

**Perceptions of ethical decision-making:  
A study of Thai managers and professionals  
in Bangkok and provincial Thailand**

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## ADDENDUM

p. 35 line 15: insert after “accountants” “(e.g Baker and Viet, 1998; Marta, Singhapakdi and Higgs-Kleyn, 2001; Singhapakdi, 1993; Singhapakdi, Rao and Vitell, 1998: Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1992)

p. 43 para 2: replace “(Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Hunt and Vitell, 1992)” with “Hunt and Vitell, (1986) and Hunt and Vitell (1992)”

p.53 para 2: delete “The Thais are taught from an early age to be *grewng jai* of other people, which means they have to be careful with what they say and what they do so they will not in anyway offend upset or displease others (Komin, 1990; Sriussadaporen-Charoenngam and Jablin, 2002).”

p. 73: insert the following paragraphs at the end of the page:

Thomas (2004) identifies the two basic research tasks as requiring the researcher to engage in theorizing, whether through theory building or theory testing. Theory can be defined as “a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic way” (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000 p. 11; also in Thomas, 2004, p. 16). Theoretical frameworks are necessary in both describing and explaining phenomenon. (Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Thomas, 2004).

There are two broad approaches to theory development: a priori reasoning, which builds on existing or assumed knowledge, and empirical observation, which is a grounded theory approach based in which theory is generated during fieldwork (Thomas, 2004). In Chapter 2, I discussed existing research that described and explained aspects of the relationship between intra-cultural characteristics, Thai Buddhist religiosity, urban or provincial location and ethical decision-making in the Thai business context. I used a *priori reasoning* to deduce testable propositions based on this explanation and discussion. This is consistent with Creswell’s (2003) recommendations on the use of theory in quantitative studies.

A theory remains 'just a theory' until it is tested (Thomas, 2004). Consistent with the epistemological stance that I have taken, I have chosen to use a quantitative research approach to test or verify the theory by collecting and analysing data and reflecting on the confirmation or disconfirmation of the theory based on the results of the analysis (Creswell, 2003). In line with the recommendations of both Creswell (2003) and Thomas (2004), I have adopted a survey research strategy to achieve this goal. The aim of this strategy is to produce generalisations about populations by collecting and analysing information from samples (Thomas 2004). Details of the operationalisation of this strategy are documented in subsequent sections of this chapter.

p.74: para(s) inserted after para1 in 3.3 Sample:

Bangkok is the national capital and largest city in Thailand, with over ten million people registered in the local government area administered by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA, 2005). In reality, the population is larger than this for two reasons. Firstly, for a variety of legal reasons, it is common for people who move to Bangkok to maintain their house registration in their home province. Secondly, the "Greater Bangkok" urban area extends beyond Bangkok province to include Nonthaburi, Samut Prakan, Pathum Thani Nakhon Pathom and Samut Sakhom. The sample of working Bangkokian managers and professionals was drawn from people studying in the Masters program at Universities in Bangkok itself, rather than the surrounding provinces.

In selecting the provincial sample I was conscious of the need to clearly differentiate the provincial managers and professionals from their urban counterparts. Clearly none of the provinces surrounding Bangkok (e.g., not long established urban centres such as Chang Mai, Songkla and Pattaya) would be suitable sites for sampling managers from less developed or rural provinces. On the other hand, there are no universities in the least developed, most rural provinces. There are, however, a number of Universities that are either newly established or recently upgraded from polytechnic and teachers colleges in less developed provinces. Further, because the size of these provinces is closer to that of an Australian Council or Shire, these regional centres service not only their home province, but also the surrounding "least developed provinces".

p. 80: insert para(s) after para 1, in Section 3.6 Research Procedure:

In all cases the independent director was either a staff member unconnected with the class group surveyed. An hour was allocated for the process. As students were given the opportunity to choose whether they completed all or part of the survey, and the anonymity of their response was part of the protocol, follow up of incomplete surveys was not possible.

The implementation process was relatively straightforward. Access to working managers and professionals who were students in the programs was gained through cooperation with the MBA Director of each program, all of whom I personally knew because of my prior role as an academic in Thailand. Further, because of my experience as a manager in both the public sector and university sectors, in which I was responsible for large, complex, and politically or administratively sensitive projects, I was well prepared to undertake this research project.

p .82: insert para after para 2 in 4.2 Subjects

The size of this sample compares favourably with samples in previous research which ranged between 98 and 798 managers. (See Table 2.2 for a summary of sample sizes in previous research). The balance of male to female managers reflects the relatively even composition found in managers and professionals in Thailand (See Fisher, Bibo, Youngsamtart and Chomjunroonjee, 2000). With almost 90% in the age range of 25-40 years old, and over 60% with greater than 10 years work experience, the sample is likely to provide a good representation of mid-career managers and professionals.

p.84 insert para after para 1:

Across all scenarios, the means for likelihood that the same action would be taken by peers was consistently lower than the means for likelihood that the respondents would take the same action. (Scenario 1 Respondents M=3.68, Peers M=2.95; Scenario 2: Respondents M=3.78, Peers M=3.13; Scenario 3: Respondent M=5.43, Peers M=4.10; Scenario 4: Respondents M=5.26, Peers M= 3.93; Scenario 5: Respondents M= 4.72, Peers M= 3.41; Scenario 6: Respondents M= 5.02 Peers M= 3.66; Scenario 7: Respondents M=5.13, Peers M=4.00). While these differences were not always statistically significant, it does indicate that deliberation occurred in responding to the questions posed related to ethical dilemmas. In responding to the question as to whether the action was ethical or unethical, the means ranged from a low of M=4.22 (Scenario 1) to a high of M= 5.57 (Scenario 3). The two scenarios developed for the research had high means on the scale of ethical-unethical (Scenario 6: M=4.77 Scenario 7 M=5.37) which indicates that the respondents felt that behaving in line with Thai culture was not ethical. However, as both values fall within the range of the means of other Western context grounded scenarios it could be concluded that the respondents have a relatively strong understanding of 'modern ethical behaviour'.

On average all respondents indicated relatively high levels of influence of religion at work (M=5.37), influence of *greng jai* at work (M= 4.66) and Influence of patron client relationships at work (M= 4.54). A range of correlations were evident among the dependent variables. This, however, was to be expected as the scenarios all dealt with ethical dilemmas faced in business settings.

p.119 para 1: delete last sentence in the para: "Thus, Hypothesis 10 is not supported"

p. 137: para(s) to be added after third paragraph in section 5.4 Theoretical and Practical Implications:

The final theoretical domain in which this research makes a contribution is in the literature on convergence, divergence and crossvergence. To explain the contribution, it is first useful to briefly review the nature of these three perspectives.

Convergence theory states that technology rather than sociocultural forces influences the formation of values, and as industrialization occurs, changes in education needs and business processes will lead societies to adopt the values of the existing industrial societies from which the technology emanated (Ralston, 2008). Dunphy (1987) notes that prior to the 1970s, “most writers favoured the convergence theory” (1987, p. 445). By contrast, divergence theory, which emerged in the 1970s, emphasises the importance of sociocultural influences on societal values and the associated values systems (Ralston, 2008).

Ralston, Gustafson, Cheung and Terpstra (1993) and Ralston, Holt Terpsrta and Yu (1997) suggested a third perspective; crossvergence. In this model it is a combination of sociocultural influences and business ideology influences that drive the development of new and unique values systems (Ralston 2008), in part as a response to the “incomplete explanations or the previously proposed convergence and divergence perspectives” (Ralston 2008, p 27). The convergence- divergence–crossvergence debate still generates a large body of literature (e.g. Peng and Pleggenhuhle-Miles, 2008; Ralston, 2008; Ralston, Holt Terpsrta and Yu, 2008; Rowley and Benson 2002).

The research documented in this thesis dealt with sociocultural characteristics unique to Thailand. The lack of significant influence of these characteristics on decision-making related to ethical dilemmas supports a convergence theory perspective: Changes in values arise from the educational needs and different business structures that are necessary to deal with modern technological requirements in a newly industrialised country. The lack of difference between the decisions made by urban and provincial managers and professionals studying business degrees at graduate level could also be

attributed to the values of these managers being influenced by education and changed business structures.

p. 141: para(s) to be added after para 3 in section 5.6 Limitations of the research

Fourthly, there is the issue of common method bias. This has received growing coverage in the discipline of applied psychology, with Podsakoff, Podsakoff, McKenzie and Lee (2003) citing 40 years of literature discussing its potential impact. They state "Most researchers agree that common method bias (i.e. the bias that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measure represents) is a potential problem in behavioural research (Podsakoff et al, 2003: 879).

In international management research, however, the recognition of this as an issue has only recently come to prominence, and is frequently only noted as a limitation rather than addressed in research design (Rose, 2009). Indeed, a keyword database review conducted for this research of the Journal of International Business articles over the last 10 years identified only two articles (Christmann and Taylor, 2001; Minbaeva Pedersen, Bjorkman, Fey and Park, 2003) in which explicit procedures were undertaken to address common method bias. Podsakoff et al (2003) suggest a number of procedural or statistical remedies that can potentially reduce method effects that arise from a common source or rater, item characteristics, item context or measurement context. Protection of the anonymity of the respondents, and reducing evaluation anxiety, both of which were part of the procedure used in this research, are two of the methods proposed. The use of other remedies is discussed in the future research directions section of this thesis.

Fifthly, there is the question of social desirability. While this has been identified by Podsakoff et al (2003) as one of the sources of rater bias, it has also emerged as an important area of research in behavioural ethics (e.g. Chung and Monroe, 2003). In an attempt to reduce social desirability bias in this research, I both ensured the anonymity of respondents and asked questions on what the individual would do and what their peers would do in response to the ethical dilemmas in the scenarios. Arguably, however, the organizational, cultural and institutional forces at play may encourage individuals to respond in a consistently biased manner to each of these questions. The potential for

further research to address this limitation is discussed in the following section of this thesis.

p. 141: para(s) to be added after the first paragraph in 5.7 Directions for Further Research:

Beyond replication and extension, there are other questions that could be investigated. Most notably are the issue of common method bias identified as a limitation in the previous section and the use of a broader range of qualitative and quantitative research methods in an integrated research study to gain a richer understanding of both the phenomenon of ethical decision-making in different cultural contexts, and the components of the process of such decision-making. Further, the specific application of the theoretical paradigms of convergence, divergence and crossvergence to the process of ethical decision-making in different cultural contexts could provide a rich theoretical contribution to the debate that surrounds these competing explanations of the behaviour of managers and professionals across borders.

With respect to common method bias, there are a number of potential research design issues that could be incorporated into future research to minimize this issue. These include obtaining information regarding respondents' actual behavior from outside sources such as supervisors, observing actual behaviour in quasi-experimental settings, and creating research procedures that mask the relationship between the variables or the "true intent" of the research such as varying or counterbalancing question order, and improving scale items. Statistical procedures such as Harman' single factor test, or partial correlation procedures could also be used, subject to their inherent limitations (See Podsakoff et al, 2003).

p. 144-162: insert additional references:

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## ERRATA

- p. 1 line 5: insert "and" after "behaviour"
- p. 1 line 8: insert "." after "investigated."
- p. 2 line 18: replace "western" with "Western"
- p 7 line 17: replace patron-client relationships with "Patron-client relationships"
- p. 8 line 8: insert "." after "(Komin, 1990)"
- p. 10 line 2: insert "," after "(1991)"
- p 10 line 7 insert "." after "making"
- p.12, line 9: insert "based on" after "scenarios"
- p.12.line 12: replace "western" with "Western"
- p. 14 line 5: insert "," after "thesis"
- p. 14 line 13: replace "come" with "comes"
- p. 14 line 16: insert "," after "test"
- p. 14 line 16 insert "," after "way"
- p. 15 line 5: insert "," after "behaviour"
- p. 15 line 21: insert "," after "that"
- p. 16 line 3: insert "," after "chapter"
- p. 16 line 6: replace "chapter 2" with "Chapter 2,"
- p. 16 line 7: replace "this' with "the"
- p. 16 line 8: insert "," after "subsequently"
- p 16 line 10: insert "," after "5"
- p. 20 line 3: replace "," with " "
- p. 21 line 8: insert "," after "such"
- p. 29 line 3: insert "," after "Specifically"
- p. 32 line 17: insert "," after "Finally"
- p. 33 line 2: replace "chapter 1" with "Chapter 1,"
- p. 26 line 14: insert "," after "However:"
- p. 31 line 16-17: replace "," with ":" after "1985", "1989" and "1993"
- p. 39 line 3 insert (1980) after "Hofstede's"
- p. 41 line 1: insert Park et al after "intentions"
- p. 51 line 24 replace "page" with ":p41"
- p. 69 line 22: insert "(1969)" after "Kohlberg's"
- p. 128 line 6: insert "Hofstede 1980" after "light"
- p. 138 line 10: insert "(1886, 1993, 2005, 2006)" after "model"
- p. 44 line 14: replace "multi-cultural" with "multicultural"
- p. 44 line 17 replace "(2004, p. 251)" with "(2004:251)"
- p. 45 line 13: delete "by"
- p. 52 line 8: insert "," after "Secondly"
- p 52 line 19: insert "," after "Arguably:"
- p. 53 line 20: replace "jai" with "jai"
- p. 54 line 3: insert "by" after "avoidance,"
- p. 54 line 9: replace "I" with "is"
- p. 55, line 2: replace "," with "," after 2004
- p 55 line 12: replace "western" with "Western"
- p. 57 line 7: insert "." after "unethical"
- p. 60 line 12: insert "," after "Specifically"
- p. 60 line 23: replace "note" with "noted"
- p. 61 line 5: replace "is" with "would"
- p. 62 line 14: replace "practicing" with "practising"
- p. 69 line 12: delete "," after "Thailand"
- p. 69 line 13 replace "outcome" with "outcomes"
- p. 70 line 9: insert "." after "Alternatively"
- p. 71 line 7: replace "chapter 1" with "Chapter 1,"
- p. 71 line 10: insert "," after "chapter"
- p. 72 line 2: insert "," after "Chapter 2"
- p. 72 line 9: insert "," after "Subsequently"
- p. 73 line 2: insert "." after "(1994)"

p. 73 line 16: replace "influences" with "influenced"  
p. 73 line 17: insert "," after "Secondly"  
p. 74 line 7: replace "base" with "based"  
p.82 Table 4.1 change Male Percentage to "50.8"  
p. 121 line 10: insert "," after "However"  
p. 137 line 15: insert "." after "present"  
p. 137 line 17: replace "," with "." after "behaviours"  
p. 138 line 23: replace "in" with "is"  
p. 141 line 7: replace "5.5" with "5.6"  
p. 142 line 4: replace "5.6" with "5.7"  
p. 143 line 15 insert "," after "Beck"  
p. 144 line 14: replace "P.," with "P.," after "Burnard,"  
p. 145 line 3 insert "." after "221"  
p. 146 line 2 insert "." after "Schuster"  
p. 146 line 4 insert "." after "Hall"  
p. 146 line 16 insert "." after "Sharp"  
p. 147 line 6 insert "." after "42"  
p. 148 line 3 insert "." after "Hall"  
p. 148 line 24 insert "." after "553"  
p. 152 line 3 insert "." after "(NIDA)"  
p. 152 line 6 insert "." after "Press"  
p. 153 line 18 insert "." after "20"  
p. 154 line 3 insert "." after "47"  
p. 154 line 5 insert "." after "149"  
p. 154 line 12 insert "." after "413"  
p.154 line13 insert para break after "420."  
p. 155 line 3 insert "." after "443"  
p. 155 line 13 insert "." after "Sage"  
p. 155 line15 insert "." after "790"  
p. 155 line 19insert para break  
p. 156 line 3 insert "." after "350"  
p. 157 line 11 insert "." after "32"  
p. 159 line 16 insert "." after "Press"  
p. 160 line 7 insert "." after "344"  
p. 160 line 712insert "." after "312"  
p. 161 line7 insert "."after "91"  
p. 162 line 5 insert "." after "400"

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## ABSTRACT

Academics and social commentators have emphasised the importance of religion and specific cultural characteristics in influencing or explaining the perceptions, values and behaviours of cultural groups. The quantitative empirical research into ethical perceptions, intentions and behaviours has used culture and religion to define cultural groups, or compare and contrast two national cultural groups. Little focus has been placed on intra-cultural differences.

While there has been some quantitative empirical research into the role of Thai Buddhist religiosity in ethical decision making, there has been no such research that deals with the unique Thai cultural characteristics of *greng jai* and patron-client relationships or differences between urban and provincial Thai managers and professionals. In the research conducted for this thesis, I explore the relationship between Thai Buddhist religiosity, patron-client relationships and *greng jai*, and ethical intentions, expectations of other's behaviour and the nature of ethical dilemmas (ethical or unethical). In addition, intra-cultural differences between 'Thai managers and professionals in Bangkok and 'less developed' provinces on these items are investigated.

Survey responses from 522 Thai managers and professionals from Bangkok and provincial Thailand were obtained in the research conducted for this thesis. The instrument used includes five scenarios from previous research, two new scenarios that address *greng jai* and patron-client relationship dilemmas,

demographic and cultural measures, and measures of ethical intentions, behaviour of others, and the nature of the ethical problem.

Neither patron-client relationships nor *greng jai* were found to influence ethical intentions, perception of other's behaviour or perception of the nature of ethical problems. This suggests that importance of these cultural characteristics has been exaggerated in previous qualitative research, that these previously important characteristics are no longer important, or that Thai managers and professionals insulate their ethical perceptions in business settings from Thai cultural influences. The latter explanation would indicate convergence of Thai business culture with a more modern globalised perception of business ethics.

Thai Buddhist religiosity did not consistently play a role in perceptions of ethical intention, behaviour of others or the nature of the problems. In scenarios in which it did play a role, the effect was small. Again, this suggests that the importance of religiosity may have been exaggerated in the past, was once important but is no longer so, or that Thai managers and professionals compartmentalise the role of religion in business and non-business settings.

No differences were found between Thai managers and professionals in Bangkok and provincial Thailand. Again, this suggests a convergence with a modern globalised perception of business ethics.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the research

This research is a study of ethical perceptions of Thai managers and professionals working in Thailand. Using a scenario based approach, I explore the relationship between the Thai cultural characteristics of patron-client relationships and *greng jai* (mutual obligation), and Thai Buddhist religiosity on ethical intentions, expectations of others behaviour, the nature of ethical dilemmas (ethical or unethical). Intra-cultural differences between Thai managers and professionals in Bangkok and 'less developed' provinces on these items are also investigated

There are several reasons for investigating the role played by unique cultural characteristics, including Thai Buddhist religiosity and intra-cultural difference in ethical decision making by Thai Managers and professionals. Firstly, the distinctiveness of Thai culture and society make it a well justified context in which to investigate ethical decision making. Thailand is a unique social and economic environment in South-east Asia (Dheravegin, 1997) in part because it has never been colonised (Dheravegin, 1997; Samudavanija, 1995), and as such retains much of its original cultural characteristics. Politically, it has experienced long periods of military rule and demi-democracy, with government change equally likely to occur through coup de tat as it had been through elections (Dheravegin, 1997). It is a society where business elite, bureaucratic

elites and military elites compete for power, and the power of the other elites, frequently through the formation of fluid, patron-client relationships (Dheravegin, 1997; Vallipodom, 1990).

Secondly, the economic significance of Thailand in South-east Asia and the impact of its business practices on the region make it a justified context in which to research ethical decision making. Thailand is economically important to the region. In a positive sense, it was one of the fast growing 'mini- tigers' throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Dheravegin, 1997). In a negative sense, however, Thailand's business practices and 'crony capitalism' arguably made it the initial catalyst for the Asian economic crisis in 1997 (Pornpitakpan, 2000). Post crisis, until the coup de tat in 2006, it again experienced strong growth, led by the business elite dominated government of Thaksin Shinawatra (Pornpitakpan, 2000). Again, however, lack of transparency, inappropriate patronage, and grand and minor corruption led to the coup de tat (Pornpitakpan, 2000; Samudavanija, 2007).

Thirdly, intra-cultural differences have been under investigated, with most research dealing with inter-cultural comparisons (Samudavanija, 1995). Previous research has often used western constructs of culture and religion, and research conducted in Thailand has generally concentrated only on Bangkokian professionals. In an attempt to address this gap, this thesis makes a contribution through the investigation of patron-client relationships, *greng jai* and religiosity, and through comparison of Bangkokian and provincial managers

and professionals. In particular, this research makes new theoretical and practical contributions through:

1. The application of ethical scenarios developed by Cohen, Pant and Sharp (1998) and utilised by Chung and Monroe (2003) to a new cultural context;
2. The development of scenarios that illustrate ethical dilemmas related to the Thai cultural characteristics of patron-client relationship and *greng jai*, enabling the exploration of these unique cultural characteristics and their relationship to ethical perceptions;
3. The development and application of religiosity measures designed for Thai Buddhist, rather than Western Christian religious beliefs. The use of adapted Christian measures was identified as a research weakness by Singhapakdi, Salyachivin, Virakul and Veerayangkur (2000).
4. The extension of prior research focussed on marketing and accounting professionals, to a broader sample of managers and professionals.
5. The investigation of intra-cultural difference in a non-Western culture.

## 1.2 Research problem and research questions

The purpose of this research study is to understand the roles played by patron-client relationships, *geng jai*, Thai Buddhist religiosity and urban or provincial location in ethical decision making by Thai managers and professionals.

