

**"How are perceived cultural challenges addressed by the Western project manager operating in the Asian region?"**

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## **I. Abstract**

Western project managers can increasingly be seen managing projects in Asia, so it is timely to assess whether the knowledge already acquired about cultural differences has permeated the discipline of project management. Do Western project managers ensure culture is a considered factor during the management of projects within the Asian region? Do Western project managers make any modifications to their project management techniques to account for cultural diversity?

The purpose of this research is to examine any knowledge gaps concerning the perceptions of international project managers in regards to cultural differences between them and their project teams, and to see how, if at all, they dealt with these differences. This research focused specifically on Western project managers operating within the Asian region.

This research involved a single case organisation study where both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered for analysis and interpretation. The study identified perceived Asian cultural challenges facing the Western project manager, and the modifications put in place to address them. As such it provides valuable information for both project managers already working in Asia, and prospective managers looking to operate in the Asian region.

Western project managers going to work in Asia need to understand that there are many cultural influences, perhaps more than they realize, and that those cultural influences interact in ways that may not be readily apparent. The results of this study suggest the pure processes of project management can transcend culture, provided an awareness of potential cultural differences is present. The project management process does not need to be modified to account for cultural difference; rather Western project managers need to place more emphasis on particular stages of the process once they identify the cultural challenges they

have to address. Further, they may need to modify their own personal management styles and enhance their 'soft skills', as these will be tested when they are required in a foreign environment.

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### **III. Declaration of Originality**

#### **Author's Declaration**

I (Anthony George Gilden) declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Unitec New Zealand. The regulations for the degree are set out in the Master's of Project Management programme schedule and are elaborated in the course handbook.

I confirm that:

- This Thesis represents my own work
- The contribution of any supervisors and others to the research and to the dissertation was consistent with the Unitec Code of Supervision.
- No part of this dissertation has been submitted for any other degree or examination to any other tertiary institution.

Signed:

Dated:

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I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge:

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- Except where otherwise approved by the Board of Postgraduate Studies of Unitec, the research was conducted in accordance with the degree regulations and programme rules;

- The contribution made to the research by me, by other members of the supervisory team, by other members of staff of Unitec and by others was consistent with the Unitec code of supervision.

Signed:

Dr Noel Burchell -----

Dated: -----

Peter Quinnell -----

Dated: -----

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## 1. Introduction

Much has been written over the last 25 years about the impact of cultural differences on the effectiveness of the international manager. During the later part of this period, the discipline of project management has also evolved into a profession in its own right. This has, in turn, provided career opportunities worldwide for many Westerners, as evidenced by the number of Western project managers currently responsible for projects within the Asian region.

It is therefore now timely and important to assess whether the knowledge already acquired about cultural differences between differing nationalities and ethnic groups has permeated the discipline of project management. Do Western project managers ensure culture is considered as a factor during the management of projects within the Asian region?

On a daily basis, Western project managers encounter diversity between their own culture and the culture of their colleagues. The question is to what extent is this diversity being both recognized and accommodated by Western project managers. Do Western project managers make any modifications to their styles of project management, or project management techniques, to account for cultural diversity?

For a Westerner to operate successfully within the Asian region, it is not enough to be aware that they will encounter cultural challenges. They need to be able to recognize and address cultural differences, and incorporate their methods for doing so inside a project management framework. Through the attainment of cultural awareness, and the subsequent modification of their existing project management techniques, Western project managers should reduce their risk of project, and consequently personal, failure.

As managers become increasingly sensitized to the differences between themselves, their environment and other team members, and these differences are increasingly incorporated into a new, cross-cultural project management style, Western project managers can add more value to their work in Asia, and enhance their career prospects, both within Asia and worldwide.

This research identifies perceived Asian cultural challenges facing the Western project manager, and the modifications put in place to address them. As such it provides valuable information for both project managers already working in Asia, and prospective managers intending to operate in the Asian region.

The purpose of this research is to begin to address the knowledge gaps around the perceptions of the international project manager in regards to cultural differences, and how, if at all, they deal with them.

This research focuses specifically on Western project managers associated with a single case organisation, referred to in this study as AsiaCo, operating within the Asian region.

The research aims to identify:

- the degree of importance and conscious attention given to culture by Western project managers employed by, and associated with, AsiaCo;
- the specific cultural challenges the Western project manager perceives they face while managing projects within the Asian region;
- to what extent do Western project managers adapt their project management techniques to address perceived cultural differences between themselves and their project teams?

The specific research question is:

**"How are perceived cultural challenges addressed by the Western project manager operating in the Asian region?"**

For the purposes of this research, Western is defined as someone who is born into a Western family (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, USA, Western Europe), and has been both educated and employed in a Western nation prior to being allocated responsibility for projects in the Asian region.

The Asian countries researched include Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong and China.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Project Management**

Projects are faced and completed throughout all facets of our personal and professional daily lives. A project may be as simple as sending out Christmas cards, or as complex as opening a new theme park on reclaimed land in Hong Kong.

The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) ® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) defines a project as “a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service” (p. 4). A project has a definite beginning and end date, and generally has clear boundaries which define the scope of the work (Bartram, 1999). Regardless of the size of the project, all projects should have definable objectives; they will consume resources; and they should operate within time, cost and quality constraints (Kerzner, 2004).

The PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) defines nine key areas of project management (pp. 7-8):

#### **1. Project Integration Management**

- proper coordination of the various elements of the project

#### **2. Project Scope Management**

- ensuring the project includes all the work, and only the work required, to complete the project successfully

#### **3. Project Time Management**

- the processes required to ensure the timely completion of the project

#### **4. Project Cost Management**

- the processes required to ensure the project is completed within the available budget

#### **5. Project Quality Management**

- the processes required to ensure the project will satisfy the needs for which it was undertaken

#### **6. Project Human Resource Management**

- the processes required to make the most effective use of the people involved in the project

#### **7. Project Communications Management**

- the processes required to generate, collect, disseminate, store and ultimately dispose of project information

#### **8. Project Risk Management**

- the processes concerned with identifying, analysing, and responding to project risk

#### **9. Project Procurement Management**

- the process required to acquire goods and services from outside the organization

While there are other standard project management methodologies available, such as PRINCE 2, ISO 10 006 (Turner, 2002), the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) was selected for the purposes of this research, as it provided a concise framework around which to frame survey questions, and it could be correlated well to aspects of culture that may be identified as areas where cultural difference could be pervasive.

The discipline of project management, and the role of the project manager if they follow the PMBOK® 2000 framework (PMI, 2000), is to ensure that each of the nine key areas of project management is addressed in the most efficient, effective, timely way possible. Project Management is thus “the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements” (PMI, 2000, pp. 7-8). It is the planning, scheduling and controlling of a series of integrated tasks such that the objectives of the project are achieved successfully and in the best interests of the project stakeholders (Kerzner, 2004). Project management as a discipline provides a structure and set of tools to ensure goals are achieved based on thorough planning and management principles. As Turner (1999) wrote “project management is the art of turning vision into reality” (p. 3).

The smaller projects we encounter in our lives we can generally manage ourselves, whereas organizations may be faced with a multitude of projects of varying sizes, importance and cost. Accordingly, organizations may differentiate a task versus a project, by the size and complexity of the activity.

Today’s companies recognize that employing a dedicated project manager to oversee the running of the larger projects helps to ensure the project is more likely to be completed on time, within budget, meets its objectives and is of an acceptable quality (Kerzner, 2004). The project manager brings a degree of efficiency to projects, ensuring they achieve the desired aim without the need for costly rework.

Project management generally transcends departments and is an effective mechanism to ensure a common focus exists towards an agreed goal. Work, activities and resource are coordinated with this goal in mind. Without this project focus, people and organisations are simply left with a group of tasks, and this is a situation that is difficult to manage and control (Frigenti & Comninos, 1999).

The project manager requires the ability to communicate, facilitate, negotiate, plan, budget, organise, motivate, manage, measure, monitor, think laterally, and make decisions. These are predominately social activities (Neal, 1998).

Nowadays, with the global nature of business, a project manager may be required to perform each of these functions in a foreign country, embedded in a foreign culture. This gives rise to a whole new set of challenges the project manager may not have had to face previously in their home country.

## **2.2. Culture**

Numerous studies have been conducted concerning the concept of culture, and as a result there are a number of definitions for the term 'culture'.

According to Thomas (2002), Kluckhohn presented a widely accepted definition of culture in 1962 which reads "culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values" (p. 27-28).

In perhaps simpler terms, culture consists of basic human norms, ideas, values and beliefs which have developed, and continue to develop over time, helping to guide what would be considered acceptable human behaviour within a given society (Giddens, 1993; Daniels & Radebaugh, 1995; Bjerke, 1999; Kets de Vries, 2001; Warner, 2003). Culture is learned, shared, and may manifest itself in both conscious and unconscious behaviour.

Hofstede (1980) called culture "the 'software' or 'collective programming' of the mind" (cited in Hickson and Pugh, 1995, p. 17). Hofstede suggested culture came about as a result of shared mental programming developed in early

childhood and reinforced throughout a person's lifetime (Bjerke, 1999). Hall and Hall (2003) built on this concept, likening culture to "a giant, extraordinarily complex, subtle computer, which guides the actions and responses of human beings in every walk of life" (p. 151).

Over the last 50 years many conceptual models have been devised for studying culture, among them models by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Hofstede (1984), Laurent (1983), Trompenaars (1984, 1993) and Kets de Vries (2001). These and other researchers have created and refined the models through identifying key cultural components that are exhibited by human groups all over the world.

The underlying premise that these researchers have built on is that human beings essentially have to deal with the same issues, no matter where in the world they live. For example, we all must eat and drink to survive; we all must interact with nature; we all must solve problems; and in some manner, we all communicate and interact.

In looking at how different societies address each of these aspects of human life, researchers have attempted to define the cultural dimensions that make up societies. Through the use of these dimensions, researchers have a framework around which to explore and build up information about a given cultural group. The use of such frameworks then provides a means for comparing cultures; examining commonality and diversity among cultures which may not have been readily evident.

Frameworks bring some order to an incredibly complex research topic. As well as potentially adding structure to any cultural study, the use of a framework facilitates a more focused analysis of one culture in relation to another.

Very few management studies have used Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) framework (Thomas, 2002), as while the framework provided an excellent theoretical basis for cultural study, the lack of a psychometric instrument to measure the dimensions in a manner applicable to a managerial context limited its application.

Subsequent to Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961), Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1984, 1993) both individually conducted extensive cultural studies, the former identifying four cultural dimensions, and the later, seven. Although the studies were conducted at different times using different methods, the consistency of their findings lent validity to both the identification of cultural dimensions, and their usage as a means of conducting cultural research.

The cultural frameworks and the research of Hofstede (1984) and Trompenaars (1984, 1993) were also not without their critics. Dorfman & Howell (1988) and Randel (2003) each expressed concern that as Hofstede's research was conducted inside one organisation, it was possible the respondents may have been socialized to the company's culture, or have simply been systematically different from the general population. Further, Thomas (2002) noted that the survey Hofstede used to conduct his research was "not developed from any theoretical base, but extracted from a broader survey designed to assess employee satisfaction, perception of work, and personal beliefs and goals" (p. 56).

Kets de Vries (2001) took the better-known cultural frameworks that had been designed over the last 45 years, and simplified them into one model. Kets de Vries Wheel of Culture (2001) was selected as the framework for this research as it was considered his model categorized and described cultural dimensions in such a way that they provided the most relevant framework for the study of culture in relation to its impact on project management.

Kets de Vries Wheel of Culture (2001) comprises nine cultural dimensions as shown in Figure 2.1. Each of these cultural dimensions contains one or more cultural continua, which are used to assess the nature of any given culture. There are 18 cultural continua which allow researchers to 'measure' specific patterns of behaviour or attitudes in regards to each of the cultural dimensions. These are described in Table 2.1.

**Figure 2.1: Ket de Vries Wheel of Culture (2001)**



**Table 2.1: Ket de Vries Wheel of Culture (2001) Continua Descriptions**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Continuum</i>	<i>Description of Continuum</i>
ENVIRONMENT	Control/Harmony	What is a person's relationship to nature? Do they feel the need to control their surroundings or live in harmony with them?
	Good/Evil	What is the nature of people? Are people basically good or basically evil?
	Certain/Uncertain	What is a person's relationship to uncertainty? Can it be tolerated, or should it, where possible, be avoided?
	Trust/Mistrust	What is the nature of people? Are people essentially trustworthy or not worthy of trust?
ACTION ORIENTATION	Being/Doing	What is more important in life? Being-oriented cultures value who a person is, their character, and personal qualities. Doing-oriented cultures are concerned with what a person does, the goals they achieve, and the measure of their accomplishments.
	Internal/External	How much control does a person have over what happens to them? Internal control refers to those that believe that people can shape their own destiny. External control defines the belief that events are determined independent of human action (i.e. by chance or supernatural force).
EMOTION	Expressive/Inhibited	How much emotion is appropriate for public display? Expressive people are not afraid to show their emotions. Inhibited people go to great lengths to control and conceal their feelings.

**Table 2.1: Ket de Vries Wheel of Culture (2001) Continua Descriptions (Continued)**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Continuum</i>	<i>Description of Continuum</i>
LANGUAGE	High Context/Low Context	How clear are people when they communicate? High context communication tends to be implicit and less literal (relying on eye contact, body language etc). Low context communication focuses on words and explicitness.
SPACE	Private/Public	How does an individual demarcate their physical and psychological immediate environment? Private people value their personal space, and information is provided only when necessary. Public people like proximity to others, and value the sharing of information.
RELATIONSHIPS	Individualist/Collectivist	How is a person's identity derived, and for whom is a person primarily concerned? Individualists focus on individuals, their achievements and what is good for each of them independent of others. Collectivists consider their social network defines who they are, and that it is more important to be concerned with the welfare of the group rather than the individuals within it.
	Universalism/Particularism	What is a person's attitude to rules? Universalism values consistency and one rule for all, whereas particularism accepts differences and exceptions.
	Competitive/Cooperative	Are people motivated by competition or cooperation? Competitive cultures value actions and decisions based on competitive motivations. Cooperative cultures value actions and decisions which are socially responsible, being more concerned with everyone's overall quality of life.

**Table 2.1: Ket de Vries Wheel of Culture (2001) Continua Descriptions (Continued)**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Continuum</i>	<i>Description of Continuum</i>
POWER	Egalitarian/Hierarchic	How does a person gain power within a society? Egalitarian cultures value equal access to, and control of, power based on ability, attempting to limit any power centralization. Hierarchical cultures advocate differing access to, and varying degrees, of power, based on factors such as age, wealth, birthright and experience.
	Achievement/Ascription	How is a person's individual status earned? Is it earned through their achievements, or ascribed due to wealth or birthright?
THINKING	Deductive/Inductive	What is an individual's propensity to conceptualize? Individuals in deductive cultures values abstract thinking, based on accepted values, principles and theories, often being highly influenced by the past. Individuals from inductive cultures like to deal with facts and statistics, drawing on relevant, recent experiences, tending to more focused on the here-and-now.
	Holistic/Part-Oriented	How does an individual think? Holistic people will look at the whole problem or issue, focusing on the relationships between the parts. Part-oriented people are more concerned with the specific pieces, preferring to break down problems or issues into smaller, more manageable parts.

**Table 2.1: Ket de Vries Wheel of Culture (2001) Continua Descriptions (Continued)**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Continuum</i>	<i>Description of Continuum</i>
TIME	Monochronic/Polychronic	What is a person's attitude towards the use of time? Monochronic people prefer to do and deal with things one at a time. Polychronic people prefer to do and manage many things at once.
	Past/Present/Future	Towards what aspect of time is a person most oriented? Past-oriented people look to the past for guidance, and change and the unknown are not favoured. Present-oriented people are primarily concerned with the here-and-now. Future-oriented people will sacrifice short-term gain for their longer term vision.

It is one thing to acknowledge that a particular culture exists within a society, and to be able to identify some of the elements that characterise that culture. It is quite another to be able to incorporate that knowledge into effective project management practices.

In addition to recognising cultural differences between people of different nationalities, international project managers need to know what to do about the problems associated with these differences. As Ramaprasad and Prakash (2003) wrote "while macro cultural categories such as the one developed by Hofstede (1980) are good and appropriate to explain [cultural] differences, they may be inadequate to provide the micro-level guidance to develop the needed cognitive and behavioural competencies required for effective day-to-day project management" (p. 200).

Finally, it is important to note that not all individuals within a given cultural group will necessarily exhibit the same cultural traits. An individual who holds a

particular cultural value may not behave in a way that typically reflects that cultural value (Randel, 2003). Identifying with a cultural group does not mean identification with every cultural component of that group.

### **2.3. Project Management and Culture**

Many books have been written about addressing cross-cultural business challenges (Trompenaars, 1993; Elashmawi & Harris, 1993; Mark, 1999; Thomas, 2002), however limited literature is available on how cultural differences specifically influence project management practices.

Some research has been conducted identifying that project management techniques should be adapted when working in a foreign culture, and that often this does not occur, as was the case when Milosevic (1999) identified the deficiency in the techniques of international project manager's, stating "they [project managers] leave intact the old belief that one project management fits all cultures" (p. 1).

The PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) dedicates nineteen pages to the important project requirements of human resource and communication management. However only on page 27 is there a brief reference to the influence that culture will have on the way people will behave. The inference from this is the Project Management Institute considers that if their methodology is adopted, project management should transcend culture.

This idea is supported in an article in the February 2005 issue of the Project Management Institute's magazine, PM Network, where it is stated that "project management methodologies neutralize cultural differences and promote one standard everyone can model" (p. 34).

Dr. Al Zeitoun, Chief Projects Officer at the International Institute of Learning, believes that “the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) provides a solid basis for standards, but as strong as the document is ... there is still the crucial need to develop a comprehensive international standard that encompasses all the key disciplines of project management and cuts across industries and global cultures and boundaries” (cited in Kerzner, 2004, p. 20).

The PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) places a huge focus on the project processes which are ‘hard skills’, but pays little heed to ‘soft skills’, which deal with managing, mentoring, and motivating people. As stated on the website of Technology.com, “ultimately, soft skills bring hard benefits” (*Menu-Management-Issues-Soft-Skills* (n.d.)).

The personal experiences of the author while working in the Asian region, have only served to reinforce his thoughts on the importance of soft skills. Managing people in a project team is hard enough in one’s home country. In a foreign country, people do not always ‘behave’ as one might expect, and it is not enough to simply understand the project process. An attempt must be made to specifically understand the people and their culture.

Turner (1999) shares this viewpoint, writing that there is “a need to recognize and understand culture within international projects in order to not unwittingly cause or take offence” (p. 482 - 483). This is just one small example of how important it is to identify cultural issues, and manage them through the use of well-developed ‘soft skills’. Without this recognition and skill set, successful project management in the international arena will be extremely difficult.

From the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000), the inference seems to be that once a project manager is

proficient in understanding the nine key areas of project management, projects will follow a natural path to success.

The author's personal experience managing projects, both within his home country and abroad, has helped formulate his viewpoint that it is not enough to simply understand the project process. Project management must go beyond the process, as for the process to work, the people involved in the project must make it work. Ramaprasad and Prakash (2003) recognised this when they referred to project management as "a normative methodology with rigid techniques and technologies" that needs to advance to an emergent methodology with adaptive ... techniques" (p. 204).

Cultural imperatives should be a valued factor in project management, yet the lack of reference to culture within the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) is also reflected in much of the other conventional literature on project management. As Ramaprasad and Prakash (2003) have noted, much of it focuses on global knowledge from a Western viewpoint, saying little about the interplay of local knowledge and culture.

Part of the key to project success in a foreign country is to acknowledge, understand and incorporate that country's 'silent language' (Milosevic 1999; Hall & Hall, 2003). To be able to interpret, understand and communicate in a country's silent language, a project manager must first gain an understanding of that country's culture.

Project management becomes more difficult when managers are faced with leading projects in the international as opposed to the national arena. Cultural influences must be acknowledged and managed, as cultural factors are difficult to control. As Enshassi (1994) put it, "when ignored, cultural diversity causes

problems that diminish the project team's productivity" (cited in Milosevic, 1999, p. 4).

Having to apply one's knowledge of project management in a foreign country brings with it a cultural context with which the project manager may be totally unfamiliar. But as both Ramaprasad and Prakash (2003) and Milosevic (1999) stress, not only is it important to try and understand the local culture; it is also important to identify the differences between that culture and the project manager's own. This allows the project manager to devise a strategy to mitigate the cultural differences.

However, there is no 'list' of cultural differences available that can be learned, and their solutions for project management committed to memory. As Hickson & Pugh (1995) wrote, "what is needed is a feel for what is going on" (p. 20).

What is going on in the early part of the twenty-first century is a shift in the economic centre of the universe towards Asia, with potentially dramatic effects on the economic backdrop of international management (Parker, 1998). The discipline of project management and the efficiencies it brings could provide great opportunities for both Western project managers and Asian companies alike, however a barrier to this mutual success is potential cultural clashes. Each party may traditionally chart a different course to attain the same end goal. That is the nature of culture.

Cultural frameworks were devised in an attempt to understand that nature. The idea of cultural frameworks is that there are only so many problems humanity has to deal with, and only so many ways they can be addressed. The PMBOK framework is built on the same ideology; regardless of the project's country, the elements of a project that have to be dealt with are the same. As a consequence, a universal methodology can be applied to address them.

Yet it is clearly recognised that cultural differences will impact on the effectiveness of the project manager. As a result, one is left wondering whether a universal project management methodology is appropriate.

Research on whether international project managers actually recognise the influence of culture on their project teams is scarce. Further, this is little information available specifically addressing whether these cultural differences, whether they are recognized or not, impact on their projects; how, and indeed if, international project managers deal with these differences; and what international project manager's can actually do to mitigate the potential impacts of those differences on a project's success, in order to use them to the project's advantage. The purpose of this research is to begin to address some of these knowledge gaps.

This research focuses specifically on Western project managers associated with a single case organisation (referred to in this study as AsiaCo), operating within the Asian region.

The research aims to identify:

- *the degree of importance and conscious attention given to culture by Western project managers employed by, and associated with, AsiaCo.* This is important, as before it is possible to determine whether they actually perceive any cultural differences and adapt to them, it is necessary to first understand the Western project managers awareness of culture, and cultural dimensions;
- *the specific cultural challenges the Western project manager perceives they face while managing projects within the Asian region.* An understanding of the perceived cultural challenges is necessary to determine whether the Western project managers should make some

adaptations to their project management techniques, and if they do, whether the adaptations are going to be worthwhile.

This research aim is based around perceptions for two reasons. Firstly, it is accepted the identification of cultural difference will be specific to individuals, as even people from the same culture will view societal activity differently; and secondly, the author did not wish to lead the respondents beyond what was necessary to obtain the quantitative data required for the research;

- *to what extent do Western project managers adapt their project management techniques to address perceived cultural differences between themselves and their project teams.* Ultimately, what the research is trying to find out is do Western project managers manage projects differently when they are in the Asian region, as opposed to when they are working in a Western environment?

Given these three research aims, many variations of the research question were formulated. The author considers that the final version of the question is both well-structured, ensuring that each of the research aims can be individually addressed; and specific, which will help keep the research focused, with the aim of delivering good quality, relevant data.

The specific research question is:

**"How are perceived cultural challenges addressed by the Western project manager operating in the Asian region?"**

The remainder of this dissertation discusses the methodology employed to obtain and analyse the research data; the results and findings from the research; and the author's conclusions.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to explain how the author designed and conducted the research. The key areas covered are the choice of the research methodology; the data collection methods, including the formulation of the research questions, the format of the written questionnaire, and the selection of the research candidates; the methods employed to analyse the data; the limitations of the research; and the ethical considerations that had to be taken into account by the author before this study could commence.

#### **3.2. Research Methodology**

This study involved a single organisation as a case study where a survey was used to gather a range of qualitative and quantitative data for analysis and interpretation.

A research strategy that was suitable for this investigation of culture, as a phenomenon associated with project management, with many descriptive and subjective elements within a work situation, was that of a case study. A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p.13). A case study strategy was appropriate as the research question did not require the behavioural events to be controlled, multiple variables existed and multiple sources of evidence were required (Yin, 1994).

As the research was limited by time, distance and financial factors, it was necessary to obtain the data remotely. Survey research was chosen as the optimal method to facilitate the data collection.

Kalbeek (1995) identifies a number of features which are important to survey research, including that they may be conducted by telephone, or a combination of data collection methods such as emails or interviews. These features supported the use of survey research for this study, as it faced the challenge of globally dispersed participants, with communication only available via written, telephone and electronic means.

Survey research was ideal as it enabled the exploration of the attitudes and experiences of individual Western project managers, and as stated by Babbie (1998), surveys are excellent vehicles for measuring the attitudes of individual people in a large population.

The purpose of this survey research was to:

- obtain data on the self perceptions of the Western project manager in relation to the cultural dimensions identified by Kets de Vries (2001) Wheel of Culture;
- obtain data on how the Western project manager perceived members of Asian project teams would identify with Kets de Vries (2001) Wheel of Culture;
- identify any specific cultural challenges that Western project managers perceived they faced while managing projects in a nominated Asian country; and
- assess the extent to which 15 of the major project management processes, within the nine key areas of the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000), if any, were adapted by Western project managers to address their perceptions of cultural differences.

The survey research utilized written self-administered questionnaires, followed up with telephone or electronic interviews, where it was considered they would be of value. This occurred when clarity was required around a qualitative response, or when it was felt the expansion of a qualitative response would elicit further valuable information for this research.

The written questionnaire was completed during the participant's own time therefore it was not hindered by time zones, and there was no requirement for face to face contact. Any follow up interviews necessary after the completion and review of the questionnaires were conducted by telephone or via email, due to the same constraining geographical factors.

It was not possible to survey all Western project managers operating within the Asian region, due to limit of the scope of the study to fit a 60 credit dissertation; distance, and financial factors, so it was necessary to obtain data from a representative sample. For this reason, a convenience sample of project managers from AsiaCo was chosen.

These factors place obvious limitations on the applications for this research. However it will still provide a valuable insight into the world of a Western project manager operating in the Asian region, and it could be used as a basis for ascertaining the value of conducting further, more expansive research in this area. The respondents were well qualified to comment on project management in Asia, as 75% of them had more than 6 years project management experience, and over 50% had more than 11 years as project managers. Furthermore, half of the respondents had spent more than 6 years managing projects in Asia, and 80% of those held project management qualifications.

### **3.3. Data Collection Methods**

Two data collection methods were employed. The self-administered, written survey questionnaire was the main source of data collection (see Section 3.3.1), supplemented by interviews (see Section 3.3.2)

#### **3.3.1 The Nature of the Survey Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is shown in Appendix A.

#### **Culture and the Research Questions**

Kets de Vries (2001) Wheel of Culture (see Figure 2.1) was selected as the most appropriate cultural framework around which to conduct this research as:

- the model clearly and accurately identified cultural dimensions (further defined as cultural continuum), that would facilitate constructive analysis of the perceived cultural differences identified by the Western project manager working in the Asian region; and
- the cultural dimensions were defined in such a way that they could be clearly mapped to factors that could impact on the effectiveness of project management.

Kets de Vries (2001) Wheel of Culture provided the basis for having respondents report both their own self-perceptions, and their perceptions of how their Asian project teams perceived cultural attitudes.

In section 2(b) of the written questionnaire, the Western project managers were asked to report their own personal perceptions for each of the cultural continua on a 'YOU' scale, rated 1 through 5. A rating of 1 meant they perceived they had a very strong association with one extreme of the continuum, whereas a rating of

5 meant they perceived they had a very strong association with the opposite extreme of the continuum. A rating of 3 meant they sat somewhere in the middle of the continuum, not having a strong tendency to one extreme of the continuum or the other. On a second scale, labeled the 'TEAM' scale, for each of the cultural continua, the Western project managers were then asked to report their perceptions of how they thought their Asian team members would respond if they were asked the same question.

For the purposes of determining the perceived cultural differences, what position the Western project managers identified on each of the cultural continua was not the most important point to note. What was most important was identifying the continua with the biggest gaps between the Western project managers own perceptions, and their perceptions of their Asian team members. These gaps represented the first insight into the cultural differences that were perceived by Western project managers operating in the Asian region.

Further to the direct questions in section 2(b), in section 3 the participants were also given the opportunity to provide details of up to six cultural challenges they had faced while operating as project managers in their nominated Asian countries. This qualitative data provided a second insight into the perceived cultural differences. Using a free-form format such as that utilized in section 3, as opposed to the more structured approach used in section 2, allowed the Western project managers to report in their own words their personal experiences of cultural differences.

### **Project Management and the Research Questions**

To try and isolate the effect of perceived cultural influences on the effectiveness of project management, it was important to consider there are other key determinants of project success that may mitigate any attempts by the Western project managers to alleviate perceived cultural differences. One of these

determinants is how well the discipline of project management is accepted within the Asian region. So an important initial component of the research aimed to develop a feel for whether the participants in the research felt that the discipline of project management was integrated within Asian business practices, and valued by Asian business managers.

Accordingly, in section 2(a), the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following two statements:

- “The discipline of project management is integrated within Asian business practices”; and
- “The discipline of project management is valued by Asian business managers”.

Section 4 of the survey questionnaire then provided a framework around which respondents could consider their project management technique modifications. The framework followed the format of the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000). This provided a measurement tool to aide respondents in their reporting of project management adaptations to cultural challenges.

Within each of these nine key areas of the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000), there are a number of major project management processes. Due to limitations beyond the control of this research, it was not possible or practical to gather data on all the processes within each of the nine key areas.

