gratuity payments. You know, the gratuity payments are very small. You can work for 10 years and be paid for 21 days per year. You end up going home with less than 50,000<sup>26</sup>. The government also takes its cut. What can 50,000 do for you in today's world? Nothing. A worker will get the money and perhaps buy his family some new clothes and buy himself a jacket. Perhaps he feels he's worked all these years and hasn't owned a nice jacket. That may be the only thing he gets to enjoy. After deductions and transportation back to the rural village, he may have 10,000<sup>27</sup> left. A life of misery begins. The company should really help us in this respect.

Given that the workers have little time outside of work to develop new skills, Jerry argues that the company had a big responsibility to assist the workers to develop skills that they can use after they leave the organization. Jerry's account highlights a deliberation process that includes moral awareness, perspective taking, and creative imagination. He is aware of the difficulties faced by workers as they leave the tea plantations and, in exercising productive imagination, presents vivid accounts on how these difficulties impact them. Though he does not have the power to actualize change in this respect, he exercises creative imagination to generate an idea about how conditions for workers could be improved.

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<sup>26</sup>This is approximately \$555 CDN

<sup>27</sup> This is approximately \$111 CDN



## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

This dissertation sought to uncover how moral imagination is reflected in the real-life experiences of organizational stakeholders who are involved in the management of poor working conditions. Specifically, the study evaluated the experiences of managers and union stewards in an organization in the Kenyan tea industry. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate information from participants on their thoughts and experiences as they managed potentially morally laden issues related to working conditions of lower-tier workers. Thematic analysis was used to examine the accounts participants shared, in order to uncover the deliberative processes participants engaged as they strived to make sense of these issues. It was also used to identify the contextual factors that could facilitate or constrain their efforts.

This dissertation represents a novel examination on moral deliberation in organizational settings in several ways. First, it identifies the management of working conditions as a moral issue for individual organizational stakeholders. Second, it is one of few attempts to study individuals' moral deliberative experiences qualitatively in an organizational setting. Third, it employs the framework of moral imagination that allows an examination of how individuals attend to social and emotional cues as they deliberate on moral issues. Fourth, it includes an investigation of moral deliberation among union stewards who are a largely neglected population in moral deliberation research. Finally, this work introduces to the literature, research from a non-Western developing country context. In this section, I will engage in an integrative discussion on the relevance of these conceptual and methodological decisions in light of the findings of the study. Theoretical and practical implications will be discussed along with future research directions, and study limitations.

### Understanding Affordances of Moral Imagination and the Power of Context

One of the primary advantages of the qualitative approach to studying moral imagination is that it enabled a detailed examination of the context in which the participants were embedded. One tenet of moral imagination is that it involves a thorough examination of the situation surrounding the moral issue/s under consideration. The analysis of facilitating and constraining affordances was thus critical to developing an understanding of factors operating within the tea estates that would undoubtedly impact managers' moral imagination and action. Managers discussed several factors that they had to consider in their day-to-day administration of working conditions. They identified several constraints to the improvement of working conditions in the workplace. As could be expected in any business environment, one of their primary considerations was maintaining profitability. They worked in a competitive environment where the market value for their product remained fairly stagnant. Under these circumstances, the objective of maintaining 'healthy' profit margins would be at odds with any efforts to invest resources in the improvement of employees' working conditions. In fact, most of the identified affordances are constraints that would in fact encourage behaviour that is counter to the improvement of working conditions. The only pressure in the positive direction is the demand by certain consumers that the company engage in fair labour practices. As Ann explained, if a client required a certain certification or standard (e.g., Rainforest Alliance, or Fair Trade), the company would strive to fulfil the clients' wishes. The standards are generally audited, and several managers reflected on how the audits had resulted in improvements to working conditions. Some managers engaged in retrospective imagination as they discussed how the social audits had improved the overall wellbeing of staff, as they required the organization to pay closer attention to conditions in the tea estates, including workers' housing and medical care. It is interesting to

note that in this study, profitability concerns function as both facilitating and constraining affordances. In this case, they are facilitating affordance because there are certain markets that are inaccessible to tea producers who do not meet certain minimum requirements with regard to the working conditions of their employees. The existence of stipulated standards of working conditions encourage the organization, and its managers, to direct continued attention to working conditions and ensure they are up to par. Though not a topic in this study, it shows the power that consumers can wield over efforts to improve working conditions.

Comparative industry norms were also identified as a constraint, as many managers made reference to the fact that their competitors had significantly lower labour costs than they did, and could thus beat their prices in the market. Normative information occupies a central position in moral theory. According to cognitive moral development theory, for example, ethical decision-making at the conventional level involves appeals to shared moral norms of society or some sub-group of society (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969). At the post-conventional level, one's moral reasoning goes beyond what is normative and involves self-chosen ethical principles of justice and human rights. Norms are also said to play a role in enabling moral awareness. They are indicative of the social consensus on 'appropriate' behaviour and they designate a particular shared frame of reference for those embedded within a given social context (Gibbs, 1965). Norm violation can thus trigger moral awareness (Reynolds, 2006). As the data illustrated, industry norms (along with national norms) on wages served as many managers' frame of reference in determining whether or not workers' wages were reasonable. As no norm violation was perceived, moral imagination was constrained. Indeed, it may be exceedingly difficult, if not impractical, to present an argument for improving wages, for example, when all your competitors are paying lower wages and tapping into similar markets. Managers who demonstrated moral

awareness on issues related to wages did so because they recognized harm to workers who were unable to meet their basic needs at the current wage level. Overall, the findings of this research suggest that efforts should be made to understand the norms operating in any environment where moral reasoning and organizational ethics are studied. Societal norms surrounding ‘minimizing harm’ provide an important frame of reference for moral action in many settings. In business settings, managers also appeal to industry and related norms on labour practices. These norms also provide managers with guidelines about what kind of behaviour is acceptable. It cannot be assumed that the prescriptions of industry norms are congruent with other societal norms for moral behaviour.