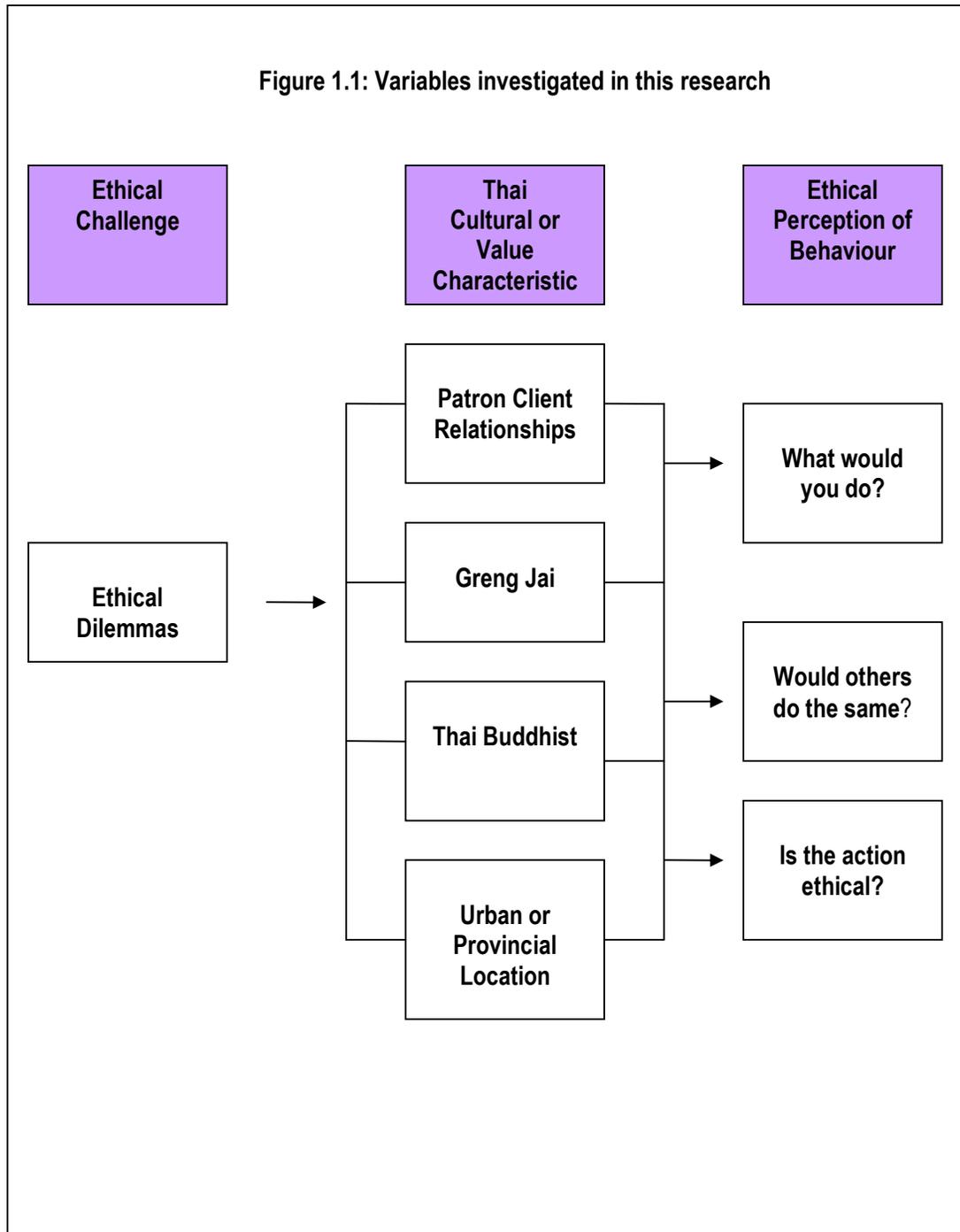
Academic, professional and popular literature identifies anecdotal, narrative, case and descriptive evidence of the importance of patron-client relationships, *geng jai* and Thai Buddhist religiosity as important influences of behaviour at individual, organisational and societal levels. However, there is limited empirical research examining these characteristics in contemporary business contexts. There is also anecdotal, narrative, case and descriptive evidence, and indeed some empirical evidence, that cultural characteristics may be less important in businesses settings that are more modern, have more exposure to international relationships, or are subject to more transparent institutional environments. However, this empirical research has not provided clear and consistent answers to the question of ethical decision making by managers and professionals in contemporary Thai business contexts.

Flowing from the introductory discussion presented above, the research in this thesis examines whether within cultural differences are related to the evaluations of ethical dilemmas made by Thai managers and professionals (See Figure 1.1).

Four specific research questions are utilized to guide the investigation of this research issue.

1. How does the Thai cultural characteristic of *geng jai* influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?
2. How does the Thai cultural characteristic of patron-client relationships influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?
3. How does religious commitment influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making, in general management decisions, and in decisions where *geng jai* or patron-client relationships are evident?
4. Are there differences between the roles played by *geng jai*, patron-client relationships and religious commitment among Bangkok resident Thai managers and professionals and Thai managers and professionals who live in other provinces?

Figure 1.1: Variables investigated in this research



### **1.3 Definition of terms**

In the following section I provide the definitions of the key terms used in the research conducted for this thesis.

#### ***Greng jai***

It is not possible to make a direct literal English language translation of the Thai phrase *greng jai*. It is defined by Klausner (1981, p.199) as "...to be considerate, to feel reluctant to impose upon another person, to take another person's feelings (and ego) into account, or to take every measure not to cause discomfort or inconvenience for another person." *Greng jai* also refers to an attitude whereby an individual tries to restrain his own interest or desire, in situations where there is the potential for discomfort or conflict, and where there is a need to maintain a pleasant relationship (Holmes and Tangtongravy, 1995). As such, *greng jai* means having consideration for another's' feelings. It also reflects conflict-avoiding values because those with *greng jai* usually avoid expressing a different opinion or decision, especially when interacting with a superior (Roongrerngsuke and Cheosakul, 2002). Drawing from these three definitions for the purpose of this research *greng jai* is defined as mutual obligation to others.

#### **patron-client relationships**

Patron client relationship refers to the relationship between a patron and a client. In Thai culture, the ideal patron is one who protects, assists, or rewards

those of inferior status. In return, the client is expected to reciprocate the patron's favour by performing tasks efficiently, loyally, and with the least amount of trouble to the patron (Burn and Thongprasert, 2005).

### **Religiosity**

Religiosity is defined as the strength of an individual's religious beliefs and encompasses elements of affect and behaviour (Hunt and Vitell, 1993). In Thailand the main religion is Theravada Buddhism, professed by 95% of the total population (Komin, 1990). It is important to note that most Thai (93.6%) perceived religion as important and having influence in their life (Komin, 1990)

### **Managers and Professionals**

For the purpose of this research Managers and Professionals will be used to refer to people who work in public sector or private sector organisations that hold positions that have authority to make work related decisions.

### **Bangkok and Provincial or Urban and Rural**

In this study, Bangkok or Urban refers to people who live in the capital of Thailand, Bangkok. Provincial or rural refers to people who do not live in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand.

## **Ethical behaviour**

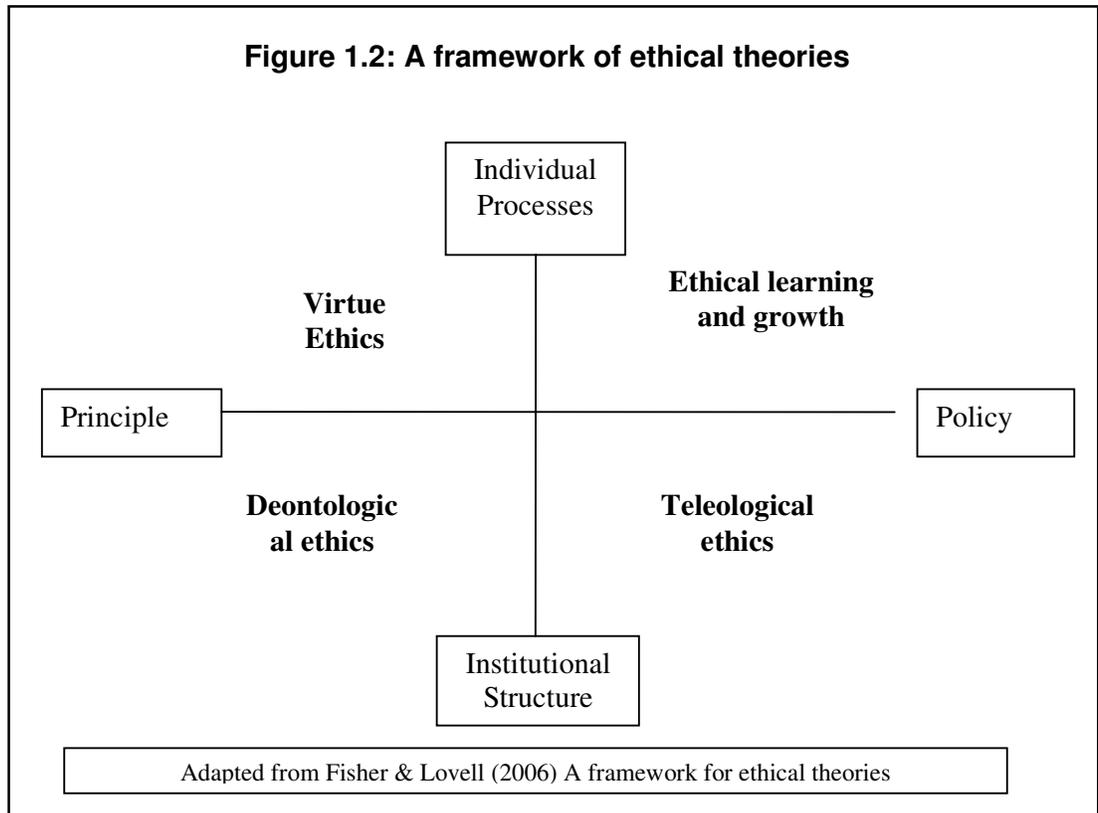
For the purpose of this study, ethical behaviour refers to pattern of action of individual that are acceptable to societal norms.

## **Ethical perception**

Ethical perception refers to the strength of an individual's awareness of an ethical issue in a described scenario (Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1990). Ethical perception is also concerned with an individual's recognition of a moral issue and the realization that he or she is a moral agent (Jones, 1991).

## **1.4 Theoretical framework**

The field of business ethics fits within the broader research into applied ethics. A number of models of business ethics have been put forward in the literature. While these are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, an introduction to the predominant models in the literature is provided below. Fisher and Lovell (2003, 2006) note that there are four basic theoretical perspectives, based on the work of Petrick and Quinn (1997) and Dworkin (1977), that provide a map of ethical theories (See Figure 1.2). Notably, this model does not directly mention national culture.



Ferrell (2005), drawing from previous literature (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Ferrel Gresham and Fraedrich, 1989; Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Jones, 1991) suggests that individual factors, such as personal moral philosophy and stage of moral development, and organisational factors including culture, co-workers and opportunity influence perceptions of whether a decision is ethical or unethical. In addition, Ferrell identifies ethical issue intensity – how important or relevant the issue is to the decision making – as an influence on ethical decision making. Ethical intensity can change over time as it is influenced by both individual organisational and institutional factors. The Ferrell (2005) model does not directly mention national culture as a factor that influences ethical decision making.

Another prominent model of ethical decision making is the Hunt and Vitell model, originally proposed in 1986 as “a general model of ethical decision making that would draw on both the deontological and teleological ethical tradition” (Hunt and Vitell (2005:18). This model identifies cultural environment and personal characteristics as influences on ethical perceptions and behaviour. In this model, professional, individual and organisation environment are seen as influence that “individuate the general model to particular professional and managerial context” (Hunt and Vitell 2005:18; 2006:144).

It is important to note that Hunt and Vitell (1986, 1993, 2005, 2006) describe the cultural environment using three items: religion, legal system and political system. Religion, values system and belief system are three of the six items included in their description of personal characteristics. As such, while values and beliefs are recognised, the Hunt-Vitell model does not explicitly include the notion of a general shared national culture value system. Religion is seen as both a cultural environment and a personal characteristic.

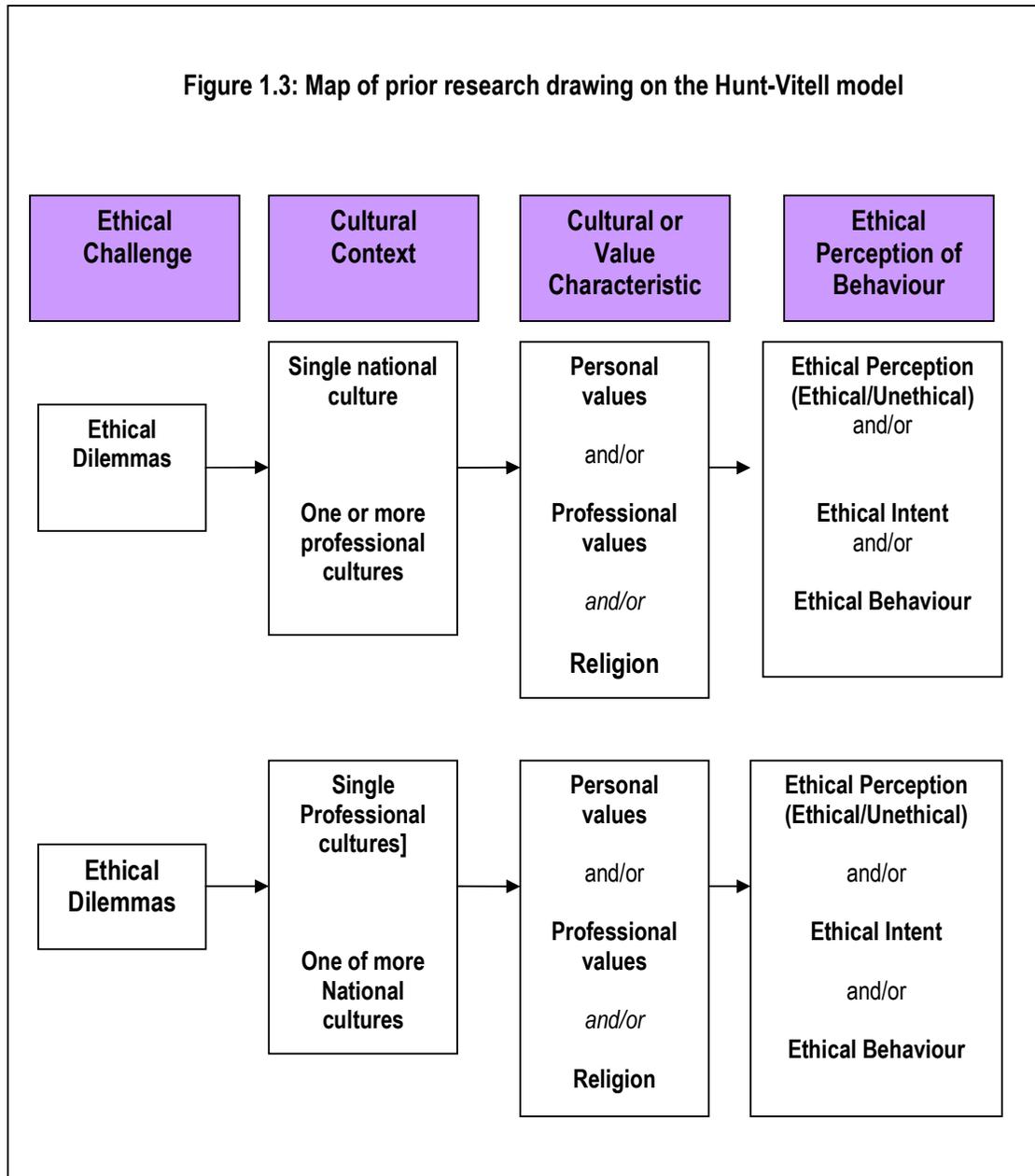
Aspects of this model are frequently used in research into ethical decision making in business settings. However, possibly because of the complexity of the model, researchers usually focus a small number of personal characteristics, environmental issues or cultural influences when conducting empirical research (See Figure 1.3). Usually these researchers have either dealt with one cultural context to investigate individual differences or when dealing with comparisons between people from different nations; and have tended to use Hofstede’s model of national culture, rather than the description

provided by Hunt and Vitell, to characterise national culture. Further, they have tended to deal with religion separately from national culture. While some have dealt with religiosity, none have dealt with intra-cultural differences in personal values in Thailand.

In 1998, Hunt, Pant and Sharp were responsible for highlighting the role of culture in ethical conflicts in multinational firms in their seminal article in American Accounting Associations journal *Accounting Horizons*. Following on from this, the majority of the quantitative empirical research investigating the issues raised in the Hunt-Vitell model has used scenarios the ethics teaching and research resource developed by Cohen, Pant and Sharp (1998).

The research in this thesis builds on scenario based research undertaken on other single western cultural groups, or comparisons between professional groups from two different countries (Chung and Monroe, 2003; Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Park, Rehg and Lee, 2005; Su, Sirgy and Littlefield, 2003). In addition, this research replicates and extends a stream of scenario based research conducted by Singhapakdi and a number of collaborators (Marta, Singhapakdi, Attia and Atteya, 2003; Marta, Singhapakdi, Attia, and Vitell, 2004; Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1994; Singhapakdi, Rawwas, Marta and Ahmed, 1999; Singhapakdi, Marta, Attia and Atteya, 2003; Singhapakdi, Salyachivin Virakul, and Veerayangku. 2000).

Figure 1.3: Map of prior research drawing on the Hunt-Vitell model



The Singhapakdi stream of research has mainly used samples of Thai marketing professionals. While in some cases intercultural comparisons have been made with American marketing professionals, the research does not investigate unique cultural characteristics or intra-cultural differences. In the research conducted for this thesis I investigate both unique cultural characteristics and intra-cultural differences. Further, the one paper (Singhapakdi et al, 2000) that dealt with religiosity in Thailand used a measure based on Judeo-Christian religiosity. In the research conducted for this thesis a measure of Thai Buddhist religiosity is developed to investigate the role of religiosity in decision making by Thai Managers and professionals.

### **1.5 Research Approach**

The evidence for the importance of *greng jai*, patron-client relationships, Thai Buddhist religiosity and rural and urban differences come mainly from descriptive case, qualitative and anecdotal or narrative reports. The research conducted for this thesis is a quantitative study. I have chosen this methodology as I am trying to test in a structured way the relationship between variables that have in the past generally been identified through constructivist, advocacy or participatory knowledge approaches (Cresswell, 2003). This methodology is consistent with the positive epistemological approach in which I am seeking to identify a single truth (Robson, 1993).

A sample of Thai managers and professionals working in urban and rural areas in Thailand is used in this research. The questionnaire uses self-report measures to assess within cultural differences relevant to the Thai context including: how important religion is as an influence on one's work behaviour, how important *greng jai* is as an influence on one's work behaviour and how important the concept of patron-client relationship is as an influence on one's work behaviour. Participant responses for seven scenarios were obtained. The scenarios comprised five scenarios used in previous studies of ethical behaviour and two scenarios developed to illustrate ethical dilemmas that may arise due to the Thai cultural characteristics of patron-client relationships, *greng jai*, and Thai Buddhist religiosity. Consistent with prior research, in addition to being asked to evaluate whether an action was ethical or unethical, respondents will be asked what they would do in response to a particular situation, and what others would do. The latter question is designed to decrease the motivation for respondents to provide the response seen to be right or desirable (Fisher, 1993; Jo, 2000)

For the purpose of the research, hypotheses that are supportive of a relationship between the cultural characteristics, religiosity, urban or provincial location, and ethical decision making have been put forward. This is because, on balance, the qualitative literature supports the importance of these characteristics in the Thai business environment. However, I note that given the limited amount of prior empirical research, and the mixed results derived in the research that has been undertaken, it would have been equally possible to argue for the lack of such relationships.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

The research proposed for this thesis examines the influence of within-culture differences on responses to ethical dilemmas among urban and rural managers and professionals in Thailand. In this chapter I have provided a background to the research, identified the research problem and research questions, defined terms, provided an overview of the theoretical framework, and discussed the research approach. In chapter 2 I present a more detailed discussion of the theoretical context of this research, and link this theory to the research problem, research questions, and specific hypotheses. Subsequently the research methodology is discussed in Chapter 3 and the data analysis is presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 I present the discussion, conclusion and practical and theoretical implications of the research conducted for this thesis.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH ISSUES

### 2.1 Introduction

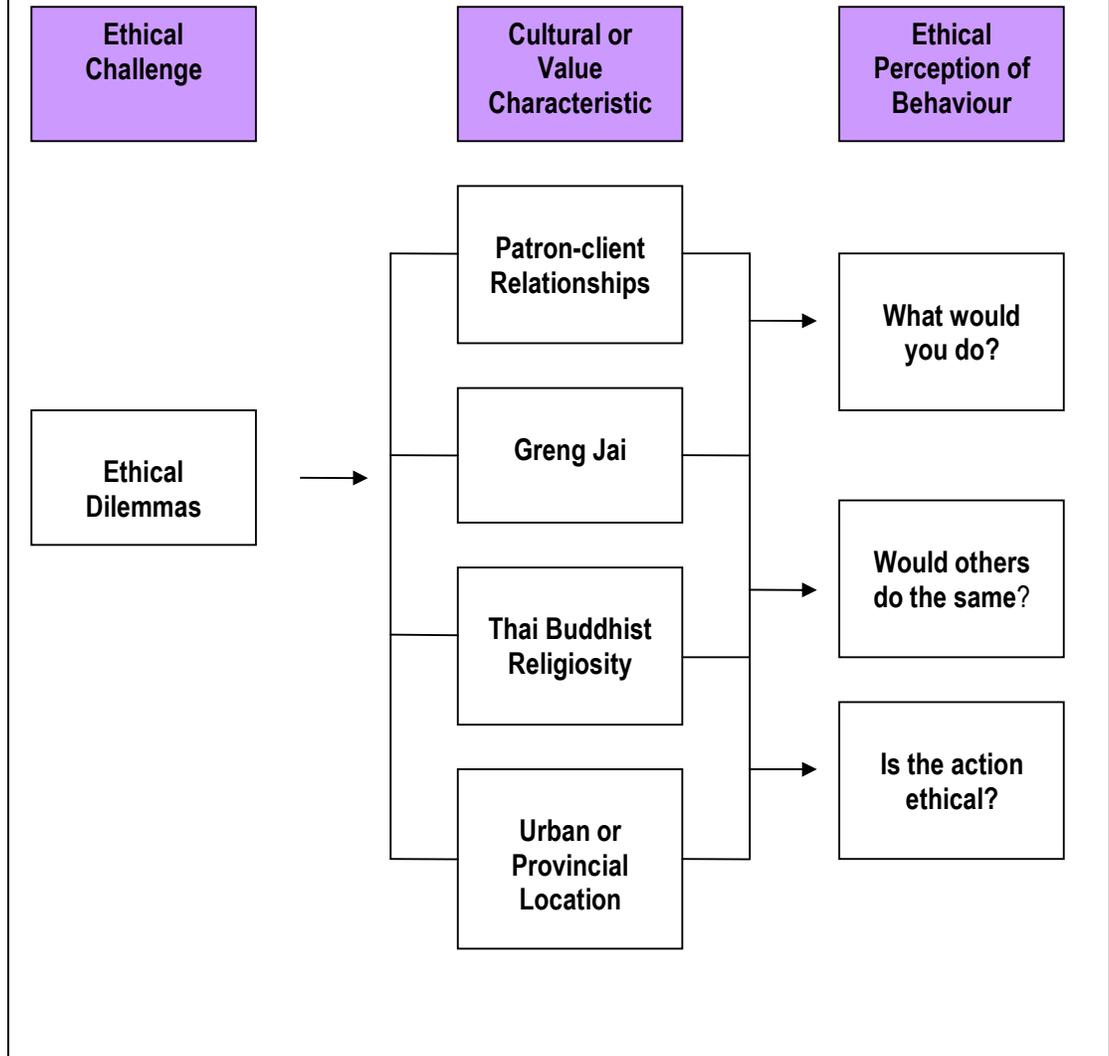
As identified in Chapter 1, research is required which examines ethical decision making in a non-Western context. This is a gap which this thesis attempts to address. In order to do this, in this chapter I will review the literature on ethical decision making and culture, discuss Thailand as the context for research being undertaken, and develop research questions and hypothesis on national culture, patron-client relationships, *greng jai* (the obligation maintain or preserve one another's feelings) and religiosity as they relate to ethical perceptions of Thai managers and professionals in urban and provincial Thailand.

