2013

An individual-centric study of career paths and development of serial project managers

Jason D. Bingham
Southern Cross University

Publication details
Bingham, JD 2013, 'An individual-centric study of career paths and development of serial project managers', DBA thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.
Copyright JD Bingham 2013

ePublications@SCU is an electronic repository administered by Southern Cross University Library. Its goal is to capture and preserve the intellectual output of Southern Cross University authors and researchers, and to increase visibility and impact through open access to researchers around the world. For further information please contact epubs@scu.edu.au.
An Individual-centric study of career paths and development of serial project managers

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Business Administration

Southern Cross University, NSW, Australia

Presented by candidate:

Jason D. Bingham

BA Humanities – Applied Ethics (Griffith University, Australia)
Master of Business Administration (Queensland University of Technology, Australia)

Submitted: 18th March 2013

© Jason D. Bingham
Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

SIGNED: ______________________________

DATED: 18 March 2013

Candidate: Jason D. Bingham
Abstract

An individual-centric study of career paths and development of serial project managers

For the past 60 years or so, organisations have increasingly been using projects to achieve their strategic objectives. The World Bank suggests that 22% of the world’s USD $48 trillion GDP is gross capital formation, which is almost entirely project-based. In India the figure is 34%, and in China it is 45%. Moreover, there is the growing propensity across all industries to undertake more project-based activity within operating expenditures. With projects representing such a significant proportion of global economic activity, the importance of project management, including the human capital inputs, becomes apparent. Yet project management is a relatively young area of academic inquiry and is both broader and less mature as a discipline than more traditional examples such as engineering, medicine or law. Furthermore, it comprises knowledge areas that span the highly technical through to the softer disciplines. Skills can therefore be learned through academic study, experience or both, meaning there are few formal barriers to entry in this field of work and career. This study relates to career development theory and project management theory and more specifically to the individual career paths and development of project managers. A review of this body of theory led to the research problem, which is that not enough is known about serial project managers, including their career path experiences, their attitudes and perceptions about PM as a career and profession, their contribution to strengthening the PM profession, and their own future development needs. This problem of poor understanding has a plethora of implications, not only academically but for PM careerists, their profession and the industry sectors in which their services are in demand.

The study explores serial project managers in Queensland Australia, using a qualitative methodology. The specific technique or method used is semi-structured interviews, chosen because of its ability to provide maximum opportunity for complete and accurate communication of ideas between the researcher and participant. The sample group in this study comprised participants who could demonstrate at least equivalence to PMI’s PMP® credential, a globally recognised standard and arguably the best-known of its type at time of writing. In total there were 25 participants. Three research questions were deployed: (1) what have today’s PMs’ career path experiences been, (2) how do today’s PMs relate to their current situation including the PM profession, and (3) what are today’s PMs’ views on their career futures and development priorities? The research questions were supported by a larger set of interview questions.

The interpreted results of this study include nine conclusions in relation to the research questions and two in relation to the overall research problem. In relation to the research problem, the main conclusion of this study is that project managers tend to be highly experienced, multi-disciplined professionals whose association with the project management profession is often characterised by latency, emergence and self-identification. Moreover, with project management still being relatively young and emergent when compared to other and more traditional professions, the concept of the project manager career hence presents as a moving, impalpable target that whilst on the one hand benefits from being flexible to labour market demands, on the other hand seems inevitably encumbered with poor understanding, not least by project sponsors, early careerists and in many cases project managers themselves. This epitomises the situation of the serial project manager.
Acknowledgements

The development of this thesis would not have been possible without the support of a range of individuals.

First and foremost I must dedicate this work to my family including my wife Niki, our children (James, Elyssa and Joshua) and our parents (Roslyn, Derek, Veena and Colin). Niki in particular has been eminently patient with my work and especially considering that we have started and grown our family, by three, during this same period. Also, I could not overstate how appreciative that both Niki and I have been for the unwavering support and encouragement that we have received from our parents during this time.

Next, thanks to my academic supervisors. Firstly to Dr James Cowley, who supervised my work with both patience and precision, including supporting me to realise a personal objective of producing applied research under the DBA structure. Secondly, to Dr Phil Neck who was particularly helpful in assisting me to respond to the examiners’ feedback. And finally, to the examiners themselves who provided invaluable feedback towards the final version of this thesis.

Thanks also to my employer during this period, for providing me the mental bandwidth to see this study through. Juggling work, a young family and study for a doctoral research degree is a challenge perhaps best understood only by having experienced it. Without my employer’s enduring support this journey would not have been possible.

Of course, it is essential that I also thank the participants in the research interviews. Their frank, honest and candid responses underpin why I embarked on this study. Likewise, outputs are only as good as their inputs and to quote an expert, “One should sedulously seek participants in the sphere of life who are acute observers and who are well informed. One such person is worth a hundred others who are merely unobservant participants” (Blumer 1986).

Finally, thank you to the many anonymous and often oblivious contributors who provoked and inspired my thoughts, including participants in the doctoral symposiums that form part of the degree program under which this study was completed. From each and every interaction I found myself stretching my thinking and redefining my personal understanding of rigorous, purposeful research.

Thank you.
# Table of Contents

Declaration........................................................................................................................................i
Abstract...........................................................................................................................................ii
Acknowledgements.........................................................................................................................iii
Table of Contents............................................................................................................................iv
List of tables ......................................................................................................................................ix
List of figures .....................................................................................................................................xi
Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................................xii

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................1
   1.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................1
   1.2 Background to this study .......................................................................................................1
   1.3 Aim and objective of this study ............................................................................................3
      1.3.1 The research aim and relevant literature .......................................................................3
      1.3.2 The research problem and objective .............................................................................3
   1.4 Overview of the research methodology ................................................................................4
   1.5 Contributions of this study ....................................................................................................4
      1.5.1 Contributions to theory ..................................................................................................4
      1.5.2 Contributions to practice ................................................................................................5
      1.5.3 Dissemination ................................................................................................................6
   1.6 Limitations and delimitations of this study ..........................................................................6
   1.7 Outline of this thesis ..............................................................................................................7
   1.8 Definitions of key terms ........................................................................................................8
   1.9 Conclusion .............................................................................................................................9

2 Literature review .........................................................................................................................10
   2.1 Introduction ...........................................................................................................................10
   2.2 Parent discipline 1 – project management .........................................................................11
5 Conclusions and implications ........................................................................................................... 117

5.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 117

5.2 Discussion of the research findings in light of the academic literature ...................................... 117

5.2.1 A deliberately open and interdisciplinary approach .................................................................... 118

5.2.2 The situation of the project manager epitomising modern conceptions of career .................... 119

5.2.3 Their career path fundamentally different to the functional (line) manager’s ............................ 120

5.2.4 Their professional commitment not determinable by postgraduate qualifications .................. 121

5.2.5 Their perceptions of career success as developing, subjectively driven persons ...................... 122

5.2.6 Their propensity for self-management and grounded personal branding ..................................... 123

5.2.7 Their perceptions and handling of life/career stages ................................................................. 124

5.2.8 Their limited emphasis on project management tools as boundary objects ............................... 125

5.2.9 Their level of interest and support in the learning of others ...................................................... 126

5.2.10 Organisational career path design as part of HRM practices ................................................ 127

5.2.11 Organisational variability in perceptions of the role and its competencies ............................... 128

5.2.12 Context of project management’s profession status ............................................................... 130

5.2.13 Challenges for the PM in transforming and leaving behind .................................................. 132

5.3 Conclusions in relation to the research questions ........................................................................ 133

5.3.1 Conclusions in relation to RQ1 ................................................................................................ 136

5.3.2 Conclusions in relation to RQ2 ................................................................................................ 137

5.3.3 Conclusions in relation to RQ3 ................................................................................................ 141

5.4 Conclusions in relation to the research problem ........................................................................ 142

5.5 A model of the serial project manager’s career path and the two-pillar career .............................. 146

5.5.1 The serial project manager’s career path .................................................................................. 146

5.5.2 The two-pillar career: a formative risk-based model for modern careerists .............................. 147

5.6 Implications for current practice ................................................................................................. 148

5.6.1 Implications for early careerists .............................................................................................. 148

5.6.2 Implications for practicing PMs .............................................................................................. 149

5.6.3 Implications for PM associations ............................................................................................ 150
List of tables

Table 1 - Project management process groups and knowledge areas mapping ........................................ 13
Table 2 - Example of a project manager's competence profile ........................................................................ 23
Table 3 - The new ‘protean’ career contract .................................................................................................. 27
Table 4 - Developmental needs in early, middle and late career .................................................................... 31
Table 5 - Interaction of Boundaryless Careers and Project Networks .......................................................... 32
Table 6 - Meaning of career success (% mentioned) ....................................................................................... 34
Table 7 - Summary of methods of improving self-management of careers ................................................... 35
Table 8 - Search of the academic literature on the immediate discipline .................................................... 37
Table 9 - Project manager career path versus functional manager career path ............................................. 43
Table 10 - Overview of the four scientific paradigms .................................................................................... 51
Table 11 - Quantitative vs qualitative research approaches ........................................................................... 54
Table 12 - PMP eligibility requirements (educational and professional experience) .................................... 62
Table 13 - Summary of data collected from the semi-structured interviews ............................................... 68
Table 14 - Country of birth of the sample ...................................................................................................... 69
Table 15 - Current and previous industry sector experience ....................................................................... 70
Table 16 - Degree qualifications held by project managers ........................................................................... 71
Table 17 - Non-degree level qualifications held by project managers ............................................................ 72
Table 18 - How PMs come to identify themselves with the project management profession ..................... 73
Table 19 - PMs’ number of years industry experience before considering self a bona fide PM .............. 75
Table 20 - PMs’ number of roles during their career (other than PM) ........................................................... 76
Table 21 - Countries lived and worked in (excluding short stays) ................................................................. 76
Table 22 - PMs' characterisation of their level of career self-management .................................................... 77
Table 23 - The role and value of ‘personal branding’ in PMs' careers ............................................................ 79
Table 24 - PMs’ perceptions and attitudes towards career plateaus ............................................................. 82
Table 25 - PM’s professional memberships held during their career ............................................................ 85
Table 26 - PMs' perception of the relative value of PM as a career theme ................................................... 86
Table 27 - What PMs call themselves to others ................................................................. 88
Table 28 - How active PMs are in their PM professional association .................................. 89
Table 29 - PMs’ levels of interaction with early careerists .................................................. 90
Table 30 - PMs’ attitudes towards the role of PMs in supporting early careerists ............... 92
Table 31 - How PMs define career success ........................................................................... 95
Table 32 - PMs’ reflections on career regrets ..................................................................... 97
Table 33 - PMs’ perceptions of how reliant their self-identity is on their PM work persona .... 99
Table 34 - Do PMs view their career and related needs in terms of life stages ..................... 102
Table 35 - PMs’ perceptions of their current stage of career ............................................. 104
Table 36 - PMs’ identified future development needs for themselves ................................. 105
Table 37 - PMs’ expectations on their organisation in supporting their development needs .... 107
Table 38 - PMs’ attitudes towards late stage of career leading to end of career ................. 109
Table 39 - PMs’ overall comments on their self and the PM profession as relate to career .... 112
Table 40 - Organisational vs. Individual view of required PM competencies across project types ... 130
Table 41 - PMs’ perceptions of project management against the 9 traits of a profession ........ 132
Table 42 - The interview questions’ respective contribution to answering the research questions . 134
Table 43 - Indicators suggestive of two pillars (or more) in the serial project managers’ career .... 139
List of figures

Figure 1-1 Outline of this thesis .................................................................................................................. 7
Figure 2-1 Concept map of the literature review ...................................................................................... 10
Figure 2-2 The generic project life cycle .................................................................................................. 14
Figure 2-3 Two dimensions of boundaryless careers .............................................................................. 26
Figure 2-4 The Systems Theory Framework of career development ...................................................... 30
Figure 2-5 Comparative matching of functional manager’s and project manager’s career paths ...... 41
Figure 3-1 Conceptual and theoretical framework resulting from the literature review .................... 53
Figure 3-2 The process of quantitative research ....................................................................................... 56
Figure 3-3 The process of qualitative research ......................................................................................... 58
Figure 3-4 Complementary mixes of qualitative and quantitative research methods ......................... 60
Figure 5-1 Career path influencing forces in becoming and staying a serial project manager .......... 146
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACE</td>
<td>Association for the Advancement of Cost Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPM</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Project Management (Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZSCO</td>
<td>Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APM</td>
<td>Association for Project Management (United Kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPPD</td>
<td>Certified Practising Project Director, AIPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPPM</td>
<td>Certified Practising Project Manager, AIPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPPP</td>
<td>Certified Practising Project Practitioner, AIPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPCM</td>
<td>Engineering, Procurement, and Construction Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICB</td>
<td>IPMA Competence Baseline, Version 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPMA</td>
<td>International Project Management Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Organization for Standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>Interview Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSCI</td>
<td>My System of Career Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCDA</td>
<td>National Career Development Association (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCSPM</td>
<td>National Competency Standards for Project Management (Australia), AIPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGC</td>
<td>Office of Government Commerce (United Kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Project Manager or Project Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMA</td>
<td>Project Management Associates (India)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMBOK</td>
<td>Project Management Body of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMCD</td>
<td>Project Manager Competency Development Framework, PMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMI</td>
<td>Project Management Institute (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMO</td>
<td>Project Management Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMP®</td>
<td>Project Management Professional, PMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMRC</td>
<td>Project Management Research Committee (China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCE2®</td>
<td><strong>PRojects IN Controlled Environments</strong>, OGC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICS</td>
<td>Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCU</td>
<td>Southern Cross University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STF</td>
<td>Systems Theory Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCM</td>
<td>Total Cost Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web</td>
<td>World Wide Web</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study.

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study, which examines the individual career paths and development of project managers. The chapter commences with the background and aim of the study and then proceeds to overview the research design and methodology, including limitations. The chapter then describes the contributions of this study, both theoretical and practical. This is followed by an outline of the thesis structure as well as definitions of the key terms used in this study.

1.2 Background to this study

For the past 60 years or so, organisations have increasingly been using projects to achieve their strategic objectives (Morris & Jamieson 2004; Paton, Hodgson & Cicmil 2010). This has been in the context of a rapidly changing macro-environment which has exhibited increasing socio-economic complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity. Through projects, resources are mobilised in temporary activity to bring about value-adding change taking into account the relevant environmental factors.

The primary domain of projects and project management has, until the mid-1980s, largely been limited to construction, defence, engineering and information technology. Today however, project-based working is much more widely spread and has become an embedded, readily deployable work mode in many organisations. Currently, more than 20% of global economic activity occurs in projects, and in some emerging economies this figure exceeds 30% (Bredillet 2010).

In developed countries such as Australia the key sectors of economic output such as the resources and energy sectors are overwhelmingly project-based. Current demand for this type of work is unprecedented. The Australian Government’s Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics has identified 106 projects at the Publicly Announced Stage with a potential value of over $91 billion, 171 projects at the Feasibility Stage that have a combined value of $292 billion, and 87 projects at the Committed Stage worth $268 billion (Barber et al. 2012). Moreover, the demand for related project labour is forecast to increase by 70% between 2010 and 2015 (DEEWR 2010).

Data produced by the World Bank (World development indicators CD-ROM 2009) suggests that 22% of the world’s USD $48 trillion GDP is gross capital formation, which is almost entirely project-based. In India the figure is 34%, and in China it is 45%. In addition there is a growing propensity across all industries to undertake more project-based activity within operating expenditures (Paton, Hodgson & Cicmil 2010; Sydow, Lindkvist & DeFillippi 2004, p. 1475).

With projects representing such a significant proportion of global economic activity, the importance of project management, including the human capital inputs, becomes apparent. Yet project management is a relatively young area of academic inquiry, being both broader and less mature as a discipline than more traditional examples such as engineering, medicine or law. Furthermore, it comprises knowledge areas that span the highly technical through to the softer disciplines. Skills in these areas can be learned through academic study, experience or both, meaning there are few formal barriers to entry in this field of work and career. This in turn means that there are few single...
or expansive registers of project managers, although many governments do tend to capture basic
related information through mechanisms such as censuses and surveys – for example, ANZSCO
*(ANZSCO: Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations First Edition 2006;
ANZSCO: Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations First Edition Revision 1
2009)*.

So how do project workers including project managers organise themselves such that their common
interests are advanced? For individuals who associate their skill set first and foremost with project
management, they typically join a professional body such as the Project Management Institute
(PMI). PMI is a significant, global organisation with more than 500,000 individual members and
credential holders across 185 countries *(PMI 2010)*. Country-specific associations exist also, such as
AIPM in Australia, APM in the United Kingdom, PMA in India, and PMRC in China. Many of these
country-specific associations are also represented globally, through the International Project
Management Association (IPMA). It is these types of professional networks that play a key role in
developing and supporting the ‘ties that bind’ the profession.

A further key value driver of membership of project management associations, apart from
networking and advocacy, is that they typically have competency and/or exam-based certifications.
These provide members a means by which to be recognised for their characteristically generalist, or
interdisciplinary, skills in managing projects. Certification and accompanying credentials also help
provide at least some form of barrier to entry to the profession by defining minimum requirements
to be part of the group. For example, PMI’s flagship credential the PMP® *(Project Management
Professional)* has clear requisites including minimum hours of experience across various process
groups.

Noting the context thus far, project managers tend to have a rich diversity of career paths influenced
by a broadly defined and relatively immature profession. Their careers exist in the context of a
delivery-driven and temporary mode of work, including where external networks play a key role in
their sense of belonging to the profession. Emanating from this context project managers tend to
make more movements sideways, upwards and between organisations in their career than their
functional counterparts, and whilst on the one hand there is an attractive uniqueness to this career
path, there are challenges also.

For example, the career path of the project manager tends to be vague, both in terms of the
available points of entry and the predictability of the journey. ‘Bigger is better’ is a popular phrase
associated with managing projects, however this could hardly account for the full breadth of the
profession as already described above. A second consideration is that organisations do not always
have a strong incentive to be committed to project-based workers and whilst this is no surprise
based on the configuration of modern labour markets, its effect is perhaps most acutely felt with
respect to the level of support that project workers receive in relation to career paths and
development. Consider here that in temporal terms, projects and careers can at times be
diametrically opposed.

These and related challenges illustrate both the context and the justification for this study. In this
study this is expanded upon by way of structured academic inquiry.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.3 Aim and objective of this study

This section introduces the research aim, the relevant literature and the research objective.

1.3.1 The research aim and relevant literature

The aim of this study is to undertake a naturalistic enquiry of the diverse, individual career paths and development of serial project managers in Queensland Australia, in order to complete as comprehensive and accurate a picture of the subject area as conditions allow. This type of enquiry necessarily involves both exploration and inspection (representing respectively, depiction and analysis) (Blumer 1986). The overall merit of naturalistic enquiry is that that it respects and stays close to the empirical domain. Such direct examination permits the scholar to meet all of the basic requirements of an empirical science, namely:

... to confront an empirical world that is available for observation and analysis; to raise abstract problems with regard to that world; to gather necessary data through careful and disciplined examination of that world; to unearth relations between categories of such data; to formulate propositions with regard to such relations; to weave such propositions into a theoretical scheme; and to test the problems, the data, the relations, the propositions, and the theory by renewed examination of the empirical world (Blumer 1986, p. 48).

The relevant literature in this study includes two parent disciplines, namely project management and career development, then the immediate literature which focuses on the individual career paths and development of serial project managers. A review of the relevant literature identified gaps in knowledge, which in turn impede our understanding of serial project managers.

1.3.2 The research problem and objective

The research objective is directly borne out of the research problem, which is that not enough is known about serial project managers, including their career path experiences, their attitudes and perceptions about PM as a career and a profession, their potential contributions to strengthening the PM profession, and their own future development needs. The specific gaps identified in the extant literature include:

1. A gap in our understanding of how serial project managers perceive their own career path experiences;

2. A gap in our understanding of how serial project managers perceive their current situation, including their role as part of a PM profession; and

3. A gap in our understanding of what serial project managers perceive to be their own future career path direction and related development needs.

These gaps in our first hand understanding of project managers have a plethora of implications, not only academically but for PM careerists, the project management profession and the industry sectors in which project managers’ services are in demand.

Thus, the objective of this study is to explore through direct engagement with serial project managers their career path and development experiences, attitudes and perceptions, in order to contribute to theory and practice a body of empirical evidence grounded in first hand perspectives.
1.4 Overview of the research methodology

Three research questions were deployed in this study, they include:

1. What have today’s PMs’ career path experiences been?
2. How do today’s PMs relate to their current situation including the PM profession? and
3. What are today’s PMs’ views on their career futures and development priorities?

The methodology used in this study is qualitative. This is a legitimate research approach (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 1991, pp. 21-43), distinguished from quantitative and critical methods by the following characteristics:

- The assumption is that reality is socially constructed and arises out of social interaction;
- The purpose is contextualisation;
- The researcher role is up close and personal;
- The methodology is inductive/interpretive, the emphasis is on building theory;
- The data collection is by way of captured lived experiences of informants; and
- The data analysis is by way of identification of recurring themes and patterns in the search for meaning.

The specific method used was semi-structured interviews, with serial project managers. Interviews were chosen because of their ability to provide maximum opportunity for complete and accurate communication of ideas between the researcher and participant. Moreover, the ultimate intention was to achieve trustworthiness in the final research output, by focusing on credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

The sample group in this study comprised participants who could demonstrate at least equivalence to PMI’s PMP® credential, a globally recognised standard and arguably the best-known of its type presently. In total there were 25 participants in this study.

1.5 Contributions of this study

This research has benefits both academically and professionally. The specific contributions have been divided into those relating theory and those relating to current practice. The respective contributions are summarised below.

1.5.1 Contributions to theory

The findings of this study collectively represent a substantive contribution to knowledge and theory on the individual career paths and development of project managers. At the outset of this study specific gaps were identified in the literature (see section 2.5.1) and this study has addressed those gaps by providing a mix of insight into, as well as confirmation of, theory reviewed as part of this study. The contributions of this study are detailed in the final chapter and span the following themes:
Chapter 1 - Introduction

- A deliberately open and interdisciplinary approach through systems thinking;
- The situation of the project manager epitomising modern conceptions of career;
- Their career path fundamentally different to the functional (line) manager’s;
- Their professional commitment not determinable by postgraduate qualifications;
- Their perceptions of career success as developing, subjectively driven persons;
- Their propensity for self-management and grounded personal branding;
- Their perceptions and handling of life/career stages;
- Their limited emphasis on project management tools as boundary objects;
- Their level of interest and support in the learning of others;
- Organisational career path design as part of HRM practices;
- Organisational variability in perceptions of the role and its competencies;
- Context of project management’s profession status; and
- Challenges for the PM in transforming and leaving behind.

1.5.2 Contributions to practice

This research set out to provide the following practice-related contributions:

- Better information to inform early careerists entering or contemplating entering project management;
- Improved responsiveness to project manager skills shortages in relevant industry sectors;
- Better understanding by the profession of the experiences and future development needs of serial project managers; and
- Better awareness by organisations of the individual perspectives serial project managers hold in relation to their careers.

In respect to the above, this study achieved its objective. To explain further:

1. Better information for early careerists has been achieved through providing insight into the individual career path and development experiences and attitudes of serial project managers. A summary of implications specific to early careerists is provided in the final chapter (see section 5.6.1);

2. Improved responsiveness to skills shortages has been enabled through providing a better understanding of who project managers are, including what their career path experiences have been and what their attitudes are towards the path they have taken, their current
situation and their future needs. Some key implications specific to project managers is provided in the final chapter (see section 5.6.2);

3. Better understanding by the profession, in particular professional associations, has been enabled through both of the above. This is summarised in the final chapter (see section 5.6.3); and

4. Better awareness by project-oriented organisations has been enabled through this study in general and in particular through the participants’ responses to questions directly related to their perceptions and attitudes towards organisations. This is presented in the final chapter in the form of a self-assessment that organisations can use when considering putting in place a career path framework targeting project managers or project workers more generally (see section 5.6.4).

1.5.3 Dissemination

To support the dissemination of the findings of this study the researcher has firstly identified key, relevant academic routes to publication (for further information, see Table 8). Once this thesis has passed examination and peer review the researcher will disseminate the findings of this study through these or other relevant publications.

To augment the traditional academic paths to dissemination, and recognising the importance of research creating impact in the wider community, the researcher has put in place three additional methods of dissemination. The first additional method has been a web-based, self-hosted request form promoting access to the findings for any interested parties. At the time of writing, more than 100 requests for copies of the final thesis had been received. The request facility has been promoted through social media, such as LinkedIn, and other communities. The second additional method has been to showcase the research through the local PMI chapter, comprising more than 750 members. This form of dissemination and awareness-raising occurred throughout the study. The third additional method has been to make a fully copy of the final thesis publicly available on the researcher’s personal website. The benefits of this approach include (i) a static URL address to survive over time, as well as (ii) the flexibility to easily add complementary research and related information alongside the original thesis report.

1.6 Limitations and delimitations of this study

The following limitations are identified in relation to this study:

1. This study did not attempt to include any participants who did not self-identify as project managers;

2. This study only considered the personal perceptions of project managers in Queensland Australia and to this end did not attempt to gain any perceptions from other stand-alone occupations or professions;

3. This study did not distinguish between project managers who only manage projects, and project managers who may also manage programs or portfolios; and
4. This study did not attempt a detailed quantitative analysis of the responses as the research was exploratory and qualitative in nature.

Whilst the above limitations restrict the generalisability of the findings, they also point the way for further research (see section 5.8).

1.7 Outline of this thesis

This thesis follows the standard five-chapter format developed by Perry (1998). Figure 1-1 below outlines the structure.

Figure 1-1 Outline of this thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1 – Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 – Literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 – Research methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 – Results and data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 – Conclusions and implications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Chapter 1 sets out by describing the background and aims of this study, and then the research design and methodology including limitations and assumptions. The chapter then summarises the contributions of this study, both theoretical and practical. This is followed by an outline of the thesis structure and a summary of key definitions.

Chapter 2 reviews the extant literature including the theoretical basis for the research. The two parent disciplines are explored, including project management and career development. This is followed by a review of the immediate discipline which is the individual career paths and development of project managers. The chapter then summarises the extant literature. Gaps in the literature are identified, the research problem is stated and the research objective and questions are outlined.

Chapter 3 discusses the selection of the research methodology, as well as the data collection, analysis and limitations. The chapter also discusses ethical considerations in the research methodology.

Chapter 4 reports the results and their analysis, including how the data was coded, summarised and assimilated to form the findings of the research.

Chapter 5 takes the analysis of the results, discusses this in light of academic literature, then draws conclusions in relation to the research questions and the research problem. The researcher then introduces a generic model illustrating the career path of the serial project manager. In addition, the researcher introduces a related yet formative concept of the ‘two-pillar career’ orientation. The chapter then draws on the findings, discussion and conclusions to offer some practical implications.
for current practice. To conclude the chapter, and the thesis, the researcher identifies the limitations of this study together with opportunities for further research.

1.8 Definitions of key terms

The following definitions are provided so that the reader can understand the researcher’s precise meanings (Creswell 2003), in the context of this study.

ANZSCO: Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations

ANZSCO is a joint product of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Standards New Zealand and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The ABS uses ANZSCO in surveys and censuses, and to source all new occupation classifications. Similarly, DEEWR uses ANZSCO to analyse emerging and future workforce skills needs, and inform skilled migration settings (DIAC 2010).

Career

“The individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person’s life” (Hall 2002, p. 12).

Career development

“The total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that combine to influence the nature and significance of work in the total lifespan of any given individual” (NCDA 2003).

Career path

“A planned logical sequence of jobs within one or more professions through which a person can progress in the course of their working life” (HRdictionary.com 2011).

Career success

The positive psychological and work-related outcomes accumulated as a result of one’s work experiences (Judge et al. 1995; London 1982; Seibert, Scott E., Crant & Kraimer 1999; Seibert, S.E. & Kramer 2001).

Core theme

A long-term investment in a particular field of occupational specialisation.

Employability

The careerist’s ability to create or obtain work (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth 2004). Employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes possessed by the careerist, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work (Hillage & Pollard 1998).

Portfolio management

“The centralised management of one or more portfolios, which includes identifying, prioritising, authorising, managing and controlling projects, programs and other related work, to achieve specific strategic business objectives” (PMI 2008, p. 433).
Project management

“The application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements” (PMI 2008, p. 435).

Project manager (PM)

“The person assigned by the performing organisation to achieve the project objectives” (PMI 2008, p. 436).

Program management

“The centralised coordinated management of a program to achieve the program’s strategic objectives and benefits” (PMI 2008, p. 434)

Project-oriented organisations

Project-oriented organisations include two types, either project-based or project-led. In project-based organisations the majority of products or services produced are against bespoke designs for customers (Turner & Keegan 2001). In project-led organisations the functional dimensions of organisational structure and process dominate and projects take place in the back office to support the functionally based front office (Hobday 2000).

The serial project manager

A term and concept introduced in this study, the serial project manager is a person who is bona fide by virtue of their repertoire of skills applied to managing projects but who is not necessarily always practicing, nor exclusively.

Two-pillar career

A concept formatively introduced in this study, the two-pillar career is a career orientation that includes two core themes, each established early and maintained through development, over the individual’s career life. Each core theme represents a long-term investment in a particular field of occupational specialisation. A key positive impact (intentional or otherwise) of the two-pillar career is that it mitigates external risks, such as industry and occupation instability. It also positively impacts on internal factors by increasing optionality in relation to the individual’s career priorities by life stage. The key attributes of the two-pillar career are that it is coherence-oriented, flexible, risk-based and pragmatic.

1.9 Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced this study which examines the individual career paths and development of project managers. The chapter commenced with the background and aim of this study then proceeded to overview the research design and methodology, including limitations. The chapter then described the contributions of this study, both to theory and in relation to current practice. This was followed by an outline of the thesis structure as well as definitions of the key terms used in this study.
2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the extant literature relating to this study. The chapter provides both a theoretical basis for the research, and a lens through which to look at the data to be collected and make sense of it in terms of a theory. Two parent disciplines are explored as part of this review - they include project management and career development. This is followed by a review of the immediate discipline, the individual career paths and development of project managers. The above reviews are then followed by a summary of the extant literature including gaps in the literature, the resultant research problem and objective, then the specific research questions to be deployed in this study utilising, through a more detailed set of interview questions. The chapter then concludes.

An initial concept map for this study is provided below. This map is further developed later in the thesis.

Figure 2-1 Concept map of the literature review

In approaching this subject the researcher reviewed various areas of theoretical and academic practice. The researcher concluded that project management was a good field within which to seat the research due to its inextricable relevance to the careers of project managers. Similarly, career development theory was chosen as the second parent discipline because of its strong explanatory focus on modern conceptions of career, together with its coverage of interdisciplinary considerations.

These two fields then allowed the researcher a degree of precision in reviewing the immediate literature which was peer reviewed research or developed theory related to the narrower field of the individual career paths and development of project managers.
2.2 Parent discipline 1 – project management

This section reviews the parent literature on project management.

2.2.1 Introduction

Section 2.2 presents an overview and discussion of project management. The section commences with an overview of key project management concepts, including those of the project, project management, the project life cycle and the project-oriented organisation. The discussion then turns to an overview of key project management standards, competencies and methodologies. This is followed by a discussion on two key tensions in the project-oriented organisation which include integration/embeddedness and knowledge/learning. Lastly, the discussion begins to narrow towards the theme of career, with two questions being posed: is project management a profession, and what or who is the project manager? A summary of the section is then provided, before concluding.

2.2.2 Key concepts

This section reviews key concepts relating to project management.

2.2.2.1 What is a project?

The Project Management Institute’s (PMI) PMBOK® Guide (A guide to the project management body of knowledge) defines a project as “a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result” (PMI 2008, p. 5). Similarly, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines a project as “a set of co-ordinated activities, with a specific start and finish, pursuing a specific goal with constraints on time, cost and resources” (ISO 9001 2000, p. 3). Meredith and Mantel (2000, p. 9) contend that, “In the broadest sense, a project is a specific, finite task to be accomplished. Whether large- or small-scale or whether long- or short-run is not particularly relevant. What is relevant is that the project be seen as a unit”.

According to Nokes et al. (2003, p. 13), there are certain attributes that characterise projects, they include:

- **Projects involve change:** these changes may be simple or complex. The change creates value for the business or operation.

- **Projects have an objective or end point:** once the objective is achieved the project finishes or a new project is created.

- **Projects do not always have a clear path or methodology for achieving the objectives, therefore projects are more risky than day-to-day processes.**

In summary, a project is a mode of work organisation.

2.2.2.2 What is project management?

If projects are a particular mode of work organisation, what then is project management? In a broad sense, and taking into account the macro-environment, project management can be seen “both as a ubiquitous contemporary organisational phenomenon and as a strategic imperative in the current economic and technical climate” (Paton, Hodgson & Cicmil 2010, p. 163). PMI (2008) describes
project management as the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities intended to meet the project requirements. Sapsed and Salter (2004) note project management literature’s long-standing interest in tools and techniques in particular. Some traditional project management tools include cost-benefit analysis, critical path method (CPM), earned value analysis (EVA), Gantt charts, PERT and work breakdown structures (WBS). Wysocki, Beck and Crane (2000) describe project management as a method and set of techniques based on the accepted principles of management used for planning, estimating and controlling work activities to reach a desired end result on time, within budget and according to specification. From the perspective of customer need, this commonly translates to the maxim “on time, on budget, on spec” (Zwerman, Thomas & Haydt 2004, p. 173).

Project management is accomplished through the appropriate application and integration of processes. PMI (2008) for instance has identified 42 project management processes and places these in five logical groupings, the five process groups include: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. With these processes at hand, managing a project typically then includes: (i) identifying the requirements, (ii) addressing the various needs, concerns and expectations of the stakeholders as the project is planned and carried out, and (iii) balancing the competing project constraints such as scope, quality, schedule, budget, resources and risk. With all of this in mind, managing projects requires the management of change; PMI describes this as ‘progressive elaboration’.

An illustrative and globally recognised mapping of project management process group and knowledge areas, as defined by PMI, is shown in Table 1 below. Although this table is drawn from non-academic literature, it is still considered relevant for this study given the extent of its global distribution, and presumably therefore, its widespread application by project management practitioners (including project managers) the world over.
Table 1 - Project management process groups and knowledge areas mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Areas (9)</th>
<th>Project Management Process Groups (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>- Develop project charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop project management plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Direct and manage project execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>- Monitor and control project work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perform integrated change control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Close project or phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Collect requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Define scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Create WBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Verify scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Control scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Define activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sequence activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Estimate activity resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Estimate activity durations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Control schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Estimate costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Determine budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Control costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plan quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perform quality assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perform quality control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop HR plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Acquire project team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop project team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Manage project team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Identify stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plan communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Distribute information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Manage stakeholder expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Report performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plan risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Identify risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perform qualitative risk analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plan risk responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Monitor and control risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plan procurements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Conduct procurements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Administer procurements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Close procurements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: (PMI 2008, p. 43)

2.2.2.3 The project life cycle

A project life cycle, often referred to more simply as phased project management (Saynisch 2010, p. 31), is a collection of generally sequential and sometimes overlapping project phases whose name and number are determined by the management and control needs of the organisation(s) involved in the project, the nature of the project itself and the project’s area of application. While every project has a definite beginning and end, the specific activities and deliverables that take place in between will vary by project. The project life cycle is often illustrated in generic terms, accepting both the variance between but also the predictability of, many and most projects. PMI (2008, p. 16) suggests that all projects, no matter how large or small, simple or complex, can be mapped to this
structure of: starting the project, organising and preparing, carrying out the project work, and closing the project. Figure 2-2 below illustrates. It should be noted also that similar depictions of the project life cycle can be found throughout the academic literature, although often less generic than this example which is in wide circulation globally across the project management community.

**Figure 2-2 The generic project life cycle**

![Diagram of the generic project life cycle](image)

**SOURCE:** (PMI 2008, p. 16)

Whilst most theorists support the concept of a generic project life cycle, some argue that it is insufficient to explain the management of complexity in projects. Saynisch (2010) for instance argues the need for a new paradigm in project management whereby the “traditional” project management mind set is replaced by PM-2 (Project Management Second Order) in response to increasing complexity and change in the world and a subsequent need for an advanced understanding of project management. He specifically argues that modern projects and their life cycles should be viewed in terms of “evolutionary process” (Saynisch 2010, pp. 32-5), with new and higher levels of quality, organisation and complexity, ordered by fluctuation and bifurcation.