After giving due consideration to all of the major processes within the nine key areas, the author opted to select the major processes which would provide the widest breadth of project methodology information, at a cost of depth in some

areas. This was considered acceptable by the author, as the projects being managed by the candidates who had been identified for the research were primarily Information Technology based, and some of the eliminated major processes were too low-level to be of relevance. Further, it was felt by the author that the 15 major processes selected were the most relevant for the candidates, each of them having likely been encountered by the candidates during the course of their project management experiences.

The following 15 project management processes were specifically considered relevant for this research:

- Scope
  - Scope Planning and Definition
  - Scope Verification and Sign Off
  - Maintaining Scope Control
  - Managing Scope Change
- Time
  - Time Planning
  - Time Control
- Cost
  - Cost Planning
  - Cost Control
- Quality Management
- Risk Management
- Human Resource Management
  - Human Resource Planning
  - Human Resource Development and Performance
- Communication
  - Communication with Management
  - Communication with the Project Team

- Integration

The research data for the 15 major project management processes was obtained from section 4 of the written questionnaire. Each of the respondents was asked to indicate a modification rating between 1 and 5 for each of the 15 project management processes being researched. A rating of 1 meant they made no modification to their project management techniques, whereas a rating of 5 meant they made very large modifications to their project management techniques. The respondents were then asked to explain why they made the modifications to their project management techniques, for that particular project management process.

### **The Format of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire format was of a quantitative and qualitative nature, which allowed the respondent the freedom to relay their cultural experiences concerning project management. The questions were designed to draw out a variety of cultural perceptions and experiences.

The written, self-administered questionnaire took the following format:

Section 1. This section contained general questions to determine demographic data detailing personal information and work experience.

To complete the remainder of the questionnaire, the participants then had to nominate an Asian country in which they had managed projects where all, or the majority of the team members, were nationals of that country. The balance of the questionnaire was to be answered based on the participants' experience within that nominated Asian country.

- Section 2. Part A contained questions to obtain the respondents perceptions around the discipline of project management as a core business competency in Asia;  
Part B, using Kets de Vries (2001) wheel of culture as a basis, asked respondents to:
- report self-perceptions of how importantly they rated each of the cultural continua in relation to their impact on project management; and
  - report how they perceived members of their Asian project teams from within their nominated Asian country would rate the importance of each of the cultural continua, with respect to successful project management.
- Section 3. This section was an opportunity for respondents to describe in a free-form manner up to six (6) specific cultural problems or challenges they may have faced while operating as project managers within their nominated Asian country.
- Section 4. Using the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) as a basis, in this section respondents were asked to report the extent to which they had adapted their project management techniques for any of the 15 project management processes being researched, to account for perceived cultural differences.
- Section 5. This section was an area where respondents were free to express 'war stories' and cultural challenges they had experienced that had

impacted on their ability to manage a project, both positively and negatively.

Section 6. This section contained a question to verify whether the respondent was prepared to be interviewed to explore further any comments made in the questionnaire or the findings in general.

The survey questions were limited to questions concerning project management in a cultural context.

The questionnaire was piloted on 2 project management colleagues for clarity of instructions and clear meanings of the questions asked. No changes were made to the questionnaire as a result of this process.

### **3.3.2 The Nature of the Interview**

Where the author believed the elaboration of a qualitative answer from sections 3 or 4 of the written questionnaire would yield further insights into perceived cultural differences or project management challenges, the respondent was contacted by either telephone or email.

At the commencement of the telephone or e-mail communication, the respondent was reminded about the research, and asked whether they minded being contacted to elaborate on a response they had made on the written questionnaire. No respondent declined to be interviewed. 5 interviews took place.

Each interview related to a specific question on the written questionnaire. The question was reiterated to the respondent, as was their response. They were then asked to expand on their response, and the results were noted as an addendum to their written questionnaire.

The data analysis subsequently occurred in the same manner as if the response had formed a part of the initial written questionnaire.

### **3.3.3 Research Participants**

In order to provide in-depth data for this research, and to ensure all the respondents met a given criteria, it was determined that from within both AsiaCo, and third-party vendors who worked on-site at AsiaCo, there were 22 Western project managers who would meet the selection criteria that had been defined for this research, and who may be willing to participate in the study. The candidates from third party vendors associated with AsiaCo increased the numbers of available candidates, and they added a further perspective to the research, as they were employees of separate multinationals temporarily operating within the same site in the Asian region.

Candidates were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- **Position:** candidates must have held a position of seniority equivalent to, or higher, than Business Analyst, and have held that level of seniority for more than 12 months. This helped to eliminate candidates new to a position, which in itself may present cultural difficulties unrelated to project management. Further, it helped to ensure the candidates surveyed had enough experience to justify their roles as project managers for the purposes of this research. They must have been responsible for project teams operating in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Hong Kong and China;

- Experience: candidates must have had significant history of project management of Asian project teams; and
- Nationality: candidates must be Westerners. For the purposes of this research, Western was defined as someone who was born into a Western family (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, USA, Western Europe), and has been both educated and employed in a Western nation prior to employment in the Asian region.

The candidate's current country of residence was not important to the research. At the time of the research being conducted, the candidates were resident in The United States of America (7), South Korea (3), Scotland (2), Spain (2), Hong Kong (3), France (1), New Zealand (1), China (mainland) (1), Taiwan (1) and Japan (1).

A key criterion for selecting participants was that they were not local to the Asian countries targeted for this research.

Some potential candidates for this research were not included. Reasons for non-inclusion were:

- being an unwilling participant;
- possession of sensitive information that may disadvantage AsiaCo;  
and
- time or availability constraints.

The candidates had a wealth of experience in management and project management within the Asian region. They included expatriate staff immersed in the Asian culture, and staff based outside of Asia, who were also responsible for management and project management within the Asian region.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Once the questionnaires were returned via email they were copied in electronic form to a personal laptop not connected to AsiaCo's network.

The questionnaires were then printed, read thoroughly, and coded by respondent and nominated country.

Database tables were created in Microsoft Access for each of the quantitative questions. These tables were used for conditional analysis to assess a given question's responses, in relation to the responses to one or more of the other research questions. The quantitative data was then migrated to Microsoft Excel to enable the statistical analysis, and to create the graphical images used throughout this dissertation.

The qualitative data was coded, and also entered into Microsoft Excel to assist with the determination of data trends.

#### **3.4.1 Use of the Demographic Data**

The demographic data was only used as final confirmation of the respondent's eligibility to participate in the research.

#### **3.4.2 Cultural Differences**

The quantitative responses from section 2(b) of the written questionnaire were used to determine if there was a level of agreement among the Western project managers as to how they perceived their own Western culture, and the culture of their Asian team members. Any large variances of opinion amongst the Western project managers would distort the determination of the largest areas of perceived cultural difference.

Their perceptions of each culture, within each cultural continuum, were compared to identify the trend for each culture, and the gap between the cultures.

Using the coded qualitative data from section 3 of the written questionnaire, remembering that some thematic trends had been identified and coded to one or more of the cultural continua, these trends were compared with the quantitative data trends from section 2(b). This enabled the analysis of whether the Western project managers' perceptions of cultural differences correlated with the cultural challenges they freely reported.

Finally, through the comparison of their responses for the various continua, it was possible to analyse whether the Western project managers' perceptions for each of the cultural continua correlated with their responses for the other continua. This would provide an indication of the Western project managers' level of cultural understanding and awareness, and determine whether they could accurately identify, and quantify, the specific basis of the cultural challenges they had experienced.

### **3.4.3 Modifications of Project Management Techniques**

For each of the 15 project management major processes, the quantitative responses from section 4 of the written questionnaire were used to determine the degree of modification made, if any, to Western project managers' project management techniques, to account for perceived cultural differences.

For each major process, the qualitative responses from section 4 were summarised and the frequency of responses noted to identify key trends in the data. These trends were compared with the quantitative modification ratings to determine if the Western project managers appeared to have accurately indicated the degree of the modifications they had made.

This information was subsequently used to draw conclusions on whether the identified perceived cultural differences were indeed addressed by the Western project managers, through modifications to their project management techniques.

### **3.5. Limitations**

Investigating, and providing explanations for, differences between countries within the Asian region, when considering the perceived cultural differences of the Western project managers, is outside the scope of this study.

Providing explanations for the perceived cultural differences of the Western project manager, or explanations for any cultural-factor omissions from the PMBOK® 2000 Guide to Project Management (Project Management Institute, 2000) is also outside the scope of this study.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

The research project adhered to UNITEC New Zealand's ethics process, and gained ethical approval from the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

Key senior personnel within AsiaCo were approached and gave written approval to approach employee line managers and relevant third party vendor personnel.

This completed dissertation has:

- no direct reference to any employee of AsiaCo, or third party vendors. All data collected has, and will, remain totally confidential; and
- no reference to AsiaCo, or any of the associated third party vendors.

A copy of the written questionnaire was made available to AsiaCo's International Human Resource management personnel for their approval, before it was distributed to the research participants. A copy of this research dissertation will be made available to AsiaCo.

Refer Appendix A for a copy of the research questionnaire.

## **4. Results and Findings**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The results and findings of this research have been presented in three sections:

- the first section presents the findings around the discipline of project management as a core business competency in Asia;
- the second section addresses the perceived cultural differences, including assessments of cultural awareness on the part of the Western project manager; and
- the third section reports on the modifications made by the Western project managers to their project management techniques.

Both sections two and three conclude with summaries.

Of the 22 candidates identified, 20 participated and returned the completed questionnaire.

## **4.2. Asian Utilisation and Acceptance of Project Management**

### **4.2.1. Introduction**

In an attempt to ascertain how project management was viewed within the Asian region, in section 2(a) of the written questionnaire, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following two statements:

- “The discipline of project management is integrated within Asian business practices”; and
- “The discipline of project management is valued by Asian business managers”.

If Asian chief executives do not believe in the value of project management, or cultivate an environment in which project management is an integrated component of the organization, the Western project manager will almost certainly fail, regardless of any modification he or she might make to their project management style.

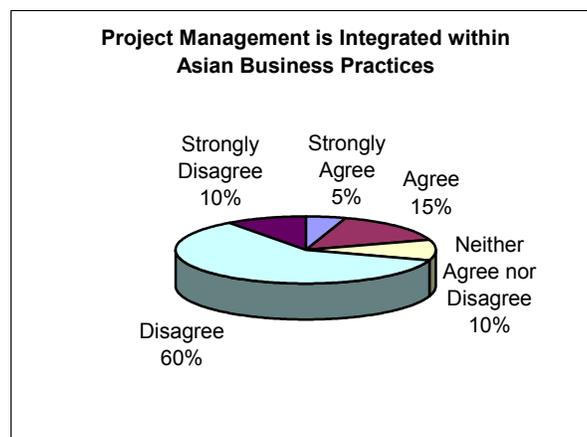
This has serious implications for the Western project manager in Asia, and the discipline of project management as a whole within the Asian business community:

- Asian chief executives may perceive, or continue to perceive, that the discipline of project management added no value to their organization;
- the career of the Western project manager could be negatively impacted by their failure within the Asian environment; and

- contributing factors to the failure could be overlooked, due to the pre-conception that project management adds no value. These may include cultural issues, lack of the necessary skills within the project team, economic factors etc.

#### 4.2.2. Is Project Management Integrated within Asian Business Practice?

**Figure 4.1: Participant responses to the statement that “the discipline of project management is integrated within Asian business practices)”**



Only 20% of respondents agreed that project management was an integrated component of Asian Business practice (see Figure 4.1). So do Asian company managers actually want to see project management integrated into their organisations, or do they consider the introduction of project management disciplines will add no value to their organisations? Will Western project managers be well received by their Asian work colleagues, or will they encounter hostility and resistance?

While the answers as to why project management may not be integrated within Asian businesses is beyond the scope of this research, some insight into these other questions can be gained from the Western project managers responses to the second question around whether project management is valued (see section 4.2.3).

#### 4.2.3. Is Project Management Valued by Asian Business Managers?

While it appeared quite overwhelmingly that project management was not integrated within Asian business practices, it did not equate to the opinion that project management was not valued by Asian business managers (see Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2:** Participant responses to the statement that “the discipline of project management is valued by Asian business managers”



While 70% of respondents considered that project management was not integrated into Asian business, only 35% thought that project management was not valued by Asian business managers. This suggests that while Asian organisations understand the value project management would bring to their organisations, for reasons that are beyond the scope of this research, the Western project managers perceive project management in Asia to be in its infancy. With the economies of countries within the Asian region expanding rapidly (Thomas, 2002), there is a great opportunity for Western project managers to apply their skills within a new cultural environment.

### **4.3. The Western Project Managers Perceived Cultural Differences between themselves and their Asian project team members**

#### **4.3.1. Introduction**

Sections 2(b) and 3 of the written questionnaire were designed to gain an understanding of the cultural differences perceived by the Western project managers operating within the Asian region. Section 2(b) provided a quantitative measure of the differences, while section 3 followed a free-format to gain a more qualitative measure of the perceived cultural differences.

In section 2(b), each of the respondents were asked to indicate *their own personal perceptions* of each of the 18 cultural continua as defined by Kets de Vries (2001), and to indicate *how they perceived their Asian team members would respond if they were asked to answer the same question*.

In section 3, the participants were given the opportunity to provide details of up to six cultural challenges they had faced while operating as project managers in their nominated Asian countries. The qualitative data obtained from section 3 of the written questionnaire was then used in two ways. Firstly, it provided an opportunity to determine whether the responses from section 2(b) were substantiated by the experiences reported in section 3; secondly, in conjunction with the information gathered from section 2(b), the qualitative data provided more detailed information about the Western project managers' perceptions of the cultural challenges they faced. The qualitative data has been reported on extensively to add to the value this research can provide for other Western project managers operating, or planning to operate, within the Asian region.

Using the data from section 2(b), the *level of agreement amongst the Western project managers* was determined. Table 4.1 reports the average (mean) perceptions and the standard deviations of the perceptions of the Western Project Managers when they were asked to assess their own Western culture

against the 18 cultural continua, and their perceptions of how their Asian team members would respond if they were asked about the same continua.

**Table 4.1: Statistical Data for the Western Project Managers Perceptions of each of the 18 Cultural Continua, for themselves and their Asian project team members**

		WESTERN PROJECT MANAGERS		ASIAN TEAM MEMBERS	
		YOU Rating Scale		TEAM Rating Scale	
CULTURAL DIMENSION	CULTURAL CONTINUUM	Mean Response	Standard Deviation	Mean Response	Standard Deviation
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	Control/Harmony	3.40	0.82	3.85	0.93
	Good/Evil	1.75	0.60	2.00	0.81
	Certain/Uncertain	2.85	1.18	3.40	1.23
	Trust/Mistrust	2.75	1.02	2.80	1.32
<b>ACTION ORIENTATION</b>	Being/Doing	3.05	1.23	3.05	1.36
	Being/Doing	2.20	0.83	3.60	1.14
	Internal/External	1.95	0.89	3.30	1.03
<b>EMOTION</b>	Expressive/Inhibited	2.50	0.76	3.95	0.89
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	High/Low Context	2.35	0.96	3.05	0.94
<b>SPACE</b>	Private/Public	2.10	0.72	3.25	0.97
	Private/Public	2.90	0.85	3.40	0.82
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>	Individualist/Collectivist	3.05	0.89	3.20	1.11
	Universalism/Particularism	2.80	1.11	2.45	1.23
	Competitive/Cooperative	2.35	0.99	3.25	1.16
<b>POWER</b>	Egalitarian/Hierarchic	1.40	0.50	3.35	1.04
	Achievement/Ascription	1.95	0.60	3.45	1.10
<b>THINKING</b>	Deductive/Inductive	2.25	0.85	3.65	1.18
	Holistic/Part Oriented	1.95	0.83	3.45	0.83
<b>TIME</b>	Monochronic/Polychronic	3.85	0.88	2.20	1.11
	Past/Present/Future	4.05	0.76	2.80	1.06

n = 20

For the purposes of determining the perceived cultural differences from the data in section 2(b), the differences between the ratings on the 'YOU' and 'TEAM' scale were determined (i.e. the amount of gap between the ratings).

It was not sufficient to simply take the mean ratings for 'YOU' and 'TEAM' and subtract them, as different respondents would have rated each of the rating scales for each of the cultural continuum differently.

For example, if Respondent A ranked the Trust continuum on the 'YOU' rating scale with a 1, and on the 'TEAM' rating scale with a 5, the perceived cultural difference, or gap, would be 4. If Respondent B then ranked the Trust continuum on the 'YOU' rating scale with a 5, and on the 'TEAM' rating scale with a 1, the perceived cultural difference, or gap, would also be 4. The mean rating for each rating scale is 3, which, if subtracted, would give a perceived cultural difference of 0, which is incorrect. The mean perceived cultural difference is 4.

As the placement of the extremes for each of the cultural continua was arbitrary (i.e. the author randomly decided whether to place each of the two extremes on the left or the right of the continuum for each of the questions within section 2(b) of the written questionnaire), the direction of the gap was not important for this part of the research. The key was to determine whether there was a perceived cultural difference (i.e. a gap); and how large the difference was, if there was one, relative to other perceived cultural differences. The author was also interested to learn how much the Western project managers truly understood about the interplays of cultural dimensions.

Table 4.2 reports the extent of the relative differences by respondent. It lists the overall percentage of Western project managers who perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian team members; the perceived levels of cultural differences; and the mean and standard deviation for each of the perceived cultural differences for each of the 18 cultural continua. *The higher the mean, the greater the level of cumulative perceived cultural difference.*

**Table 4.2: The Cultural Differences as perceived by the Western Project Managers**

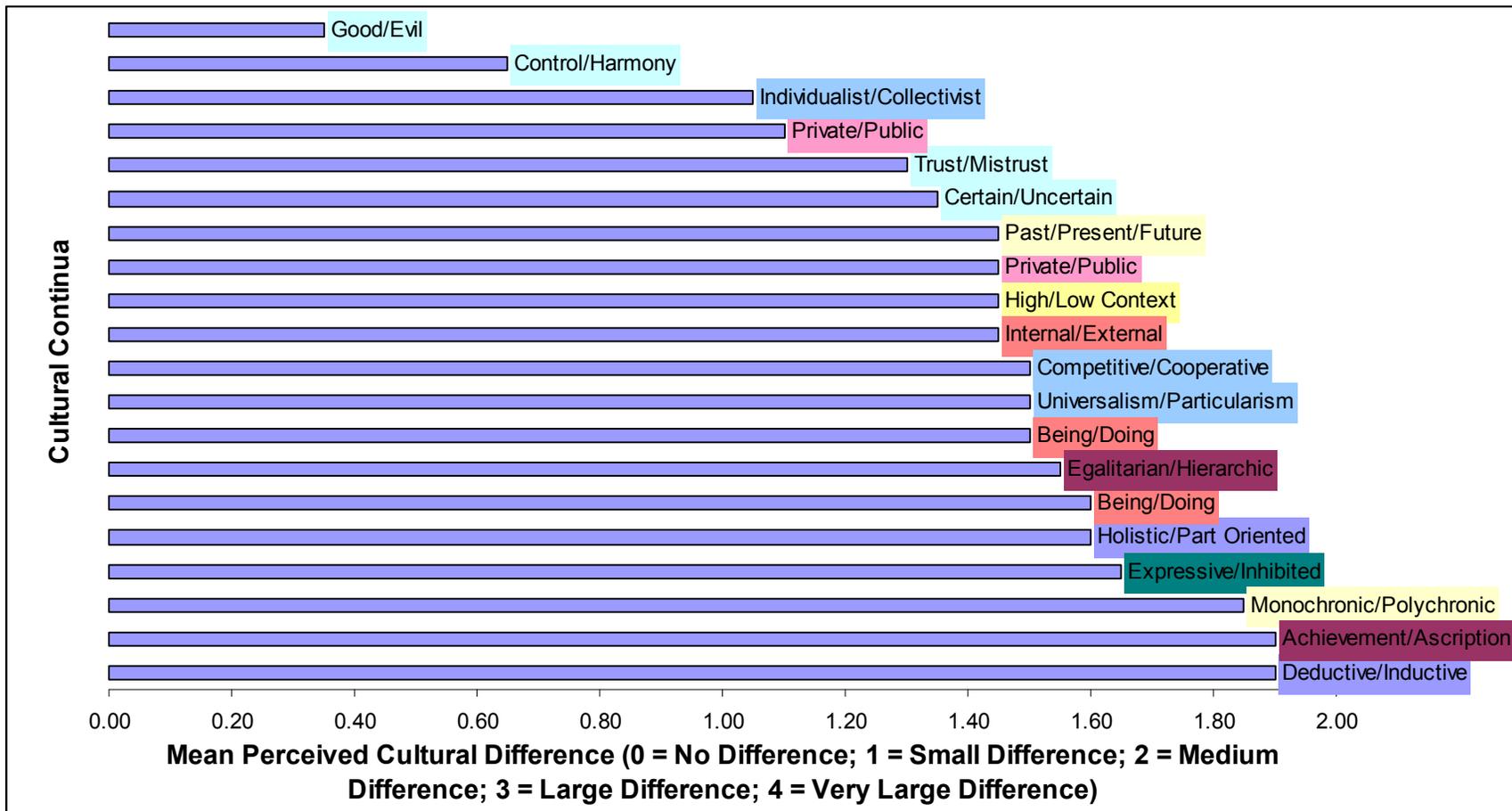
CULTURAL CONTINUUM	PERCENTAGE WHO PERCEIVED A CULTURAL DIFFERENCE	LEVEL OF PERCEIVED CULTURAL DIFFERENCE (AMOUNT OF GAP)					MEAN PERCEIVED CULTURAL DIFFERENCE	RANKING BY MEAN PERCEIVED CULTURAL DIFFERENCE	STANDARD DEVIATION PERCEIVED CULTURAL DIFFERENCE
		No perceived difference (0)	Small perceived difference (1)	Medium perceived difference (2)	Large perceived difference (3)	Very Large perceived difference (4)			
		Control/Harmony	55%	9	9	2			
Good/Evil	30%	14	5	1	0	0	0.35	20	0.5871
Certain/Uncertain	70%	6	5	6	2	1	1.35	15	1.1821
Trust/Mistrust	80%	4	9	4	3	0	1.3	16	0.9787
Being/Doing	80%	4	4	8	4	0	1.6	5=	1.0463
Being/Doing	80%	4	6	7	2	1	1.5	8=	1.1002
Internal/External	75%	5	6	4	5	0	1.45	11=	1.1459
Expressive/Inhibited	90%	2	7	7	4	0	1.65	4	0.9333
High/Low Context	85%	3	7	9	0	1	1.45	11=	0.9445
Private/Public	85%	3	8	7	1	1	1.45	11=	0.9987
Private/Public	80%	4	12	2	2	0	1.1	17	0.8522
Individualist/Collectivist	60%	8	5	5	2	0	1.05	18	1.0501
Universalism/Particularism	70%	6	4	5	4	1	1.5	8=	1.2773
Competitive/Cooperative	85%	3	8	6	2	1	1.5	8=	1.0513
Egalitarian/Hierarchic	85%	3	7	7	2	1	1.55	7	1.0501
Achievement/Ascription	90%	2	6	4	8	0	1.9	1=	1.0712
Deductive/Inductive	90%	2	4	9	4	1	1.9	1=	1.0208
Holistic/Part Oriented	85%	3	7	5	5	0	1.6	5=	1.0463
Monochronic/Polychronic	75%	5	2	6	5	2	1.85	3	1.3485
Past/Present/Future	85%	3	7	8	2	0	1.45	11=	0.8870

n = 20

Figure 4.3 reports the mean perceived cultural difference graphically to illustrate pictorially the ranking of the perceived cultural differences, and also the relative size of the perceived cultural differences.

No respondents provided any further information in section 5 of the written questionnaire.

Figure 4.3: Ranking of the Perceived Cultural Differences of the Western Project Manager



Key: Kets de Vries (2001) 9 Cultural Dimensions

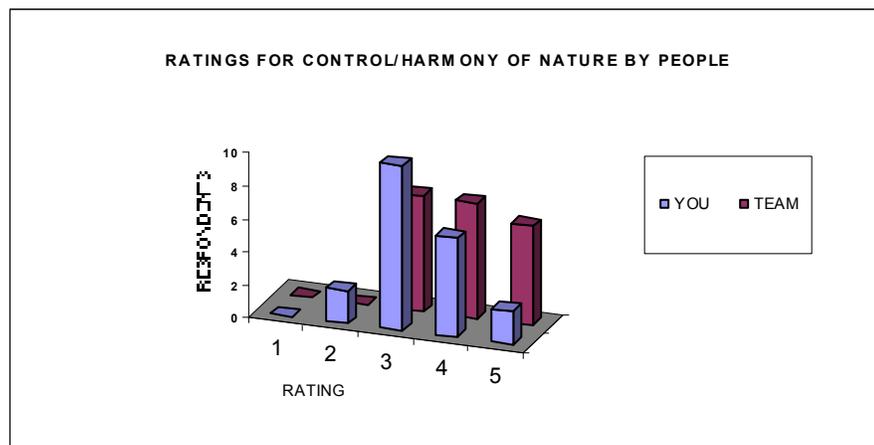
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> ENVIRONMENT	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span> ACTION ORIENTATION	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: teal; border: 1px solid black;"></span> EMOTION	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> LANGUAGE	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> TIME
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black;"></span> SPACE	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> RELATIONSHIPS	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: maroon; border: 1px solid black;"></span> POWER	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> THINKING	

## 4.3.2. Environment

### 4.3.2.1 Control/Harmony

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.4: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Environment - Control/Harmony**



Rating 1 = People should control nature  
 Rating 5 = People should live in harmony with nature

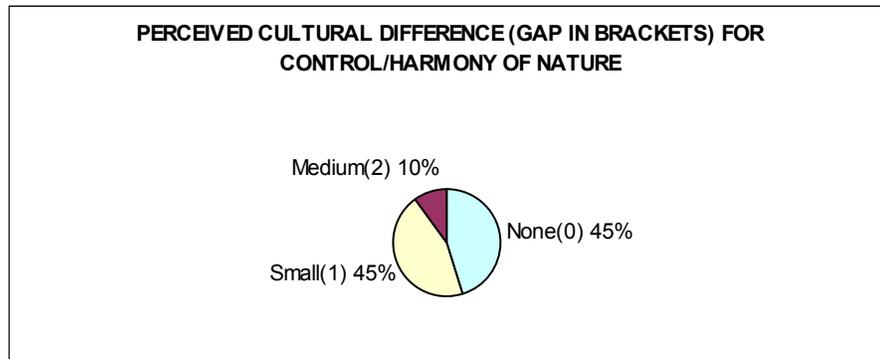
- YOU: Average perceived rating: 3.40 Standard deviation: 0.82
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.85 Standard deviation: 0.93

For both ratings the data trended towards people living in harmony with nature, although the Western project managers were more likely to consider controlling nature acceptable.

- 55% of the Western project managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.5);

- Environment - Control/Harmony was ranked 19<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 0.65 (no – small difference).

**Figure 4.5: Western Project Managers perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Environment - Control/Harmony**

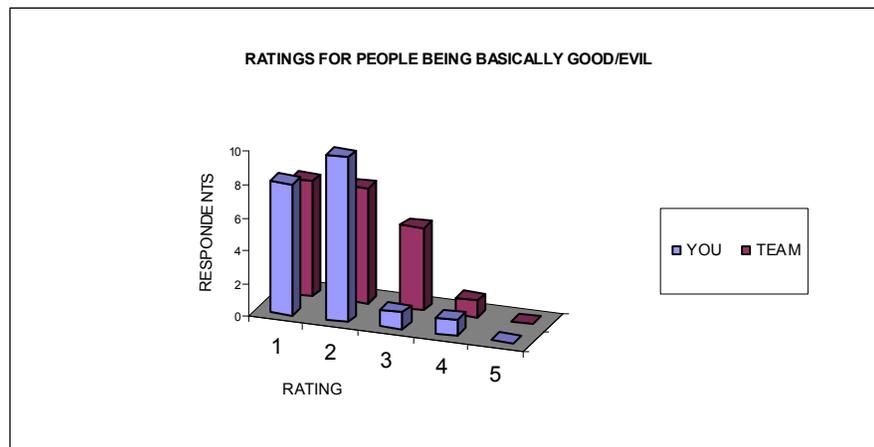


The low level of perceived cultural difference identified in section 2(b) of the written questionnaire was supported by no reference to this cultural continuum in section 3.

4.3.2.2 Good/Evil

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.6: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Environment – Good/Evil**



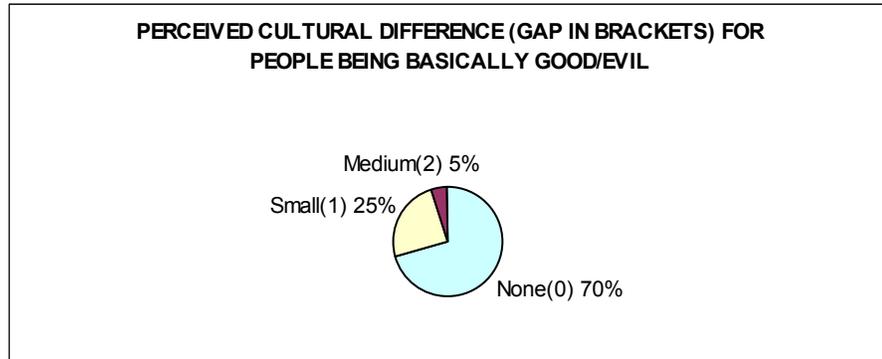
Rating 1 = People are basically good  
 Rating 5 = People are basically evil

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 1.75 Standard deviation: 0.60
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 2.00 Standard deviation: 0.81

For both ratings the data trended towards people being basically good, although the Western project managers perceived that their Asian team members would be more likely to believe people could be either good or evil.