I begin with a discussion of the parent discipline of business and management ethics and then focus specifically on the role of personal moral codes in ethical decision making in business and management contexts, with specific reference to the Hunt-Vitell Theory of Ethics (1986, 1993, 2005, 2006). This model, which addresses the roles of the cultural environment, the professional/industry/organisational environment and personal characteristics in ethical decision making and ethical perceptions, is the theoretical frame within which the research being undertaken rests. Following this, I provide a background of the social cultural environment of Thailand, the context in which the research conducted for this thesis is being undertaken. As perceptions of ethical behaviour is often rooted in values that have evolved in a society over its history, and Thailand's history is unique in South-east Asia, my discussion of

the cultural aspects of Thai society will include succinct coverage of the emergence and development of Thailand as a 'nation' and the Thai as a "race". I will also describe current social, cultural, political and economic aspects of Thailand, differences in Thai culture in urban and provincial settings, and the significance of Thailand in the regional and world stage. I will discuss the four independent variables that I will be exploring in this thesis: patron-client relationships, *greng jai*, Thai Buddhist religiosity and urban or provincial location. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the importance of Thailand as a unique context in which to undertake research on ethical behaviour and ethical perceptions.

As previously indicated, the research conducted for this thesis will address similarities and differences displayed by Thai managers and professionals in the urban setting of Bangkok, and in less developed provinces of Thailand, in relation to ethical decision-making. Specifically it looks at the role played by religion, patron-client relationships, *greng jai* and urban or provincial location (See figure 2.1). Based on the literature review of the above constructs I will identify gaps in the literature that warrant further research, leading to the development of the specific research questions and hypothesis.

Figure 2.1: Dependent and independent Variables investigated

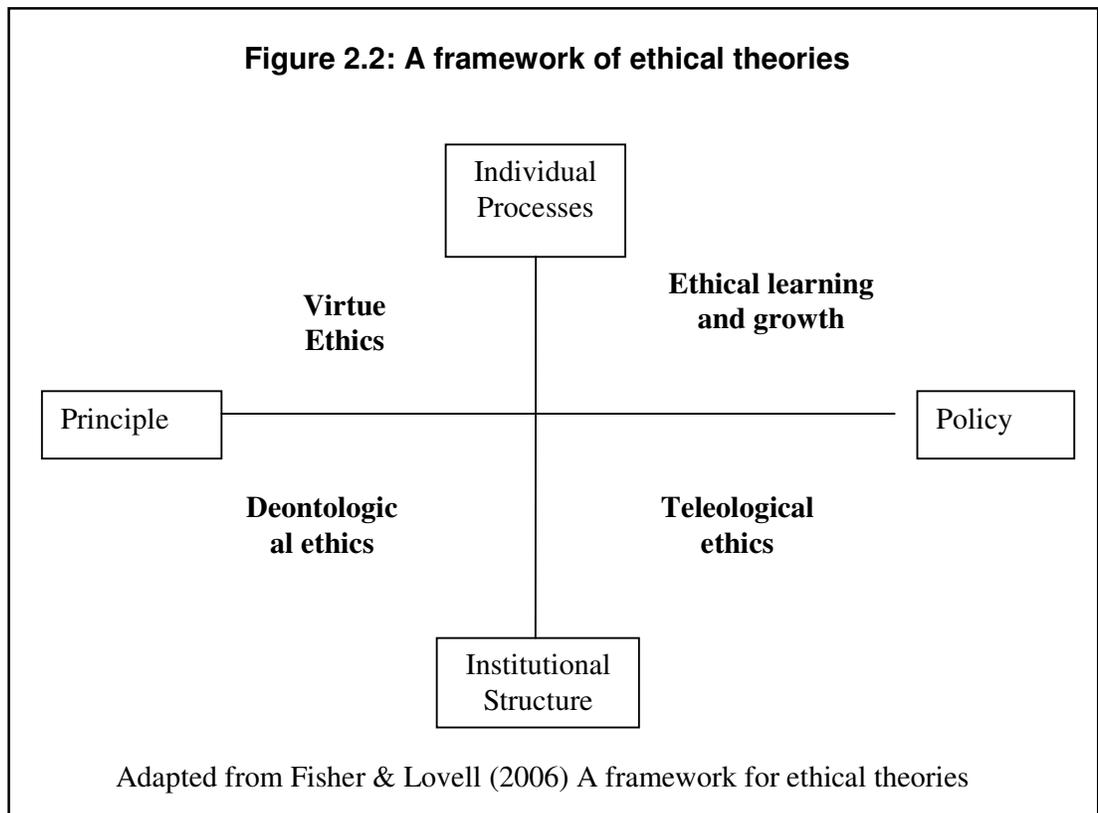


## **2.2 Business and management ethics**

One of the difficulties in discussing ethical theory is deciding where to start. It could be argued that coverage of ethics should commence with a discussion of Aristotle's moral codes, first developed circa 400BC, Confucious circa 500BC; or given that many religious leaders dismiss Buddhism as merely a moral code, not a religion, because it has no deity, the four principles of Buddhism circa 500BC. However, to commence at any of these points would require the discussion of two millennium of world history which is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I have chosen to define my parent discipline as business and management ethics, rather than simply ethics, and to focus in particular on managerial ethical decision making. This is not to say that they are entirely separate discipline areas. Indeed, a review of business and management ethics texts clearly reveal that the theory applied in business and management is based on broader ethical theories. However, while the discussion of ethics tends to address broad moral dilemmas, often in an esoteric manner, most of the focus in business and management is on its application to challenges faced in day to day business operations. This means that subtle nuances of existing theories, important in mainstream ethics, are ignored so that business and management researchers can develop simplified models that are applicable to ethical dilemmas faced in business and management.

As noted in chapter one, an example of such a simplification is the model developed by Petrick and Quinn (1997) which has become a de-facto standard

in teaching texts (e.g. Fisher and Lovell 2003, 2006). They proposed a framework grouping the key theoretical perspectives into a two-by-two matrix. (See figure 2.2). The principle-practice continuum is a reflection the rights framework developed by Dworkin (1977).



Both virtue ethics and deontological ethics focus on principle. These principles are a set of beliefs that are not influenced by the decision maker, those affected by the decision or the consequences of the decision (Fisher and Lovell 2003, 2006). As such both perspectives focus on the means, rather than the end result, of an ethical decision, and are sometimes categorized as the non-consequentialist ethical perspectives. Fisher and Lovell (2003, 2006) note that

virtue ethics are based on personal qualities which lead to virtuous behaviours by the individual, who in turn is perceived to live a virtuous life full of happiness. The Greek word for happiness includes both behaving well and faring well (MacIntyre 1967; also quoted in Fisher and Lovell 2003, 2006). The concept of virtue ethics, rooted in Aristotle's moral virtues first enunciated in the fourth century B.C. reflect the nature of that society, and what is virtuous depends on both the period and the society being considered (MacIntyre 1967; McMylor 1994, also quoted in Fisher and Lovell, 2003;2006). For example, Aristotle's moral virtues are described in terms that can only be applicable to the elite in Greek society of the time (MacIntyre, also quoted in Fisher and Lovell, 2003; 2006) and effectively exclude women, who were of low importance in that society (Gillian, 1982, also quoted in Fisher and Lovell, 2003, 2006). Different perceptions of what is virtuous include the Homer's Greek Warrior or the inclusion of the poor and slaves as people able to display Christian virtues in the first century A.D. (Fisher and Lovell, 2003, 2006), the virtues of industrial man described by Benjamin Franklin at the time of the industrial revolution (McMylor 1994) or the managerial virtues described by Solomon (1993).

Deontological ethics are also based on principle. However, it is institutional forces, rather than individual characteristics, that are the drivers of ethical behaviour. Two theoretical views sit within this domain: Kantian imperatives, and justice and rights. Kantian imperatives are principles, derived through deductive reasoning, that exist universally, regardless of consequence or context (Fisher and Lovell 2003; 2006). This view provides rigid moral choices. Lying, for example, would always be wrong even for example, to save a life.

Later writers (Beck 1959; Bowie 1999; de George 1999) suggest this rigidity can be modified by having a hierarchy of imperatives, or through using of a *prima facie* rather an *a priori* view as the basis of deductive reasoning (Ross 1930) (see also Fisher and Lovell 2003; 2006). The Kantian perspective and its modifications all argue that there are non- consequentialist principles on which society is based.

Fisher and Lovell (2003, 2006) discuss the centrality of justice and rights in the non-consequentialist ethical perspective, noting that inequity was the accepted societal norm in Greek society in Aristotle's time. Writers and political activists in the eighteenth century such as Thomas Paine, Jean-Jacques Rosussea and Mary Wooltonecraft promoted the opposite perspective that is a right to equality and liberty. Libertarians, such as Nozick (1974) argue that people have the right to freedoms from restrictions. Underlying the libertarian concept of justice is Nozick's entitlement theory, in which only property rights need to be protected by the state, and resources obtained legally or fairly under past, even if by means that would be considered illegal or unfair in the present, can not now be taken away.

By contrast Rawls (1971, 1999) also quoted in Fisher and Lovell 2003, 2006) argues that justice is embodied by fairness to all, which can only be obtained by ignoring past history and prejudice. Societies should provide the same rights to all members, while recognizing that individuals may have different abilities or characteristics that lead will lead to different outcomes.

Stepping back from theoretical considerations for a moment, one can see practical examples of societies in which different perspectives of justice are applied by the State. For example, the United States tends to have a more libertarian society, while some European societies may be more reflective of more justice as fairness. That being said, a regular reader of the world news section of daily newspapers could easily find exceptions to this statement. However the fact that we can see societal or cultural differences, in both the application of deontological and virtue ethics supports the investigation of ethical decision making within different societies. This thesis addresses such an issue.

Both the ethical learning and growth perspective and teleological ethics are influenced by the extent of application of policy (or rules) and take into account the consequences of ethical behaviour. There are three dominant perspectives in this domain: individual growth, communitarianism and ethical egoism. Senge (1990) and Covey (1992) argue that people develop ethically by following a set of personal rules, and learning. This evaluation occurs either through self reflection (Covey) or through evaluation of their relationship with others, the organisation and society (Senge). In both cases self-development of the individual becomes an ethical goal. Communitarianism, by contrast, focuses on the growth and development of communities. People who contribute to the ethical development and growth of communities, become ethical individuals, and anything that limits such growth will produce negative consequences (Fisher and Lovell, 2003, 2006). In the ethical egoism perspective individuals are encouraged to “pursue their own interest by applying their reason to the

task of identifying and achieving their own best interests” (Fisher and Lovell, 2006 p 122). It is up to the individual, not society, to objectively evaluate the ethical consequences of decisions. As such the policy should be to minimize the subjective application of rules, and laws to protect the individual. This viewpoint is largely exemplified in perspectives on American society (Kirpartick 1994, also quoted in Fisher and Lovell 2003, 2006).

The final group of theories to be considered are those in the domain of teleological ethics. Both discourse ethics and utilitarianism fit within this domain. Both perspectives define what is right or good in terms of its consequences, and recognise the importance of society’s institutions in achieving ethical goals. They differ in the manner in which rightness or goodness is identified. In discourse theory the question of whether behaviour is ethical is evaluated through dialogue or debate. Fisher and Lovell suggest that the criteria for evaluation could include formal validity, truth, content justice and procedural justice (Schreier and Groeben, 1996) in an environment of impartiality, non-coercion, non-persuasiveness and expertise (Preuss,1999), in which consequences of actions are considered against norms, values, laws, network circumstances and fundamental needs of mankind are considered (Fischer, 1983). As such different societal contexts can influence the criteria by which a discourse ethics decision is made.

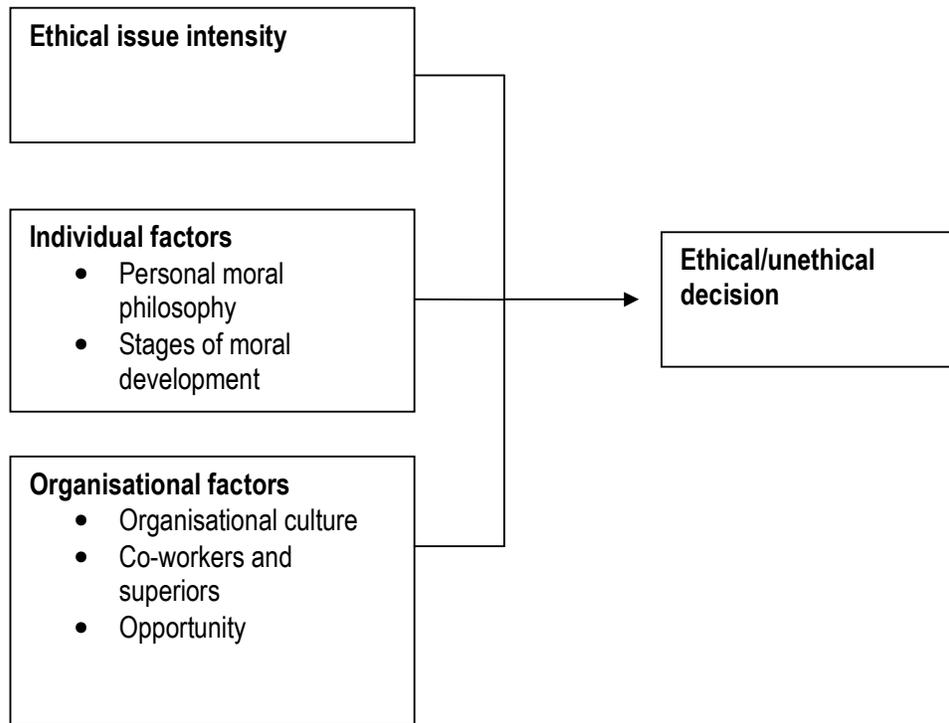
Utilitarianism, first identified by both Bentham and Mill in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is a calculation based approach to ethics which seeks to promote happiness, or

greatest benefit, to the greatest number as the basis of morals and legislation. It assumes that qualitative and quantitative benefits can be measured objectively, and that stakeholders to the decision can be identified. Different societal or organisational settings could change the assessment of what the value of qualitative and quantitative benefits are, and the stakeholders that may be considered (Fisher and Lovell, 2003, 2006). As a different context may change the nature of ethical decision making, investigating the nature of ethical decision making in different contexts has become of growing importance.

The Petrick and Quinn (1997) model discussed above provides a workable theoretical perspective of the ethics in business and management settings. However, in reality they present competing viewpoints, rather than an integrated perspective. An attempt to integrate these theories to provide a general model of ethics is embodied in the Hunt and Vitell (1986) general theory of ethics. However prior to discussing this model in detail, it is prudent to first note the associated stream of research conducted by Ferrell and others (e.g. Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Ferrell, Gresham and Fraedrich, 1989; Fraedrich and Ferrell 1992 LeClair, Ferrell and Fraedrich 1998). While Ferrell and Gresham (1985) emphasise the primacy of organisational rather than individual ethics, the model evolved over times to include ethical issue intensity (Jones 1991), and individual factors such as moral philosophy (drawing from Hunt and Vitell 1986; Fraedrich and Ferrell 1992) and stages of moral development, drawing from Kohlberg (1958; 1969). Fraedrich and Ferrell (1992) also found that there was a difference between moral philosophy in work and non-work decision making situations.

Figure 2.3 is a representation of Ferrell's (2005) framework for understanding ethical decision making. Ferrell (2005) states that this model is an attempt to integrate the literature on ethical decision making. However, it does not include national culture, professional culture or industry culture. Organisational factors are the only contextual issues utilized. By contrast, the Hunt and Vitell place organisational environment, industry environment and professional environment outside their general theory of ethics for use, if necessary, in particular managerial and professional contexts. Cultural environment and personal characteristics are given primacy within the theory. Arguably, while the Ferrell stream of research is important, Hunt and Vitell model of ethics provides a more comprehensive, albeit more complex, attempt to integrate existing literature of ethical decision making.

**Figure 2.3 A framework for understanding ethical decision making in the workplace**



Source: Ferrell (2005)

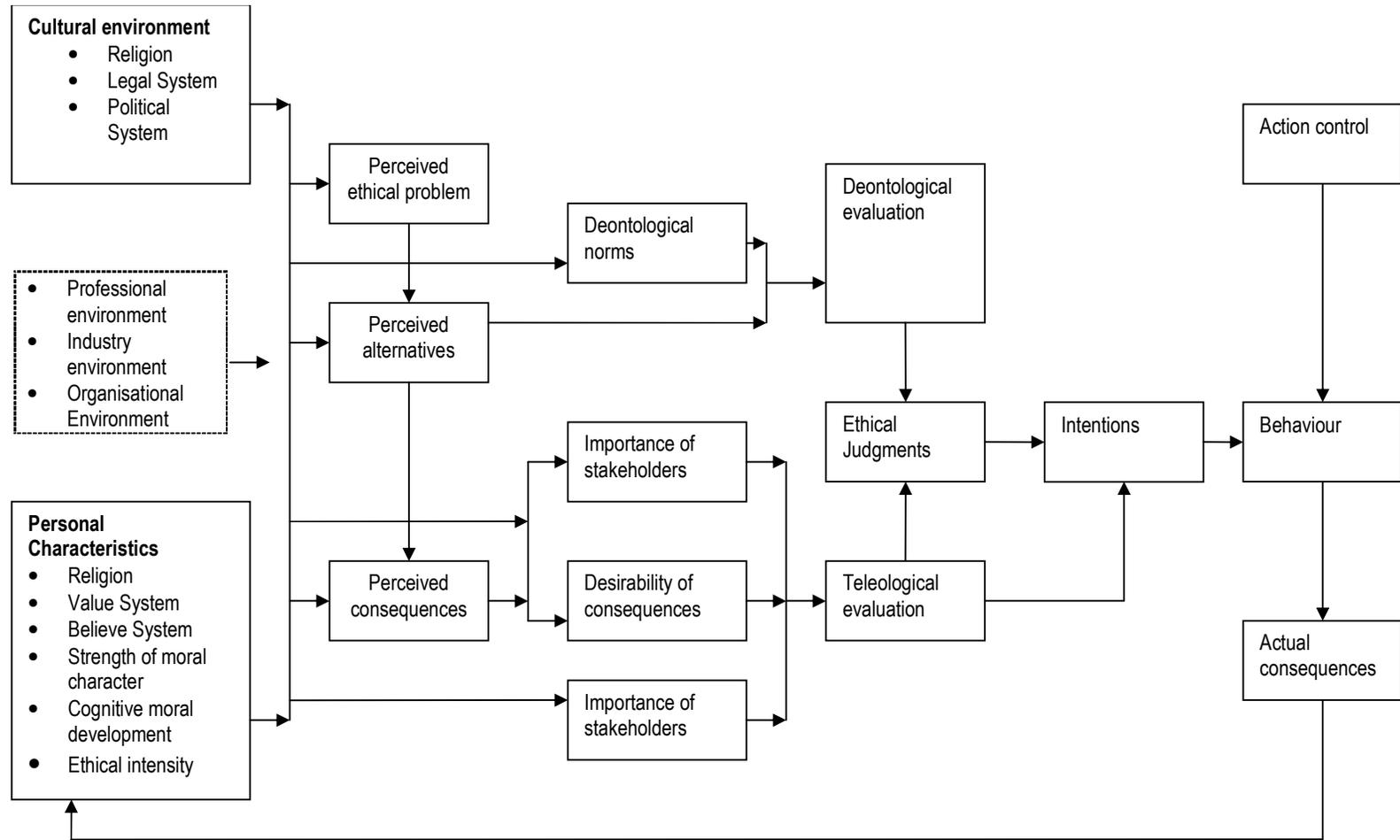
### 2.3 The Hunt-Vitell theory of ethics

Hunt and Vitell (1986, 1993, 2005) have developed a model of ethical decision making that attempts to explicate the construct of a personal moral code to explain why people's ethical judgments differ. Specifically it seeks to "provide a general model of ethical decision making that would draw on both the deontological and teleological ethical traditions in moral philosophy" (Hunt and Vitell, 2005:19).

The general theory of ethics, which appears in diagrammatic form in Figure 2.4, includes two groups of antecedents to the ethical decision-making process. The first of these is the cultural environment, described by the authors as consisting of religion, the legal system and the political system. This is different to the more frequently used descriptions of cultural environment, which refer to shared values of a particular national group (e.g. Hofstede, 1991). Dependent on the cultural model, religion may be included as a cultural characteristic or may be a separate construct. Further, the legal and political environment is more usually considered as an institutional rather than cultural characteristic.