Another issue that functioned as constraints for managers in this study was the discrepancy between contemporary skill demands and the skills of the current workforce. The lower-tier workforce, particularly the tea pickers, are described by managers as being uneducated and, often, illiterate. Problems with communicating information arose frequently, and managers expressed frustration at this state of affairs. Only one manager, Julie, engaged in creative imagination in presenting ideas that could be used to improved communication with this group of workers. (She proposed the use of signs to provide information, and the training of supervisors from diverse ethnic communities on important rules and regulations, so they could in turn communicate this information to workers in their native tongue). Most other managers merely expressed a desire to have the staff replaced. To this end, Jo stated that the company’s overall recruitment strategy had changed so as to recruit only employees who had achieved a certain minimum level of education. The absence of moral imagination processes, with regard to communication problems in the working environment, may be related to the fact that the responsibility for these communication problems is attributed to the worker, rather than to the

organization. Indeed, the company was already taking measures to address the situation over the long term by modifying their recruitment strategy. The single intra-organizational theme that emerged among constraints was the widespread discriminatory employment practices within the organization. Participants painted a picture of a strong moral order of tribalism and nepotism in the organization. This was attributed to both senior management behaviour and pressure from politicians in the local community. Though many managers questioned this moral order in their organization, it still had significant power over their behaviour as will be discussed in the section on moral deliberation. Overall, the analysis of affordances provides a clear picture of the contextual pressures that have an impact on managers' behaviour.

The examination of affordances also enabled a thorough understanding of the specific constraints under which union stewards operate, as well as the resources they have to draw upon to improve working conditions. A major constraint for union stewards was their perception that managers, and business owners, often acted in bad faith. Whether or not there is an objective reality to these claims, perceptions that their employers are inclined to ill-will and worker subjugation have an adverse impact on management-union relations. It likely puts the union and its stewards in a defensive position, where they feel compelled to react against management initiatives. This is evident in some stewards' accounts as they express their distrust and disdain for certain management policies, including quality checks for picked tea leaves, and certain health and safety regulations. These findings do, however, reflect a long-standing narrative of antagonism between unions and management (Sloane & Witney, 2004). These negative sentiments may constrain creative imagination. If unions are consistently in a position of reacting against employers' initiatives, both groups of organizational stakeholders may not consider opportunities to engage in collaborative problem solving to generate ideas that can serve mutual

interests. It was ironic that in the face of stewards' general distrust of their employers, some stewards identified supportive management-steward relationships as a facilitating affordance. Jerry and Isaiah, for example, both described having working relationships with their unit managers that were characterised by mutual respect and open communication. They both reported a certain ease to problem resolution in the context of these positive working relationships. These findings suggest that individual attitudes that foster positive workplace relationships can facilitate mutual problem solving; they may thus facilitate creative imagination among organizational stakeholders.

Some stewards questioned the general abilities of the union and the body of union representatives. The union was faulted for being slow to act on grievances, which in turn discouraged workers from reporting problems. A lack of education was reported to be one of the reasons that workers failed to protest negative working conditions. As Isaiah put it, some workers did not see themselves as people with rights. Such perceptions can constrain moral imagination. Workers may be condemned to indefinite ill treatment at the hands of their employers, if they fail to perceive harm or ascribe external agency to the harm they experience by holding the employer responsible for creating an unhealthy working environment. Their hunger for additional education and training is evident in stewards' accounts, as they believe it would improve their advocacy efforts. Although stewards may believe they have the ideas and the commitment to effect change in the working environment, further training may enable them to execute their visions more appropriately. Overall, the analysis of affordances provided a clear picture of the environment in which stewards in the Kenyan tea industry operate.

### Caring Managers and Principled Caring Union Stewards

The findings of this study provide evidence that both managers and union stewards experience various aspects of poor working conditions as having moral significance, albeit in different ways. In general, moral imagination among managers appeared to be associated more with an ethics of care, whereas moral imagination among union stewards was associated with an ethics of justice. Though it was by no means universal, across individuals or issues, many managers demonstrated moral imagination about conditions in the tea estate working environment. Across four of the five identified themes on moral deliberation processes, we encounter managers who recognize conditions that cause workers harm, understand their impact on worker wellbeing, and present ideas on how the working environment could be improved. Often these accounts reflect a genuine concern for worker wellbeing, and disappointment about their circumstances. As mentioned earlier, care involves ongoing attention to the emotional concern and wellbeing of others (Ciulla, 2009). Pettersen (2008) regards care ethics as a system in which moral problems are resolved by responding to the needs (rather than rights) of others by promoting their welfare, and/or relieving the harm/burdens they are experiencing. It was clear from some managers' demonstrations of reproductive and productive imagination that they had a good understanding of the needs of workers on various fronts (e.g., housing conditions, income level). They expressed the desire to address those needs in ways that could improve workers' lives, even though they were not always able to. Jack, for example, understood that workers were not always fairly compensated. He believed that it was thus important for managers to make efforts to address the concerns they could to ensure that workers were comfortable. Bob and Tom were particularly vocal in expressing their disapproval about the housing conditions of workers. They were concerned about their workers' struggles under these conditions and were

disappointed that the company had not done more to address the problem. Yet other examples demonstrate the existence of an ethics of care among managers. Julie, Ken, and Pete reflected on workers' problems with prostitution, interpersonal conflict, and hunger, respectively, as a consequence of their low income. They all express a desire for different outcomes, even though they are unable to make decisions that could effectively address workers' needs.

Overall, the findings of this research provide some evidence that where managers display moral imagination, it is associated with an ethics of care. One of the issues raised in the introductory critique of contemporary research was the focus on deontological ethical approaches in studying moral deliberation among managers. The findings of this research suggest that an exclusive focus on deontological approaches to moral reasoning may exclude important aspects of managers' deliberative approaches to moral problems. Indeed, appeals to deontological principles of justice were uncommon among this group of managers outside of the discussion of discriminatory employment practices. There are indubitably issues where deontological models are relevant. They should, however, not be employed to the exclusion of other approaches to understanding managers' moral deliberation in applied research. The findings of this research suggest that '*ethics of care*' has a place in the study of manager behaviour in business settings. One may argue that this is a function of the collectivist cultural context of this study. Though this may be the case, it does not negate the importance of attending to ethics of care in research given our increasingly globalized business environment.