- 30% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.7);
- Environment – Good/Evil was ranked 20<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 0.35 (no – small difference).

**Figure 4.7: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Environment -Good/Evil**

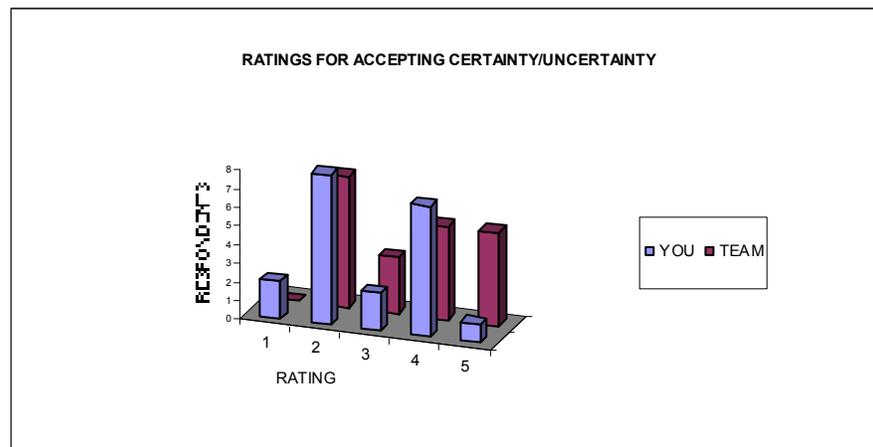


The low level of perceived cultural difference identified in section 2(b) of the written questionnaire was supported by no reference to this cultural continuum in section 3.

### 4.3.2.3 Certainty/Uncertainty

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.8: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Environment – Certainty/Uncertainty**



Rating 1 = Uncertainty can be tolerated  
 Rating 5 = Uncertainty should be avoided

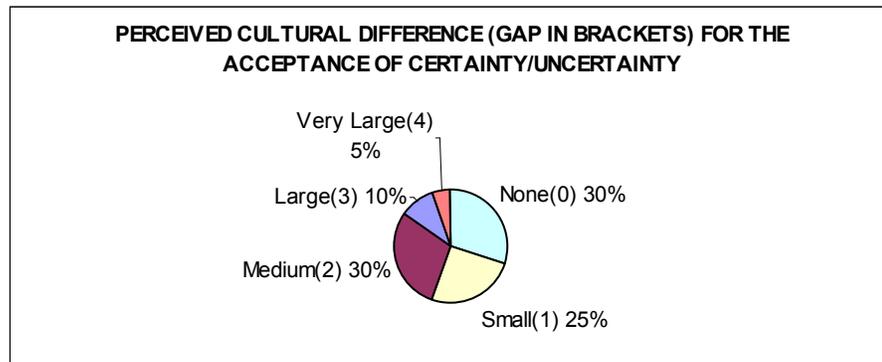
- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.85 Standard deviation: 1.18
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.40 Standard deviation: 1.23

The Western project managers' own perceptions around the acceptability of uncertainty were spread across the continuum, as were their perceptions about their Asian team members' attitudes towards uncertainty. This will have impacted on the meaningfulness of the average (mean) gap and the overall assessment of the ranking of this cultural continuum.

- 70% of the Western project managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.9);

- Environment – Certainty/Uncertainty was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.35 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.9: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Environment - Certainty/Uncertainty**



While some comments from section 3 reflected a perception on the part of the Western project managers that their Asian project team members accepted that uncertainty was as a part of life (see section 4.3.3.2), 15% of the Western project managers indicated a perception that their Asian project team members have a definite aversion to uncertainty:

- “new ideas will be rejected if risk or innovation is required”
- “prefer specific tasks and clear instruction”
- “need to define clear, unambiguous role boundaries”

This aversion to uncertainty is supported, for the Chinese at least, in research conducted by Chan & Partington (2003). Their study highlighted the different attitudes to uncertainty avoidance between Chinese and Western people, with the Chinese tending to fear unfamiliarity and risk, whereas Westerners tended to be more comfortable with risk and ambiguity.

The perception of uncertainty avoidance was particularly apparent among the Western project managers who completed their questionnaires with their Japanese team members in mind:

- “desire perfection regardless of time or cost, so things checked and rechecked at enormous cost, even for eventualities that will almost certainly never occur”

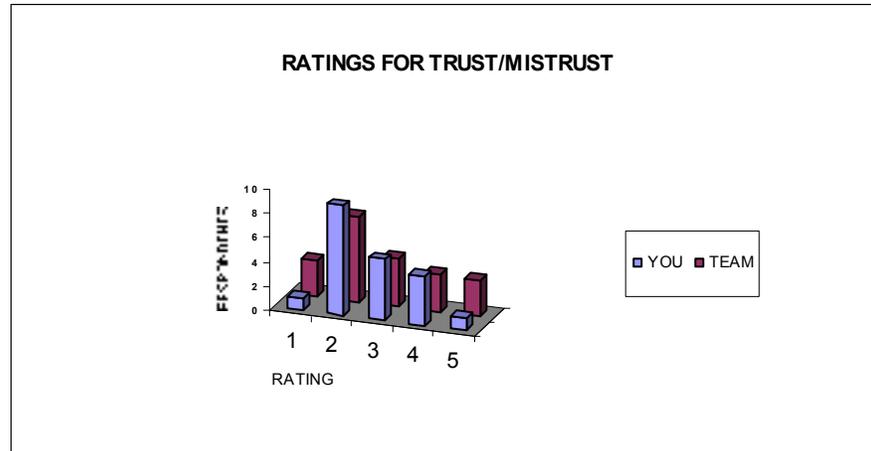
It is the author's experience, that while actions on the surface may indicate an acceptance of uncertainty, other factors may actually be influencing the action, or non-action, as the case may be. What may actually be happening is a failure by someone to take ownership of an issue, or a failure to raise an issue out of respect, or fear of conflict. When these other factors are considered, the lesser of the evils may be to accept the uncertainty of what may happen if the issue remains unresolved, over bringing about a loss of face, or initiating potential conflict.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that there was quite a variance of opinion on the continuum of certainty/uncertainty for both Western project managers and their perceptions of their Asian team members. A Western project manager who was risk-adverse themselves may perceive little difference, however if they were quite accepting of uncertainty, and were used to working in an environment where some level of risk was tolerated, they may perceive a greater gap in attitudes around this continuum.

#### 4.3.2.4 Trust/Mistrust

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.10: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Environment – Trust/Mistrust**



Rating 1 = People can be trusted

Rating 5 = It is necessary to check up on people

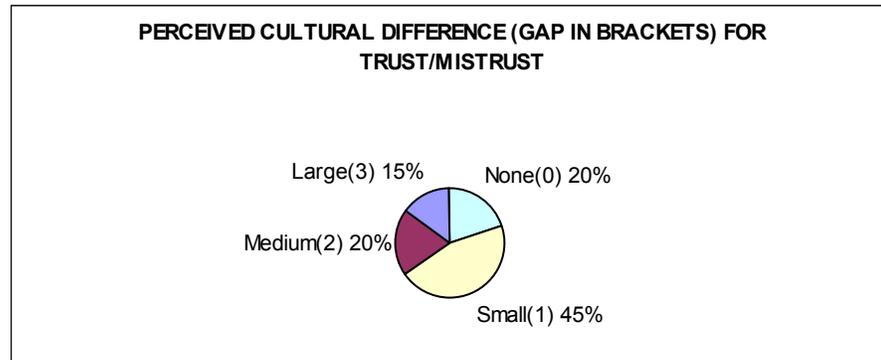
- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.75 Standard deviation: 1.02
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 2.80 Standard deviation: 1.32

The responses in section 2(b) of the questionnaire showed a reasonable variance among the Western project managers on their perceptions around whether people could be trusted or not, independent of whether they were considering their own Western culture, or their perceptions of the thoughts of their Asian team members. This will have impacted on the meaningfulness of the average (mean) gap and the overall assessment of the ranking of this cultural continuum.

- 80% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.11);

- Environment – Trust/Mistrust was ranked 16<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.3 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.11: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Environment - Trust/Mistrust**



While these gaps could imply that some Western project managers considered people to be deliberately deceitful, no free-form comments were forthcoming in section 3 of the questionnaire to suggest this to be the case.

In the author’s experience, the perceived cultural differences reported would more likely have come about due to the constant perceived need to check up on Asian project team members. This is not because they cannot be trusted per se, but because they are perceived as reluctant to deliver unfavourable news; they will not always tell the whole story (see section 4.3.5.1); they are unwilling to say ‘no’ to senior personnel if a superior asks them to do something; or they are perceived as having an overall fear of challenging anyone further up social hierarchy than themselves (see section 4.3.8.1).

Other comments made by the Western project managers in section 3, concerning problems with getting people to stick to priorities, and difficulties ascertaining whether what people are verbalizing is what they really mean to do, may more accurately represent what the Western project managers were indicating, when

they spread their responses across the trust continuum. The spread is more likely a reflection of not being able to trust people to act as you would expect, based on what they have told you, as opposed to people being deliberately untrustworthy.

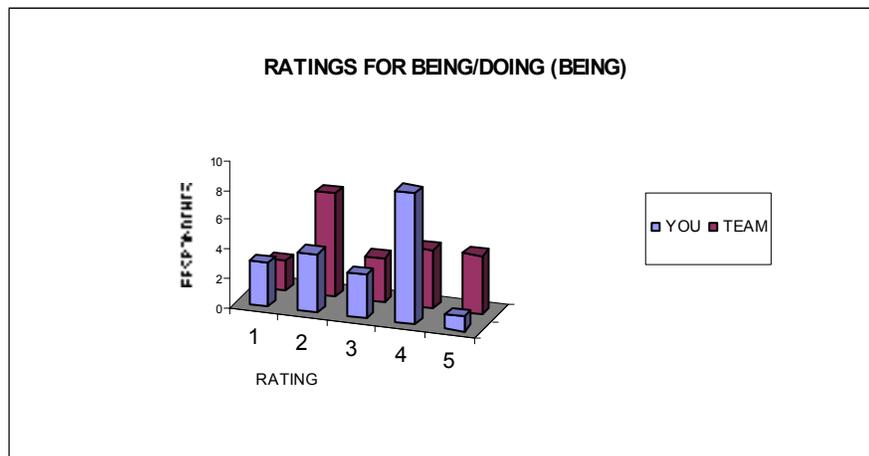
### 4.3.3. Action Orientation

#### 4.3.3.1. Being/Doing

In section 2(b), the Western project managers were asked to report on this cultural continuum from two slightly different aspects, in an attempt to derive a clearer picture of their perceptions around this continuum.

The first question the Western project managers were asked to answer was Being/Doing (Being), which pertained to whether who you are, or what you do, was more important.

**Figure 4.12: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Action Orientation – Being/Doing (Being)**



Rating 1 = Who you are is what counts  
 Rating 5 = What you do is what counts

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 3.05 Standard deviation: 1.23
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.05 Standard deviation: 1.36

From Figure 4.12 it is quite clear there is a large spread of perceptions amongst the Western project managers across both the 'YOU' and 'TEAM' scales, although there are distinct peaks at either end of the scales. The peak on the 'YOU' scale at 4 indicates a tendency on behalf of the Western project managers to lean towards perceiving it is what you do that is most important.

This viewpoint is supported by the University of California's Counseling and Career Services Department (2003). Using material sourced from Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961), the department notes that white culture values doing over being and that there is "a strong belief that one's worth is measured by task accomplishments. Statements such as "do something" indicate the positive value placed on action. When someone is 'being', white culture may use pejorative statements such as "hanging out" or "killing time". Thus, 'being' may be viewed by white culture as associated with personal inadequacy" (<http://www.accta.net/2003whitedim.pdf>).

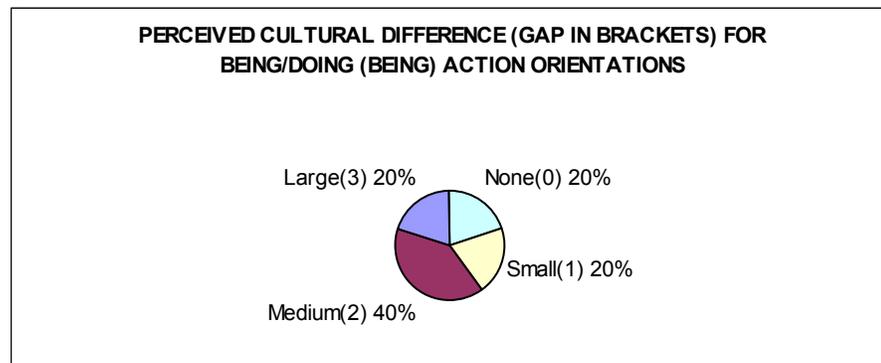
The peak on the 'TEAM' scale at 2 indicates the Western project managers have a strong tendency to perceive their Asian team members feel it is who you are that counts. When the responses from section 3 were analysed, it was quite clear that who a person 'is' in Asian society, is perceived as being very important, as over 50% of the Western project managers made reference to cultural challenges they faced having to deal with the importance placed on hierarchy and status (see sections 4.3.8.1/2).

The large spread of the perceptions across both the rating scales was evidenced by the high standard deviations. Both of these rating scales exhibited the highest standard deviations across all the cultural continua. This will have impacted on the meaningfulness of the average (mean) gap and the overall assessment of the ranking of this cultural continuum. That the average perceived rating for both of these rating scales is the same, yet the average gap of 1.6 places it 5<sup>th</sup> equal

when the perceived cultural differences are ranked, further illustrates that there is a high variance of perception on this continuum.

- 80% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.13);
- Action Orientation – Being/Doing (Being) was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.6 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.13: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Action Orientation – Being/Doing (Being)**



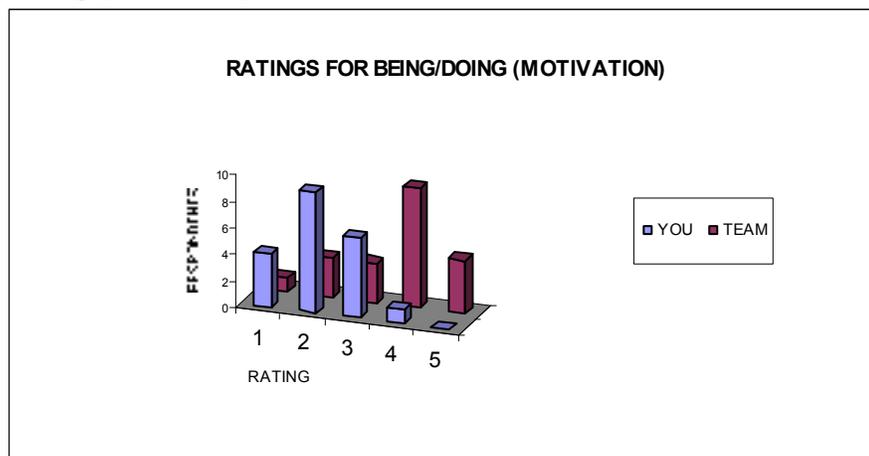
In addition to the comments from section 3 of the written questionnaire about who you are being significantly important (see sections 4.3.8.1/2), the importance of religion, specifically in Indonesia was also reported by 15% of the Western project managers. This was not in regards to the religious beliefs themselves, but on the influence of religion on business:

- “task schedules to cater for Muslim requirement to pray”
- “religion being confused with business (business issues become Christian versus Muslim issues)”

In these examples, the influence of religion on business is quite transparent. Undoubtedly, religion influences culture (Milosevic, 1999; Hampden-Turner, 2000), and the cultural dimension of Action Orientation, however the influence may not always be so obvious.

The second question the Western project managers were asked to answer was Being/Doing (Motivation). This question pertained to whether quality of life, or money and recognition, were more important.

**Figure 4.14: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Action Orientation – Being/Doing (Motivation)**



Rating 1 = Quality of life is paramount  
 Rating 5 = Money and recognition are most important

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.20 Standard deviation: 0.83
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.60 Standard deviation: 1.14

Figure 4.14 illustrates a similar sort of pattern for the Being/Doing (Motivation) continuum as was seen for the Being/Doing (Being) continuum, with the two distinct peaks at either ends of the scale.

This was to be expected. It was perceived from the Being/Doing (Being) continuum that who you are is important in Asian society. So to achieve the

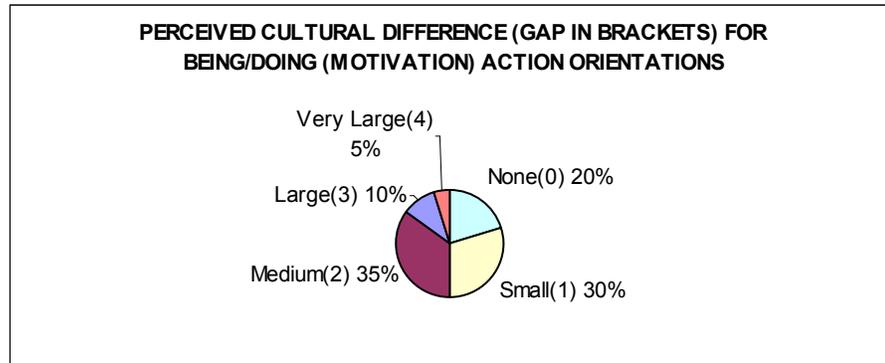
hierarchy and status required to become 'somebody' requires money and recognition, and this is reflected on the 'TEAM' scale on the Being/Doing (Motivation) continuum. Over 75% of Western project managers indicated they thought their Asian project team members would consider money and recognition to be more important than quality of life.

The converse is true for the 'YOU' scale. It was perceived from the Being/Doing (Being) continuum that what you do is what counts in Western society, which correlates with less of a motivation for money and recognition (although the fulfillment of doing something worthwhile, and earning money and recognition are not mutually exclusive). Quality of life was considered more important, although again it should be noted that attaining a good quality of life may indeed come about as a result of acquiring money and recognition.

While the trends essentially translate to the same perceptions, the spread is not quite so varied. This is evidenced by the lower standard deviations, especially for the Western project managers' perceptions of their own Western culture. This may be because the concept of quality of life, versus money and recognition, may be easier for the Western project managers to both comprehend and identify with, than the concept of being versus doing.

- 80% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.15);
- Action Orientation – Being/Doing (Motivation) was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.5 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.15: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Action Orientation - Being/Doing (Motivation)**



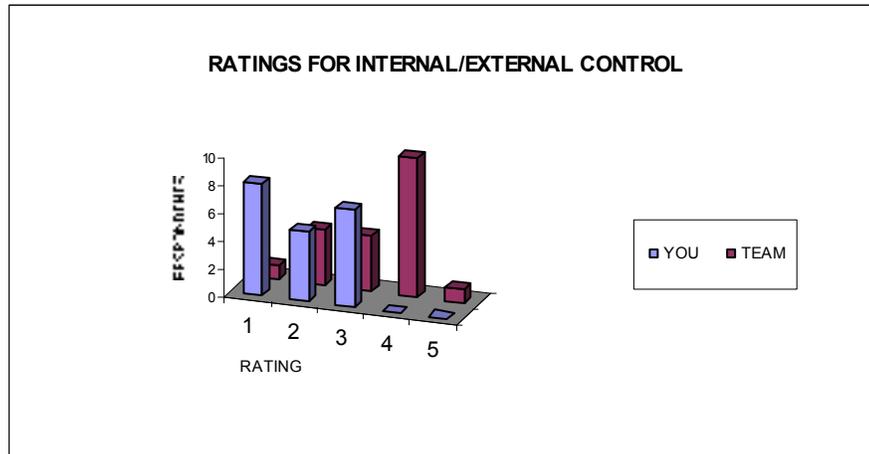
In section 3 of the written questionnaire, the Being/Doing (Motivation) continuum was only indirectly referred to via the importance linked to hierarchy and status (see sections 4.3.8.1/2).

For the Being/Doing continuum as a whole, the perceived cultural difference or gap averages out to 1.55. This gap is a reflection of the significance placed on hierarchy and status, and interestingly the average gap for the egalitarian/hierarchical continuum is also perceived as 1.55. The achievement/ascription continuum, which represents status, ranked as the number one perceived cultural difference.

4.3.3.2. Internal/External

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.16: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Action Orientation – Internal/External**



Rating 1 = Each of us controls our life  
 Rating 5 = People have limited control over what happens

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 1.95 Standard deviation: 0.89
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.30 Standard deviation: 1.03

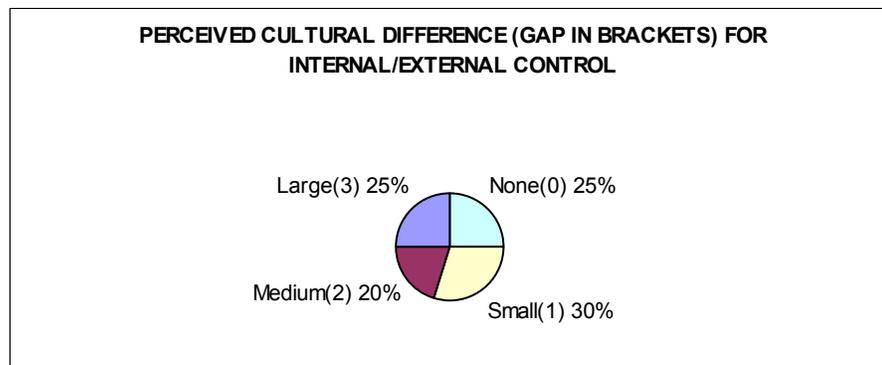
The Western project managers' responses in section 2(b) of the questionnaire showed they perceived themselves as essentially in control of their lives, with the diversity of opinion occurring more around 'how much' in control they are, as opposed to not really being in control at all. In contrast, over half the Western project managers perceived that their Asian project team members were more inclined towards a "whatever will be, will be" mentality, having limited control over what happens to them. The remaining perceptions trended towards their Asian team members being in control of their lives, though nothing near the level of control the Western project managers felt they had over their own destinies.

The perception that Asians feel they have limited control over what happens to them may be a further manifestation of the importance of hierarchy in Asian

society. The influence of the Confucian values of loyalty to family, and the group, is strong and unchallengeable, with hierarchy seen to be a natural part of every day life (Marx, 1999). This could easily evolve into personal conditioning that Asians are not truly able to shape their own individual lives, especially if they do not hold a place relatively high on the social ladder.

- 75% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.17);
- Action Orientation – Internal/External was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.45 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.17: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Action Orientation - Internal/External Control**



In section 3 of the questionnaire the Western project managers reported the “whatever will be, will be” mentality materializing in actions such as:

- “not wanting to bother with a task-scheduling plan”
- “a reluctance to set objectives”

The overall tone of the responses from section 3 was that the Western project managers perceived a lack of desire on behalf of their Asian project team members to focus on details, as doing so was considered to be of little practical value. Along the same fatalistic lines, the Western project managers revealed a frustration with some of their Asian project team members' attitudes when urgency or accuracy was required:

- “always consider there to be plenty of time, so they take their time”
- “close enough is good enough”

Perceptions around the Japanese culture were a notable exception here. The Western project managers who based their perceptions on Japanese culture all observed a desire on the part of the Japanese for control:

- “see all details before moving forward”
- “slow-moving - decision making, requirements definitions, testing (even for conditions that would never occur)”

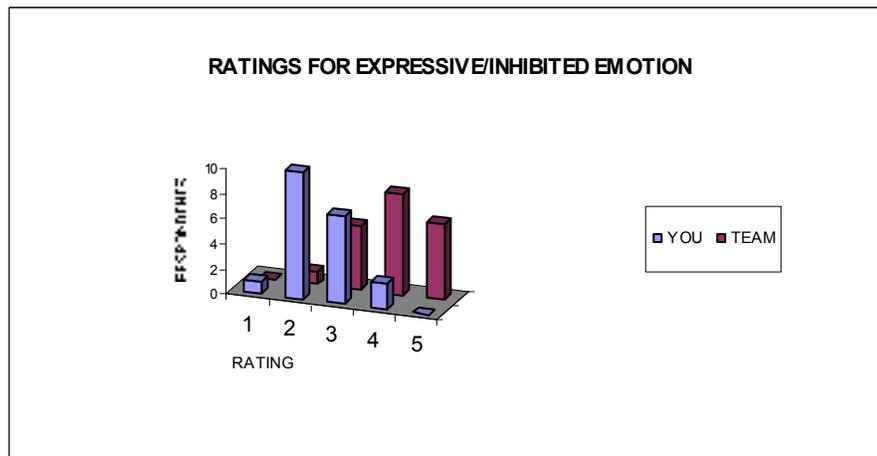
In sum, social conditioning may mean there is a perception by both foreigners and Asians alike, that Asians do not have complete control over what happens to them in their personal lives. While this can translate into an acceptance that the outcome of business activities is uncontrollable, this is not always the case across the Asian region as a whole. Furthermore, it does not mean that Asians would not like to have more control over their business activities; it may simply be they are not conditioned to the idea of being able to take control, and drive a particular business process to a desired completion point.

### 4.3.4. Emotion

#### 4.3.4.1. Expressive/Inhibited

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.18: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Emotion – Expressive/Inhibited**



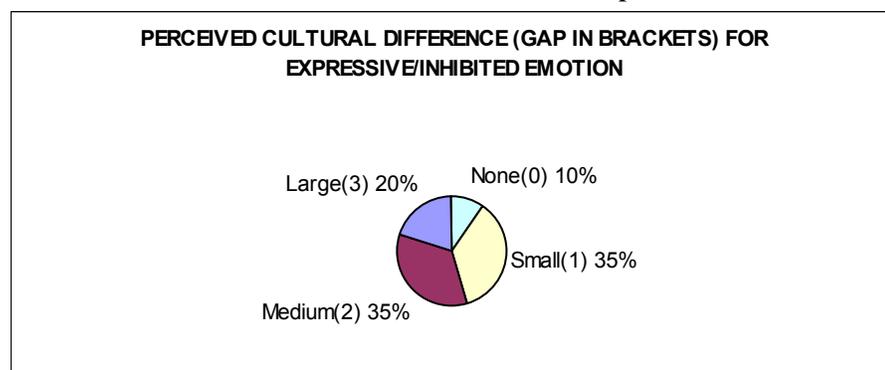
Rating 1 = People express emotion freely  
 Rating 5 = People should control their emotions

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.50 Standard deviation: 0.76
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.95 Standard deviation: 0.89

In section 2(b) of the written questionnaire, the Western project managers indicated they considered Westerners to be more emotionally expressive than their Asian team members, although almost no Western project managers thought unrestrained emotional expression would be accepted by either culture as normal behaviour. This perception is supported by research that has shown that emotional expression in Asian countries, particularly Japan and China, is intolerable, and would have the expresser ‘losing face’ and consequently respect (Marx, 1999).

- 90% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.19);
- Emotion – Expressive/Inhibited was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.65 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.19: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Emotion - Expressive/Inhibited**



In section 3 of the written questionnaire, the free-form responses showed that the Western project managers did not see these gaps as a problem on their own; rather the different approach to emotional expression was perceived as a problem only when it was interplayed with power and relationships:

- “important not to be publicly emotional or put them in a position where they will lose face”
- “on international teams, Asians members have been unfairly considered ‘boring’ or ‘devoid of emotion’, which is not good for team building, when really they are just guarded with their displays of emotion”
- “cultural aversion to saying NO, and then laughter when a deadline is missed as this is how they respond in difficult situations”

The participant was asked to expand on this last response as the author felt it potentially illustrated well the multifaceted nature of cultural differences.

The participant reported that initially due to the need to show deference to superiors and the desire to avoid conflict, a potential problem was not highlighted. However when that potential problem materialized into an actual reality, they were unsure what emotion to display, so nervous laughter was the result.

The use of laughter to express emotion was reported by a number of project managers in other free-form responses in section 3 of the written questionnaire, although rather than being exhibited in adverse situations as it was in the last response above, the project managers reported trying to use it as positive emotion, to their advantage.

In one example in section 3, it was used by a project manager to make light of a situation that was quite serious in an attempt to draw out information. A further example from section 3 saw a project manager use laughter to “show consequences of actions in a humorous light”; yet another wanted to show “a willingness to jest” to help build a relationship between themselves and their project team.

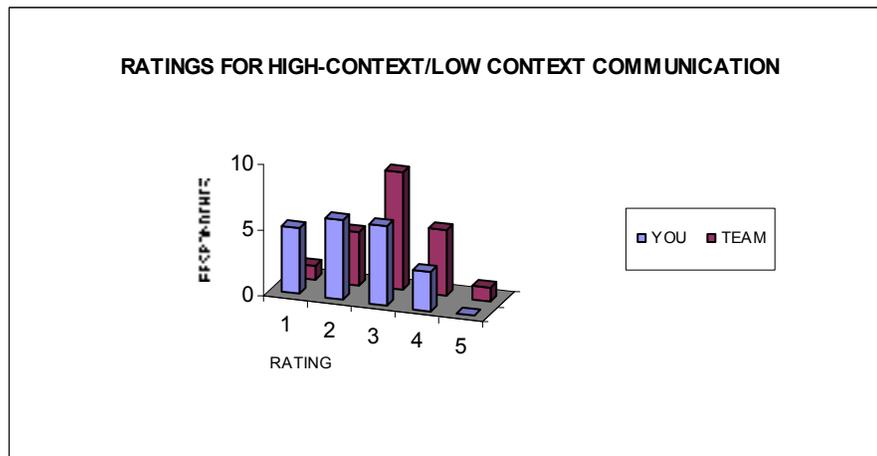
Even if emotion can be freely expressed, there will still be a need to determine what type of emotion is acceptable (Marx, 1999). The perceptions of the Western project managers were that while public displays of negative emotion were definitely frowned upon, public positive displays of emotion were to be welcomed in certain situations.