Hunt and Vitell (1986, 1993, 2005) include six personal characteristics in their general model. Three of these, *religion*, *belief system*, and *value system*, could arguably reflect the more common models of culture. The remaining three are strength of moral character, cognitive moral development and ethical sensitivity.

Figure 2.34 Hunt-Vitell General Theory of Ethics



Source: Hunt & Vitell (1986, 1993, 2005). Note the portion of the model outside the dashed lines constitutes the general model. The portion inside the dashed lines individualates the general model for professional and managerial contexts.

Explicit in the model is that people's perspectives on ethical issues are influenced by their environment, and may change over time. Further the model suggests that deontological considerations can be equally important to, if not more important than teleological considerations in determining ethical judgments, intentions and behaviour.

In their 1993 revision, Hunt and Vitell point out that "an important question would be the extent to which cultural mores differ across societies and the extent to which those mores affect the deontological norms of individuals and how they value different stakeholders" (1993:6). This statement, which in fact aligns their description of culture with the more mainstream views, has acted as a catalyst for the use of their model to investigate cross cultural differences in ethical decision making.

Hunt and Vitell (1986) propose that an individual will apply ethical guidelines based on different moral philosophies or ideologies when making decisions involving ethical considerations. These include general societal values, the decision-maker's individual experiences and predispositions, including religious faith, attitudes within the firm and industry, and diverse emotional forces generated by the specific situation at hand (Ferrell and Gresham 1985, Ferrell et al 1989, Hunt and Vitell 1986, 1993, Jones 1991). However it is important to note that this model is not prescriptive. Indeed many of the researchers that have used the model are seeking to document, explain or describe what happens in a particular context or among individuals with particular personal characteristics when confronted with a decision with ethical considerations.

Hunt and Vitell (2005:26) state that over the past 20 years there have been scores of articles testing aspects of the model. However, in part because of the complexity of the model, researchers have tended to address specific aspects of the cultural environment, professional industry or organisational environment, and personal characteristics. Indeed, frequently the focus has been on researching the influence of personal characteristics within constant, or comparative, environments, for example marketing professionals from different national cultures. The richness of the model, coupled with its practical focus and ability to be 'sliced' to assess different aspects of ethical decision making has made it useful for both teaching and application in business, and attractive to business and management researchers.

There is an extensive, but eclectic, range of items that fit within Hunt and Vitell's cultural environment or personal characteristics categories that have been researched. In many cases a single construct that could fit in within one of the descriptive categories, and a single dependent variable are tested. Frequently the authors use culture or religious environment as the context of the research, or as categories for between group tests of samples from different cultural or religious backgrounds. In other cases these aspects of culture or religion are independent variables. Sometimes they are both. Finally while the papers all refer to the Hunt and Vitell model, they do not always state which categories their contextual items or manipulated variables fit within. In some ways, therefore, the Hunt and Vitell model is treated more as a mind-map that seeks to describe the domain of ethical decision making than a prescriptive causal model.

The empirical studies identified that relate to the Hunt and Vitell model sit within an emerging focus on quantitative empirical research into the nature of ethics decision making in business contexts. Two extensive reviews of literature on ethical decision making have been published in the Journal of Business Ethics in recent times: Loe, Ferrell and Mansfield's (2000) review covering 189 articles in the period 1961-1996, and O'Fallon and Butterfield's (2005) review covering 174 articles in the period 1996-2003. Two interesting issues arise from these reviews. Firstly, it is noticeable that frequently the papers include results in which the findings run counter to the predictions hypothesised from the theory. Secondly, the results are often contradictory, depending on the national or business context in which the research has been undertaken. O'Fallon and Butterfield (2005) note that there were more empirical studies published in the period 1996-2003, than in the previous four decades, and that there is a lack of theoretical grounding in the research. Both articles refer to the need to conduct further empirical research in different contexts to further develop theoretical and practical understanding of ethical decision making.

In chapter 1 I identified the four variables that exist in the Thai cultural context that will be investigated in the research conducted for this thesis. These are patron-client relationships, *greng jai*, Thai Buddhist religiosity and provincial or urban location. These are to be tested using ethical dilemmas that involve indication of the perceived nature of ethical problem, ethical intentions, and ethical behaviour. These variables are my slice of the Hunt and Vitell model.

I have two motivations for selecting this slice of the model. The first is my interest in intra-cultural differences and their relationship to ethical decisions. While the Hunt-Vitell model recognises culture as an influence, there has been no quantitative empirical research how culture specific differences influence ethical decision making. My second motivation is my interest in Thailand as a context, and the limited quantitative empirical research that has been undertaken on ethical decision making in that context. While patron-client relationships and *greng jai* have been widely identified as Thai cultural characteristics that have a broad influence on the behaviour of Thai people, there has been no quantitative empirical research conducted on their influence on ethical decisions made by Thai managers and professionals. Thai Buddhist religiosity has also been identified as influential in the behaviour of Thai people, but there has only been one quantitative empirical study that attempted to link religiosity with ethical decision making (Singhapakdi et al, 2000). The relationship was not clearly established in this research. Differences have been identified in the strength of Thai cultural characteristics and Thai Buddhist religiosity between urban (Bangkokian) and provincial Thai, but there has been no qualitative empirical study relating these differences and ethical decision making.

In section 2.4 I discuss the literature on culture, religion and ethical decision making that is most relevant to the research conducted in this thesis. In subsequent sections I discuss the Thai cultural context, and describe and justify the importance of, and develop of research questions related to each of the four variables that I have chosen to investigate.

## **2.4 The influence of culture on ethical perceptions and decision making on business people**

The importance of professional and organisational culture has been widely recognised in research into business ethics. Generally, either one or the other is used as a sampling frame within studies, to enable cross-cultural comparison within professions or organisations. A review of the quantitative empirical research undertaken reveals that the great majority of these studies deal with ethics in marketing or accounting professions (See Table 2.1). At the commencement of the research conducted for this thesis, a similar comment could also have been made for Thai based research. However, during the research period, there have been a number of papers that use Thai MBA samples, some of which are used to compare with existing international marketing samples (See Table 2.2). A contribution of this study is the extension of our understanding of ethical decision making beyond the marketing and accounting professions.

To date, a vast body of literature has accumulated that deals with the ethical behaviour of particular business professional groups in particular national cultures. Much of this research deals with the ethics of marketers or accountants. While the majority of research deals with Western national cultures, there is a number of papers that deal with ethical behaviour in other cultures, either individually, or in comparison with Western cultures. A sub set of these is research conducted into ethical behaviour in Thailand, which has predominately dealt with ethical behaviour, and the perceptions of ethical behaviour, by Thai marketers.

Many of the initial studies into business ethics dealt with marketing ethics. These early studies influenced the style, content, and research method used in later research into other business contexts. The initial studies in marketing ethics explored the influences of culture and moral philosophies on the ethical decision making processes of marketers (e.g. Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Hunt and Vitell, 1986,1993). The contingency framework for understanding ethical decision making proposed by Ferrell and Gresham (1985) depicts marketers' ethical decision making process as the result of interactions among individual factor, organisational factors, and significant others. In this model, cultural factors and personal moral philosophies are listed specifically among the individual factors.

Several studies have explored the issue of marketers' perceptions of ethical problems, which refers to the strength of their awareness of an ethical issue in a described scenario used in the study by Rallapalli (1994). Rallapalli examined the influence of personal background factors, such as age, gender, income and education, on marketers' perceived ethical problem. The results revealed that except for education, other demographic variable such as age, education, gender and income were not significant in influencing marketers' perceived ethical problems. Rallaphalli (1994) suggested that other background variables, such as culture, religiousness and moral sensitivity, could be better predictors of marketers' perceived ethical problems than demographic variables.

**Table 2.1 Selected Culture, Religion and Ethics articles using Non-Thai samples**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Variables</b>
1993	Singhapakdi	Ethical perceptions of marketers: the interaction effects of Machiavellianism and organizational ethical culture	529 US American Marketing Association Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational ethical culture</li> <li>• Perceived ethical problem</li> <li>• Perceived alternatives</li> <li>• Machiavellianism</li> </ul>
1993	Singhapakdi and Vitell	Personal and professional values underlying the ethical judgments of markets	479 US American Marketing Association Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Values</li> <li>• Personal Values</li> <li>• Ethical judgments</li> </ul>
1996	Singhapakdi, Rao & Vitell	Ethical decision making: an investigation of services marketing professional	252 US American Marketing Association Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical perceptions and judgments</li> <li>• Professional values</li> </ul>
1999	Singhapakdi, Vitell, Rao & Kurtz	Ethics Gap: comparing Marketers with consumers on important determinants of ethical decision making	453 US Marketing Association Members and 282 householders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived ethical problem</li> <li>• Personal moral philosophies</li> </ul>
1999	Singhapakdi, Vitell and Franke	Antecedents, consequences and mediating effects of perceived moral intensity and personal moral philosophies	453 US American Marketing Association Members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived moral intensity</li> <li>• Personal moral philosophies</li> <li>• Demographics</li> <li>• Religion</li> </ul>
2000	Singhapakdi, Marta, Rallapalli, & Rao	Toward an understanding of religiousness and marketing ethics; AN empirical study	453 US Members of the American Marketing Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal moral philosophies,</li> <li>• Perception of ethical problem and ethical intentions</li> <li>• Influence of Religiousness</li> </ul>
2001	Marta, Singhapakdi, & Higgs-Kleyn	Corporate ethical values in South Africa	256 South African Institute of Marketing Management members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal moral philosophies</li> <li>• Perceived ethical problem</li> <li>• Corporate ethical values</li> </ul>
2004	Marta, Singhapakdi, Attia, & Vitell	Some underlying ethical decisions of Middle-Eastern Marketers	134 Marketers in Jordan Egypt and Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical perceptions</li> <li>• Perceived importance of ethics</li> <li>• Age</li> </ul>

**Table 2.2 Selected Culture, Religion and Ethics Articles Using Thai Samples**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Variables</b>
1994	Singhapakdi, Vitell and Leelakulthanit	A cross cultural study of moral philosophies, ethical perceptions and judgments	492 American Marketing Association members 98 Thai Marketing Association Members	Moral Philosophies National Culture Ethical Perceptions and Judgments
1998	Baker & Veit	A comparison of ethics of investment professionals; North America versus Pacific Rime nations	414 Investment professional who are AIMR members in Hong Kong Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and North America	Culture Descriptive information on ethic norms and training by profession age and culture.
2000	Singhapakdi, Salyachivin, Virakul, & Veerayankur	Some important factors underlying ethical decision making of managers in Thailand	798 Thai Managers enrolled in MBA programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal moral philosophies</li> <li>• Perceived ethical problem</li> <li>• Corporate ethical values</li> <li>• Religiosity</li> </ul>
2002	Powpaka	Factors affecting managers decision to bribe; An empirical investigation	188 Thai MBA students	Perceived necessity, unethically, support, choice, attitudes to bribe giving and intention to bribes
2004	Kini, Ramakrishna and Vijayaraman	Shaping of Moral Intensity regarding software piracy: A comparison between Thailand and US students	843 US and 663 Thai students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral intensity to software piracy</li> </ul>
2005	Marta & Singhapakdi	Comparing Thai and US business people. Perceived moral intensity of unethical marketing practices, corporate ethical values, and perceive importance of ethics.	605 Thai Managers in MBA program and 453 American Marketing Association members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate ethical values</li> <li>• Perceived moral intensity</li> <li>• Perceive importance of ethics</li> </ul>
2008	Singhapakdi, Gopinath, Marta & Carter	Antecedents of perceived importance of ethics in marketing situations.	798 Thai MBA students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral Philosophies</li> <li>• Corporate ethical values</li> <li>• Perceived importance of ethics</li> <li>• Ethical perception and intention</li> </ul>

Singhapakdi, Rawwas, Marta, and Ahmed (1999) compare consumers from two very different cultures Malaysia and USA, in terms of their attitudes, ethical perception and personal moral philosophies. Hofstede's typology of cultural dimensions, as well as differences between the economic and business development contexts, were used to formulate the research hypothesis regarding attitudes toward business and salespeople. Of the items within the Hunt and Vitell model investigated, the role of perceived moral intensity was only partly supported, and moral philosophies of idealism and relativism were not supported. Further their findings regarding idealism and relativism raise some questions regarding the usefulness of Hofstede's schema as a basis to explain inter-country differences in ethical ideologies. Rather economic and business development in individual countries was found to be useful to explain inter-country differences in ethical behaviour.

Singhapakdi et al (1999) investigate the influences of perceptions regarding the importance of ethics and social responsibility on ethical intentions of marketing professionals. They also investigate the effects of perceived ethical problems and gender on ethical intentions. The results, based on a survey of practitioner members of the American Marketing Association, revealed that a marketing professional's perception regarding the importance of ethics and social responsibility seems to influence his or her ethical intention in a positive way. The survey results also indicate a positive relationship between ethical perception and ethical intention. The results reveal some gender differences in ethical intentions of marketing professionals.

In another study, Cohen, Pant and Sharp (2001) investigate the differences in individuals' ethical decision making between Canadian university business students and accounting professionals. They examine the differences in three measures known to be important in the ethical decision-making process: ethical awareness, ethical orientation, and intention to perform questionable acts. They tested for differences in these three measures in eight different questionable actions among three groups of students: Students starting business studies, those in their final year of university, and professional accountants. The measures of awareness captured the extent to which respondents felt that a particular action was unethical according to each of several ethical criteria. They found few differences between the two students groups on these measures, suggesting that their education had minimal effect on raising their awareness of the ethical issues in the vignettes. Indeed, overall, the graduation students' scores were marginally lower than those of the entry-level students. However, the professionals viewed some actions as "significantly less ethical" than did the graduating students.

Marta, Singhapakdi, Attia and Atteya (2003) compare business students from Egypt and the United States in terms of their perceptions of ethical problems, personal moral philosophies (idealism, relativism), and their perceptions about the importance of ethics. This study used Hofstede's cultural typology as a theoretical foundation in studying cross-cultural ethics. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data, in the classroom setting. The results revealed significant differences between the business students from the two

countries, which suggests the possibility of various cross-cultural business interactions.

Mata, Singhapakdi, Attia, & Vitell (2004) analyse the marketing ethics decision-marking process of Middle-Eastern marketers. They examine the relative influences of ethical perceptions, perceived importance of ethics and age on ethical intentions of marketers in Middle East. The results indicate that a perceived ethical problem is a positive factor of a Middle-Eastern marketer's ethical intention. The results also support the hypothesis regarding the influence of perceived importance of ethics, that Middle-Eastern marketers who perceive ethics to be important are more likely to have an ethical intention than Middle-Eastern marketers who do not perceive ethics to be important.

Park, Rehg and Lee (2005) study the effects of Confucian ethics and collectivism, on individual whistle blowing intentions. Confucian Ethics and Individual-Collectivism were measured in a questionnaire completed by 343 public officials in South Korea. Their study found that Confucian ethics had significant but mixed effects on whistle blowing intentions. Specifically affection between father and son was found to have a negative effect on internal and external whistle blowing intentions, while the distinction between the roles of husband and wife had a positive effect on those intentions. The effects of collectivism were also different depending on the specific types of collectivism. Horizontal collectivism had a positive effect on both types of whistle blowing intentions, whereas vertical collectivism did not show any significant effects on

whistle blowing intentions. These results indicate that cultural traits such as Confucian ethics and collectivism may affect an individual's whistle blowing intentions in degree and direction, making blanket predictions about cultural effects on whistle blowing difficult.

The focus of the studies listed above is either on differences between different national cultural groups or differences between professional cultural groups. None of the studies deal with differences within cultures with a focus on cultural specific characteristics. Specifically, the Singhapakdi et al stream of research does not directly address the Thai cultural characteristics of patron-client relationships and *greng jai* (mutual obligation not dependent on benefit). Many researchers have identified the importance of these characteristics in other management context (e.g. Bunnak 1990, 1991; Komin, 1990; Suparb, 1998). This is one of the gaps in the literature that this thesis seeks to address.

## **2.5 Religion and ethics**

The relationship between religion and ethical decision making has been extensively documented. However, much of the academic writing in this area has been theory building, model development or prescriptive, rather than theory testing. Ali, Camp and Gibbs (2000, 2005), Beekun and Baduawi (2005), Calkins (2000), Cavanagh and Bandsuch (2002), Epstien (2002), Jackson (1999), Pava (1998) and Worden (2005) all present cases for the importance of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or 'spirituality' as a contributor to ethical behaviour

in business settings. However, in published empirical work involving vignettes or scenarios representing ethical dilemmas there has been mixed findings as to the importance of religion or religiosity in relation to ethical decision making and perceptions of ethical behaviour.

Building on their general theory of marketing ethics (Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Hunt and Vitell, 1993) explicitly stated that religiousness can influence perceptions of ethical problems in three ways: as part of the cultural environment, as a personal characteristic or by being the basis of individual deontological norms. However, the quantitative empirical research conducted does not consistently support the role of religion in ethical decision making.

Lam and Hung (2005) found a positive relationship between religiosity and ethical behaviour for both Christians and those following 'traditional Chinese religion'. Devitt and Van Hise (2002) used scenarios to investigate the role of religion and other influences on ethical intentions. Respondents were grouped in terms of materiality. For religion there was no significant difference in the scores across these groups, with between 25.40% and 28.10% of respondents placing great importance on the question *What does my religion say about this kind of activity?*, and between 33.6% and 39.3% stating it was of no importance. Religion, as measured by church attendance, was a significant predictor of responses to ethical scenarios in less than on third (8 of 25) of the ethical vignettes used in the study by Conroy and Emerson (2004). Similarly Longenecker, McKinney and Moore (2005) found the relationship between possession of religious faith and ethical behaviour to be 'almost imperceptible'.

In half the vignettes (8 of 16), there was no difference between groups who placed little or no importance on religion, and those who placed moderate or high importance on religion. When comparing evangelical Christians and non-evangelicals, the first group reflected stronger ethical intentions in 10 of the 16 vignettes. Chung and Monroe (2003) found that in a sample of Australian accountants, respondents who were more religious tended to overstate their own ethical intentions and understate the intention of others. This finding was stronger in women who were religious than in their male counterparts.

Research incorporating religions other than Christianity and non-western countries has produced mixed results in relation to the role of religion and religiosity. While Wimalasiri (2004) found differences in moral judgments using a sample of Singaporean and Fijian respondents of different religious affiliations, these differences could be more reasonably attributed to the alignment of race with religion in these multi-cultural societies. However, no significant differences were found in the moral judgments of groups of different levels of religious commitment. Wimalasiri states that the research “confirms the assumption that culture plays a definite role in determining one's moral judgment over and above other variables” (2004, p.251)

Marta, Singhapakdi, Rallapalli and Joseph (2000) explored cross-cultural issues in marketing ethics by comparing business students from India, New Zealand and the United States on their perceptions of the ethical problems, perceived importance of ethics and social responsibility and their personal moral philosophies. The findings from the study generally indicated that the business

students from the US, New Zealand, and India differed in their ethical perceptions, personal moral philosophies, and perceptions about the importance of ethics and social responsibility in business. Specifically, the Indian students treated ethical problems as less serious than their western counterparts, and placed less importance on the link between ethical behaviour and organisational performance. However there were also differences the mean scores for the United States respondents were also significantly higher than those of the New Zealand respondents. The authors suggest that given the relative economic development rather than cultural factors may provide the explanation for these differences between the three countries.

In research covering samples in four Asian countries (Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Japan) and North America, Baker and Veit (1998) found that the respondents from Asia rated by religious education last as a source of ethical training and education. In contrast, North American respondents ranked moral or religious beliefs as the second most important deterrent to unethical behaviour. Respondents from Thailand rated it as the fifth most important.

Cornwell, Cui, Mitchell, Schlegelmilch, Dzulkiilee and Chan (2005) found that Buddhists (who they grouped with Confucianism) to be more relativistic and less universalist than Christians. It should be noted that in this study, the Asian countries surveyed were more likely to practice Mahayana Buddhism than Theravada Buddhism and the grouping of Buddhism with Confucianism across all countries indicates a Chinese style focus on Buddhism. Consequently, it is

not clear that these findings could be directly transferred to Theravada Buddhist societies.

As noted in section 2.4, there is a stream of research that was initiated in the early 1990s, by Singhapakdi independently, and with collaborators, which investigates a range of ethical issues as they apply to the decisions of Thai marketers. (See Table 2.1) Using Hunt and Vittell's model, Singhapakdi, Marta, Rallapalli, and Rao (2000) examined the influence of religiousness on different components of marketing professionals' ethical decision making: personal moral philosophies, perceived ethical problem, and ethical intentions in American marketing professionals. The results of this study revealed that religiousness is generally a factor of a marketer's personal moral philosophies, perception of an ethical problem, and ethical intentions, and that there is a strong positive relationship between a marketer's religiousness and his or her degree of idealism: relative to their counterparts, the more religious marketers tend to adhere to moral absolutes when making moral judgments. Conversely, the study found a strong negative relationship between religiousness and relativism; less religious marketers tend to reject universal moral principles when evaluating ethical actions and base their decisions more on the nature of the situation and the consequences resulting from the action. The results also reveal that religiousness affects a marketer's degree of ethical perceptiveness, and intentions to act in an ethical manner, though these results are not as strong as those pertaining to idealism and relativism. Singhapakdi, Salyachivin, Virakul and Veerayangkur (2000), suggested that one of the limitations of their research was that religiosity has been measured using a translation of a

Christian religiosity scale. This may not be applicable to Buddhist practices. For example, regular attendance at church (temple) is not important to Thai Buddhism.

Addressing this limitations and investigating the role of religion plays in decision making in Thailand is one of the contributions made by this thesis.

## **2.6. The Thai cultural context**

Thailand is unique in many ways. Its political social and economic development has followed a different path to its neighbours in Asia (Ku, 2002; Samudavanija, 1995). This is because Thailand is the only country in South-East Asia that was never colonised, maintaining its independence through the height of the Western imperial presence in the region (Dheravegin, 1997; Samudavanija 1995). Thailand never experienced the imposition of foreign legal frameworks, or the transfer of institutions from the West that occurred in many developing countries. The absence of colonialism means that traditional structures of Thai politics such as political culture, democracy development, power of elites and cultural factors have not been disrupted (Samudavanija, 1995). As such, the direction of the development of Thai society has been strongly influenced by its unique “political culture, political development and the power of the elites” (Dheravegin, 1975:6), with patron-client relationships playing an important role in politics (Ku, 200) and in broader societal contexts (Pornpitakpan, 2000).