Union stewards' accounts showed that their moral imagination was associated with both an ethics of care and an ethics of justice. Stewards often shared their concern about the circumstances of their fellow workers. Across the themes, there were accounts of self-sacrifice in order to help colleagues experiencing problems. Stewards often lost income as they attended to



the grievances and disputes in the workplace. Yusuf, for example, says that he interrupts his own tea-picking to attend to disputes because he would not like to see his 'friend' lose his/her job. In the theme on stewardship as a 'calling,' several stewards talked about how their role fulfilled their need to help others who were experiencing difficulties. John, for example, said that he felt unsettled when he saw his coworkers experiencing trouble and was moved to do something to help them. The findings thus suggest that decisions among union stewards to advocate for their colleagues are associated with an ethics of care. Their efforts to help resolve others' disputes are driven by their feelings of concern for their fellow workers. Appeals to ethics of justice may have been uncommon among managers, but they were universal among union stewards. Ethics of justice theories align with deontological ethics, which focuses on inherent rightness or wrongness of behaviours, as well as principles of fairness. Many stewards appealed to principles of justice and workers' rights in their accounts. "Fighting oppression" was an echoed chorus through many interviews with stewards. Across the identified themes, stewards frequently used words such as 'oppression,' and 'rights.' Henry, for example, said that he served as a union steward because he was dedicated to liberating others from oppression. Musa and Isaiah both stated that their service was due to their desire to see others secure their rights. John and James both presented arguments that the company should maintain equality across levels of staff with regard to the housing maintenance standards, and systems of remuneration, respectively. These trends in stewards' accounts imply their belief in the moral legitimacy of their efforts. Stewards believe that they are working to promote a greater good, and are on the right side of the moral divide between workers and their oppressors.

### Moral Deliberation Processes

A primary aim of this research was to evaluate how moral imagination is reflected in the real-life experiences of organizational stakeholders. Moral imagination comes from a pragmatist ethics tradition that emphasizes thorough analysis of moral situations, including observations of conflicting desires, and the examination of manifest and unfolding consequences of behaviour (Dewey, 1920; Jacobs, 2004). Werhane (1998) called attention to reproductive imagination (moral awareness), productive imagination (perspective taking) and creative imagination as three critical elements of moral imagination. This research design allowed for the examination of how and whether these elements of moral imagination are employed in participants' deliberations on situations of potential moral import in their working environment. As these elements often unfolded simultaneously where they were manifested, an overly reductionist approach to reviewing them would not have been a fair representation of the data. Rather, they were analysed under broader themes that reflected patterns of analysis of moral situations among managers and union stewards.

#### *Managers*

The first identified theme was on attributing blame. Managers who displayed this pattern of deliberation did not discount workers' experience of harm. In fact, both managers represented in this theme acknowledged that many lower-tier workers experienced significant financial frustrations and had challenges in making ends meet. They, however, attributed agency for this harm to the workers themselves. In other words, these managers believed workers caused their own problems by irresponsible financial practices. Productive imagination was not observed in these accounts, as the managers did not appear to take the perspective of workers and reflect on other factors that may contribute to their poor financial circumstances. It can be

argued that they displayed moral awareness in recognizing harm, but placed moral responsibility for the problem on the workers themselves. Across the other themes, there are a few examples of managers making attributions about the reasons behind workers' woes. In other words, as harm is recognized (e.g., in the form of limited financial resources), some individuals deliberated on the agent of harm. The trend in this data was that in accounts where managers ascribed agency to circumstances external to the individual, they were more likely to engage in perspective taking. For example, in contemplating personal involvement in workers' problems, Julie attributes disputes among workers to a history of difficult past experiences. Under the theme on impossible situations, Tom and Ken attribute workers' despondence and interpersonal conflicts to poor social mobility, and low income respectively. In these reflections, the managers engage in productive imagination as they reflect in some detail on how workers are affected by these problems. Though no causal claims can be made, these findings could be interpreted to mean that the attribution of blame to a victim of harm can preclude productive imagination. Attribution processes are widely studied in psychology. The findings of this research suggest that these processes may play an important role in moral deliberation, and thus merit further attention in research on moral reasoning and ethical decision-making.

The second identified theme was on managers' analysis of the costs associated with certain working conditions, including job insecurity. Most managers who engaged in this kind of cost analysis displayed both reproductive and productive imagination. They were well aware of certain problems experienced by workers, and in engaging in productive imagination provided clear pictures as to how workers were affected by those problems. Productivity was the cost of concern for most managers. Bob, for example, said that the sharing of limited housing facilities created conflicts among workers; consequentially, what could have been productive working

time was lost to conflict resolution. Tom believed that making improvements to recreational facilities for lower-tier staff would result in their increased productivity in the workplace. Julie and Mary both linked efforts to keep workers happy to their belief that they there were better able to meet stipulated performance targets if workers were satisfied. Overall, for these managers, poor working conditions were evaluated as an indirect threat to productivity for two reasons. First, they had a negative impact on workers' wellbeing. Second, managers lost productive working time to resolving problems that arose as a consequence of poor working conditions. More unexpected analyses of costs of current working conditions came from Tom and Jo who both reflected on the potential social costs of the increasing mechanization of the tea industry. They both express concern about the looming job losses, and reflect on how this could impact the broader community, (e.g., in the form of increased crime). These findings suggest that a review of associated costs is an important part of managers' understanding of a given issue. In addition to serving an informative function, an awareness of such costs may present some instrumental motivation to address identified problems.