### 4.3.5. Language

#### 4.3.5.1. High-Context/Low-Context

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.20: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Language – High Context/Low Context**



Rating 1 = Communication is explicit  
 Rating 5 = Communication is implicit (e.g. body language)

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.35 Standard deviation: 0.96
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.05 Standard deviation: 0.94

This was a continuum in section 2(b) of the questionnaire where the Western project managers displayed a reasonable amount of variance amongst themselves about western culture, although generally they considered Westerners relied more on explicit (i.e. low-context) than implicit (i.e. high-context) communication.

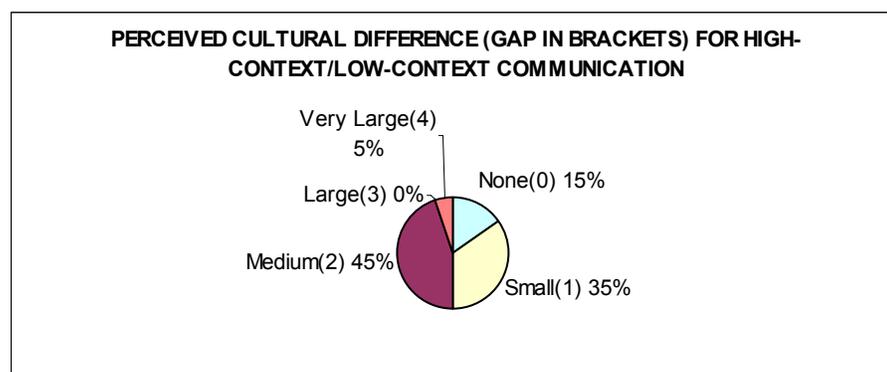
When asked to report their perceptions of where their Asian project team members would consider themselves sitting on the continuum, generally the Western project managers thought their Asian project team members relied on a

combination of explicit and implicit communication, tending more towards implicit, and a high-context communication environment.

These perceptions are supported by other research, which has shown that people from Western countries, for example, the United States, expect communication to be explicit, direct, and unambiguous (Gallois & Callan, 1997). In contrast, Asian people, such as those from China, Japan and Indonesia, have a communication style that is considerably more inexact, ambiguous and implicit (Pekerti, 2001; Thomas, 2002).

- 85% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.21);
- Language – High-context/Low-context was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.45 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.21: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Language - High-Context/Low-Context**



The results from section 3 of the questionnaire indicate that the variance in the ratings from section 2(b) blurred the high degree of perceived cultural difference centered around high and low-context communication, as 80% of the free-form responses indicating some aspect of communication to be a challenge:

- “say ‘yes’ when they mean ‘I don’t understand”
- “insincere agreement – will agree to your face but then proceed on their own path”
- “restrained communication due to reluctance to give bad news or disagree with the boss”
- “language barriers”
- “better to accept than show lack of understanding or have a confrontation – Westerners may consider this dishonest but to Asians it is better to do this than have a confrontation”
- “to meet the deadline, one option was to eliminate large aspects of the documentation”
- “answers to questions are often not answers, but simply information that the local Korean wishes to share”
- “language barriers adds a level of complexity to ensure communication is understood”
- “avoid conflict (will do what they want after American management is gone) – easier to know what an American PM thinks about an issue”

It was no surprise that language barriers were identified as an area of perceived cultural difference. As Neal (1998) noted, “language difficulties are important contributory factors in the development of cultural problems. They undermine the experience of working with foreign colleagues; negative experiences mean that

managers are more comfortable with compatriots, as, indeed, foreign managers may be more comfortable working with *their* compatriots; and this, in turn, contributes to a subtle but pervasive polarization of staff along national lines” (p. 61).

However many of the perceived communication challenges identified in section 3, while affected by differences attributable to a high versus low context environment, are also heavily influenced by the continua of relationships and power, and the ever-present importance of ‘saving face’. High-context, indirect communicators value conflict avoidance (Walker, Walker and Schmitz, 2003). They dislike bringing contentious issues out into the open as they do not wish to bring tensions into a relationship or to be seen as challenging a superior’s status or rank.

15% of the Western project managers did identify a specific feature of high-context communicators that they perceived separated them from their Asian team members. Walker, et al (2003) noted that Asians need a great deal of contextual information before they will partake in a business transaction. This information may be gleaned from communication and interactions that Westerners may consider inconsequential, such as small talk prior to the real business agenda.

Social communications were perceived to be of great importance, as relationships are built up and decisions made outside of the boardroom (Marx, 1999). Where Westerners may not like to merge business with pleasure, and indeed believe good personal relationships are not necessarily essential to conduct business (Walker, et al, 2003), Western project managers perceived that in Asia, this was not the case:

- “the texture of friendship – in Asia friendship often denotes a certain obligation”

- “time is often spent talking about issues that have no immediate relevance to the problem or issue at hand which is frustrating, but without this communication fixing the problem would become more difficult”
- “formal business venues are not the final venue for decision making and deals; preferred venue is dinner and drinks”

In sum, communication in general is perceived as a major area of cultural difference. The gap identified in section 2(b) specifically referred to the nature of communication, be it high or low context, which belied the truly high level of perceived cultural difference in this area. Once the many facets of cross-cultural communication were considered, and the influences of other cultural factors are taken into account, it is apparent the Western project managers recognise they have to consider communication differences very carefully if they are to successfully manage projects in Asia.

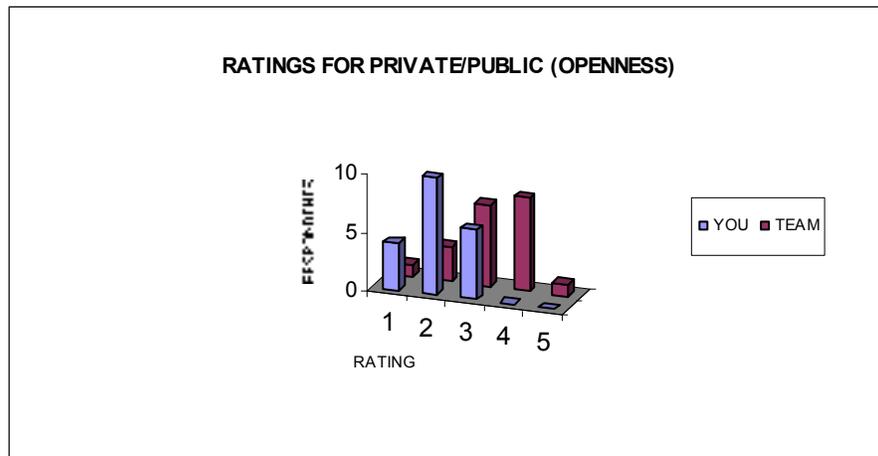
### 4.3.6. Space

#### 4.3.6.1. Private/Public

In section 2(b), in an attempt to derive a clearer picture of their perceptions around this continuum, the Western project managers were asked to report on this cultural continuum from two slightly aspects.

The first question the Western project managers were asked to answer was Public/Private (Openness), which pertained to whether activities are best kept public or private:

**Figure 4.22: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Space – Private/Public (Openness)**



Rating 1 = Activities are made public  
 Rating 5 = Activities are best kept private

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.10 Standard deviation: 0.72
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.25 Standard deviation: 0.97

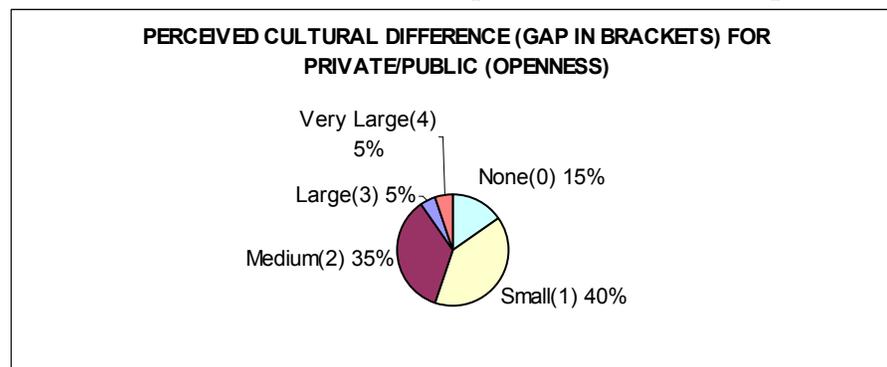
This continuum had one of the lowest variances of opinion for the 'YOU' scale, as all of the Western project managers perceived themselves as quite willing to share at least some information about activities in their lives. In contrast, they felt

that their Asian team members would be more likely to keep information about activities private.

While this perception may not be so important if it pertained only to peoples' personal lives (although it could hinder the all-important relationship building between the Western project manager and their Asian team members), it would be a significant factor if it translated into a tendency to keep information that would be vital to the success of a project, private.

- 85% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.23);
- Space – Private/Public (Openness) was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.45 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.23: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Space - Private/Public (Openness)**



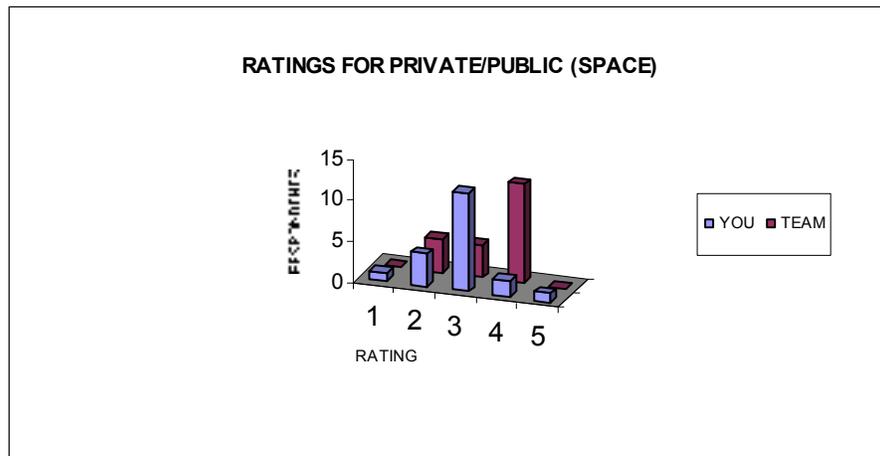
While specific comments were not made by the Western project managers in section 3 of the written questionnaire around this continuum, the indirect impact of it was clearly noticed by the Western project managers when they stated that their Asian team members were often reluctant to communicate openly all issues, especially bad ones, with their Western project manager. The Western project managers put this down to hierarchical cultural influences, which would certainly

be having an impact, however the cultural tendency to keep things private would also be affecting their Asian team members' behaviour.

In the experience of the author, this perceived lack of openness may only be perceived by a foreigner, especially one who is a superior. There may not actually be a cultural difference around openness per se; more the cultural differences are around the continuums of power and relationships, and the outcomes of these differences manifest themselves in a perceived lack of openness, as people are reluctant to discuss personal issues with a superior or an outsider.

The second question the Western project managers were asked to answer was Public/Private (Space), which pertained to whether a public or private environment was preferable:

**Figure 4.24: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Space – Private/Public (Space)**



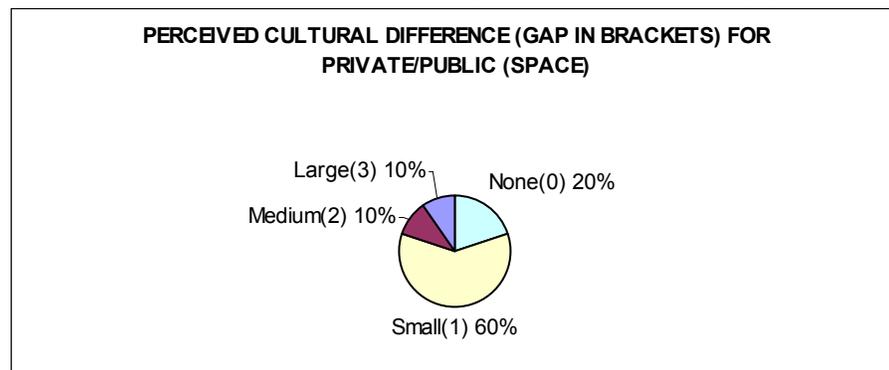
Rating 1 = Prefer a public environment  
 Rating 5 = Prefer a private environment

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.90 Standard deviation: 0.85
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.40 Standard deviation: 0.82

For this aspect of the private/public continuum, there was not much divergence of opinion, and relatively small differences between the rating scales.

- 80% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.25);
- Space – Private/Public (Space) was ranked 17<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.1 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.25: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Space - Private/Public (Space)**



Again no specific comments were made by the Western project managers in section 3 of the written questionnaire around this continuum; however the small gap they did perceive is substantiated by other researchers and by themselves indirectly, in section 4 of the written questionnaire. Private environment cultures are more likely to engage in one-to-one communications, whereas public cultures are comfortable with open-style interactions (Milosevic, 1999), and an adjustment from an open, communication style, to a one-on-one communication style, was a modification the Western project managers regularly mentioned having to make.

Here is an example of a continuum where the Western project managers identified there was a gap in cultural attitudes, yet they did not make any link between the need for private communication, and the need for privacy in their

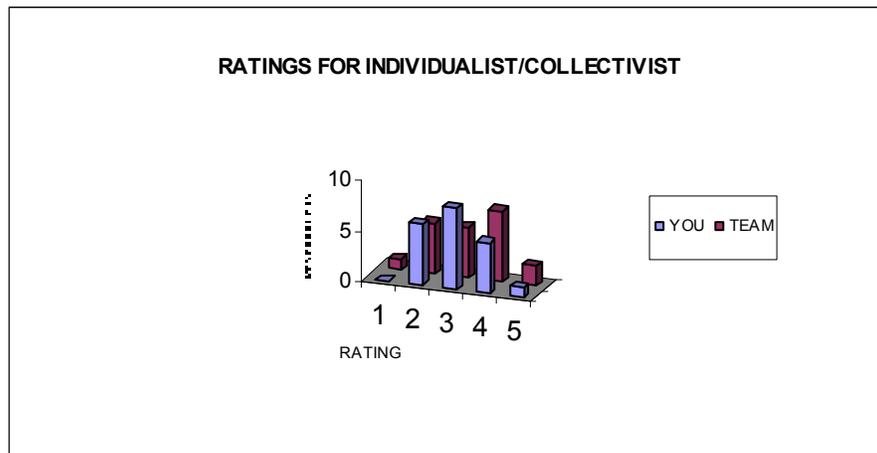
personal surroundings. The readiness to assign causes for cultural behaviour to one cultural influence, that of hierarchy, meant they missed another contributing cultural attribute – that of a tendency to be more private than public.

### 4.3.7. Relationships

#### 4.3.7.1. Individualist/Collectivist

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.26: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Relationships – Individualist/Collectivist**



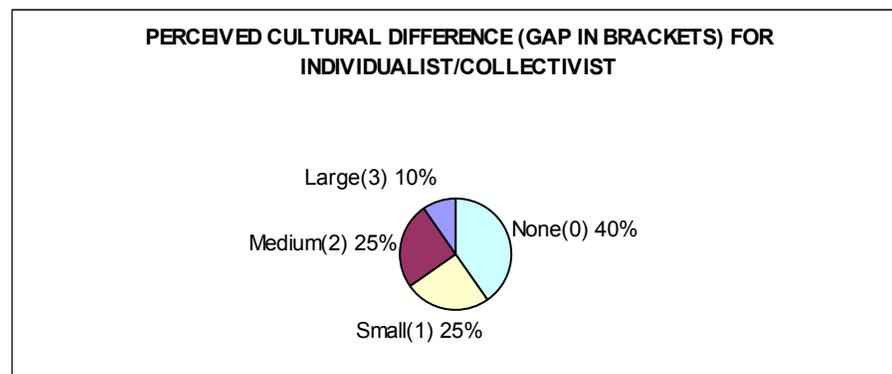
Rating 1 = Primary concern for the person  
 Rating 5 = Primary concern for the group as a whole

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 3.05 Standard deviation: 0.89
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.20 Standard deviation: 1.11

Interestingly, the ratings for both the Western project managers and their Asian team members followed a similar pattern. Importantly, the Western project managers did not clearly identify with a commonly accepted idea that Western culture would be considered individualist and generally, Asian culture would be considered collectivist (Marx, 1999; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000; Chen & Partington, 2004).

- 60% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.27);
- Relationships – Individualist/Collectivist was ranked 18<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.05 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.27: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Relationships - Individual/Collectivist**



There were no specific comments given in section 3 of the written questionnaire around this continuum. This correlates well with the low gap perceived by the Western project managers from the quantitative data in section 2(b).

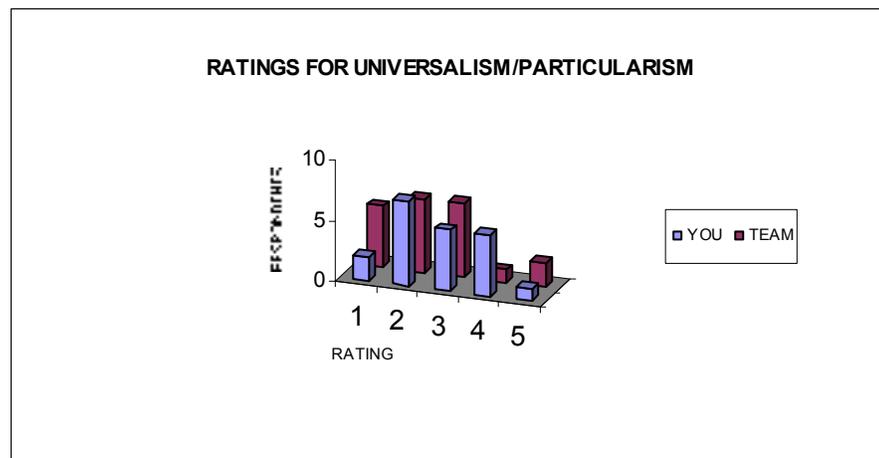
However, this overall result was somewhat surprising, as traits typical of individualist/collectivist cultures were reported as specific project management challenges by the Western project managers. For example, collectivists require decisions by consensus (Marx, 1999), which takes more time, whereas individualists are used to fast, incisive decision-making (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000). The regular deferral by the individual to the group was reported by the Western project managers as a frustration experienced throughout the entire project management process.

This continuum is another example of Western project managers identifying there is a cultural difference that needs to be accounted for, yet being unable to correlate that difference with a specific cultural trait, or recognising that more than one cultural continuum may be at the source of the perceived difference.

#### 4.3.7.2. Universalism/Particularism

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.28: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Relationships – Universalism/Particularism**



Rating 1 = One rule for all  
 Rating 5 = Rules can be adapted for individuals

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.80 Standard deviation: 1.11
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 2.45 Standard deviation: 1.23

From the Western project managers' responses to this continuum in section 2(b), when asked to consider their own perceptions, it was apparent there was a reasonable variance of opinion amongst the Western project managers, which would have distorted the average perceived difference (or gap).

However when it came to the perceptions of the Western project managers, in regards to the culture of their Asian project team members, there was still variance, but the results were definitely skewed towards universalism.

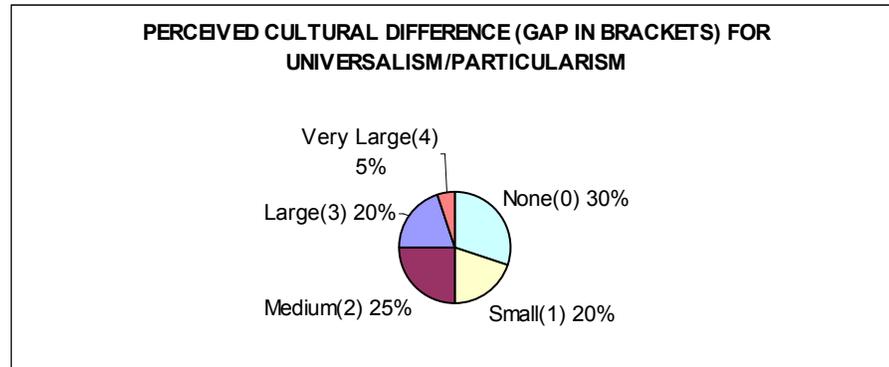
This tendency towards universalism was somewhat surprising for a number of reasons. Firstly, South Korea, China, Indonesia and Japan are defined as among the most particularist nations in the world (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000).

Secondly, given the Western project managers' perceptions about their team members' acceptance of a hierarchical society (see section 4.3.8.1), it would be reasonable to assume that if a superior was at risk of losing face, or if a relationship with a superior was being threatened, that there would be an acceptance that the rules that may apply for a co-worker, may not apply if a superior was involved. As Trompenaars (2000) wrote, 'universalist cultures seek moral absolutes; for particularist cultures, "it depends" (p. 30).

Thirdly, the author's own experiences had indicated that Asians have a particularistic orientation, with Rearwin (1991) perception summing the author's thoughts quite nicely: "[In Asia], abstract concepts like right and wrong, or truth and untruth, depend on the circumstances, rather than being absolute. Behaviour that is acceptable in one situation may be unacceptable in another" (p. 76).

- 70% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.29);
- Relationships – Universalism/Particularism was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.5 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.29: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Relationships - Universalism/Particularism**



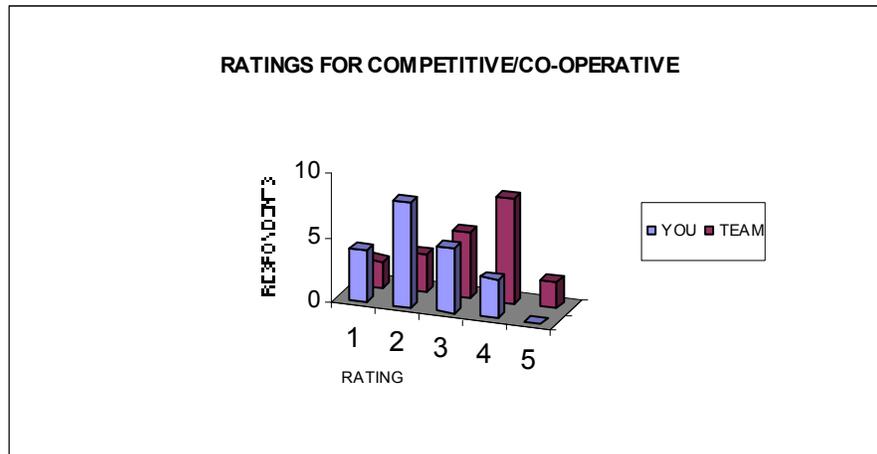
The continuum of universalism/particularism was not directly referred in section 3 of the written questionnaire; however the overarching tone of the respondents in this section was a recognition that regardless of the situation, adherence to hierarchy and the preservation of relationships is paramount (see sections 4.3.8.1 & 4.3.7.3).

The Western project managers described a cultural environment that, by default, means that not all the same rules can apply to everybody. Even if they did not qualitatively mention elements of this continuum, quantitatively the Western project managers perceived the cultural gap, and supported their quantitative reasoning through their reference to other contributing cultural factors.

4.3.7.3. Competitive/Co-operative

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.30: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Relationships – Competitive/Co-operative**



Rating 1 = Competition is good

Rating 5 = People should co-operate for the betterment of all

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.35 Standard deviation: 0.99
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.25 Standard deviation: 1.16

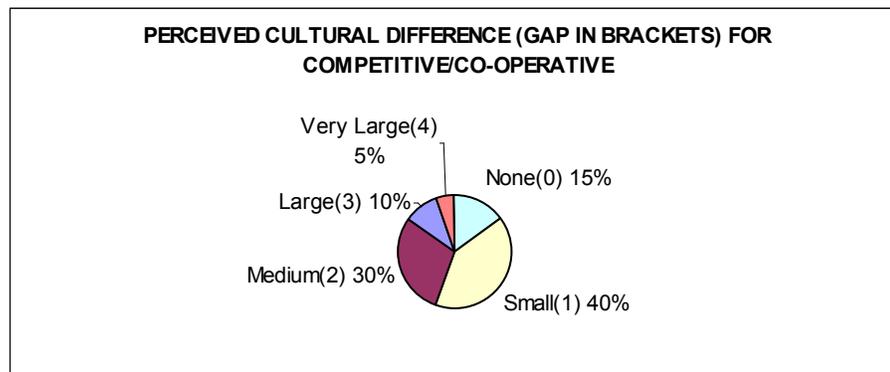
From the Western project managers' responses to this continuum in section 2(b), when asked to consider their own perceptions, overall Western project managers tended more towards agreement that competition was good, whereas they perceived their Asian team members favoured co-operation over competition.

This observation fitted strongly with their perceptions around the importance the Asian cultures place on the value of relationships, and the preservation of a person's character. Co-operation in Asia is valued for the maintenance of harmony, long-term relationships, and the creation of mutual, longer term benefits (Marx, 1999), whereas in most business situations in America, Americans will come armed with a competitive attitude (Elashmawi & Harris, 1993). The Western project managers recognized the importance of business

relationships at all levels in Asia, and how vital it is that everybody feels valued, and that they are contributing, rather than being in competition, with one another.

- 85% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.31);
- Relationships – Competitive/Co-operative was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.5 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.31: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Relationships - Competitive/Co-operative**



That a gap exists on this continuum was readily apparent, with the repeated references by the Western project managers in section 3 of the written questionnaire to the frustration experienced due to the need to achieve consensus and always work together, particularly when decisions had to be made. It was perceived as imperative that decisions were made as a group, meaning no one individual could receive all the credit, or be assigned all the blame if a decision was later shown to be misguided. Examples of the importance of co-operation and the group from section 3 include:

- “reward the team, not the individuals”

- “meetings running over time due to need for consensus decisions”
- “[For the Asians] decisions made by consensus of many – Americans have many in the information gathering and few in the decision-making”
- “fear of accountability, therefore always forced consensus so no one person had clear responsibility for a decision”
- “desire for conformity, even with competitors“
- “standing out not valued”

One free-form response stood out as an illustration of how the group or consensus mentality can become a problem:

- “inability to assign priority or weight of impact of an issue”

The author’s own experience managing projects in Asia correlated with this perception. The result is when no-one takes responsibility for the impact or resolution of the issue, with everyone deferring to the group, there is the potential for the issue to remain unresolved for longer than is necessary.

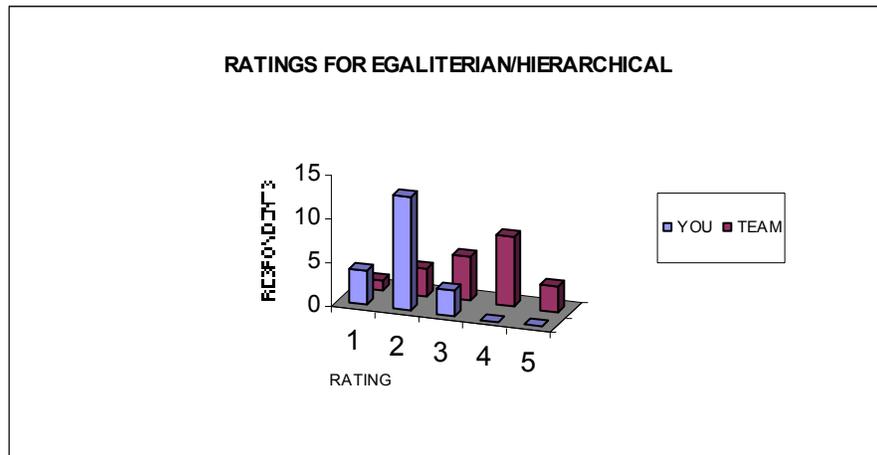
Research conducted by Elashmawi & Harris (1993) and Marx (1999) showed that Asian nationalities value relationships, group harmony and co-operation over typically preferred American values of individuality, freedom and self-reliance. This research supports those findings. These key differences within the cultural dimension of relationships will need to be addressed by the Western project manager if they are to be successful working within the Asian region.

### 4.3.8. Power

#### 4.3.8.1. Egalitarian/Hierarchic

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.32: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Power – Egalitarian/Hierarchical**



Rating 1 = Comes from what a person does  
 Rating 5 = Comes from who a person is

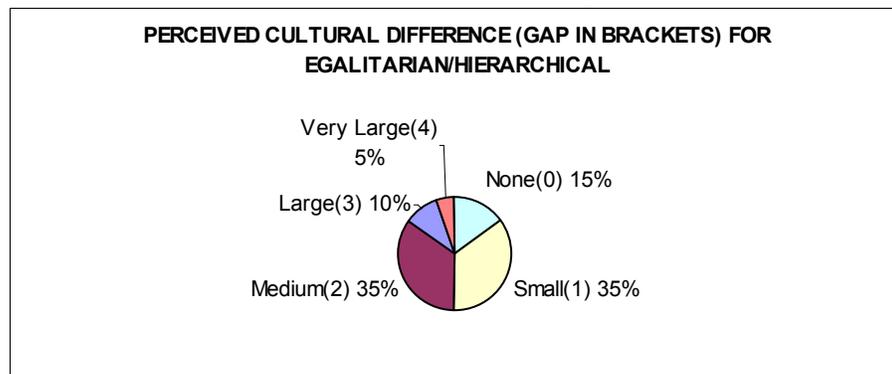
- YOU: Average perceived rating: 1.40 Standard deviation: 0.50
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.35 Standard deviation: 1.04

For the Western project managers' perceptions of their own culture, the continuum of egalitarian/hierarchical power had the lowest spread of opinion, with an undisputable tendency towards egalitarian values. "The value American culture places on independence and individual freedom of choice naturally leads to the idea that everyone is equal regardless of age, social status, or authority" (Elashmawi & Harris, p. 62).