In order to understand Thai society and the distinctive features of the Thai culture, it is necessary to understand how Thailand emerged as a nation, how the monarchy played its role in Thai society and how religion influences Thai.

### **2.6.1 The Nation**

A nation can be defined as a group of people who join together as a community within the same area, and who share the same religion, language, race, culture and history (Vallipodom 1990). Using this definition, the first time Thai joined as a nation was in the 13th century, although ancient Thais lived in the 'golden axe' region of Southeast Asia for many centuries prior (Keyes, 1987; Vallipodom, 1990). There have been four periods in the development of the Thai nation (Keyes 1987). These are the Sukothai period (1238-1386), the Ayuttaya period (1386-1767), the Dhonburi period (1767-1782) and the Rattanakosin period (1782- present) (La-Ongsri & Chumchan 1975).

The Thai kingdom in its earliest days was formed from various city-states. These included the cities of Chiang Sean, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Nakorn Sri Thammarat (Warren, 1995). During the 13th Century Thais established their first capital, Sukhothai which was the national capital for less than two centuries, from 1238 to 1368 (Vallipodom 1990). It is said that the Sukhothai period was the scene of remarkable political and cultural developments. The Thai alphabet was devised here as well as many distinctively Thai ornamental and architectural features (Warren 1995, Valipodom 1990)

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the king of the city named Ayutthaya overpowered Sukhothai and subsequently Ayutthaya became the capital of the kingdom for nearly 400 years. When Ayutthaya fell to the Burmese in 1767 (Sukhothai Thammathirat 1991), King Taksin (1767-1782) gathered the Thai people and built a new capital, Dhonburi. Dhonburi was the capital for just 15 years (1767-1782). Upon the death of King Taksin in 1782, his son-in-law and close friend, Som Dej Chao Pra Ya Mahakasatsuk established the Chakri dynasty and became its first monarch, King Rama the First (1732-1809). In 1782, he moved the capital from Dhonburi to the area known as Bangkok on the opposite bank of the Chao Praya River (Thammathirat, 1991). He renamed it Krung Thep, which means the 'City of Angels' (Rapeepat, 1985). Krungthep has remained the capital until the present day.

During its eight hundred year history, the Thai nation developed a system of beliefs about the ideal society, political system, and culture all of which were entrenched with a Thai political culture. What defines the Thai as a nation are a shared history, language and culture under the same king. Even now, the Thai nation consists of minority groups, with different ethnic backgrounds, that have melded their own cultures into one single system. The unique Thai nation exists in its cultural and physical setting with a personality that is the result of a succession of long historic roots in ancient kingdoms (Bunnak, 1991; Lekhakula, 1996).

## 2.6.2 The Monarchy

In Thailand, the monarchy stands side-by-side with the nation. Thailand has been a monarchy for almost 800 years and a constitutional monarchy since 1932 (Lekhakula 1996). Samudavanija (1995) states that, traditionally, the Thai political system relied on the monarchy as the basis for its legitimacy. The king and the dynasty are central to both the ideology and reality of political rule (Samudavanija, 1995). However, clearly, the role of the monarchy has changed over time.

Much has been written about the system of Thai monarchy, how it continues to “survive and even flourish” (Lekhakula, 1996:50) when its equivalent institutions in other countries become hapless victims of forces undermining their existence. Lekhakula (1996) for instance, states that the Thai monarchy, fraught with a long history of struggles for survival and acceptance, has consistently adapted itself to the social, geo-political, environmental, economic and technological changes taking place in the country and in the world. It has proven its capacity to respond to the needs of the people and society for almost eight centuries.

According to Thai history, the monarchy was firmly established in the Sukhothai period during King Ramkhamhaeng the Great (1279-1299), who ruled his people as a father, treating them as his children (Keyes, 1987; Dheravegin, 1985). However, this paternalistic rule was replaced by a system called ‘*Dhevaracha*’ when the centre of the Thai kingdom moved to the city of

Ayutthaya in 1386 (Dheravegin 1985; Keyes, 1987). '*Dhevaracha*' system was influenced by both Indian and Khmer philosophies. The King was seen as a '*Narai Theppachao*' or '*Esuan Theppachao*', both gods of the Hindu religion (Langsri and Chumchan, 1975). As such, the status of the king was that of a god, and the citizens were that of normal human beings. In the later part of the Ratanakosin period, the '*Dhevaracha*' system was modified somewhat. The kings came to be seen as reincarnations of Lord Buddha before enlightenment (Wannarat, 1981, translated by the author). However, effectively the king was still seen as a god and his subjects as mere mortals.

In 1932, Thailand ceased being an absolute monarchy. Nonetheless, the monarchy remains the most legitimate institution, and one, which has greatly contributed to social and political stability in Thailand. Samudavanija (1995) states that it took the monarchy only three decades (after 1932) to slowly, but firmly, re-establish its prestige, charisma, power and influence in the Thai political system. The king is the constitutional head of state, and an important symbol of national identity and unity. In addition, the king is empowered with the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to exercise moral authority whenever the government appears not to be administering the will of the people (Wannarat 1981). The present king, King Bhumipol (1946- ), is a powerful influence in Thailand, because "as a constitutional monarch, Bhumibol sits above politics, but his words have enormous resonance across Thai society" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 February 2002, page).

## 2.7 Thai cultural characteristics

Clearly, Thailand is a unique country within South-East Asia and there are many aspects of Thai national culture that could be investigated. However, in this study I have elected to focus on two main characteristics of Thai culture which influence decision making. These are patron-client relationships and *greng jai*. There are two reasons for doing so. Firstly, similar cultural characteristics such as *guanxi* (an important Chinese characteristic) have been found to be important cultural influences in other Asian cultures (Su, Sirgy and Littlefield, 2003). Secondly there is a significant amount of discussion in refereed, professional and 'popular' publications as to the importance of these characteristics in Thailand, however there has been little recent empirical research.

It could also be argued that religion is a cultural characteristic, and indeed many theoretical descriptions do so (Park, Rehg and Lee, 2005). Others, such as Hofstede (1991), Marta, Singhapakdi, Attia and Atteya (2003), Singhapakdi, Rawwas, Marta and Ahmed (1999), and Marta, Singhapakdi, Rallapalli and Joseph (2000) do not. It is purely for parsimony that I have grouped Thai Buddhist religiosity separately.

The final area of potential difference that I will be investigating is urban and regional contexts. Arguably people in different geographical locations have different exposures to cultural, professional, industry and organisational

influences, and may possess different personal characteristics (Komin, 1990; Suparb 1998).

### **2.7.1 *Greng jai***

Translating the concept of *greng jai* into English is difficult. The Thai are taught from an early age to be *greng jai* of other people. Literally, it means that Thai have to be careful with what they say and what they do so that they will not in any way offend, upset or displease others (Komin, 1990; Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, 2002). However, its application in Thai society is more complex and nuanced than this literal translation implies.

The Thais are taught from an early age to be *greng jai* of other people, which means they have to be careful with what they say and what they do so that they will not in anyway offend, upset or displease others (Komin, 1990; Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, 2002). *Greng jai* is a basic social rule, observed by all Thai, superiors, equals, and inferiors, even in more intimate relationships (Komin, 1990). Komin (1990) explains that *greng jai* means to maintain or preserve one another's feeling. Roongrerngsuke and Cheosakul (2002) also say *greng jai* means having consideration for another's feeling and reflect a conflict-avoiding value because those with *greng jai* usually avoid expressing a different opinion, especially when interacting with a superior. Similarly, Reungnam (2004) states that *greng jai* is to be considerate of others' feelings, and not wishing to impose on other. *Greng jai* also refers to the desire to be "self-effecting, respectful, and extremely considerate as well as the wish to

avoid embarrassing others or intruding or imposing upon them” (Fieg, 1989:43). While Burn and Thonprasert (2005) seek to equate this Thai cultural characteristic with Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance, linking it to the need to maintain surface harmony, this does not adequately describe the *greng jai*. Avoiding conflict does not logically link to greater certainty. While *greng jai* does reflect the need to maintain a pleasant relationship (Holmes and Tangtontavy, 1995), there is ample evidence that in multinational corporations in Thailand this need is less important among Thais than is believed to be by Western Managers (Semler, 1996).

Given the apparent centrality of *greng jai* to Thai culture, it is logical to expect that it would have an influence on the decision making of Thai managers. Specifically it should play a role when in scenarios designed to reflect a *greng jai* related ethical dilemma. Investigating the role *greng jai* plays in ethical decision making is one of the key contributions made by the research reported in this thesis and addressed by research question 1.

**Research Question 1:** How does the Thai cultural characteristic of *greng jai* influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?

The evidence for *greng jai* influencing management decisions comes from qualitative, case and action research, and from professional and business media publications discussed above. There has been little quantitative empirical research undertaken on the topic. Several authors merely assert its importance in Thai society, often as part of the contextual background to the research, or as

a potential explanation of an observed or stated behaviour (e.g. Andrews, 2001; Burnard and Naiyapatana, 2004, Hallinger and Kantamara 2000; Kitiyadisai 2005; Knutson, Komolsevin Chatiketun and Smith (2002) Niffinger, Kuliwat and Engchanil, 2006; Patterson and Smith, 2001; Petison and Johri, 2008; Rosutti and Makayathorn 2005; Srisussadaporn, 2006; Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin 1999) These assertions are often supported only by reference to the Holmes and Tangtongtavy's (1995) descriptive professional publications "Working with Thais". Thanasankit (2002) bases the assertion that *greng jai* is important by a comment of one of 8 interviewees who indicates that they feel *greng jai* when ringing clients because the clients may be busy.

It should be noted that it is possible to argue a counter position that because of institutional modernization and exposure to western values, educated middle class managers and professionals will not be influenced by the Thai cultural characteristic of *greng jai*. However, again, there is little empirical evidence on which to base this assertion.

Rather than present a series of hypothesis and counter hypothesis to reflect this possibility, I have chosen to present hypothesis that suggest that there *will* be relationships between the stated influence of patron–client relationships at work, and ethical intentions, behaviour and perceptions of the ethical nature of the issue.

The first hypothesis relates to the likelihood that, when confronted with a scenario that contains a *greng jai* related issue, the respondent would take the

same action as the manager in the scenario. Essentially, the more strongly a Thai feels influenced by *greng jai* relationships at work, the more likely he or she is to behave in a way consistent with this influence.

***Hypothesis 1:*** *For scenarios with a greng jai component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of greng jai relationships at work and unethical intentions.*

When asked to respond to a question that requires moral judgement, respondents may seek to provide the right or acceptable response, rather than truthfully respond to what they would do in a given situation. However, when faced with the question what would others do, the respondent is no longer faced with the dilemma of seeking the 'right answer' that will show them in a positive light. As such, while the response to the question "what would you do?" may be more likely to provide the model socially desirable answer, a response to the questions 'what would others do?' is more likely to provide an answer that reflects the social norm (Fisher, 1993; Jo, 2000). As such, the second hypothesis is:

***Hypothesis 2:*** *For scenarios with a greng jai component, there will be a positive interaction between self ratings of the influence of greng jai and the likelihood that others would take the same action.*

When asked to evaluate if the response by the manager in the scenario is ethical or unethical, there is also the possibility that the respondent will try to find the 'right' socially desirable answer. However, again, this is one step

removed from providing a direct comment on their own behaviour. Managers who are strongly influenced by *greng jai* at work will be less likely to find the *greng jai* driven actions by the manager in the scenario to be unethical. This leads to hypothesis 3.

**Hypothesis 3:** *There will be a negative interaction between self rating of the influence of greng jai at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical*

### **2.7.2 Patron-client relationships**

It is widely recognised that patron-client relationships are a very important part of Thai society (Bunnak, 1991; Ku, 2002; Pornpitakpan, 2000; Rapeepat, 1985; Somwichien, 1979). Patron-client relationships are based on the principle of vertical affiliation where persons of unequal status enter into either formal or informal social relationship. These relationships are based on exchanges that are mutually beneficial to the parties involved and are the mechanism that links higher status persons to the many tiers of lower status people in Thai society (Girling, 1981; Samudavanija, 1971). As patron-client relationships were formalized and instituted as the principle form of social organisation in traditional Thai society, they also served to weaken and erode horizontal linkages in society (Bunnak, 1991; Rapeepat, 1985).

In the past, patron-client relationships were important in nation-building because they provided a source of political, economic and social power for the king and

his subordinates (Bunnak, 1991; Girling, 1981). While kinship was the basis of some of these relationships, non-kinship relationships were also common (Rapeepat, 1985). The cessation of slavery in 1832, the modernisation of Thailand in the late 1800s, and the move to a constitutional monarchy in 1932 all contributed to the movement from a monarch base patronage system to one where patronage relationships between government officers and business grew increasingly important (Ku, 2002).

Writing on contemporary Thailand, Kamoche (2000) explains that the patron-client relationship is a pervasive Thai social value that emphasizes harmonious social relations and consideration for others. It influences the way Thais live, and the way Thais interact among themselves. Many studies find that typically management systems follow a pattern of benevolent paternalism which emphasizes the quality of the relationship between the superior and subordinate (e.g. Bunnak, 1992; Fieg, 1989; Kamoche, 2000 Komin, 1990; Mann and Parinyavuttichai, 2003; Roongrerngsuke and Cheosakul, 2002). The superior or boss (patron) is one who protects, assists, or rewards those of inferior status. In return, the subordinate (client) is expected to reciprocate the patron's favour by performing tasks efficiently, loyally, and with the least amount of trouble to the patron (Roongrerngsuke and Cheosakul, 2002).

Patron-client relations can be seen to influence both the operation of public affairs and Thai society more generally. Ku (2002), for example, states that "things are managed more easily and more efficiently when patronage politics are involved" (Ku, 2002: 67). Bunnak (1991: 147) also indicates that "patron-

client relationships highly influence Thai society” while Girling (1981) describes the use of patron-client relationships to build political and economic power. Patron-client relationships have been well accepted as an important and influential part of Thai culture and society (Bunnak, 1991; Ku 2002; Pornpitakpan, 2000). The reason for this is that “Thais emphasize respect for their elders, superiors, and patrons. They are trained from a young age to know who is superior, who is inferior” (Pornpitakpan, 2000: 61).

Beyond semantic differences that arise from in the definitions of *guanxi*, patron-client relationships in Thailand differ from the Chinese *guanxi* in several important ways. *Guanxi* is a behavioural skill that is used in concert with other behavioural skills such as *mientz* (face) and power to reach harmonious and competent interaction (Chen, 2006). It is based on the development of long term and frequently rigid relationships (Reungnam, 2004; Su, Sirgy and Littlefield, 2003). *Guanxi* is predicted on the notion that relationships in traditional Chinese society are hierarchical. This relationship hierarchy reflects social norms between ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, brother-brother, and friend-friend. The norms that guide successful *guanxi* are that the humble cannot assail the noble, the distant cannot overrun the closer, and the individual cannot override the group (Yueng and Tung, 1996). Therefore, in a Chinese society, *guanxi* transcends business relationships to encompass all social relationships (Ambler, 1995). Su, Sirgy and Littlefield (2003) explain that for Chinese, people receiving assistance must consciously reciprocate to avoid feeling guilty and losing face. Therefore, gift giving in China allows people to express their appreciation for any assistance received. To the party who provides assistance,

the gift signifies appreciation; to the party who receives the assistance, the gift is an expression of reciprocity. Therefore, gift giving is a typical way of culturally developing *guanxi*, that is, respect, friendship, and trust. By contrast, patron-client relationships in Thailand are a construct fundamental to Thai culture, rather than a behavioural skill. The relationships may be based on short term benefits, and can be short term and fluid in nature, following the change in power structures in a family, a community, an organisation or society as a whole (Fieg, 1989; Reungnam, 2004).

Consistent with my rationale for included *greng jai* as an area for investigation, given the prevalence of patron-client relationships in Thai culture it is logical to expect that these relationships would have an influence on the decision making of Thai managers. Specifically it should play a role when in scenarios designed to reflect a patron-client relationship related ethical dilemma. Investigating the role of patron-client relationships play in ethical decision making is one of the contributions made by the research reported in this thesis and addressed by research question 2.

**Research Question 2:** How does the Thai cultural characteristic of patron-client relationships influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?

There are three hypothesis related to this research question. Consistent with the hypothesis in the previous research question, each hypothesis is written in a way that supports the likelihood of patron-client relationships having a relationship. It is again note that it could be argued that no relationship exists. The first hypothesis relates to the likelihood that, when confronted with a

scenario that contains a patron-client related issue, the respondent would take the same action as the manager in the scenario. Essentially, the more strongly a Thai feels influenced by patron-client relationships at work, the more likely he or she is behave in a way consistent with this influence. This leads to the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 4:** *For scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and unethical intentions.*

Consistent with the discussion under the previous research question, when faced with an ethical dilemma that asks an individual to indicate what they would do, the individual may feel pressure to provide the right or socially acceptable answer. As such, a second question asking what they believe others would do may eliminate this pressure, and provide a more accurate reflection of their real response. This leads to the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 5:** *For scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships and likelihood that others would take the same action.*

Finally, the greater the perceived influence of patron-client relationships, the less likely that Thai managers would see behaviour beneficial to patrons as unethical. This leads to following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 6:** *There will be a negative interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical*

## 2.8 Thai Buddhist Religiosity

Thailand is religiously homogeneous, with 95% of the population identifying as Buddhist (Lekhakula, 1996). The Buddhism practiced in Thailand is Theravada Buddhism which is the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the texts of the Pali Canon, or Tipitaka (Ambuel, 2001; Lekhakula, 1996). Theravada Buddhism teaches that Buddha was a man, rather than Mahayana Buddhism, common in China, Japan and Tibet, which ascribes a level of divinity to Buddha. This differentiates Thailand from other Asian countries.

The emphasis of Theravada Buddhism is practice for the spiritual attainment and liberation of the individual. Unlike the Bible in Christianity, Buddhism does not have a single sacred book. However, Buddha's disciples originally maintained his teachings, known as *sultras*, through the oral tradition until they were recorded in written form after his death (Hallisey, 1996; Lerdmaleewong, 1998)

Generally practicing, Buddhists must follow the five precepts which are the basic Buddhist code of ethics, these are:

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking the life (killing) of living beings.
2. I undertake the precept to refrain from stealing (taking what is not offered).

3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct (adultery, rape, exploitation).
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from false speech (lying).
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicants which lead to heedlessness.

(Hallisey, 1996)

Apart from following the five precepts, Buddhists believe in “Good and Bad” or *Boon* and *Kam*. *Boon* or merit ( Good) is the positive behaviour that a person does while *Kam* or evil (Bad) is the negative behaviour (Bunnak, 1991: 165). Harvey (1995) explains that within Buddhism, the most usual way of referring to a good action is to describe it as *kusala*: “wholesome”, in that it involves a healthy state of mind-stable, pure, unencumbered, ready to act, calm and contented or skillful in producing an uplifting mental state and spiritual progress in the doer. A bad action on the other hand is *akusala*: “unwholesome” or unskillful.

Ambuel (2001, p.147) explains that:

The tradition of karmic Buddhism is a conservative one that lends to justification of the status quo and existing social structures. If one person’s wealth and high position just as another’s poverty are accepted as evidence of fruits from the merits or demerits earned in past lives, then the existing hierarchy constitutes an

argument that those in power both deserve their position and are superior to those who remain beneath. Success and ill-fortune alike are both “premise and proof of old karma”<sup>i</sup>

As Buddhists, most Thais believe in a theory of action which is embodied in Buddhist thought in the law of ‘Karma’ (action). The law of Karma suggests that the more merit one accumulates the more positive rewards she/he will experience in the future, either in this life or in a subsequent lifetime. A person who assumes a high social or organisational position is one who claims to have *boon*’ (Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, 2002).

Belief in *Boon* and *Kam* has affected not only the explanation of social distinction but also the structure of Thai business, government and society. Before the fall of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Bunnak (1991) states that Thais accepted the differences between classes and the status to which they belonged by birth (Bunnak, 1991). Thais did not have equal freedoms and rights. Their rights and freedoms depended upon the state or ruler. Thais accepted this concept because they were taught by their religion that everyone was born with a different status due to the result of positive activities and negative activities in previous or present lives (Ambuel, 2001; Bunnak, 1991). In other words, differences in status were due to the differences in merit (*Boon*), and demerit (*Kam*). Somwichien (1979) states that there is no doubt that the explanation of the social distinctions by principles of religion are acceptable to Thais, because it provides a good explanation of why people are not equal. Even now when Thailand is a constitutional democracy, the Thais consider that

individuals do not have an equal start in life due to the *Boon* and *Kam* they did in their past life. While Thais do not seriously attribute differences in access to the social and economic resources of society, including wealth, income, health care, education and housing to difference in *Boon* and *Kam*, the concepts are used as social justifications for inequality (Bunnak, 1991; Keyes, 1987). The belief in *Boon* and *Kam* provides benefits to society as it assists in maintaining peace in Thai society as current social inequalities can be social differentiation result of inequality blamed on actions in past lives.

Harvey (1995); Payutto (1993) and Keown (1992) further explain that there are three criteria that can be used to decide if and what action is “unwholesome” or “wholesome”. The first criterion concerns motivation whereby the three possible motivating “roots” of unwholesome action are greed, hatred and delusion and the opposites of these are the three “roots” of wholesome action which are non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. The criterion for what actions are unwholesome or wholesome concerns the anticipatable direct effect of the action in terms of causing suffering or happiness. The criterion for what is wholesome or unwholesome builds on the second. It concerns an action’s contribution to spiritual development.

Harvey (1995) also states that overall, one can say that an “unwholesome” action is one that arises from greed, hatred or delusion (or a combination of these), leads to immediate suffering in others and/or oneself and thus to further karmic suffering for oneself in the future, and contributes to more unwholesome states arising and to liberating wisdom being weakened, while “wholesome”

actions have the opposite characteristics. They arise from a state of mind which is virtuous, as judged by the action's motive and the agent's knowledge of likely harm or benefit, its contribution to the improvement of the character of the person who does it, and thus its assistance in moving a person along the path to Nirvana (the transcendent freedom that stands as the final goal of all the Buddha's teaching).