The third theme on feeling hopeless reflects the experience of many managers who engaged in reproductive and productive moral imagination, but could not perceive any alternatives for action. In Tom's first account under this theme, his hopelessness was likely due to the fact that he linked the problems workers were experiencing to broader social problems for which there were no foreseeable solutions. His assertion that, "there is no future" is particularly poignant as he talks about workers who struggle hard to educate their children to no avail. Pete and Ken both share their observations on workers who are unable to feed their families due to lack of money. Though they express empathy about this state of affairs, Pete and Ken both say that they do not have alternatives for action. This theme also captured situations where the

managers had made efforts to act on their deliberations, but those efforts were in vain. In Ann's case, for example, she recognized serious problems with sexual harassment, but her efforts to refer those cases through proper channels were in vain as perpetrators were rarely punished. Overall, the data captured under this theme present an aspect of moral deliberation that is often ignored or underrepresented in contemporary research: that there are situations where there is no single effective decision alternative. MacLagan (1995) has criticized research on moral reasoning for a reductionist focus on decision-making that can preclude an understanding of other processes associated with moral deliberation. These accounts of feelings of hopelessness are a reflection of real-life situations where there may not be any practical, short-term alternatives for action. This does not negate the fact that these managers demonstrate moral deliberation in the form of moral awareness and perspective taking.

The fourth theme captures situations where managers are experiencing moral dilemmas. These managers not only demonstrate both reproductive and productive imagination, they are clear about what their preferred course of action would be. However, because of external pressures, they are either unable to act or they act counter to the dictates of their moral imagination. Jack, for example, discusses the political pressure he faces to recruit and/or promote people from the local ethnic community. He acknowledges that this practice is discriminatory and describes his dilemma in dealing with these demands. This account is consistent with the identification of tribalism and nepotism as constraining affordances in this context. Julie and Mary talk of 'humbling themselves' and 'taking care of me' respectively in the face of demands to support discriminatory practices. As Ann put it, tribalist hiring practices in favour of the local ethnic community was 'the tune to be followed.' Under the same theme, Julie reflected on the conflict she experienced between the company's demand for staff reduction and her moral

beliefs about not causing suffering. Her organization put her in a difficult position as she would be rewarded for engaging in behaviour that she found morally questionable. These accounts shed interesting light on the real-life experiences of managers. Once again, the importance of understanding the context in which managers are embedded is critical. To an outsider, the behaviour of these managers may reflect badly on their capacity for moral deliberation. Jack, for example, could be perceived as failing to value merit. Julie, could be perceived as inconsiderate of the consequences of job loss among workers. What is unseen is the inner turmoil that these managers experience. They demonstrate moral awareness and perspective taking, perceive certain behaviours to be a moral transgression, and could still engage in the behaviour in the interests of self-preservation. These findings suggest that the relationship between moral reasoning and moral action is much more complex than originally thought, particularly in situations where there is significant pressure to act unethically or face negative personal consequences. Research attention should be directed to the impact of such situations of individuals' wellbeing as well as to factors that can help individuals negotiate such situations successfully.

The fifth theme and sixth theme both capture creative imagination processes, albeit in different ways. In the theme on personal involvement, some managers sought to find personal means of helping workers. Though they may not have been able to find ways to modify working conditions, they exercised creative imagination in finding ways to address the general social circumstances of employees. Examples come from Julie, who did this through counselling, and Mark and Pete, who got personally involved in the education of workers' children. As was noted in the analysis, the accounts shared in this theme are in certain ways paternalistic. There is often a parent/child, teacher/student dynamic to the way these managers relate to their workers as they

get involved in dealing with issues in the personal lives of workers. I do maintain, however, that this type of paternalism does not preclude an ethics of care. Managers recognize and express concern about workers' circumstances and make genuine efforts to help workers within the confines of the existing social structure. Under the sixth theme, I discussed managers' envisioned alternatives for action with regard to the improvement of working conditions. The managers who participated in this study presented a range of action alternatives that could be employed to improve working conditions for lower-tier workers in the tea industry. These included expert help with money management, improved recreational facilities, and improved communication strategies, among others. Though the ideas presented are unique to this context, they are a testament to the utility of encouraging people to engage in creative imagination. These findings present interesting implications for applied research. It would be interesting to further our understanding on factors that can promote creative imagination in organizational settings.

#### *Union Stewards*

The adoption of the moral imagination framework for this research also facilitated a broad integrative coverage of a range of deliberation processes among union stewards. The first theme among stewards was related to their appeal to principles and justice. This has been largely discussed in previous sections. Suffice it to say that for union stewards, harm experienced in the workplace was largely attributed to oppression at the hands of management and business owners. This perception of a violation of workers' rights and principles of fairness was the impetus for many stewards' engagement in worker advocacy. Moral imagination among stewards likely predicted action (in the form of attending to workers' grievances and participating in union activities), because it was associated with the conviction that there was an inherent 'rightness' to their behaviour. Henry, for example, saw himself as a liberator inspired by the actions of

historical figures who had also fought for justice. Musa saw himself as providing an important voice for the voiceless, and Isaiah maintained that he was on a crusade to ensure the rights of workers were respected. This kind of moral conviction could be a powerful predictor of moral action. As the findings from managers illustrated, moral imagination does not necessarily predict moral action. Among the union stewards, who did act in accordance with the dictates of their moral deliberations, moral imagination was associated with a strong conviction in the 'rightness' of their actions.

The second theme highlights stewards' strong identification with their advocacy role, to the extent that some perceived it to be a special vocational calling. Their advocacy efforts were a fusion of the fact that they felt empathically compelled to help co-workers in need and the fact that they felt they had the skills to do the job effectively. Stewards' productive imagination is thus closely associated with a sense of self-efficacy about their ability to be effective advocates for workers. These findings suggest that confidence in one's ability to effect change could be a strong predictor of whether individuals are moved to act as they engage in moral imagination. In the third theme, some union stewards discuss the self-development benefits that they get from participating in union activities. Perceived developmental and/or personal-growth opportunities could be yet another factor that predicts the translation of moral deliberation into moral action. As with the managers, the final theme is on creative imagination. The stewards' ideas for action tend to be more general than specific. Nevertheless, the fact that they present envisioned alternative arrangements for conditions of work can be a good starting point for the development of more concrete and practical alternatives.