For the purpose of this study, the simpler and more established generic project life cycle is used. This life cycle is useful in helping to differentiate project management from routine operations management, by emphasising the temporary nature of projects.

### 2.2.2.4 The project-oriented organisation

There are generally considered to be two broad types of project-oriented organisations. The first is the project-based organisation, where “the majority of products made or services delivered are against bespoke designs for customers” (Turner & Keegan 2001, p. 256). This implies the organisation is project-based by necessity because of the customised nature of the demand from its customers (Turner, Huemann & Keegan 2008, p. 578). Notwithstanding, the project-based organisation typically chooses this way of working and in support shapes its governance and culture to match. The second type of project-oriented organisation is what Hobday (2000) refers to as the project-led organisation, where the functional dimensions of organisational structure and process dominate and projects take place in the back office to support the functionally based front office.

### 2.2.3 Project management standards, competencies and methodologies

Written standards are generally considered the yardstick by which the performance of projects and project practitioners are measured. Project management has various relevant standards, competency frameworks and methodologies. Globally there are a number of different types of
standards, including knowledge-based standards and competency-based standards (or frameworks). These standards commonly also attach means of certification, or professional recognition. Below is an overview of some of today’s better recognised project management standards and competence frameworks. This includes an overview of key project management methodologies, also. The overview does not however attempt to cover the various project management certifications that exist in the marketplace and are too numerous to list here. What can however be commented upon is that most professional associations who produce their own standards, have their own certification offerings also.

2.2.3.1 **Knowledge-based standards**

*A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK® Guide) - ANSI/PMI 99-001-2008 - is currently the most popular standard globally for project management. The latest edition (2008) is its fourth and each edition has been produced in consultation with a large global community of project management practitioners and experts, and this has contributed to its popularity. The PMBOK Guide is produced by the Project Management Institute (PMI), a global professional association headquartered in Pennsylvania U.S.A. This standard specifically relates to the management of single projects, for other environments such as program management and portfolio management PMI have produced separate standards. Program management refers to groups of projects, and portfolio management to groups of programs.

The PMBOK is structured into nine knowledge areas and five process groups. The nine knowledge areas include: project integration management, project scope management, project time management, project cost management, project quality management, project human resources management, project communications management, project risk management and project procurement management. The five process groups include: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. Each process within the process groups identifies inputs, tools and techniques, and outputs to the process (PMI 2008).

A second well known knowledge-based standard is the UK’s *APM Body of Knowledge* (5th edition), which is similar in principle to the PMBOK but contains fifty-two knowledge areas instead of PMBOK’s nine. The 5th edition of the *APM Body of Knowledge* was released in January 2006 as an update to the version released in 2000 (APM 2006).

In September 2012 a new global standard, ISO/CD 21500, was published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The standard (2002) is designed to be applied internationally, across a wide range of industries and project types. Work on this standard began in February 2007 through an ISO project committee chaired by the British Standards Institute (BSI) and whose secretariat was the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Membership of the Committee included more than 45 participating countries (*Communiqué on new International Standard ISO 21500: Guide to project management* 2011).

2.2.3.2 **Competency-based standards and frameworks**

As more organisations adopt project-oriented working and the demand for project managers grows, there is increasing interest in the competence of project managers as well as in standards for the development and assessment of project management competence. Project management standards are being used extensively throughout the world for learning and development, professional
certification programmes and corporate PM methodologies, on the assumption that there is a positive relationship between standards and effective workplace performance. That is, that project management competence leads to project performance which in turn leads to organisational performance (Lindkvist, Söderlund & Tell 1998, p. 7).

There are various popular competency-based standards or frameworks for project management. Four of the better recognised of these include PMI’s Project Manager Competency Development Framework (PMI 2007), APM’s competence framework (APM competence framework 2008), AIPM’s national competency standards for Australia (AIPM 2008), and IPMA’s competency baseline (IPMA 2006).

1. The Project Manager Competency Development (PMCD) Framework, by PMI, provides a framework for the definition, assessment and development of project manager competence. It defines the key dimensions of competence and identifies those competencies that are most likely to impact project manager performance. The PMCD is currently in its second edition, 2007.

2. The APM Competence Framework, by APM in the United Kingdom, provides a tool to: assess the individual’s knowledge and experience against a recognised project management benchmark; help in identifying training and development needs including the individual’s readiness to obtain internationally recognised professional qualifications; and specify areas of knowledge and experience needed as part of their Continuing Professional Development. The APM Competency Framework is currently in its first edition, 2008.

3. The National Competency Standards for Project Management (NCSPM), by AIPM in Australia, provides a framework for competency-based assessment. In AIPM there are four levels of project manager in assessment and certification terms. They are (in order): project practitioner, project manager, project director and executive project director. The knowledge-base applied to the NCSPM is the nine knowledge areas in PMI’s PMBOK. The NCSPM is currently in its first edition, 2008.

4. The IPMA Competence Baseline (ICB), by IPMA, is the basis for the IPMA’s four level certification system. The ICB sets out the knowledge and experience expected from the managers of projects, programmes and project portfolios. It contains basic terms, practices, methods and tools for professional project management, as well as specialist knowledge and experience. The ICB is currently in its third edition, 2006.

Yet, despite the popularity of competency-based standards or frameworks there is conflicting empirical evidence as to the extent of the relationship between performance against standards and perceived effectiveness of workplace performance. Crawford (2005, p. 15) for instance suggests a difference in perceptions and expectations of project management competence between project managers and their supervisors, senior management. Thus, whilst competency-based project management standards and frameworks should be recognised for their benefits, they must similarly be recognised for their limitations.
2.2.3.3 **Project management methodologies**

Methodology, according to the *Macquarie concise dictionary* (2006), refers to “a systematic approach to scientific inquiry based on logical principles, employed in various sciences”. The project management discipline is no different to many other disciplines in that there is a plethora of methodologies available to help apply the knowledge and competencies required to effectively manage projects. Possibly the best known of these methodologies at present is PRINCE2® (*P*rojects IN *C*ontrolled *E*nvironments), which is used extensively by the UK Government, the UK private sector and internationally, particularly in ICT projects. PRINCE2® is a Registered Trade Mark of the Office of Government Commerce in the United Kingdom and other countries. The primary focus throughout PRINCE2 is on the business case that provides justification for the project. The business case drives all of the project management processes, from project set-up and initiation through to project completion.

There are other methodological frameworks that support only subsets of the full project management discipline. They are numerous in type and focus, and as subsets, are by their nature more specialised. One such example is that of the AACE, a professional association for cost management professionals. The AACE’s Total Cost Management Framework is a systematic approach to managing cost throughout the life cycle of any enterprise, program, facility, project, product or service (*Total cost management framework: An integrated approach to portfolio, program, and project management* 2006).

2.2.4 **Dilemmas of embeddedness and learning in the project-oriented organisation**

The discussion on project management so far has explored key concepts, including that of the project-oriented organisation, as well as an overview of the more ubiquitous project management standards, competencies and methodologies. As part of the discussion some complications of sorts were touched upon, such as conflicting empirical evidence as to the extent of the relationship between performance against standards and perceived effectiveness in the workplace. Crawford (2005) for instance was noted as suggesting a difference in perceptions and expectations of project management competence between project managers and their supervisors (senior management). Continuing this theme of complication or complexity, Sydow, Lindkvist and DeFillippi (2004) note that project-oriented organisations seem to pose a recurring set of dilemmas for managerial practice, which in turn have implications for theory. They identify two dilemmas or tensions in particular, including:

1. “...between the autonomy requirements of project participants and [yet] their embeddedness within organizational and interorganizational settings that demand integration of project activities within organization command and control routines and/or interorganizational coordination efforts.”; and

2. “... between the immediate task and performance demands of the project at hand versus the opportunities for learning and disseminating project practices that can be employed in subsequent projects.” (Sydow, Lindkvist & DeFillippi 2004, p. 1476)

These dilemmas are intertwined to the extent that they both have implications for knowledge and learning, most particularly with respect to our understanding of the possibilities for (and limitations to) optimising efficiency and effectiveness in the project-oriented environment. Three examples of
these dilemmas already explored are discussed now. They include Grabher (2004) on project ecologies, Sapsed and Salter (2004) on boundary objects in global projects, and Brady and Davies (2004) on project capability-building.

In the first example Grabher (2004), by adopting a contextual understanding of projects through the notion of ‘project ecologies’, conceptualises a framework for analysing learning processes in and around projects. In introducing his study, he notes that the trans-disciplinary and transient nature of projects make them a pertinent form of creating knowledge in the context of its applications, and yet their temporal limitation also causes a cardinal limitation with respect to sedimenting knowledge. Grabher reveals the basic organisational architecture of project ecologies through consecutive probing into their constitutive layers – the core team, the firm and the epistemic community (each representing organisational layers or networks), and the personal networks. He utilises two contrasting cases – the first is a software ecology that exemplifies a cumulative learning regime, the second is an advertising ecology that in marked contrast exemplifies a disruptive learning regime. In the case of the software ecology the key imperative is the modularisation of knowledge, in other words, there is a fundamental association between learning and repetition whereby repeated cycles of interaction within the organisation and between it and the environment form the basis of learning. Project organising is geared to favour repeatable solutions over singularly minded ventures. In the case of the advertising ecology the key imperative is originality, whereby learning by repetition is less important than learning by reconfiguring relationships, for instance, by switching ties both within and across organisations. Project organising is instead geared towards routinely defying convention (Grabher 2004, p. 1493).

In both the advertising and software ecologies the actual locus of project-specific knowledge production is the epistemic community. The epistemic community is one that extends beyond the organisation and involves clients, suppliers and global corporate groups. Equally important though, beyond these actual production networks, are personal networks. Personal networks by contrast tend to have both wider reach and greater longevity. Grabher explores this through a lens of social embeddedness and the notions of network communality (exchanging experience), sociality (acquiring know-whom) and connectivity (upgrading know-how). In doing this he importantly notes the diffuse learning processes in latent personal ties of project ecologies (Grabher 2004, pp. 1502-6).

Building on one of Grabher’s propositions, that acquiring the capability to successfully transfer knowledge in a community of practice is as much a matter of socialisation as of absorbing facts, Sapsed and Salter (2004) discuss boundary objects and assess the limitations of project management tools as boundary objects in globally dispersed projects and programs. This is the second of the three examples. Drawing on Star and Griesemer (1989, p. 393), Sapsed and Salter define boundary objects as artefacts of practice that are agreed and shared between communities yet “satisfy the informational requirements of each of them”. They also note that Brown and Duguid extend the notion of boundary objects to business tools, including for example “shared documents, tools, business processes, objectives, schedules” (Brown, J. S. & Duguid 2001, p. 209). Sapsed and Salter’s study nests itself in three distinct but related sets of literature, including dispersed teamwork, boundary objects and project organisation.

The key insights that Sapsed and Salter glean from the dispersed teamwork literature include, firstly, that there is a tendency for knowledge to be locally embedded and difficult to transfer over
distance; secondly, that face to face interaction plays a key role in knowledge transfer, building trust, commitment and social capital; and thirdly, that in the absence of face-to-face interaction local coalitions tend to become distrusting of their remote partners (Sapsed & Salter 2004, p. 1517). From the boundary objects literature they point out that the origins of boundary objects as analytical tools are in the sociology of science, albeit they are being increasingly applied to the management and organisational fields. They discuss the example of project timelines (emphasising their visual nature), noting these can be seen as an alternative to traditional hierarchical coordination (Brown, J. S. & Duguid 2001; Lindkvist, Söderlund & Tell 1998; Yakura 2002). Moreover, that a boundary object “stands or falls on its capacity to accommodate local ‘dialects’” (Sapsed & Salter 2004, p. 1519). Sapsed and Salter’s two key points of emphasis with regards the boundary objects literature are, firstly, that it is not entirely clear how the concept now being applied in project management differs from the traditional views and functions of tools and devices in that field, and secondly, that “the raison d’etre for boundary objects – facilitating collaborative work and knowledge sharing between diverse people – raises the complex issues of organizational power and interdependence” (Sapsed & Salter 2004, p. 1520). In their subsequent review of the project management literature they continue this theme, pointing out for instance that whilst the boundary object literature offers project management tools as an antidote to balkanisation, neither the boundary object nor project management literatures consistently or adequately factor into discussion the power and control implications of organisational structures.

A case study presented by Sapsed and Salter examines the purported collaborative and intercommunal properties of project management tools as boundary objects in a globally dispersed program (anonymised). The case study finds that, applied on their own, project management tools are limited in their usefulness and in fact can inadvertently become pawns in the negotiation of power between a program’s central and dispersed teams. More generally, the authors conclude that:

... in dispersed programs where there is no opportunity for face-to-face interaction, and/or ambiguous lines of authority, project management tools will be ineffectual as boundary objects and prone to avoidance. Boundary objects are inherently limited precisely because of their marginal nature, the effects of which are exacerbated in diverse and dispersed programs... [and] because of their marginal nature, [they] are prone to be relegated to the edge of projects, which is after all where they belong (Sapsed & Salter 2004, pp. 1515, 31).

The third and final example is that of Brady and Davies (2004) who discuss project capabilities and capability-building. By ‘project capabilities’ they refer to “the core activities of firms that design and produce complex products and systems in low volumes to specific customer requirements” (Brady & Davies 2004, p. 1603). Brady and Davies present a model of project capability-building (PCB), consisting of two interacting and co-evolving levels of learning. The first level involves bottom-up ‘project-led’ phases of learning, and the second, top-down ‘business-led’ learning in which the project-led learning is embedded. The bottom-up phases of learning occur when an organisation moves into a new technology or market base; they include an exploratory ‘vanguard project’ phase, a ‘project-to-project’ phase where lessons learned are captured, and a ‘project-to-organisation’ phase where the organisation increases its capabilities to deliver with consistency across multiple projects. In contrast, the top-down phase occurs when strategic decisions are taken by the organisation to create and exploit company-wide resources and capabilities to perform increasingly
predictable and routine project-oriented activities (Brady & Davies 2004, p. 1602). An example of this would be the creation of global services organisations or business units. In the same way that Grabher’s ecology framework (2004) illustrates the doing versus learning dilemma, Brady and Davies’ project capability-building (PCB) model offers a template for understanding how organisations can address the doing versus learning dilemma, through a succession of project initiatives.

To illustrate their case, Brady and Davies explore embeddedness in two high-value capital goods providers, Ericsson and Cable & Wireless, over a nine year period which enabled the examination of sequential relatedness between projects. The cases detail how each of the firms utilised a variety of organisational and procedural practices to manage the interplay and tensions between project autonomy and organisational integration, thus mitigating or else resolving their negative effects.

The above examples more generally highlight the array of tensions that may typically arise between temporary (project) and permanent organisations, as well as underlining the importance of giving due attention to both the formation and maintenance of project-oriented organising and learning (Bresnen 2006; Manning & Sydow 2011).

2.2.5 Is project management a profession?

It is widely accepted that project management has developed into a discrete occupation (some would describe it as a new “profession” (Hodgson 2002)) including the continued emergence of indicators such as greater numbers of dedicated training courses at the postgraduate level as well as rapidly expanding professional associations. But is project management truly a profession, and what defines a profession? Professions Australia defines a profession as:

... a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others. It is inherent in the definition of a profession that a code of ethics governs the activities of each profession. Such codes require behaviour and practice beyond the personal moral obligations of an individual. They define and demand high standards of behaviour in respect to the services provided to the public and in dealing with professional colleagues. Further, these codes are enforced by the profession and are acknowledged and accepted by the community (Definition of a Profession 1997).

Zwerman, Thomas and Haydt (2004, p. 12), in their study of the professionalisation of project management identify nine traits of a profession:

1. “Exclusive control and command of an esoteric and systematic body of knowledge – essentially a monopoly on knowledge and understanding”;

2. “Education and research – the body of knowledge is constantly reviewed and extended within the educational and research institutes of the profession. The claim to mastery of the body of knowledge is verified through the completion of a prescribed educational program, coupled with tests and training supervised by members of the profession and their representative professional associations”;

© Jason D. Bingham
3. “Code of ethics – occupational associations adopt a code of ethics to guide practice. Professional practitioners are supposed to commit to maintaining the highest standards of practice adopted by their associations”;

4. “Autonomy of practice – incumbents are the only ones capable of understanding and practicing, and believe they should be free to control their own work; outside interference would threaten “professional” standards of practice”;

5. “Norm of altruism – members have been imbued with a sense of service to their clients and the community, and do not act out of self-interest”;

6. “Control of the name – the professional associations gain, and retain, control of the name of the occupations. For example, the use of the title “lawyer” is restricted to those who are approved of by the various legally constituted bodies that control practice”;

7. “Authority over clients – professionals should control the client/practitioner relationship. The quality of service is compromised if clients challenge the authority of the professional practitioner”;

8. “Distinctive occupational culture – a distinctive set of norms, values, and symbols sets a particular professional occupation apart from others”; and

9. “Recognition – there is an explicit acknowledgement by both the community and the law that the occupation is special and its incumbents are deserving of special privileges. This means that a profession comes into existence when its practice is recognised by some governmental authority as requiring specific training and preparation, regulation of that profession is turned over to a professional body, and there is general acceptance that the tasks of this profession cannot be done without such preparation”.

Zwerman, Thomas and Haydt conclude that project management does not (yet) hold “traditional” professional status, arguing that project management, like many emerging professions, does not satisfy the complete set of traits held by traditional professions such as law or medicine.

Similarly, Giammalvo (2007) in his study titled “Is project management a profession? If yes, where does it fit in and if not, what is it?” concludes that:

- Project management is not a profession;
- Project management is a process, system or methodology; and
- Project management is more of a profession than being an electrician, less of a profession than being an MBA (which is not a profession) and a Professional Engineer (which is a profession).

Beaton (2010), on the other hand, in his essay on why professionalism is still relevant, takes a different perspective on these emerging or modern professions. He argues that whilst there are the classic “learned” professions – divinity, law and medicine (the so-called trinity of the professions) – professionalism now covers many more disciplines than originally or previously. He describes how advancement and increasing complexity have resulted in increasingly specialised knowledge, and
how communication technology in particular has democratised access to this specialised knowledge (Beaton 2010, pp. 18-9). For Beaton, this macro-environmental context is key in demonstrating that professionalism is more necessary and more relevant than ever before. He also concludes that in this new context it is integrity, more than ever, that is the essence of professionalism.

For the purpose of this study project management is referred to as a profession. This is for convenience and consistency only, although further discussion

2.2.6 What then, or who, is the project manager?

The project management profession encapsulates a diversity of project-oriented roles with just one of these, albeit a key one, being the ‘project manager’. In simplest terms, the project manager’s role is to oversee the project, discharging his or her professional expertise to the benefit of the project’s objectives. With this remit comes responsibility (Sotiriou & Wittmer 2001), team leadership (Fisher 2011; Kloppenborg & Petrick 1999), a results orientation and depending on the project, a degree of technical competency including in the use of related tools (Hyväri 2006). Wang and Armstrong (2004), in discussing commitment to profession, observe also that project managers tend to have significantly higher commitment to profession (over organisation) than other project workers, and that commitment is further reinforced where the individual possesses formal postgraduate PM qualifications.

So how then do project-oriented organisations define or perceive the ‘project manager’? Pinto and Kharbanda (1997, p. 216) observe that the project manager role “is neither a well-defined nor a well-understood career path within most organizations. Generally, the role is thrust upon people, rather than being sought”. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the ‘accidental project manager’. Similarly, Paton, Hodgson and Cicmil (2010, p. 159) observe that, in the context of the rise of project management as a work mode in post-bureaucratic society, a consequence is the constitution of the project manager as “an attractive yet insecure organisational actor in many modern organisations”. Hölzle (2010) observes that organisations see their project managers quite differently to each other, that is, there is significant variance. In one organisation a project manager might be considered a ‘true’ manager with all the typical trappings of such roles (significant responsibility including formal authority for budget, disciplinary, etc.), whereas in others, the project manager role is treated more as administrative, confining the role’s remit to activities such as overseeing the PMO or maintaining project management guidelines and controls. Eighty per cent of the companies surveyed in Hölzle’s study reported that their project managers have full expert authority for the project, 40% reported they also have budget authority for the project, while only 20% reported their project managers as having disciplinary authority (Hölzle 2010, p. 783).

In Hölzle’s research the 20 participant companies were also asked what competencies, based on size of project, they would most like to see in their project managers. This provides further clues as to how organisations define and perceive project managers. Below in Table 2 is an exemplar of the expertise and social competence required of PMs, as derived from Hölzle’s study.
### Table 2 - Example of a project manager’s competence profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Small project</th>
<th>Medium project</th>
<th>Large project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breadth of experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management methods</td>
<td>Knows project management methods and how to use them</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>••</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary thinking</td>
<td>Thinks interdisciplinary and judges situations from a broader perspective</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth (specialist)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Well-known expert</td>
<td>•••</td>
<td>••</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative problem solving</td>
<td>Analyses complicated problems fast, efficient and goal-oriented</td>
<td>•••</td>
<td>••</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation and team skills</td>
<td>Starts and supports interdisciplinary cooperation in the team</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•••</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness and negotiation skills</td>
<td>Wins others for an idea, method or process; realises own ideas against barriers (in the hierarchy); shows negotiation skills even in controversial situations</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>Persuasive in personal contact, confident in dealing with people on different level and represents the company convincingly internally and externally</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>••</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-cultural competence</td>
<td>Deals confidently with other cultures</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Basic skills, •• Medium skills, ••• Advanced skills

SOURCE: (Hölzle 2010, p. 784)

It seems then that the role of the project manager varies widely, depending on the organisation they are doing the working for, the type of project(s) they work on, and the individual skills and attributes that they personally bring to the situation (Crawford, Hobbs & Turner 2006; Dvir & Lipovetsky 1998; Hölzle 2010; Shenhar 1992).

### 2.2.7 Summary

Section 2.2 has presented an overview and discussion of project management. The section commenced with an overview of key project management concepts, including those of the project, project management, the project life cycle and the project-oriented organisation. The discussion then turned to an overview of key project management standards, competencies and methodologies. This was followed by a discussion on two key tensions in the project-oriented organisation, which are integration/ embeddedness and knowledge/ learning. Finally, two key questions in relation to project management were explored, firstly, is project management a profession, and secondly, what or who is the project manager? Next, section 2.3 discusses the second parent discipline, career development.

### 2.3 Parent discipline 2 – career development

This section reviews the parent literature on career development.
2.3.1 Introduction

Section 2.3 presents an overview and discussion of career development theory. The section begins with an overview of conceptions of career, including a history of the shift in recent decades from ‘old’ to ‘new’ career paths. This includes an overview of some of the modern conceptions of career that reflect this ‘new’ career context. The discussion then turns to theoretical understandings of career development, in particular the principal fields contributing to modern career theory. Within this discussion the need for theory convergence and integration is identified and an example provided in systems theory. Moving then to some more practical considerations, the following questions are explored: (i) how do age and career stage impact and inform career, (ii) what does career success look like, and (iii) does ‘personal branding’ have a place in self-management and employability? The chapter then summarises and concludes.

2.3.2 Modern conceptions of career

The concept of career has traditionally been synonymised with ‘vocation’ or ‘occupation’ (that is, paid employment) and has been associated with linear advancement within a single technical specialty, industry and/or organisation. However, it is commonly acknowledged that career dynamics have undergone significant change during the 19th and 20th centuries. These changes have broadly taken two forms. Firstly, the way in which work is organised and structured has changed and become more flexible (Hirsh 1998). Whereas 19th century business requirements were characterised by functional structures supporting large specialised heavy industries such as steel and rail, the 20th century evidenced a move to divisionalised structures after World War II to respond to national markets. The final third of the 20th century was dominated by the matrix organisation, largely in response to the requirements of growing complexity and change (Hall 1996b, p. 13). Resultant from these changes has been the emergence of the concept of the ‘boundaryless career’ (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005; Arthur & Rousseau 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur 1994).

Secondly, there has been an emergence of more developed understandings of the ways that individuals construct their working lives and obtain meaning from them. In effect, career is redefined as an individual’s lifelong progression in learning and in work. This recent conception of career has commonly been termed the ‘subjective career’ (Collin & Young 1986, 2000; Miller-Tiedeman 1999; Peiperl et al. 2000; Savickas 2001, 2002; Watts 1998).

Moreover, the general definition of career has itself necessarily changed, and will likely continue to do so. McMahon, Patton and Tatham (2003) support this and note that as the irrefutable influence of globalisation and lifelong learning requirements continues:

... emerging definitions of career and career development are reflective of a proactive, individual centred, lifespan, life/career management process where individuals are active in responding and adapting to change and in creating, constructing, designing, and identifying paid employment opportunities, life and learning experiences that will enable them to create satisfying lives. (McMahon, Patton & Tatham 2003, p. 4)

Two established and relatively modern definitions of career include, (i) the unfolding sequence of a person’s work experiences over time (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence 1989), and (ii) “the individually
perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person’s life” (Hall 2002, p. 12).

A further consideration in exploring modern conceptions of career is that the extant literature notably uses various, often synonymous word pairings to illustrate the ‘from and to’ of career dynamics in recent years. Some commonly used pairings include: the linear versus the multidirectional career path (Baruch 2004a); the traditional versus the non-traditional career; the organisational versus the individual career; the objective versus the intelligent career (Arthur, Claman & DeFillippi 1995; DeFillippi & Arthur 1994; Parker & Arthur 2002; Parker, Khapova & Arthur 2009); the objective versus subjective career (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005); the old versus new career contract; and the old versus new psychological contract.

Some specific examples of modern conceptions of career are now expanded upon.

2.3.2.1 Boundaryless career

By the end of the 1970s it was becoming evident that organisations needed new ways to manage people and their development across the organisation (Baruch 2004a). Schein (1978) for instance introduced a new concept (through his cone model, as it is known) of cross-functional movement within the organisation. For its time this was an innovative breakthrough in career development thinking. By the mid 1990s career development literature increasingly discussed alternatives to the traditional or linear or ‘bounded’ career path. DeFillippi and Arthur (1994; 1996) were one of the first to use the term the ‘boundaryless career’, in which a key theme is employability through skills and competencies. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) argue that career mobility and flexibility are key conditions of the boundaryless career. McMahon, Patton and Tatham (2003, p. 5) note of the boundaryless career, “work is often no longer characterised by a vertical process of advancement within one organisation”. Baruch (2004a), in discussing the related notion of the ‘multidirectional career’, characterises a series of lateral or advancing movements within, between and outside organisations, occupations and paid employment, associated with both formal and informal educational experiences.

Some authors however contend that the term boundaryless career is misleading, arguing that rather than signalling a dissolution of career boundaries, these careers are merely differently bounded and organised, including different kinds of employer-employee relationships (Bridgstock 2007; King, Burke & Pemberton 2005). The boundaryless career can however be considered broadly along dimensions of mobility, both physical and psychological (Sullivan & Arthur 2006). This transcends the simplicity sometimes assigned to the boundaryless career as being synonymous with only physical mobility, or with the protean career (discussed shortly). Sullivan and Arthur classify boundaryless careers into broadly defined quadrants (see Figure 2-3). In quadrant one are careers low in both physical and psychological mobility; in quadrant two are careers high in physical but low in psychological mobility; in quadrant three are careers high in psychological but low in physical mobility; and finally, in quadrant four are careers high in both physical and psychological mobility. In other words, the model denotes a range of combinations of psychological and physical mobility that may occur during a person’s career. Hence, a boundaryless career “can be viewed and operationalized by the degree of mobility exhibited by the career actor along both the physical and psychological continua” (Sullivan & Arthur 2006, p. 23).
These variations assist more precise and effective theory and research (Briscoe & Hall 2006, p. 8).

### 2.3.2.2 The subjective career

As work pattern norms have changed to the non-traditional and boundaryless, career theorists have also begun to discuss and explore more holistic, subjective and process oriented views of career. This has meant a recognition of both internal and external components, whereby the internal components include attitudes, orientation and perceptions, and external components include visible, observable activities, behaviours or events comprising a person’s work history (Bridgstock 2007, p. 29). Careers are the subjective construction of the individual and individuals create their own definitions of work in their lives.

In support, Wolfe and Kolb (1980, pp. 1-2) posit that “Career development involves one’s whole life, not just occupation ... it concerns him or her in the ever-changing contexts of his or her life ... self and circumstances – evolving, changing, unfolding in mutual interaction”. In essence, the distinction between work and private life has blurred, with paid employment being one system embedded in other complex and dynamic systems (e.g. family and friends, community, peers, education, professional and social networks) comprising individuals’ lives (Bridgstock 2007; Miller-Tiedeman 1999; Super 1990). Indeed, the term ‘life/career’ has become widely used, acknowledging the active role that individuals must now take in their ongoing career development; no longer can individuals content themselves with being passive recipients of a life/career process (McMahon 2005).

### 2.3.2.3 The protean career

Protean career theory is linked both to career boundarylessness and career subjectivity and is seen as an extreme form of both (Baruch 2004b). It is sometimes also referred to as the ‘path with a heart’. The protean career can be distinguished from other modern conceptions of career, such as the boundaryless career, by its emphasis on internal motivations and measures of career success. Briscoe and Hall (2006) define the protean career as:
... a career in which the person is (1) values driven in the sense that the person’s internal values provide the guidance and measure of success for the individual’s career; and (2) self-directed in personal career management – having the ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands (Briscoe & Hall 2006, p. 8).

The main point of focus in this definition is the stance or ‘orientation’ one takes toward the career rather than the career structure itself. A person can be higher or lower (stronger or weaker) both in terms of whether, in their career management, they are values driven or self-directed or both. The union of such attitudes and behaviours determines whether a person can be considered to fully demonstrate a protean career orientation.

There are four primary categories of career, as seen through the protean lens. They include: dependent, reactive, rigid and protean (Briscoe & Hall 2006). A ‘dependent’ person is neither values driven nor self-directed, they are unable to define priorities or self-manage their career. A ‘reactive’ person is self-directed in career management but is not values driven, they would not ultimately have the perspective to guide their career successfully. A ‘rigid’ person by comparison is values driven but not self-directed, they would not be able to sufficiently adapt to the performance and learning requirements of their career (i.e. shape it). Finally, a ‘protean’ person is both values driven in defining their career priorities and identity, and self-directed in adapting to the performance and learning demands of their career. As Briscoe and Hall (2006, p. 8) state, “such people are thus more able to lead themselves and others, are more capable of continuous learning, and thus ‘transformational’”.

Hall (2002) summarises the protean career contract as shown below, in Table 3.

**Table 3 - The new ‘protean’ career contract**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The career is managed by the person, not the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The career is a lifelong series of experiences, skills, learnings, transitions, and identity changes (‘career age’ counts, not chronological age).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Development is Continuous learning; Self-directed; Relational; Found in work challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Development is not (necessarily) Formal training; Retraining; Upward mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ingredients for success have changed From know-how to learn-how; From job security to employability; From organizational careers to protean careers; From work self to whole self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The organization provides Challenging assignments; Developmental relationships; Information and other developmental resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The goal is psychological success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** (Hall 2002, p. 24)
Hall also highlights the importance of two meta-competencies that are critical to providing the sense of direction and the creative energy for the protean career – they include identity growth and adaptability (Hall 2002, p. 259).

A final comment on the concept of the protean career is that similar to its own history of being framed as an extreme form, one view that has recently emerged (much as the protean view was emerging in the late 1970s) is the spiritual view of career, as a ‘calling’ (Weiss et al. 2001). This notion goes beyond purpose, to the idea that there is a community in which we do our work and that our work should contribute to others in this community in some way. Thus the path with a heart is not only about accomplishment and psychological success but also about service and contribution to others (Hall 2002, p. 304).

2.3.3 Theoretical foundations and interdisciplinary convergence

Four principal fields contribute to career theory; they include psychology, sociology, education and management (Peiperl & Arthur 2000, p. 2). It is not surprising therefore that there are a significant number of theories accounting for career development. A common distinction made between these theories is those that are primarily related to content/structure, versus those that are primarily related to development/process. A third distinction is that of context. Below are examples of widely recognised theories that relate to career development (Bridgstock 2007, pp. 33-49).

Structure-oriented theories:

- ‘Trait and factor theories’, which assess characteristics of individuals and jobs and then attempt to match them. Five-factor personality theory (John 1990; McAdams 1992; McCrae & Costa Jr 1996, 1997) is an example;
- Work adjustment theory (Dawis, R. 1996, 2002, 2005; Dawis, R. V. & Lofquist 1984); and
- Brown’s values-based theory (Brown, D. 2002b, 2002a; Brown, D. & Crace 1996).

Process-oriented theories:

- The early theories of Ginzberg (Ginzberg 1972, 1984; Ginzberg et al. 1951);
- Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman’s career development theories, which emphasise the individual (Miller-Tiedeman 1997, 1999; Miller-Tiedeman & Miller-Tiedeman 1979, 1990; Tiedeman & O’Hara 1963); and

Theories embracing structure, process and context:

- Krumboltz’s social learning theory (Krumboltz 1979; Krumboltz & Worthington 1999; Mitchell, A. M. & Krumboltz 1990, 1996; Mitchell, K. E., Levin & Krumboltz 1999);
• Social cognitive career theory (Hackett & Betz 1981; Lent & Brown 1996; Lent, Brown & Hackett 1994, 2002; Lent & Hackett 1987, 1994);

• Cognitive information-processing theory (Peterson, Sampson & Reardon 1991; Peterson et al. 2002; Reardon et al. 2000; Sampson et al. 1999);

• Vondracek’s developmental-contextual approach (Vondracek 1990, 1995, 2001; Vondracek & Fouad 1994; Vondracek & Kawasaki 1995; Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg 1986); and

• The contextualist approach of Young et al. (Valach & Young 2002; Young & Valach 2000; Young, Valach & Collin 2002).

Furthermore, career development theory has traditionally been informed by concepts derived from the positivist worldview, with its emphasis on objective, value-free knowledge; whereas in more recent times the constructivist worldview, with its emphasis on meaning constructed by the individual, has become increasingly prominent. It is evident from the mass of career development theory and the diversity of its origins that there is considerable scope for theory convergence and integration. Moreover, interdisciplinary enquiry can only serve to benefit both theory and practice, which includes not least the person or ‘client’ (Khapova & Arthur 2011, pp. 9-10). Some attempts have already occurred resulting in movement towards the integration of several of the major theories (Chen 2003; Savickas & Lent 1994), nevertheless further integration to address disjointedness is required. This need is reinforced by the growing attention around a lack of breadth and explanatory power in existing theories (such as the variables of race, gender, sexual orientation and disability), as well the recent prevalence of various career theorists moving to update their contributions to theory in order to remain relevant to current accepted thinking (Bridgstock 2007). One such example of integration and convergence is McMahon and Patton’s Systems Theory Framework (STF), which is proposed by its makers as a metatheoretical account of career development (McMahon 2002; McMahon & Patton 1995; Patton, W. & McMahon 1997, 1999). The STF draws heavily on systems theory, an overarching framework for potentially explaining many issues relating to human behaviour. Contributors to systems theory have emanated from a diversity of fields including anthropology, biology, physics (Capra 1982) and psychology (Bateson 1979). Specific contributions include the development of an integrated framework of human development by Donald Ford (1987) and Martin and Donald Ford (1987) in their work on living systems, Developmental Systems Theory (Ford, D. H. & Lerner 1992) and Motivational Systems Theory (Ford, M. E. 1992).

Expanding on the above example, the key purported benefit of the STF is that it provides a platform of theoretical and practical consistency for career development planning, including addressing concerns about a gulf between career theory and practice. The STF strives in its aim as a holistic framework to accommodate both the content influences and the process influences on an individual’s career development. Some key points about the STF include: (i) content influences are inter-connecting and include the individual system, the social system, and the environmental-societal system, (ii) process influences include recursiveness, change of time, and chance, (iii) all influences are set within the context of past, present and future, and (iv) the individual system is central including its subsystems comprising intrapersonal influences. The STF is illustrated below, in Figure 2-4.
Related to the STF, McMahon et al. also later developed a reflection process, known as My System of Career Influences or MSCI (McMahon, Patton & Watson 2005b, 2005a; McMahon, Watson & Patton 2005), as a tool to facilitate individuals to draw their own constellation of influences via a step-by-step process of visually representing aspects of their career narrative or story. The MSCI helps map the interconnectedness of systemic influence on an individual’s career and is specifically targeted at adolescents (McMahon & Watson 2008).