As Buddhist, to avoid "unwholesomeness" one must follow the path of Kam or Karma (the law of cause and effect; for every action there is a reaction): Do no evil, cultivate wholesome action and purify one's mind (Harvey, 1995). Buddhists have been taught that in order to receive boon or merit, they must follow these three levels a guideline for living (Bunnak, 1991).

Bunnak (1991) and Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin (2002) conclude that as Buddhists, most Thai Buddhists believe in a theory of action which is embodied in Buddhist thought in the law of 'Karma' (action). The law of Karma suggests that the more merit one accumulates the more positive rewards she/he will experience in the future, either in this life or in a subsequent lifetime. A person who assumes a high social or organisational position is one who claims to have boon (merit). They believe that it is no doubt that such a belief like this always influence Thai's behaviour and their decision making in doing the "wrong" things or "unwholesome".

There is a diverse range of literature that emphasises the role of Thai Buddhist religiosity in influencing values and behaviour in Thai society, business and

government (e.g. Ambuel 2001; Bunnak, 1991; Girling 1981; Keyes, 1987; Komin 1990; Somwichien, 1979; Suparb, 1998; Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam and Jablin, 2002). Further investigating the role played by Thai Buddhist religiosity in ethical decision making is one of the key contributions made by this thesis as addressed by research question 3.

**Research question 3:** How does religious commitment influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making, in general management decisions, and in decisions where *greng jai* or patron-client relationships are evident?

The three hypotheses under this research question deal with the role of Thai Bhuddist religiosity. Again they have been stated to reflect the likelihood that influence will be evident.

The first hypothesis reflects the view that the more strongly a Thai is influenced by religion, the more likely that they will behave in a manner that produces merit (*Boon*), and display ethical behaviour.

- **Hypothesis 7:** *There will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood to behave ethically*

Again, to address the issue of providing a socially acceptable answer, the second hypothesis relate to the question of what others would do.

- **Hypothesis 8 :** *There will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood that others would take the same action*

The final hypothesis reflects the view that more religious Thais are more likely to recognise unethical actions

***Hypothesis 9:*** *There will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of religiosity at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical*

## **2.9 Bangkok and provincial differences**

Similar to the situation described for greng jai, patron-client relationships and religiosity, the research related to ethical decision making have compared and contrasted with Thai non- Thai cultural differences, rather than intra-cultural differences between provincial and Bangkokian Thai managers and professionals. As such, one of the key contributions made by this research is the investigation of this intra-cultural difference.

Thai values in rural and urban areas are different (Komin, 1990; Suparb,1998) Suparb (1998) notes that basically rural areas are agriculturally based, less educated, and poor while urban area are industrially based, richer and better-educated. According to Suparb ( 1998), dominant rural values include: passivity which means a tendency to accept what happen to them as part of their deeds committed in their past lives; love for recreation; materialism; respect for people who do good deeds; face-saving; refraining from causing displeasure to others;

submission to the powerful; communitarians; informality; and strong kinship obligations. On the other hand, Thai urban values listed by Suparb (1998) include: belief in rationality; emphasis on competition; privileging of Westernization; emphasis on formality; materialism; emphasis on face-saving or face-promoting which means performing expensive ceremonies or celebrations; respect for legitimate authority; lack of discipline; disregard for public property; paying lip service instead of undertaking practical action; jealousy and selfishness.

In addition, Komin (1990) found that religion has a greater influence in rural areas in Thailand than in Bangkok, a greater influence on less educated people than highly educated people and a greater influence on the poorer than the rich. I argue that the different values between urban and rural areas in Thailand, will lead to different outcome for the ethical decision making of Thai managers.

Arguably, Thai managers and professionals in Bangkok are more likely to be exposed to 'Western values, either through media or interaction with foreign expatriates, than those in provincial areas. While this is not an absolute difference, on balance it could be expected that provincial Thai managers and professionals would more strongly reflect traditional behaviours in their management decisions than Bangkokian Thai managers and professionals.

That they would have different ethical values is also consistent with Ferrell (2005) who notes that changes in the environment can change the perceived ethical intensity of an issue, with Kohlberg's stages of development which

explicitly acknowledges changes in ethical perspectives. Further research in Asian contexts note that culture becomes less important to business decisions as institutions become more developed (Fisher, Lee and Johns, 2004), exposure to foreign nationals more extensive as the workplace becomes more international (Fisher and Hartel 2003) and organisations adopt a crafted culture that reflects modern business practices (Haley and Low 1998).

If these views are correct, then it could be expected that the influence of *greng jai*, patron-client relationships, and Thai Buddhist religiosity will be a stronger in the provinces than in Bangkok. Alternatively given that the intended sample for this research is Thai managers and professionals who are currently undertaking post graduate study, it may be that there is only a marginal difference in the exposure to modern business practices and international perspectives in the two groups, and as such provincial or urban location will not have an impact. The thesis will assess which of these explanations has more support.

This leads to the following research question and hypothesis:

**Research Question 4:** Are there differences between the roles played by *greng jai*, patron-client relationships and religious commitment among Bangkok resident Thai managers and professionals and Thai managers and professionals who live in other provinces?

- **Hypothesis 10:** *Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai cultural characteristics of greng jai and*

*patron-client relationships influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professionals*

- **Hypothesis 11:** *Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai Buddhist religiosity influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professionals*

## **2.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature on ethical decision making, discussed the Thai socio-cultural context, identified the key areas of difference in ethical behaviour and perceptions that I will be investigating – patron-client relationships, *grewng jai*, religiosity and Bangkok/provincial differences. In the following chapter I discuss and describe the methodology used in this research.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 four research questions were developed. These deal with the relationship aspects of ethical decision making and patron-client relationships, *grewng jai* and Thai Buddhist religiosity, and intra-cultural differences in between urban and rural Thai managers and professionals. In this chapter, I initially describe and justify the research paradigm and methodology used in the thesis research to investigate these issues. The methodology I have chosen is a scenario based quantitative survey of Thai managers and professionals in Bangkok and provincial Thailand. The instrument includes five existing scenarios, and two scenarios developed for this research. Subsequently I describe the research procedures, including sample selection and composition, instrument development, the procedures used in administering the questionnaire. I then discuss ethical considerations related to the research, and provide a conclusion that leads into the reporting of my data analysis in Chapter 4.

### 3.2 Overview of the paradigm and methodology

Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that the epistemology utilised in a piece of research needs to align with both the nature of the research issues addressed

and the research methods chosen. They identify four broad epistemological paradigms: critical theory, constructivism, positivism and realism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

Both the realist and the positivist epistemological paradigms could be applied to the issues addressed in this thesis. In the positivist paradigm, the research seeks to identify a single truth that will guide action now and in the future (Robson, 1993). Positivists seek to break down a phenomenon into its components and then test the relationships between these components, often using experimental or quasi-experimental methods. By contrast, realists recognise that truth is more a composite of events, experiences and mechanisms that may only be probably true now and may change in the future (Bhaskar, 1978). While seeking to identify 'reality', realists, recognise that this reality is based on observations, and as such is an observed reality rather than a single truth (Bhaskar, 1978; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

I have chosen to take a realist epistemological stance for three reasons. Firstly, my research examines perceptions which are influenced by events, mechanisms and experiences. Secondly the research is conducted in the real world setting, and as such experimental methods are not appropriate. Finally, from my review of the literature, the realist paradigm is the one followed in prior scenario based research.

### **3.3. Sample**

Consistent with prior research, the sample for the research reported in this thesis is a purposeful sample of working Thai managers and professionals, studying Masters level business degrees in Bangkok and rural provinces. It is noted that the researcher has previously held academic roles in Masters Programs in Thailand, and the programs selected were chosen because access was possible base on prior professional relationships with program directors.

A total of 522 usable responses were collected, and the sample comprises 261 full time working Thai Managers and professionals in provincial areas (Ubonrajchatanee, Utaithanee, Pitsanulok and Chonburi) and 261 full time working Thai Managers and Professional in Bangkok. At each university, questionnaires were distributed to approximately 50 persons. All respondents held at least bachelors degree level qualifications.

### 3.4 Instrument development

The questionnaire included seven scenarios. Five of the scenarios were developed by Cohen, Pant and Sharp (1998; 2001) and subsequently used by Chung and Monroe (2003), while the other two scenarios were developed specifically for this research, and designed to capture the Thai cultural characteristics of patron- client relationships and *grewg jai* (mutual obligation or consideration). These scenarios appear in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 Additional items to measure aspects of Thai culture and Buddhist religious practices were also developed.

The questionnaire was initially assembled in English, and piloted by several academics in Thai universities including Thammasart University, Sillapakorn University, Chulalongkorn University and Ubon Ratchathanee University, who are natives of Thailand and teach in English language international programs. I was also piloted by a small group of MBA students in Thai universities. They were asked if the design, instructions, and items were clear, if they knew why each item was being asked and if any items and scenarios were unnecessary. In addition, these people were also asked to confirm that the new scenarios reflected respectively, *grewg jai* and patron-client relationships. The respondents were also asked to comment on the items that reflected Thai Buddhist religious practice. The results revealed that some items needed to be reworded in order to enhance clarity and consistency and that the format needed slight adjustment to make it easier for individuals to respond.

Since the actual study was to be conducted in Thailand, the English version of the questionnaire was then translated in format and content into Thai by a suitably qualified translator. It was then piloted with an expert group of bilingual Thai academics with business and business communication qualifications all of whom were practicing Theravada Buddhists. Pilot testing was undertaken to determine the accuracy of the translation, the relevance of the newly developed measures of religion, and the transparency of the two new scenarios as illustrations of ethical dilemmas that arise from situations involving a patron-client relationship and *greng jai*.

Afterwards, a group of 25 Thai MBA students were asked to review the Thai-version for clarity and adequacy. The original questionnaire, the revised questionnaire and the back-translated questionnaire were then shown to an expert group of Australian Business academics, who confirmed consistency of meaning. To further insure the success of the study, the final version of the Thai questionnaire was given to Thai managers working in the finance industry in Thailand and Thai accounting and business students studying in Australia for examination. Based on their feedback some slight revisions were made. The final questionnaire was then prepared for distribution.

**Table 3.1: Scenarios used in the research**

Scenarios from Chung and Monroe (2003)

**Scenario 1**

A sales manager realises that the projected quarterly sales figures will not be met, and thus the manager will not receive a bonus. However, there is a customer order which if shipped before the customer needs it, will ensure that the manager receives the quarterly bonus but will have no effect on the annual sales figures.

**Action:** The sales manager ships the order this quarter to ensure that the quarterly sales bonus is earned.

**Scenario 2**

An Australian manager of a company eager to do more business abroad has been requested to make an undisclosed cash payment to a manager of a local distributor in a foreign country. The payment is requested as a “goodwill gesture” that will allow the Australian company to introduce its product in that foreign country. This practice is considered a normal business procedure in that country and no laws prohibit such a payment there.

**Action:** The Australian manager verbally authorises the payment.

**Scenario 3**

A salesperson has just been promoted to product manager. The salesperson’s first responsibility is for a new, highly successful small kitchen appliance. This person will be paid in part based on sales of this product. On reviewing information about the new product, the salesperson discovers that there has been insufficient product testing to meet new Commonwealth product safety guidelines. However, all testing so far indicated no likelihood of any safety problem.

**Action:** The salesperson authorises the sales force to continue to promote and sell the product.

**Scenario 4**

A promising new company applies for a loan at a bank. The Credit Manager at the bank is a friend of and frequently goes golfing with the company’s owner. Because of this new company’s short credit history, it does not meet the bank’s normal lending criteria.

**Action:** The Credit Manager recommends extending the loan.

**Scenario 5**

The CEO of a company requests that the financial controller reduce the estimate for bad debts in order to increase reported income, arguing that this is a common practice in the industry when times are hard. Historically, the company has made very conservative allowances for doubtful accounts, even in bad years. The CEO’s request would make it one of the least conservative in the industry.

**Action:** The financial controller makes the adjustment.

**Table 3.2 Scenarios developed for this thesis**

**Scenario 6**

A construction company has the contract with the government agency to build a new office building. After they finish the job, they need to have the quality of the building inspected and a completion certificate issued by a senior government official. Before the inspection, the construction company's project manager gives the senior government official a high value gift. The company's project officer does not ask for special treatment from the senior government official.

**Action:** The senior government official keeps the gift.

**Scenario 7**

A government agency has a project to print an historical book, which will be sold to the public. In general, to award a contract to print a book, government agencies have to call for tenders, in open competition, and award the contract to a company that offers the lowest price. The exception to this is when there is only one supplier of a particular quality of product, in which case the Director General of the government agency can award the contract without open competition. One well-known company has won awards for the quality and design for the historical books it has printed for other agencies. The wife of the General Director is a Board member of this printing company and her family is a major share holder.

**Action:** The General Director awards the contract to this company without having an open competition.

### **3.5 Measures**

#### ***3.5.1 Dependent variables***

Chung and Monroe's (2003) instrument was used to assess the three dependent variables: likelihood the participant would perform the unethical behaviour, the participant's evaluation of whether their peers would engage in the unethical behaviour, and the extent to which the participant judges the unethical behaviour to be unethical. Specifically, respondents were asked to rate their responses to the following questions on a seven point scale, with descriptors only evident at the extremes of the scale. The variables were described as; *the probability that I would undertake the same action is (high/low)*; *the probability that my peers would undertake the same action is*

*(high/low); and the action described above is (ethical/unethical).* Consistent with Chung and Monroe (2003) a seven point Likert type response scale was used. The scales had endpoint descriptors of high and low, high and low and ethical/unethical respectively.

### **3.5.2 Independent variables**

Religiosity was assessed in accord with Chung and Monroe (2003), namely, participants were asked to respond, on a seven point Likert type scale, with end descriptors and numeric points indicated, to the question *'How do you rate yourself in terms of religion (Not religious at all/very religious).* Three measures were developed for this research. The first of these was a measure of religiosity, *how important is religion as an influence on your behaviour at work? (Not important at all/very important).* The second was used to assess *grewng jai* with the question, *how important is grewng jai as an influence on your behaviour at work? (Not important at all/very important).* The third assessed within cultural differences on the Thai value of patron-client relationships with the question *how important are patron-client relationships as an influence on your behaviour at work? (Not important at all/very important).*

Demographic information on age, gender, education level years of work experience and religion and Bangkok or provincial location were also collected.

### **3.6 Procedure**

The final questionnaire was distributed, in cooperation with MBA directors in Bangkok and selected provinces, to working managers and professionals studying part-time business masters degrees. The questionnaires were administered in a class setting, using a standard preamble explanation that allowed for voluntary participation. Emphasis was placed on the need to follow a consistent protocol, and an independent observer was used to confirm that the protocol was followed.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

The ethical protocols used in this research mirrored those used by Fisher and Bibo (2003) and Fisher, Lee and Birt (2002), in research examining cultural characteristics of student and manager populations in Australia and Asia. Emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity, and the ability to decline to answer questions at any stage of the process. This was considered to be particularly important as questions related to religion, culture and ethics were being asked. However, it is noted that as respondents were managers and professionals, there was no unequal relationship between participants and the investigator. Despite there being minimal likelihood of risk, appropriate adverse event procedures were in place. An independent observer was also used during data collection.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined and justified the research paradigm and methodology used to conduct the research, described the research procedures including sample selection and composition, instrument development and administration as well as the ethical considerations related to the research. In the next chapter I present the findings of the research.

## Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present my analysis of data collected for the research conducted in this thesis. After initially presenting a summary of the characteristics of the respondents, and a brief discussion of the data screening and statistical analysis tools selected, I have grouped my analysis around each of the three research questions, and the hypothesis that flow from each question. The specific research questions are listed below:

1. How does the Thai cultural characteristic of *greng jai* influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?
2. How does the Thai cultural characteristic of patron-client relationships influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?
3. How does religious commitment influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making, in general management decisions, and in decisions where *greng jai* or patron-client relationships are evident?
4. Are there differences between the roles played by *greng jai*, patron-client relationships and religious commitment among Bangkok resident Thai managers and professionals and Thai managers and professionals who live in other provinces?

## 4.2 Subjects

The sample selection procedures and composition of the sample were discussed in Chapter 3. A total of 522 usable questionnaires were obtained, split evenly between both Bangkok and the provinces. Eight of the 522 respondents did not provide a response to one or more questions related to religion. Given the large sample size relative to the number of variables being utilized in the regression analyses to be conducted, and the large sample size overall for the purpose of the ANOVAs to be conducted, I elected to remove these respondent data from the data-set. This left 514 respondents: Bangkok (n=253) and the provinces (n=261).

The respondents were split relatively evenly between 261 males (50.8%) and 253 females (49.2%). All respondents held at least bachelors degree level qualifications, with 10.9% holding higher level degrees. The majority of respondents were Buddhist (92.2%). 81.5% of respondents had more than 5 years of work experience with 62.7% having more than 10 years work experience. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the demographics of the sample.

**Table 4.1 Sample Demographics**

		<i>n</i>	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Female	253	49.2
	Male	261	30.8
<b>Age</b>	< 25 years	5	1.0
	25-30 years	107	20.8
	31-35 years	225	43.8
	36-40 years	127	24.7
	40-45 years	42	8.2
	45-50 years	5	1.0
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor	458	89.1
	Masters Degree	43	8.4
	Doctorate	13	2.5
<b>Years of Work Experience</b>	1-3 years	25	4.9
	3-5 years	57	11.1
	5-10 years	97	18.9
	> 10 years	322	62.6
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhist	474	92.2
	Other / No religion	30	7.8

#### **4.3 Patterns of data for each research question and hypothesis**

##### **Data Screening**

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 15 for windows. Initial screening of data indicated that the levels of skewness and kurtosis of the relevant sample responses were generally in line with the parameters necessary to conduct the selected statistical tests. As such no transformation of data was conducted. Inspection of the scatterplots was conducted to assess the need to exclude outliers. A test for multicollinearity was also conducted using the collinearity diagnostics test in SPSS. The variance inflation factor for all independent variables was 1.0, well below the 4.0 level which multicollinearity would be an issue. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables.

**Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

	MEAN	S.D.	S1SAME	S1PEERS	S1ACTION	S2SAME	S2PEERS	S2ACTION	S3SAME	S3PEERS	S3ACTION	S4SAME	S4PEERS	S4ACTION	S5SAME	S5PEERS	S5ACTION	S6SAME	S6PEERS	S6ACTION	S7SAME	S7PEERS	S7ACTION	D18RWK	22GJINFLW	29CPIMPWK
S1SAME	3.68	1.96																								
S1PEERS	2.95	1.50	.60"																							
S1ACTION	4.22	1.71	.64"	.37"																						
S2SAME	3.78	1.88	.33"	.34"	.14"																					
S2PEERS	3.13	1.49	.15"	.33"	0.06	.68"																				
S2ACTION	4.68	1.65	.09"	0.06	.11"	.52"	.32"																			
S3SAME	5.43	1.81	0.08	0.03	0.08	.30"	.11"	.20"																		
S3PEERS	4.10	1.78	-.121"	0.05	-0.08	0.03	.28"	-0.02	.41"																	
S3ACTION	5.57	1.70	0.01	-.13"	.11"	.01"	0.05	.22"	.50"	0.07																
S4SAME	5.26	1.79	.146"	.240"	.16"	.22"	0.04	.27"	.40"	.15"	.14"															
S4PEERS	3.93	1.76	-0.08	.19"	0.05	-0.03	.11"	-0.06	.12"	.31"	0.03	.39"														
S4ACTION	4.97	1.70	.12"	.16"	.15"	.23"	.10"	.41"	.34"	0.08	.48"	.67"	.26"													
S5SAME	4.72	1.90	.210"	.12"	.15"	.30"	.12"	.24"	.37"	.12"	.11"	.41"	.16"	.27"												
S5PEERS	3.41	1.60	0.00	.22"	0.04	0.03	.19"	0.02	.13"	.47"	-0.05	.26"	.51"	.20"	.49"											
S5ACTION	4.89	1.72	.23"	.09"	.19"	.26"	.16"	.39"	.37"	0.05	.51"	.33"	0.08	.55"	.53"	.23"										
S6SAME	5.02	1.90	.17"	.22"	.21"	.29"	.16"	.11"	.36"	0.08	0.08	.33"	.22"	.21"	.36"	.15"	.14"									
S6PEERS	3.66	1.68	-0.07	0.04	-0.01	.14"	.32"	0.02	.18"	.39"	0.06	0.01	.28"	-0.03	.13"	.29"	0.06	.44"								
S6ACTION	4.77	1.71	0.05	-0.01	.17"	0.09	-0.06	.17"	.27"	0.04	.24"	.29"	.20"	.38"	.29"	.14"	.26"	.64"	.29"							
S7SAME	5.13	1.86	.16"	0.08	.09"	.37"	.23"	.16"	.36"	0.07	.20"	.22"	.11"	.18"	.17"	0.06	.13"	.52"	.21"	.38"						
S7PEERS	4.00	1.87	0.09	.16"	0.03	.21"	.37"	0.045	.12"	.39"	-0.01	0.03	.25"	-0.04	0.03	.23"	0.01	.20"	.46"	0.01	.49"					
S7ACTION	5.37	1.58	-0.04	-.17"	0.07	.12"	0.03	.28"	.25"	.16"	.37"	.01"	0.07	.29"	0.02	0.06	.25"	.22"	0.08	.39"	.51"	.33"				
D18RWK	5.03	1.47	0.00	-.14"	0.06	0.07	.12"	.13"	0.05	-0.02	.14"	-0.09	-.16"	0.01	-0.02	-0.06	0.07	-0.08	0.01	0	0.02	-0.03	0.08			
D2GJINFWK	4.66	1.22	-.11"	-0.00	-0.07	-0.04	0.02	-0.05	0.04	.09"	0.03	-0.00	0.07	-0.02	-0.02	0.08	-0.01	0.03	0.05	0.03	-0.01	-0.03	0.00	-0.01		
29CPIMPWK	4.54	.60	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	0.05	0.00	.090"	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.03	-0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	-0.02	-0.05	-0.01	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	-0.02	.112	-0.05	

\*\*significant at the .01 level; \*significant at the .05 level

## **Data analysis**

This research extends the research undertaken by Singhapakdi et al (2000). They used multiple regression to conduct their analyses. In addition, this is the usual form of analysis undertaken in scenario-based ethics research, using similar independent and dependent variables to those in the research reported in this thesis. This similarity also extends to instrument design including the use of Likert-type response items.