### Broader Implications

At the beginning of this dissertation, I situated this research within the broader context of contemporary debates regarding labour practices around the globe. The findings of this study provide evidence of adverse working conditions of workers in the developing world, who are involved in producing goods for consumption in the Western world (Arnold & Hartman, 2006). This is largely consistent with the status quo in globalized economies and international trade relations. This may bring despair to those who long for a more equitable and humane system of international trade relations. It is my assessment, however, that there is room for optimism. First, the data obtained from managers capture, in several instances, an inherent moral conflict between their obligation to generate profit for their business owners, and their empathic concern for lower-tier employees who experience various forms of physical, economic, and psychological harm as a consequence of poor working conditions. There is hope to be had in the fact that individuals engage in moral reflection on these issues and reflect on their complicity in systems of work organization that are oppressive to others. These kinds of reflections are needed to spark and develop global consciousness about the current unfair state of trade and labour practices. Second, grounds for optimism can be found in the resolve of the union stewards to fight against the perceived injustice of their circumstances. Their victories may be few and far between, but their passion for labour advocacy, and willingness to persevere in their efforts in spite of the negative consequences they face can be a source of inspiration to disenfranchised developing country workers. Finally, the accounts of managers on the impact of Fair Trade and Rainforest Alliance certification on the working environment let us know that the voice of the consumer makes a difference. Corporations must respond to the demands of the consumers of their products to remain economically viable. Thus the consumer wields significant power and

has the opportunity to exercise voice in the debate on labour practices via the purchases they make.

### Caveats

Qualitative research does not generally make claims of objectivity. Qualitative data analysis is inherently a subjective endeavour that requires researchers to be instruments of interpretation (Murray, 2003). As such, I do not hesitate to acknowledge that the findings of this dissertation reflect my epistemological assumptions and theoretical interpretations. Having acknowledged this as a feature of my research approach, I made efforts to be attentive to how my perspective shaped my analytic decisions, and be explicit about the theoretical perspectives that shaped my interpretations of the data. Other researchers with alternative theoretical frameworks might have interpreted the data differently. Indeed, one strength of qualitative research is that the data can be employed to inform diverse psychological theories.

There are some caveats associated with my sampling approaches. The managers interviewed for this research were multi-lingual, relatively fluent English speakers. Although communication in English is essential for day-to-day operations for most Kenyan professionals, they quite commonly use certain Kiswahili words and/or phrases in their communications. Most union stewards interviewed were not fluent English speakers. Their interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, though some did speak in English for portions of the interview and/or reverted to English as they searched for particular words. The data presented from union stewards are thus my English translation of information that was conveyed to me in Kiswahili. The implication of this is that some of subtleties of meaning could have been lost in translation. That being said, this effect is greatly minimized by the fact that the note-taker and I are both multi-lingual Kenyans

who speak fluent English and Kiswahili. Our familiarity with both languages contributed to maintaining the integrity of participants' accounts as they were translated.

A second caveat associated with my sampling approaches has to do with the selection of participants. The participants in my study sought to participate of their own accord, sometimes with the encouragement of their colleagues who knew that I was recruiting additional participants. The fact that they offered to participate in the study and share their experiences could reflect that they sought to accomplish certain agendas through participation in the study. These agendas likely influenced the information that participants chose to share or keep private, as well as their framing of their accounts. This retrospective sense-making of moral situations may appear problematic to some researchers. For the purposes of this research, however, it is precisely this subjective and contextualized, analytical interpretation of moral situations that provided the rich insight into the organizational stakeholders' deliberative processes. A third caveat with my sampling procedure lies in the fact that the organization from which participants was sampled was undergoing major change as it transitioned from manual labour to mechanized labour. This shift may have further influenced the agendas of those who participated in the study. It likely had a significant influence on the information that participants chose to share. Nevertheless this is, in some ways, a reflection of real-life business practice as modern organizations are dynamic and often in states of change. A fourth methodological caveat lies in the use of a single interview with participants as a source of data. Several qualitative researchers (e.g., Charmez, 2003) recommend the use of iterative data collection processes including multiple sequential interviews and/or revising transcripts with participants to gather data from participants. Multiple sequential interviews permit independent checks over time, and allow the participants' accounts to gain depth, and detail (Charmez, 2003). However, there were logistical

challenges to such an approach given the location of the sample. In addition, participants in this study were not explicitly informed of the theoretical objectives of the study which, in and of itself, imposes limits on the extent of participant questioning as discussed below, and also limits the utility of reviewing transcripts with participants.

The thematic categories on moral deliberation processes are intended to organize various ways in which organizational stakeholders make sense of the moral issues they encounter in the workplace. The categories should not be taken as exhaustive or prescriptive. In fact, the design of this study highlights the uniqueness inherent in moral imagination. Even when people can identify common moral issues, there are idiosyncratic ways of reflecting and making sense of these issues. A similar logic can be applied to the thematic categories on affordances and individual variables. Though some of the affordances identified (e.g., market- and industry-based constraints) are bound to be present for all corporate managers, there are some that may be unique to this study context (e.g., tribalism and nepotism). Different environments would naturally present their own affordances. Unlike most research on moral deliberation, this study is conducted in a developing country context among participants from largely collectivist backgrounds. It is feasible that some of the patterns identified may not be reflected in more individualist cultures.

In order to minimize social desirability demands, participants were not explicitly informed that their accounts would be examined for moral content. This could have limited the extent to which participants expressed certain information about their moral perspectives on conditions in the working environment. Failing to inform participants of one's theoretical objectives has its shortcomings. The questioning process needs to be more subtle than direct and, as such, there may be some losses with regard to the depth of information obtained. In order to

minimize such losses, the interview guide was designed to facilitate in-depth probing about the thoughts and feelings underlying participants' initial responses to interview questions.