2.3.4 Practical questions and considerations

2.3.4.1 How do age and career stage impact and inform career?

Notwithstanding that modern conceptions of career overwhelmingly promulgate the non-linear nature of career development in the 21st century, age is one inevitable factor in career that is
indisputably linear. With this comes the notion of chronological time, and in turn, the potential modelling of career stages. It is worth exploring, if only briefly at this point, some of these models.

Schein (1978, pp. 173-85) distinguishes between early, mid and late-career and notes that mid-career in particular can often be problematic (or a ‘crisis’ phase) for careerists. He notes in particular, that problems arising tend to include or else relate to, (i) living with the realities of having either specialised or generalised, (ii) maintaining the establishment of one’s own organisational identify and area of contribution, (iii) reflecting on progress – that is, the ‘Dream’ versus ‘Reality’, (iv) accepting the responsibilities of ‘Mentoring’, (v) achieving a proper balance of involvement in work, family and self-development, and (vi) maintaining a positive growth orientation. Schein concludes that the key to an understanding of any career / life period is to take a developmental view, that is, identifying the developmental tasks of the career stage (whether early, mid or late) and treating it as a period where further growth can and will take place. He refers to this as maintaining a ‘proactive growth orientation’, throughout all of the stages of the career and life.

Hall (2002) also distinguishes between the developmental needs of early, versus middle, versus late career. He further distinguishes between task needs and socio-emotional needs. These are summarised below in Table 4.

### Table 4 - Developmental needs in early, middle and late career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Task needs</th>
<th>Socio-emotional needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early career</td>
<td>• Develop action skills&lt;br&gt;• Develop specialty and general skills&lt;br&gt;• Develop creativity, innovation&lt;br&gt;• Develop helping and team skills&lt;br&gt;• Rotate into new area after 3-5 years (new learning cycle)</td>
<td>• Support&lt;br&gt;• Autonomy&lt;br&gt;• Develop emotional intelligence&lt;br&gt;• Deal with feelings of rivalry, competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle career</td>
<td>• Develop skills in developing and mentoring others&lt;br&gt;• Master learning how to learn&lt;br&gt;• Develop broader perspective on own work&lt;br&gt;• Rotation into new area of work, requiring new skills</td>
<td>• Opportunity, support for expressing feelings about midlife&lt;br&gt;• Revise sense of personal identity (regarding work, family, personal life, values, mortality, etc.)&lt;br&gt;• Reduce self-indulgence and competitiveness&lt;br&gt;• Connection with midlife peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late career</td>
<td>• Shift from power role to consultation, guidance, wisdom&lt;br&gt;• Explore, begin to establish identity in activities outside current work role</td>
<td>• Gradual detachment from current work role and organization&lt;br&gt;• Support to help see purpose, legacy in one’s work&lt;br&gt;• Acceptance of one’s one and only life cycle&lt;br&gt;• Support to help see own integrated life experience as a platform for others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** (Hall 2002, p. 124)

A further perspective is that of Jones (1996), who presents a model of career stages in project networks. In this model the careerist moves through the phases of Beginning, Crafting, Navigating and Maintaining. Table 5 below illustrates.
Table 5 - Interaction of Boundaryless Careers and Project Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career stage and primary issues</th>
<th>Skills and Competencies</th>
<th>Organizational requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEGINNING:</td>
<td>• Identifying gatekeepers to gain entrance</td>
<td>• Attracting new entrants to regenerate organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting access to the industry or profession</td>
<td>• Demonstrating interpersonal skills</td>
<td>• Sorting potential entrants by their interpersonal skills and motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Showing motivation and persistence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAFTING:</td>
<td>• Learning technical skills and roles</td>
<td>• Training in a range of technical skills and roles facilitates coordination of complex projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning required skills and industry culture</td>
<td>• Assimilating industry culture – norms and values</td>
<td>• Inculcating industry culture allows interfirm movement and enhances coordination among multiple participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrating reliability and commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVIGATING:</td>
<td>• Establishing reputation through quality work</td>
<td>• Defining status order as new members enter and older members shift positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building reputation and personal networks</td>
<td>• Expanding one’s skills and competencies</td>
<td>• Negotiating membership relations among participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing and maintaining personal contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAINTAINING:</td>
<td>• Mentoring and sponsoring others</td>
<td>• Providing forums to develop members’ skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending the profession and balancing the personal</td>
<td>• Balancing personal needs and professional demands</td>
<td>• Coordinating industry events to expose and integrate members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Setting standards for skills and competencies in the industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: (Jones 1996, p. 68)

So it seems then, as each of the above perspectives illustrate, that the consideration of age and stage is central to understanding career paths and development. Moreover, learning appears to be a common theme across these stage models. For instance, there is the need for a ‘proactive growth orientation’ throughout one’s life and therefore lifelong learning (Schein 1978; van Veldhoven & Dorenbosch 2008). Similarly, Mirvis and Hall (1996) describe how workers need to ‘learn a living’ rather than ‘earn a living’.

2.3.4.2 What does career success look like?

Related to career development theory is the often ambiguous concept of career success. Seibert and Kramer (2001) define career success as the accumulated positive work and psychological outcomes resulting from one’s career experiences. In the occupational literature career success is typically classified into either extrinsic (objective) or intrinsic (subjective) outcomes (Judge & Higgins 1999; Ng et al. 2005). Extrinsic career success is marked by objective and observable criteria, such as pay and ascendency (advancement), whereas intrinsic career success is marked by the individual’s subjective evaluation of the job or career, according to criteria such as satisfaction.

As discussed earlier, modern conceptions of career have increasingly focused on subjective criteria of career success. This highlights the need for any measures of career success to take into account individual priorities and perceptions. Moreover, evidence suggests that there are multiple co-existing dimensions which comprise subjective career success (Eby, Butts & Lockwood 2003; Parker & Arthur 2002). An example of a dimension is career orientations, often referred to as ‘career anchors’ (Schein 1993, 1996), which denotes the values the careerist finds to be the most important, such as autonomy, contributing to a cause, or security (Derr & Laurent 1989; Driver 1982). Weick
(1996, p. 54), in discussing the relevance of enactment and organising in the boundaryless career, posits that:

... success comes to be defined in terms of things like amount of learning accumulated; meaningfulness of continuities constructed; ability to create and manage organizing; comfort in returning to the novice role over and over; ability to explicate what had previously been known only tacitly; tolerance for fragmentary experience; skill in making sense of fragments retrospectively in ways that help others make sense of their fragments; willingness to improvise, and skill at doing so; persistence; compassion for others struggling with the uncertainties of a boundaryless life; and durable faith that actions will have made sense, even though that sense is currently not evident. People skilled in these ways are likely to find a series of challenging projects that, when strung together, simulate traditional advancement. The difference is that transitions from project to project are more dramatic and more discontinuous.

DeFillippi and Arthur (1998, pp. 133-4) further observe that in project-oriented working, where there is a paradox in the notion of temporary enterprises sustaining permanent industries, career successes can accumulate in spite of enterprise failures.

Sex and age are also each reported to influence conceptions of career success. Research by Sturges (1999) suggests that male managers are more likely than female managers to see career success in terms of remuneration and advancement, whereas female managers more often associate success with internal and intangible criteria. Age also tends to influence the definition of career success, in that in the earlier stages of their careers individuals most often emphasise material benefits whereas in the middle to later career stages they tend to place more emphasis on influence, autonomy and enjoying one’s work (see previous section, also). Sturges concludes that managers’ conceptions of career success indeed involve both external and internal measures and that although managers’ conceptions naturally differ, there do appear to be certain patterns of definitions which they use. These are expressed as four orientational categories – the climbers, experts, influencers and self-realisers.

Research by Lee, Lirio and Karakas (2006) examined the personal, career and family outcomes of part-time professionals (managers) by exploring their conceptions of career success in the context of working on a part-time basis to accommodate personal or family commitments. The research was underpinned by the premise that there is a need for more holistic and multidimensional conceptions and definitions of career success, where the interplay between work, family, life, significant others, and various life stages is acknowledged. The research sample included the following work environment contexts: support function managers (48%), line managers (39%) and project managers (13%). In terms of sex, approximately 90% of the participants were female. Table 6 below summarises the research’s findings in terms of the meaning of career success among the sample.
Lee et al. note that, of the eight emergent definitions of career success, only four fit well with the presumed duality of objective and subjective career success. There were however three clearly subjective career success themes that emerged from the research, including: being able to have a life outside work, opportunities to do challenging work and continue to grow professionally, and enjoying work (Lee, Lirio & Karakas 2006, p. 302). The three most prevalent definitions of career success at Time 1 were: being able to have a life beyond work, performing well, and doing challenging work and continuing to grow professionally. At Time 2, performing well was replaced by having an impact (Lee, Lirio & Karakas 2006, p. 305). This highlights the importance of understanding how the priorities and values of the careerist can tend to shift over time (see also, previous section 2.3.4.1).

### 2.3.4.3 Does ‘personal branding’ have a place in self-management and employability?

Hall (1976, pp. 181-9) outlines methods for improving the self-management of careers, as Table 7 below illustrates.
Table 7 - Summary of methods of improving self-management of careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Develop basic career competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Self-appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Obtaining occupational information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Goal selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Choose an organization carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Get a challenging initial job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Be an outstanding performer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Develop professional mobility (“executive chess”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Maintain the widest set of options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Don’t be blocked by an immobile superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Become a crucial subordinate to a mobile supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Always favour increased exposure and visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Be prepared to practice self-nomination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Leave an organization at your own convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Rehearse before quitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Plan for a multi-career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Plan your own and your spouse’s career collaboratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>Get help in career management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Anticipate chance events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Continually reassess your career</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: (Hall 1976, p. 189)

Hall’s methods remain relevant today, not least because the types of conditions in which they become even more relevant, such as the relatively discontinuous context of project-based working, have increased (World development indicators CD-ROM 2009; Bredillet 2010; DEEWR 2010; Morris & Jamieson 2004; Sydow, Lindkvist & DeFillippi 2004). Moreover, El-Sabaa (2001) observes that self-management is particularly relevant to project managers, compared to functional managers.

A more recent and overt phenomenon relating to self-management is that of personal brand (Peters 1997), a concept with at least part of its origins in marketing, as well as self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1936) and the Thomas theorem (Thomas & Thomas 1970). Lair, Sullivan and Cheney (2005) note that as career dynamics have undergone significant change during the 19th and 20th centuries, personal branding has emerged as a stabilising tool for the individual, offering to assist in satisfying an increasing need for career to be managed as a portable holding and intangible marker of identity. Personal branding both encompasses, and extends beyond, the conventional career-related notions of competency, experience and reputation. It specifically extends to ‘self-packaging’, underpinned by the premise that an individual can be commoditised into an asset, leading to an indelible impression that is uniquely distinguishable and valuable. More generally, the lure of personal branding is its promise to assist gain control over one’s work identity, which in turn offers a primary solution to structural uncertainties in the work economy.

So for project workers for instance it seems that personal brand may not only be relevant but a potentially indispensable tool in supporting their ‘staying the path’ in the project-oriented environment. By actively managing their personal brand, the project worker could potentially mitigate structural risk and uncertainty and thereby achieve greater personal control over his or her career. Of particular appeal would be the notion of the brand’s portability which would support
employability (over job security), a key concept in modern conceptions of career (Clarke 2008; DeFillippi & Arthur 1994; DeFillippi & Arthur 1996; Hall 1996a). Conversely however, personal branding does seem somewhat reductionist by its very design and this could conjure negative perceptions (ethically and culturally), especially from those who it seeks most to influence. The potential negative perception is that it is seen as a diversion towards superficial and technically executed representations of self, away from the more substantive aspects of individual rationality and identity (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney 2005).

As to whether good self-management (including personal branding) and employability could be seen as synonymous with career success (see previous section), more qualitative research is required into the subjective criteria that people bring to their own career situations (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005, p. 196; Heslin 2005).

2.3.5 Summary

Section 2.3 has presented an overview and discussion of career development and related theory. The section began with an overview of conceptions of career, including a history of the shift in recent decades from ‘old’ to ‘new’ career paths. This included an overview of some of the modern conceptions of career that reflect this ‘new’ career context. The discussion then turned to theoretical understandings of career development, including the principal fields contributing to modern career theory, as well as the need for theory convergence and integration. Some more practical questions and considerations were then explored, including: (i) how do age and career stage impact and inform career, (ii) what does career success look like, and (iii) does ‘personal branding’ have a place in self-management and employability?

This section and the previous (2.2 and 2.3), with their review of the parent discipline literatures on project management and career development, have presented a solid base from which to conceptualise the theoretical underpinnings relating to this study. This aspect of the study has not sought to directly add research data to these major fields, but rather, has acted first and foremost as a signpost to the immediate literature which is discussed next. Notwithstanding, each of the parent disciplines are also discussed further in Chapter 5, as part of formulating from the earlier results and analysis the research conclusions and implications for theory (and practice).

2.4 Immediate literature – individual career paths and development of serial project managers

This section reviews the immediate literature, on the individual career paths and development of serial project managers.

2.4.1 Introduction

In the previous two sections (2.2 and 2.3) we explored the parent disciplines of project management and career development respectively. In this section (2.4) we explore the extant literature within a more precise immediate literature field – the individual career paths and development of serial project managers. The section is divided into two parts. In the first part the discussion focuses on career paths and development of project workers in the organisational context. HRM practices are discussed, along with organisation-sponsored career path and development programs. This is followed by discussion on the declining role of the organisation in the context of project-based
learning. Incorporated in this discussion is a broader consideration of all the participants in knowledge work, which is explored (if only briefly) through the concept of the ‘knowledge diamond’. In the second part, discussion turns to the career paths and development of project managers specifically. Project manager careers are compared to those of the more traditional functional manager, then, consideration is given to the personal challenges that arise in the transformation to project manager. The section then summarises and concludes, in readiness for section 2.5 which begins to introduce the study itself. The ultimate purpose of the immediate literature is to identify gaps in the extant literature, help conceptualise the research and in turn help interpret the research results and conclusions.

In completing this review a comprehensive search of major academic databases and journals was undertaken, however, only limited literature was found on the precise immediate discipline, particularly with respect to (i) theory centered on project managers (versus project workers generally), and (ii) empirical evidence based on first-hand accounts by PMs (versus accounts by others). A summary of the search approach taken by the researcher is provided below, in Table 8.

Table 8 - Search of the academic literature on the immediate discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Databases</th>
<th>Major journals</th>
<th>Keywords (used in combination)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EBSCOhost - Business Source Premier Internet (e.g. Google scholar)</td>
<td>Australian Journal of Career Development</td>
<td>career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Development Quarterly</td>
<td>career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Journal of Project Management</td>
<td>career path*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal of Career Assessment</td>
<td>career self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal of Organizational Behavior</td>
<td>career success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal of Vocational Behavior</td>
<td>project manage*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization Studies</td>
<td>subjective career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PMOZ (conference proceedings)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Management Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Where theory focusing precisely on project managers and first-hand accounts is not identified, this is supplemented with empirical data that includes elements of reference to indirect accounts and to project workers more generally. The researcher has sought to clearly identify where this is the case.

2.4.2 Career paths and development of project workers in the organisational context

Discussed earlier were the project-oriented organisation (section 2.2.2.4), dilemmas of embeddedness and learning (section 2.2.4), modern conceptions of career (section 2.3.2), and of career success (section 2.3.4). Turner, Huemann and Keegan (2008) note that several features of this project-oriented work environment, such as temporary work processes, dynamic work environment, project-portfolio resource and role demands, and a specific management paradigm, create the need for different and often new human resource management (HRM) practices. The types of HRM practices that support these features are those which are aligned (Lengnick-hall & Lengnick-hall 1988; Wood 1999):

- Vertically with the choice to be project-oriented and adopt project-based ways of working;
- Horizontally so that HRM practices are consistent with and support working in temporary organisations such as projects and programs;
• Horizontally so that HRM practices adopted in projects and programs are mutually consistent with and supportive of practices adopted in the line, and vice versa; and

• Horizontally with the organisational context.

Huemann, Keegan and Turner (2007) explain the need further:

1. In the temporary organisations that are projects and programs, novel HRM practices need to be adopted and these practices need to be consistent with and supportive of project-based ways of working; and

2. In the line organisation, HRM practices need to be different (adapted) so that they are consistent with and supportive of project-based ways of working.

Yet in project-oriented structures, where work and environment tend to be constantly changing, employee wellbeing and ethical treatment can potentially suffer. This is because when it comes to considering the effects of HRM practices, the organisational or managerial perspective dominates and the effect on individual employees can be marginalised (Greenwood 2002). An example of this is career development support and whether an employee of a project-oriented organisation could reasonably expect their employer to routinely prioritise their development needs – for instance, through the employer’s choice of projects that the employee is allocated to, including when and in what role. More often than not this would be a false expectation, as mismatches in the individual’s and organisation’s needs inevitably occur. This tension is no more so than in the project environment where the importance of time drives shorter intervals for reciprocal fit to occur, that is, for the needs of the individual and organisation to be at the same stage. For any period where this reciprocal fit is not established, in other words there is a mismatch, this represents a lost opportunity for development, in that learning (through organising) will inevitably be inhibited (Weick 1996, pp. 50-1).

In reconciling the potential mismatch between organisational and individual needs, Bonache (2004) argues the need for people to develop a more critical view of the concept of justice in the HRM practices of organisations. Turner, Huemann and Keegan (2008) on the other hand, observe that project work does in fact seem to be inherently more interesting than routine work and that project-oriented companies have greater success retaining their employees doing project work than doing routine work. Similarly, Jones (1996, p. 72) observes that project-oriented careers and organisations provide the individual more challenge and variety in their work, albeit with more responsibility and need for proactive self-management. And so, it seems that whilst the needs of project-oriented organisation tend to take priority over the development needs of their employees, it remains that these two sets of needs can align, that project work is in fact a relatively attractive proposition (over routine work in an organisation) and that those project workers who choose to stay the path with an organisation longer term simply need their organisation to have and maintain effective HRM practices.

So what then might these effective HRM practices look like? A relatively established approach by organisations in supporting the career development of their employees is to implement a career development program(s), sometimes referred to as career path frameworks. These programs vary depending on the size and resources of the organisation. In larger programs, it is not uncommon
that some elements to be outsourced, for example, to a professional association or private training providers. An example of this would be an organisation and a PM professional association partnering to deliver to a large body of staff an industry-recognised certification, through an already established learning structure or platform. Corria-Simpson et al. (2008) note the background to and journey undertaken by one major projects organisation, Bechtel (www.bechtel.com), in embarking on putting in place their career development program for ‘project controls’ careerists (for further explanation on project controls in the wider project management context, see ‘monitoring & controlling’ process, in Table 1). The program utilises the below elements in a nine step process.

- Personal portfolio – the employee builds a view of their skills profile as it relates to the skills and experience valued by the company;
- Career road map – helps the employee determine the sequence of positions (in the company) most likely to help him/her acquire the skills needed to proceed to higher levels of responsibility, if this is the employee’s career objective;
- Competency matrix – describes the competencies and proficiency levels (in company-specific terms) for each role in the career road map. This typically covers the job knowledge, skills and training required;
- Gap analysis tool – a means by which to easily match and contrast the employee’s competencies to a particular role’s competency requirements (both as determined by the company);
- Development planning – this is as it suggests and typically involves two aspects, short-term planning (the competency matrix being a key input) and long-term planning (the career road map being a key input);
- Job descriptions – these define for each role in the career road map its classification, title, basic qualifications, general duties and responsibilities;
- Review processes – an established and often automated (with support online systems) work process for assisting the employee/supervisor complete annual reviews and development plans;
- Mentoring program – this is most often (though not exclusively) a supplementary element targeted at recent and new hires. Such programs generally aim to improve employee access to experienced staff for the purpose of supporting the employee’s learning and growth, as well as alignment and commitment to the company; and
- Rotation program – this is most often (though not exclusively) a supplementary element targeted at high-performing employees, or else graduates predicted to have high-performing potential. The purpose is essentially cross-training and professional development and the selection criteria or program structure is typically determined (by the company) on the basis of cost versus benefit.

Notwithstanding the merits of career development programs, not all organisations have the capacity, scale or inclination to support project workers in this way. Moreover, it remains that not
all organisations need to, because as the discussion so far has highlighted, in the modern career context organisation is replaced by organising and learning becomes the new source of continuity. Projects become learning episodes, where career capital (knowing-why, knowing-how, knowing-whom) is accumulated, and possibly although not certainly, company non-financial capital (cultural, human and social) may accumulate also (Arthur, DeFillippi & Jones 2001, pp. 100-3). This is none so more obvious than in industries such as film making, a relatively pure form of project-based working, where it is project networks that take center stage in achieving desired outcomes (DeFillippi & Arthur 1998; Jones 1996; Jones & DeFillippi 1996). Organisations by comparison become less central to project success, and likewise, when looked at from a longer term perspective may in fact hold negligible significance to the industry.

DeFillippi, Arthur and Lindsay (2006) draw together the various elements of knowledge and learning discussed so far, in the concept of the ‘knowledge diamond’ which usefully describes a model of interplay between individuals, communities (mainly occupational), organisations and industries. The model explains how each of these participants in knowledge work influences, and is influenced by, one another. Each participant represents a point on the diamond and interconnecting lines between each participant represent two-way interaction and influencing. Thus, the expected interactions and influencing can be summarised as:

- Individuals, through the work they take on, will interact with communities, organisations and industries;
- Communities will engage with their individual members, as well as organisations and industries, through trade, professional and industry associations;
- Organisations will engage with individual workers and occupational communities (through employment or else contracting), as well as industry associations; and
- Industries, as the hosts of knowledge work activities, will engage with all of the relevant individuals, communities and organisations. (DeFillippi, Arthur & Lindsay 2006, pp. 19-20)

The model assumes a relatively open system, as well as varying levels of influence between participants. Moreover, that for any given knowledge activity all four types of participant will likely be relevant.

2.4.3 Career paths and development of project managers specifically

As outlined so far, in a project-oriented society a career can become a succession of projects (Jones & DeFillippi 1996), rather than a series of steps up a ladder. Organisation becomes less important than organising (for learning)(Weick 1996), and project management therefore becomes a career in itself, relatively young and immature, but no less legitimate than more traditional and functional or technically focused disciplines (Meredith & Mantel 2000; Turner 2003; Wirth 1994). It is appropriate then at this point to begin narrowing our attention further still, to the specific focus of this study being the career path and development of the ‘project manager’. To this end the focus now turns to comparing the project manager career path with that of its line management counterpart or equivalent, the functional manager. Then, to challenges observed in the transition to the position of project manager.
2.4.3.1 Project manager and functional manager career paths compared

Hölzle (2010), in studying 20 companies that have implemented a project managers’ career path (necessarily, in the organisation context), provides *inter alia* a comparative view of how the project manager and functional manager career paths may be mapped against each other. Three essential levels of project leadership role are identified and these are mapped against a broadly equivalent level in the traditional line management organisation. The levels include project manager, senior project manager and project director. Beyond these project-level roles are program/portfolio through to executive level. See Figure 2-5, below.

Figure 2-5 Comparative matching of functional manager’s and project manager’s career paths

The figure also illustrates the ability to move between the project and line organisation environments. Many factors can influence these movements, for example, where the individual is the key influence in a given move then a likely factor might be personality disposition (Holland 1973; Myers & McCaulley 1985 (1986); Tremblay, Wils & Proulx 2002). Yet, despite Hölzle’s representation serving its purpose as a basic comparison between the project and functional manager, it remains a relatively bounded representation of career path. As discussed earlier, in modern conceptions of career a relatively common theme is that of the career journey comprising destinations that are “no longer fixed levels in a hierarchy, but fluid positions of expertise in a heterarchy organized around collective learning” (Weick 1996, p. 54). A further observation on Hölzle’s study is that it could usefully have explored the part of the project manager’s career path that sits below leader or manager level, that is, the (seemingly precarious) journey to becoming a bona fide project manager (Paton, Hodgson & Cicmil 2010). A final and more general observation on Hölzle’s study is that despite it signalling that “the role and motivation of the individual project manager is still under-researched” (Hölzle 2010, p. 779), the research focuses its attention on career path design in organisations, without ever quite returning to address the more individual-specific aspects in this initially identified gap in knowledge. This could have been achieved by gathering empirical evidence, directly from project managers, on their attitudes and perspectives on career unconstrained by organisational context.
Moving then closer still to the individuals’ perspectives, El-Sabaa (2001) conducts a study into the skills and career paths of effective project managers. This is a three stage research project that provides interesting insights into the comparative characteristics of project manager career paths. In the first stage of his research El-Sabaa asked open-ended questions of 85 project managers, in order to capture their descriptions of the personal characteristics, traits and skills of the best project managers they knew. The responses were categorised into three skill types (human, conceptual and organisational, and technical) and 18 skills based on a modified approach of Katz (1955, 1974, 1991). In the second stage El-Sabaa deployed a questionnaire whereby 126 project managers rated the importance of each of the 18 skills. In the third and final stage, a questionnaire was developed to capture information about the career paths of both project managers and functional managers. A functional manager was defined as a person in charge of one of the functional departments of a firm such as accounting, finance or production. The respondents for this third stage questionnaire included the same 126 project managers who completed the second stage questionnaire, together with 94 functional managers from a cross-section of public and private sector organisations.

The results of the first and second stages of the research suggested that technical skills are less important to effective project management than conceptual and organisational skills, and that human skills are more important than both of the former. Other studies tend to support this stance on the relative importance of human skills (Fisher 2011). The results of the third and final stage led El-Sabaa to conclude that there is indeed a difference between the career path of a project manager and that of a functional manager, and that in this respect, the outlook of a good project manager differs sharply from that of a functional manager. He noted in particular, that:

- While both roles require resourcefulness, “a project manager is required to have an extensive cross-functional experience”. They need “a basic understanding of other functions’ paradigms, so that multi-disciplinary resources can be efficiently utilised” (El-Sabaa 2001, p. 6); and

- Project managers need to “take personal control over their careers by becoming more versatile in their skills, accepting change, and being active in shaping their life at work” (El-Sabaa 2001, p. 6).

Table 9 below summarises the findings of the third stage of El-Sabaa’s research, focused on career path. Notably also, the project manager’s career path seems to naturally align much more closely to the modern conceptions of the boundaryless or protean career than does the functional manager’s career path.
Table 9 - Project manager career path versus functional manager career path

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Project manager</th>
<th>Functional manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>35.5 years</td>
<td>42.25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of movements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from one organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to another</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of lateral movements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>across projects and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>firms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of vertical movements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>along the hierarchy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of firms and project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of stay in</td>
<td>4.3 years</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key competencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative and</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-governance</td>
<td></td>
<td>technical specialty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(93%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td></td>
<td>Efficiency and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(91.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>accuracy (87.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(84%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career motives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stability orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(92%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(maintaining a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>position) (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(90.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(83.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-managed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paternalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(86.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(regulated by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonuses (85%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Promotion (96%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job rotation (90.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bonuses (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-training (88%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: (El-Sabaa 2001)

Whilst the subject of El-Sabaa’s work is particularly relevant to this study, and the findings intuitively appealing, the researcher has made the below appraisal of El-Sabaa’s study (as presented). This should be read in conjunction with Chapter 5 (see sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.6), where the findings of this study are interpreted in light of El-Sabaa’s work.

- Regarding the first stage, it is unclear how the researcher translated open-ended question responses to numeric scores intended to illustrate the skills of “the best project manager they knew”. The researcher’s explanation of using “a modified approach of Katz [9]” (El-Sabaa 2001, p. 3) seems inadequate. To have sufficient understanding of the research design (particularly where, as it appears, qualitative input is converted to a quantitative output) is particularly important given the subjective nature of the questioning in this stage;

- Regarding the first stage, it is unclear how the open-ended questions have been constructed or delivered to the participants. Likewise, were the open-ended questions in fact a questionnaire? The researcher later refers to questionnaire two in stage two and questionnaire three in stage three, so implicitly stage one involved a ‘questionnaire one’;

- Regarding the second stage, the questionnaire is not provided for the reader. This would have been useful for a better understanding of the research;

- Regarding the second stage, the questions are highly subjective (as in the first stage). This is only problematic to the extent that the researcher has not provided as background a
definition or criteria (e.g. experience, qualifications, etc.) of the sample, other than their industry sectors and that they are “project managers”. How qualified are these participants to make the judgments of project manager skills and career paths, particularly since the objective is to define “best” or “ideal”?

- Regarding the first and second stages, it is unclear whether there is overlap (or not) between the 85 participants in stage one and the 126 participants in stage two;

- Regarding the third stage (collecting information on career paths of project versus functional managers), it is uncertain whether the respective participants, being either project or functional managers, are being asked questions only about themselves or about the ‘other’ / alternate profiles also. The former has initially been assumed, however the explanatory text implies in places that the participants have directly contrasted the two profiles, rather than the researcher having used participant responses to make the contrasts. As an example, the researcher notes “The participants pointed out that there was a sharp contrast between the profiles of ‘Project Manager’ and that of ‘Functional Managers’” (El-Sabaa 2001, p. 4). To help remedy this, the researcher could have (i) provided a copy of the ‘third questionnaire’, and (ii) possibly have paid closer attention to the explanatory text (e.g. where it was himself and not the participants, doing the contrasting); and

- The research has limited generalisability, to the extent that (i) its focus is only on perceptions in Egypt, that is, “the skills and career path of the ‘ideal project manager’ as perceived in Egypt” (El-Sabaa 2001, p. 1), and (ii) parts of the sample have only limited industry sector representation (for example in the second stage – information systems, electricity, agriculture). Without further information the study would be difficult to replicate.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the above study as reported, it remains that there are significant differences between career paths of project managers and functional managers (Hölzle 2010; Turner, Keegan & Crawford 2000).

2.4.3.2 Experiences of challenge in the transformation to project manager

Leaving off then from one of El-Sabaa’s key findings, that project managers need to have extensive cross-functional experience, it seems apparent that there is significant insight to be gained by exploring the transition from functional manager or else technical specialist, to the position of project manager. In this under-researched area, an example of empirical evidence can be found in the work of Paton, Hodgson and Cicmil (2010), who explore the process of becoming and being a project manager in post-bureaucracy. Their study covers factors that drive the transformation of technical specialists into projects managers, and leading on from this, the tensions and challenges experienced once in these positions. Some of the key findings identified in their study include, that:

- The transformation or transfer into a project manager position is often driven by the need to progress one’s career, enhance one’s status and expand one’s role by making a step toward management;

- And yet, most of the participants cited a failure of their organisation to embrace the discourse of project management, in particular, ambivalence or else a more explicit rejection
of the values and status of project management. This was seen to stem from senior management;

- Most of the participants in turn cited a resulting discomfort with the title of project manager, including concerns over ignorance or lack of respect by peers in other fields, or else in the project managers’ previous (and often more established) disciplinary area, such as engineering, quantity surveying, et cetera. As a result, several of the participants would engage in quite complex identity politics, such as reverting to their previous occupational title or else rephrasing their title altogether to remove the term ‘project manager’;

- None of the participants suggested that their position provided substantial autonomy, in terms of decision-making and discretion. A common experience was that decision-making authority was instead vested in a subject matter expert in the traditional line organisation, such as a chief engineer or functional manager. Moreover, several participants cited that despite this lack of status, influence and control of resources, the project manager position often retained ‘accountability’ for the project (hence illustrating a dichotomy between strong relationship with outputs and weak relationship with inputs); and

- Yet in spite of all this, many of the participants attested with pride to their positive feelings of felt ownership for their projects.

The authors conclude that the project manager role “is typically compromised by structural and cultural aspects of the organisational and industrial context, the credibility of project management and the authority, resourcing and autonomy afforded to those taking up this role... [and that] these challenges illustrate the difficulties involved in adopting and effectively enacting the discrete project management role, and bring into question the contribution that project management can currently make in delivering the post-bureaucratic organisation” (Paton, Hodgson & Cicmil 2010, p. 164).

Keegan, Huemann and Turner (2011) in exploring HRM configurations in project-oriented companies provide further insight by way of their complementary conclusion relating to authority and control of resources. They observe that sub-optimal configurations seem to be common and are often brought about by a lack of clarity over the respective roles and responsibilities of HR specialists, line managers and project managers. Moreover, “…where the organizational balance of power lies with the line organization as opposed to the project organization, the project manager’s HRM responsibilities [and] issues are often not recognized by the HR department and are handled in a rather informal and uneven basis by both line and project managers” (Keegan, Huemann & Turner 2011, p. 3101). This additional insight provides further clues as to the situation of the serial project manager, in particular with respect to the types of circumstances that they must often navigate as people leaders in the project-oriented environment.

2.4.4 Summary

Section (2.4) has explored the extant literature within a more precise immediate literature field – the individual career paths and development of project managers. The section was divided into two parts. In the first part the discussion focused on career paths and development of project workers in the organisational context. HRM practices in project-oriented organisations were discussed, as were organisation-sponsored career path and development programs. The discussion also explored the declining role of the organisation in the context of project-based learning, as well as the importance
of understanding all of the participants in knowledge work. This was illustrated through the ‘knowledge diamond’. In the second part, discussion turned to the career paths and development of project managers specifically. Project manager careers were compared to those of the more traditional functional manager, then, consideration was given to the personal challenges that arise in the transformation to project manager. The next section (2.5) begins to introduce the study itself.

2.5 Summary of the extant literature

This section introduces the researcher’s perspective on some key gaps in the extant literature and from this constructs the related research problem, objective and questions to be pursued in this study.

2.5.1 Gaps in literature

A review of the two parent disciplines and the immediate literature has identified gaps in the literature and therefore the need for further research. Firstly however, it is worth acknowledging where there is currently good coverage in the extant literature. As relates to project management, it is acknowledged that the extant literature provides extensive coverage of the history and key concepts associated with the discipline. Similarly, there is an extensive literature on project management standards, competencies and methodologies. This extends to the theme of knowledge management and in particular learning in what is an increasingly project-oriented world of work. As relates to career development, it is acknowledged that the extant literature provides good coverage of the history of careers and of modern conceptions of career, including theoretical understanding as well as the need for (and value in) interdisciplinary enquiry including theory convergence and integration. The literatures of the two parent disciplines combined provide a useful contextual backdrop to the specific focus of this study.

It is further acknowledged that the immediate literature goes some way to providing insights into the career paths and development of project managers, however, in some respects the coverage is scant. In particular there are few examples in the immediate literature that provide either (i) an undiluted focus on project managers specifically (versus project roles generally), or (ii) empirical evidence gleaned first-hand from project managers themselves. Moreover, it appears that even less of the literature captures their situations holistically or end-to-end, instead choosing to focus (often exclusively) on very specific subsets of inquiry. An advantage in capturing participant data on a more holistic basis is that the more complete empirical view that results can both improve the practical applications of the immediate findings as well as lay a more useful foundation for further research. The implication of both is the increased likelihood of impact to a wider audience base, extending beyond the academic environment to the likes of early careerists, serial project managers, project-oriented organisations and project management associations.

In summary then, the specific gaps that have been identified to be addressed in this study include:

1. A gap in our understanding of how serial project managers perceive their own career path experiences;

2. A gap in our understanding of how serial project managers perceive their current situation, including their role as part of a PM profession; and
3. A gap in our understanding of what serial project managers perceive to be their own future career path direction and related development needs.

These gaps are taken forward into this study utilising both the parent disciplines and the immediate literature (mostly the latter) to provide a relevant and useful set of constructs in which to embed the findings and conclusions. Given the nature of the gaps in the literature, the study intends to pay close (although not exclusive) attention to the subjective criteria that project managers bring to their own career situations. The study is also characterised as applied research, given its focus on what are very much business-related issues albeit addressed through empirical investigation and theoretical understanding.

2.5.2 The research problem

The literature review identified certain gaps in the extant literature relating to the individual career paths and development of project managers. These gaps impede our understanding of serial project managers. The research problem therefore is that not enough is known about serial project managers, including their career path experiences, their attitudes and perceptions about PM as a career and a profession, their potential contributions to strengthening the PM profession, and their own future development needs. This problem of poor understanding has a plethora of implications, not only academically but for PM careerists, their profession and the industry sectors in which their services are in demand.

2.5.3 The research objective

Noting the problem outlined above, the objective of this study is to explore through direct engagement with serial project managers their career path and development experiences, attitudes and perceptions, in order to contribute to theory and practice a body of empirical evidence grounded in first hand perspectives. The research objective is supported by a set of research questions.