A requirement of linear multiple regression is that the independent variables are continuous or interval in nature. Consistent with common practice, the researcher accepts that the data collected meet this requirement. Conversely, it could be argued that the data is ordinal in nature, which would indicate that the appropriate test would be an ordinal logit regression. Alternatively, if the data were considered to be categorical, a multinomial regression would be the most suitable choice.

There is also precedent in the literature that supports the idea that data obtained from any form of visual scale should be treated as at least interval in nature, as treating it as ordinal or categorical will mean that some of the meaning of the responses is lost. Jaccard and Wan note that “for many statistical tests rather severe departures (from intervalness) do not seem to affect Type I or Type II errors dramatically” (1996:4), while Knapp states “that there is empirical evidence that it matters little if an ordinal scale is treated as an interval scale.” (1990: 122)

General precedent, however, is not a sufficient justification for choosing to treat the data as continuous. There are, however, compelling reasons for eliminating the option of using either ordinal logit regression or multinomial regression, and similarly strong reasons for selecting linear multiple regression.

To evaluate which form of regression was appropriate for the data collected, I initially conducted ordinal regressions. A necessary requirement for ordinal regression is that the test of parallel lines is satisfied. This was not the case in the ordinal regressions conducted. Where these failed the test of parallel lines, I carried out a multinomial regression, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996).

In observing the results from these tests, it became apparent that the data were, in fact, behaving as if they were continuous rather than ordinal data. Specifically, the data met the requirements outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). Firstly, the number of categories (seven) is large. Indeed, Johnson and Creech, (1983), and Zumbo & Zimmerman (1993) suggest the lower threshold of five categories as the point at which responses can be considered continuous.

Secondly, although the scale is coded as ordinal, the underlying scale can be assumed to be continuous. To illustrate, the high to low probability that responses indicate could be assumed to actually represent an underlying probability value (between 1 to 0) that respondents think their peers would

undertake the same action. Finally, on observing the distribution of the response variables, it was observed that variables did not seriously depart from normality. As such, it was determined that the most appropriate form of analysis to conduct was linear regressions; the results of which are reported in this chapter.

As the data were established to be behaving as continuous rather than ordinal or categorical, I selected a between groups ANOVA for the hypotheses that involved the tests of difference between the Urban (Bangkokian) Thai and the Provincial Thai groups.

#### **4.3.1 How does the Thai cultural characteristic of *greng jai* influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?**

This research question deals with the relationship between ethical behaviour and the Thai cultural characteristics of *greng jai*. The scenario developed for this thesis to evaluate this relationship was Scenario 7. The expert group consulted in the development of the questionnaire also noted that Scenario 4, which came from prior research, also reflected *greng jai*. As such, this was included in the examination of these hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1: For scenarios with a greng jai component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of greng jai relationships at work and unethical intentions.**

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of Greng Jai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the probability that I would undertake the same action is (high/low)*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 4 and Scenario 7, the two scenarios that specifically reflected situations in which a *greng jai* related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 below.

**Table 4.2.1 Influence of *greng jai* at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 4**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.012	.791
Influence of Religion at Work	-.089	.046
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.041	.363
R <sup>2</sup>	.009	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.003	
F	1.509	

**Table 4.2.2 Influence of *greng jai* at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 7**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.016	.713
Influence of Religion at Work	.021	.635
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.022	.625
R <sup>2</sup>		.001
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		-.005
F		.179

The results indicate that the *influence of greng jai at work* did not contribute significantly to the model in either scenario. As such Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 2: For scenarios with a greng jai component, there will be a positive interaction between self ratings of the influence of greng jai and the likelihood that others would take the same action**

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of Greng Jai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the probability of my peers undertaking the same action*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 4 and Scenario 7, the two scenarios that specifically reflected situations in which a *greng jai* related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 below.

**Table 4.2.3 Influence of *greng jai* at work on ethical actions of others - Scenario 4**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.059	.178
Influence of Religion at Work	-.157	.000
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.003	.951
R <sup>2</sup>	.028	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.022	
F	4.902	

**Table 4.2.4 Influence of *Greng Jai* at Work on ethical actions of others – Scenario 7**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.029	.512
Influence of Religion at Work	-.023	.613
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.30	.505
R <sup>2</sup>	.002	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	-.004	
F	.389	

The results indicate that the Influence of *greng jai* at work did not significantly contribute to the model for either Scenario 4 or Scenario 7. This means that the Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 3: There will be a negative interaction between self rating of the influence of greng jai at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical**

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of Greng Jai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Patron-client Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the action was described as ethical/unethical*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 4 and Scenario 7, the two scenarios that specifically reflected situations in which a *greng jai* related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.2.5 and 4.2.6 below.

**Table 4.2.5 Influence of *Greng Jai* at Work on perceptions actions were unethical- Scenario 4**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.018	.685
Influence of Religion at Work	.013	.774
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.005	.907
R <sup>2</sup>	.001	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	-.005	
F	.092	

**Table 4.2.5 Influence of *Greng Jai* at work on perceptions actions were unethical- Scenario 7**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.011	.810
Influence of Religion at Work	.087	.052
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.025	.573
R <sup>2</sup>	.008	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.002	
F	1.327	

In both Scenario 4 and Scenario 7 there was no significant relationship between Influence of *greng jai* at Work, and perceptions of that the actions were unethical. Therefore Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

#### **4.3.2 How does the Thai cultural characteristic of patron-client relationships influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?**

This research question deals with the relationship between ethical behaviour and the Thai cultural characteristics of patron-client relationships. The scenario developed for this thesis to evaluate this relationship was Scenario 6. As noted earlier, the expert group of Thai academics and managers indicated that Scenario 4 reflected a situation in which both patron-client relationship and *greng jai* may be evident.

***Hypothesis 4: For scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and unethical intentions.***

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of Greng Jai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the probability that I would undertake the same action is (high/low)*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 6 and Scenario 4, the two scenarios that specifically reflected situations in which a *patron-client relationship* related ethical dilemma existed, appear in table 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 below.

**Table 4.3.1 Influence of patron-client relationships at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 6**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.025	.576
Influence of Religion at Work	-.073	.104
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.036	.418
R <sup>2</sup>	.008	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.002	
F	1.341	

**Table 4.3.2 Influence of patron-client relationships at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 4**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.012	.791
Influence of Religion at Work	-.089	.046
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.041	.363
R <sup>2</sup>	.009	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.003	
F	1.509	

No significant relationship was found between influence of patron-client relationships at work, and ethical intentions. This means that Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 5: For scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and unethical intention.**

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of Greng Jai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the probability that my peers would undertake the same action is (high/low)*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 6 and Scenario 4, the two scenarios that specifically reflected situations in which a *patron-client relationship* related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 below.

**Table 4.3.3 Influence of patron-client relationships at work on ethical actions of others - Scenario 6**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.040	.363
Influence of Religion at Work	.010	.826
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.013	.770
R <sup>2</sup>	.002	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	-.004	
F	.327	

**Table 4.3.4 Influence of patron-client relationships at work on ethical actions of others - Scenario 4**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.059	.178
Influence of Religion at Work	-.157	.000
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.003	.951
R <sup>2</sup>	.028	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.022	
F	4.902	

The self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work did not significantly contribute to the model in either Scenario 6 or Scenario 4. As such, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

***Hypothesis 6: There will be a negative interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical***

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of greng jai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the action described above is (ethical/unethical)*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 6 and Scenario 4, the two scenarios that specifically reflected situations in which a patron-client relationship related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.3.5 and 4.3.6 below.

**Table 4.3.5 Influence of Patron-Client relationships at work on perceptions actions were unethical- Scenario 6**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.032	.475
Influence of Religion at Work	.003	.952
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.031	.494
R <sup>2</sup>	.002	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	-.004	
F	.345	

**Table 4.3.6 Influence of Patron-Client relationships at work on perceptions  
actions were unethical- Scenario 4**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.018	.685
Influence of Religion at Work	.013	.774
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.005	.907
R <sup>2</sup>		.001
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		-.005
F		.092

No significant relationship was found between the influence of patron-client relationships at work and perceptions of the ethical nature of the decision. This means that Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

#### **4.4.3 How does religious commitment influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making, in general management decisions, and in decisions where greng jai or patron-client relationships are evident?**

This research question deals with the relationship between ethical behaviour and the religiosity. The expert group indicated that scenario 1-5 could all be influenced by the religious commitment of the respondents. It is noted that these scenarios were also used to test religious commitment by other researchers using Western samples.

***Hypothesis 7: There will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood to behave ethically***

*Consistent with the treatment of other hypotheses in this thesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables Influence of Greng Jai at Work, Influence of Religion at Work and Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work. The dependent variable was the probability that I would undertake the same action is (high/low). The results of the regressions for Scenario 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 which are the scenarios that were identified as reflecting situations in which a religion related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.4.1 - 4.4.5.*

**Table 4.4.1 Influence of religion at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 1**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.102	.022
Influence of Religion at Work	.003	.940
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.022	.625
R <sup>2</sup>	.011	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.005	
F	1.959	

**Table 4.4.2 Influence of religion at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 2**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.050	.264
Influence of Religion at Work	.60	.176
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.036	.416
R <sup>2</sup>	.008	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.002	
F	1.385	

**Table 4.4.3 Influence of religion at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 3**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.027	.549
Influence of Religion at Work	.043	.333
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.016	.725
R <sup>2</sup>		.003
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		-.003
F		.495

**Table 4.4.4 Influence of religion at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 4**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.012	.791
Influence of Religion at Work	-.089	.046
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.041	.363
R <sup>2</sup>	.009	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.003	
F	1.509	

**Table 4.4.5 Influence of religion at work on ethical intentions- Scenario 5**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.016	.724
Influence of Religion at Work	-.018	.695
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.016	.721
R <sup>2</sup>		.001
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		-.005
F		.131

The influence of religion did not significantly contribute to the model in any of the five scenarios. As such Hypothesis 7 was not supported. It is noted that in Scenario 1 *Greng Jai* was significant at the 0.5 level.

**Hypothesis 8: There will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood that others would take the same action.**

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of Greng Jai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the probability that my peers would undertake the same action is (high/low)*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 which are the scenarios that were identified as reflecting situations in which a *religion* related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.4.6 - 4.4.10

**Table 4.4.6 Influence of religion at work on ethical actions of others**

**Scenario 1**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.009	.831
Influence of Religion at Work	-.138	.002
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.004	.929
R <sup>2</sup>		.019
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		.013
F		3.287*

\*Sig at the .05 level

**Table 4.4.7 Influence of religion at work on ethical actions of others**

**Scenario 2**

<i>Item</i>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.004	.923
Influence of Religion at Work	.125	.005
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.010	.817
R <sup>2</sup>	.015	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.010	
F	2.631	

\*Sig at the .05 level

**Table 4.4.8 Influence of religion at work on ethical actions of others -**

**Scenario 3**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.084	.059
Influence of Religion at Work	-.023	.607
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.031	.482
R <sup>2</sup>	.008	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.002	
F	1.381	

**Table 4.4.9 Influence of religion at work on ethical actions of others -**

**Scenario 4**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.059	.178
Influence of Religion at Work	-.157	.000
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.003	.951
R <sup>2</sup>		.028
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		.022
F		4.902

**Table 4.4.10 Influence of religion at work on ethical actions of others -  
Scenario 5**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.080	.071
Influence of Religion at Work	-.065	.144
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.024	.596
R <sup>2</sup>	.011	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.005	
F	1.83	

Influence of religion was significant in Scenario 1, Scenario 2 and Scenario 4. However, it was not significant in Scenario 3 or 5. As such, Hypothesis 8 was only partly supported.

**Data Analysis for Hypothesis 9 There will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of religiosity at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical.**

To test this hypothesis a linear regression was conducted using the variables *Influence of GrengJai at Work*, *Influence of Religion at Work* and *Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work*. The dependent variable was *the action described above is (ethical/unethical)*. The results of the regressions for Scenario 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, which are the scenarios that were identified as reflecting situations in which a *religion* related ethical dilemma existed, appear in Tables 4.4.11 - 4.4.15.

**Table 4.4.11 Influence of religion at work on perceptions that actions were unethical - Scenario 1**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.055	.214
Influence of Religion at Work	.062	.168
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.031	.491
R <sup>2</sup>	.007	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.001	
F	1.226	

**Table 4.4.12 Influence of religion at work on perceptions that actions were unethical - Scenario 2**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.034	.443
Influence of Religion at Work	.118	.008
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.076	.090
R <sup>2</sup>	.023	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.017	
F	3.973	

**Table 4.4.13 Influence of religion at work on perceptions that actions were unethical - Scenario 3**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	.017	.702
Influence of Religion at Work	.143	.001
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.003	.950
R <sup>2</sup>	.021	
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	.015	
F	3.567	

**Table 4.4.14 Influence of religion at work on perceptions that actions were unethical- Scenario 4**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.018	.685
Influence of Religion at Work	.013	.774
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	.005	.907
R <sup>2</sup>		.001
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		-.005
F		.092

**Table 4.4.15 Influence of religion at work on perceptions that actions were unethical - Scenario 5**

Item	Beta	Sig.
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	-.018	.678
Influence of Religion at Work	.075	.092
Influence of Client Patron Relationships at Work	-.029	.512
R <sup>2</sup>		.006
AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>		.000
F		1.072

Religion was significant in Scenario 2 and 3. It was not significant in Scenario 1, 4 or 5. As such Hypothesis 9 was only partially supported.

**4.3.4 Are there differences between the roles played by *geng jai*, patron-client relationships and religious commitment among Bangkok resident Thai managers and professionals and Thai managers and professionals who live in other provinces?**

As this is a test of differences between two groups of Thai, all scenarios are relevant to this research question.

***Hypothesis 10: Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai cultural characteristics of *geng jai* and patron-client relationships influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professions***

An independent t test was conducted to explore the difference between Bangkok and provincial managers and professionals on the influences of *geng jai* and patron-client relationships at work. The mean and SD of the Influence of *geng jai* at work and patron-client relationships at work are displayed in Table 4.5.1.

**Table 4.5.1 Mean and SD of the influences of greng jai at work and patron-client relationship at work.**

Variables	Location	
	Bangkok	Provincial
Influence of <i>Greng Jai</i> at Work	4.66 (1.20)	4.67 (1.25)
Influence of Client-Patron Relationships at Work	4.50(0.65)	4.58(0.58)

Note. SD is displayed in the parenthesis.

Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were met. There was no significant difference between Bangkok and provincial managers and professionals on the Influence of *greng jai* at Work,  $t(512) = -.061$ ,  $p = .951$ , 95% confidence interval of difference,  $-.22 - .21$ . Furthermore, there was no significant difference between Bangkok and provincial managers and professionals on the Influence of Patron-Client-Relationship at Work,  $t(512) = -1.52$ ,  $p = .128$ , 95% confidence interval of difference,  $-.18 - .02$ . As such Hypothesis 10 is not supported. Thus, Hypothesis 10 was not supported.

***Hypothesis 11: Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai Buddhist religiosity influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professions***

To assess Hypothesis 11, an independent t-test was conducted on the Influence of Religion at Work. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of

variance were met. No significant difference was found between the Bangkok and provincial managers and professionals on the Influence of Religion at Work,  $t(508) = -1.477$ ,  $p = .14$ , 95% confidence interval of difference,  $-.45 - .06$ . As such Hypothesis 11 was not supported; however, the mean of Bangkok managers and professionals ( $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ) were lower than provincial managers and professionals ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have reported on the results of the statistical analysis that I have undertaken as part of this thesis. Of the eleven hypotheses addressed only two were partially supported: *Hypothesis 8, There will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood that others would take the same action;* and *Hypothesis 9 There will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of religiosity at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical. The remaining nine hypotheses were not supported.* In Chapter 5 I present a discussion of the limitations of this research, the theoretical and practical implications, the contributions made by the research conducted for this thesis, and potential future research directions.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Introduction

While there has been an increasing focus on quantitative empirical research to investigate ethical perceptions, behaviour and decision making in different business contexts, this research has not yielded consistent findings. The model suggested by Hunt and Vitell (1986, 1993, 2005, 2006) has mainly been used as a descriptive framework to enable investigation of relevant issues, rather than a prescriptive paradigm. Slices of the model have been used to investigate relationships between the suggested variables. In different contexts these variables have not had consistent impacts. Both culture and religion appear in the Hunt - Vitell model. However they have generally been used as either context of research, or to enable comparative studies to be undertaken between different religious or cultural groups.

Academics and social commentators have emphasised the importance of specific or unique cultural characteristics in influencing, or explaining, the perceptions, values or behaviours of cultural groups. *Greng jai* and patron-client relationships are two such characteristics of Thai culture. However, to date there has not been a quantitative empirical study that addresses the relationship between these characteristics and ethical perceptions and behaviour.

There is also a lack of research dealing with intra-cultural differences in ethical decision making of managers in more and less developed areas of emerging economies. While intra-cultural differences have been identified between provincial and urban Thai, no quantitative empirical research has been undertaken on whether these differences influence ethical perception and behaviour.

Thai Buddhist religiosity has been identified as an important influence on individuals in Thai society. While there has been one study that sought to relation Thai Buddhist religiosity to ethical perception and behaviour, the nature of the relationship between these variables is not clear.

In an attempt to address these gaps in the literature, the research presented in this thesis sought to investigate the following four research questions:

1. How does the Thai cultural characteristic of *greng jai* influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?
2. How does the Thai cultural characteristic of patron-client relationships influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals?
3. How does religious commitment influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making, in general management decisions, and in decisions where *greng jai* or patron-client relationships are evident?

4. Are there differences between the roles played by *geng jai*, patron-client relationships and religious commitment among Bangkok resident Thai managers and professionals and Thai managers and professionals who live in other provinces?

The country in which the research was carried out was Thailand. The reason for this is that Thailand is a country that has never been colonized, and therefore one in which unique aspects of its culture may continue to play a strong role.

Based on existing academic, professional and popular literature identifying anecdotal, narrative, case and other qualitative evidence of the importance of patron-client relationships, *geng jai* and Thai Buddhist religiosity as important influences on behaviour at individual, organizational and societal levels, a number of hypotheses proposing that patron-client relationships, *geng jai*, and Thai Buddhist religiosity would play a role in the likelihood of ethical or unethical action, perceptions of the behaviour of others, and perceptions of whether an action was unethical were developed.

In section 5.2 of this chapter I discuss each hypothesis individually, and in section 5.3 I identify the theoretical and practical implications of the research. In section 5.4 I discuss the limitations of this research, and in section 5.5 I suggest future research directions.

## **5.2 Discussion of results**

A total of 11 hypotheses were tested. The results are summarised in table 5.2 below. None of the hypothesis related to *greng jai*, patron-client relationships or differences between urban and provincial Thai were supported. Two of the three hypotheses on religion were partially supported.

### **5.3.1 Research question 1**

Research question 1 addressed whether the Thai cultural characteristic of *greng jai* influences perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making by Thai managers and professionals? The importance of *greng jai* has been identified by a broad range of writers and researchers (Feig 1989; Holmes and Tantontavy, 1995; Komin, 1990; Reungman, 2004; Roongrerngsuke and Cheosakal 2002; Semler, 1996; Sriussadaporn-Charoennagam and Rablin, 2002). However, no empirical research has been undertaken on its relationship with ethical decision making in Thai business contexts.

**Table 5.1 Summary of Hypothesis Results.**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>H1.</b> For scenarios with a <i>greng jai</i> component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of greng jai relationships at work and unethical intentions.	Not supported
<b>H2.</b> For scenarios with a greng jai component, there will be a positive interaction between self ratings of the influence of <i>greng jai</i> and the likelihood that others would take the same action	Not Supported
<b>H3.</b> There will be a negative interaction between self rating of the influence of <i>greng jai</i> at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical	Not Supported
<b>H4.</b> For scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and unethical intentions.	Not Supported
<b>H5.</b> For scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and unethical intentions	Not Supported
<b>H6.</b> There will be a negative interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical	Not supported
<b>H7.</b> There will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood to behave ethically	Not supported
<b>H8.</b> There will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood that others would take the same action	Partially supported
<b>H9.</b> There will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of religiosity at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical	Partially supported
<b>H10.</b> Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai cultural characteristics of <i>greng jai</i> and patron-client relationships influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professions	Not supported
<b>H11.</b> Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai Buddhist religiosity influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professions	Not supported

Three hypothesis were investigated in this research question. Hypothesis 1 stated '*for scenarios with a greng jai component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of greng jai relationships at work and unethical intentions*'. Scenario 4 and Scenario 7 were the two scenarios that were identified as including a *greng jai* related dilemma. In neither case was influence of *greng jai* at work a significant contributor to the ethical intentions of respondents. As such the hypothesis was not supported.

There are several possible interpretations of why this scenario was not supported. Firstly, it could simply be that the importance of *greng jai* in Thai culture is not as great as suggested in the popular media, and previous qualitative research. It may merely be part of a promoted concept of 'official culture' promulgated by the Thai elites, rather than a universal cultural characteristic. Alternatively, it may have indeed been important in the past, but is now not as important. Secondly, there may just be real differences in the way *greng jai* is applied to business related decisions, as compared to the way it is applied in the broader society. Fisher et al (2004) suggested that as the institutions in a society become more advanced a new business culture emerges and national culture becomes less important as a determinant of managerial decision making. Thirdly, it is possible that there is something unique about the sample. The sample consisted of university educated working managers and professionals completing Masters level studies in Business and associated fields. It is possible that their likelihood of following the same actions is influenced, not by the Thai cultural characteristic of *greng jai*, but by a convergence of values towards 'modern (western) business practices

commonly taught in such courses. Similarly, the group sampled may be the Thai cultural group most likely to adopt a 'new business culture' as described in the previous point.