Despite best efforts to minimize self-presentation biases, it is still possible that participants neglected to share socially undesirable information about themselves and/or their organizations. Participants could actively construct their experiences within the interview setting for impression management and emotion regulation purposes. Participants were often asked questions that required them to expound on the reasons behind their expressed thoughts and actions, and thus provide justification for their behaviour. It is acknowledged that people's concerns with their social images powerfully influence their behaviour and emotions, and the information they share is always somewhat constrained by the realization that certain actions might lead others to regard them in a negative way (Leary, Allen, & Terry, 2011). A few participants in the sample of managers appeared somewhat cautious and guarded in their responses, particularly at the beginning of the interview. As is reflected in the selection of quotes throughout the results section, and in the length of the interviews, some individuals shared significantly more information than others. Nevertheless, most participants opened up as the interview progressed and communicated deeply personal details and insightful reflections about their experiences in the working environment. The richness and meaningfulness of the data, and the link to the concrete experiences of participants seemed evident as I conducted the interviews and ensuing data analysis.

#### Avenues for Future Research

This research was an exploratory investigation on moral imagination amongst organizational stakeholders involved in the management of poor working conditions. The use of a qualitative approach, under the framework of moral imagination, facilitated a comprehensive

examination of the context in which managers and union stewards in the Kenya tea industry are embedded. Overall, we see diverse patterns of analysis of moral situations among organizational stakeholders. The findings provide empirical support for Bartlett's (2003) argument that there are many intervening processes between problem perception and action when it comes to moral deliberation and decision-making. Among the managers in the study, they were found to include processes of attribution of agency for observed harm, analysis of individual, organizational and social consequences, reflections on conflicts of interest and values, as well as creative imagination in envisioning and enacting actions that could address perceived problems. Among the stewards, they included reflections on principles of justice and human rights, reflection on opportunities for self-development, as well as creative imagination. The findings also show that whereas productive, reproductive, and creative imagination are important tools in the moral deliberation processes, they are but one part of complex patterns of moral deliberation in which that individuals engage when confronted with issues of potential moral import.

One of the benefits of exploratory investigations is that their findings can present a myriad of new and exciting avenues for future research. Organizational ethics and moral reasoning research has yet to direct significant attention to moral questions related to working conditions. This investigation demonstrates that individual-level research on this topic can make a worthwhile contribution to the broader discourse on the ethical management of working conditions. Future research can direct attention to exploring ways in which to engender moral imagination, particularly creative imagination, among organizational stakeholders involved in the management of working conditions. The findings of this research also lend credence to MacLagan's (1995) argument that a singular focus on decision-making can preclude the examination of other processes of deliberation in moral situations in real-life settings. The

findings of this research suggest that these processes are diverse and merit further examination. In efforts to reduce the research-practice divide on moral reasoning in organizational settings, further attention should be directed to understanding the diverse patterns of deliberative analysis that organizational stakeholders employ as they make sense of moral situations at work. One such pattern is the attributions that individuals make about the reasons behind perceived problems. As reflected in the findings of this research, such attributions may have an impact on ensuing deliberations on moral questions. Future studies could evaluate whether individual attributions about the agents of perceived harm predict different modes of engagement in moral imagination. The relationship between such attributions and perspective taking merits particular attention. The inclusion of union stewards in a study on moral deliberation was particularly novel, and resulted in some interesting information about the potential for role-related differences in moral deliberation. Future research should explore whether or not there are in fact role-related differences in patterns of moral deliberation among different groups of organizational stakeholders. Such research can provide useful information for practitioners in cases where negotiation and mutual problem solving among different groups of organizational stakeholders is required. As was demonstrated in this study, engaging in moral imagination does not guarantee that one will act ethically, even when they are expressly aware of what the most ethical course of action would be. This is particularly the case when there are conflicting instincts toward moral action and self-preservation. An interesting avenue for inquiry would be to develop an understanding of factors that can tip the balance in favour of moral action. The findings from deliberation processes among union stewards may shed some light on these factors. Among stewards, conviction in certain moral principles, a sense of self-efficacy about effecting change, and perceived opportunities for self-development, were all associated with

moral imagination and action. Future research could direct attention to the role of these factors in predicting ethical decision-making and behaviour in other contexts.



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## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYMS

*Table I: Participant Pseudonyms*

Participant No	Pseudonym	Participant No	Pseudonym
Manager 1	Bob	Union Steward 1	Jacob
Manager 2	Ken	Union Steward 2	Joan
Manager 3	Tom	Union Steward 3	Musa
Manager 4	Jack	Union Steward 4	James
Manager 5	Mary	Union Steward 5	Joshua
Manager 6	Pete	Union Steward 6	Jeremiah
Manager 7	Julie	Union Steward 7	Henry
Manager 8	Mark	Union Steward 8	Yusuf
Manager 9	Jo	Union Steward 9	Isaiah
Manager 10	Phil	Union Steward 10	Jerry
Manager 11	Anne	Union Steward 11	Jane

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDES

## Interview Guide for Managers

What do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing your company today?		
Probes:		
Does that affect how you do your job? How so?	How does that affect the workers in your factories and estates?	How does your company deal with those challenges?
Why do you think that is important?	Are estate/factory workers aware of these challenges?	How would you deal with those challenges?
What do you (personally) find to be the most satisfying aspect of your job, when it comes to dealing with workers?		
Probes:		
Why do you think that?	How so?	Are there changes that could be made that would make your role even better?
What do you (personally) find to be the most challenging aspects of managing workers?		
Probes:		
Why is that challenging for you?	Are there any obstacles in your way as you try to manage such situations?	What kinds of things do you consider as you are managing these challenges?
How do you deal with that?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Do you feel you have the power/ability to deal with that? Why? Why not?
How do you handle such situations?	What do you do then?	Does your company have any power to act upon these situations?
What are some of the most common complaints that you hear from workers directly about their day-to-day working experiences?		
Probes:		
How often does this happen?	How do you handle such situations?	Are there things that you would like to do but are unable to?
How do the workers react?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Do you think such situations can be resolved? How?
How do you manage that?	Does your company have any power to act upon these situations?	What kinds of things do you have to think about as you deal with such complaints?
Do either your factory and/or estate workers complain about: their wages; their workload; the physical conditions of their workplace; lack of equipment; injuries?		
Probes:		
How often does this happen?	How do you handle such situations?	What kinds of things do you have to think about as you deal with such complaints?
How do the workers react?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Can you resolve such situations? How?
How does that affect the workers?	How does that affect the workers?	Are there changes that can be made to bring lasting improvement?