The Western project managers however did not perceive the same value system in their nominated Asian countries. While the perceptions were a little spread, the overall trend was towards a culture based on hierarchical values, which was to be expected.

- 85% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.33);
- Power – Egalitarian/Hierarchical was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.55 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.33: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Power - Egalitarian/Hierarchic**



The responses in section 2(b) of the questionnaire and comments from section 3 of the questionnaire highlighted that the egalitarian/hierarchic continuum was a major area of perceived cultural difference.

The Western project managers' responses in section 2(b) saw equality as being valued, whereas they considered their Asian team members were more accepting of social stratification and the associated degrees of power, status and authority. This was well illustrated by their comments in section 3 of the questionnaire, which included:

- “overcoming the idea that their superiors may be wrong, and not accepting their ideas without question”

- “afraid to say ‘no’ if a superior asks them to something, irrespective of their already allocated priorities”
- “Korean business people address people by title as opposed to name, reflecting the importance of hierarchy
- “not always appropriate to question or disagree with someone of a ‘higher’ title”
- “afraid to respond honestly if asked whether they agree with a suggested course of action, as ‘no’ not an allowable response”
- “inability to challenge colleagues or superiors so they are not in a position to lose face”
- “difficulty in escalating problems”.

A subsequent interview around this last written response highlighted an issue that came through many of the cultural continua time and time again – the idea of ‘saving face’. The avoidance of shame and the associated loss of respect are paramount to Asian people (Walker, et al, 2003) so having to admit they have made a mistake even to their colleagues, let alone their superiors, is to be avoided at all costs.

Throughout the comments in section 3 of the questionnaire, the Western project managers repeatedly referred to how important it is that their Asian colleagues, particularly the senior ones, were allowed to ‘save face’ regardless of the circumstance.

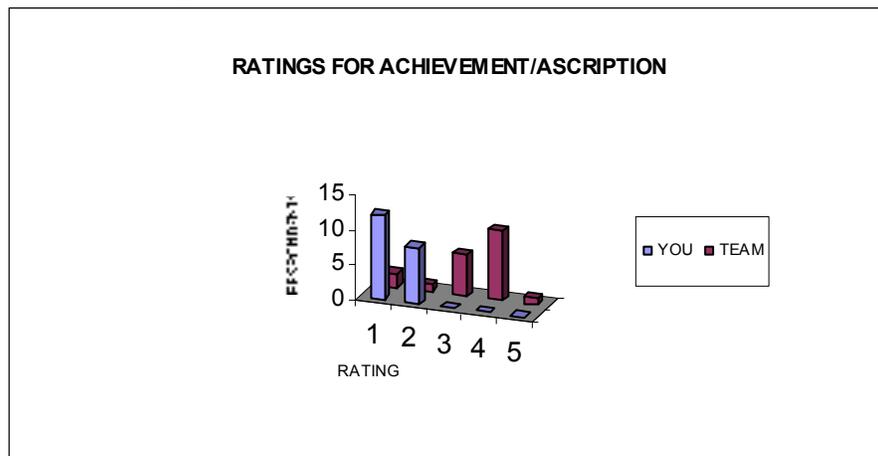
The author's own experience is that personnel are always afforded a level of respect commensurate with their status within the company, almost always independent of their actions. As a result respect has to be paid, even if that respect is not always justified.

Western project managers need to recognise that both work and social power structures, and values, are different between Western and Asian cultures. Where in the West, it is still possible to show respect to a superior while challenging their thought processes, this would be considered irreconcilable within the Asian region. This almost unqualified respect for authority needs to be factored in by any Westerner faced with the management of people in Asia.

**4.3.8.2. Achievement/Ascription**

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.34: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Power – Achievement/Ascription**



Rating 1 = Status is earned  
 Rating 5 = Status is ascribed by wealth or birth

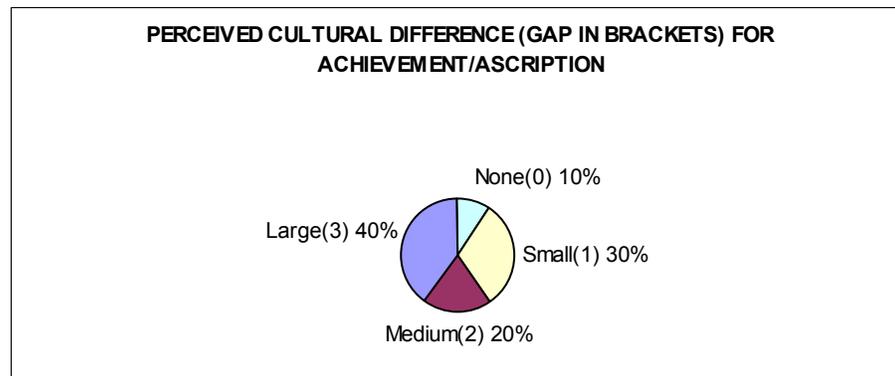
- YOU: Average perceived rating: 1.95 Standard deviation: 0.60
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.45 Standard deviation: 1.10

Responses in section 2(b) of the questionnaire on the continuum of achievement/ascription showed the Western project managers considering power and status to be earned via achievement, whereas they perceived that their Asian team members considered power and status to be warranted due to birth right, wealth, age, and length of service with the company. Similar to the other continuum within the Power dimension (i.e. egalitarian/hierarchical), there was very little variance of opinion among the Western project managers for the Western culture rating, as evidenced by the low standard deviation, and while the deviation was greater for the Asian team rating, the trend was still towards ascription of power and status, rather than the earning of it.

These ratings correlated well with the Western project managers' perceptions for being/doing (being), where they felt that Westerners valued a 'doing' culture and assessed people on what they did, while Asians valued a 'being' culture, respecting people for who they are (see section 4.3.3.1). The Western project managers are also supported by Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (2000) who state that the most dominant Western culture, that of the American culture, has one of the highest achievement orientations of any national business culture in the world.

- 90% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.35);
- Power – Egalitarian/Hierarchical was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.9 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.35: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Power - Achievement/Ascription**



The gap the Western project managers identified in section 2(b) was supported by some comments provided in section 3 of the questionnaire:

- “difficult to promote junior staff members quickly as assumption from both them and others that the person is not senior enough”
- “at times an element of distrust of foreigners” [simply because they are foreign, irrespective of their ability to perform a role]
- “a long time to gain acceptance that a foreigner deserved to be in a role”

However, given the Western project managers rated this continuum as the one exhibiting the largest perceived cultural difference, that there were relatively few comments in this area was intriguing.

In the author’s opinion, while the Western project managers are obviously aware that status and power in Asian society is assigned differently (as evidenced by the gap identified in section 2(b)), they do not generally ‘see’ or experience the ascription of status or power itself, so overall, this does not cause them a problem. What does bring about the cultural challenge however, is how status and power are used and accepted. The power that is associated with status

manifests itself into what the Western project managers see as frustrating, hierarchical influence.

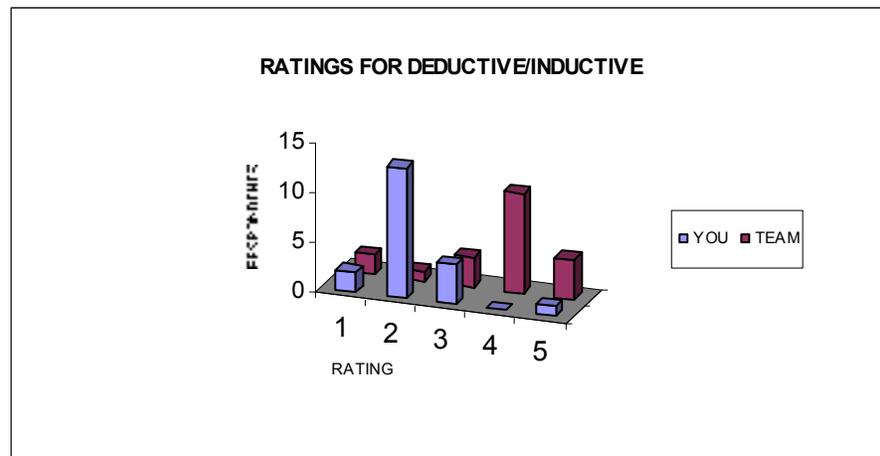
The free-form comments suggest that within the Power dimension, it is the unrelenting, hierarchical nature of Asian society, and the unequivocal acceptance of power and status that introduces more challenges for the Western project managers, even though they recognise the larger gap between the cultures is actually how that power is assigned in the first instance.

### 4.3.9. Thinking

#### 4.3.9.1. Deductive/Inductive Thinking

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.36: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Thinking – Deductive/Inductive**



Rating 1 = Guided by experience  
 Rating 5 = Guided by accepted rules and principles

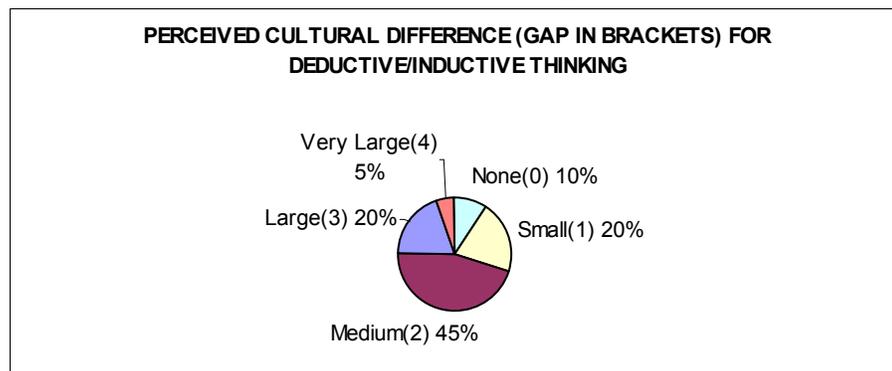
- YOU: Average perceived rating: 2.25 Standard deviation: 0.85
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.65 Standard deviation: 1.18

When the Western project managers responded to section 2(b) of the questionnaire, they reported Western cultural members as being decidedly more inclined to draw on empirical knowledge and current experience, which indicates an inductive culture, whereas they perceived their Asian cultural counterparts were more likely to be guided by well-established, accepted rules and principles, which are traits exhibited by deductive cultures.

The perceptions for both these scales are supported by the Western project managers other observations around the certainty/uncertainty and being/doing continua. Research has shown that the perceived attraction on the part of Asians to rules and regulations fits with a culture that dislikes uncertainty (Chen & Partington, 2004); and doing-orientated cultures, to which the Western project managers identified themselves as belonging, emphasizes risk-taking and few rules (Milosevic, 1999).

- 90% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.37);
- Thinking – Deductive/Inductive was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.9 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.37: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Thinking - Deductive/Inductive**



When given the opportunity to freely describe the cultural challenges they faced in section 3 of the questionnaire, 40% of the Western project managers supported their response to the direct question around the continuum of deductive/inductive thought in section 2(b) by making repeated references to the problems of trying to get their project team members to look at things differently:

- “need to overcome their ideas of quick-fix, band-aid solutions”
- “bound by existing relationships that make them unable to see the fundamental strength of an idea”
- “when kickbacks were stopped, team thought they would never be able to succeed”
- “measure of success is results through work/actions, not time spent in the office”
- “work ethic is long hours, even if not productive; emphasis is time on the job as opposed to working smarter”
- “never wanting to do anything different from what has been done in the past, even if the facts in front of them plainly speak otherwise”

Given these comments and as deductive cultures tend to be influenced more by the past (Walker, et al, 2003), it would be reasonable to expect that the time continuum of past/present/future would also have been seen as a major point of difference.

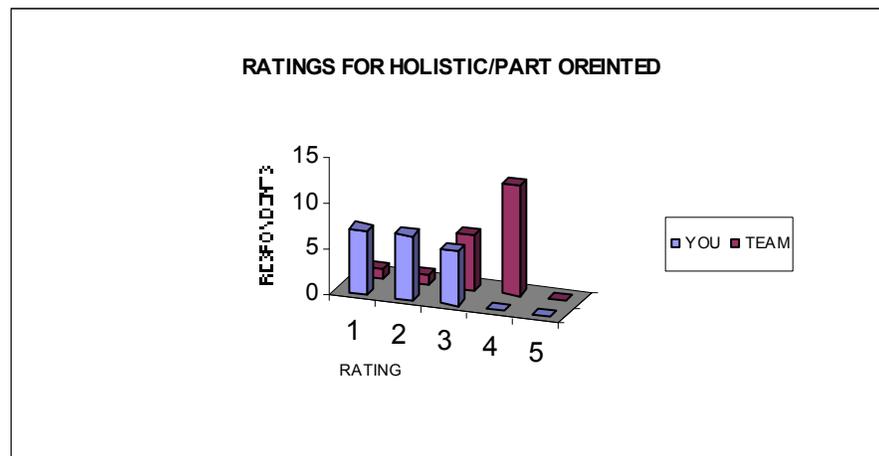
Interestingly this was not the case. Only when the Western project managers could freely write about the challenges they faced, did they link the different time

orientations to the thinking process. The implication is that although they recognized the mismatched conceptualization processing between the cultures, they did not make the association that the differing time orientation of the two cultures was a contributing factor to the mismatch.

#### 4.3.9.2. Holistic/Part Oriented

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.38: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Thinking – Holistic/Part Oriented**



Rating 1 = Always consider the whole  
 Rating 5 = Consider the parts individually

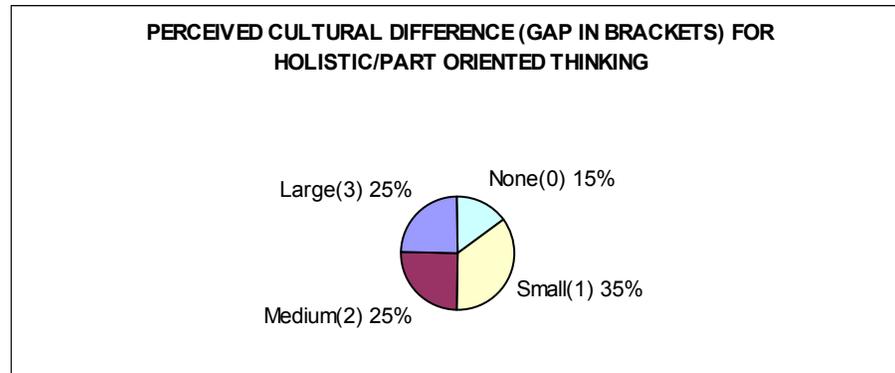
- YOU: Average perceived rating: 1.95 Standard deviation: 0.83
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 3.45 Standard deviation: 0.83

The Western project managers perceived themselves as tending to consider the whole over the parts, however they felt their Asian project team members had a greater tendency or preference to deal with individual aspects or tasks of a project, than the project as a whole.

- 85% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.39);

- Thinking – Holistic/Part Oriented was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.6 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.39: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Thinking - Holistic/Part-Oriented**



The quantitative positions identified in section 2(b) were supported by the qualitative response received in section 3 of the written questionnaire:

- “only concentrating on given task without consideration for implications for other tasks/people”
- “computer systems tend to focus on specific product or function – Americans tend to look for common functions and build a single system for multiple tasks”
- “difficulty with determining all requirements up front”
- “reluctance to create and follow a detailed project plan – would rather start work on tasks than think and plan all activities”

This was somewhat surprising as holistic ideas are regularly associated with Asian culture (Mole, n.d.). For example, Chinese medicine holds that symptoms

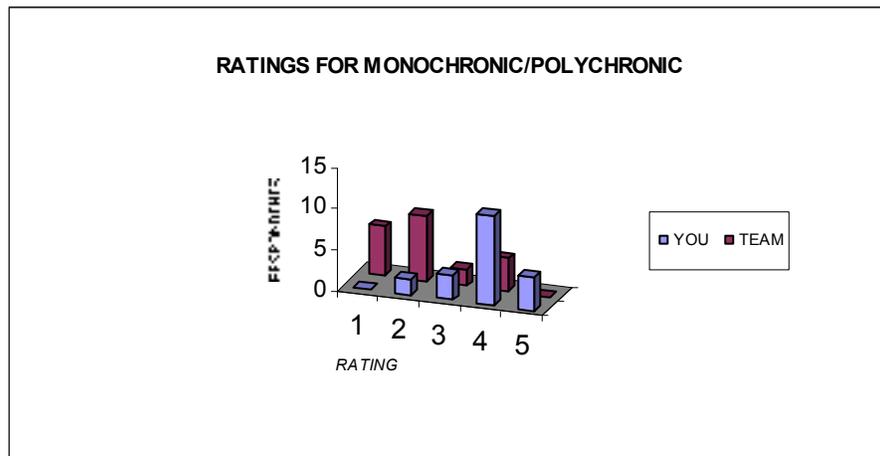
should be viewed as small manifestations of a larger picture; that understanding should always be reached about cause and effect; and that consideration should always be given to how one action or decision will impact another. However the Western project managers did not correlate this holistic style of Asian thinking with the perceived approach of the Asian project team members when they were involved with projects. In this arena the Western project managers perceived their Asian project team members had a greater tendency or preference to deal with individual aspects or tasks of a project, rather than considering that their pieces of the project were part of a desired, wider outcome.

### 4.3.10. Time

#### 4.3.10.1. Monochronic/Polychronic

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.40: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Time – Monochronic/Polychronic**



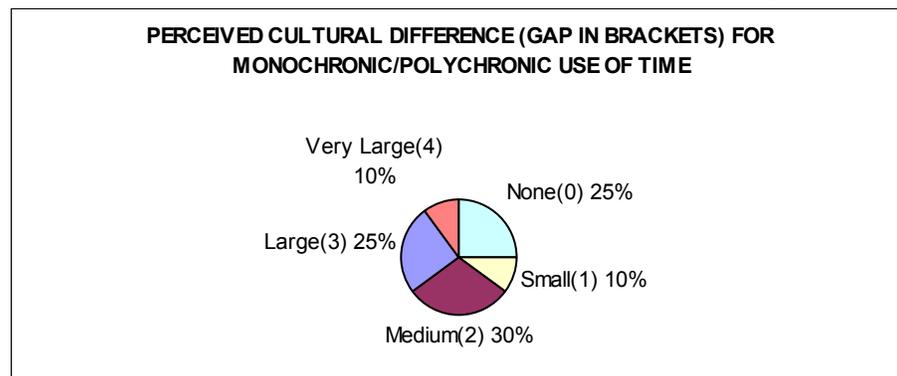
Rating 1 = Concentrate on one thing  
 Rating 5 = Do many things at once

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 3.85 Standard deviation: 0.88
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 2.20 Standard deviation: 1.11

The Western project managers clearly perceived they tended to do many things at once, whereas they generally felt their Asian team members would perceive concentrating on one task was preferable, represented by a greater spread of opinion on the TEAM scale.

- 85% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.41);
- Time – Monochronic/Polychronic was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.85 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.41: Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Time - Monochronic/Polychronic**



In both the direct questioning in section 2(b) of the questionnaire and responses from section 3 of the questionnaire, the Western project managers responded that Westerners had a greater propensity or inclination to multitask, and that Westerners had a more flexible approach to time management than Asians, whom they perceived tended to be more committed to schedules. This correlates well to the perceptions around the Asian tendency to think deductively (see section 4.3.9.1), and to be adverse to uncertainty (see section 4.3.2.3), each of which favours rules and regulation. Examples included free-form responses such as:

- “a dedicated work force focused on delivering on stated timeframes, irrespective of the quality impact”
- “slow moving”
- “blind adherence to rules such as starting and finishing times”.

This last written response was expanded on during an interview, which subsequently illustrated well the multifaceted nature of perceived cultural differences.

The written response pertained to a meeting that had been called by a Western project manager and a Western colleague, both of whom had seniority over the required meeting attendees. Although the regular office start time was around 10am, the meeting was scheduled to commence at 9am. While none of the local employees said they could not attend, no-one came to the meeting.

A number of cultural differences were actually coming into play in this example, the obvious being the monochronic/polychronic continuum. Their normal working day commenced at 10am, not 9am and their adherence to that schedule triggered the dilemma.

However the problem was compounded by the meeting being called by a superior. This brought the power dimension into play, as the Asian team members would perhaps have liked to ask if the meeting could be changed, but felt unable. As a result they agreed to the meeting, knowing they are not going to come until 10am.

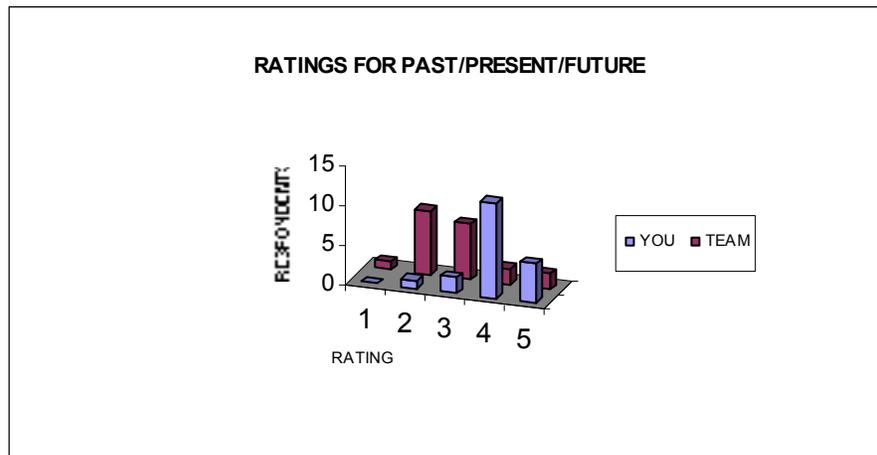
This introduced the dimensions of relationships and communication. The Asians wished to avoid conflict so again said nothing that they felt could induce friction,

yet their body language and demeanor may actually have provided the clues to an attuned observer that saying ‘yes’ in this instance really meant ‘no’.

#### 4.3.10.2. Past/Present/Future

From section 2(b) of the written questionnaire:

**Figure 4.42: Western Project Managers Ratings for themselves (YOU) and their Asian Team Members (TEAM) for the cultural continuum of Time – Past/Present/Future**



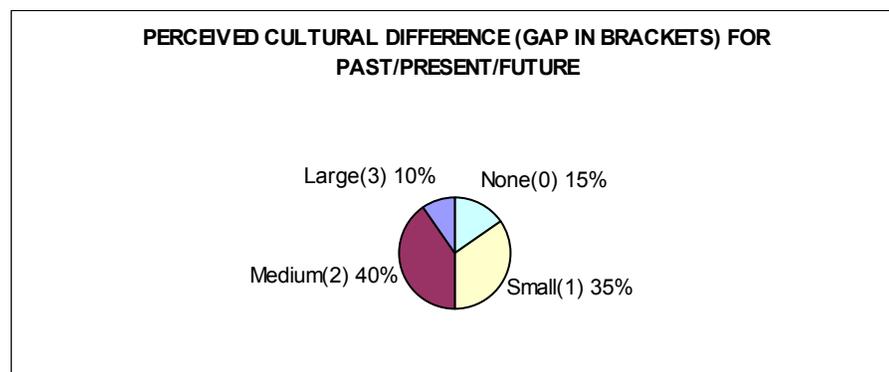
Rating 1 = Orientation is to the past  
 Rating 5 = Orientation is to the future

- YOU: Average perceived rating: 4.05 Standard deviation: 0.76
- TEAM: Average perceived rating: 2.80 Standard deviation: 1.06

The Western project managers perceived their own time orientation tended towards the future, with little spread of opinion on this continuum. Their perceptions are supported by Elashmawi & Harris (1993) who stated that Western societies focus an eye to the future, while Asians societies place more emphasis on past events. The Western project managers also made this observation about their Asian team members, although there was some variance of opinion among the perceptions.

- 85% of the Western Project Managers perceived a cultural difference between themselves and their Asian project team (see Figure 4.43);
- Time – Past/Present/Future was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the perceived cultural differences (see Table 4.2), with an average gap of 1.45 (small - medium difference).

**Figure 4.43 Western Project Managers cumulative, perceived levels of cultural difference for the cultural continuum of Time - Past/Present/Future**



In section 2(b) of the questionnaire, this continuum was not identified by the Western project managers as a major area of perceived cultural difference. However an apprehension to change is associated with a past-orientated culture (Walker et al, 2003), and the free-form responses from section 3 of the questionnaire reported 30% of the Western project managers being frustrated with their Asian team members' perceived unwillingness to change. Typical comments included:

- “fear of change to existing work processes and approaches”
- “focus on custom/tradition/way things have always been done – Americans tend to learn from the past but are more focused on the future”
- “never wanting to do anything different from what has been done in the past or by current competitors”

- “value conformity over innovation”

As has already been noted in section 4.3.9.1, it was interesting to see this continuum was not ranked higher among the perceived cultural differences, when deductive/inductive thinking was reported as a major area of perceived cultural difference, due to the impact of the past on the deductive thought process.

Furthermore, an apprehension to change is associated with a past-orientated culture (Walker et al, 2003, p. 65), so although the aversion to change was recognized, the time orientation was not identified as a contributing factor.

This fear of change is also linked to an aversion to uncertainty which interestingly ranked immediately underneath the past/present/future continuum when the levels of perceived cultural difference were ranked.

#### **4.3.11. Results from the Asian Region as a Whole**

The ‘TEAM’ rating scale was used as a means to efficiently report statistical results for the Asian region as a whole. It is only relevant for the purpose of this research.

As there were not an equal number of respondents from each of the nominated countries within the Asian region, it was necessary to consider whether the cumulative totals of the perceived cultural differences were being distorted by some countries having more respondents than others.

For example, Japan is country with a high regard for tradition. If a significant proportion of the respondents based their answers on their experiences in Japan, this would likely result in the perceived cultural differences showing cultural continua heavily influenced by tradition as being major factors to be considered when managing projects throughout the Asian region. The reality may be that

while these differences would need to be specifically addressed by Western project managers operating in Japan, while working elsewhere in the Asian region, such differences may not pose as much of a challenge.

By averaging out the perceived cultural differences by country, it was possible to ascertain whether the perceived cultural differences as recognized by the Western project managers could be applied across the region as a whole. When the results were averaged out by the number of respondents from each of the nominated Asian countries, there appeared to be no major difference between the averaged out responses and the raw data which made up the 'TEAM' responses.

#### **4.3.12. Summary of the Cultural Differences Perceived by the Western Project Managers**

When the quantitative levels of perceived cultural differences were correlated with the cultural challenges qualitatively described through the use of free-form comments, the Western project managers perceived the biggest cultural differences to lie within the four (4) cultural dimensions of:

- Thinking;
- Power;
- Time; and
- Emotion (see Table 4.2).

A summary of the Western project manager perceptions from sections 2(b) and 3 of the written questionnaire, for these four (4) cultural dimensions is provided below:

1. Thinking

- Western project managers perceived they were more inclined to draw on empirical knowledge and current experience, whereas they perceived Asian team members were more likely to be guided by well-established, accepted rules and principles;
- The Western project managers indicated it was problematic to try and get their project team members to look at things differently;
- Western project managers perceived they were more inclined to consider the whole over the individual parts, or the relationships between the parts, than Asian team members, whom they perceived had a greater tendency or preference to deal with individual aspects or tasks of a project, than the project as a whole.

2. Power

- Western project managers perceived equality as being valued, whereas they perceived Asians were more accepting of social stratification and the associated degrees of power, status and authority;
- The Western project managers noted that respecting power and status, and avoiding shame was more important in Asia than in the West, as a great degree of emphasis was placed on ensuring people were never put in a position to suffer loss of face;
- The Western project managers considered power and status to be earned via achievement, whereas they perceived that Asians considered power and status to be warranted due to birth right, wealth, age, and length of service with the company.

3. Time

- Western project managers perceived they had a greater propensity or inclination to multitask, and that Westerners had a more flexible approach to time management than Asians, whom they perceived tended to be more committed to schedules and agreed plans;
- The Western project managers considered themselves as looking to the future, trying to adapt to future needs even before they arise, whereas they perceived Asians exhibited an apprehension to change, preferring to do things the way they have traditionally been done in the past, or the same as everyone else.

4. Emotion

- Western project managers perceived themselves as more emotionally expressive than Asians;
- The Western project managers thought they had to exhibit more emotional control when dealing with Asians than they were used to with Westerners;
- Western project managers perceived that while generally emotions should be kept in check, it was acceptable to display some levels of positive emotion publicly.

**4.4. Modifications made by the Western project managers to address the perceived cultural differences between themselves and their Asian project team members**

**4.4.1. Introduction**

Section 4 of the written questionnaire was designed to gain an understanding of the modifications made by the Western project managers to account for the cultural challenges they felt they faced while operating within the Asian region.

For each of the 15 project management major processes, the respondents were asked to do two things. Firstly, to obtain quantitative data, the Western project managers were asked to indicate to what extent they had modified their project management techniques to address cultural differences they had perceived. Secondly, to obtain qualitative data, they were asked to describe their reasoning behind any modification they had made.

The qualitative data was then used in two ways. Firstly, it provided an opportunity to determine whether the quantitative responses were substantiated; secondly, in conjunction with the quantitative data, the qualitative data provided more detailed information about the Western project managers' project management modifications.

The qualitative data has been reported on extensively to add to the value this research can provide for other Western project managers operating, or planning to operate, within the Asian region.