2.5.4 The research questions

There are three research questions asked in this study, each focusing on different tense – past, present and future. The research questions are:

1. (RQ1) What have today’s PMs’ career path experiences been?

2. (RQ2) How do today’s PMs relate to their current situation including the PM profession?

3. (RQ3) What are today’s PMs’ views on their career futures and development priorities?

These research questions underpin the format of enquiry discussed further in the next chapter, on the research methodology. Each research question is in turn supported by a set of interview questions. A complete list of the interview questions as scripted and deployed in this study is provided in Appendix 1, including explanation of minor refinements in order, structure and content that inevitably occurred as the data collection phase of this study unfolded. See also, Table 42 which outlines each of the interview questions’ respective contribution in answering the research questions.


2.6 Conclusion

Chapter 2 has reviewed the extant literature relating to this study. Two parent disciplines were explored including project management and career development. This was followed by a review of the immediate discipline which is the individual career paths and development of serial project managers. The researcher then identified gaps in current knowledge and from this confirmed both the research problem and the research objective. Subsequently, three specific research questions were identified together with a larger set of interview questions to be deployed as part of this study.

The above review has provided a broad theoretical base for this study. This is later used by the researcher as a lens through which to analyse and interpret the research results. Next, Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology for this study.
3 Research methodology

This chapter discusses the research methodology.

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature related to the subject of this study: individual career paths and development of project managers. The two dimensions of the research domain, namely project management and career development were examined, the research gaps were identified and research questions were developed.

This chapter discusses the selection of the research methodology, as well as data collection, analysis and limitations. Also discussed are the ethical considerations related to the research methodology.

3.2 Research paradigms and justification

3.2.1 Research paradigms

The definition of ‘paradigm’ varies (Neuman 2006) and it can mean different things to different people (Hussey & Hussey 1997). It is “too vague to be pinned down, so it pops up everywhere” (Mintzberg 1978, p. 635). Patton (1990) describes a paradigm as a worldview, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Morgan (1979) summarised the various usages of the term and classified them into three different levels:

- the philosophical level, which reflects basic beliefs about the world;
- the social level, which provides a framework for the research design guiding a researcher’s endeavours; and
- the technical level, which determines the specific methods and techniques that should be adopted in the research.

A paradigm predetermines how an inquiry will be conducted based on assumptions associated with ontology, epistemology and methodology. The ontological assumptions involve the researcher’s beliefs about the nature of reality; the epistemological assumptions reflect the researcher’s views on what the best ways are of inquiring into the nature of the world; and the methodological assumptions revolve around the collective techniques adopted to enquire into a specific situation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 1991, 2001). Kuhn (1970) describes how paradigms contribute to scientific inquiry by identifying the following aspects of investigation:

- Creating avenues of inquiry;
- Formulating questions;
- Selecting methods with which to examine questions; and
- Defining areas of relevance.

The approaches which exist in social research can be generally classified into four categories: positivism, constructivism, critical theory and realism (Guba & Lincoln 1994). The four paradigms
differ in their ontology, epistemology and methodology. The main features of the four research paradigms are briefly described below.

The positivist paradigm

The positivist paradigm is grounded in the ontological assumption that social reality is objective and relatively constant across time and settings (Ticehurst & Veal 2000). The epistemological assumption is that stable patterns or order pre-exist in the social reality and can be discovered (Neuman 2006). The researcher is viewed as independent and value-free, and detached and disinterested throughout the research. The dominant methodologies focus on description, explanation and uncovering of reality by collecting numerical data on observable behaviours of samples (Ticehurst & Veal 2000). The resulting data is then subjected to statistical analysis (Gall, Borg & Gall 1996).

The constructivist paradigm

In contrast with the positivist view that the reality is ‘out there’ to be investigated, constructivist research is based on the assumption that “realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions” (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p. 110). Truth is largely people’s perception, reality is socially constructed by people who experience it, and then give it meaning and create interpretation by interacting with others (Neuman 2006). Therefore, the social researcher should endeavour to “appreciate the different constructions that people place upon their experience”, rather than gathering “facts and measures how often certain patterns occur” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 1991, p. 24). A theory or description is true as long as it conveys a deep understanding of the meaning of the actor’s perception within a situated context (Neuman 2006).

Critical theory

Critical theory adopts a realist orientation and is based on the assumption that social reality is independent of subjective perceptions and is apprehendable (Guba & Lincoln 1994). Facts derived from reality are not theory-neutral; they are interpreted from a framework of values, theory and meaning (Neuman 2006). The researcher is integral to the research activity and shares knowledge with respondents (Healy & Perry 2000). Research conducted under this paradigm is usually long-term ethnographic and historical studies of organisational process and structures (Perry, Riege & Brown 1999).

The realist paradigm

The realist researcher believes that there is a ‘real’ world to discover even if it is only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible (Godfrey & Hill 1995; Guba & Lincoln 1994). The realist paradigm differentiates between reality per se and perceptions about reality. In contrast to the view of constructivism and critical theory, realism is grounded in the basic belief that there is only one reality “although several perceptions of that reality must be triangulated to obtain a better picture of it” (Perry, Riege & Brown 1999, p. 18). The associated methodology focuses on falsifying rather than verifying hypotheses, highlights situational information in a more natural context, and solicits different viewpoints (Guba & Lincoln 1994). The validity of research findings is a matter of probability rather than absolute truth, and therefore data should be collected from as many sources as possible (Guba & Lincoln 1994).
Table 10 below summarises the four research paradigms.

Table 10 - Overview of the four scientific paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Critical theory</th>
<th>Realism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td>Reality is real and apprehensible</td>
<td>Multiple local and specific ‘constructed’ realities</td>
<td>‘Virtual’ reality shaped by social, economic, ethnic, political, cultural and gender values, crystallised over time</td>
<td>Reality is ‘real’ but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>Objectivist: findings true</td>
<td>Subjectivist: value mediated findings</td>
<td>Subjectivist: value mediated findings</td>
<td>Modifies objectivist: findings probably true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>Experiments/ surveys: Verification of hypotheses, chiefly quantitative methods</td>
<td>Hermeneutical/ dialectical: Researcher is a ‘passionate participant’ within the world being investigated</td>
<td>Dialogic/ dialectical: Researcher is a ‘transformative intellectual’ who changes the social world within which participants live</td>
<td>Case studies/ convergent interviewing: Triangulation, interpretation of research issues by qualitative and quantitative methods such as structural equation modelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Adapted from (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Perry, Alizadeh & Riege 1997)

3.2.2 Justification for adopting the constructivist paradigm

The research paradigm adopted by the researcher is constructivist, also commonly described as interpretive social science (Neuman 2006, pp. 87-94). There are several varieties of interpretive social science, including: hermeneutics, constructionism, ethnomethodology, cognitive, idealist, phenomenological, subjectivist, and qualitative sociology (Neuman 2006, p. 88). In relation to this research, the researcher’s specific ontological position is best described as phenomenological. From the researcher’s perspective, reality is understood as a personal construct driven by a combination of nature and nurture. The interpretive approach is also associated with symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969, 1986; Mead & Morris 1934).

3.2.2.1 Conceptual and theoretical framework

The associated theoretical framework for this research is based on symbolic interactionism, which is a social psychological approach most closely associated with George Herbert Mead (Mead & Morris 1934) and Herbert Blumer (Blumer 1969, 1986). In symbolic interactionism the major concepts include: self, reference group, role-playing and perception. The symbolic interactionist asks (Patton, M. Q. 1990, p. 75), “What common sets of symbols and understandings have emerged to give meaning to people’s interactions?”

The key assumptions in symbolic interactionism (Neuman 2006, pp. 75, 88) include:

- People transmit and receive symbolic communications when they socially interact;
- People create perceptions of each other and social settings;
- People largely act on their perceptions; and
• How people think about themselves and others is based on their interactions.

Blumer (1986, p. 49) describes seven basic premises of symbolic interactionism:

1. “human group life consists of the fitting to each other of the lines of action of the participants”;
2. “such aligning of actions takes place predominantly by the participants indicating to one another what to do and in turn interpreting such indications made by the others”;
3. “out of such interaction people form the objects that constitute their worlds”;
4. “people are prepared to act toward their objects on the basis of the meaning these objects have for them”;
5. “human beings face their world as organisms with selves, thus allowing each to make indications to himself”;
6. “human action is constructed by the actor on the basis of what he notes, interprets, and assesses”; and
7. “The interlinking of such ongoing action constitutes organizations, institutions, and vast complexes of interdependent relations”.

The importance of symbolic interactionism to qualitative enquiry is “its distinct emphasis on the importance of symbols and the interpretive processes that undergird interactions as fundamental to understanding human behaviour” (Patton, M. Q. 1990, p. 76).

On the basis of the above, together with the review of extant literature in the immediate and parent disciplines, the conceptual framework shown below in Figure 3-1 was developed.
3.3 Research approaches and justification

Qualitative and quantitative methods represent the two major approaches to social research (Bavelas 1995; Guba & Lincoln 1994; Neuman 2006). They differ in many ways but can also complement each other. Quantitative research involves large numbers of respondents and yields results that are representative of the total population, whereas qualitative research focuses on a variety of empirical inputs and is commonly conducted in the form of focus groups and in-depth interviews (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).
The section below describes the two methods, together with a hybrid method commonly referred to as ‘mixed methods’. Later, in sections 3.3.5 and 3.3.6, the method chosen for this study is described together with the justification for its use.

### 3.3.1 Quantitative and qualitative – key differences

Qualitative and quantitative approaches differ in several ways, as summarised below in Table 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theorising pattern</td>
<td>Deductive</td>
<td>Inductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time horizon</td>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalisation</td>
<td>Generalisable</td>
<td>Contextual understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Hard reliable data</td>
<td>Rich, deep data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings</td>
<td>Artificial settings</td>
<td>Natural settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>Pre-planned</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>No statistics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Adapted from (Bavelas 1995; Becker 1996; Bryman & Bell 2007; Neuman 2006)

These key differences are explained further below.

#### Objectivity vs. Subjectivity

There is a plausible view that characterises “quantitative research as objective and qualitative research as subjective” (Bavelas 1995, p. 52). The two perspectives take opposing points of view in terms of what constitutes good research. On the one hand, the qualitative researcher emphasises a full understanding of social behaviour and relies on personal insights, feelings and perceptions that are associated with the notion of subjectivity (Dalton 1959, 1963), whereas on the other hand, the quantitative researcher highlights numerical measures, statistics and standard techniques and addresses the issue of integrity by relying on an objective toolset (Neuman 2006).

#### Hypothesis Testing vs. Exploratory Research

Quantitative research is commonly viewed as applying an existing theory to a relevant context so as to generalise it into a new area and thus a hypothesis testing approach is commonly adopted (Bryman & Bell 2007). Accordingly, the research questions are usually pre-planned (Neuman 2006). Qualitative research in contrast tends to capture a rich description of the social world and then develop theory utilising inductive reasoning based on the rich information gathered during the process of exploration of the real world (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

#### Static vs. Process

Quantitative research entails “presenting a static image of social reality with its emphasis on relationships between variables” (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 426), whereas qualitative research is often associated with the unfolding of events over time (Bryman & Bell 2007).
Chapter 3 - Research methodology

**Generalisable vs. Non-generalisable**

The quantitative researcher tends to vigorously pursue generalisability, whereas the qualitative researcher typically seeks a deeper understanding of behaviour, beliefs, values and the like in a particular context (Bryman & Bell 2007), even though they frequently also argue that their results are more generalisable than those from non-qualitative studies (Bavelas 1995).

**Empirical vs. Non-empirical**

Notwithstanding that all researchers engage in empirical research unless they simply disregard or ignore the data (Bavelas 1995), a quantitative approach is often depicted as an empirical study and a qualitative approach as non-empirical (Bavelas 1995). The reality remains that all scientists, irrespective of bent towards a particular approach, use data to support or reject theories. This data represents the empirical evidence or information that one gathers carefully according to rules or procedures, and data can be either quantitative (i.e. expressed as numbers) or qualitative (i.e. expressed as words, pictures or objects) (Neuman 2006, p. 8).

### 3.3.2 Quantitative method

#### 3.3.2.1 Overview

Quantitative research methods have traditionally dominated management research (Hill & Wright 2001; van Maanen 1983). By comparison, the historical role of qualitative research has tended to be to help formulate hypotheses which can be tested by further quantitative study (Walle 1997). Quantitative research views social reality as an external, objective reality and focuses on quantifying the relationships between variables by gathering numerical information (hard data) from a large sample (Neuman 2006; Zikmund 2003) and using statistical techniques to analyse data (Sekaran 2003). The common methodologies include experimentation, observational and survey techniques (Sekaran 2003). Quantitative research applies a deductive orientation to the role of theory and seeks to test theories (Bryman & Bell 2007). Typically, quantitative research follows a fixed sequence of steps in a linear path, like a relatively uncomplicated staircase leading in one clear direction (Neuman 2006). A typical ideal process for quantitative research is outlined below in Figure 3-2. This process sets ‘theory’ as the starting point and a hypothesis is deduced from the theoretical framework (Sekaran 2003). A typical research strategy might include experimental design and a social survey approach. Most often, a large sample of respondents is chosen and data is collected in order to examine the causal relationship between variables (Bryman & Bell 2007).
3.3.2 Strengths and limitations

Quantitative research offers the following benefits (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001):

- **Reliable** - When a quantitative research is done correctly, the results are an accurate representation of the population being studied. That is, quantitative research can reliably determine a population’s response to one idea, concept, product, package, etc.;

- **Large-scale** - Quantitative researchers use standardised questionnaire and interview techniques which enable the investigation to easily cross geographic boundaries and industrial sections, and the size of sample is large enough to be a statistically valid representation of the entire population; and

- **Replicable and tractable** - When two or more quantitative studies are executed correctly in the same population, the results can be nearly identical in spite of the time sequence. “Therefore, changes in a population can be tracked over time (longitudinally) by executing the same study at regular intervals” (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001, p. 87).

The critics of the quantitative approach tend to highlight limitations such as the following:

- **Failure to distinguish social institutions from the natural world** – The quantitative researcher turns a blind eye to the differences between the social and natural worlds by mechanically applying the principles of natural science to the world of people (Bryman & Bell 2007);

- **Potentially misleading** – The reliance on instruments and procedures cuts off the connection between research and everyday life (Bryman & Bell 2007) and certain factors such as leading questions included in questionnaires, biases generated in data collection methods and occasional small sample sizes may result in inaccurate or even misleading findings (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001); and
• **Limited potential for exploration** – Quantitative research tends to use highly standardised questionnaires and interview techniques to test predetermined hypotheses. Moreover, the questions and optional answers are also generally predetermined so that respondents have to react to the questions by selecting from these answers, even where they may seemingly not make sense to the respondent. As a result, some valuable responses may not be given adequate facility to be captured. Therefore quantitative research is not always the best choice for exploratory research (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001).

Thus, quantitative research is most appropriate when the issues to be tested are known, and is arguably less often appropriate during an initial learning phase or as a method to develop creative ideas.

### 3.3.3 Qualitative method

#### 3.3.3.1 Overview

Qualitative approaches adopt a different stance. Grounded in the ontological assumption that reality is socially constructed in the process of individual social interaction (Neuman 2006), qualitative approaches emphasise exploration by seeking a deep understanding of complex situations in order to build a theory from the ground up (Bryman & Bell 2007; Leedy & Ormond 2005; Patton, M. Q. 1990) and involve an analysis of ‘soft data’ in the form of impressions, words, sentences, pictures, symbols and so forth, rather than ‘hard data’ in the form of numbers (Neuman 2006). Qualitative research focuses on a full and rounded understanding of organisational experiences and the situations of individuals within a group; it typically gathers large amounts of rich information concerning a small number of people or organisations (Ticehurst & Veal 2000).

Qualitative research follows a non-linear path which means the “research proceeds in a cyclical, iterative, or back-and-forth pattern” (Neuman 2006, p. 152). The main steps of qualitative research are illustrated in Figure 3-3 below. A qualitative researcher does not pass through all steps straight away in the order shown. S/he will move backwards or sideways when necessary, however, the retrospection or deviation facilitates gathering new data and gaining further insights, rather than simply uncovering findings that have already been reached. The research process tends to move in an upward spiral (Neuman 2006).
3.3.3.2 **Strengths and limitations**

The strengths of qualitative research are as follow:

- Qualitative research is an ideal exploratory tool. The free-form design provides flexibility for almost anything to happen (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001) and the researcher can interact with respondents, with sufficient opportunity to ask questions based on previous responses. This allows for in-depth probing of issues and can yield great detail in responses (Neuman 2006; Patton, M. Q. 1990);

- Qualitative research employs a face-to-face format of investigation which enables visceral feedback in addition to or instead of cold numbers (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001; Patton, M. Q. 1990);

- Qualitative researchers often conduct investigations in a group setting; this allows for interaction between group members (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2000) which can “draw out ideas and opinions that may not have come up in one-on-one situations” (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001, p. 53); and

- Qualitative research can serve as a planning tool for further quantitative study (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001).

Qualitative research methods can have certain limitations (Bryman & Bell 2007), including:
Too impressionistic and subjective – Qualitative findings can be overly reliant on the close personal relationships between the researcher and the people being studied; likewise the research tends to follow an open-ended process risking the possibility that insufficient clues or explanation is provided by the researcher as to why one area is highlighted over another;

Difficult to replicate – The researcher in a qualitative study serves as the main instrument of data collection. What is observed and what is to be concentrated on, largely remains within the predilection (partiality) of the researcher; and

The findings are restricted – When the researcher uses unstructured interviews with a small number of individuals in a certain organisation or locality, it can at times be difficult if not impossible to generalise the findings to other settings.

3.3.4 Mixed methods
The term ‘mixed methods’ denotes research methods that integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single project or context (Bryman 2006; Bryman & Bell 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Oakley 1999). Creswell (1994, p. 174) defines a mixed methods study as “one in which the researcher uses multiple methods of data collection and analysis”. The distinctions between quantitative and qualitative approaches is often overdrawn and presented as a rigid dichotomy (Bryman 2006; Neuman 2006), whereas in fact each method need not exist in isolation of the other (Cameron 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2000). In practice these two approaches are often used as complementary stages of an overall project (Grossnickle & Raskin 2001; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003). Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 642) also note that, “in business and management research combined research is particularly popular”.

Saunders et al. (2003) argue that there are two main advantages in using a mixed method strategy. First of all, different methods can be used for different purposes in a study – for example, in order to help create hypotheses which can then be tested and to have a clearer picture about the key issue before embarking on a questionnaire, in-depth interviews with certain informative interviewees can be of great value. Secondly, using more than one method enables triangulation, for example, a semi-structured group interview may examine the data collected by other means from a different point of view.

Bryman and Bell (2007) summarise the possible ways that a variety of methods may be integrated in the same project. Firstly, qualitative research may provide hypotheses and better measurement for subsequent quantitative research. For example, the in-depth contextual knowledge acquired through qualitative investigation may inform a questionnaire and improve the response rate of a survey. Secondly, quantitative research can “prepare the ground” (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 649) for qualitative research. For example, based on a large-scale questionnaire survey a smaller and representative sample of respondents may be generated for in-depth interviews. Thirdly, a mixed method approach may be employed in a complementary manner when the information is not accessible to a set of methods typically falling into an exclusively quantitative or qualitative approach.

Morgan (1998) summarises the literature on the mixed methods approach and clarifies four applicable possibilities for mixing qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Morgan, there are generally two decisions that need to be made when using a mixed method, namely (i) the
Chapter 3 - Research methodology

priority decision, and (ii) the sequence decision. The priority decision decides which method, qualitative or quantitative, will be the principal tool to collect data, and the sequence decision determines which method precedes or follows up in the process of investigation. Each decision generates two possible complementary designs. Thus, in total four models of mixed methods are developed, as illustrated in Figure 3-4, below.

Figure 3-4 Complementary mixes of qualitative and quantitative research methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority decision</th>
<th>Principal method: Qualitative</th>
<th>Principal method: Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Qualitative preliminary</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller qualitative study helps guide the data collection in a principally quantitative study.</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller quantitative study helps guide the data collection in a principally qualitative study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can generate hypotheses; develop content for questionnaires and interventions, etc.</td>
<td>Can guide purposive sampling establish preliminary results to pursue in depth, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: Focus groups help to develop culturally sensitive versions of a new health promotion campaign.</td>
<td>Example: a survey of different units in a hospital locates sites for more extensive ethnographic data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Quantitative Preliminary</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller quantitative study helps evaluate and interpret results from a principally quantitative study.</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller quantitative study helps evaluate and interpret results from a principally qualitative study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can provide interpretations for poorly understood results, help explain outliers, etc.</td>
<td>Can generalise results to different samples, test elements of emergent theories, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Qualitative Follow-up</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller qualitative study helps evaluate and interpret results from a principally quantitative study.</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller quantitative study helps evaluate and interpret results from a principally qualitative study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can provide interpretations for poorly understood results, help explain outliers, etc.</td>
<td>Can generalise results to different samples, test elements of emergent theories, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quantitative Follow-up</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller quantitative study helps evaluate and interpret results from a principally quantitative study.</td>
<td>Purpose: smaller quantitative study helps evaluate and interpret results from a principally qualitative study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: in-depth interviews help to explain why one clinic generates higher levels of patient satisfaction.</td>
<td>Example: a state-wide survey of a school-based health program pursues earlier results from a case study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.3.5 Justification of qualitative approach used in this research

The methodology used in this research is qualitative. This is a legitimate research approach (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 1991, pp. 21-43), distinguished from quantitative and critical methods by the following characteristics:

- The assumption is that reality is socially constructed and arises out of social interaction;
- The purpose is contextualisation;
- The researcher role is up close and personal;
- The methodology is inductive/interpretive, the emphasis is on building theory;
- The data collection is by way of captured lived experiences of informants; and
The data analysis is by way of identification of recurring themes and patterns in the search for meaning.

3.3.6 Justification of interviews as the qualitative technique used in this research

The specific technique or method used in this qualitative research is interviews. This technique was chosen because of its ability to provide maximum opportunity for complete and accurate communication of ideas between the researcher and participant (Cannell & Kahn 1968). This includes, helping the researcher to explore biographies and understand the perceptions of participants, as well as learn how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events (Mays & Pope 1995; Taylor & Bogdan 1998). Interviews can also be justified in terms of rigour, validity and reliability by focusing on the notion of trustworthiness, which is particularly relevant to qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that trustworthiness in the qualitative context involves credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability:

- Credibility (instead of internal validity) – one excellent way for instance is to ask the participants of research whether their realities have been represented appropriately;
- Transferability (instead of external validity) – to what extent does the research contain identical elements, theoretical/purposive sampling and ‘thick’ description?;
- Dependability (instead of reliability) – multiple data collection methods is key, these include participant observation, interviewing and/or document collection. Triangulation is also useful; and
- Confirmability (instead of objectivity) – similar to dependability, triangulation can play a key role, as can practising reflexivity, and conducting a confirmability audit by member check.

Credibility was achieved through the interview method by applying feedback and syndication on key observations made during the data collection. Transferability was achieved by virtue of the sample group being delimited and because the data collection method contained structure and standardisation. This comment is primarily about the minimum threshold for participation, being PMP or equivalent. Dependability was achieved through the consideration and use of ancillary methods during the research to augment the results of the primary, interview method. In addition to triangulation of measures and method, the researcher also considered triangulation of theory (Neuman 2006, pp. 149-51). Lastly, confirmability was achieved by applying an iterative style to the data collection, whereby the first-pass data collection and analysis was followed by one or more confirmatory cycles, sometimes referred to as a hermeneutic spiral (Gummesson 1991).

The researcher has also been cognisant, in developing this research, of the work of Cooksey (2007) on paradigm-independent meta-criteria for social and behavioural research. In particular, Cooksey argues the notion of ‘convincingness’, and, that focused consideration of meta-criteria can greatly assist both the planning and evaluation of social and behavioural science research. Cooksey proposes a network of 12 interconnected meta-criteria explicitly designed to move researchers’ thinking beyond the boundaries of specific research traditions or paradigms and their localised assumptions and definitions of research ‘validity’. Whilst the researcher has not explicitly applied Cooksey’s meta-criteria in this research, he does however acknowledge that his awareness and support of Cooksey’s meta-criteria has indirectly encouraged and influenced his own decisions on
and treatment of methodology, technique, analysis and handling of findings in this research, to the extent that the question of ‘convincingness’ has remained front-of-mind throughout.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Research sample

The sample group for this research was assembled to reflect equivalence with a minimum and globally recognised standard, decided upon as PMI’s PMP® (Project Management Professional) credential, which is arguably the best-known standard globally. The PMP® credential recognises the competence of an individual to perform in the role of a project manager based particularly on their experience in leading and directing project teams. PMP candidates are assessed by examining their competence using: reviewing education and experience, testing competence, and ongoing development. Eligibility requirements for PMP certification are summarised in Table 12, below.

Table 12 - PMP eligibility requirements (educational and professional experience)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>Project management experience</th>
<th>Project management education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary degree (high school diploma, associate’s degree or global equivalent)</td>
<td>Minimum 5 years / 60 months unique non-overlapping professional project management experience during which at least 7,500 hours were spent leading and directing project tasks</td>
<td>35 contact hours of formal education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OR

| Four-year degree (bachelor’s degree or global equivalent) | Minimum 3 years / 36 months unique non-overlapping professional project management experience during which at least 4,500 hours were spent leading and directing project tasks | 35 contact hours of formal education |


In practical terms, participation was encouraged from what were the three primary local sources of eligible participants:

1. PMP-certified members of PMI’s local (Queensland Australia) chapter;
2. AIPM members certified with post-nominal designation CPPM, or higher; and
3. Non-certified (and/or non-members of a project management association) project managers who meet or exceed the minimum criteria for inclusion, as defined above.

PMI and AIPM are the two dominant professional bodies for PM professionals in Australia and more specifically in Queensland Australia, the region from which the sample was drawn and in which the research conducted.

The total number of participants in this research was 25. The sample was, as much as possible, selected to include a spread of industry backgrounds that would broadly reflect Queensland economic output, and therefore (by assumption), project and project manager demand in the region.
3.4.2 Interview format

The interview format was one-to-one, face-to-face. In terms of formality and structure each interview was semi-standardised (Berg 2004, p. 79). This means that:

- the approach adopted in delivery was more or less structured;
- questions could be reordered during the interview;
- wording of questions was flexible;
- the level of language could be adjusted;
- the interviewer could answer questions and make clarifications; and
- the interviewer could add or delete probes.

The advantages of interviews held face-to-face and one-to-one is that, with appropriate preparation and introduction to the sample group, you achieve a high level of personal interest in (and response rate to) the research, leading to quality interview outcomes including data collected.

A complete list of the interview questions as scripted and deployed in this study is provided in Appendix 1, including explanation of minor refinements in order, structure and content that inevitably occurred as the data collection phase of this study unfolded. See also, Table 42 which outlines each of the interview questions’ respective contribution in answering the research questions.

3.4.3 Ancillary aspects of the interviews (before, during, after)

It is arguably important that small, seemingly trivial (or ancillary) aspects of the data collection phase be captured also. The benefits of capturing such information are no less than two-fold:

1. The reader or audience has a better appreciation of the research as it has occurred; and
2. The research becomes better documented and therefore more likely of being able to be replicated, for example to other regions or contexts.

Below is a summary of ancillary aspects in relation to the interviews:

Before the data collection:

- The researcher meticulously planned, several months in advance, awareness-raising for the research including interactions (whether direct or indirect) with potential research participants. For more information on related activities undertaken, see the research schedule (Appendix 2);
- The researcher enlisted the support of prominent industry peers to promote participation in the research and to raise awareness generally. For example, personalised invitations were circulated to members of the local PMI chapter. For a sample letter, see Appendix 5; and
- The researcher presented at evening events to promote participation in the research and to raise awareness generally. For a sample presentation headline slide, see Appendix 6. The
sample comprised busy professionals, many holding senior roles. In Australia, obtaining willing respondents in research is becoming a critical issue in both commercial and academic research. The efforts that were put in as described achieved a good sample for this study seeing these difficulties others are experiencing.

During the data collection:

- The researcher booked interviews in a controlled manner with detailed guidance to participants. Interviews were booked well in advance (e.g. 2-4 weeks) of the interview, using electronic calendar invites (MS Outlook). Invites included high-level additional prompts and comforters around the style and theme of the interview, invites gave location guidance and provided dress/suitable attire guidance;
- The researcher reconfirmed all interviews 24 hours prior to commencement, to minimise the risk of participants rescheduling or declining last minute out of convenience; and
- At each interview there were scheduled ‘buffers’ of 15 minutes before to allow for rapport-building and 30 minutes after to allow for debriefing / feedback;
- At each interview the researcher took extensive hand notes (2–3 pages per one hour), however he was also conscious of needing to not materially impact the flow and depth of the interaction;
- Each interview was audio taped (and these were subsequently transcribed, in support of analysis);
- Each interview took place in the same environment, which was a corporate office in Brisbane’s CBD;
- There were gaps between the interviews to enable the researcher to reflect and write up notes from each interview;
- The researcher maintained a consistent tone and personal style in each interview; and
- At the conclusion of each interview the researcher thanked the participant for their time and likewise restated an offer to provide advanced access to the research findings (interim and final) in recognition and appreciation of their support.

After the data collection:

- The researcher provided to the research participants advanced/early access to the research findings (interim and final) in recognition and appreciation of their support; and
- The researcher maintained contact with several of the participants, on a professional networking/interest basis.

3.5 Data analysis
This section describes the approach taken to analysing the results of the data collection phase.
3.5.1 Data analysis procedure
The approach to data analysis in this research involved:

1. Codifying the data;
2. Categorising the data; and
3. Refining the data further still to identify abstract themes that could be understood holistically.

In codifying the data a structured approach was adopted, bearing in mind that codifying can be a difficult operation to understand and master for inexperienced researchers (Neuman 2006, p. 460). Strauss (1987) identifies three phases of qualitative data coding, including: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. In open coding data is examined and condensed into preliminary analytical categories. Then, in axial coding the codes are organised and linked in order to discover key analytical categories. Finally, in selective coding previous codes are examined to identify and select data that will support the conceptual coding categories that were developed.

Overlying this approach, the findings are also interpreted through the constructs of the parent disciplines – that is, career development and project management.

3.5.2 Verification and triangulation
Triangulation is sometimes referred to as “cross examination”. The purpose of triangulation in qualitative research is to increase the credibility and validity of the results. Denzin (1978) identifies four basic types of triangulation:

1. Data triangulation, involving time, space, and persons;
2. Investigator triangulation, involving multiple researchers in an investigation;
3. Theory triangulation, involving the use of more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon; and
4. Methodological triangulation, involving the use of more than one method to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents.

Data triangulation was utilised in this research. The purpose of triangulation was to be satisfied that saturation had been achieved, as well as to uncover any previously unidentified cases that may serve to falsify the results (this ultimately adds to the robustness of emergent theory) (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 1991, p. 39). The means of implementation was in essence through three interview ‘rounds’, where the second and third rounds involved expanding the sample (rather than follow-up interviews). The breakdown of participants per round of interviews included:

1. Participants 1–10
2. Participants 11–21
3. Participants 22-25 (introduced later, to address under-representation by females)
In practical terms, a key objective had been to code and categorise the results of the first round, before the second round had commenced. This discipline of coding and categorising in a timely manner, in what was already a tight interview schedule, proved well worth the effort to the extent that it greatly assisted refinements in the delivery of the second (and subsequently, third) round interviews. Also, in terms of the data collection phase as a whole, it served to achieve progressive refinement of categories towards abstract themes.

The design of the above approach to data analysis was intentionally structured, iterative and comprehensive. By fulfilling these three key criteria, a robust lead-in was created to the research summary and conclusions.

### 3.6 Delimitation of the methodology

The research methodology included the following limitations:

1. It did not attempt to engage participants who were no longer engaged in the profession but otherwise fitted the profile;
2. It only considered the personal perceptions of project managers in Queensland Australia and to this end did not attempt to gain any perceptions from other stand-alone occupations or professions;
3. It did not distinguish between project managers who only manage projects, and project managers who may also manage programs or portfolios; and
4. It did not include detailed quantitative analysis of the responses, as the research was exploratory and qualitative in nature.

Whilst the above limit the generalisability of the findings, they may also point the way for further research.

### 3.7 Ethical considerations in the research methodology

Typically, the ethical considerations involved in qualitative research revolve around methods and procedures. There are five key issues related to this: voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and deception (Neuman 2006, pp. 129-46). In this research, ethics has been comprehensively addressed.

Firstly, all participants were provided a thorough introduction and background to the research. The purpose of providing this information to participants was to ensure that they each had a clear understanding of the purpose of the research including how the research data would be used. The following interactions are examples:

- Each participant received and signed a ‘Consent Form’ (see Appendix 3);
- Each participant was provided a concise, two-page information sheet (see Appendix 4);
- Each participant was provided access to additional, detailed information about the research (the preliminary literature review and the research proposal), via the researcher’s personal website (www.jdbingham.com);
Each participant received a ‘refresher’ briefing about the research, during the 15 minutes immediately prior to their interview commencement; and

Each participant was asked immediately after the close of their interview whether they had any concerns or additional questions about the research.

Secondly, a plan existed that identified and protected any private research notes, in particular, where they could have linked individual names to specific responses. As part of this plan an assessment was made on how and where data was stored, who could access it, and whether the data to be collected was indeed necessary or whether it might be able to be excluded from the research notes in order to ensure anonymity of participants. The key elements of the data privacy plan included:

- The researcher’s paper-based work was stored in a secure office including locked cabinets;
- Electronic material was stored on an encrypted stand-alone hard drive and will continue to be for no less than seven years after the completed research;
- Any material outsourced to a third party for transcribing was subject to discloser-generated Deed of Confidentiality between the researcher and contractor, which obliged the contractor to handle, store and/or dispose of the relevant data in a manner that met or else exceeded the obligations on the researcher to the research participants and others; and
- Any data that could or should reasonably be de-identified prior to storage or archive, was.

In addition to the above, this research was subject to ethics approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the relevant institution, Southern Cross University, Australia. The research was then approved on 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2010 (approval number ECN-10-156).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology of this study. The chapter commenced with an overview of research paradigms, including a justification for the research paradigm chosen for this study. The researcher then discussed specific research approaches, including a justification for the research approach adopted for this study as well as a justification for the specific technique adopted for this study. Next, the researcher discussed data collection, followed by data analysis. Finally, the researcher discussed limitations and delimitations of the methodology as well as ethical considerations and how these have been addressed. The next chapter will analyse the data collected through the qualitative method employed in this study.
4 Results and data analysis

This chapter discusses the results and analysis of the data collection undertaken as part of this study.

4.1 Introduction

The literature review presented in Chapter 2 provided a theoretical basis for this research, into the career paths and development of project managers. Chapter 3 presented the research methodology, the data collection techniques and data analysis procedure adopted in this study. Chapter 3 also discussed the ethical considerations involved and how these have been addressed. Here, Chapter 4 overviews the results of the data collection and analyses those same results, in preparation for the next chapter which focuses on conclusions and implications.

4.2 Summary of data collected

Semi-structured interviews were held with 25 participants, between October 2010 and February 2012. The data was collected from these interviews included 23 hours of audio recording, 357 pages of transcript and 86 pages of hand-written notes made during the interviews. The data then underwent coding and categorisation in accordance with the research methodology outlined in Chapter 3.

There were 21 (84%) male and 4 (16%) female participants in this study. Participants 22-25 were female. At the time of this study the representation of females in the local PMI chapter and in the AIPM was approximately 25% and 17% respectively. Hence, a good balance of representation by sex is seen to have been achieved.

A summary of the total data collected during the interviews is provided below, in Table 13.