## Interview Guide for Managers (2)

Has anything been done to correct such situations in the past?	Does your company have any power to act upon these situations?	Are there things that you would like to do but are unable to?
What are some of the most common complaints or concerns that you hear from the Union?		
Probes:		
How often does this happen?	How do you handle such situations?	Are there things that you would like to do but are unable to?
What do you think about the demands of the Union?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Do you think such situations can be resolved? How?
How do you manage that?	Does your company have any power to act upon these situations?	What kinds of things do you have to think about as you deal with such complaints?
Now, could you share with me an example of a situation (a story) where a worker has come to you with a concern about their working environment?		
Probes:		
How did you handle it?	What did you think about the situation?	What do you think the worker's motivations were?
What happened next?	What did the worker do	What did you have to consider as you did that?
What was the outcome?	How did you do that?	Is there anything you would do differently if this situation occurred again?
Are there situations where you experience a conflict between what you would like to do in dealing with a worker's concern and what you have to do as an employee of your company?		
Probes:		
Tell me more about that	Why do you think that happens?	How do you feel about that?
What happens then?	What factors do you have to consider in such situations/	How would you change that if you had the power to do so?
Do you think that there are changes that can be introduced to the working environment to help change the conditions for factory and estate workers?		
Probes:		
What would that look like?	Where could such a change be introduced?	When could that be done
How could that be implemented?	Why do you think that is important?	What effect would that have on the workers?
What would be required to ensure that was implemented?	What resources would be needed?	What do you think the long-term impact of that is/would be on the work environment?

## Interview Guide for Union Stewards

What do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing KPAWU and workers in the tea industry today?		
Probes:		
Does that affect how you do your job? How so?	How does that affect the workers in factories and estates?	How does KPAWU deal with those challenges?
What is the impact of that?	Why is that problematic?	How would you deal with those challenges?
What do you think that is important?	How do you feel about that?	How would you deal with those challenges?
What do you (personally) find to be the most satisfying aspect of your job, as a union representative?		
Probes:		
Why do you think that?	How so?	Are there changes that could be made that would make your role even better?
What do you (personally) find to be the most challenging aspects of being a union representative?		
Probes:		
Why is that challenging for you?	Are there any obstacles in your way as you try to manage such situations?	What kinds of things do you consider as you are managing these challenges?
How do you deal with that?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Do you feel you have the power/ability to deal with that? Why? Why not?
How do you handle such situations?	What do you do then?	Does the Union have any power to act upon these situations?
What are some of the most common complaints that you hear from workers directly about their day-to-day working experiences?		
Probes:		
How often does this happen?	How do you handle such situations?	Are there things that you would like to do but are unable to?
How do the workers react?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Do you think such situations can be resolved? How?
How do you manage that?	Does the Union have any power to act upon these situations?	What kinds of things to you have to think about as you deal with such complaints?
Do either your factory and/or estate workers complain about: their wages? their workload? the physical conditions of their workplace? lack of equipment? injuries?		
Probes:		
How often does this happen?	How do you handle such situations?	What kinds of things to you have to think about as you deal with such complaints?

Interview Guide for Union Stewards (2)

How do the workers react?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Can you resolve such situations? How?
Has anything been done to correct such situations?	Does the Union have any power to act?	Are there things that you would like to do but are unable to?
What are some of the most common problems that you experience in dealing with employers in the tea industry?		
Probes:		
How often does this happen?	How do you handle such situations?	Are there things that you would like to do but are unable to?
What do you think about the position taken by the company?	Do you find such situations difficult to handle? Why?	Do you think such situations can be resolved? How?
How do you manage that?	Does the Union have any power to act upon these situations?	What kinds of things do you have to think about as you negotiate these issues?
Now, could you share with me an example of a situation (a story) where a worker has come to you with a concern about their working environment and you had to deal with his/her employer to resolve the issue?		
Probes:		
How did you handle it?	What did you think about the situation?	What do you think the worker's motivations were?
What happened next?	What did the worker do	What did you have to consider as you did that?
What was the company's position?	What did you think about the company's position?	How did the worker respond to that?
What was the outcome?	How did you do that?	Is there anything you would do differently if this situation occurred again?
Are there situations where you experience a conflict between what you would like to do in dealing with a worker's concern and what you have to do as a representative of the Union?		
Probes:		
Tell me more about that	Why do you think that happens?	How do you feel about that?
What happens then?	What factors do you have to consider in such situations/	How would you change that if you had the power to do so?
Do you think that there are changes that can be introduced to the working environment to help change the conditions for factory and estate workers?		
Probes:		
What would that look like?	Where could such a change be introduced?	When could that be done
How could that be implemented?	Why do you think that is important?	What effect would that have on the workers?
What resources would be needed?	What would be required to ensure that was implemented?	What would be the impact on the work environment?



## APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

### Informed Consent Form for Managers (1)

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#### Consent to Participate in Research Study on the Managerial Roles and the Working Environment within Factories and Estates in the Tea Industry in Kenya

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Betty Onyura from the Psychology Department at the University of Guelph. I am conducting this project in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a PhD program in Industrial and Organizational psychology at the University of Guelph. If you have any questions about the study please contact:

Betty Onyura  
Kenyan address  
P. O. BOX 64331 Nairobi, 06200 Kenya  
Tel: 020-8562622  
**E-mail :** [bonyura@uoguelph.ca](mailto:bonyura@uoguelph.ca)  
Canadian address  
Department of Psychology; University of  
Guelph; Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1  
**Tel:** 1-519-824-4120 **Ext:** 58931

Vivian Shalla, PhD  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1  
**E-mail:** [vshalla@uoguelph.ca](mailto:vshalla@uoguelph.ca)  
**Tel:** 1-519-824-4120 **Ext :**

#### Purpose of the Study

This research is designed to explore the personal and social factors that influence the roles of factory and estate managers. As a manager, you have to deal with meeting the goals of your employers as well as deal with issues surrounding the management of your employees. Your workers (and/or their representatives) may come to you with concerns about their work and/or working environment on a regular basis. My research deals with: (i) what managers think about such concerns, (ii) how they respond to such concerns, and (iii) the challenges they face in dealing with such concerns on a day-to-day basis.

#### Procedure

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in an interview. The interviews will last approximately two hours. I will ask you general questions about your job and about management in a tea factory and estate environment. I will also ask you to share some of your personal experiences in your work environment. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding your thoughts and experiences.

#### Potential Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. I hope that this study will provide information that will help improve understanding of the managerial role within the tea industry in Kenya and the personal and social factors that influence managers' work experiences.

## Informed Consent Form for Managers (2)

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### Payment for Participation

You will receive a token of appreciation of a Safaricom credit card for 500/= for your participation in this study.

### Confidentiality

I will take notes during the interview. I will also have a note-taker present to assist me note-taking. In accordance with the strict ethical guidelines of the University of Guelph, every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. The notes taken will be accessible only to the primary researcher. All information that I collected will be presented only in summary form. You will never be identified by name in any reports and no personally identifying information will ever be made public.

### Participation and Withdrawal

If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also decide not to have your data included in the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator  
University of Guelph  
437 University Centre  
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606  
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca  
Fax: (519) 821-5236

### **SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information provided for the study Managerial Roles and the Working Environment within Factories and Estates in the Tea Industry in Kenya as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of participant (print)	Signature of participant	Date
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### **SIGNATURE OF WITNESS**

Name of witness (print)	Signature of witness	Date
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## Informed Consent Sheet for Union Stewards (1)

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Consent to Participate in Research Study on the Roles of Union Representatives and the Working Environment within Factories and Estates in the Tea Industry in Kenya

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Betty Onyura from the Psychology Department at the University of Guelph. I am conducting this project in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a PhD program in Industrial and Organizational psychology at the University of Guelph. If you have any questions about the study please contact:

Betty Onyura  
Kenyan address  
P. O. BOX 64331 Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: 020-8562622  
**E-mail :** [bonyura@uoguelph.ca](mailto:bonyura@uoguelph.ca)  
Canadian address  
Department of Psychology  
University of Guelph; Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1  
**Tel:** 1-519-824-4120 **Ext:** 58931

Vivian Shalla, PhD  
Department of Sociology and  
Anthropology  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1  
**E-mail:** [vshalla@uoguelph.ca](mailto:vshalla@uoguelph.ca)  
**Tel:** 1-519-824-4120 **Ext :**

### Purpose of the Study

This research is designed to explore the personal and social factors that influence the roles of union representatives in tea factories and estates. As a union representative, you have to deal with managing the concerns of the workers you represent and negotiating terms with the organizations that employ them. Union members may come to you with problems or concerns about their work and/or working environment on a regular basis. My research deals with: (i) what union representatives think about such concerns, (ii) how they respond to such concerns, and (iii) the challenges they face in dealing with such concerns on a day-to-day basis.

### Procedure

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in an interview. The interviews will last approximately two hours. I will ask you general questions about your job and about management in a tea factory and estate environment. I will also ask you to share some of your personal experiences in your work environment. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding your thoughts and experiences.

### Potential Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. I hope that this study will provide information that will help improve understanding of the role of union representatives within the tea industry in Kenya and the personal and social factors that influence their work experiences.

### Payment for Participation

You will receive a token of appreciation of Kshs 250/= for your participation in this study.

Informed Consent Sheet for Union Stewards (2)

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**Confidentiality**

I will take notes during the interview. I will also have a note-taker present to assist me note-taking. In accordance with the strict ethical guidelines of the University of Guelph, every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. The notes taken will be accessible only to the primary researcher. All information that I collected will be presented only in summary form. You will never be identified by name in any reports and no personally identifying information will ever be made public.

**Participation and Withdrawal**

If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also decide not to have your data included in the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator  
University of Guelph  
437 University Centre  
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606  
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca  
Fax: (519) 821-5236

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information provided for the study *the Roles of Union Representatives and the Working Environment within Factories and Estates in the Tea Industry in Kenya* as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of participant (print)	Signature of participant	Date
-----------------------------	--------------------------	------

**SIGNATURE OF WITNESS**

Name of witness (print)	Signature of witness	Date
-------------------------	----------------------	------

APPENDIX D: NOTE TAKER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Research Study on the Roles of Organizational Stakeholders and the Working Environment within Factories and Estates in the Tea Industry in Kenya

Confidentiality Agreement for Research Assistant

This agreement is entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ (date) by and between \_\_\_\_\_ (Research Assistant) and Betty Onyura who is the primary researcher for the above named research project.

I \_\_\_\_\_ have been recruited to work as a research assistant for the above named research project.

As the research assistant, I will be taking notes during interviews with research participants and assist in the transcription of notes from recorded interviews.

I have been made aware of the strict ethical guidelines that govern this project. I agree to abide by them.

I agree that I:

**will not** disclose any information gathered during these interviews to any third parties  
**will not** disclose any information related to the identity of the participants in this project to any third parties

**will not** make use of any information acquired during the execution of my duties for any purposes that are not related to this research project

**will** turn over all transcribed notes and all notes taken during interviews to the primary researcher upon the conclusion of the research project.

I have read the above information and I willingly enter into this agreement.

Research Assistant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary researcher signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Witness signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_