For each of the 15 project management major processes, table 4.3 reports the average (mean) modification, and the standard deviation of the responses. *The higher the mean, the greater the level of modification made by the Western project managers.*

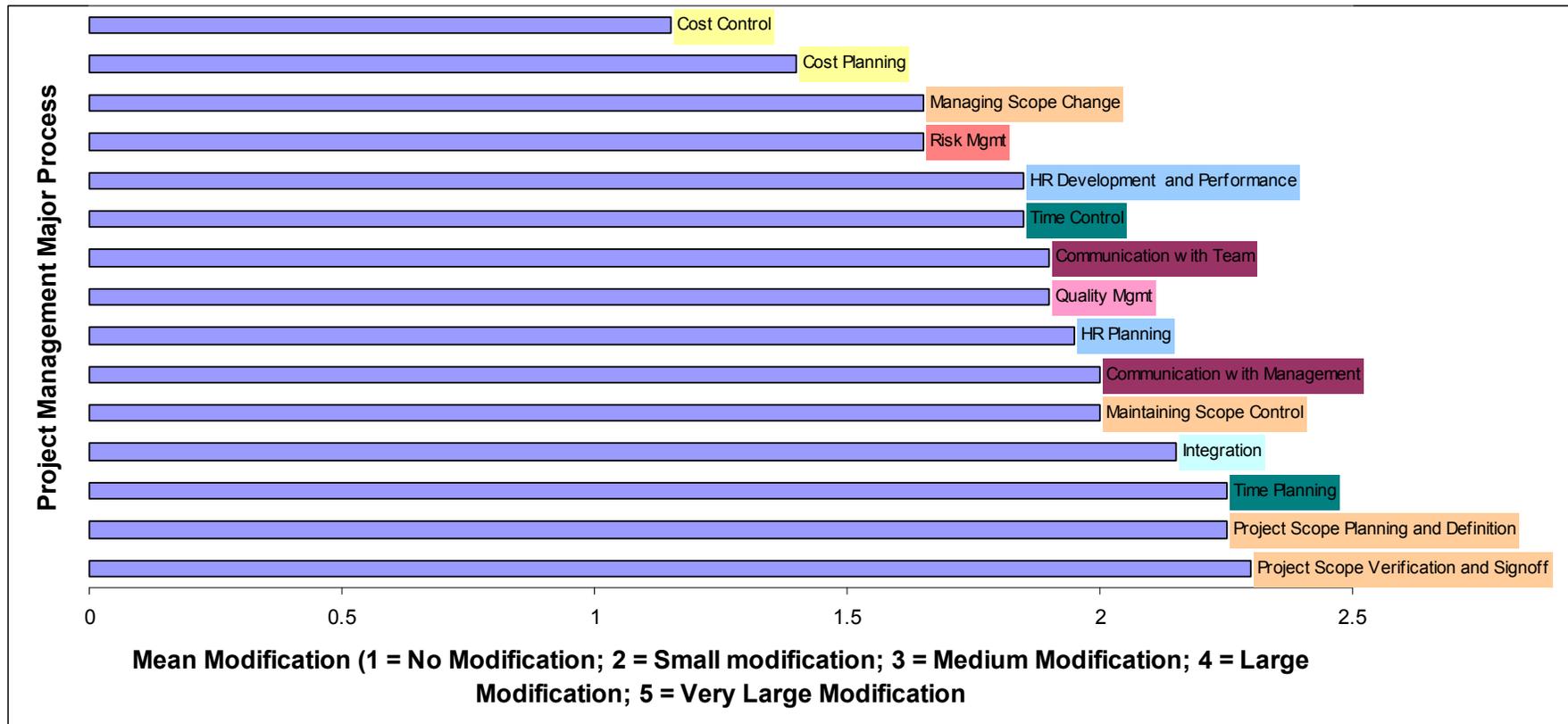
**Table 4.3: Statistical Data on the Modifications made by the Western Project Managers to their project management techniques**

<b>PROJECT MANAGEMENT KEY AREAS</b>	<b>PROJECT MANAGEMENT MAJOR PROCESSES</b>	<b>Mean Response</b>	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>SCOPE</b>	Project Scope Planning and Definition	2.25	2=	1.25
	Project Scope Verification and Signoff	2.30	1	1.08
	Maintaining Scope Control	2.00	5=	1.12
	Managing Scope Change	1.65	12=	0.81
<b>TIME</b>	Time Planning	2.25	2=	1.18
	Time Control	1.85	10=	0.96
<b>COST</b>	Cost Planning	1.40	14	0.58
	Cost Control	1.15	15	0.37
<b>QUALITY</b>	Quality Management	1.90	8=	0.94
<b>RISK</b>	Risk Management	1.65	12=	0.83
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	Human Resource Planning	1.95	7	0.88
	Human Resource Development and Performance	1.85	10=	0.88
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Communication with Management	2.00	5=	0.85
	Communication with Team	1.90	8=	0.78
<b>INTEGRATION</b>	Integration	2.15	4	0.90

n = 20

Figure 4.44 reports the mean of the modifications made for the 15 project management major processes graphically, to pictorially illustrate the ranking of the modifications, and also the relative size of the modifications.

Figure 4.44: Ranking of the Project Management Modifications Made by the Western Project Managers



Key Areas of Project Management Key

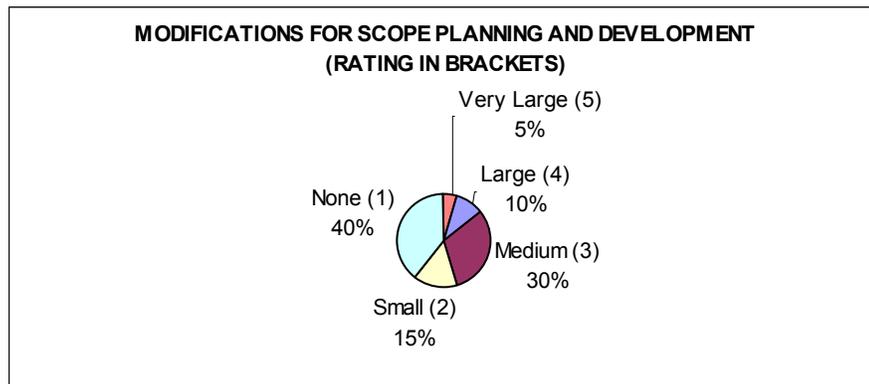


#### 4.4.2. Scope Planning and Definition

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 60% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Scope Planning and Definition;
- Scope Planning and Definition was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 2.25 (small - medium).

**Figure 4.45: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Scope Planning and Definition**



From section 4, the three modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Scope Planning and Definition, and the comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarised below:

1. Recognised that more time and communication would be needed to define the project scope

40% of the Western project managers reported they had to allocate more time than they were used to, to the planning and definition of a project's scope:

- “more emphasis on detail to avoid ambiguity”
- “there is a need to mentor them to think more expansively (holistically)”
- “greatly increased one to one communication to ensure understanding”

This last comment was followed up with the respondent during an interview to clarify the perceived need for higher levels of personal communication. The response included the problems of language difficulties, which had often resulted in missed communication and ambiguity in the past; reluctance on behalf of the manager or project team member to show confusion in a public environment; and “an obsession with the details”.

2. Recognised the need to consider hierarchy

While the underlying influence of hierarchy was apparent in many of the Western project managers' responses to the project management modifications made around scope planning and definition, 25% specifically mentioned hierarchy. As cross-cultural specialist Mary van der Boon wrote “Asians believe in 'management by subjective', that is, they will patiently wait for instructions and do not believe in challenging authority”

[http://www.expatica.com/source/site\\_article.asp?subchannel\\_id=159&story\\_id=11579&name=At+cross-purposes](http://www.expatica.com/source/site_article.asp?subchannel_id=159&story_id=11579&name=At+cross-purposes)):

- “keep Asian project manager away if I need robust discussion from the team”
  - “if team thinks other ways are better, Western project manager would take that to the Asian project manager, instead of the Asian project team members having to present it”
3. Recognised the need to clarify the role of the project manager in the scope planning and definition phase

When specifically asked in the questionnaire about project scope planning and definition, 20% of the Western project managers reported a difference in how they traditionally saw their role as project managers in this area. “The responsibility of the project manager is to manage the achievement of results” (Turner, 2002, p. 65); the Western project managers did not always consider their Asian team members saw this as their role:

10% had had to modify their technique to be more leaders than facilitators in this area:

- “prefer to be led, rather than me facilitating the process and them ultimately defining the scope”
- “project manager sets the scope and let them work within it, else insignificant issues just got in the way”

5% reported a modification the other way, where the Western project manager was used to setting the scope, and in Asia the experience of this was that it was unacceptable:

- “they like to plan as a group, but the Western project manager prefers to gather the information, make the plan himself, then walk through the plan for feedback”

5% reported being brought into the project once the scope had already been defined:

- “project had to delivered as had previously been scoped”

Right from the outset of the project management cycle, the Western project managers had to initiate change, and their modification ratings correlated well with the comments they made about those changes. While cultural differences around attitudes to senior personnel are undoubtedly impacting on the need for change, it is also likely Asian unfamiliarity with project management (see section 4.2) was a major contributing factor in the need for modifications to their project management approach. With the major process of scope planning and definition being the first stage in the project management cycle, this stage may well be the first communication that the Western project managers had with both Asian management and the project team involved with the project. Therefore this may have been the first opportunity for cultural differences to materialize in a project setting.

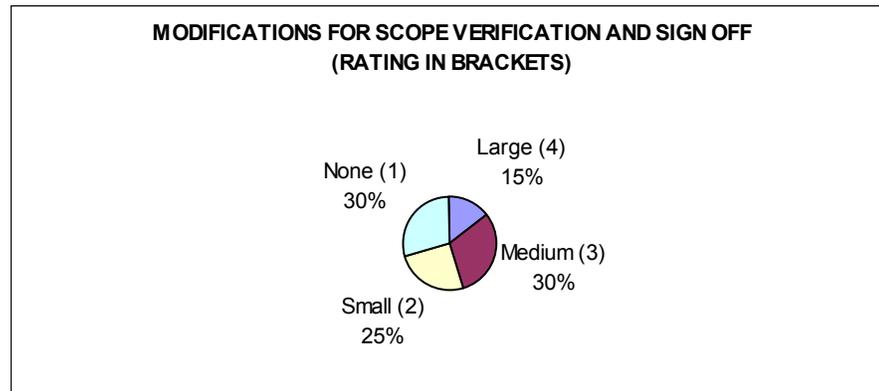
#### **4.4.3. Scope Verification and Signoff**

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 70% of the Western project managers reported in Section 4 of the written questionnaire making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Scope Verification and Sign Off;

- Scope Verification and Sign Off was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 2.30 (small - medium).

**Figure 4.46: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Scope Verification and Sign Off**



From section 4, the five modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Scope Verification and Sign Off, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Recognised that more time and communication would be needed to obtain project scope verification and sign off, including breaking down the sign off process into stages

40% of the Western project managers reported that additional time was needed during this process to ensure genuine understanding and acceptance of the project scope was obtained:

- “scope broken down into manageable chunks with multiple sign off to ensure clarity and understanding”
- “more detailed task by task review to validate project plan”

- “needed to make decisions smaller and more targeted”
  - “had to explain that signing off was not a bad thing and showed an interest in the final deliverable”
  - “local teams had to spend more time on the document requiring sign off to embrace and understand the document”
  - “had to create multiple documents first in Chinese, then in English, then converted to specification English, then reflected back for discussion. Versions then had to be cross-checked, however once this was done, sign off was rapid”
  - “more time invested for communicating scope and what the impact would be if changes were necessary”
  - “demanded perfection as terrified of losing face”
2. Increased use of individual over group meetings and reduced expectation of being able to hold individuals personally accountable

45% of the Western project managers reported that obtaining individual sign off was often difficult, and therefore it was necessary to create an environment where the project stakeholders could feel comfortable signing off on the project as a group:

- “having individuals held accountable was less effective than holding a department or group to account, so ensure buy-in from all, instead of individual manager sign offs”

- “Japanese needed consensus so the timeframe to get decisions made was enormous”

This last comment complements the need to modify the project management approach to allow for more time, as in the author’s experience, obtaining the consensus of a group can take significantly longer than the agreement of one individual.

Furthermore, two of the Western project managers reported a danger of signing off in a group environment, as people may sign off because they feel pressurized to do so:

- “sign off as a matter of course as it is better to accept than show a lack of understanding”

To obtain an environment where all parties were comfortable both signing off, and receiving sign off, each of the Western project managers who reported that individual sign off was difficult, reported meeting privately as many times as would be required with each of the individual managers involved with the project to allow them to voice any concerns or ask any questions regarding the project scope. In my personal experience, an added advantage of the individual meetings is it is easier to gauge an individuals’ in- depth understanding of particular issues on a one on one basis.

The Western project managers reported that through the use of the private meetings, by the time public verification of scope was required, individual managers were more likely to be comfortable signing off:

- “group meetings not effective, so would meet individually with managers to ensure understanding and to try and determine the true level of comfort”

- “reluctance to contribute in public so private one on one sessions are imperative”
- “review project deliverables individually rather than at meetings due to the need to save face or not contradict others”

The importance of relationships and the trust that is built up as a result of their existence was noted in a comment from one Western project manager who wrote:

- “verification more face to face than providing written document”

3. Recognised the importance of hierarchy in relation to the position of the project manager

In addition to the role hierarchical issues were reported as playing on the need for increased individual rather than group discussions, 15% of the Western project managers recognized themselves as being seen as hierarchically superior, and that this impacted on their role as a project manager, and how they were perceived:

- “staff considered themselves junior to me therefore had to take on more responsibility in the areas of scope planning, verification and sign off”
- “as PM hierarchically superior, asking for sign off could be seen as order, not request”
- “having the one to one meetings with the team members and individual managers removed the public element of hierarchy resulting in more open communication”

4. Recognised a need to increase the visibility and public support of senior managers

It was perceived by 10% of the Western project managers to be vitally important to project team members that the project was seen to be supported by senior management. “As project sponsors, senior managers provide support and encouragement to the project managers and the rest of the project team ... it is important everyone, including line managers and their employees, feels supported by the sponsor “(Kerzner, 2004, p. 404). When the less senior employees on the project team had the project scope reiterated by their own managers, this aided with developing confidence amongst the team to verify and sign off the project scope:

- “organised special project briefings with the sole aim of getting senior managers to publicly verbalise in the local language the purpose and goals of the project”
- “sought buy-in of the top management to ensure they were on-side and that they would then pass down the project scope to their teams to embrace”

As AsiaCo is a multinational, one Western project manager identified that local managers at times deferred to the region, illustrating further the deeply embedded need for support from those more senior, irrespective of how high one already is on the hierarchy:

- “local management reluctant to sign off without regional involvement”

5. Recognised the potential influence hierarchy will have later in the project process

One Western project manager reported how important it was to gain complete public understanding, acceptance and sign off of project scope, as hierarchical influence in the past had meant scope changes were readily made simply because a senior manager asked for them:

- “hierarchy means changes by senior people always accepted, so getting sign off at the start more important than at home”

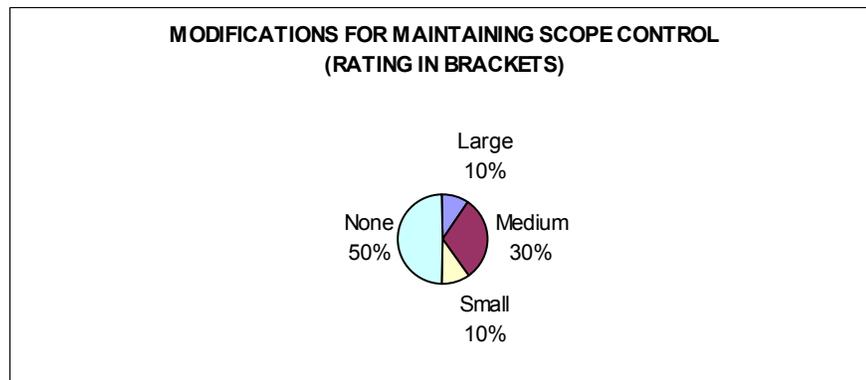
With the influences of hierarchy and communication combining in the need to set to the final rules for the project and obtain the all important signoff, it is little wonder the major process of scope verification and sign off ranked number one, and the comments provided by the Western project managers supported this ranking.

#### **4.4.4. Maintaining Scope Control**

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 50% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Scope - Maintaining Scope Control;
- Scope – Maintaining Scope Control was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 2.00 (small).

**Figure 4.47: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Scope – Maintaining Scope Control**



From section 4, the two modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Scope - Maintaining Scope Control, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Increased the amount of time allocated to this process as more checking required to ensure the project stayed in line with the scope

20% of the Western project managers stated that they increased the amount of scope monitoring they conducted:

- “more time is allocated to ensuring everyone is following the process and staying within the project scope”
- “more time checking scope and ensuring scope is adhered to”
- “an increased need for constant checking that individual’s are still working within scope”
- “lots of checking to keep scope in check”

One Western project manager reporting this increased checking as a “safety net approach” as it was recognized that local managers may be “telling the Western project manager one thing, but asking the team to do another”

2. Removed the group forum as the main channel for ensuring the project stayed within scope

35% of the Western project managers reported that as their Asian team members were reluctant to deliver unfavourable news in a public setting, they needed to increase the levels of individual contact to make sure they maintained a good hold on scope:

- “individual sessions to maintain scope as group meetings less useful”
- “group meetings simply ineffective as only good news would ever be reported”
- “more face to face meetings and reading of body language”

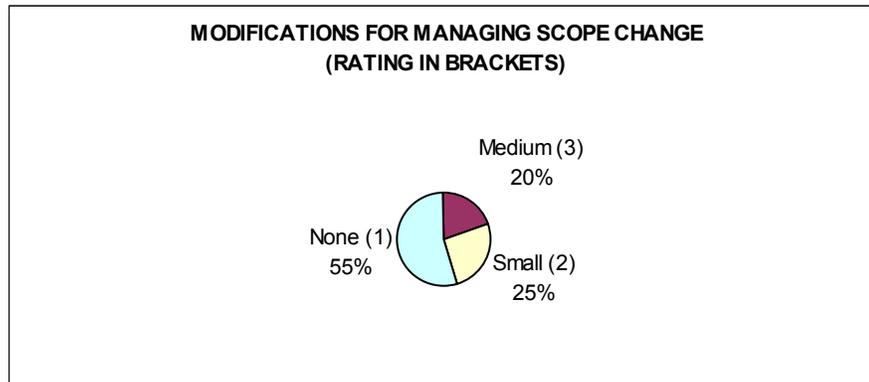
The modification ratings and the position of the maintenance of scope at 5th seems appropriate given the comments, and that these changes are simply an extension of the changes already identified as required for scope administration in general. It would be of concern if the maintenance of scope ranked higher than either the defining or verification of scope, as this would illustrate that the modifications and effort were occurring in the wrong places (i.e. the largest amount of effort should go into ensuring the scope is accurate and able to be adhered to at the outset, rather than placing more emphasis on the maintenance of controlling the scope itself once it is set).

#### 4.4.5. Managing Scope Change

In Section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 45% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Scope - Managing Scope Change;
- Scope – Managing Scope Change was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.65 (none-small).

**Figure 4.48: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Scope – Managing Scope Change**



From section 4, the three modifications the Western project managers made for the project management process of Scope - Managing Scope Change, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Increased emphasis on the process of change control management due to hierarchical influences

25% of the Western project managers reported that more emphasis had to go into this aspect of project management than they were used to in their home countries, due to the importance of hierarchy. This could impact on scope

change in two ways. One way would see the unconditional acceptance of requests by the project team members from personnel more senior than themselves, that would change a project's scope; the second way would see no scope change allowed even though scope change is usually inevitable (Turner, 2002), due to the potential loss of face:

- “centralized all change acceptance as people in Taiwan would rather accept changes than say NO and this required management”
- “often scope changes were done without management knowing about it therefore change request methodology introduced to try and keep changes under control”
- “hierarchy means changes by senior people always accepted, so more challenging managing scope change”
- “once plan developed and published, no changes allowed even if scope changed”
- “scope change is occasionally unacceptable due to the loss of face”
- “scope change is done one on one to minimize loss of face”

## 2. Introduced methods to help manage scope change

15% of the Western project managers noted that often the management of scope change was not already an accepted part of the project management process within the organization, prior to their arrival. In addition to the practices already reported above due to hierarchical influences, further methods were needed as:

- “scope change is accepted but without adjustment to end date, so introduced Steering Committees so business owners were made aware of impacts of scope change and held accountable”
3. Became more proactive in facilitating the avoidance of scope change, or minimizing its impact

20% of the Western project managers recognized that more time and effort needed to be spent helping their Asian project teams through the process of scope change than they were used to in their home countries. As a result, more time and effort was spent trying to avoid scope change by placing more emphasis at the start of the project on scope planning, verification and sign off. If scope change was unavoidable, the Western project managers reported being more hands-on with the development of the options:

- “initial unplanned enthusiasm meant requirements normally changed”
- “more time invested for communicating scope and what the impact would be if changes were necessary”
- “more time making sure the issues are understood, then discussing the options and helping them decide on a course of action”
- “need to always question the cost of any changes against the business value, and remind them that all changes should still align to business strategy”

That the Western project managers’ mean modifications levels saw the major process of managing scope change come in near the bottom of the rankings is explainable only due to the close proximity of all the mean modification results. With the other three areas of scope management ranking so highly, unless the

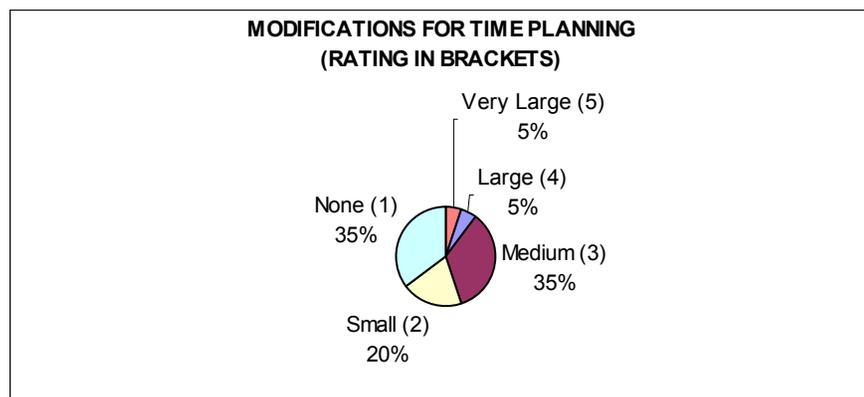
Western project managers perfected both their project management techniques and their cultural modifications, it does not fit that the management of scope change would require significantly less attention.

#### 4.4.6. Time Planning

In Section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 65% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Time Planning;
- Time Planning was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 2.25 (small-medium).

**Figure 4.49: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Time Planning**



From section 4, the three modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Time Planning, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Recognised that more time would be needed to ensure task scheduling was accurate

45% of the Western project managers reported that realistic, accurate time estimates were difficult to obtain. Typical comments were:

- “team members always seemed to prefer to deliver good news in relation to estimates when all I wanted to hear as a project manager were accurate and realistic estimates. I felt I was always questioning the basis for the estimate and this was extremely time-consuming”
- “people liked defined tasks and deadlines as opposed to taking the lead and showing initiative in task definition and sequencing”
- “Hong Kong teams less likely to say a project could not be delivered in the requested time. Requires a more detailed investigation into resourcing and estimation to ensure they have not simply chosen estimates to fit a perceived desirable delivery time”

All of the Western project managers using Japan as their nominated country commented on how they perceived the Japanese as constantly aiming for perfection. As a result this had a huge impact on time planning, as they planned for almost every eventuality to a very low level:

- “the level of detail required in the project plan meant large amounts of time were spent on minor task planning”
- “two project plans had to be introduced for Japan. The local version was always clouded with so detailed that it would be almost impossible to manage, so a high level plan had to be created to see the way forward clearly”

- “in Japan it was always easy to track time against the original project scope. The challenge was more related to controlling the scope against the cost schedule. Once scope and cost were achieved I could always guarantee the time schedule would be so detailed it would be easy to control during the project execution”

2. Considered the influence of hierarchy when formulating time plans

30% of the Western project managers commented on the fact planning could be made more difficult if too many senior, local managers were involved. This was especially true if the detailed knowledge was held by less senior employees, who were reluctant to share this knowledge if a senior manager was present in the discussions:

- “it is seen that the senior manager may lose face if a lower level employee appears more knowledgeable”
- “suggestions to task direction were often taken as direct orders when they were meant as triggers for thought and discussions. It was necessary to try and flatten out the management hierarchy so all team members felt free to think”

3. Placed more emphasis on holistic thinking

15% of the Western project managers reported difficulty with mentoring their Asian project teams that project tasks do not have to exist in isolation:

- “lateral thought did not show signs of coming naturally and therefore as project managers we had to constantly direct the thought processes to consider a wider view than just the task at hand”

- “activity duration required a holistic view and this seemed to be an on-going coaching exercise”

The now familiar influence of hierarchy and the need to invest more overall time on the project came through again for the major process of Time Planning. However this was one of only three major project management processes in which holistic thinking was mentioned or alluded to (the other processes being Scope Planning and Definition and Risk Management) (see sections 4.4.2 & 4.4.11).

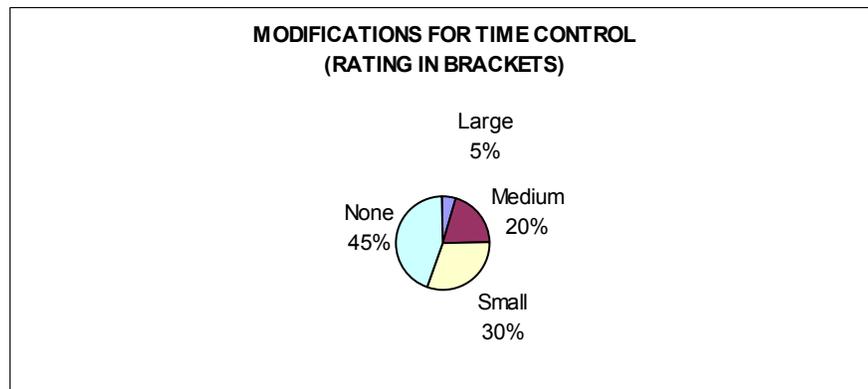
It was within Time Planning that modifications for perceived cultural differences around Thinking were most significant, yet given the high ranking of holistic thinking as a perceived cultural difference, it was reasonable to expect conflicting approaches to thought processing would have been a trigger for more project management technique modifications, especially within any of the Scope major processes.

#### **4.4.7. Time Control**

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 55% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Time Control;
- Time Control was ranked 10<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.85 (none-small).

**Figure 4.50: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Time Control**



From section 4, the four modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Time Control, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Performed tighter monitoring of task progress

50% of the Western project managers commented that the focus on task tracking had to be higher than what they were used to at home. This would be typical of past-oriented cultures, which also adhere to a 'God willing' nature (Milosevic, 1999):

- "if staff are not constantly pushed and reminded of a deadline then there is a greater risk a deadline will slip"
- "in Korea project manager largely seen as creating a project plan – following, tracking and changing if necessary the plan was not common practice. This meant the plan actually lost all effectiveness once it was created. Formal weekly review meetings were introduced that were fully documented, with '7 day look ahead' versions of the plan distributed to persons with deliverables scheduled within the upcoming 7 days"

- “planning and documentation has to be extremely strong. I found if I could demonstrate the fact I had a tight control on expected task delivery then team members would respond based on this level of professionalism”
- “this is an area where you focused your attention as team members did not worry unduly about time constraints”
- “very regular meetings with the entire team to go over plan and timelines so everyone understood where we were. Specifically had to mention issues else nothing was forthcoming”
- “used one to one meetings to ensure potential slippage was identified and issues did not materialize in formal project team meetings”
- “lack of time management skills so more focus on checking”
- “more checking required to ensure that you are able to finish the project even close to the original time agreed”
- “issues were never mentioned unless asked. The feeling is no news must be a sign of good news when at times the opposite is true”

One exception to this pattern was identified by a Western project manager operating in Japan who reported:

- “could assume ‘no news was good news’, and could rely on team members to report problems. Large team meetings where the status of each task was discussed”

2. Recognised that the influence of hierarchy had to be considered when trying to assess if project tasks were going to plan

45% of the Western project managers reported that having senior managers present at project meetings limited the amount of information that would be forthcoming about the state of the project tasks, and that individual discussions were more likely to elicit factual information:

- “extremely difficult to gain an accurate position on the task status or duration if questioning employees when their senior manager is also in the room. The lower level team members do not like to speak unless almost prompted by their management superior”
- “one on one informal progress sessions were found to be the best mechanism to gauge task progress”
- “face to face meetings were an essential tool to managing time control”
- “more meetings. Face to face, informal, one on one to ensure staff could be honest without considering peers or superiors”

One Western project manager reported that using local resource to obtain accurate information and keep the project on track was a technique that had worked well for them in the past:

- “having a loyal local leader as part of project management team, ensures timely delivery of action points”

3. Educated local staff that it was acceptable to sometimes change timeframes and tasks to keep the project on track

15% of the Western project managers reported they often encountered resistance to making changes to tasks due to impending time pressures, as the Asian project teams wanted to deliver on what had been promised. Even when unplanned outcomes from tasks could actually be temporarily lived with, there was still a reluctance to deviate from the plan:

- “we couldn’t change the plan, so we just worked longer”
- “much more difficult to sign off, and look at minor fixes as maintenance later”
- “responsiveness and promptness of completion in China is exceptional, even with precipitous changes”

4. Used an alternate management style to bring project back on track

10% of the Western project managers mentioned that the manner in which they communicated with their Asian project team that the project tasks were slipping, differed from the method they often reverted to in their home country:

- “to yell and scream was not a technique that seemed to motivate, but a reminder of a clearly defined vision seemed to work extremely well”
- “very open and soft communication so not afraid to highlight slippage or potential slippage.