Table 13 - Summary of data collected from the semi-structured interviews

| Participant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | TOTAL |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Transcript (pages) | 16 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 17 | 15 | 16 | 13 | 12 | 16 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 12 | 18 | 19 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 10 | 357 pages |
| Audio (minutes) | 61 | 45 | 51 | 54 | 61 | 63 | 55 | 48 | 52 | 48 | 47 | 76 | 47 | 43 | 70 | 75 | 75 | 56 | 46 | 56 | 35 | 48 | 56 | 39 | 22 hrs 52 mins |
| Hand notes (pages) | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 86 pages |

n=25

SOURCE: Developed for this research

It should be noted that the results data presented in this chapter includes sample statistics which will inevitably highlight potential biases in this non-probability sample and which in turn may impact the findings of this study. However, as the research is qualitative rather than quantitative, limited emphasis should be placed on the numerical prevalence of particular findings. The aim in interviewing to thematic saturation, as in this study, is to exhaust the emergence of themes rather than to quantify their occurrence. The statistics described in this chapter show that the sample provided diverse perspectives so that the risk that saturation was reached prematurely through sample homogeneity was minimised.
4.3 Interview results and analysis

This section is divided into five parts, to reflect the interview structure. The five parts include: demographics, the past (RQ1), the present (RQ2), the future (RQ3), and a concluding ‘catchall’ question to participants.

4.3.1 Demographic questions

This part of the section provides a demographic profile of the participant sample in this study.

4.3.1.1 Total number of years industry (work) experience

The participants’ total number of years of industry experience ranged from 10 to 45 years or more. In total, the sample had more than 600 years combined industry experience. The average industry experience of the participants was 25 years.

4.3.1.2 Country of birth

The participants were asked what country they were born in. Table 14 below shows the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England / UK</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Only twelve of the 25 participants were born in Australia. The remaining majority were born outside of Australia, across eight different countries. The most common place of birth other than Australia was the United Kingdom which is not unexpected given Australia’s colonisation by Britain and continued immigration trends over the past two hundred years.

4.3.1.3 Current and previous industry sectors worked in

The participants were asked which industry sector they currently worked in, and which industry sectors they had worked in previously. Fifteen relevant industry sectors were identified from the results, of which six were sectors that the participants currently worked in. Table 15 below shows the results.
Table 15 - Current and previous industry sector experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Current sector focus</th>
<th>Previous sector experience</th>
<th>Total with sector experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aviation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking &amp; insurance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering / manufacturing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance &amp; accounting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining / minerals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil &amp; gas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property &amp; construction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail &amp; hospitality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain logistics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecoms / media</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25 for current sector focus

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The results indicate a diverse background of experience, both in terms of the number of industry sectors worked in by the sample as a whole, as well as the number of industry sectors worked in by each participant. Participants had worked in up to seven different industry sectors apart from their current one. Interestingly, the sample contained two diverging profiles; one profile where the participant had worked in just one or two other industry sectors and the other where the participant had worked in six or more other sectors. Only six of the 25 participants indicated that they had not moved industry sector during their career.

4.3.1.4 Degree qualifications (if any)

The participants were asked what, if any, degree level qualifications they held. Table 16 below shows the results.
Table 16 - Degree qualifications held by project managers

| Participant                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----| Total |
| **Bachelors degree**         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Business - Computing         | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Business – Info. Systems     |   | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Eng. - Aeronautical          |   |   | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Eng. - Civil                 |   |   |   | Y |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Eng. - Electronics           | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Eng. - Mechanical            | Y | Y | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 3 |
| Finance & Computing          |   |   |   |   | Y |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Multimedia                   |   |   |   |   |   | Y |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Science                      |   |   |   |   |   |   | Y |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Sci. – Quantity Surveying    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Y |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Sci. - Sports Sci. & Ecology |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Y |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| **Bachelors with Honours**   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | |
| Computing and Electronics    | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Eng. - Metallurgical         |   | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Eng. - Mech. & Mnfg.         |   |   | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Eng. - Mining                |   |   |   | Y |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Sci. - Physics               |   |   |   |   | Y |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| **Masters degree**           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | |
| Engineering                  | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Information Systems          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Y |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Int. Economics & Finance     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Y |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| MBA                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    | Y | Y | Y |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 3 |
| MBA (Executive)              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |   |   |   | Y |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| Project Management           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    | Y |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |
| **Doctoral degree**          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | |
| PhD                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | Y |

Total number of degrees 1 2 1 2 1 1 0 1 0 1 1 1 1 2 1 2 1 2 0 0 0 2 1 3 1

n=may be more than 25 as can have more than one response

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The results illustrate a wide variance in degrees held. Many participants held one degree, some held two and six participants held none. Only one participant held a full degree qualification specific to project management. The most common degree qualification was engineering, closely followed by business and science degrees.

4.3.1.5 Other qualifications (if any)

The participants were asked if they held any non-degree level qualifications. Table 17 below shows the results.
Table 17 - Non-degree level qualifications held by project managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diploma</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AICD (Aus. Inst. of Company Directors) – Grad Dip.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Programming – Dip.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science – Dip.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Post-Grad Dip.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management – Dip.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting (certificate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural drafting (certificate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPM (Certified Associate in Project Management)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPPD (AIPM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPEng (Certified Practicing Engineer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITIL (Information Technology Info. Library)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing (Advanced Certificate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSP Practitioner (Managing Successful Programmes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMP (Project Management Professional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCE2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management (Master Certificate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RegPM (AIPM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Sigma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSE (Site Senior Executive), QLD coal mines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television &amp; radio (trade certificate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Other Qualifications</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = may be more than 25 as can have more than one response

SOURCE: Developed for this research
The results show that the participants held a wide range of non-degree level qualifications. Also, that PMP certification was the most commonly identified non-degree credential. The prominence of PMP certification could be associated with its global popularity as a credential, however, it should also be noted that the sample group comprised 19 (76%) PMI members and that PMP is a PMI credential.

4.3.2 The past (RQ1): PMs’ reflections on their career path to date

These next questions were from the first of three categories in the main body of the interview, all of which focus on the attitudes and perceptions of project managers. The questions below focus on the ‘past’, exploring PMs’ backgrounds and experiences leading up to their seeing themselves as bona fide project managers.

4.3.2.1 How do they come to identify themselves as PMs?

The participants were asked how they came to identify with being a project manager. Table 18 below shows a summary of the results.

Table 18 - How PMs come to identify themselves with the project management profession

| Participant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| Early awareness and respect for project environments | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 10 |
| Employability and the need to convey competencies | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 8 |
| The PM profession emerged, their career emerged with it | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 10 |
| Their organisation or mentor enlightened / encouraged | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 4 |
| Wider frame of reference (e.g. soft skills, management) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 11 |

n=may be more than 25 as can have more than one response

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments from those who expressed an early awareness and respect for the project management environment include:

- I’ve always been in projects actually, even as a graduate I was a project engineer in the coal industry, so I’ve always worked as a project engineer / project manager from day one. (Participant 13)
- I believe that it started possibly around 1984 ... [my] experience of working as an accountant in projects but not necessarily managing projects, it triggered an intrigue ... (Participant 21)

Examples of comments from those who found the project manager banner useful for employability purposes (e.g. to label their competency set) include:

- [I sought] a baseline qualification that would be recognised by other organisations ... [it] helps get through the initial cull [when submitting a CV for a job]. (Participant 5)
- ... the [IT] industry is a lot more aware of PM today, they know what to ask for. (Participant 9)
Examples of comments from those who reported that their career emerged in parallel with the emergence and professionalisation of project management include:

- ... there seemed to me to be a lot of people with loud voices in big boots... shouting at people to get things done – cracking whips ... there was something behind that, but it was very difficult to find out what it was. (Participant 1)
- years ago we didn’t have any formal way of conducting projects (Participant 3)
- I’d been working as a project manager for a number of years at that point and I started to identify myself as a project manager rather than a research scientist ... (Participant 15)

Examples of comments from those who identified that their organisation or a mentor pushed them towards project management include:

- I had a manager who was also a bit of a mentor and he put that on my development plan. So I took that up. I thought that was a good opportunity to cement my career, whereas previously it was not so obvious that I was a project manager first and foremost. (Participant 18)
- when I first started my career ... I basically just cruised from contract to contract in IT ... but when I joined [company name] and got introduced to project management, I decided to take that path ... (Participant 19)
- I was a graduate with [company name] and ... you were selected for your potential leadership in the future so you really had to show that you could run either a crew, or a team or a project within the first three years of graduating. So that’s how I really went into projects. (Participant 24)

Examples of comments from those who were attracted to project management because it offered a wider frame of reference for their work include:

- I just thought that was the next logical step ... I noticed I was just directing people more ... managing people and I seemed to be getting quite a good result from that side of things. (Participant 4)
- ... it was really a [self] recognition that my professional qualifications only covered a small portion of what my job was then requiring in the project environment ... (Participant 6)
- I think that it [the self-identifying as a PM] was the culmination of all of the different skills and abilities that I have [developed] and the recognition that that could be fulfilled and satisfied in the role of the PM. (Participant 25)

In summary, the results show that the participants have a wide mix of attitudes and experiences in regard to how they see themselves as having ‘arrived’ into project management.

### 4.3.2.2 How many years industry experience before identifying self as a PM?

The participants were asked how many years of industry experience they had had before considering themselves a bona fide project manager. Table 19 below shows the results.
Table 19 - PMs’ number of years industry experience before considering self a bona fide PM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 5 years</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20 years</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 50 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure because gradual</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

- [In the 1980s] not even the managers knew very much what project management was... we started actually doing project management but without knowing, you know, what project management was about. (Participant 3)
- [Until 7 years ago] it never occurred to me that this was a core competency, and it could actually be an area specialisation, and it could be the label I put on myself, project manager. (Participant 12)
- ... I’ve never actually got to a point where I’ve said now I’m a project manager; it’s just been a gradual thing that’s happened. (Participant 13)
- As a project manager there was a very clear point where I realised I was doing project management because someone came in and said, ‘you’re doing project management’. (Participant 15)
- [It] is difficult to give you some sort of epiphany moment. I think, in my view, you progress through gradually taking on more responsibility in promotional roles and so forth ... the scale of the projects that I’ve been involved with and the extent to which I’ve been in leading roles has grown as I’ve progressed through my career. (Participant 16)
- So if I go back to my career path, when I started the implementing systems, I was just a junior working under a project manager so just doing bits of the certain part. So as I got more experienced, I got promotion to being a project leader and eventually a project manager. (Participant 20)
- Given the host of different roles and different functions and jobs and career paths that I took, it would have been ten years I reckon. (Participant 21)

The results indicate that for the large majority of the participants, determining when exactly they saw themselves as a bona fide project manager was not a straightforward task. This would appear to contrast with more traditional professions where the barriers to entry and progression through the ranks are more established than in project management. For some of the participants, gaining a qualification in project management was a key determinant, whereas for others education was inconsequential and the emphasis was placed entirely on experience.

4.3.2.3 How many different types of roles have PMs had during their careers?

The participants were asked how many different types of roles they had had during their careers, other than PM. Table 20 below shows the results.
Table 20 - PMs’ number of roles during their career (other than PM)

| Participant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
| 0 roles (PM only) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 0 |
| 1-4 other roles | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 12 |
| >4 other roles | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 13 |

n=25

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of additional comments from participants include:

- *I’ve been through the gamut.* (Participant 11)

- *Multiple roles... in terms of when you’re ready and competent [to be the PM]... it’s by degree ... you need to understand the technical issues and designs around a given project; you need to have strong leadership to be able to deal with what is very much more a dynamic environment in a project space than it is in an operation; so that also means that you need pretty good interpersonal and communications skills and so forth so there’s this sort of range of things. Technical knowledge is relevant to being able to be a good PM ... I’d describe it as being latent knowledge.* (Participant 16)

- *... it was a bit of a voyage of mostly technical roles, project manager, then technical, then project management. Then I have really stuck with project management since 2000 ...* (Participant 18)

- *I relied a lot on my leadership and project management processes, rather than being a technical expert which is where you really started.* (Participant 24)

The results of this question indicated than many project managers have had a plethora of other roles during their careers. The different role types were too numerous to list and offered no substantive trend or insight that would support high predictability or uniformity in project manager career paths. However, in more general terms many of the participants predictably described beginnings in technical roles followed by a progression into more managerial and leadership types of roles.

**4.3.2.4 How many countries have PMs lived and worked in?**

The participants were asked how many countries they had lived and worked in during their careers. They were asked to exclude short visits (less than a few months) from their count. Table 21 below shows the results.

Table 21 - Countries lived and worked in (excluding short stays)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of countries lived and worked in</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 country only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 3 countries</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more countries</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The results show that project managers are highly mobile. This may reflect the nature of their working environment, being project-based or else project-oriented.
4.3.2.5 To what extent do PMs feel they have consciously self-managed their career path?

The participants were asked to what extent they felt they had self-managed their career path to date. Table 22 below shows the results.

Table 22 - PMs’ characterisation of their level of career self-management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characterisation of career self-management</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunistic over planned</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned over opportunistic</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More planned recently (more than earlier in their career)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=may be more than 25 as can have more than one response

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The results indicate that 64% (16 out of 25) of the participants felt that their career path to date has been predominantly the result of good planning. In contrast, 36% (9 out of 25) of the participants felt that their self-management had been more opportunistic than planned. Almost all of the participants gave at least some examples of planning as well as opportunities arisen and pursued. Five of the participants, or 20%, additionally noted that their level of planning had increased as they had got older, to adapt to changing circumstances and responsibilities (e.g. family, financial security).

Interestingly, of all the responses only a very few made mention of the role that their organisation, versus their self, had played in managing their career. This could imply low involvement of organisations in career management in the project-oriented environment, or it may simply indicate that the respondents kept their responses strictly in accordance with the question’s focus on self-management.

A further point of interest is the breakdown of responses by sex. Whilst 57% (approximately half) of males considered their self-management as characteristically planned over opportunistic, the female response was 100% (4 out of 4). This may imply a greater level of career planning and self-management among female PMs, or similarly, that female PMs are less likely than their male counterparts to ‘leave things to chance’ when it comes to their career.

Examples of comments include:

- Don’t trust those bastards in a corporate situation, you never know what’s gonna come around the corner and you’ve got to have an alternative plan ... [now] I always recognise the risk out there. (Participant 1)

- I get into an area [where] an opportunity opens for example, and I analyse that opportunity and how suitable I would be and go for it or not go for it. (Participant 3)

- I certainly am more aware of it [planning] now. Probably earlier on in life it was just more about doing something interesting and a bit more adventurous and I think we’re all, when we’re a younger, we’re all a bit more adventurous. (Participant 4)

- If 100% is I controlled it and 0% is I’ve just gone with the flow, it’s probably somewhere around the 40-50% mark ... the majority is the opportunity that the world brings you, with a bit of influence of trying to find those opportunities at the same time. (Participant 5)
• … [I] self-managed to the extent that as soon as I left college I was always driven to do the best that I could as fast I could, but it didn’t mean that necessarily I was focused on one particular sector or another different location, it was really a case of, do the best you can and see what opens up for you … career development has been more a function of serendipity than a long term plan to end up in a particular location doing a particular job. (Participant 6)

• Yes I think I have [planned], because from about the mid 80s [when I was made redundant], I’ve contracted and I’ve been working as an independent contractor. (Participant 7)

• Oh very much so [planned] … stepping up through the various levels into General Manager, Vice President level, and then also coming back into the project management area has been a very structured plan. (Participant 11)

• I feel that I’ve always been in the position of making the decisions for myself 99 per cent of the time … I wouldn’t say that I went out looking for project management when I started as an engineer, but it became the answer [for how to achieve objectives, beyond knowing the content]. (Participant 12)

• Not at all [planned]. Just take opportunities and they come. That’s right, I’ve always worked hard, worked long hours, put in the extra work as required, and it’s paid dividends along the way. Get offered opportunities and you can choose to take them or not. (Participant 13)

• A fair bit [planned]. I take opportunities and I don’t mind changing directions, and did quite a few times. But I took fairly deliberate steps towards project management, and especially once I’d got into that sort of mindset, then I especially put a fair bit of effort into career development around that. (Participant 15)

• It’s a fairy loose plan. (Participant 18)

• There was always a goal involved. (Participant 20)

• So I have chosen probably 60% of the time, where I’d really wanted to go, but then the other part has really been assisted by mentors and people I admire and look up to that I can self-acknowledge that they’ve helped me guide my decision into the right direction. I don’t really plan and you know, play chess on a lot of my life, right through. I think probably two or three steps ahead, but no more than that. (Participant 21)

• I would say that, not as well as I should have done. I would certainly say that in the last 2 years or so I have had this epiphany that perhaps I haven’t been managing it as well as I should have done. I think that’s partly around the break with kids, coming back and getting back into the work force and so on, but I think I certainly think that I could make a better job of that. Early on, I certainly made conscious decisions about where to go. I think actually getting into project management per se, I did because I felt it was a move up from functional consulting and would give me certain experiences, but since then, I don’t think I’ve managed my career well within project management to take full advantage of those skills. (Participant 22)
• [It’s] about constantly improving, say, constantly improving in terms of climbing the corporate ladder, if I may use those terms. I know exactly that when you are moving up the corporate ladder you basically need to get some skills so you must educate yourself. I educated myself and I am prepared to learn new things, such as IT, such as being trained in the corporate world if there is such a thing. Like whatever is the…. I pay attention to what is around me and I pay attention to the new trends, you know, what will take me from here to there, from A to B. (Participant 23)

• I would say 80%. But there have been opportunities created through having done the last job well and someone recognising it, and then you get the phone call saying ‘Hey this opportunity is coming up, I’d like you to apply for it or consider it’. So you can’t take away those opportunities that exist and without them you may not have gotten recognised or on the list, so it really has been about past performance. (Participant 24)

• 100%. I am really focussed so yeah, I have taken the time to map out my career [for example] ... researching about project management, meeting with other Project Managers, peer to peer discussions, going on courses, that type of thing. (Participant 25)

In summary, the participants had mixed perceptions on the extent to which they had (or felt they had) self-managed their career to date. They also tended to have acknowledged that the way in which they had managed their career had changed over time, in some cases by becoming more planning orientated with age.

The next question extends this thinking on self-management to the concept of personal branding.

4.3.2.6 What do PMs think about the role of personal branding in their career to date?

The participants were asked if they were familiar with the notion of personal branding. Once their familiarity was confirmed, they were asked to explain what, if any, role personal branding had played in their career to date. In helping provide a common definition of personal branding the researcher gave several examples including self-promotion, reputation management, portability and the use of social media (e.g. LinkedIn). Table 23 below shows the results.

Table 23 - The role and value of ‘personal branding’ in PMs’ careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The importance of personal branding</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important or very important</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressed that it remains essential to be able to deliver</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=may be more than 25 as can have more than one response other than importance

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

• I don’t alter my behaviours very much. (Participant 1)

• I think it’s very important ... in finding new opportunities ... it is a slow process where you need to prove that whatever you say you are, you can do it. (Participant 3)
• I’ve been very project orientated and not company orientated, so you move from project to project, so consequently ... your reputation does follow you, if you don’t have any problem with your ability, people will ring you up for projects and stuff like that ... but it brands you. In fact, do a bad job and that brands you as well. (Participant 4)

• Exceptionally important ... I’ve got a brand around honesty, integrity and ethics which is only something I believe you can earn, rather than sell ... it’s not something I believe I can boldly advertise ... I can only sell so much ... because it’s around my personality and behaviours and how I approach the work ... the strength of the brand only comes through with others I have worked with in the past, rather than something I can put up on a billboard. (Participant 5)

• [Personal branding is] ... probably the most important thing you can have ... your advancement or lack thereof depends hugely upon your personal branding and your ability to live up to it ... [the attributes are] commitment to deadlines, always acting professionally, always acting honestly, being calm under pressure and always being prepared to take the uncomfortable leap into the unknown ... I have no illusions that the technical ability isn’t what’s taken me there [personal career success]. (Participant 6)

• I think it is very important. A great deal of my success has come from my personal integrity and the way that people view me. (Participant 7)

• ... don’t leave a disappointed client ... because you are absolutely reliant on their recommendation. So you do have to be careful that anything that you take on is actually doable and deliverable, and that is within your ability to do. (Participant 10)

• ... I think that branding stuff is incredibly important particularly as you get more solidified or more concrete in your role within large organisations, especially if you are going to work in large corporations or large industries where your reputation goes with you. That branding is very, very important ... [but] having [and maintaining] that relevant experience at a very grass roots level is essential. (Participant 11)

• I think it’s very important and I also think that you’re not the only person who influences the branding that you have as an individual. (Participant 12)

• I haven’t spent any time promoting myself, but the closest I get to social is I joined LinkedIn about two years ago or something but that’s about it, but no, I don’t put myself out there a whole lot. (Participant 13)

• It’s not a term I use all the time but I understand what it is and ... at one time I wanted to be known as a PM instead of a research scientist so I put that effort in to making that distinction ... (Participant 15)

• I don’t think of myself quite in terms of being a product, but I can understand the concept absolutely. It is certainly extremely important, particularly in any leadership role, how the team and how the functional support and so forth, see you, how they identify with you. What does this person stand for and all of those sorts of things are absolutely vital and take actually quite a lot of time to establish through reinforcement, symbolism and so forth. And in fact can be quite rapidly destroyed with contrary symbolism or contrary action which gives
incongruity to [leader] messages. I don’t find that I have a great deal of time to self-grandiose myself around the business. (Participant 16)

- I think I do it a bit, and probably would like to invest more time into that, having seen some of things I’d do if I had a candidate that I have to assess for a role, I will Google them, or contact someone in the network, or whatever. So you try to build up a picture of someone based on non-traditional ways ... [it’s also] about ‘what’s your narrative?’, you’re explaining what you will be... rather than what have you done. (Participant 18)

- I think it’s been more applicable possibly in the last ten years for me, which is when I’ve seriously started looking at myself in terms of my professional network, the people that I know, the people that I need to show myself in a positive manner, instead of that child-like individual that I used to be. (Participant 21)

- I was only very conscious about personal branding about 10 years ago. Personal branding for me is your track record in terms of what you have achieved and people will talk about you in terms of your success in what you have achieved and what the impact of your contribution to the work place and to the community [has been]. (Participant 23)

- I think it is important and I don’t think it’s something I did well. I don’t think I did it consciously, and I’ve had peers who have done it consciously and [I’ve] watched them in how they go... [as for myself] I tend to be on the project and the project is my world, or I’m in the team and the team is my world, so I don’t spend a lot of time networking, but I do maintain longer term relationships to some degree. I could do it better. I could do it far better than I do. I’m not part of any association or anything like that - Alumni, etc. I’ve seen some of my peers do that, and it works for them...[for me, it’s important] that people know what you’re about, where you’re at, what it is that you’ve last done, what is your life theme or career theme. (Participant 24)

- I am aware of the term, but I can’t say that I have leveraged that as yet... I suppose it’s [about] moving towards a more consulting sort of a mindset. So, more independent. Moving away from the employee contractor sort of framework. (Participant 25)

The results indicate that the vast majority of the participants were familiar with the expression personal brand, although each placed their own interpretation of what it meant in the context of career. In discussing this frame of reference the participants tended to identify both positive and negative aspects. In terms of positive aspects, approximately 80% (20 out of 25) of the participants identified personal brand as a useful vehicle to convey valued personal attributes, such as integrity, reputation and results orientation. Some of the participants noted also, how in the modern career landscape basic marketing considerations such as online CVs and social media have become increasingly important in influencing individual careerists’ prospects. In terms of negative aspects, approximately 40% (10 out of 25) of the participants were somewhat sceptical of personal brand, perceiving it as placing too much emphasis on self-promotion and potentially even being deceptive in terms of not being a true representation of reputation or ability. Moreover, some participants saw this as distorting perceptions of value in the labour market, hence creating rewards for effective self-promoters and relative disadvantage for those who could deliver results but who were poor at self-promotion.
4.3.2.7 Have PMs seen (or expect to see) a so-called plateau in their career?

The participants were asked whether they had ever experienced, or expected to experience, a plateau in their career. Table 24 below shows the results.

Table 24 - PMs’ perceptions and attitudes towards career plateaus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, has experienced</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, expects to experience</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, has not and does not</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=may be more than 25 as can have more than one response

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Two participants added that maintaining technical skills reduces the risk of a plateau. Five participants commented that remaining adaptable and open to change is a critical trait for avoiding plateaus. Finally, two other participants who had lived and worked extensively abroad noted that plateaus can sometimes be inevitable especially when moving permanently between countries and having to rely on building new networks and opportunities.

Examples of other comments include:

- [in reference to Jaques’ Stratified Systems Theory] ... everybody has a level at which they can work, depending on a number of criteria. One is the mental processes and cognitive ability, and the other one is their temperament and their people skills, and their willingness ... after a bit of personal anguish of [asking myself] ‘are you good enough to be where you are?’ [and] a couple of years working through it, [recognised] where my level was ... I’m basically at that level now so I will plateau at that level, and I think that is what happens. (Participant 1)

- ... as a PM you lose a lot of your skills, so consequently I’ve lost my engineering skills so if there is no longer a position for a Project Manager, consequently I can’t keep doing the Project Managers job. (Participant 4)

- Yes there have been plateaus, self-imposed and otherwise ... and yes I see there is a plateau coming also. (Participant 5)

- Absolutely, yeah ... the peak in my career when I was in my late 30s. People say that’s when you’re most successful and after that, it’s all down hill ... I chose to get out of London at that stage and go and have a sabbatical, and now I choose not to go and work those kind of crazy hours and not to work that hard again. So I choose to work for organisations that are more congruous with my ambitions. (Participant 7)

- Not in the next ten years [but references a recent role drop when migrating to Australia] ... I have clear plans in the next five years and the next ten years, and after that, when I’m 55, ... I should have achieved most of my career plans. (Participant 8)

- No, but that could just be wishful thinking ... It will go through its natural cycles of bubbles. (Participant 9)
• Plateaued, but not tapering off just yet... for me it’s because I’m very much the tail end of that, and it’s now just a conscious decision to plateau. I don’t want to walk out the door one day and then do nothing. (Participant 10)

• ...yes you do actually get to those and for me it has been where you stay in the one role or stay in the one organisation to the point where the challenges start flattening out and so that’s about the learning... you don’t learn unless you are challenging yourself... in both cases [where I experienced plateaus] they were sideways but then they created a lot more opportunity to move ahead. Some people may have even thought it was a step down. You take a risk and move on to something else. (Participant 11)

• I expect I will see a plateau because I expect that that’s what I’ll want. I’m of the mindset that you control your own destiny and therefore if you want a plateau you’ll get one, and if anyone thinks that they’ve got a plateau forced upon them it’s probably because they don’t feel in control, that other people are making decisions for them and they’re just accepting them rather than moving on and doing something else or whatever... I think [mine] will be driven by the mix of circumstances; work/life balance, personal circumstances as well as career things... it will be a plateau where the breadth of accountability is not increasing, or the complexity of the projects or accountability that I’m taking on is not increasing... (Participant 12)

• ...at this stage there’s not that much further up I can go within the company. (Participant 13)

• I believe that my career changes every five years, so only at the end of those five years, if I haven’t adjusted to what I should be moving to then it would start to plateau. (Participant 14)

• ...[yes I’m] stuck at the moment. It was a significant step backwards coming back here [to Australia] for me. (Participant 15)

• I’ve skipped steps, I’ve gone sideways a lot. (Participant 17)

• Several... I think it’s [about the risk of] allowing people’s perception of what you do... right now, lock you in. (Participant 18)

• I have seen a plateau in my career about last year, when I wake up in the morning and see that I’m not ‘ticking’ anymore... even though I’ve got these big projects I have managed and a lot of people under me. (Participant 23)

• ...women are really worried about plateauing, they are worried about, ‘if I have that year off or two years off, how much will I get missed, especially if I’m cusping from the 30 to 35 age group’... I [also] look around at how many [few] women in leadership roles in [my company] there are... it would be interesting to see [now that there are a few more] if they plateau out or not and see what really drives them, whether it’s a self thing or whether it’s the type of roles they are selecting. (Participant 24)

• No I haven’t. I wouldn’t expect a plateau because I always have my five ten year goals, so I’m always working toward something. (Participant 25)
In summary, the results firstly show that a large majority of the participants are open and candid about discussing career plateaus (past and/or future). Secondly, the results show that the participants’ experiences in this area were predictably mixed and that their attitudes vary, most notably in terms of whether they perceive career plateaus as something typically forced upon an individual, or as something that can be reasonably managed (e.g. avoided or even proactively planned). The consideration of personal circumstances outside of work seems significant also, such as family and children and the types of decisions and trade-offs these bring to career.

### 4.3.3 The present (RQ2): How PMs relate to their current career situation

These next questions are the second of three categories in the main body of the interview, all of which focus on the attitudes and perceptions of project managers. The questions below focus on the ‘present’, exploring how PMs relate to their current career situation including the project management profession.

#### 4.3.3.1 What professional associations do PMs align with?

The participants were asked what, if any, professional association memberships they had held during their career (current or previous and project management or otherwise). Table 25 below shows the results.
Table 25 - PM’s professional memberships held during their career

| Participant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| Member of a PM association (current) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 21 |
| Member of a second PM association (current or previous) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| American Institute of Mining & Metallurgy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| American Physics Society | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Asian Center for Engineering Computations & Software | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Association of Arbitrators | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Association of Cost Engineers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Assoc. for the Advancement of Cost Engineering | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Australian Computer Society | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Australian Institute of Company Directors | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Australia Institute of Management | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Australian Institute of Physics | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Australian Maintenance Engineers Association | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Australian Optics Society | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Australia Philippines Chamber of Commerce | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| British Computer Society | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Chartered Institute of Management Accounting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Chartered Institute of Marketing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Institute of Electrical & Electronic Engineers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Institute of Engineers Australia | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 6 |
| Institute of Mining & Metallurgy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| International Institute of Business Analysis | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| IT Service Management Forum | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Royal Aeronautical Society | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Software Engineering Australia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Women in IT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
Chapter 4 - Results and data analysis

The results show that 84% (21 of 25) of participants held current membership of a PM professional association. The results also show that many participants have held memberships in non-PM associations also, during their career (26 non-PM associations were identified - this excludes clubs and temporary networks). Further analysis identified the prevalence of concurrent membership, for example, the results showed that ten of the 21 participants who held a current PM association membership also held a concurrent membership in one or more non-PM associations. Seven of those same ten participants with concurrent memberships said that their PM association was their primary affiliation. Finally, only one out of the 21 male participants (or less than 5%) had never been a member of a professional association, whereas this was two out of four (or 50%) for the female participants.

4.3.3.2 How valuable do PMs find project management as a career theme?

The participants were asked how valuable project management had been for them as a career theme to date, compared to other (if any) career themes. To help clarify the question, the researcher asked the participants to think about any ‘enduring career threads’, meaning fields of occupational specialisation that had received persistent emphasis. Table 26 below summarises the results.

Table 26 - PMs’ perception of the relative value of PM as a career theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The relative value of PM as a career theme</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has always been the most valuable</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has always been not the most valuable</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has become the most valuable, over time</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has become not the most valuable, over time</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has been of equal value (to a second career theme)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

- I think it [PM] gives you a different vision in terms of engineering activities and it also gives you better tools to envision your team, to get a long on the day to day actually ... if engineering is the what, PM is the how, when and what. (Participant 3)

- I’m hearing every now and again that some organisations like people with some sort of project management affiliation and certification so I am just getting a bit prepared in case that happens. (Participant 4)

- ... the catalogue of experiences is what has helped me move from one organisation and one project to the next, rather than a degree or an association. (Participant 5)
• It [PM] is a comprehensive framework with which to run your career ... from a leadership point of view, I find that broader experiences keep you positive. I guess that’s probably more important from my point of view, because the more and more you go through life, the more important you realise it is to make sure that you build effective performing teams. (Participant 6)

• I think it [PM] is a combination of a management and a skill-based, not really a technical skill, but a field of expertise. So you have to have the management and the people skills, but you also need the specific skills in a particular field ... I don’t subscribe that a project manager can walk in and supervise or manage a project for civil engineering or IT or aeronautics etc., just by application of pure project management disciplines ... I am very strongly of the belief that you need expertise and knowledge in the field. (Participant 10)

• I think that project management has taken on a greater amount of meaning. A lot more people are going into it. Some of these professional bodies like PMI and AIPM have actually added a lot more definition and meaning around what a project manager is. Whereas 10 plus years ago, everyone said, ‘I’m a project manager’. (Participant 11)

• I value it [PM] very very highly, because I think it actually is the thing that differentiates your ability to deliver on your [e.g. technical/ foundation] core competency ... [but] I’m not sure that all audiences see it that way ... they don’t see it as the core competency, they see it as almost like an additional skill that supports the core competency of being an engineer... like the ‘free set of steak knives’ ... [but] a good project manager in building a wash plant could still be a good project manager in delivering an IT solution and vice versa. (Participant 12)

• ... project management’s been obviously extremely valuable to me because I was not a very good technical engineer in my opinion ... but as a project manager, and a business manager, I think I had something to offer. (Participant 13)

• they [industry] are starting to realise what project management is. (Participant 14)

• [PM has been] highly valuable, as far as people want to be able to position you as something. So it’s a very good career anchor, for me anyway. (Participant 18)

• For me it’s the primary value. It’s the most valuable one because I have branded myself as a Project Manager, and I’m still currently branded as a Project Manager, and I wanted to be branded as the Project Manager, or Project Director. (Participant 23)

• That has been the main theme. Project management obviously is hugely related to how you can motivate the team, lead the team to an outcome, and so that’s the leadership and project management demonstrated. And it has to be demonstrated. I’ve found, people really want to know ‘what was the project, what were the deliverables, what were the boundaries of your responsibilities’. And I think that’s a good thing, because now as I recruit, you see people are coming out [of universities] with Masters in Project Management... [but] unless you have been a Project Manager... you do have to ‘bleed a bit’
to call yourself a Project Manager, you can’t just go and get a book and say ‘well done’. (Participant 24)

- *I think it’s particularly helpful when applying for jobs in that it’s meaningful information, so whether that be a recruiter, or an organisation that has an understanding of project management standards, without having to prove if you like the actual nuts and bolts of what a PM does, so that credential I think sets a person apart from someone who perhaps doesn’t have the credential, because of the topics and standards and the whole package of what that represents.*  (Participant 25)

The results show that the participants have had varied experiences and hold a variety of opinions on the relative value of PM as a career theme. However, on the whole the majority of participants felt that project management as a career theme had had a strong positive impact on their career. Multiple participants described how project management as a career theme had enabled them to better package or convey their full and current skill set, for instance beyond just the technical or discipline-specific skills typically accumulated earlier in their earlier career. This phenomenon of maintaining two complementary and substantive career themes (or fields of occupational specialisation) may point the way for further research.

### 4.3.3.3 Do PMs call themselves PMs, or something else?

The participants were asked what they call themselves (in terms of work or role title) in the company of others. Table 27 below shows the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refer to themselves as</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project manager</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management consultant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project manager... (in sector / of deliverable type)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in (sector / deliverable type) as a project manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (not a project manager)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 27 - What PMs call themselves to others*

*n=19; six were not asked this question

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The results show that project managers do not commonly refer to themselves as such, or at least not without reference to other identifying anchors. Only six of the participants indicated that they call themselves simply a project manager. A further six of the participants referred to themselves as project managers but routinely supplemented their title with additional descriptive explanation. Seven of the participants referred to themselves as something not including the phrase ‘project manager’ at all, despite associating their career with project management.

The results suggest that some project managers may find the title of project manager inadequate or unhelpful in explaining their professional focus or skill set, despite their considering themselves as part of a project management profession. More broadly, when considering the results of this question whole it becomes apparent that project managers aren’t necessarily easily visible as a group, which in turn has implications for early careerists and their level of access to role models and experience-based career path information.
Examples of comments include:

- [I say] I manage capital expenditure projects. (Participant 8)
- ... the term project manager often draws blank faces... only project managers ‘get it’. (Participant 9)
- [I say] I manage a large change project which leverages IT. (Participant 12)
- [I say] I head up the team that makes everything work. (Participant 14)
- [I say] project manager of ICT or IT systems. (Participant 15)
- I would say, first and foremost I work in the mining industry. (Participant 16)
- [I say] programme and portfolio manager. (Participant 18)
- The first word that comes out of my mouth is that I am a ‘company trouble shooter’. (Participant 21)
- Project manager... it used to be a Business Process Improvement Consultant, but generally now I would talk about project management. (Participant 22)
- Depending on where I am. If I’m in the business world as an entrepreneur I am the ‘President of the Chamber’, because that has more attention and more credibility. If I am with the professionals, I consider myself a ‘Certified Practising Project Director’. (Participant 23)
- [I say I’m the VP or] GM of Project Services (Participant 24)
- I generally just refer to myself as a Project Manager and then ‘in IT’ if that’s appropriate for the context. So it’s usually contextual. (Participant 25)

### 4.3.3.4 What are PMs’ levels of interaction with their project management association?

The participants were asked how they would describe their current level of interaction with their PM professional association. Table 28 shows the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of interaction</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate-High (2-3 aspects of sustained interaction)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low / sporadic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable (non-member)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(n=25\); out of these four were not applicable and one was not asked this question

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The responses to this question indicate that approximately 80% (16 out of 20) of the participants who are members of a PM professional association (see also, Table 25) are actively involved in their association’s activities. The most common type of involvement was through attendance at chapter meetings and other networking events. Participants also indicated a strong culture of volunteerism.
ranging from committee memberships and board directorships to certification coaching and events organisation (for example, annual awards and executive breakfasts).