Finally it could be that the individuals were merely providing the 'socially desirable' response. It can be assumed that the respondents knew what the 'appropriate' ethical response was, and thus provided it, when in reality they would behave differently. However, if this was the case, and *greng jai* really was an important, though socially undesirable, influence on managerial decision making, then it would be expected that a significant interaction would be found when commenting on the actions of others. This is the question addressed in Hypothesis 2. However, no such interaction was found. As such we can conclude that the responses provided to Hypothesis 1 were not merely the provision of socially desirable answers.

Hypothesis 2 stated '*for scenarios with a greng jai component, there will be a positive interaction between self ratings of the influence of greng jai and the likelihood that others would take the same action*'. The reason for asking for a response regarding perceptions of the actions of others was to remove the motivation to provide an answer that painted the respondent's action in a positive light. However, for Scenario 4 and Scenario 7, the two scenarios which directly portrayed a *greng jai* related ethical dilemma, there was no significant relationship between the influence of *greng jai* at work, and the likelihood that others would take the same action. As such, the hypothesis was not supported.

This finding is consistent with hypothesis one and the least complex conclusion is that intra-cultural differences in *greng jai* do not influence ethical decision making. As a counterpoint, however, given that Thailand can be characterized as a group culture, and pride in being Thai is an important part of Thai culture, it is possible that a socially acceptable example could extend to painting all Thai in a positive light. As such, it could be possible that the response provided to both hypothesis one and hypothesis two are invalid. This issue is outside the scope of the research conducted by this thesis, but does open the opportunity for a future program of research.

Hypothesis 3 stated *'there will be a negative interaction between self rating of the influence of greng jai at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical'*. Again, Scenarios 4 and 7 were the scenarios in which a *greng jai* related dilemma was evident. No significant relationship was found between self rating of influence of *greng jai* at work, and perceptions that the actions were unethical. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

Similar interpretations to those presented for Hypothesis 1 apply to this result. It may be that it is not the Thai cultural factor of *greng jai*, but other business or professional cultural constructs that are influencing perceptions of whether Thai managers and professionals view behaviours as ethical or unethical in scenarios where the potential for *greng jai* exists. For example, given that many Thai managers were educated in western perspectives of business, it may be that such perspectives are used when evaluating business decisions. In other words, the Thai may be separating Thai culture matters from business matters.

### 5.3.2 Research question 2

Research Question 2 addressed the issue ‘How does the Thai cultural characteristic of patron-client relationships influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision- making by Thai managers and professionals?’ Scenario 6 was identified as the scenario in which a patron-client relationship was evident. While the importance of patron-client relationships has been identified by a number of writers and researchers (Bunnak, 1992; Fieg, 1989; Kamoche, 2000 Komin, 1990; Ku, 2002; Mann and Parinyavuttichai, 2002; Pornpitakapan, 2000; Roongrerngsuke and Cheosakul, 2002), to date, little empirical research on its role in ethical decision making in the Thai context has been conducted. Again, three hypotheses were tested, dealing with the ethical intentions of respondents, the ethical intentions of others, and perceptions of ethical behaviour.

Hypothesis 4 stated *‘for scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and unethical intentions’*. For the two scenarios in which patron-client relationship dilemmas were presented, there was no relationship between self rating of influence of client patron relationship and ethical intention. As such the hypothesis was not supported.

My interpretation of the reasons why the stated importance of patron-client relationships at work do not significantly interact with the nature of the ethical

decision of the managers and professionals surveyed is consistent with my interpretation of the lack of significance of *greng jai* in Thai business settings, as discussed in Hypothesis 1. In summary, either the importance of patronage has been exaggerated in past research, or has become less important in general Thai society over time; or there are now differences in the way patronage applies in modern Thai business cultures; or that the sample was influenced by the nature of their professional education.

*The proposition addressed in hypothesis 5 was 'for scenarios with a patronage component, there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of patron-client relationships at work and unethical intentions'.* As no relationship was found between influence of patron-client relationship and likelihood that others would take the same action in either relevant scenario, the hypothesis was not supported. The stated level of influence of patronage does not relate to how a Thai manager evaluates the likelihood of others to behave ethically or unethically. Again, social desirability of responses does not appear to play a role, as there is no interaction between patronage and the actions of others evident. This again supports the contentions made related to the role of patronage in the discussion of hypothesis 4 above.

Hypothesis 6 addressed the relationship between influence of patron-client relationships and perceptions of ethical behaviour. Specifically, the proposition presented was *'there will be a negative interaction between self rating of the*

*influence of patron-client relationships at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical*'. As no significant relationship was found the hypothesis was not supported.

Consistent with my discussion of *greng jai* in hypothesis 1 and 3, and my discussion of patronage in hypothesis 4, the conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that professional or business culture norms other than the Thai cultural characteristic of patron-client relationships influence perceptions of ethical or unethical behaviour in scenarios where the potential for patronage exists. For example, we may be seeing accounting, finance or marketing professional ethical norms being applied to the decision related to the scenarios presented rather than Thai cultural values.

### **5.3.3 Research question 3**

Research question three was *'how does religious commitment influence perceptions of ethical behaviour in decision-making, in general management decisions, and in decisions where greng jai or patron-client relationships are evident?'* The empirical research into the role of ethical decision making has not been consistent (Loe, Ferrell and Mansfield 2000). While there has been empirical research conducted into the role of religion in Thai management contexts (e.g. Bunnak 1990, 1991; Komin, 1990; Suparb 1998), and specifically in ethical decision making in the Thai cultural context (Singhapakdi, Salyachivin and Virakul 2000), this research has frequently relied on Judeo-Christian perceptions of religiosity and has failed to yield consistent findings.

*Again there were three hypothesis dealing with ethical intent, actions of others, and perceptions of the nature of the ethical dilemma*

Hypothesis 7 stated that *'there will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood to behave ethically'*. In each of the five scenarios identified as potentially dealing with a dilemma in which religion could influence decision making at work, no significant relationship was found between religiosity and likelihood to behave ethically. Thus Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Again, this finding can be interpreted in a manner consistent with the interpretations of Hypothesis 1 (*greng jai*) and Hypothesis 4 (*patronage*). In addition, my findings support some prior research regarding the lack of a clear link between Thai Buddhist religiosity and ethical business decision making (Singhapakdi et al 2000).

By using a measure that asked for their own reported Thai religiosity, rather than measures adapted from Christian concepts of religion, it clarifies the findings of Singkapakdi et al (2001), indicating that Thai Buddhist religiosity does not consistently play a role in ethical decisions in Thai professional contexts. To qualify this, however, there was religiosity did play a role in two of the scenarios when the question of the action of others was asked (see Hypothesis 8). However, the contribution to variance was extremely low, and

was only present in three of the scenarios. As such it can be argued that Thai Buddhist religiosity has little real impact on self reported ethical intentions.

Hypothesis 8 addressed the relationship between religion and the actions of others. It states *'there will be a positive interaction between self reported Thai Buddhist religiosity and the likelihood that others would take the same action'*. Relationships were found between the influence of religion at work and the likelihood others would take the same action in three of the five scenarios. However, while significant, the actual contribution to the variance was extremely low, and only occurred in three of the five scenarios. As such it can be argued that there was no real social desirability issue exists.

Specifically, an interaction was found in Scenario 1, which dealt with delaying reporting sales to receive additional bonus payments, Scenario 2 in which a manager authorizes an arguably inappropriate goodwill gesture, and Scenario 4, which addresses providing credit to a friend who did not meet organisation guidelines. As such, the hypothesis was partly supported. The nature of the scenarios did not appear to have any particular religious overtones. In all cases, however, the contribution was quite low with adjusted R<sup>2</sup> values being .013, .010 and .022 respectively. Given this low contribution, and the fact that significance was only found in three of the five scenarios, it can be concluded that Thai Buddhist religiosity does not play a strong or consistent role in influencing perceptions of behaviour of Thai managers and professionals. This finding corresponds with the trend in the data generally showing that Thai

cultural values appear to be separated from matters undertaken in business contexts.

*Hypothesis 9 states' there will be a positive interaction between self rating of the influence of religiosity at work and perceptions of the actions were unethical'*

Religion was only significant at the .05 level in one of the five scenarios. As such, on balance the hypothesis was only partially supported

The scenario where a significant finding was found was one in which an inappropriate gift was given. The contribution made, however was very low (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> .017). As such on balance, consistent with the interpretations provided for earlier results, it can be argued that professional and business culture factors other than religiosity influence perceptions of the nature of ethical decision making by Thai managers and professionals. In other words, the scenario did not have specific religious conditions, but rather a patron-client focus.

#### **5.3.4 Research question 4**

Research question 4: Are there differences between the roles played by *geng jai*, patron-client relationships and religious commitment among Bangkok resident Thai managers and professionals and Thai managers and professionals who live in other provinces? While Komin (1990) and Suparb (1998) have conducted research on differences between provincial and urban

Thais, there has been no empirical research on differences in ethical decision making between these groups. From the broader literature on both cultural convergence (e.g. Fisher and Hartel 2005) and business ethics (e.g. Ferrell 2005) it could be expected that such differences would exist. Two hypotheses were used to investigate this research question

Hypothesis 10 stated: *'Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai cultural characteristics of *geng jai* and patron-client relationships influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professionals'*. No significant difference was found on the self rating of *geng jai* and patron-client relationships by Bangkok and provincial managers and professionals.

In discussion of the results of earlier hypothesis I suggested that the sample of university educated managers and professionals currently studying at Masters level may possess business and professional cultural characteristics that transcend or over-ride, to some extent, their Thai culture. Similarly, these individuals form part of a middle class that may be more likely to be exposed to modern (western) influences. Further it should be noted that all these individuals were studying at accredited universities. As such the provinces in which they were located were not the least developed provinces in Thailand. This would also decrease the likelihood that such individuals were unexposed to modern (western) influences in their daily lives. As such, despite the differences in their location in the more developed province of Bangkok, and the less

developed provinces in greater Thailand, there were no detectable differences between these middle class managers and business professionals.

In Hypothesis 11 the following proposition was presented: *Provincial Thai managers and professionals are more likely to indicate that the Thai Buddhist religiosity influence their behaviour at work than Bangkok managers and professionals.* There were not significant differences in rating between the two groups of managers and professionals on the question of influence of religion at work. As such the hypothesis was not supported

It is possible to explain the lack of difference in religiosity in exactly the same way as I have explained the lack of difference in *greng jai* or patronage in Hypothesis 10. It is the business and professional and social class characteristics of these middle class managers that define the influence religion has at work rather than their location in Bangkok or in less developed provinces.

#### **5.4 Theoretical and practical implications**

A number of theoretical and practical issues arise from the research conducted for this thesis. The first two goals of this research were to investigate the influence of culture specific characteristics – *greng jai* and patronage- on the ethical decision making of managers and professionals in Thailand. Both these culture specific characteristics and the Thai context were domains that were under-researched. The results of this research indicate that for educated middle class managers, the Thai cultural characteristics of *greng jai and client patron relationships do not interact with* ethical intentions, expectations of others behaviour, or the nature of ethical dilemmas.

This finding makes an important contribution to the body of literature. While anecdotal, case and other qualitative research emphasis the roles that these two characteristics play, this research demonstrated empirically that, at least for educated Thai middle class managers and professionals, the role of these characteristics has either been exaggerated in the past, or become less important in the present Thus, it would appear that business has its own culture for Thai, and that Thai managers differentiate between Thai culture and business culture in their attitudes and behaviours,

There is also a contribution made to relation to the broader stream of empirical research in the domain of business ethics. Both Loe, Ferrell and Mansfield (2000) and O'Fallen and Butterfield (2005) highlighted the lack of consistency in

the results of empirical research into business ethics. While the Hunt Vitell model does provide a framework in which research can be conducted, the complexity of the model has meant that researchers have tended to investigate interactions between selected variables only. The proposition that different impacts will be observed in different contexts has not been empirically investigated. In the research conducted for this thesis, Thai cultural characteristics did not have an impact, the role of religiosity was limited, and there were no differences identified between rural and urban cultural contexts. These findings bring into question the role of culture as specified in the Hunt Vitell model.

The research also has practical implications for management of Thai managers and professionals, the design and implementation of informal and formal control systems, corporate governance, and managerial performance appraisal systems in the Thai business environment. If unique Thai cultural characteristics play little role in the ethical decision making of Thai managers and professionals, it becomes easier for both Thai and foreign multinational corporations to adopt and implement common international best practice systems to manage individuals and the organisation.

This finding also has practical implications related to the use of host or home country managers by foreign multinational corporations operating in Thailand, and for the career paths of Thai managers and professionals working for either foreign or Thai multinational corporations. If the nature of ethical decision making by Thai managers and professionals is not influenced by their own

national culture, but rather by their business or professional cultures, the necessity for home country managers to be placed in Thailand for organisation control and compliance reason is diminished, and the opportunity for Thai managers to successfully take up foreign placements increased.

The third goal was to investigate the role of religion. There were mixed findings as to its role in ethical decision making in general, and in the Thai business context. One of the reasons suggested in empirical literature on the Thai context was that measures of religiosity commonly used were based on Christian constructs of religion. Using a Thai Buddhism specific measure of religiosity, it has been demonstrated that Thai Buddhism has little or no real impact for educated Thai Managers and professionals on ethical intentions, expectations of others behaviour and the nature of ethical dilemmas. This finding has similar practical implications to those identified for the Thai cultural characteristics of *greng jai* and patronage.

The fourth goal was to explore intra-cultural differences in city and provincial managers and professionals related to perceptions of ethical decision making. No real differences were found. The lack of difference diverges from the findings made by Komin (1998). From a theoretical perspective, this means that there has been a convergence of values within Thailand over time. The practical implications of this finding is that when dealing with managers and professionals from Bangkok or less developed provinces, similar perceptions related to behaviour can be expected. This also has implications for design and implementation of management performance and organisation control systems

of companies operating in multiple locations within Thailand. Specifically, it may be possible to implement country wide systems, rather than expect difference to occur based on a stereotypical perspective of the nature of managers in urban and provincial Thailand.

### **5.5 Limitations of the research conducted for this thesis**

There are a number of limitations related to this research. Firstly, the sample group was working managers and professionals who were currently studying Master's level degrees in business related courses. Questions may arise regarding the as to how generalisable the results are to the broader population of Thai managers and professionals, given that not all managers are motivated to study higher degrees. However, the use of this cohort is consistent, much of the prior research. In addition, the sample size was at least comparable with, and generally much larger than, the samples sizes of prior research.

Secondly, the scales used to measure the independent variables were single item scales. Again this is consistent with prior research. The decision to use such scales was based on, firstly maintaining consistency with prior research, and secondly, operational issues related to keeping the questionnaire to a manageable length. However, it is possible that the use of more complex, multi-item scales would have yielded a more nuanced result.

Thirdly, the research was cross-sectional. Changes in the external environment for example legislative reform, the current global financial crisis, or the current

political crisis, may change perceptions of the ethical intentions, behaviour or assessment of ethical issues.

Finally, despite the comprehensive process thought which the scenario's and measures were developed and translated, there is always the possibility that the meaning of the scenario's or the nature or the items were interpreted differently to the way intended by the researcher.

### **5.5 Directions for future research**

There are several potential opportunities for further research. Firstly, the research in this thesis could be used as the basis for replication and extension to other national contexts. Secondly this research could be replicated and extended to different employee and/or professional groups within Thailand. Thirdly, scenarios could be developed for use in evaluating the relationship of cultural characteristics to other forms of decision making. Fourthly, a more comprehensive multi-item based measure of Thai Buddhist religiosity could be developed and applied to research into decision making, within the Thai context.

Finally, any of the above approaches could be applied concurrently as part of a rich stream of potential research into culture specific characteristics, religiosity and decision making in multiple national contexts. More specifically, it would be interesting to examine the idea of a separation between business and culture in various cultural context. It may be that in some cultures, religion crosses over

into business dealings, while in others it does not. How it crosses over also needs to be examined as participation of religious rituals in the workplace may not translate to religion being a criteria on which business decisions are made.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The underlying intention of this research was to use quantitative techniques to investigate intra-cultural differences in the role played by *greng jai*, patron-client relationships and Thai Buddhist religiosity when Thai managers and professionals from Bangkok and provincial Thailand were asked to address ethical dilemmas. Though the role of these characteristics of Thai society have been regularly documented in the media, business professional publications, and qualitative research, there had been little quantitative empirical testing undertaken. The results of the research call into question the importance of these characteristics as influences on the behaviour of Thai managers and professionals operating in the contemporary business environment.

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## **APPENDIX 1 ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCENARIOS**

### **CASE 1:**

A sales manager realises that the projected quarterly sales figures will not be met, and thus the manager will not receive a bonus. However, there is a customer order which if shipped before the customer needs it, will ensure that the manager receives the quarterly bonus but will have no effect on the annual sales figures.

**Action:** The sales manager ships the order this quarter to ensure that the quarterly sales bonus is earned.

### **CASE 2.**

An Australian manager of a company eager to do more business abroad, has been requested to make an undisclosed cash payment to a manager of a local distributor in a foreign country. The payment is requested as a “goodwill gesture” that will allow the Australian company to introduce its product in that foreign country. This practice is considered a normal business procedure in that country and no laws prohibit such a payment there.

**Action:** The Australian manager verbally authorises the payment.

### **CASE 3:**

A salesperson has just been promoted to product manager. The salesperson’s first responsibility is for a new, highly successful small kitchen appliance. This person will be paid in part based on sales of this product. On reviewing

information about the new product, the salesperson discovers that there has been insufficient product testing to meet new Commonwealth product safety guidelines. However, all testing so far indicated no likelihood of any safety problem.

**Action:** The salesperson authorises the sales force to continue to promote and sell the product.

**CASE 4:**

A promising new company applies for a loan at a bank. The Credit Manager at the bank is a friend of and frequently goes golfing with the company's owner. Because of this new company's short credit history, it does not meet the bank's normal lending criteria.

**Action:** The Credit Manager recommends extending the loan.

**CASE 5:**

The CEO of a company requests that the financial controller reduce the estimate for bad debts in order to increase reported income, arguing that this is a common practice in the industry when times are hard. Historically, the company has made very conservative allowances for doubtful accounts, even in bad years. The CEO's request would make it one of the least conservative in the industry.

**Action:** The financial controller makes the adjustment.

**Case 6:**

A construction company has the contract with the government agency to build a new office building. After they finish the job, they need to have the quality of the building inspected and a completion certificate issued by a senior government official. Before the inspection, the construction company's project manager

gives the senior government official a high value gift. The company's project officer does not ask for special treatment from the senior government official.

**Action:** The senior government official keeps the gift.

**Case 7:**

A government agency has a project to print an historical book, which will be sold to the public. In general, to award a contract to print a book, government agencies have to call for tenders, in open competition, and award the contract to a company that offers the lowest price. The exception to this is when there is only one supplier of a particular quality of product, in which case the Director General of the government agency can award the contract without open competition. One well-known company has won awards for the quality and design for the historical books it has printed for other agencies. the wife of the General Director is a Board member of this printing company and her family is a major share holder.

**Action:** The General Director awards the contact to this company without having an open competition.



## Dependent variables

For each Scenario respondents were instructed to:

Indicate your answer to the following questions by placing a tick [✓] in the appropriate place:

The probability that I would undertake the same action is

High 

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 Low

The probability that my peers would undertake the same action is

High 

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 Low

The action described above is

Ethical 

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 Unethical

## APPENDIX 3:THAI LANGUAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

### เรียน ท่านผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

ขอขอบพระคุณเป็นอย่างยิ่งที่ท่านให้ความร่วมมือในการตอบแบบสอบถามครั้งนี้ การตอบคำถามต่างๆ จะใช้เวลาประมาณ 15 นาที ก่อนที่ท่านจะลงมือตอบคำถามกรุณาอ่านคำแนะนำต่อไปนี้อย่างละเอียด

1. จุดมุ่งหมายของงานวิจัยนี้คือ การศึกษาถึงกระบวนการตัดสินใจของบุคคล
2. กรุณาตอบคำถามโดยตลอดทุกหน้า
3. คำตอบของท่านไม่มีคำตอบที่ผิดหรือถูก ดังนั้นโปรดกรุณาตอบคำถามตามความคิดเห็นของท่านให้ดีที่สุด โดยวิเคราะห์จากกรณีศึกษาแต่ละกรณี
4. ถ้าท่านมีข้อสงสัยใดๆ เกี่ยวกับคำถามต่างๆ ในแบบสอบถามนี้ กรุณายกมือขึ้น ผู้วิจัยพร้อมที่จะแนะนำ และตอบข้อสงสัยของท่าน















**ข้อมูลส่วนบุคคล**

1. ท่านอายุ \_\_\_\_\_ ปี
2. เพศ (วงกลม) หญิง ชาย
3. ท่านมีประสบการณ์ในการทำงานมานานเท่าใด  
\_\_\_\_\_ ปี \_\_\_\_\_ เดือน
4. ระดับการศึกษาของท่าน (โปรดระบุสาขา)
5. ท่านจบการศึกษาจากประเทศใด \_\_\_\_\_
6. ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาแม่ของท่านหรือไม่ (วงกลม) ใช่ ไม่ใช่
7. ลักษณะของหน่วยงานของท่าน (ทำเครื่องหมาย ✓)  
( ) บริษัทขนาดใหญ่  
( ) บริษัทขนาดกลาง  
( ) บริษัทขนาดเล็ก  
( ) อื่นๆ โปรดระบุ \_\_\_\_\_
8. งานหลักของบริษัทของท่าน (เช่น วิศวกร, หน่วยราชการ, บัญชี)  
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9. บริษัทของท่าน เป็น  
( ) บริษัทขนาดใหญ่  
( ) บริษัทร่วมทุนระหว่างไทย และ \_\_\_\_\_ (โปรดระบุประเทศ)  
( ) บริษัทข้ามชาติ (โปรดระบุประเทศ) \_\_\_\_\_
10. ตำแหน่งปัจจุบันของท่าน \_\_\_\_\_
11. โปรดระบุสาขาวิชาชีพของท่าน (เช่น นักบัญชี, เจ้าหน้าที่การเงิน)  
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