The Western belief in the adage that “time is money” reflects the value placed on the use of time (Elashmawi & Harris,1993). The Western project managers had

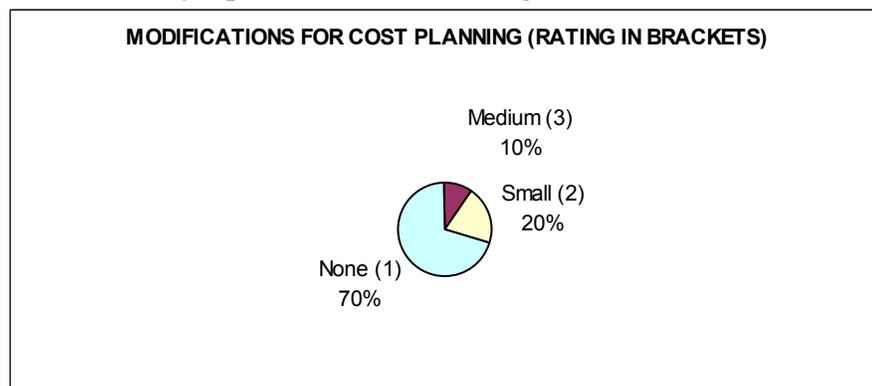
to modify their project management techniques essentially to allow for the realization that their Asian project team members did not always place the same value on time as they did.

#### 4.4.8. Cost Planning

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 30% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Cost Planning;
- Cost Planning was ranked 14<sup>th</sup> amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.40 (none-small).

**Figure 4.51: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Cost Planning**



From section 4, the two modifications the Western project managers made for the project management process of Cost Planning, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Realised that basic procedures may have to be introduced due to the lack of project management in the past

20% of the Western project managers noted that outside of Japan, cost was affected by the lack of basic procedures normally seen within most Western organisations, and that this would continue until best practice initiatives were introduced.

- “first time projects in a country always required extra training and process control and this directly influenced the project cost”
- “it was often frustrating to find project management processes were only followed if driven on a project by project basis by a Western project manager. If the processes were not driven by the Western project manager, then often they would not be championed by local personnel, and the local standards and methods would start to take over again. All of this added to project cost”
- “most cost changes were delays and extra training, so through experience could plan for it, then adjust for local conditions by allowing 20-60% extra time. This additional cost was then often offset by lower costs in the later project phases”
- “unwillingness and/or lack of confidence in local management for sign off meant additional resource demands on regional team, which had to be factored into the project cost”

2. Specifically considered the country of operation within Asia when assessing cost planning

15% of the Western project managers commented on the fact the highly regulated Asian environment directly influenced project cost. This was seen as a battle that could not be fought in Asia, and this had to be accepted and adjusted to as a cultural aspect of Asian business practice:

- “more cost factored in to deal with the bureaucracy of regulatory compliance”
- “I would adjust costing estimates by 20-30% as through years of experience in Indonesia it was very rare to work on projects not affected by regulatory delays”

All of the Western project managers operating in Japan perceived that the Japanese aim for perfection directly resulted in rising project costs:

- “the focus on perfection added to upfront planning and design costs, but often there was a degree of pay back due to fewer errors during the testing and implementation stages of the project”
- “longer design and planning and the constant desire for perfection had to be factored into estimates and project costs”

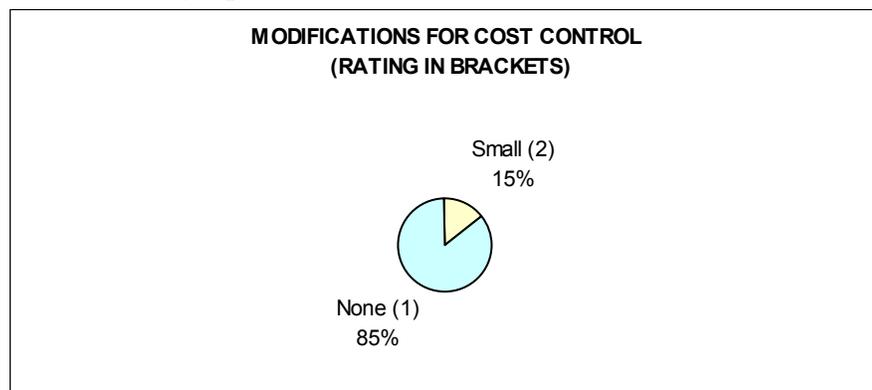
The major process of cost planning was rightly ranked among the processes with the least amount of modifications required to address cultural differences, as given the comments received, the modifications were necessary due to factors that were technically external to cultural differences per se (i.e. lack of project management in general within the organization and regulatory controls imposed by the governments).

#### 4.4.9. Cost Control

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 15% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Cost Control;
- Cost Control was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.15 (none-small).

**Figure 4.52: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Cost Control**



From section 4, the two modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Cost Control, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Recognised that cost disclosure and financial tracking were not always typical processes within AsiaCo and that this had to be managed

15% of the Western project managers, particularly those from Indonesia, commented that money was not openly discussed, and therefore cost disclosures were hard to elicit. In sections 2(b) and 3, the Western project managers had also reported the “whatever will be, will be” mentality among their Asian team

members (see section 4.3.3.2). This would also contribute to a lack of desire to monitor the financial status of a project, as budgeting may be seen as an essentially pointless, unfruitful task, going against fatalistic, predetermined outcomes (Milosevic, 1999). This lack of concern for cost control required a great deal of one on one discussion to resolve, as well as introducing a higher degree of report control to track cost variances from the estimates and base-line costing:

- “a greater emphasis on disclosing cost items had to be enforced. Money was not seen as a fitting topic for open discussion”
  - “operating in a country where undisclosed payments/incentives were a normal business practice made it extremely difficult to track cost and expenditure. This fact had to be accepted as a component of the extended business relationship and factored into cost contingency”
  - “brown paper bags ... culturally it was accepted to acquire and maintain business relationships through payment kick-backs”
2. Recognised that the desire for perfection, and greater financial control in Japan would mean extra costs would be incurred unless a level of pragmatism could be introduced

All of the Western Projects managers in the Japanese environment commented on the fact they were often faced with correcting low priority errors that may have been accepted or lived with in a western environment:

- “we just had to accept that we would end up fixing problems that would have been acceptable when operating in America”

They also commented that more time and attention was focused on cost control by other managers, resulting in the Western project managers having to allocate

more of their own time and resources to this process to ensure its accuracy and completeness:

- “Japanese more focused on detailed recordkeeping, therefore I had to spend more time checking up on my team and recording details I would not normally bother with at home”

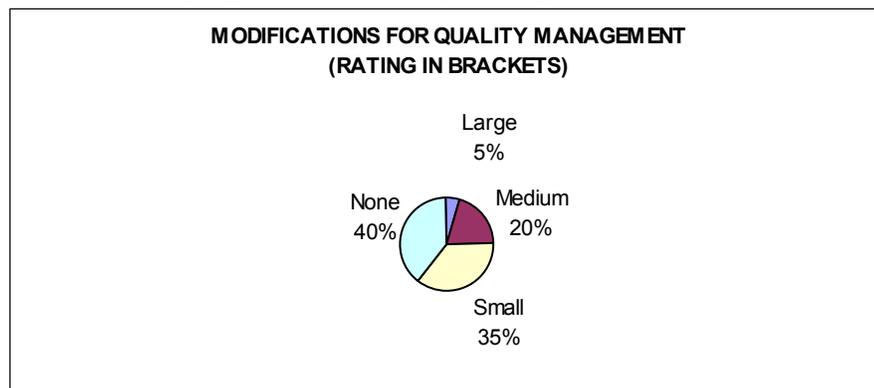
Cost control, like cost planning, was at the bottom of the modification rankings, and for similar reasons. Given the comments, for the Asian region as a whole, the ranking seems justified.

#### 4.4.10. Quality Management

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 60% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Quality Management;
- Quality Management was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.90 (none-small).

**Figure 4.53: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Quality Management**



From section 4, the four modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Quality Management, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Recognised the need to adapt to the highly government regulated Asian business environments, in particular the Insurance and Financial Services sectors

30% of the Western project managers found that the highly, government regulated nature of countries such as South Korea and China had a major impact on project management process of quality.

It was recognised by the Western project managers that data would be inspected regularly, and therefore accuracy in end content, explanation and documentation had to be very strong:

- “government compliance regulations demanded very low error rates, therefore quality checks had to be more rigorous”
- “internal processes and documentation had to be strong to ensure data was understood to a very low level of detail”
- “large overhead caused by the need to constantly cross-check results to ensure government data extracts were accurate and consistent with data extracts sent in the past”

2. If working in Japan, recognized it was preferable to be able to introduce pragmatic quality management, else projects ran the risk of running over time and budget

All of the Western project managers commented that the Japanese aim for the delivery of perfect quality, every time. This aim in many cases was perceived by the Western project managers as being unrealistic, and financially foolhardy as every conceivable business scenario had to be catered for. This obsession with quality directly impacted project time and cost unless carefully managed and negotiated from a project management perspective:

- “Japan culture intolerant of poor design, therefore had to spend more time ensuring the solution offered was the best, without question”
- “Japan culture aimed for perfection and finding the last 5% of errors was always very costly and time consuming”
- “the end product in Japan was always of a higher quality but was it worth the time and cost?”

3. Recognised that outside of Japan, it may be necessary to introduce quality management processes

The converse of the Japanese culture was evident when 30% of the Western project managers noted quality was affected by the lack of basic procedures normally seen within most Western organizations. This comment was made based on Asian countries outside of Japan.

- “formal requirements and testing documents had to be introduced as centralized and consistent templates were non-existent”

- “peer reviews had not been conducted before”
- “testing and sign off processes had to be introduced to Hong Kong”
- “show and tell sessions were introduced. Taking someone’s word is one thing but proof can always be obtained by way of presentations or peer reviews”
- “the expectation was generally low and therefore tolerance to a poor quality product was seen as OK, and no real surprise”

One Western project manager also reported that they spent more time at the start of the project process ensuring expectations were clearly defined and understood. As a result, the quality management demands were less, and overall the expectations were usually met.

4. Understand that issues with communication in an Asian environment had to factored in to the management of quality

25% of the Western project managers’ commented that communication and openness required constant management within the Asian business environment. The comments were made in line with other references to communication (see sections 4.3.14/15), which resulted in the need for more hands-on project management, with constant monitoring and additional control gates to ensure quality was delivered.

Again for this process, it was evident that outside of communication, many of the modifications required were attributable to a lack of familiarity with many facets of project management, and an overall difference in the way business is regulated or controlled in Asia, as opposed to strictly cultural differences. Given this, it is somewhat surprising that Quality Management ranked as high, or higher, than

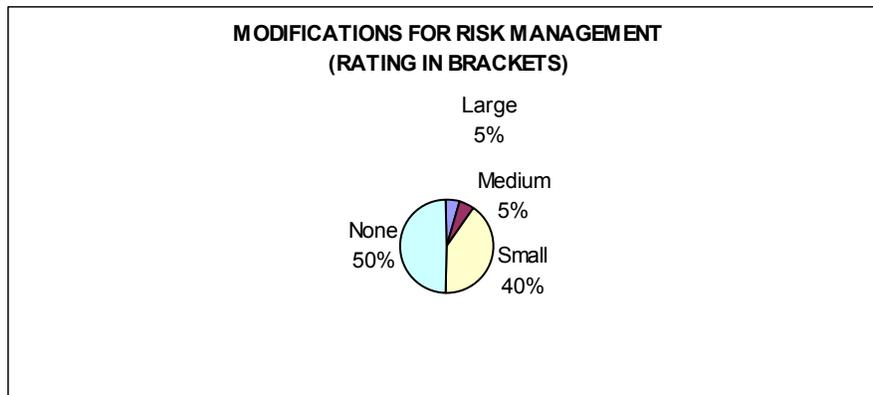
other major processes such Communication with the Project Team and Risk Management.

#### 4.4.11. Risk Management

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 50% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Risk Management;
- Risk Management was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.65 (none-small).

**Figure 4.54: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Risk Management**



From section 4, the three modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Risk Management, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Risk management was reinforced as a proactive management tool as opposed to a reactive tool

25% of the Western project managers commented that risk had to be consciously brought to the fore, as opposed to simply waiting for events to unfold. Where the preparation of a project plan draws on what has been learnt from past experience, Risk Management requires an ability to look to the future (Kerzner, 2004) which is not something the Western project managers generally perceived their Asian project team members as being comfortable with (see section 4.3.10.2), therefore it is not surprising Risk Management was not being used in a proactive way. Factors influencing risk management related to openness, communication and the inability to think holistically:

- “inability and ineffectiveness of the project team to think about risk and often this was simply left up to the project manager”
- “more attention had to be paid to which local managers and staff were selected to reside on the project Steering Committee, as the influence and input of the Steering Committee had a direct effect on the successful, sensible management of risk”
- “project managers have to spend more time probing to obtain the thoughts at an individual level.”
- “I always found I spent more time focusing on risk management when involved in projects in the Asian region. I knew through experience that to not do this was a risk in itself, and I had to be seen to be the driver of risk management or it would not get done”
- “involved a local Asian project manager to assist with this process”

2. Increased the attention paid to risk management to understand the Asian attitude to risk, and to be in a position to influence this attitude where required

15% of the Western project managers noted that the accepted solution to risk was an increase in project cost or a time-line increase, when other solutions were available. This was noted as being particularly true of the Japanese:

- “understanding the fact the Japanese are risk adverse meant an education process was required to ensure risks were always assessed and balanced as opposed to simply being accepted”
- “an increase in time and cost is a solution to managing risk but in most cases the risk can be mitigated through other means, such as strong task monitoring, and more emphasis on scope, requirements gathering, and expectations from the start”
- “use my personal project management experience to balance risk and costs, and pass that knowledge and experience on to give the local people confidence that living with some risk is OK”

15% of the Western project manager reported that while the organization wanted no risk to the delivery date or the final deliverable, risk was acceptable for other project phases. The Western project managers had to take on more responsibility educating the local personnel on the ill-advisability of some of their risk-taking. While this was generally respected, it was reported that at times it often put them in a difficult position:

- “team wanted no risk in end-product, but was willing to take risk in schedule and cost. This in itself was risky as it could obviously impact the quality of the end product, however this wasn’t immediately perceived. As

a foreigner, I needed to prove my value and gain their respect, but challenging the hierarchy from the outset is not traditionally the best way to get on in Asia”

- “to ensure the project was delivered on time, it was considered acceptable by the Asian team members that documentation could be sacrificed”
- “my personal style is ‘I would rather delivery quality late, than garbage on time’. The methods of achieving the time target are not always acceptable to a Westerner, thus it is obvious the metric for success often differs between the two cultures”

3. Increased communication to ensure risks identified and understood

10% of the Western project managers listed spending more time communicating with management and Asian project team members to ensure the concept of risk management, and the risks associated with specific projects were understood.

5% of the Western project managers reported that as the concept of running projects across departments was often new, projects were even more susceptible to the interference of line managers than they were in organizations that regularly operated in a matrix environment:

- “resources more likely to be removed without warning from the team, so this needed to be factored in when assessing risk, and the impact of [removing the resource] had to be clearly communicated to the respective local managers and stakeholders”

The Western project managers not only had to manage risk differently; they had to deal with a completely different, and at times contradictory, attitude towards

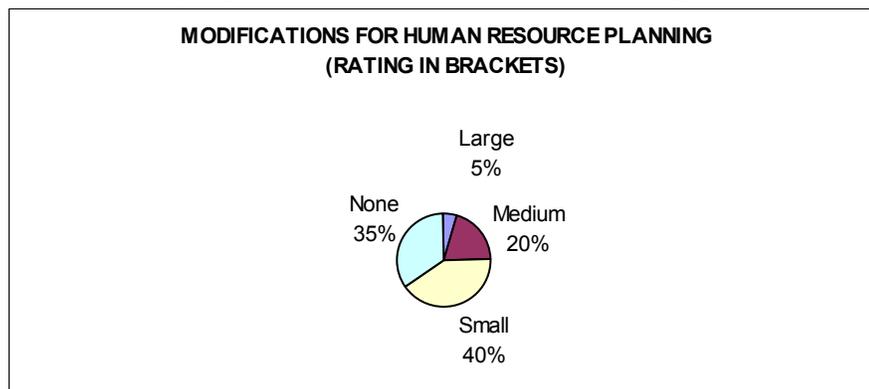
risk. The Risk Management mean modification rating was quite low, and given that cultural (i.e. attitudes to time, cultural aversion to risk, and communication differences) as opposed to other influences were undoubtedly impacting on the need for the modifications, the ranking of the level of modification required to address cultural differences for Risk Management should probably have been higher.

#### 4.4.12. Human Resource Planning

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 65% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Human Resource Planning;
- Human Resource Planning was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.95 (none-small).

**Figure 4.55: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Human Resource Planning**



From section 4, the three modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Human Resource Planning, and the

free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Recognised the influence of hierarchy

40% of the Western project managers reported that an individual's job title is of enormous significance in the Asian business environment, and this filters through to team selection and the team dynamics. If group members perceive their status in the team to be favourable, they are likely to participate more fully (Thomas, 2002).

The Western project managers commented that title by its very nature in Asian commands respect, and therefore it is a challenge to the Western project manager to understand this dynamic when looking to develop high performing project teams.

- “difficult to have a harmonized team if responsibility is assigned to someone in a project team when superiors are also team members in the project team”
- “hierarchical culture means peoples places in organizational society must also be respected and team resource allocated accordingly”
- “team would resist older workers being managed by younger ones regardless of talent”
- “spent more time finding out from locals who worked well together as it was not as easy as selecting project team members based on experience and capability”

- “title not always commensurate with ability and this often made it difficult obtaining the desired skill set for the project team”
  - “as subject matter experts were often not titled high enough to make the critical decisions ... removed all Korean titles from the project and assigned accountability to team members ... in an attempt to make them understand a project manager is looking for contributions and expertise from them, and not for them to require their superior’s permission”
  - “I always had to discuss a team members project related action plans with the direct manager present. This is the only way the action plans would truly gain credibility”
2. Increased time spent organising the project team, and placed more emphasis on gaining support of line managers and other superiors of project team members

25% of the Western project managers reported that more time and effort had to be put into relationship building and obtaining the buy-in of superiors of the Asian project team members, even if they were not directly involved in the project. Project managers often use resources on secondment from other managers, and they will not willingly release or support the employee unless they are committed to the project (Turner, 2002):

- “it was important to quickly build relationships with the superiors of those assigned to be project team members. To do this would have a direct impact on the performance and contribution seen from the team members”
- “working outside their assigned day to day responsibilities to be involved in a project team was not very common. Roles and responsibilities had to be worked out with Human Resources, the team member’s manager and

management as a group, then be very clearly documented and published to the entire group”

- “team member selection is more rigorous and carefully considered than in Western environment. Ensure time commitments are communicated as managers will often expect team members to do their normal job as well as project work”
- “Japanese very rigid in job responsibilities so had to allow for that when building project teams”

3. Became more aware of the different work ethic

25% of the Western project managers commented that the Asian work ethic is often extremely formal and based on hard work and loyalty. These factors could be positive or negative to the Western project manager, depending on the type of team culture trying to be harnessed:

- “people will work long hours so the challenge was to strive for efficiency and creativity to ensure people worked harder and not smarter”
- “time was always a challenge to manage. I say this because the temporary project team member would always be expected to perform the duties of their day to day job as well. I found this to almost be an unwritten rule and a trait extremely difficult to break down”
- “a positive aspect to loyalty is the need for very little planning around absence of time off”
- “team members will be reluctant to leave the office until the project manager does. Need to monitor that long hours are actually producing

quality work, and while encouraging the positive work ethic, encourage also smarter time and work management”

- “had to accept that it would be harder to build relationships socially over a beer or two, which is a technique often used in a Western environment”

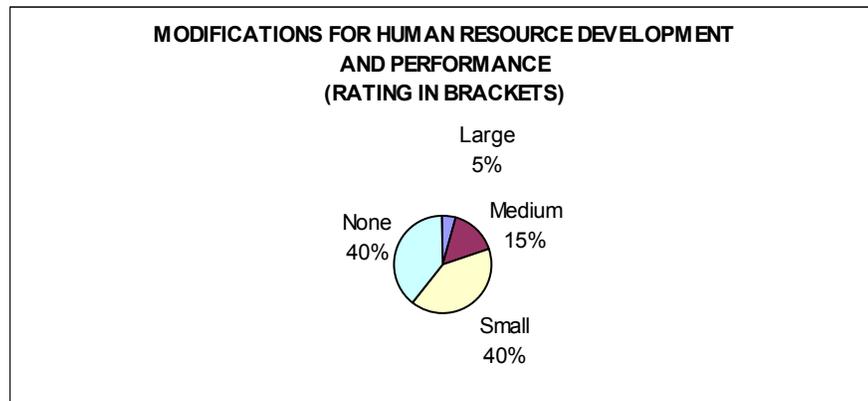
It was apparent the major process of Human Resource Planning had more time and effort expended on it than the Western project managers were used to. While the ranking of this process seems feasible, given the major processes above it, the mean modification rating does appear to have been underestimated by the Western project managers.

#### **4.4.13. Human Resource Development and Performance**

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 60% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Human Resource Development and Performance;
- Human Resource Development and Performance was ranked 10<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.85 (none-small).

**Figure 4.56: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Human Resource Development and Performance**



From section 4, the three modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Human Resource Development and Performance, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Became more conscious of the communication style used to develop project team members and to deliver performance assessments

30% of the Western project managers stated the need to save face and respect an individual has a direct bearing on managing and developing a high performing team in Asia.

What may work in the Western project manager's home country may not necessarily be the technique to motivate, mentor and get results when operating in an Asian environment:

- "I quickly change from someone who would rant and rave to get results to someone that would cajole and influence"
- "it was best to discuss an individuals weakness privately rather than exposing this openly in front of peers"

- “it was always best to stay as positive as possible. Success is so important in Asia and if you state the aim is to help someone to be successful then they generally respond”

2. Learnt to over-estimate training needs

20% of the Western project managers thought it was prudent to increase the amount of time and money allocated to training. This was due to language barriers; a reluctance on the part of the project team members to come forward and admit they did not understand something from the outset; or an unfamiliarity with project involvement outside of their day to day duties:

- “much more hands on training of individuals and spelling out instructions to ensure expectations were not filled with ambiguity”
- “having never been a part of a project team before, project team members needed educating in how project’s actually operate”
- “as project team members were assigned outside of my control, often I was not aware until well into the project that members of the team did not fully understand key components of the particular project. At times attempts were made to hide this from me by the project team members. More time then had to be spent bringing them up to speed”

3. Recognised the performance of the group may be of equal if not greater importance, than the performance of individuals within the group

15% of the Western project managers noted that the performance and success of the group was often more important to the local organization and the Asian project team members, than the individual performances of the project team

members themselves. The typical American appraisal system would see an individual assessed against personal objectives, whereas Asian performance reviews are more likely geared to how well the employee is functioning within the group (Marx, 1993):

- “management are not directly interested in individual performance, it should be seen as privilege to participate”

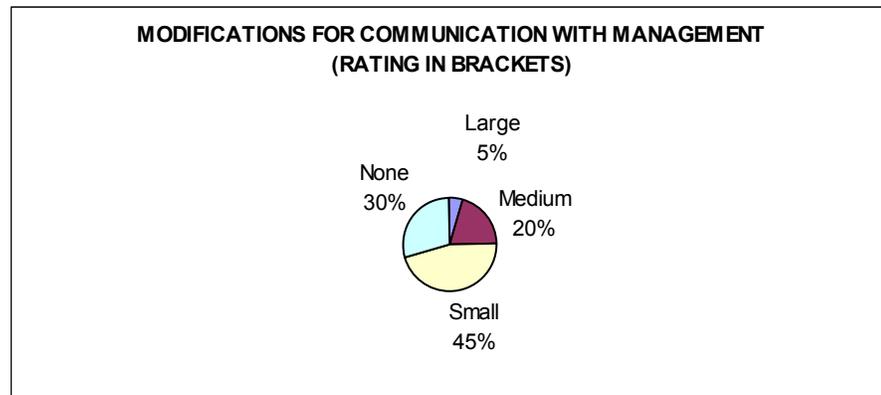
While the comments suggest the mean modification rating for Human Resource Development and Performance could have been higher, within AsiaCo the development of employees and their performance ratings were probably the responsibility of the line managers, rather than the Western project managers. So while the development and performance of their Asian project teams was obviously of interest and concern to them, they may not have considered it their final responsibility. As a result the Western project managers may not have perceived a huge need to adjust their project management style, hence the lower modification rating.

#### **4.4.14. Communication with Management**

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 70% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Communication with Management;
- Communication with Management was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 2.00 (small).

**Figure 4.57: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Communication with Management**



From section 4, the modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Communication with Management, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized along with the Communication with the Project Team modifications (see Section 4.4.15), as most comments were specific to both project management processes.

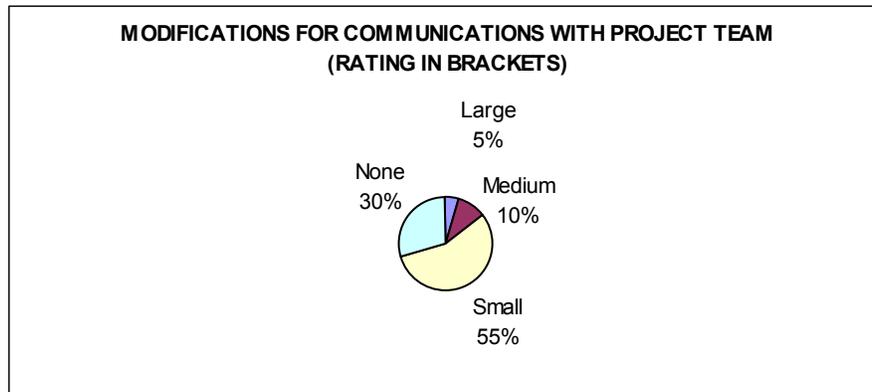
Where comments were specific to one process or the other, it has been made clear.

#### **4.4.15. Communication with the Project Team**

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 70% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Communication with the Project Team;
- Communication with the Project Team was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> equal amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 1.90 (none-small).

**Figure 4.58: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Communication with the Project Team**



From section 4, the six modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Communication with the Project Team, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below, along with the Communication with Management modifications (see section 4.4.14), as most comments were specific to both project management processes.

Where comments were specific to one process or the other, it has been made clear.

1. Refined use of the English language and explored alternatives for delivering a message

40% of the Western project managers stated the importance of ensuring the message that was intended, was in fact the message received. They recognized that the English skills of both Asian management and their Asian team members varied greatly, and also the ear for differing English accents had to be considered. The use of colloquialisms and slang was discouraged, and more pictorial ways of conveying information were adopted:

- “more use of the whiteboard, humour and theatrics”

- “the use of an English translator was an integral component in the project success”
  - “greater emphasis on clear and comprehensive communication to all team members, followed up by with personal communication to confirm understanding”
  - “use of simple English”
  - “use of mind-mapping”
  - “increased the use of presentation software as information presented pictorially often made it easier to transcend language difficulties”
  - “use of bulleted emails over complete sentences”
  - “VERY clear, concise communication taking special care to avoid ambiguity”
2. Increased the use of personal, face to face, verbal communication over written and/or group communication, and therefore had to allow more time to do so

40% of the Western project managers reported using less written methods of communication such as email and long documents, which traditionally would have been distributed to a group of people. The Western project managers found that more personal, face to face meetings increased the quality of communication, while helping to forge better relationships, even if it did take up a lot of the project manager’s time:

- “would still conduct more regular group meetings than I would in a Western environment, to build on the group culture they have such an affinity with, but I would also have separate meetings with individuals to validate information”
- “far more productive to go and talk to five people individually, face to face, than send a global email. While this took longer, it gained me respect, and allowed for face saving if required”
- “early private communication of issues. I saw this extra overhead as an investment in personal relationships which in the future would pay off”
- “individuals regularly just don’t speak up in a group environment. If you want answers, you need to go and see them casually, personally”
- “overall, much more face to face and one on one to ensure all status’ are reported and issues identified, as there is a much higher risk that slippage/issues will not be cascaded, due to fear of losing face and the hierarchical nature of the workplace”

This modification correlated well with the Western project managers perceptions of their Asian team members culture as being more private than their own (see section 4.3.6.1). Private cultures are more likely to engage in one-to-one communications, closed to other individuals, whereas in public cultures, multiple interactions may occur in a very open style (Milosevic, 1999).

### 3. Needed to manage the importance placed on hierarchy

30% of the Western project managers commented on the effect title and hierarchy had on communication. This had to be managed as there was a risk

individuals would not voice opinions, making it harder to build a productive, team environment:

- “team concept in Korea still embraced where individuals do what they are told by their manager”
- “individual meetings were held with team members to counter the fact they were reluctant to speak up in a group”
- “managers were deliberately excluded from certain meetings so that everybody would free to speak”
- “project reporting was at an extremely low level and detailed so that managers could keep tabs on the project without me having to involve them in every project meeting”
- “it was important to use the project meeting to show I was the project manager for this project and therefore I was the person in control. To do this gained respect and gave team members the confidence to treat me as though I was their temporary line manager”

4. Paid more attention to the tone of communication

15% of the Western project managers noted they were very careful with the tone of both written and verbal communication with management and project teams:

- “had to consciously avoid the use of aggressive communication, as it was perceived as a sign of weakness”
- “used words like ‘suggest’ and ‘consider’ a lot”

- “even though I accepted the reluctance of some individuals to speak, I would encourage everybody to contribute, while taking care not to pressurize”

5. When communicating with management, increased the frequency and the detail

20% of the Western project managers reported management as more demanding of information, requiring reporting at greater frequency intervals, and in much greater detail:

- “had to meet personally with management weekly to discuss status, issues, risks and resources”
- “more proactive approach and there was a requirement to cascade issues slightly earlier than may happen in a Western environment”
- “always inform them immediately of any risks or issues. It is very bad form for them to be the last to know”

One Western project manager noted that they were able to rely on local managers to communicate with their staff to a much greater extent than was possible at home.