Examples of general comments and sentiment expressed include:

- ... you get out what you put in. (Participant 5)
- It’s high level. I always make a point to attend all the technical sessions and even before, when I was still in the Philippines we have a chapter there, and I was making a point to attend, and I also was involved in the Board members elections last year, in the Philippines, so I was part of the election committee and as I said, I also volunteered for the, in 2007 for the PMISP certification. (Participant 8)
- I think if you’re going to join a community you might as well try to give something back to it. (Participant 9)
- I’m a regular! (Participant 14)
- It’s occasional ... it’s a vehicle for networking ... It’s a vehicle for remaining certified. (Participant 18)
- I would say that I try to attend the meetings as regularly as possible. I have [also] committed myself to the Chapter Toastmasters club. (Participant 20)
- Over the last three months, probably not as intense as it was before, but I’ve been a Director for the last five years, I’ve presented with the PMI, I have good relationships with board members and we communicate monthly. I’m part of an advisory group within PMI, so I’m quite involved. (Participant 21)

In summary, the results show that the participants have a mixed profile of interaction with PM professional association, but that those who are active tend to be moderately to very active with involvement in two or more aspects of their association’s activities.

### 4.3.3.5 What level of interaction do PMs have with early PM careerists?

The participants were asked what level of interaction they currently had with early PM careerists (or else those contemplating a career in PM). Table 29 below shows the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of interaction with early careerists</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal and informal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal only</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal only</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The results identified that the most typical forms of interaction with early careerist include coaching, mentoring and professional advocacy or counselling. This can be either formal or informal, although informal interaction is the most common. Nine of the participants identified that they were
interacting with early careerists but only on an informal basis. A further six participants identified that their level of interaction extended to the more formal also. For example, some participants described how their interactions had broadened over time from in essence chance interactions only, to things such as having become a leader of a low level certification study group, or a mentor in a formalised mentor/mentee arrangement. Three participants noted that they had some current level of interaction but that they had been more active in this area in the past. Ten participants identified that their interaction with early careerists was negligible.

Examples of comments include:

- *I have some contact through the PMI organisation, but because I generally try to put my efforts into the [experienced end of career] post-PMP development area rather than the 'getting to' a professional level. I don’t have a lot of contact.* (Participant 1)

- *I wouldn’t say high, because I don’t have any graduates that report to me or anything like that and that would be my basis for a high. But I would say medium on the basis of I seem to be a person that people come to if they want to talk about becoming a PM for a career. I [do however] want to team up my junior PMs and my up-and-coming BA’s with the sorts of people that will then share their experience and their knowledge to help build them up.* (Participant 5)

- *I am actively putting four of our people through project management courses at the moment, who are not necessarily looking to be project managers in the construction sense, but I believe it will help them with their careers ... As a business, we push hard to take on a number of graduates every year and support cadets through the process.* (Participant 6)

- *Let’s just say that I’m trying to motivate them to join PMI.* (Participant 8)

- *I’ve had a little bit of a chat to people who have been interested in getting into project management.* (Participant 9)

- *Low to moderate ... I work in a group where there are new PMs coming in and while there is no formal process for mentoring, or buddy system, it happens as a matter of course, and if there’s an opening for that, I’m always happy to be involved with that ... people that are entering [the field] today are left to fend for themselves, can make a lot of mistakes when those lessons have already been learned and could quite easily have been passed on.* (Participant 10)

- *At the moment, not a lot. Used to be very, very high in [company name], I used to have about 50 graduates at any one time and used to run graduate programs and we’d run mentor sessions and all sorts of things so it was very high during the [company name] years. [I have recently] put together a [capital projects] career map of how a graduate engineer goes through all the steps through to project director if that’s what they want to be. That career map’s available with all the competencies et cetera required and banding of each of the levels along the way as a standard for us to use going forward... the same [also] with project controls.* (Participant 13)
I have a number of project managers that report to me. I try and identify non-project managers in teams that are potential project managers and talk to them about that and see if that's something they're interested in, and mentor people up into project management. (Participant 15)

I have occasional opportunities to coach people in my working role. PMP is not a great vehicle for learning... it is a vehicle for levelling people around some definitions ... I think things like communities of practice, coaching and mentoring are much more useful in terms of people actually improving and becoming more professionally competent. (Participant 18)

When they come across ... or when the opportunity comes, I really like to talk to them ... the conversation generally always comes out ‘What do you do?’ and ‘You’ve had a fantastic career’, and I always come away thanking project management for what I’ve achieved. So I really publish it out there. (Participant 21)

I don’t have a lot of interaction with people doing that, to be honest. Most of the people I work with are experienced Project Managers. And we’ve got probably a few graduates coming in and out of project management, but they have been fairly few and far between. (Participant 22)

I have several Project Managers under me and it is my responsibility to enhance their capability, or improve their capability and skills. (Participant 23)

High... because of the market and the way it has been [tight labour], we have had to take on less experienced people. Some people have got no project experience they are bringing in to the organisation, so in that sense, as a leader and a mentor, I have been involved in that. (Participant 24)

In summary, the results showed mixed levels of interaction between the participants and early careerists. Where the interaction was high, it tended to have been mainly linked to activities or programmes associated with the participant’s workplace. It appeared that other interactions tended to be unplanned and unstructured, apart from isolated exceptions.

4.3.3.6 What level of interaction do PMs think they should have with early PM careerists?

The participants were asked what their attitude was in general to role of experienced PMs in supporting and nurturing early careerists. Table 30 below summarises the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of interaction with early careerists</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important or very important</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25; out of these one was not asked this question

SOURCE: Developed for this research

All of the participants who were asked this question indicated that they felt that the role that PMs could play in supporting early careerists was either important or very important. Many of the participants wished to elaborate in detail on their views.
Examples of comments include:

- I think it’s very important. That is the basic model of acquiring accreditation in the engineering professions which I know of, and I assume it’s the same in the professions of actuarial skills and accountancy as well where a senior person, if you like, coaches and mentors somebody who is coming up the ranks. And that is very appropriate. (Participant 1)

- [PMs] need to enter the feedback loop… pass on the experiences they have gained. (Participant 2)

- An excellent thought actually … What I found with young engineers actually is that they’ve got very little knowledge about project management. Very little. To them, and to a lot of older managers, you know, a project is really just managing a Gantt Chart and they come out here with some sort of knowledge of Gantt charts but that’s it … management [also] doesn’t know [enough about] project management. (Participant 3)

- I would rather try to give back more to the engineering field than the project management field at the moment. (Participant 4)

- I believe as senior PMs we have the responsibility to help train up others because there’s so much you can learn in a book but the majority of it you have to learn by doing. (Participant 5)

- Absolutely paramount … [in the past] there wasn’t a lot of science to it, but there was a lot of table banging and strength of personality which almost coerced people teams to do things by certain dates … [to address this] as a business, we started off with trying to employ the right people who would manage in a positive way and would demonstrate the right behaviours in terms of bringing on youngsters with them, but it was all very much the heroic efforts of individuals rather than the sort of company level culture … [the company now has over 500 PMs and a PM framework / service process map so there is a set process] that gives a level of discipline and rigour that should assure our quality. It doesn’t stifle the innovation that an individual project manager might need to show … skill sets and those experiences are passed on through our team members … [PMs working with PMs] is hugely important for us because it builds our future business. (Participant 6)

- I think you only become a true expert in your subject by walking the walk and teaching people how things should be done properly … I think a lot of young project managers would gain a lot more from case studies and from doing … and from actually getting involved with project scenarios perhaps, workshops, you know … that should be a way where you can earn your PDU’s [continued professional development] as well … I would certainly support that sort of effort, and I would certainly see myself getting involved in that workshop, training and developing younger people. (Participant 7)

- I came across it [PM] by accident, but I feel that if you could give people an understanding of … that it’s almost a science unto itself, there’s an extremely large amount of extremely
interesting stuff in project management and I don’t think you realise that until you take the lid off it. And you don’t take the lid off it until you’re sort of in that space. (Participant 9)

- I think there definitely needs to be some, and I think it’s a huge opportunity, and without it, as project directors move from project to project to project and then eventually retire, if you don’t have some type of engagement, you’re not bringing that next level of project managers along ... [in major projects] there’s not a lot of room for newbies to come in, so I think that there is a huge opportunity there, and it’s essential just in the same way as chief engineers need to be mentoring junior engineers, crusty old project directors need to be mentoring our new project managers ... it’s not always easy because project directors are control freaks by nature... [in major projects] to be actively coaching is a little bit different than just going about your job so others can observe. (Participant 12)

- It’s essential. I think project management is almost 20 years behind project management in the U.S. There’re a lot of industries where people think project management is just common sense or something like that. It’s still not identified as a very discrete profession and I think that more experienced project managers are essential for the career paths of project managers, because otherwise their employer’s [boss / senior PM] not going to identify the need and create that for them ... in state government for instance, we have whole departments that are supposed to look out for the career paths of people and I don’t think project management is on their radar at all. (Participant 15)

- It is clearly vitally important that if we don’t develop the leaders of tomorrow... it becomes a bit of a vacuum ... in a project that’s in implementation it’s pretty dynamic, pretty challenging, both physically and mentally, often one of the things that doesn’t get sufficient time and focus is how many people are we sending off to training seminars and courses and all this sort of stuff. (Participant 16)

- I think there are a lot people practicing project management that haven’t had... the experience of really solid grounding. I think that a lot of environments that people go into allow them to think they are doing a really good job where in actual fact if they have to scale that up and they don’t have the underpinning of the principles of what they are doing they wouldn’t be able to be successful and they’ll have to work it out the hard way... I think there is huge benefit in experienced people that are well grounded in the profession to share their knowledge. I am just not sure it’s really valued, is my direct experience. (Participant 18)

- I think it’s important. I think part of .... in any industry, I think the veterans have a role to play in helping to develop and to coach and mentor the up and coming parts of the organisation, the up and coming new starters, guys that are just starting out, guys that are probably doubtful whether it’s the right career or not ... it doesn’t happen enough, especially in PM. (Participant 21)

- ... as an experienced Project Manager the earlier you can teach early entrants, the better. So for me that is the role, whether within the organisation or within a group of community volunteers or in a university, the more experienced the Project Managers coaching them about the best way of project management [the better], it will give them valuable input. (Participant 23)
Chapter 4 - Results and data analysis

The results show that the participants have strong supportive views on the role of experienced PMs in supporting early careerists. However, they also suggest (when compared to the previous question’s responses) that attitude and action do not always align. There appears to be a demonstrable gap in the sample between the (generally strong) attitudes and the (generally limited) personal practices of the participants in terms of supporting early careerists. This would require further research, however one explanation may be that project managers for some reason, more often than not, exclude themselves from being an actual input (resource) to the types of positive actions that they themselves articulate in their attitudes as important for supporting early careerists.

4.3.3.7 How do PMs define career success?

The participants were asked how they would personally define career success. Table 31 below summarises the results.

Table 31 - How PMs define career success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement at work</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy their work</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to articulate</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=may be more than 25 as can have more than one response

SOURCE: Developed for this research

The participants overwhelmingly identified that achievement at work is seen as the primary determinant in career success. However this was closely followed by, and linked with, enjoyment. Enjoyment was also widely associated with being a precursor to or a pre-requisite for achievement. So in essence, if you enjoy your work you will be more likely to be a high achiever. Only 44% of the participants explicitly identified work-life balance as a determinant of career success. One participant was unable to articulate their response to this question.

Examples of comments include:

- **It can only be measured if you have a measurable goal. And very simply, if you are clear on where you would like to get to in your career and it’s measurable, then success is when you get there. The two things are a bit flexible. A goal has got to be a smart goal. It’s got to be specific, measurable, realistic, time based and achievable. And they change over time.** (Participant 1)

- **... money is a powerful motivator, but certainly not the primary one ... it’s about credibility.** (Participant 2)

- **Roles of increasing responsibility ... [also] I just want good enjoyable work, a job that I actually enjoy going to work for each day, that gives me a bit of challenge, that actually makes a difference ... [also] balance between work and life.** (Participant 5)

- **I think a real badge of honour ... [for PMs is] just how many hours they do ... I’d much rather measure people by their outputs rather than their timesheets ... [also] I like the greater definition that comes with this role I’ve got currently, but it’s got enough strategic thinking in it to keep you interested.** (Participant 6)
...I really get satisfaction from bringing all those experiences that I’ve gained in a commercial environment and applying those in [not-for-profit] organisations where they may not have those kinds of skills. (Participant 7)

...success is always defined by your own goals that you set yourself, whatever they may be, those that other people set for you and you accept, and your ability to actually achieve those goals ... so it’s very much in the eyes of a number of different stakeholders. It just depends on how ‘you’ are seeing those various stakeholders at the time. It could be your family, it could be anyone. (Participant 11)

...to deliver projects ... that bring people, process and technology together ... [also] taking something from nothing and building it into something. (Participant 12)

A job that I enjoy, working with people who I like. It gives me sufficient funds to enjoy my life outside work, and continues to provide a challenge. (Participant 13)

I think for me success is the ability to change directions with the industry and stay relevant. (Participant 14)

Some sort of recognition within your peers of the quality of your work ... [also] with experience, you get flexibility and you can start to pick and choose jobs. (Participant 15)

Being able to identify outcomes through your career ... where you’ve perhaps made a difference, made a worthwhile contribution where results have been achieved in a tough environment where teams have come together and developed their own culture, supportive culture and as a consequence delivered much more than they would have as individuals. (Participant 16)

When you can teach what you know, and when you can share the wisdom because you are proud of what you’ve learned... the other is, achieving your career objectives and being happy that you have achieved it.... and of course the third one is, about being comfortable with what your career has given you, such as monetary, as well as your mental state, that you’re not burnt out and that you are the person that you wish to be, not the person you don’t want to be... [it’s] a bit abstract. (Participant 23)

Career success for me is that I enjoy getting up in the morning and going to work. Enjoyment then is defined by that I have learnt something and given something. You know, someone has appreciated what I’ve brought to the organisation or what I’ve brought to the deliverable. You have ups and downs, it’s not about joy [though], it’s about thinking this is the best thing I should be doing. (Participant 24)

...I suppose getting to a point where I have satisfaction as opposed to success... that’s my success if you like, it’s the level of satisfaction that I obtain from what I do. So it’s not ‘I must earn x dollars’ or that ‘I must work for this type of company or whatever’, it’s more about the satisfaction around the work that I do and that encompasses work life balance and flexibility I suppose and the ability to be able to choose the type of work that I want to do. (Participant 25)
In summary, the participants’ responses to this question indicated mixed perspectives on career success. However, much of what they described contained commonality. Three key themes emerged including achievement, enjoyment of work and work-life balance. Several participants additionally observed that their perspective of career success had changed over time. Some of the shifts included from technical credibility to leadership credibility, from more travel to less travel and from self first to family first. The key descriptors drawn from the participants included: choice, credibility, role status, reputation, flexibility to change, staying relevant, resilience, suitability to chosen career, career direction and goals, monetary reward, deliver on what you promise, working with the ‘big picture’, challenge, increasing responsibility, friendships, recognition by others, self-satisfaction, teamwork, self-esteem, value-adding and making a difference.

4.3.3.8 Do PMs have fundamental regrets about their career path to date?

The participants were asked whether they had any fundamental regrets about their career path. Table 32 below shows the results.

Table 32 - PMs’ reflections on career regrets

| Has career regrets | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
| Yes               | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 11   |
| No                | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8    |
| Not asked         | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 6    |      |

n=25; out of these six were not asked this question

A note, this question on career regrets, and the next (on self-identity), did not feature in the original interview plan which explains the high number of responses identified as ‘not asked’. The reason both these questions were subsequently introduced is that because early in the interview sequence participants began offering information on these themes. The themes are relevant to the research so the researcher expanded the formal interview questions starting at interview 11. Where discussion on these themes occurred during interviews 1–10 this was captured also.

A further note: the question asks about ‘fundamental’ career regrets, the intention being to focus the participants’ thoughts on significant or material issues. The results however capture any regrets articulated by the participants. This is because the question was poorly worded, and so some participants found the question imponderable – for example, they would initially respond ‘not really’ only to go on and provide examples. The researcher could not distinguish between what might have been ‘fundamental’ and what was not, and so he reduced the risk of introducing his own subjectivity by categorising all articulated regrets as a positive response to the question.

Examples of the participants’ responses to this question include:

- Not really ... I guess that if I did have the benefit of hindsight though, one thing I might do is stay within the construction sector and follow project management as a discipline within that sector, rather than move into IT ... the product of project management in construction are very tangible, and whether there buildings or tunnels or bridges, everybody knows what has been done and what has been achieved, whereas with IT that’s not always the case. It’s much harder to quantify what has been done on a given project. (Participant 2)
• I have yet to have anything that I haven’t found something positive coming out of it, whether it be a whole lot of lessons learned, e.g. never to do that again. I think I have carried them all forward, with how I interact with other people when coaching them or mentoring them and being able to pass those learnings on to them. (Participant 11)

• In hindsight, I should’ve used a bridging job to come back and now I understand that that is a common tactic of ex-pats coming back to Australia. The large scientific research is a very large industry and I got myself too established in that, which was sort of a mistake. I really invested heavily in that industry and it doesn’t exist here [Australia]. (Participant 15)

• I don’t think so … I’ve really enjoyed mining and whilst that took me away from my home country and my immediate family and that sort of stuff, I don’t regret that at all, I’ve had a great time. (Participant 16)

• I had an opportunity to do law and I didn’t take it up at the time. Now I am at a stage of my career where it is not really practical. I think it would [have] been good and this is where we talk about career anchor [need for] and it all sort of connects back … IT is not a really strong profession, it is a profession where you get a degree, you can work for several years and be really good at it and then someone without a degree, who’s got the gift of the gab, can step in and say ‘well I can do that’. So it is not like engineering or law or medicine where it is undisputed that you have that qualification and someone that doesn’t have that qualification can’t do what you do. So that same weakness exists in project management as well, where people call themselves PMs when they are not really that good. You don’t have that concrete under it … I would probably like to have a specialisation underpinning what I do now, that is, I am a generalist. In my career I have done ‘kind of’ specialisation and then a lot of generalisation over the years. (Participant 18)

• Yes. Personally I think, again I’m not going to knock project management as a career path, but in terms of my management of that career, I think probably five or seven years ago I should have been starting to look at different avenues maybe outside of IS&T (and the ICT area), and I haven’t done that so I think that’s probably more disappointment of the way I’ve managed my career rather than thinking I have the wrong skills sets developed and so on. (Participant 22)

• I did not change early enough, I did not make a decision to change early enough. (Participant 23)

• The slight regret I have is that I probably didn’t realise that you could have family and career together early enough, and I think I’m seeing, even now, women in [my company] struggling with ‘when should I have my first baby because I’m in that ‘hot period’ where [my company] cares about what’s happening with you?’ And I shaped all my personal goals around project timelines. So most projects are a three or four year baby, and you can’t go off and get pregnant in the middle of commissioning can you! So that kind of thing. And I see it now how I have conversations with other Project Leaders, like ‘Geez I was hoping to have a child by now, but I can’t really fit it because I’ve got…. I’m so close to getting this thing in the in the organisation’. And so there’s this whole thing going on. There’s the other part [also], of women in leadership in [my company] that they just don’t have a baby. They look at each
other, and go, ‘it’s a bit late, but I had a lot of fun... I had a good career’. I think at the moment... my role at the moment is trying to get these young professionals who have got a lot of potential, and say to them, ‘look, just as important as planning your career is also planning what you want to be when you’re sixty in your personal life, and that’s from finance to children to marriages... whatever’. In terms of ‘did I just forget something?’, I forgot to find a way to have both. I think a perfect time to have a career and babies would be in your early 30’s, because physically it’s best, but one of my jobs is to fly in and fly out... it’s hard to do that [when you’re pregnant]. There were a whole heap of reasons [like that] as to why I couldn’t have a family... so that career management [support is important], if you want to see women in leadership and have them happy. (Participant 24)

- Perhaps... maybe starting on the PM journey earlier? If I had had a mentor maybe when I was at a uni or something like that, then that could have helped, but I don’t think so because the cumulative experience that I have gained on my journey have all contributed to what I do now, so on reflection, no I don’t. (Participant 25)

The results show that in general a small majority of the participants (11 out of 19) asked this question had some form of regret about how their career had played out to date. Common types of regrets included, ‘I should have completed a degree’, ‘I should have gained experience overseas’, or ‘I should have planned my moves better’. Some stronger types of regrets included, ‘I should have chosen a more traditional profession’, or ‘I shouldn’t have gone into IT’. Interestingly, none of the participants responded with strong negativity towards project management as a career path (for example, ‘I hate my work’) and many elaborated on why they had either few or no regrets in working in the project management profession.

Two types of participants were shown to be more likely to have regrets than others. These included female PMs and PMs currently working in the IT sector. In terms of participants currently working in the IT sector (see 4.3.1.3), the results show that of the ten participants who currently worked in the IT sector seven were asked this question and six of those seven (or 86%) identified having one or more regrets. In terms of female participants, the results show that three of the four females (or 75%) had one or more regrets. Further research would be required to fully explore each of these phenomena.

4.3.3.9 Do PMs feel reliant on their role as a source of self-identity?

The participants were asked the extent to which they felt that their self-identity relied on their work persona (of project manager). Table 33 below shows the results.

Table 33 - PMs’ perceptions of how reliant their self-identity is on their PM work persona

| Level of reliance on PM career for self-identity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
| Very reliant                                    | Y | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 2 |
| Not very reliant                               | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 14 |
| Not asked                                      | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 9 |

n=25; out of these nine were not asked this question

SOURCE: Developed for this research
A note, this question on self-identity (as with the previous) did not feature in the original interview plan, which explains the high number of responses identified as ‘not asked’. The reason this question was introduced is because early in the interview sequence participants began offering insights on this theme. As the theme is relevant to the research, the researcher expanded the formal interview questions to include this question, commencing at interview 11. Where discussion on these themes occurred during interviews 1–10 this was captured also.

Examples of comments include:

- *I used to think you are what you do a lot of the time, but I am trying to not think that anymore. So I don’t necessarily identify my career as who I am. I think it’s one of the traps we fall into when we’re younger. You think ‘I am what job you do’ and that certainly used to be the mantra in London in the 70s and 80s, you know, the thing was to get the big job title and get the big bucks and that’s all that mattered. And now it doesn’t matter at all [for me]. You know, I don’t care.* (Participant 7)

- *[Quite a lot] ... I think your nature leads you or drives you into occupations where you know you feel comfortable. And I am in that industry and I really enjoy it, and so there’s obviously a good match there, otherwise I wouldn’t enjoy it.* (Participant 10)

- *I think to be good at something you have to be passionate about it and to be passionate about it, if it’s no longer available it’s got to have an impact on your identity and what you think of yourself and so forth.* (Participant 12)

- *People ask you ‘what do you do?’, you normally tell them what your job is rather than start talking about something else ... I consciously stopped doing that because I know that I used to [fall into that trap of defining yourself by your work] ... In more recent years I’ve made a conscious decision when I meet someone to talk about other things other than work first, purely for that reason, that, you know, I’ve made the decision that I’m not ‘just work’, there are other things that I’m interested in.* (Participant 13)

- *Far too much. Yes [pauses]. Most friends I have, have been clients in the past, and most associates I have, are in the IT industry. It’s a bit sad. I do have sporting friends, but the majority are actually in IT.* (Participant 14)

- *Not at all. I can walk away from ‘[own name] the PM’ at any time. A lot of people get really hung up, and I saw it a lot in Antarctic work, their identity gets so wrapped up in Antarctica and it’s a dangerous thing because one day you’re not going to go back to Antarctica. I’ve seen people almost crushed by it, I’ve seen people become homeless ... I’m not sure how much of your identity you want to wrap up in your profession. [Myself], I don’t care, I’d clean toilets if I had to, I grew up on a little dairy farm and we almost went bust one time. I’ve seen hard times and know when the chips are down you just have to do what it takes. (Participant 15)*

- *Not at all ... projects are tough [environments] and I think in order to lead projects and so on, you need to be tough too. Having sufficient belief in yourself is quite important, being resilient and that sort of stuff.* (Participant 16)
• I think that it would impact me because although I don’t primarily call myself one [project manager as title], it’s something that I would like to be called in the future as that adds a lot of edge to my competitiveness. (Participant 20)

• So project management is more a function and my whole being is more doing things, innovating, changing lives, changing things. My identity it’s not really project management or manager, my identity is bigger than project management and project management is a function. (Participant 23)

• I think I’ve become more balanced. I think prior to or in my mid 30’s I would say everything was work, in terms of, and particularly work, in terms of projects, how well was I considered as a professional within in a major project, would I be put on someone’s hit list to be included in the team and was I going to be a part of the ‘soccer team’ or not. (Participant 24)

• I don’t get my identity out of what I do for a job, but I like what I do, I love what I do, but if there somehow was taken away from who I am, then my world wouldn’t fall apart. (Participant 25)

The results show mixed perceptions as to how strongly the participants felt that their self-identity relied on their work persona (of project manager). This was an expected response given the highly personal nature of the question. Two participants indicated a very strong reliance, while the other 14 participants who answered this question indicated little or no reliance. Some of the more common sentiments expressed by the participants included, (i) that there will always be some link between self-identity and work role, and (ii) that unhealthy or over-reliance can and should be counteracted through maintaining ‘balance’ (other interests) in life. An additional undertone observed in many of the participants’ comments was that they felt PMs tend to be very passionate about their projects (related to this, many projects are intense by nature) and that this inevitably draws work identity and self-identity closely together.

4.3.4 The future (RQ3): How PMs view their forward career path and development

These next questions are the third of three categories in the main body of the interview, all of which focus on the attitudes and perceptions of project managers. The questions below focus on the ‘future’, exploring how PMs view their career path and future development.

4.3.4.1 Do PMs view their career in terms of key stages, e.g. early-mid-late?

The participants were asked about the extent to which they viewed their career and related needs in terms of life stages, that is, changing over time. The researcher further framed the question by providing an example, which was the three stages of ‘early’, ‘mid’ and ‘late’ career. Table 34 below shows the results.
Table 34 - Do PMs view their career and related needs in terms of life stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of conceptual articulation of career and life stages including changing development needs over time</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25; out of these one was not asked this question

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

- Absolutely, I define the early stage as the learning and the doing, the mid stage as the doing and the managing of the doing and the end stage being the oracle, the guru, the all seeing, all dancing, the person that reports to the CEO and advises them on how to implement their strategy and has a whole division underneath them that works out how and actually goes and does it. (Participant 5)

- ... if you’re in the project space, if you’re dealing with numbers and schedules, then it [earlier career] is yes-no, right-wrong. But if you’re dealing with project philosophies then it gets a little bit greyer ... [then] once you start looking at the business which might be involved in multiple projects, then you’re into a scenario where its [later career] strategy to be brutally frank, and strategy is just different shades of grey. (Participant 6)

- ... it would be very different to how I would have described it probably 30 years ago... [earlier in my career than now] it has been the nature of the engagement, the size of the gig, the prestige, all of those things, the money. But there is a time where there are other things. (Participant 10)

- To quite a large extent. I was [previously] planning to be retired by my age now, but I actually don’t want to retire. I will reduce the hours in the years to come, so I am just consolidating where I am at the moment I guess, and hopefully I will be able to continue playing in the field and adjusting with it. (Participant 14)

- I am conscious of that retrospectively ... I have become aware of it as it is happening. I am conscious now that I am in a middle stage, probably a bit of a transitional stage actually. (Participant 18)

- I don’t think I’ve looked at it from that angle. Perhaps I might not have looked at it from a life cycle point of view, but I’ve always looked ... I’ve always considered that the future’s going to be bright so it’s always going to be ... I’ve always looked at it from the point of view that there is only the way up. There is never going to be a way down. (Participant 20)

- No ... I think the development part of my career is probably only about the last 12 years. (Participant 21)

- I think early in your career you’ve got lots of time to spare and lots of energy and probably see that if you’re putting in your work, things may happen for you and you’re getting good feedback and that sort of thing. I think later as you get family involvement, less time, you’re
still working long hours, but you’re probably slightly less enthusiastic about the longer hours or the hours that impinge on family life and those sorts of things, just because you have different pressures and people to take care of, [i.e.] competing interests... at the same time, I guess you know what you’re doing and you probably operate more effectively... you [also] know what bits you do well and what bits you don’t need to apply in the same time to, so you’re a little bit more efficient. (Participant 22)

- I think I do. I think lately I have. I never saw it like that. But yeah, now I do. I think when I’m talking to others I’m obviously referring to them as early in their career, or in the hot spot in their career. So obviously I’m starting to think like that. That’s a new thing for me to do. I’ve always been the youngest Manager and the youngest GM and all of a sudden I’m not. (Participant 24)

- I think I’ve probably become more aware of it more recently just because of life events, and I think because I’m getting older it’s presented a time of reflection I suppose, whereas, at the start of my career and moving through, it was more to attain a certain level of success for want of a better word... [also], because I’m not a parent, I have just had my career just full steam ahead... I just match my course and pursue it. And it’s more at this particular point that I, if you like, am considering the possibility of having more work life balance and that type of thing, with a view to perhaps doing more academic... spending more time academically than just putting into my worker day life. (Participant 25)

The results show mixed results in terms of the extent to which the participants clearly view their career and related needs in terms of life stages. Almost half of the participants did not articulate a clear response to the question. The others provided mainly only moderate-level responses and only four participants provided strong responses. Interestingly, all four female participants provided a moderate-strong response, compared to an evenly split mix for the male participants.

Most of the participants relied on a two-dimensional ‘then versus now’ response in the first instance. It was however noted that the question as delivered did not immediately resonate with some of the participants, in particular the example of three stages of career (‘early’, ‘mid’ and ‘late’) which may not have been sufficiently colloquial or explained in a manner which engendered consistent interpretation and responses. The researcher subsequently added additional probing after each delivery in order to draw out, at a minimum, key words (if not concepts) from the participants.

The key expressions that capture the essence of what the participants described about stages of their career include:

- Early career stage = money, travel, recognition, status, technical skills development, learning;

- Mid career stage = managerial skills, family, changing perspective, realisation, perspective, conflicts, work-life responsibilities; and

- Late career stage = strategic, guru / master, consulting, teaching, flexibility, choice, less hours, contentment.
These descriptors broadly align with those in academic theory (for example, see Table 4), although they are less refined, as one would expect. What was apparent however was a common recognition amongst the participants that career and development needs do change over time particularly as personal circumstances change.

4.3.4.2 How do PMs describe their current career stage?

The participants were asked to describe what career stage that felt that they were currently in. Table 35 below summarises the results.

Table 35 - PMs’ perceptions of their current stage of career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current stage in career</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late career</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid career</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early career</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=21; out of these two were not asked this question

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

- [Late, I’m] an old fart. (Participant 1)
- It’s late, I’m 55, but that doesn’t stop me growing. (Participant 17)
- Middle stage ... the kinds of roles that I am doing at the moment, they are a transition into that career objective ... more general management. (Participant 18)
- I’d say still in the early stage, because I still lack experience in becoming a proper ... I have been a project manager but the market’s requirement for project managers in my field is a lot more experience, so I’d put myself at junior project manager level until such time I’ve run a few projects and got more intermediate and become a more senior project manager. (Participant 19)
- Late ... well I’m 45 ... I only plan to have another 15 years in it ... I want to be sitting around fishing and playing golf. (Participant 21)
- In the last one, where I am here to change the world. The broadening out. (Participant 23)
- Honestly, I feel like I’m in the late and I don’t know what’s driving that... [perhaps it’s] looking at what others from a female leadership point of view... who else is out there? Who actually stayed? Because people choose to leave. There are a lot of bright women out there who choose to leave mining. They [even] leave careers in Corporate in mining. So what is it? So if I look for how many over 50 year old women out there [there aren’t many], why is that happening and will it apply to me, because I don’t know. I don’t know if I am in the late part of my career, but I’m just looking at the demographic. What is it? Am I only looking down the barrel of another 10 years? Am I doing consulting or will I leave the organisation? Is there room for a 50 year old woman running a project? Who knows! And the gender thing has never ever been front and centre of my mind, until the last couple of years. I was always on site... there was never really any gender bias in my career and [previous employer] was
just as equally fantastic. We lived and breathed on site and there were lots of blokes, and I never had any problems or harassment or discrimination or any bias... it’s just something in Corporate, once you get into the next... in this kind of environment, you’re off site now and you’re looking at what’s around you, and [looking at] how your peers are going. Most of your mates are male. How are they going, how have they been successful in moving into more responsible roles, so yeah [where are the females?]. (Participant 24)

The results show that the participants categorised themselves across the full career life cycle, although the majority consider themselves as being in either the mid or late stage. This intuitively aligns with the experience of the sample, where the average total industry or working experience is 25 years (see also, section 4.3.1.1).

### 4.3.4.3 What future development needs do PMs identify for themselves?

The participants were asked what their future development priorities were. Table 36 below summarises the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 36 - PMs' identified future development needs for themselves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification, formal training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand multi-disciplinary strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network learning via CPD events etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal (e.g. financial, work-life, downshift, emotional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-directed learning (reading, other)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance to more senior role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop/refine soft skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen / maintain their current technical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total needs types identified</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*n* may be more than 25 as can have more than one response

**SOURCE:** Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

- *I really should start reading more books about leaders and stuff like that. There are fairly interesting books to read, but they are fairly hard books to read. They get fairly dry.* (Participant 4)

- *I do see at least in the next five to ten years, my career is probably going to be focussed on getting either similar projects to what I’m doing or bigger, larger more complex projects than what I’ve done and that to me is career growth.* (Participant 5)
• ... as individuals we spend 90% of our effort trying to increase our technical skills, 10% trying to improve our behaviour and our personality trait skills, but I believe it should be the other way around. (Participant 6)

• ... continue working as long as our [self and partner’s] health allows us to do it in a slower fashion. (Participant 7)

• I don’t watch TV. I go home, I generally have got a few projects that are mathematically based or I’m reading or I’m doing these sorts of things. So I’m right into my personal development kind of thing anyway, but I’m used to it being my own journey of self discovery, so it’s a matter of research at the moment. (Participant 9)

• ... keeping in touch with the new technologies and how they can and are being applied around ... distributed working ... otherwise you can’t deliver to client expectations, so you need to be aware and capable of using the sort of technologies that they’re using. (Participant 10)

• ... getting the ability to have greater insights into organisations to facilitate them, helping solve their own problems. (Participant 11)

• ... to have exposure to those very first building blocks of a new mine or a new business that we’re creating in a non-OECD country I guess, so it’s about community, it’s about cultural awareness, those types of development activities ... I want to actually take on a major project, that’s my career path where I’m aiming for. (Participant 12)

• I’ll probably advance into retirement gently by working less hours in consulting definitely as I head that way. In the meantime though, I’m currently retraining myself for the next 5 years... I am getting my formal TAA [Cert IV in training] at the moment ... so again that’s in line with the mentoring side of things and training. (Participant 14)

• I’m probably not quite so good at managing upwards as I am managing downwards. That’s one of the things I’m doing some work on at the moment. (Participant 16)

• I have the skills, I have the knowledge, it’s a question of how to sell it, and how to get teams working together, to show tangible success particularly attributable to me... I need to work on that. (Participant 17)

• ... gathering and learning the knowledge, becoming an accredited trainer in it and actually training those in it. (Participant 19)

• To work less. I think development needs [pauses] ... there’s still a lot of business related things that I want to learn. I learn, and enjoy learning, much better on the job. That’s probably why I’m late in terms of my career development ... business related development ... I enjoy public speaking, presentations. (Participant 21)

• I think my key development needs are to broaden out of a particular area or a particular focus of project management being IT, and to build more functional knowledge, so that I can manage projects across a broader spectrum... I’m certainly [also] considering formalising
qualifications in project management. Having been in the area for 10 years or so, it seems quite surprising that I haven’t bothered to do that, so I think that would be helpful just from a career perspective, to have those, because people are asking for them more and more now, and if you can tick that box without people having to ask questions about it, then it would make sense. (Participant 22)

- Learn how to run a major project, in order to get the opportunity as a major project director. (Participant 24)

- ... academic, writing papers perhaps, public speaking. (Participant 25)

The results show that on average the participants have at least a couple of development priorities going forward. This suggests a reasonable depth of thought by PMs in contemplating and planning their development priorities. The most popular development priorities related to (i) refining soft skills and (ii) meeting personal needs, this was closely followed by (iii) advancing to a more senior role. The least popular development priority was to maintain or strengthen technical skills.

4.3.4.4 What career development support do PMs expect from their organisation?

The participants were asked what level or type of support they needed or expected from their organisation (employer) towards meeting their development priorities. Table 37 below summarises the results.

Table 37 - PMs’ expectations on their organisation in supporting their development needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support required from their organisation (employer)</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career path framework components (e.g. training, coaching, mentor etc)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little or None (e.g. preference for autonomous, N/A - self-employed)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=25; out of these one was not asked this question

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

- ... a recognition that I have things to do in terms of continuing professional development, and that can be exposure on the PMI Board or further training, which would require me to be absent and not in continuous employment ... that is the only sort of support I can expect. You can’t expect an organisation that you are consulting to, to pay for your professional development. (Participant 1)

- ... the key one is that the organisation values the role of the PM... [also] that the organisation values ... 'real professional development', recognising that different people at different stages require different activities ... an organisation that recognises that in a project/program not everything always goes according to plan but they value the open and honest communication that comes with it, so that you can get things back on track. (Participant 5)

- I would expect to receive quite a bit. I don’t think I would necessarily need it from the organisation, I would do it off my own bat anyway, and I would probably do some of my own bat in addition to what the organisation give me, just because obviously organisations give
input that address the business imperatives quite rightly, but I said before, there is more to life than business as well, and I don’t believe you should abdicate from trying to improve yourself beyond the business environment. (Participant 6)

• None whatsoever ... only that they don’t want to discriminate on an age basis. (Participant 7)

• ... if they want to keep me they’re going to have to support me. (Participant 9)

• None ... I’ve never expected companies to pay my way or support me, I always do it myself. But then I’ve been self-employed for 20 years, you’re used to spending money on yourself. I would never allow a company that I was working for to get in my way. So if I wanted to go and get some training, if they chose to pay for it well and good, but if they didn’t, then I would do it anyway. (Participant 14)

• [as a contractor] I have to look after myself ... where it makes sense for them I will push them ... nobody really sees me as a development material, unless I am a career person (Participant 17)

• Yes, we have development plans [in current employer organisation]. There is a tension [though] between individual development plans and the commercial reality of what the business does and more so than anywhere else I have worked. If you have a sense of entitlement, you probably don’t last too long. (Participant 18)

• ... [expects that] the organisation sets the guideline on which paths to follow [i.e. trains staff to reflect its business direction]. (Participant 20)

• Yeah ... I think my growth within the company has been successful because the company has supported me, I mean, I’ve given a lot to the company and in return they have done the same thing. (Participant 21)

• I would hope that would be part and parcel of our development and performance management system we have within [company]. (Participant 22)

• The opportunity to demonstrate [ability] and to practice. (Participant 24)

• I’m actually not looking for organisational support, [as a contractor/consultant] it would be self-motivated and self-directed. (Participant 25)

The results show that the participants have a mix of development needs and priorities as well as differing views on the extent to which their organisation should play a role on meeting those priorities. Two prominent attitudinal themes that emerged from the participants’ responses were (i) that some project managers prefer to take care of their own development in order to maintain their sense of independence, and (ii) quid pro quo, whereby organisations that expect and receive a lot (of effort) from their PMs should reciprocate this effort by giving a lot (by way of development support) in return.
4.3.4.5  To what extent do PMs think about and plan for the late stage of their career?

The participants were asked the extent to which they had thought about the late or final part of their career as well as what that may look like. Table 38 below summarises the results, identifying (i) the extent to which the participant had demonstrably considered the twilight of their career, (ii) their attitudes to downshifting, and (iii) their attitudes to retirement and retirement age.

Table 38 - PMs' attitudes towards late stage of career leading to end of career

| Participant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| **Consideration given** |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |      |
| Has considered, has clear attitudes | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 20   |
| Has not considered much, is not sure |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5    |
| **Attitude to downshifting** |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |      |
| Downshifting > less work (e.g. fewer hours, non-work interests) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 16   |
| Downshifting > different work (e.g. consult, teach, Board role, 'give back', less responsibility) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 19   |
| **Attitude to retirement age** |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |      |
| Retirement an age (e.g. specific age, a 'used by' date) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 2     |
| Retirement a state of mind | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 17   |

n may be more than 25 as can have more than one response; some did not discuss each sub-issue

Source: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

- In theory, I think being a Project Manager is ideal for my stage of life [late], the practice [though] might be different. Because Project Management by its very nature is intermittent, it’s a short burst of energy over a space of time. My needs for work are intermittent, I’ve got other things that I like to do, I like to travel a bit and do other things, I have outside interests as well, so I don’t want to be a slave to an organisation. I believe that over the next years that I have a contribution to make, if and it’s a big ‘if’, the people who employ project managers and project management’s competencies recognise that you don’t need to employ people full time. And I’ve been fortunate as a consultant to have found clients like that in the past, but not too many. My aspiration [also] would be to move onto a Board, I’m sure I could add value to an organisation, a junior mining company that is moving from exploration through to development and/or production. (Participation 1)
• I see myself working right up to the end whatever that would be, but the nature of that is changing where it becomes more voluntary ... and use more of the skills and knowledge I've got there as I get older. (Participant 2)

• I wouldn’t know what to do with myself if I retired ... that’s why I thought about this teaching side, which you could go forever until you drop dead, you know. You can retire [also], but at least you need to have a job for about one or two days a week. I think there is going to be a lot more of that, not people working five days a week but [instead] one or two, to keep their minds engaged. (Participant 3)

• It really depends on the work environment but I would rather slowly wind it back because I’ve seen some people successfully do that. (Participant 4)

• ‘Use it or lose it’ when it comes to grey matter. (Participant 5)

• Fulfilment rather than progression. I suppose I’ll start at a point in time [to think] ‘maybe a change is as good as a rest’ and try and do something else and maybe go back to the technical level. (Participant 6)

• So I definitely have a view on that kind of thing, so I’m very keen to allow older people to work and it was one of the things I was ... you become conscious of as you get older and you’ve got more grey hair than black hair ... we were looking at that in Auckland for the call centre and we were thinking, ‘oh we’ll get some older people in’, because all the people in the call centre were all young people and they were all moving on so we actually looked at that and said ‘maybe if we get some [older workers] ...’, because we could get the technology to allow them to work from home in a year or two’s time and those people wouldn’t be moving around. (Participant 7)

• I [only] sort of keep it [forward plan] to 24 months and you know, at the beginning of the year, I write my resume and how I want it to appear at the end of the year and I make sure I fill in the blanks over the coming twelve months ... I do it from a work point of view and I do it from a lifestyle point of view. (Participant 9)

• ... my current plan is to do the same work, but less of it, rather than different work for the same duration ... I think the same work for less time is a better proposition than different work for the same time and the same money. (Participant 10)

• I’ve toyed and toyed with the idea of going back and teaching and stuff like that. ... [also], people who have retired or have been retired ... they’re some of the best employees you could have, it’s a matter of mindset, attitude. Probably the worst possible thing for anyone that makes them irrelevant in the workforce is when they become too inflexible. They might have all the knowledge and the ability but once they become inflexible you have to look at yourself every now and then when you hear yourself starting to say things like ‘look we tried that three times back in ’85, ’95, and 2005, do we really want to try again?’, you have to try and stop and think, ‘are you providing sound advice or are you just being inflexible?’ (Participant 13)
• … if I cease to have a burning desire to do better things in the IT business world, then I guess I’ll spend more time fishing. (Participant 14)

• I’ll either go back into running another major project, by that I mean billion dollar plus projects, or move into a hub leadership role which would be managing more than one project, a portfolio ... I will struggle with retirement ... I get quite involved in whatever job it is at the time and I’m not a very good do-nothing person ... one thing that I probably will do, in a sense, be one of these wise old men [consultant] that we have currently to help... I’ve always been grateful of the paternal advice from the people older and wiser than me in the organisation ... I think it is important, in a sense, to try and put something back. (Participant 16)

• I don’t think I’ll retire ... I just can’t think of sitting at home. (Participant 17)

• Yeah I hope it would be a typical Gen X ambition which would be being able to ease out of full time work eventually. It seems to be what people do these days. (Participant 18)

• I haven’t thought about it, but it would be more like I might be in a role where people look up to me and all the experience I’ve had over all these years, it’s valued. So a consultant of the consultants. (Participant 20)

• I will retire from what I consider to be permanent employment and I would be doing consulting out of my own free will in my own time. I would be pretty much … doing speaking and engagements where I can give back at my own time, at my own leisure at my own convenience or when the time is right. (Participant 21)

In summary, the results show a number of themes related to the general attitudes of the participants to their late careers. The strongest themes that emerged from the results include:

1. Downshifting is a popular late career strategy which is associated first and foremost with doing less (and less over time) of the same type of work;

2. Retirement age is an unpopular concept and commonly perceived as unnecessarily abrupt, forced (e.g. legislated retirement age), and even antiquated. A much-preferred strategy or scenario is gradual and self-directed transition to non-working life.

3. Consulting is seen as a key means of downshifting or slowing down one’s working life;

4. Shifting to a lower level (less demanding or responsibility) role in the same profession is not a popular downshifting strategy. This was perceived as a non-option or backward step which would only lead to less pay with no clear benefit and probably a loss of benefits;

5. Spending more time on non-work (own choice) interests is a popular downshifting strategy and a common objective associated with this is to keep no less busy but to have more variety in the activities involved in; and

6. The desire or intent to ‘give back’ (both to the profession and to the community) becomes strong for many in their late career plans. The late career stage is seen as point where time can be ‘freed up’ for such endeavours in a way not possible earlier in career.
4.3.5 Catchall question: PMs’ final words on PM career paths and development

At the end of the ‘official’ question set the participants were asked, having now been through all the questions did they have any final comments that they felt may be relevant to the research but which hadn’t already been captured. The purpose of this question was towards reaching saturation in the interview process. Table 39 below summarises the results.

Table 39 - PMs’ overall comments on their self and the PM profession as relate to career

| Participant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Total |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|      |
| Comments on self | Y | Y | Y |   |   |   | Y | Y | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     | 8    |
| Comments on PM profession | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |     | 16   |
| None        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |   |     | 6    |

n=may be more than 25 as can have more than one response where comments made

SOURCE: Developed for this research

Examples of comments include:

Participant 1: An important role in projects and project management is that of the project sponsor.

*I think much more could be done in understanding the importance of project sponsorship, in a project management sphere. Something that [former employer – major mining company] was very strong on was what I now define as project sponsorship ... [an effective project sponsor is] somebody who takes business accountability for a project, for its delivery and the use of whatever is being delivered to provide business benefits, and be accountable for it.* (Participant 1)

Participant 2: In project management there are opportunities to work between and cross-fertilise industries.

*[IT sector is fairly young whereas construction sector is mature] ... I think that's why construction projects tend to be more successful... so there's an element of my career thinking layout of things, that's where I can probably provide or give something back or add some value [transfer construction best practice to IT sector].* (Participant 2)

Participant 4: You can start your career working in projects but not as the project manager.

*Some people seem [claim to have] to get into it straight away, project management, and I think project management is a very loose term and some people use it very loosely. I think a lot of people call themselves project managers and I don’t really believe they are... you can’t loosely be an engineer. If you are a true design engineer or a project engineer, you need to have done some sort of engineering study... you’ve got to do calculations, you’ve got to understand certain code and you’ve got to understand certain ways of doing things. Whereas with project management you don’t need to do any calculations and in actual fact, project management usually has a lot of other people doing everything for you ... I don’t know how anyone can really start out in project management to start with ... because you’ve got the project, but then you’ve usually got the discipline within the project.* (Participant 4)

Participant 6: Becoming a good project manager can take many paths and will depend on the natural fit of the individual with the demands of the profession.
Chapter 4 - Results and data analysis

[On developing as a project manager] I built my career looking at people I respected within the organisation, trying to do the things that they did, and sometimes I'd overtly ask them for guidance, and sometimes I would just mimic, but you only tend to mimic those people who are close to your own value system ... For me, [what makes a good project manager] is still one of the great imponderables. (Participant 6)

Participant 7: Project managers need to be good problem solvers and a career in project management requires having, applying and maintaining these PM skills. Also, gaining a formal certification is not enough and PM associations could do more in the way they support CPD.

I find that I’m a problem solver [more than say, a visionary] really, so if I haven’t got problems to solve I find that there’s a gap there ... and as a project manager you’re always presented with issues that you need to resolve so I guess that’s why I enjoy project management... [on the value of the popular PM certifications] it seems to be about ticking boxes and about answering questions in a specific way and then passing the exam, basically. That seemed to be the focus of everybody I’ve met, they just wanted to get the exam, they just want to pass the exam. And I’m very much more about applying these things in the real world, and I think the organisation ... I think PMI [PM association] should focus maybe more on real life application with these things, which I know they are due to professional development, but I do find that it is an American way of doing things and it’s about getting the numbers up and building the organisation and a lot of the time you think okay, well, when people get their PMP they never show up at another meeting, so ... it’s a bit disappointing to me that there isn’t like more interactive development stuff going on perhaps. (Participant 7)

Participant 10: Early PM careerists should consider more than just whether they want to work in project management or not. For example, working on the client-side and contractor-side of project management are very different experiences. Likewise, working in large companies can be a very different experience to working in small or medium-sized companies.

Participant 11: One critical tip for project managers to be successful in the work of their role is to always have or else get clarity at the executive sponsor level, just about everything else is ‘solvable’ and has less risk of compromising the overall success of a project.

Participant 12: Three tips relating to the world of project management:

1. Skills: Project management is about people management so as a project manager you need to be good at that;

2. Recruiting the project team: When recruiting for project managers you should “recruit for passion, train for skill”; and

3. Centralisation and standardisation: If you are building a large project organisation you should “centralise and standardise but only the things that matter and not the things which would detract from the ability to purpose fit for a project”. (Participant 12)

Participant 13: Three comments on the necessary skills of project managers, on industry demand and on industry’s response to skills demand, include:
1. Technical skills of the project manager: On small projects the project manager typically needs the related technical skills, because they don’t tend to have standalone technical support to draw upon. By contrast, on large projects what is more important is to have some technical expertise in the owners’ team (for example, a principal engineering group) to manage outsourced/consulting engineers.

2. Managing industry skills shortages: Project-oriented companies need to become more flexible in their people arrangements, for example the use of more part-time resources.

3. Career path gaps in project management: “There is a current shortage of project controls people world-wide, and there is no career called project controls. You don’t go to uni to do project controls. You can do project management, you might do engineering, you might go back and do a diploma, or you might just do project management. You can’t go and do project controls, it doesn’t exist. And most people in project controls sort of fall into it, it’s not what they meant to do... if you’re looking for the biggest hole [in PM-related career paths], for me, that’s it.”

Participant 14: Two useful considerations in the realm of project management, are:

1. Personal fit with projects versus line management: “[As a project manager] I go in, make change, hopefully bed it in, and then move onto the next thing that needs to be fixed. To sit there doing an operational job, day after day would make my brain cells go dead (laughs)... it would make me very grumpy too I would imagine... so I’m challenge driven.”

2. PMs need business analyst skills: “... If they [early PM careerists] spent time as business analysts, then they would be better project managers. It’s something I quite firmly believe really. The two [role types] aren’t divorced by that much. If the project manager can’t look at a business case and blow holes in it, or work through a feasibility study and say ‘I don’t think you should be doing this’, then, maybe they’re not doing their job just right”.

(Participant 14)

Participant 15: Project management has differing levels of maturity between countries. This has implications both on the role of the project manager (for example level of accountability) and on project structure and performance.

Participant 16: Career paths systems can have a significant positive effect on the bottom line and therefore shareholder value.

... getting better people, treating them better, motivating them better ... getting better results ... is really one of the keys to delivering on our promise to our shareholders, to maximise their returns, and central to that is having a better defined, more effective career pathing system. (Participant 16)

Participant 17: A common characteristic of project management is mobility, both between industry sectors and geographies. The lessons you learn as a project manager from working in different sectors can be invaluable. Likewise, geographic mobility can be an exciting and enriching experience for the project manager. However, personal needs change over time and so for instance a transient
Chapter 4 - Results and data analysis

project lifestyle may be attractive in early career but problematic later (for example, family-related trade-offs such as schooling, social network, work-life balance). This is a consideration for careerists.

Participant 18: You do not need to have a strong technical background to manage technical projects, the PM role is not about the technical requirements of the project.

Participant 20: Project management being a relatively modern profession has matured at a fast rate. This maturity will likely bring career path opportunities that were not available to the current generation of project managers. In particular, early careerists may be able to genuinely start their career in project management rather than an alternative profession or trade.

Maybe in the next few years you might see people who start careers as project managers and remain in the same career for a long time as well. But that would be a completely different generation. [It is positive that] project management studies have been introduced to people, maybe at least ten years ago or more now ... but it’s the next generation that’s going to be from a pure project management discipline. Most of the people currently in project management ... have gotten onto it as part of their ‘other’ activity that they were doing. (Participant 20)

Participant 21: Project managers need to appreciate the big picture that is beyond their project.

... a successful project manager is one that has a business understanding. I think a successful project manager is one that can be seen as a leader for the organisation, can be seen within the business as a senior influencing partner of the organisation. I don’t know that a lot of organisations still understand that, but certainly, beyond the deployment of 15 servers or 30 servers [for example], a good PM has the opportunity to make a huge difference to the business if you devise correctly, and I think PM’s need to understand that their value add is beyond the schedule scope, the charter, risk assessments [etc.] ... It’s more than that [wider, business transformation, etc.]. (Participant 21)

Participant 22: Two factors that can reduce job satisfaction include:

1. Projects in operations: “I think if you’re working project management where you’ve got constant deadlines, which most project Managers do, but in the environment that I’m in [operational], you usually have a deadline that overlaps with another deadline and another deadline. There’s not that traditional ‘project calms down and here’s the new project’. You’ve got lots of overlapping projects all of the time and there’s not the same sense of the good side of project management, like the ‘Yes, we’ve got a new team, we’re going into a new piece of work and we’ve achieved something’. So I think that part of it for me, is something that has made me less keen on the work that I’m doing now. There is less of the real upside to being in project management.”

2. Matrix organisations: “... the challenge of working in these matrix organisations is to deliver those projects where you don’t necessarily have control over your resources. You don’t necessarily have control of the initial budget coming into those projects, so I think all those things add up to project management in my context being a less exciting place to be, a less rewarding place.”
Participant 24: It's valuable to see a project through (to commissioning), because you know whether you truly did a good job or not.

In summary, the responses to this closing question provided additional insights into the attitudes and perceptions of serial project managers as relate to PM career paths and develop. These insights further contribute towards filling gaps in the extant literature (the basis of the research objective), as well as supporting the industry needs identified at the inception of this research, including:

- Better information to inform early careerists entering or contemplating entering project management;
- Improved responsiveness to project manager skills shortages in the relevant industry sectors;
- Better understanding by the profession of the experiences and future development needs of serial project managers; and
- Better awareness by organisations of individual perspectives.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research results and data analysis. The chapter commenced by summarising the data collected during the semi-structured interviews. Then the interview results were reported and analysed. The results for each interview question were summarised, key aspects of the participant responses presented and analysis conducted. The next and final chapter synthesises these results and analysis and draws conclusions in relation to the research questions. It also discusses the findings in light of theory and provides implications in relation to policy and practice. Lastly it discusses limitations, generalizability and opportunities for further research.
5 Conclusions and implications

This chapter discusses the conclusions and implications of this study.

5.1 Introduction

This study has aimed to provide insight into the individual career paths and development of serial project managers. In Chapter 1, the research was introduced including the background and justification for this study. Chapter 2 then reviewed the extant literature and identified gaps relating to the individual career paths and the development of project managers. The research problem subsequently stated was that not enough is known about serial project managers, including their career path experiences, their attitudes and perceptions about PM as a career and a profession, their contributions to strengthening the PM profession, and their own future development needs. It was further noted that this has a plethora of implications, not only academically but for PM careerists, their profession and the industry sectors in which their services are in demand. This in turn led to the research objective, to explore through direct engagement with serial project managers their career path and development experiences, attitudes and perceptions, in order to contribute to theory and practice a body of empirical evidence grounded in first hand perspectives. The research objective was supported with a set of three research questions, in turn supported by the larger set of interview questions.

Chapter 3 described the research methodology. The chapter commenced with an overview of research paradigms, including a justification for the research paradigm chosen. It then went on to discuss and confirm the research approach adopted for this study and justified the specific technique adopted for this study. In addition, the chapter discussed data collection, data analysis, limitations and ethical considerations including how these have been addressed.

Chapter 4 discussed the research results and data analysis. The chapter commenced by summarising the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, then reported and analysed the interview results. The results for each interview question were summarised, key aspects of the participant responses presented and analysis conducted.

In Chapter 5 the results and analysis are taken and discussed in light of the literature, then, conclusions drawn in relation to the research questions and the research problem. The researcher then introduces a generic model illustrating the career path of the serial project manager. In addition, the researcher introduces a related yet formative concept of the ‘two-pillar career’ orientation. The researcher then draws on the collective learning from this study to offer some practical implications for current practice. To conclude this final chapter, the researcher identifies the limitations of this study together with opportunities for further research.

5.2 Discussion of the research findings in light of the academic literature

The purpose of this section is to discuss the findings of this study in light of the literature and to ascertain their contribution to the literature including implications for theory. The discussion spans a selection of theory, from both the parent disciplines and the immediate literature. The purpose of this section is not to interpret the findings by imposing a narrow theoretical framework, but rather, to more openly explore the findings while nevertheless remaining grounded in theory.
Below is a summary of the structure of this section, by heading:

1. A deliberately open and interdisciplinary approach through systems thinking
2. The situation of the project manager epitomising modern conceptions of career
3. Their career path fundamentally different to the functional (line) manager’s
4. Their professional commitment not determinable by postgraduate qualifications
5. Their perceptions of career success as developing, subjectively driven persons
6. Their propensity for self-management and grounded personal branding
7. Their perceptions and handling of life/career stages
8. Their limited emphasis on project management tools as boundary objects
9. Their level of interest and support in the learning of others
10. Organisational career path design as part of HRM practices
11. Organisational variability in perceptions of the role and its competencies
12. Context of project management’s profession status
13. Challenges for the PM in transforming and leaving behind

The discussion now commences in the first of these focus areas.

5.2.1 A deliberately open and interdisciplinary approach

This study was borne out of a desire to better understand a particular career type, namely the ‘project manager’, both from a theoretical and practical perspective. This meant that the researcher came into this study with a firm mindset to respect, but likewise avoid becoming blinkered by, individual disciplinary fields. One example pertinent both to career studies and interdisciplinary enquiry and which was introduced briefly in the literature review was that of the Systems Theory Framework (STF) of career development. The STF is an intuitive and holistic framework that accommodates both the content influences and the process influences on an individual’s career development. McMahon (2005) posits that the STF provides a much needed theoretical and practical consistency for career counselling, as well as a comprehensive frame of reference for practitioners to consider in relation to their clients (see also, section 2.3.3). Key features of the STF include: (i) content influences are inter-connecting and include the individual system, the social system, and the environmental-societal system, (ii) process influences include recursiveness, change of time, and chance, (iii) all influences are set within the context of past, present and future, and (iv) the individual system is central including its subsystems comprising intrapersonal influences (McMahon 2002; McMahon & Patton 1995; Patton, W. & McMahon 1997, 1999).

This study makes no claim to having embedded itself in the STF, however, the researcher has taken the STF into account from its inception, attempting to allow for the constellation of career influences by pursuing an exploratory and deliberately open-ended method of enquiry. For example, the
research questions were temporally constructed in order to capture the contexts of past, present and future, which is reflective of STF thinking. Also, the research design was informed by specific consideration and accommodation of both content and process influences, as described in the STF. It is outside the scope of this study to comprehensively interpret the findings in light of the STF, not least because of the full breadth of the STF (see Figure 2-4), nevertheless some more general observations can be made. Firstly, the participants in this study reinforced several key concepts identified in the STF, including recursiveness, change over time and the role of chance (all of which are process influences), as well as the inextricable interconnectedness between their individual self and their external or societal context (content influences). Secondly, many of the participants in this study heavily used stories to convey their career narrative, and where they did not, there were more instances of “thin descriptions” leading to “thin conclusions” (Morgan, A. 2000). Finally, and relating specifically to counselling, the interview process appeared to have unintentionally catered to a tacit desire of some of the participants for quasi-career counselling and this was evidenced in some of the participants having probed the researcher during interview for career-related advise. This may point to a latent demand for career counselling among serial project managers, who may be less inclined than early careerists to seek out formal assistance.

5.2.2 The situation of the project manager epitomising modern conceptions of career

Perhaps the first and most obvious question when beginning to interpret the findings of this study has been, is the serial project manager’s career embedded in modern conceptions of career? In light of the results of this study, the answer to this question appears to be a resounding ‘yes’. Specifically, it appears that in many ways the situation of the serial project manager epitomises modern conceptions of career. By way of further explanation, the career experiences of the participants could generally be characterised as having been dominated by a series of loosely planned career decisions and moves influenced throughout by interplay between modern organisational dynamics and individual life/career needs. Some more specific observations from this study which highlight how the situation of the serial project manager aligns with modern conceptions of career include:

- A high prevalence of having brought subjective criteria to their career situations;
- A high prevalence of having moved between roles, industries and geographic regions;
- A high prevalence of moving between professions and of having had concurrent professions;
- A high prevalence of lateral or transitional moves, including career plateaus;
- A high prevalence of multi-faceted strategies supporting development and employability;
- A low prevalence of standardised or predictable scope of the project manager role; and
- A low prevalence of expected or relied upon job security from their organisation.

Paton, Hodgson and Cicmil (2010, p. 159) observe that the constitution of the project manager is “an attractive yet insecure organisational actor in many modern organisations”.

McMahon, Patton and Tatham (2003) in discussing the evolving definition of career, observe that “… emerging definitions of career and career development are reflective of a proactive, individual centred, lifespan, life/career management process where individuals are active in responding and
adapting to change and in creating, constructing, designing, and identifying paid employment opportunities, life and learning experiences that will enable them to create satisfying lives” (McMahon, Patton & Tatham 2003, p. 4). This study has identified the prevalence of several of these traits in the participant sample, including actively responding and adapting to change, being individual-centred, identifying and pursuing employment opportunities and bringing subjective criteria (from in and outside of work) to their career situations. McMahon et al. also noted that in the boundaryless career, work is often no longer characterised by a vertical process of advancement within one organisation. Again, observations from this study confirm this view.

Baruch (2004a), in discussing the ‘multidirectional career’, characterised a series of lateral or advancing movements within, between and outside organisations, occupations and paid employment, associated with both formal and informal educational experiences. The results of this study support this position. Not only were the types of moves described by Baruch found in this study, the participants’ collective education experience was vastly diverse. This included a mix of formal education ranging from lower certificates though to doctoral degrees, as well as informal education dominated by participation in professional and social networks. Furthermore, the disciplinary focus in these education options was largely unbounded; in other words it was not exclusively focused on project management as the core discipline of this particular research sample.

Briscoe and Hall (2006, p. 8) and Hall (Hall 1996b) distinguish between the boundaryless career and the protean career, where in the protean career “…the person is (1) values driven in the sense that the person’s internal values provide the guidance and measure of success for the individual’s career; and (2) self-directed in personal career management – having the ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands”. They developed 16 assorted combinations of the boundaryless and protean career then distilled these into eight archetypal career profiles whose likelihood they considered to be medium or high. The eight combinations included: ‘lost or trapped’, ‘fortressed’, ‘wanderer’, ‘idealist’, ‘organization man/woman’, ‘solid citizen’, ‘hired gun/hired hand’, and ‘protean career architect’. The results of this study show that the participants demonstrated a range of degrees of self-directed and values driven career orientations (in support of the protean concept). Likewise, a heuristic assessment of the sample against Briscoe and Hall’s eight archetypes indicates a common fit with six of the eight archetypes including the ‘wanderer’, ‘idealist’, ‘organisation man/woman’, ‘solid citizen’, ‘hired gun/hired hand’ and ‘protean career architect’. The archetypes ‘lost or trapped’ and ‘fortressed’ did not neatly fit any of the participants. The traits within the ‘lost or trapped’ and ‘fortressed’ archetypes that were not common among the participants in this study include (i) a lack of inner values or direction, and (ii) an inflexible need for a stability matching strongly held personal values. This provides insight into how project managers may differ in personality type to other careerists.

5.2.3 Their career path fundamentally different to the functional (line) manager’s

El-Sabaa (2001) studied the skills and career path of an effective project manager as perceived in Egypt, finding that it is the human skills of project managers (more so than technical skills) that have the greatest influence on project management practices. He also found that the career path of the project manager differs significantly to that of the functional manager (see Table 9), a position broadly supported by others (Hölzle 2010; Turner, Keegan & Crawford 2000). El-Sabaa found in particular that the project manager is required to have extensive cross-functional experience as well as the ability to translate the understanding that accompanies this into the efficient utilisation of
multi-disciplinary resources in projects. He also found that project managers tend to manage their own careers and to have much shorter stays in any one field. A more detailed critique of El-Sabaa’s findings is provided earlier, in section 2.4.3.1.

The results of this study broadly support El-Sabaa’s findings. In this study the participants tended to have been highly mobile during their careers both in terms of geography, organisation, and vertical and lateral movements (see Table 15, Table 20 and Table 21). They also tended to have been mobile in terms of career discipline and they tended, probably as a result of this, to have built up a wide repertoire of cross-functional skills. Another relatively common characteristic among the participants was that they tended to have self-managed their career, in the sense that irrespective of how planned or opportunistic they felt their career had been, they rarely stated any overwhelming sense of reliance on the organisations they had worked for (see 4.3.2.5). The participants in this study were also, on the whole, strong communicators and avid team players who were equally willing however to be autocratic where circumstances required. This may be partly explained by the fact that the overriding motivation of most of the participants was achievement at work and in the project-oriented environment this translated to getting the project delivered using all reasonable means. Such a mindset suggests the use of advanced soft skills (over technical skills) which again supports El-Sabaa’s findings (El-Sabaa 2001, p. 5).

5.2.4 Their professional commitment not determinable by postgraduate qualifications

Wang and Armstrong (2004), in their study of members of the project management profession in Australia, conclude that PM professionals with formal postgraduate PM education rate significantly higher on professional commitment than those without this kind of education. The results of this study tend to reject Wang and Armstrong’s findings, to the extent that their findings may be found to be inadequate to fully explain the presence of professional commitment, at least among project managers. The following results from this study illustrate this potential shortfall:

- Fewer than 5% of the participants (1 of 25) in this study held postgraduate qualifications specific to project management, suggesting that the project management profession comprises a significantly wider community than the sample employed by Wang and Armstrong and that the community is therefore best not identified by, or restricted to, individuals with formal degree qualifications in project management (see Table 16);

- The lone participant who did hold a postgraduate qualification in project management did not provide any responses that would significantly indicate or else imply a higher level of professional commitment than that of the other participants;

- A large majority of the participants (21 of 25) held a current membership with a project management association, suggesting a high level of professional commitment despite not having PM degree qualifications (see Table 25);

- A large majority of the participants (16 of 25) exhibited moderate-to-high levels of interaction with their project management association, further suggesting their professional commitment despite not having PM degree qualifications (see Table 28); and

- A large majority of the participants (16 of 25) held project management certificates, suggesting that a focus of education at this lower, non-degree level (rather than masters
degree level) may be more relevant and appropriate towards gaining insight into the professional commitment of PM professionals (see Table 17).

In summary then, the results of this study suggest that the participants tended to exhibit considerable commitment to the project management profession despite not holding formal postgraduate qualifications in project management.

5.2.5 Their perceptions of career success as developing, subjectively driven persons

Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom (2005), in their discussion of career success in a boundaryless career world, propose guidelines for rapprochement between career theory and career success research. Their guidelines include a call to recognise the developing, subjectively driven person. They note in particular that not one of the 68 articles they examined involved listening directly to the research subjects, or even allowed research subjects to elaborate on their own criteria for career success. They also note that individuals’ perceptions of how their career progress is viewed by others has “the strongest impact on individuals’ self-concepts” (Tice & Wallace 2003), which in turn influences future career behaviour. Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom conclude that more qualitative research is required into the subjective criteria that people bring to their career situations.

This study provides a direct response to Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom’s call to action, through its qualitative focus on capturing first-hand accounts from individual project managers as the subjects of investigation. To illustrate, herein is a comparison between results from this study and those from Lee, Lirio and Karakas (2006). Lee, Lirio and Karakas examined the personal, career and family outcomes of part-time professionals (managers) by exploring their conceptions of career success in the context of working on a part-time basis to accommodate personal or family commitments. Their research was underpinned by the premise that there is a need for more holistic and multidimensional conceptions and definitions of career success, where the interplay between work, family, life, significant others, and various life stages is acknowledged. Their research identified eight emergent definitions of career success, of which only four were found to fit well with the presumed duality of objective and subjective career success; three were found to be clearly subjective, including: being able to have a life outside work, opportunities to do challenging work and continue to grow professionally, and enjoying work (Lee, Lirio & Karakas 2006, p. 302). Their research findings also support the contention that the priorities and values of careerists shift over time. For example, at Time 1 in their study the three most prevalent definitions of career success were being able to have a life beyond work, performing well, and doing challenging work and continuing to grow professionally; whereas at Time 2 performing well was replaced by having an impact (Lee, Lirio & Karakas 2006, p. 305).

The results of this study, in several respects, both support and complement Lee, Lirio and Karakas’ findings. Firstly, the results of this study support their contention that that there has been a shift from the prominence of a more traditional definition of career success (meaning regular promotions and increasing responsibility, compensation and status over time) to the emergence of a more individualised and idiosyncratic definition of career success (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005; Heslin 2005; Sturges 1999). For instance, in this study a significant generational shift was identified in terms of perceptions and desires around success in later career and the notion of retirement. A large majority of the participants had rejected the traditional notion of a set retirement age, replacing it instead with individualised strategies focused on delivering better personal outcomes.
(i.e. ‘success’) in late career (see section 4.3.4.5). Secondly, the results of this study also support their contention that careerists have shifting priorities and values and that understanding this is critical for organisations. For instance, in this study the results showed that the participants readily identified that their career expectations and needs had changed over time. This was most evident when they were asked, (i) how they defined career success (see section 4.3.3.7), and (ii) the extent to which they viewed their career and related needs in terms of life stages (see section 4.3.4.1). They also provided critical insights into the often quite specific attitudes that they held on the role of organisations in their personal development (see section 4.3.4.4).

Finally, Lee, Lirio and Karakas’s study is limited in its generalisability by having had approximately 90% female participants. However in contrast, this study had 84% male participants and so this offers a potentially complementary consideration of the two studies. For instance, if you compare the mention of career success factors you find that both groups give directionally similar responses (to compare, see Table 6 and Table 31) and yet some interesting differences can still be observed, such as, for the largely male sample in this study work-life balance was the third most mentioned factor whereas for the largely female sample in Lee, Lirio and Karakas’s study the same or similar theme (‘having a life outside work’) ranked number one in its mention. Further research would be required to provide a more comprehensive comparison between the two studies.

5.2.6 Their propensity for self-management and grounded personal branding

El-Sabaa (2001) observed that career self-management is particularly prevalent among project managers with 86.5% of the project manager respondents in his study having self-managed their careers, whereas by contrast the career management of functional manager respondents was found to be largely paternalistic, regulated by an organisation(s) in 88.6% of cases. Alongside this is a related finding by El-Sabaa that project managers are generally much more mobile during their career than functional managers.