6. When communicating with the project teams, accepted it was going to take longer, and require more soft skill to obtain accurate information

30% of the Western project managers specifically reported on the extra time that had to be devoted to communication and the reporting cycle. In addition to the comments already reported, the following two comments add to the overall

picture of needing to allow for a greater time investment if meaningful information was to be obtained from Asian project teams by a Western project manager:

- “communication always ranked highly in importance as I could not wait for team members to report problems or issues, I had to be the one responsible to sift these out”
- “constant updates are required and on-going agreement is necessary to ensure team members understand and agree to task schedules”

In addition, one Western project manager stated:

- “Individuals responded when you showed a willingness to help them improve on their weaknesses. Individuals take their work lives extremely seriously and any negative communication had to be delivered carefully and almost in a positive tone”

The Western project managers saw the key to effective communication was recognizing two important variables. Firstly, English is not the first language of their Asian project teams; and secondly, the environment for communication is dominated by hierarchical influences, meaning more time and diplomacy is required for communication than what they were previously used to. Vital information for project success would not be received by the Western project manager if they were unable to recognize signals that indicated a lack of understanding, or the Western project manager did not work to create an environment in which it was acceptable to check for understanding. As a result, the second language user, in this case the Asian project team member, may pretend to understand in order to avoid embarrassment or to appear competent (Thomas, 2002).

Given the number of comments received for these two major communication processes, and the extent of the modifications the Western project managers reported, they did not appear to accurately rate their modification level. The mean modification for both of these communication processes was not above 2 (i.e. small), yet their comments suggest higher levels of modification to their project management techniques had actually been adopted.

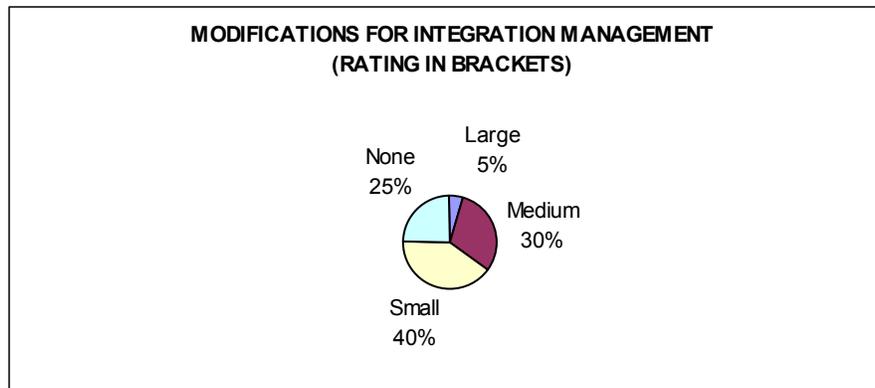
Further, when the processes were ranked, that the Communication with the Team process was not higher was surprising. With the importance placed on hierarchy it is explainable that project management modifications would see Communication with Management ranked quite highly, however many of those modifications would also be necessary for their team members. Yet Communication with the Team ranked comparatively low. Again the modification level ratings appear questionable for these two processes.

#### **4.4.16. Integration Management**

In section 4 of the written questionnaire:

- 75% of the Western project managers reported making a modification to their project management techniques when addressing the project management major process of Integration Management;
- Integration Management was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> amongst the modifications (see Table 4.3), with a mean modification of 2.15 (small-medium).

**Figure 4.59: Western Project Managers cumulative level of modifications for the PMBOK® 2000 major process of Integration Management**



From section 4, the three modifications the Western project managers made for the project management major process of Integration Management, and the free form comments provided supporting the rating of the level of modification, are summarized below:

1. Allocated more time for 'hands on' project management

50% of the Western project managers reported they felt the overall management of projects in Asia was more 'hands on', and more time consuming. They considered that tasks in a Western environment that a project manager could reasonably expect to be completed on time, often had to be followed up constantly in Asia. Generally they felt more time had to be reserved by themselves as project managers, to get more involved with the project to a lower level than they had been used to:

- "had to act more as a facilitator to resolve issues where in a Western environment team members could be relied upon to proactively identify and address project issues"
- "hands on, less delegation, more support and nurturing, manage from within and not from outside"

- “managing communication was a major factor in controlling an integrated project. Communication goes further than simply language, it is also the freedom to communicate and as a project manager I found it a huge challenge ensuring all stakeholders felt comfortable to discuss project topics honestly and openly”
- “the environment is more clinical and more formal so there is always the constant drive to build relationships. The project management role is more hands on in Asia and constant follow up and management of the plan is critical to success”
- “managers in Asia are generally the people to be seen with the ideas and solutions. This was so foreign to my Australasian experience where the structure is less top down and more horizontal”

## 2. Recognised the need to adapt their general management style

30% of the Western project managers commented on the conscious change to their management style. The Western project managers’ perceptions were that the local Asian employees were often wary of a Western manager, so it was important to be able to make adjustments to management techniques that facilitated relationship building, while still allowing respect and trust to be earned, and control to be maintained:

- “locals responded well to a leader who was empathetic and displayed a genuine interest in learning about their culture and how it influenced their lives”
- “managers are always held in high regard through the respect of hierarchy and title. I found I adapted my style to ensure my wishes were actually

- understood and agreed as opposed to simply being carried out without question. I found if I did not do this the environment felt more of a dictatorship than one of team unity.”
- “I found trust hard to earn so I had to work extremely hard to ensure team members and stakeholders felt comfortable to discuss issues with me openly”
  - “locals had a preconceived idea about ‘the American management style’ and it was important I showed the ability to adapt to a more local style where appropriate. I always ensured however that this never compromised the fact I was in control of the project and success was of paramount importance”
  - “the impact hierarchy and title has on a project meant that as a project manager I had to constantly battle to break down this barrier whilst at the same time ensuring I did not over step the mark where hierarchy and title were concerned”
3. Recognised how important business relationships were, both internal and external to an organisation.

One Western project manager summed up how subtle, yet important, the cultural differences can be, and how even minor modifications to the overall approach to working in Asia can make the road to project success easier:

- “It was a real eye opener to view the importance placed on business relationships. The offer and acceptance of the business card was a courtesy I quickly had to learn, very soon the Western tradition of dismissing a business card as soon as it was received was replaced with a two handed technique of absolute appreciation”

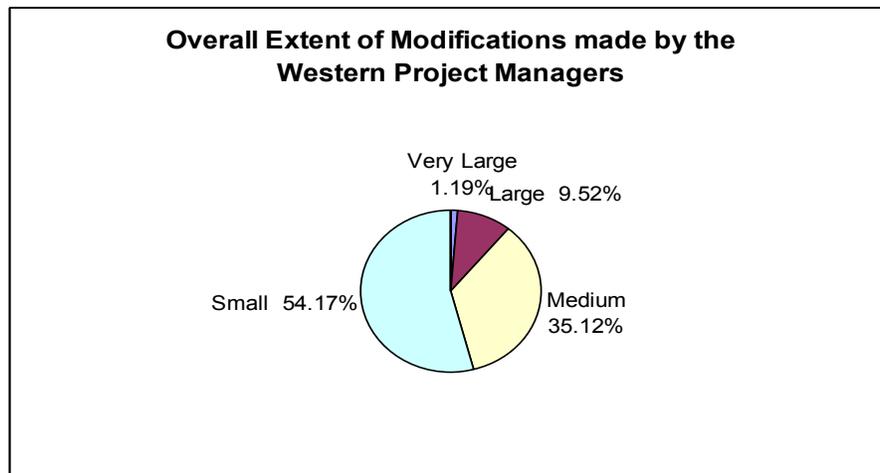
The Asian environment takes business relationships extremely seriously and this is also a direct relationship to the influence hierarchy has within the Asian business environment. It is more common to gain acceptance within the right business circles if your job title is considered worthy of acceptance into that inner sanction. It is important for the Western project manager to recognize the importance placed on relationships and to value this important cog within the Asia business world.

In sum, the Western project managers had to call on 'what' they knew (i.e. knowledge) so they could be more 'hands on', and they recognized that 'who' they knew (i.e. organization connection and savvy) was also very important. In the end, it was their ability to integrate the two that would determine the degree of true value they added to AsiaCo (Kerzner, 2004).

#### **4.4.17. Summary of the Modifications made by the Western Project Managers to their Project Management style:**

When the Western project managers rated their levels of project management modifications, overall they reported only making small modifications to their project management techniques (see Figure 4.60).

**Figure 4.60: Overall Extent of Modifications made by the Western Project Managers to their Project Management Techniques to address Perceived Cultural Differences in the Asian Region**



Four key changes they made to their project management techniques were:

- allocated more overall time, and more of the project managers time, to all of the project management processes;
- increased the amount of attention paid to the importance of the employee hierarchy within the company;
- modified the nature and frequency of communication with both management and project teams; and
- modified their own perception of the role the project manager has to play when managing a project within Asia

A summary of the Western project managers' modifications to their project management techniques is provided below:

1. Allocated more overall time, and more of the project managers time, to all of the project management processes
  - Western project managers reported they allowed more time in Asia than they would in a Western environment for all of the 15 project management processes researched. This was due to:
    - the need for more group consensus around decision making so individual risk of shame was decreased;
    - the need for increased checking as often people did not speak up when issues arose, or the project was not going to plan;
    - the need for more training on the project process itself;
    - more regulatory compliance in Asia than in many Western nations;
    - the need to improve the time management skills of Asian project team members;
    - the need to make the Asian project team members realize that they were key players in the determination of the projects outcome, and that it was up to them, both as individuals and as a group, to perform, meet deadlines and delivery the project as planned.
  
2. Increased the amount of attention paid to the importance of the employee hierarchy within the company
  - Western project managers reported that they had to consider the influence of the hierarchical nature of the Asian societies when considering the following project management processes:
    - scope planning;
    - scope verification;
    - maintenance of scope;

- scope change management;
  - time planning;
  - time control;
  - human resource planning;
  - communication with both management and project teams; and
  - integration
- The Western project managers reported that in Asia:
    - extra respect had to be paid to seniority;
    - as senior employees were typically not challenged on their thoughts or requests, tighter control had to be maintained on all aspects of the project's management;
    - more attention had to be paid to employee titles, age and length of service;
    - group meetings were used less as they were not an effective forum for the open airing of concerns, problems and project status, especially if senior staff were present, or a project team member was at risk of losing face;
    - more one on one meetings had to occur to decrease the risk of public shame and loss of face;
    - at times the Western project managers had to accept that the scope or the project plan would not be changed, even if it made sense to do so, as to make changes would bring shame on the senior employees associated with the project;

3. Modified the nature and frequency of communication with both management and project teams
- The Western project managers reported that in Asia they communicated on a more personal, individual level with people involved with projects, than they would if they were managing projects in a Western environment. More face to face, one on one communication decreased the risk of shame if the project was not progressing satisfactorily;
  - To mitigate the risk of misinterpretation of intent due to language barriers, and often unfamiliarity with the process of project management, the Western project managers:
    - paid more attention to the use of the English language, including removed the use of colloquialisms, limited the excessive use of words and took more care to avoid ambiguity;
    - increased the levels of verbal, over written, communication;
    - cut down project processes, tasks and decisions to make them more manageable and easy to understand;
    - used tools to present concepts pictorially using images or graphs rather than with words
  - Emotions, particularly negative emotions such as anger and displeasure were generally kept in check by the Western project managers, and personal efforts were undertaken to try and avoid public displays of negative emotion;
  - The Western project managers reported taking more care that their ideas and suggestions were seen as just that, and not direct orders;

- The Western project managers involved senior managers in the project more in Asia than they would in the West to encourage the Asian employees to embrace the project and ensure that the senior managers were onside with the project to facilitate its advancement;
  - Communication with management was undertaken more frequently by the Western project managers, with new issues and risks being escalated quicker to senior personnel than they would be in the West.
4. Modified their own perception of the role the project manager has to play when managing a project within Asia
- Western project managers reported in Asia they had to more hands on with projects, operating at lower levels than if they were managing projects in the West. Tasks or problems that in the West a project manager could trust would be completed or resolved without their involvement, needed the involvement of the project manager in Asia;
  - The Western project managers reported having to take on more of a lead role in the project, where in the West they would typically be seen as more facilitators of the project process. This would include:
    - making decisions around project processes such as scope, risk and time allocations, that in the West may be more likely to be considered outside of the role of the project manager;
    - mentoring the Asians through the lateral thought process, encouraging them to think of alternatives and not to think of project tasks in isolation;
    - recognizing that if they did not take responsibility for some aspects of the project, often no one else would;

- encouraging pragmatic thought especially around the key areas of risk and quality, where traditional approaches to project problems may threaten the successful outcome of the project.
  
- Western project managers recognized that they themselves were seen as superior to their Asian project team members, so more consideration had to be paid to how their team members would respond when they were asked a question, or requested to perform a function.

## **5. Conclusions and Implications**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The conclusions and findings of this research have been presented in five sections:

- the first section discusses the Asian utilisation and acceptance of project management;
- the second section is concerned with the degree of importance and conscious attention given to culture by Western project managers, and the specific cultural challenges the Western project manager' perceived they faced while managing projects within the Asian region;
- the third section reports on the Western project managers' modifications to their project management techniques;
- the fourth section discusses the relationships between the perceived cultural differences and the modifications made by the Western project managers; and
- the fifth section provides some concluding remarks

The second, third and fourth sections specifically address the three research aims of this dissertation.

### **5.2. Asian Utilisation and Acceptance of Project Management**

As the respondents had significant project management experience, both within and outside of Asia, it was of concern that 70% of the Western project managers'

considered that the discipline of project management was not integrated within Asian business practices. However it is encouraging for Western project managers' currently operating, or intending to operate within the Asian region, that only 35% of the Western project managers' felt that project management was not valued by Asian business managers.

The Western project managers' perceived that project management practices were not instilled within Asian businesses, but felt that Asian business managers believed project management could add value to their organisations. For the Western project managers in Asia, the implication is that they will be expected to introduce new ways of working, and they will be supported by the Asian business managers, however all parties need to factor in that "with unique, novel and transient things, it is just more difficult to achieve the constraints of time, cost and quality (Turner, 1999), and the benefits may not be readily achieved or immediately apparent.

### **5.3. Culture and the Cultural Challenges the Western Project Managers' perceived they faced while operating within the Asian region**

The research showed that the Western project managers' recognized the influence of culture, and the presence of cultural differences between themselves and their Asian project team members. They perceived four key cultural challenges around the cultural dimensions of thinking, power, time and emotion.

Perceptions of cultural difference varied between the Western project managers' dependent on their baseline perception of their own culture, so what constituted a cultural difference was subjective, as was the relative degree of the difference. As a result, while this research is indicative of the challenges Western project managers' face, it is not possible to generalize that all other Western project managers' operating within the Asian region will perceive the same challenges.

While the Western project managers' identified cultural differences, they:

- failed to identify linkages between different aspects of culture;
- were quick to attribute perceived differences to well-known cultural influences, without considering that other, perhaps lesser known factors, cultural or otherwise, may in fact be contributing; and
- typically tended to perceive cultural differences as a result of one cultural influence, when often more than one cultural dimension was coming into play. For example, the stereotypical influence of hierarchy was readily referred to by the Western project managers', and while hierarchical pressures were obviously a challenge, the focus placed on them was often at the expense of other cultural influences such as the Asian attitude to time, and the importance of the group over the individual.

While it would be almost impossible to discard what the Western project managers *think* they already know about the cultural differences they may be about to encounter, Western project managers' need to ensure their preconceptions do not get in the way of them seeing other influences, cultural or not, that may be affecting Asian behaviours. Otherwise they could end up feeling very frustrated, wondering why they are failing to overcome perceived cultural challenges when they are only addressing one cultural dimension.

#### **5.4. The Project Management Modifications made by the Western Project Managers**

The research showed that Western project managers' made four key changes to their project management techniques. These were the allocation of more time to all of the project management processes, increasing the amount of attention they paid to the influences of hierarchy, modifying the nature and frequency of their

communications, and modifying their perceptions of the role the project manager has to play when managing a project within Asia

Overall, the Western project managers' rated their modifications as being quite small; however their comments often suggested they underestimated the degree of modifications they had actually made. For example, when rating communication, the mean modification rating barely registered as small, yet they identified six key changes to their communication techniques.

### **5.5. The Relationships between the Perceived Cultural Differences and Project Management Modifications**

Looking at the four (4) key perceived cultural challenges:

- Power was a factor in the largest number of project management modifications, and was addressed by changes to nearly all of the project management major processes. For example, the Western project managers' extensively utilized one on one, private communication over group forums; and allowed more time for the attainment of decisions by consensus;
- Emotion was dealt with by the Western project managers' enhancing their soft skills, increasing their levels of self-control, and learning to read signs of problems without relying on overt displays of emotional behaviour from others. It was up to the Western project managers' themselves to adapt, although too much adaptation to the local culture can be risky, unless it is perceived as genuine behaviour by the local people (Thomas, 2002);
- Thinking challenges saw the Western project managers' mentoring the Asians through the lateral thought process, with the encouragement of holistic thinking, and the consideration of alternative courses of action. The

Western project managers' felt they needed to encourage pragmatic thought especially around the key areas of risk and quality, where traditional approaches to project problems actually threatened the successful outcome of the project;

- Time was addressed by the Western project managers' in much the same way as they addressed the challenges posed by thinking, supporting their Asian team members to look for alternative ways to deal with problems or processes, and encouraging them to considering the present and future, rather than tending to look to the past for solutions. The adoption of holistic thinking into their projects also helped the teams develop skills to run tasks concurrently and generally use their time more efficiently.

A key difference between the cultural challenges posed by power and emotion, as opposed to those posed by thinking and time, is that the former can be addressed by the Western project manager without any need to challenge the viability of the Asian cultural position, however the later may result in Western project managers' trying to impose their way of thinking on their Asian project team members. As a result, the Western project managers' need to be wary of the idea that to do something a way other than the Western way is wrong:

- Western project managers' need to ensure their own holistic thinking skills are wisely utilized, so that they see themselves as part of the wider Asian community, rather than as a Westerner in Asia, trying to implement Western ways if the Western way is not what the employer requires.

## 5.6. Concluding Remarks

Perceived cultural differences may be many, and for some Western project managers the cultural gap may appear quite vast, however there is no reason to suggest sweeping changes to project management processes are necessary. Modest changes such as allocating more time to the project, and the project management process; increasing the attention paid to hierarchy and communication; and paying more heed to their role as project managers in Asia, will elicit large benefits for Western project managers operating in the Asian region.

This study showed that the Western project managers' were aware of the influence of culture, and while individual perceptions varied, overall they did perceive some key cultural differences between themselves and their project teams. Even though some cultural influences passed by unnoticed, the Western project managers' level of cultural awareness was high enough to ensure some relatively simple modifications to their project management techniques overcame some of the quite large cultural challenges. However to successfully address all of the perceived cultural differences will require the Western project managers' to balance their own cultural beliefs with those of the Asian project teams they are working alongside.

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## Appendix A - Questionnaire

### SECTION 1: Demographics

Click and Drag the green buttons to make your selections below

1. Please state the country in which you were born and your nationality

2. Please indicate your gender



Male Female

3. Please indicate your current age



20-29yrs

30-39yrs

40+yrs

4. Please state the country in which you attained the majority of your school and tertiary education.

5. Please state in which Western country you have worked the longest and how many years?

6. How many years have you been employed by your current employer?



<2yrs

2-5yrs

6-10yrs

11+yrs

7 How many years project management experience do you have?



<2yrs

2-5yrs

6-10yrs

11+yrs

8 How many years have you been involved in project management within the Asian region?



<2yrs

2-5yrs

6-10yrs

11+yrs

9 If you have ever resided permanently within the Asian region, please state which countries and for how long. [e.g. Hong Kong (4 yrs); Japan (3 yrs)]

10 Do you have any formal qualifications specific to project management.



Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**YES**

**NO**

If you answered yes to the above question please indicate the type of qualification received

(e.g. short course, certificate, diploma, degree, PMI/PMP, PRINCE2, other)

**SECTION 1: Demographics (continued)**

To complete the remainder of this questionnaire, you need to nominate an Asian country in which you have managed projects where all, or the majority of the team members were nationals of that same country. **E.g.** If you were considering nominating Indonesia, when you were managing projects in Indonesia, where all or a majority of your project team members must have been Indonesian.

If you have practiced project management, as a manager of the team in more than one country, please select the country in which you have spent the most amount of time.

**11 Please state your nominated country**

**SECTION 2(a): Perceptions – Project Management**

Please consider the following statements and indicate your level of agreement:

12 The discipline of project management is integrated within Asian business practices.

 Click and Drag the green button to make your selections below

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DO NOT KNOW

13 The discipline of project management is valued by Asian business managers.

 Click and Drag the green buttons to make your selection below

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DO NOT KNOW

## SECTION 2(b): Perceptions of Culture

For each of the following questions concerning the dimensions of culture, you are asked to make two (2) responses.

Your first response will indicate YOUR perception of the dimension as a western project manager, referred to in the survey as YOU.

Your second response will indicate *How you perceive your project team members from your nominated country would respond*, if they had to respond as a group, referred to in the survey as TEAM. .

**e.g.** The first dimension could be about Clothing in the Office.

CLOTHING	YOU	Casual clothing is acceptable	1	2	3	4	5	Only business attire is acceptable
	TEAM	Casual clothing is acceptable	1	2	3	4	5	Only business attire is acceptable

If you believe that casual clothing is always acceptable in the office, on the YOU scale you would indicate a rating of (1). If you believe that casual clothing is sometimes acceptable in the office, but generally business attire should be worn, on the YOU scale you might indicate a rating of (3) or (4).

If you perceive that your team would consider that only business attire was acceptable, on the TEAM scale you would indicate a rating of (5). If you perceive that your team would consider that casual clothing was acceptable some of the time on the TEAM scale, you might indicate a rating of (2) or (3).

With this example in mind, please consider each of the following dimensions, and indicate your responses.

**SECTION 2(b): Perceptions – Culture (continued)**

 Click and Drag the green buttons to make your selections below

Dimension	Who		Scale for Rating						
			1	2	3	4	5		
14 PEOPLE & NATURE	<b>YOU</b>	People should control nature	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	People should live in harmony with nature People should live in harmony with nature				
	<b>TEAM</b>	People should control nature	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
15 HUMAN NATURE	<b>YOU</b>	People are basically good	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	People are basically evil People are basically evil				
	<b>TEAM</b>	People are basically good	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
16 UNCERTAINTY	<b>YOU</b>	Uncertainty can be tolerated	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Uncertainty should be avoided Uncertainty should be avoided				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Uncertainty can be tolerated	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
17 TRUST	<b>YOU</b>	People can be trusted	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It is necessary to check up on people It is necessary to check up on people				
	<b>TEAM</b>	People can be trusted	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
18 BEING	<b>YOU</b>	Who you are is what counts	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	What you do is what counts What you do is what counts				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Who you are is what counts	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
19 MOTIVATION	<b>YOU</b>	Quality of life is paramount	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Money and recognition are most important Money and recognition are most important				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Quality of life is paramount	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					

20 CONTROL	<b>YOU</b>	Each of us controls our life	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	People have limited control over what happens People have limited control over what happens				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Each of us controls our life	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
21 EMOTION	<b>YOU</b>	People express emotion freely	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	People should control their emotions People should control their emotions				
	<b>TEAM</b>	People express emotion freely	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
22 COMMUNICATION	<b>YOU</b>	Communication is explicit	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Communication is implicit (e.g. body language) Communication is implicit (e.g. body language)				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Communication is explicit	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
23 OPENNESS	<b>YOU</b>	Activities are made public	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Activities are best kept private Activities are best kept private				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Activities are made public	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
24 SPACE	<b>YOU</b>	Prefer a public environment	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Prefer a private environment Prefer a private environment				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Prefer a public environment	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
25 INDIVIDUALISM	<b>YOU</b>	Primary concern for the person	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Primary concern for the group as a whole Primary concern for the group as a whole				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Primary concern for the person	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					

**SECTION 2(b): Perceptions – Culture (continued)**

 Click and Drag the green buttons to make your selections below

Dimension	Who		Scale for Rating						
			1	2	3	4	5		
26 COOPERATION	<b>YOU</b>	Competition is good	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	People should cooperate for the betterment of all People should cooperate for the betterment of all				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Competition is good	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
27 UNIVERSALISM	<b>YOU</b>	One rule for all	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Rules can be adapted for individuals Rules can be adapted for individuals				
	<b>TEAM</b>	One rule for all	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
28 STATUS	<b>YOU</b>	Status is earned	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Status is ascribed by wealth or birth Status is ascribed by wealth or birth				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Status is earned	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
29 POWER	<b>YOU</b>	Comes from what a person does	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Comes from who a person is Comes from who a person is				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Comes from what a person does	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
30 HOLISTIC	<b>YOU</b>	Always consider the whole	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Consider the parts individually Consider the parts individually				
	<b>TEAM</b>	Always consider the whole	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					

**SECTION 2(b): Perceptions – Culture (continued)**



Click and Drag the green buttons to make your selections below

Dimension	Who	Scale for Rating						
		1	2	3	4	5		
31 MULTITASKING	<b>YOU</b> Concentrate on one thing	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Do many things at once				
	<b>TEAM</b> Concentrate on one thing	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Do many things at once				
32 THINKING	<b>YOU</b> Guided by experience	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Guided by accepted rules and principles				
	<b>TEAM</b> Guided by experience	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Guided by accepted rules and principles				
33 TIME	<b>YOU</b> Orientation is to the past	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Orientation is to the future				
	<b>TEAM</b> Orientation is to the past	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Orientation is to the future				

### **SECTION 3: Cultural Problems and Challenges**

This section is an opportunity for you to describe up to six (6) specific cultural problems or challenges that you may have faced while operating as a project manager within **your nominated country**.

34 Cultural problem or challenge one:

35 Cultural problem or challenge two:

36 Cultural problem or challenge three:

**SECTION 3: Cultural Problems and Challenges (continued)**

37 Cultural problem or challenge four:

38 Cultural problem or challenge five:

39 Cultural problem or challenge six:

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams.**

This section requires you to identify areas of your project management technique that you may have adapted to address any cultural differences that you may have encountered with project teams **from your nominated country**.

For each of the following areas of project management, please indicate to what extent you have modified your project management technique to address cultural differences that you have perceived.

A rating of **1** signifies No Modification, while a rating of **5** signifies A Large Modification.

If you respond with a rating other than **1**, please briefly explain the cultural issue that led you to make the modification.

*Example Answer*

1      2      3      4      5  
           

**Maintaining Scope Control**

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

Why did you make the modification?

To compensate the cultural trait of saving face in public, one on one sessions were held with staff members to ensure assigned tasks were progressing based on the constraints of quality and time.

In my experience in my home country of New Zealand group meetings were an adequate forum to openly discuss the project progress. This however did not achieve the same result in my nominated country.

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

**Project Scope Management**

**40 Project Scope Planning and Definition**      1      2      3      4      5  
                             

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

Why did you make the modification?

**41 Project Scope Verification & sign-off**      1      2      3      4      5  
                             

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

42 **Maintaining Scope Control**      1      2      3      4      5  
                             

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

Why did you make the modification?

43 **Managing Scope Change**      1      2      3      4      5  
                             

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

**Project Time Management**

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**44 Time Planning**

**(e.g. activity definitions, activity sequencing, activity duration estimations, schedule development)**

Why did you make the modification?

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**45 Time Control**

**(e.g. managing to the schedule and managing change)**

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

**Project Cost Management**

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

- 46 **Cost Planning**  
(e.g. resource planning, estimation, budgeting etc)

Why did you make the modification?

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

- 47 **Cost Control**  
(e.g. budget monitoring, managing variance etc)

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

**Project Quality Management**

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

48 **Quality**  
(e.g. quality planning, quality assurance, quality control, etc)

Why did you make the modification?

**Project Risk Management**

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

49 **Risk**  
(e.g. management planning, identification, analysis, response planning, monitoring etc)

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

**Project Human Resource Management**

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**50 Human Resource Planning**

**(e.g. identifying roles with responsibility and reporting relationships, staff acquisition)**

Why did you make the modification?

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**51 Human Resource Development and Performance**

**(e.g. developing individual and group competencies to enhance project performance, staff and performance management)**

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

**Project Communication Management**

1 2 3 4 5



Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**52 Communication with Management**

(e.g. planning, distribution of information, performance reporting, administrative closure etc)

Why did you make the modification?

1 2 3 4 5



Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**53 Communication with the project team**

(e.g. planning, distribution of information, performance reporting, administrative closure etc)

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 4 Modifications of your approach to project management to account for perceived cultural differences between yourself and project teams (continued).**

**Project Integration Management**

1 2 3 4 5

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

54 **Overall Project coordination and control**  
(e.g. leadership style, empowerment, social interaction, trust, )

Why did you make the modification?

**SECTION 5: General Issues regarding Culture and Project Management**

If there is any other further information concerning cultural issues and project management for Western project managers operating in the Asian region that you feel would add value to this research, please record it here.

**SECTION 6: Willingness to be interviewed on these issues, if required**

If required, are you willing to be contacted to explore further, any comments made in this questionnaire, or in regards to the findings in general?

Click and Drag the green button to make your selection

**YES**

**NO**

Please supply a contact email or phone number:.....

***Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated***

***Please return this questionnaire by email to [XXXXX@XXXXXXXX](#) or [YYYYY@YYYYYYY](#)***