The results of this study, whilst not having directly compared project managers to functional managers like in El-Sabaa’s study, do nevertheless provide insights into the perceptions and attitudes of individual project managers as relate to career self-management. This study found, firstly, that when the participants were asked the extent to which they had self-managed their career, there were negligible responses suggesting that their organisation(s) had done either most or all of their managing for them. Instead, the participants almost unanimously responded by describing something slightly different; what they instead described was the extent to which their development and progression had been either planned or opportunistic (see section 4.3.2.5). As to whether ‘planned’ implied a level of organisation intervention, the results were inconclusive.

Secondly, the results of this study showed that many of the participants perceived that the way in which they had managed their career had inevitably changed over time, that is, during the course of their life/career. Thirdly, the results of this study showed that the participants tended to have been highly mobile during their career, which in itself implies a higher likelihood of self-management as having been the dominant way of organising (see sections 4.3.2.2, 4.3.2.3 and 4.3.2.4).

It appears then from the evidence that project managers are strongly inclined towards career self-management. Moreover, it would seem reasonable to assume that self-management may extend to, or else incorporate, the notion of personal branding (see section 2.3.4.3). This study has tested that assumption. By way of context first, personal branding should arguably be intuitively appealing.
to project managers, given that the nature of their work environment is relatively temporary and transient and that a key premise of personal branding is that through focused effort on the likes of ‘self-packaging’ you can be better placed to successfully navigate the structural uncertainties of the modern work economy. Notwithstanding, Lair, Sullivan and Cheney (2005) set out an ethical critique of personal branding and in so lay caution on it on the basis that as a communication strategy it is startlingly overt in its invitation to self-commodification. Their critique focuses on four areas: the implied audience of personal branding, the implied individual person, the distortion of social relations and the diversion from systemic analysis. They argue, *inter alia*, that an exceedingly narrow form of instrumentality underlies the main discourse of personal branding and that it is therefore both superficial and dangerously disconnected from individual and societal values. They also suggest that the personal branding movement, which seems strongest in the U.S., plays predominantly on the vulnerabilities of a narrow audience of individuals including white, male, professional class middle managers and their perceptions of individual success.

The results of this study have provided insight into the perceptions and attitudes of the participants (at the time of study all resident in Australia) to personal branding. Specifically, the results showed that whilst the participants in general had a high level of awareness of the term ‘personal branding’, they tended to attribute both positive and negative meanings to the term. The positive aspects predominantly related to the legitimate showcasing of core strengths and behaviours, while the negative aspects predominantly related to marketing and in essence the risk of promises (or ‘sales speak’) and reality (what gets ‘delivered’) being incongruent with each other. In this respect the participants tended to reject personal branding in its whole form, instead substituting it with a self-defined alternative much more closely aligned with traditional conceptions of the interplay between self and career prospects (for example – integrity, reputation, merit). However, they also demonstrated a strong awareness of the modern recruiting and employment context including the role of social media, such as Linked In, in creating a career presence online and thereby helping to bolster networks and employment prospects. In consideration of the above, Lair, Sullivan and Cheney’s criticism of personal branding is generally supported, noting however that with the proliferation of the internet since the late 1990’s the context in which the construct of personal brand exists has changed significantly in recent times. For example, Linked In and other similar social media that influence large extended networks through technology, have become largely mainstream but only in the past several years. Critiques of personal branding may therefore need to be reformulated or else softened to take into account this new context, including not least the mass uptake of social media.

5.2.7 Their perceptions and handling of life/career stages

Schein (1978, pp. 173-85) distinguishes between early, mid and late-career contending that the key to understanding any life/career period is to take a developmental view – that is, to identify the developmental tasks of the career stage and treat them as a period where further growth can and will take place (see also, section 2.3.4.1). He refers to this as maintaining a ‘proactive growth orientation’, throughout all stages of career and life. The results of this study tend to confirm Schein’s theoretical model, to the extent that the participants were shown to be able to relate to career stages, as well as, the merits of proactive growth orientation. However, the results also suggested that the participants’ full appreciation of career development and needs changing over time was largely retrospective. In other words, whilst they were generally shown to have
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and implications

maintained a proactive growth orientation throughout their career, there was only very limited
evidence of having consciously applied during their career the type of planning that would hone in
on specific developmental needs by stage and ahead of time. Most of the participants instead
alluded to have taken more of a ‘just in time’ approach. For many of the participants, early career
planning in particular had been characterised by one or maybe two key education or transition
decisions (for example, ‘what should I do once I leave school?’), followed by a move into full-time
work and then gradual progression in the workplace largely at the hands of serendipity. All of the
participants in this study had classified themselves as falling into either the middle or late stage of
career (see sections 4.3.4.1 and 4.3.4.2).

Hall (2002) further elaborates on the developmental needs of early, middle and late career, by
dividing them into socio-emotional needs and task needs (see Table 4). This study tends to support
Hall’s model, based on strong alignment between his model and the reflections, perceptions and
attitudes of the participants in this study. In terms of socio-emotional needs, the participants’
responses confirmed their relevance for all three stages, albeit with the linkages sometimes being
subtle. Two examples of confirmation include: (i) there were participant responses that clearly
referenced the seeking out of a legacy in one’s work during late career stage, and (ii) there were
participant responses that implied the need to reduce self-indulgence in middle career stage (for
example, colloquial references to being over-indulgent in early career stage). In terms of task needs,
the participants’ responses again confirmed their relevance (overwhelmingly this time) and again for
all three stages. The only task need that was not explicitly identified by the participants was the
early career stage need to ‘develop creativity/innovation’, however this could possibly be explained
by poor memory, that is, the participants may only have recalled their more vivid or memorable
experiences.

5.2.8 Their limited emphasis on project management tools as boundary objects

The project management literature has a long-standing interest in the use of tools and techniques.
Some of the better know of these tools and techniques include cost-benefit analysis, critical path
method (CPM), earned value analysis (EVA), Gantt charts, Program Review and Evaluation Technique
(PERT) and Work Breakdown Structures (WBS). Sapsed and Salter (2004) assess the limitations of
project management tools as boundary objects, meaning, as artefacts of practice that are agreed
and shared between communities yet satisfy the informational requirements of each of them. They
conclude that:

... in dispersed programs where there is no opportunity for face-to-face interaction, and/or
ambiguous lines of authority, project management tools will be ineffectual as boundary
objects and prone to avoidance. Boundary objects are inherently limited precisely because of
their marginal nature, the effects of which are exacerbated in diverse and dispersed
programs... [and] because of their marginal nature, [they] are prone to be relegated to the
edge of projects, which is after all where they belong (Sapsed & Salter 2004, pp. 1515,31).

The results of this study tend to support Sapsed and Salter’s conclusions. In particular, two relevant
observations are made with respect to project management tools as boundary objects. The first
observation is that few if any of the participants in this study paid significant attention to describing
their learning or else application of project management tools during their career, whether in the
past, present or future. This suggests that, notwithstanding that project management tools may
indeed be relevant tools for collaboration, knowledge sharing and indeed a remedy for balkanisation, they are not necessarily the key to securing necessary project outcomes. In contrast, the participants in this study did spend a significant proportion of their responses describing the role of soft skills in managing projects effectively, in particular in building trust and navigating issues of power and control. This suggests that either soft skills are significantly more important than boundary objects in managing projects, or possibly, that soft skills are simply more important to project managers specifically. The second observation is that although there was only limited evidence of the importance of project management tools as boundary objects, two points of common ground among many of the participants were that (i) they had completed some sort of low level certificate in project management, and (ii) they tended to be familiar with at least one of the well-known project management standards, such as PMBOK. If a key purpose of boundary objects is to “accommodate local ‘dialects’” (Sapsed & Salter 2004, p. 1519), then it seems arguable that in fact certification and standards knowledge are perhaps the two most common and useful boundary objects in project management. This would seem plausible if adopting a relatively broad definition of boundary objects, such as that of Brown, J. S. and Duguid (2001, p. 209).

5.2.9 Their level of interest and support in the learning of others

It is generally accepted that most individuals, including project managers, have at minimum some degree of self-interest and growth orientation when it comes to organising, learning and their own development. It is less clear though, precisely how interested and involved project managers tend to be in the learning and development of other, lesser experienced project workers. As noted already during the review of the extant literature, in project-oriented working knowledge and learning can often suffer from tensions between the ‘temporary’ (project) and ‘permanent’ organisation (Bresnen 2006; Manning & Sydow 2011; Sydow, Lindkvist & DeFillippi 2004). In terms of support for individual learning, a related tension occurs in HRM practices and most particularly at the intersection of the relationship between the three main parties most typically responsible for delivering these types of HRM practices, namely the HR specialist, the line manager and the project manager. This is discussed by Keegan, Huemann and Turner (2011) who explore the devolution of HR responsibilities in project-oriented firms and observe, inter alia, that project managers are often stereotyped as being more interested in the task and performance demands of projects than in the learning and development of project participants. This raises an interesting question in terms of learning processes in and around projects and most particularly around what occurs beyond the immediate boundaries of project influence (Grabher 2004).

The results of this study tend to challenge the above-mentioned stereotype to the extent that they show, firstly, that project managers overwhelmingly view their role in the learning of earlier careerists as being either important or very important, and secondly, that what in fact most limits project managers’ participation is available time and therefore organisational resources. It was observed in this study that where relationships existed within the bounds of a resourced project organisation, the support provided by project managers was relatively high, whereas when the setting was limited to a personal network (that is, beyond the support limits of a resourced epistemic community) then their actual involvement appeared to be low, despite their articulated perception of importance remaining high. It seems then that whilst personal networks may foster positive sentiment towards the role of project managers in supporting the learning of other project-oriented careerists (including outside of organisations), it is production networks and their linkage to
organisations (and therefore resources) that most often make these types of relationships a reality. It seems likely also that an additional challenge in converting sentiment into reality without the support of organisational resources, is earlier careerists’ relatively weak position in terms of reciprocity. That is, earlier careerists typically have limited ability to offer project managers valuable ‘currency’ in return for meaningful participation in their learning. This is perhaps where physical currency, by way of paid mentoring and coaching services for instance, may legitimately assist in building individual’s project management competencies outside of the organisation setting.

5.2.10 Organisational career path design as part of HRM practices

Project-oriented organisations that seek effective career path and development frameworks for their project managers require new and different HRM practices (Turner, Huemann & Keegan 2008). Hölzle (2010) undertook research to design and implement a career path for project managers (see also, section 2.4.2). The results of that study concluded that from an organisational perspective the following are key success factors for the design and implementation of a successful project managers’ career path:

- The qualification of the project manager has to be aligned with according career path levels. The organization needs to engage and provide continuity to their project managers by for example, organizational recognition and equivalence of the project managers' career path in relation to other career paths. The project managers need to trust that project management is a true career booster. This is reflected in an according salary, promotion policy, additional benefits, and the permeability of line and project organization. Supporting human resource processes for internal and external applicants are needed. Projects need to be classified and this classification has to be integrated into the career path. Besides a career path, project managers need a supporting project organization with e.g., a project management office, a designated project managers’ department and project-specific methods and tools. (Hölzle 2010, p. 785)

Hölzle noted however that direct interaction with project managers did not form part of the study and that further research in this respect would therefore be valuable to glean more knowledge on what truly motivates project managers including how they value the factors presented above.

This study, which in contrast did have direct interaction with project managers, provides numerous complementary insights into the motivations of project managers. While a detailed analysis in relation to motivation theory is outside the scope of this study, its findings on the perceptions and attitudes of project managers are highly relevant towards assessing the validity or else comprehensiveness of the key success factors of design proposed by Hölzle. A summary of the most relevant findings from this study are as follow:

- **Employability** - a large majority (20 of 25) of the participants identified ‘personal brand’ as important or very important to their career (see section 4.3.2.6). Moreover, personal brand was heavily associated with individual portability and employability (over employment), that is, minimising dependence on organisational frameworks;

- **Career success** - when the participants were asked about how they defined career success (see section 4.3.3.7), three core themes were identified: achievement at work (24 of 25), enjoy their work (17 of 25) and work-life balance (11 of 25). This illustrates how key factors
that contribute to perceived career success will have differing levels of influence available to organisations;

- **Breadth of development needs** - a wide range of development priorities were identified by the participants (see section 4.3.4.3). This illustrates how designing an organisational framework needs to adequately consider the diversity of elements potentially needed to be catered for, as well as the capacity and desire of the organisation to resource such a framework;

- **Professional affiliation** - the participants tended to be a current member of one or more professional associations, usually including a PM association at minimum (see section 4.3.3.1). They also tended to have moderate-high levels of interaction with their chosen association (see section 4.3.3.4). This illustrates the need for organisations designing frameworks to have a good prior understanding of common other sources of learning and career support utilised by their people, in case this proves materially relevant to their framework design; and

- **Organisational reliance** - the participants were asked what level of support they needed or expected from their organisation towards meeting their personal development priorities (see section 4.3.4.4). The responses were somewhat polarised, with approximately half of the participants wanting one or more components that you would typically find in a career path framework, and the other half wanting or else expecting little or no support. This illustrates that individuals can have diverse perceptions of what they need or expect from an organisation in career terms.

The above examples provide clear evidence that the usefulness of organisational career paths for project managers is heavily embedded in their careful and effective design, including not least, due consideration of the individuals that they specifically seek to influence and cater for.

### 5.2.11 Organisational variability in perceptions of the role and its competencies

Hölzle (2010) observed that organisations see their project managers quite differently to each other, that is, there is significant variance between organisations' perspectives. In one organisation a project manager might be considered a ‘true’ manager with all the typical trappings of such roles (significant responsibility including formal authority for budget, disciplinary, etc.), whereas in others, the project manager role is treated more as administrative, with the role’s remit confined to activities such as overseeing the PMO or maintaining project management guidelines and controls.

The results of this study tend to confirm Hölzle’s findings outlined above. Firstly, in this study the participants described an array of role types and organisational settings, which were sometimes similar but often contained wide variances. In some examples the participants described roles with significant accountabilities for budgets and human resources (for instance, lead roles in billion-dollar-plus mega projects) whereas in other cases the roles were significantly smaller in scope and responsibility, to the extent that they were more characteristic of administration roles than of archetypal project manager responsibilities (see section 4, *passim*).

Secondly, many of the participants also described a career profile of regular organisational change whereby they had moved in and out of roles including, but not limited to, that of the project
manager (see section 4.3.2.3). In project-oriented organisations where demand naturally expands and contracts over time, this conceivably impacts the ability and desire for standardisation and stability of the PM role and would therefore reinforce differences not just between organisations but within organisations, as resources are moved around to fit demand as well as kept occupied elsewhere during less busy times.

Thirdly, there was evidence of project managers doing what they considered to be the work of a project manager but not calling themselves such, often because in their particular working context the role title did not adequately feature in the organisational vernacular (see section 4.3.3.3). Conversely however, in a sign of the maturing of the profession some participants observed a progressively increasing awareness and demand around project management, which could logically be extrapolated to a commensurate maturing and alignment around how organisations see project managers (see section 4.3.3.2).

Hölzle (2010) also used the organisational perspectives gained in her study to construct an exemplar profile for project manager expertise and social competence, by project type. In developing this exemplar Hölzle found that almost all of the respondent organisations believed that the relevance of technical expertise decreases with increasing project importance while leadership and entrepreneurial competence become more important. The results of this study tend to confirm Hölzle’s findings in this respect. However, they do not fully support Hölzle’s subsequent mapping of competencies to project size or importance. In this study, the participants’ perceptions and attitudes instead suggested that there is greater weighting on the relevance of soft skills, including on smaller projects also (see sections 4.3.3.2, 4.3.4.3 and 4.3.5). To illustrate, an alternative and comparative mapping of these two heuristic perspectives is provided below, in Table 40.
Table 40 - Organisational vs. Individual view of required PM competencies across project types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Organisations’ view (Hölzle 2010)</th>
<th>Individual PMs’ view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small project</td>
<td>Medium project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth of experience (all rounder) Project management methods and expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth (specialist) Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative problem solving skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social competence

| Co-operation and team skills                  |                          |                      |              | ⋅              | ⋅              | ⋅   |
|                                              |                          |                      |              |                |                | ⋅   |
| Assertiveness and negotiation skills          |                          |                      |              | ⋅              | ⋅              | ⋅   |
|                                              |                          |                      |              |                |                | ⋅   |
| Communication skills                          |                          |                      |              | ⋅              | ⋅              | ⋅   |
|                                              |                          |                      |              |                |                | ⋅   |
| Inter-cultural competence                    |                          |                      |              | ⋅              | ⋅              | ⋅   |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basic skills</th>
<th>Medium skills</th>
<th>Advanced skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small project</td>
<td>⋅</td>
<td>⋅</td>
<td>⋅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium project</td>
<td>⋅</td>
<td>⋅</td>
<td>⋅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large project</td>
<td>⋅</td>
<td>⋅</td>
<td>⋅</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Developed for this research, with adaptation from (Hölzle 2010, p. 784)

5.2.12 Context of project management’s profession status

In the literature review the question was asked, is project management a profession? It is important to return to this question because of its central influence on perceptions of project management as a career path. In considering this question it is useful to firstly refer back to Profession Australia’s definition of a profession, which is:

... a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others. It is inherent in the definition of a profession that a code of ethics governs the activities of each profession. Such codes require behaviour and practice beyond the
personal moral obligations of an individual. They define and demand high standards of behaviour in respect to the services provided to the public and in dealing with professional colleagues. Further, these codes are enforced by the profession and are acknowledged and accepted by the community (Definition of a Profession 1997).

The results of this study show that the participants often maintained concurrent career themes and therefore overlapping skills sets (see Table 26). This was also reflected in what each participant chose to call themselves to others, which was often not a project manager (see Table 27). Therefore, in terms of the above definition a follow on question arises, which is, are members of the project management community truly “… accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills…”? This study has shown that the participants’ knowledge and skills were not necessarily considered to be special, at least not in terms of being unique to project management, and were not necessarily accepted by the public (see section 4.3.3.2). Notwithstanding, the results did also show that project managers tend to have come from a wide and eclectic skills base spanning more than one profession. And so it can be argued, that in fact it is the pre-existing repertoire of knowledge and skills that project managers bring into their projects that represents what it is that is “accepted by the public as … special”.

The results of this study also illustrate that whether or not project management can be considered a profession remains largely subjective. On the one hand, the participants tended to strongly identify with integrity as a key component of being a project manager and project management professional. Related, they routinely identified personal attributes such as reputation as being pivotal to their effectiveness and success as project managers (see discussion on personal brand, in section 4.3.2.6). Beaton (2010) contends that integrity is the essence of professionalism, and hence from this perspective it might be argued in support of project management being a profession. Yet conversely, the participants also tended to perceive project management in ways that from the perspective of Zwerman et al. (2004) and their construct of ‘nine traits of a profession’ would not support project management being described as a profession. Table 41 below broadly illustrates this, showing where the study did or did not provide support for the existence of these traits in project management.
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and implications

Table 41 - PMs’ perceptions of project management against the 9 traits of a profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Nine traits of a profession</th>
<th>Participants’ responses as relates to the trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exclusive control and command of an esoteric and systematic body of knowledge</td>
<td>No evidence of exclusive control &amp; command and no evidence body of knowledge is esoteric; limited evidence of control of isolated, highly specialised technical skills; contrary evidence of large overlap between PM knowledge and skills with other disciplines including, importantly, these same elements (e.g. soft skills, leadership) becoming more central to project management over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Education and research</td>
<td>Evidence for is publicly available; no evidence against found in this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Code of ethics</td>
<td>Evidence for is publicly available; no evidence against found in this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Autonomy of practice</td>
<td>No evidence of autonomy found; contrary evidence related to low barriers to entry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Norm of altruism</td>
<td>Ambiguous; no evidence of altruism in a manner similar to, e.g. medicine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Control of the name</td>
<td>No evidence of control of name; contrary evidence related to low barriers to entry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Authority over clients</td>
<td>Only limited evidence of authority over clients (e.g. in parts of USA); Contrary evidence that authority is routinely challenged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Distinctive occupational culture</td>
<td>Ambiguous; limited evidence of a distinctive set of norms, values, and symbols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Only very limited evidence of recognition (e.g. in parts of USA); Contrary evidence that this generally does not exist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Developed for this research

In the same way that project management could be argued to be a profession, it seems that it could equally be argued as no more than an occupation or indeed a competency.

5.2.13 Challenges for the PM in transforming and leaving behind

Paton, Hodgson and Cicmil (2010) explore the factors that drive technical specialists to transform into project managers, as well as the tensions and challenges that arise in this new position. They find that conflicts arise between the overarching philosophy of project management and the process of enacting the role of project manager around the themes of status, organisation value, power, influence and ambiguity. The authors conclude, *inter alia*, that the project manager role is:

“...typically compromised by structural and cultural aspects of the organisational and industrial context, the credibility of project management and the authority, resourcing and autonomy afforded to those taking up this role... [and that] these challenges illustrate the difficulties involved in adopting and effectively enacting the discrete project management role, and bring into question the contribution that project management can currently make in delivering the post-bureaucratic organisation” (Paton, Hodgson & Cicmil 2010, p. 164).

The results of this study, whilst supporting much of the underlying analysis, do not however fully support the findings and conclusions of the authors. For example, Paton, Hodgson and Cicmil depict a rather bleak outlook for the project manager, whereas this study by comparison found that the participants were decidedly more positive and upbeat about their situation. Overwhelmingly, the participants in this study perceived project management as inherently more challenging and interesting than routine work, albeit with more responsibility and certainly a greater need for proactive self-management; this aligns with similarly focused research into project-oriented working (Jones 1996; Turner, Huemann & Keegan 2008). None of the participants in this study cited significant regrets about their career path and only a small majority cited any regrets at all (see section 4.3.3.8).

A further and important area of distinction between this study and that of Paton, Hodgson and Cicmil is that in their study it was observed that “The process of leaving behind the previous
occupational role is typically fraught... in leaving what is often an established and respected occupation to enter a newer, less recognised and often less valued occupation” (Paton, Hodgson & Cicmil 2010, p. 164). The necessary points of comparison with this study are twofold. Firstly, in this study all of the participants were serial project managers, meaning that they had applied their repertoire of skills to multiple projects over time, even if they had not always been practicing full-time or exclusively as a project manager. Secondly, in this study many of the participants despite their move into project management had held onto and maintained their original occupation, as a second and enduring career theme. These two points of comparison highlight a critical difference between the two studies. The critical difference is that in this study, the participants generally did not ‘leave behind’ their previous occupation. This distinction is further explored shortly, in section 5.5 where the researcher sets out two models, including (i) a model of ‘the serial project manager’s career path’, and (ii) a model of the ‘two-pillar career’.

5.3 Conclusions in relation to the research questions

This section outlines the conclusions in relation to the research questions. There are three conclusions in relation to each research question and therefore nine conclusions in total. Noting that the research questions were informed by a set of interview questions, Table 42 below provides an approximate mapping of each interview question’s contribution to answering each of the three research questions. This table should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1.
Table 42 - The interview questions’ respective contribution to answering the research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial IQ #</th>
<th>Analysis Chapter</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>RQ2</th>
<th>RQ3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demographic (opening) questions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Full name</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>4.3.1.1</td>
<td>Total number of years industry (work) experience</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.3.1.2</td>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.3.1.3</td>
<td>Current industry sector</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Previous industry sectors</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.3.1.4</td>
<td>Degree qualifications (if any)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>4.3.1.5</td>
<td>Other qualifications (if any)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>RQ1 - What have today’s PMs’ career path experiences been?</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.3.2.1</td>
<td>How have people come to identify themselves as a project manager?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.3.2.2</td>
<td>How many years’ industry experience had they had (to this point)?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.3.2.3</td>
<td>How many role types have they had during their career?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.3.2.4</td>
<td>How many countries have they lived and worked in during their career?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.3.2.5</td>
<td>To what extent do they feel that they have self-managed their career?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.3.2.6</td>
<td>What do they know and think of personal branding, in their own career?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.3.2.7</td>
<td>Have they seen, or do they expect to see, a so-called plateau(s) in their career?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>RQ2 - How do today’s PMs relate to their current situation including the PM profession?</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.3.3.1</td>
<td>What if any professional memberships have they had and do they maintain?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Is their PM body (if holding a membership) their main professional affiliation?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.3.3.2-3</td>
<td>In relative terms how valuable has PM been for them, as a career theme?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.3.3.4</td>
<td>What is their current level of interaction with their PM body?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.3.3.5</td>
<td>What is their current level of interaction with early PM careerists (including pre-career)?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.3.3.6</td>
<td>What are their thoughts more generally about PMs supporting early PM careerists?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.3.3.7</td>
<td>How do they personally define career success?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new</td>
<td>4.3.3.8</td>
<td>Do they have any fundamental regrets about their career and career path decisions to date?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new</td>
<td>4.3.3.9</td>
<td>How reliant do they feel that their own self-identity is on being a PM?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>RQ3 - What are today’s PMs’ views on their career futures and development priorities?</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.3.4.1</td>
<td>To what extent (present and past) have they viewed their career path and development needs and priorities in terms of different stages (e.g. early-mid-late stage of career)?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.3.4.2</td>
<td>What stage of career do they see themselves being in currently?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.3.4.3</td>
<td>What do they see as their career development priorities going forward?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.3.4.4</td>
<td>What level or type of support do they expect to receive from their organisation towards meeting these development priorities?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new</td>
<td>4.3.4.5</td>
<td>To what extent have they thought about what the end of (late stage of) their career may look like?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Closing question (tips, final remarks, anything significant not covered)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.3.5</td>
<td>Is there anything else that you would like to add, to round this out [complete]?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Developed for this research
The conclusions in relation to the research questions include:

**In relation to RQ1**

1. (Conclusion 1.1) - The participants in this study tended to be highly educated and highly mobile individuals who have come from diverse ethnic and professional backgrounds and experiences to become project managers, after several years of other work experience;

2. (Conclusion 1.2) – The participants in this study tended to perceive their career path to date as having been largely self-directed, and more planned than opportunistic, although the importance of planning tended to have had appreciated over time.

3. (Conclusion 1.3) – The participants in this study tended to identify that career path including trajectory is heavily dependent on personal situation and personal reputation, the latter being overwhelmingly influenced by actual performance at work including most recent and known performance.

**In relation to RQ2**

4. (Conclusion 2.1) - The participants in this study tended to perceive their career as a project manager as only one of a number of disciplinary themes or threads in their working identity;

5. (Conclusion 2.2) - The participants in this study tended to be actively involved in their PM association and the predominant purpose of their involvement was networking and receiving practically structured personal development. This involvement extended to providing their own support as experienced PMs to early PM careerists, however there was shortfall between their strong support in principle and their actual personal involvement (outside of work);

6. (Conclusion 2.3) - The participants in this study defined career success in terms of three dominant factors – achievement at work, enjoyment of their work and work-life balance;

**In relation to RQ3**

7. (Conclusion 3.1) - The participants in this study generally supported the notion that careers are useful to view in terms of life stage, not least because needs change over time. However, most of the participants based their responses on hindsight with many observing that the importance of life stage had only recently entered their consciousness as something of importance;

8. (Conclusion 3.2) - The participants in this study overwhelmingly acknowledged the role of personal development in career path planning. However, they were largely polarised in their attitudes towards the role of organisations (employers) in supporting their development needs as project managers; and

9. (Conclusion 3.3) - The participants in this study identified the concept of retirement age as largely antiquated, overtaken in the modern career context by downshifting which epitomises flexibility, choice and lifestyle.

The conclusions in relation to the research questions are expanded upon below.
5.3.1 Conclusions in relation to RQ1

Research question 1 examined the backgrounds and experiences of individual project managers. The question asked, what have today’s PMs’ career path experiences been? There are three conclusions drawn in relation to this question, each is expanded upon below.

Conclusion 1.1

The participants in this study tended to be highly educated and highly mobile individuals who have come from diverse ethnic and professional backgrounds and experiences to become project managers, after several years of other work experience.

In support of this conclusion the results showed that the participants came from diverse cultural backgrounds with more than half the participants born outside of Australia (see section 4.3.1.2). Likewise, the participants tended to have been highly mobile during their careers in terms of geography, sector and number of role types experienced. The vast majority of the participants, more than 80%, had lived and worked in two or more countries (see section 4.3.2.4). They also had a wide mix of sector experience both current and previous (see section 4.3.1.3). Furthermore, they had diversity of role type experience as evidenced by the majority of participants having held four or more different role types prior to becoming a project manager (see section 4.3.2.3).

The participants’ diversity of experience also extended to education, where the sample held a wide number and variety of degree level qualifications, typically not specific to project management (see sections 4.3.1.4 and 4.3.1.5). At below degree level, specific PM certification was relatively common but likewise was only one of more than 20 different types of diplomas or certifications held by the participants. There was only participant who did not hold a formal qualification whether at degree or non-degree level.

Conclusion 1.2

The participants in this study tended to perceive their career path to date as having been largely self-directed, and more planned than opportunistic, although the importance of planning tended to have had appreciated over time.

In support of this conclusion are the participants’ responses to being asked the extent to which they felt that they had self-managed their career path (see section 4.3.2.5). Almost two thirds of participants felt that they had been the primary controllers of their career path to date. Related, there was only very limited evidence of situations where organisations had played the dominant or else a sustained role in managing their careers for them. A further insight is that the participants tended to perceive self-management or self-direction as involving not just structured planning, but equally legitimately, serendipity (or opportunism) also. The extent of value placed on serendipity varied though.

Conclusion 1.3

The participants in this study tended to identify that career path including trajectory is heavily dependent on personal situation and personal reputation, the latter being overwhelmingly influenced by actual performance at work including most recent and known performance.
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and implications

An example in support of this conclusion is the participants’ responses when asked about what they thought of personal branding and its importance in the context of their own career (see section 4.3.2.6). A strong theme in the responses was that whilst personal branding may contain useful features in helping to support career, the most important requirement is for personal reputation, which is evidenced in trust and driven by actual performance. Moreover, whilst a sustained track record of performance is important, equally or more important is latest performance. In other words, you are ‘only as good as your last project’.

A further example in support of this conclusion is provided in how the participants perceived career plateaus (see section 4.3.2.7), which could be considered a proxy for career trajectory. The responses showed that career plateaus can often be of one’s own design and making and therefore are not just something to be feared or forcibly thrust upon an individual, as they are often assumed to be. For instance many of the participants described self-imposed changes in trajectory, some examples including temporary career breaks for family reasons and lateral moves into roles with no greater complexity or scope of responsibility.

5.3.2 Conclusions in relation to RQ2

Research question 2 examined how today’s project managers relate to their own current career situation as well as the project management profession. The question asked, how do today’s PMs relate to their current situation including the PM profession? There are three conclusions drawn in relation to this question, each is expanded upon below.

Conclusion 2.1

The participants in this study tended to perceive their career as a project manager as only one of a number of disciplinary themes or threads in their working identity.

An example in support of this conclusion is that the participants between them maintained a wide, multi-disciplined range of professional association memberships, both historically and currently (see section 4.3.3.1 including Table 25). In whole-of-career terms the participants had between them held memberships in at least 28 different professional associations, of which only two association types were specific to project management. On average the participants had held 2.32 professional memberships during their career. Furthermore, 10 of the 21 participants (approximately half) who held a current PM association membership also held a concurrent membership of one or more non-PM association.

A second example is where the participants were asked how valuable project management had been for them as a career theme to date, compared to other (if any) career themes. The results illustrated the common existence of alternating value over time (see section 4.3.3.2 including Table 26). Moreover, at least five of the participants specifically identified that project management had been of equal value (to a second core theme) over time.

A third example in support of this conclusion is one of self-association, in that not all of the participants ‘called themselves’ project managers, by profession (see section 4.3.3.3 including Table 27). Seven of the 19 participants who were asked this question noted that they called themselves neither a project manager nor anything with reference to project management. This suggests at
least a second core theme and for that matter one that is preferred for the purposes of self-representation in the work context.

A popular stance among the participants in describing their background and experience was to describe how, initially, they had ‘done their time’ or had ‘got their stripes’ in one career discipline or theme (e.g. engineering) then as their career had progressed they had naturally taken on project management as a second, complementary theme. Project management was often labelled as ‘generalist’, as compared to ‘technical’, albeit with the two theme types being strongly complementary. This interplay, between ‘technical’ roots and ‘generalist’ growth over time, may help explain why tertiary core themes were rarely evidenced during the interviews. Below, Table 43 builds on the previous chapter’s analysis revisited through the above three examples, to identify the total number of participants with a positive indication to at least one of these questions.
### Table 43 - Indicators suggestive of two pillars (or more) in the serial project managers' career

#### PART A - LEGEND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis ref # (see Appendix 1)</th>
<th>In Conclusion 2.1</th>
<th>Second example</th>
<th>Third example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter section</td>
<td>4.3.3.1</td>
<td>4.3.3.2</td>
<td>4.3.3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Table</td>
<td>Table 25</td>
<td>Table 26</td>
<td>Table 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Answer (categorised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis ref # (see Appendix 1)</th>
<th>In Conclusion 2.1</th>
<th>Second example</th>
<th>Third example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A - None; (p 13, 22, 24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B - PM only; (p 7, 9, 10, 19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C - non-PM only; (p 19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - PM and non-PM with overlap; (p 4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E - PM and non-PM, no overlap; (p1, 2, 3, 5, 15, 16, 18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### PART B - COMPARATIVE RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responded in a manner suggestive of two or more core themes</th>
<th>&gt;0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Count**  
10 5 7 17

Source: Developed for this research
As a result of this comparison, it is apparent that 17 of the 25 participants (a large majority) provided at least one response suggestive of two or possibly more core themes in their career. This phenomenon, although formative (including outside the scope of this immediate study), would appear to be worth further investigation. It is hence expanded upon, if only briefly, in subsequent sections 5.5.2 and 5.8 under the name of the ‘two-pillar career’.

Conclusion 2.2

The participants in this study tended to be actively involved in their PM association and the predominant purpose of their involvement was networking and receiving practically structured personal development. This involvement extended to providing their own support as experienced PMs to early PM careerists, however there was shortfall between their strong support in principle and their actual personal involvement (outside of work).

In support of this conclusion were the participants’ responses to three interview questions, asking how much they interacted with their PM professional association, how much they interacted with early PM careerists and how much support they thought experienced PMs should provide to early PM careerists.

In terms of interaction with their PM association, the participants described moderate to high levels of involvement with the activities and services provided by their PM association (see section 4.3.3.4), where moderate to high was defined as involvement in at least two to three aspects of sustained interaction. All of the aspects identified during the interviews included elements of direct or indirect networking and all were considered practical in nature. The aspects broadly reflected those typically provided by most professional associations, for example, networking events, study classes, local committees and case study presentations.

In terms of interaction with early PM careerists, only a small majority of the participants identified reportable levels of interaction (outside of work). The nature of the interactions varied widely and was predominantly limited to informal or ad hoc interaction (see Table 29). In addition, the levels of interaction were described as fluctuating over time. By contrast, when the participants were asked what their attitude was in general to the role of experienced PMs supporting early PM careerists, their level of response was unanimous in describing the need as being important or else very important (see Table 30). Participants verbalised the sentiment with descriptors such as ‘an excellent thought’, ‘absolutely paramount’ and ‘essential’. The above highlights a gap between attitude and practice among experienced PMs, many of whom appear to be a rich yet under-utilised source of career-related advice and support (see also, section 4.3.5 on PMs’ final words).

Conclusion 2.3

The participants in this study defined career success in terms of three dominant factors – achievement at work, enjoyment of their work and work-life balance.

In support of this conclusion the results showed that when the participants were asked how they personally defined career success (see section 4.3.3.7), their responses fell into one or more of three categories – achievement at work, enjoyment of their work and work-life balance. The actual criteria provided by the participants were many and varied and were hence categorised by the
The categories appear to broadly align with previous research, for example Lee, Lirio and Karakas (2006).

Of the 25 participants who responded to this question on how they defined career success, a large majority (24) identified achievement at work as a key factor, while a small majority (17) identified enjoyment of their work. A large minority (11) identified work-life balance as a key factor (see Table 31).

5.3.3 Conclusions in relation to RQ3

Research question 3 examined the views of today’s project managers on their career futures and development priorities. The question asked, what are today’s PMs’ views on their career future and development priorities? There are three conclusions drawn in relation to this question, each is expanded upon below.

Conclusion 3.1
The participants in this study generally supported the notion that careers are useful to view in terms of life stage, not least because needs change over time. However, most of the participants based their responses on hindsight with many observing that the importance of life stage had only recently entered their consciousness as something of importance.

In support of this conclusion, the study showed that the majority of the participants had a moderate to weak recognition of life stage as relates to career paths and development (see section 4.3.4.1). In particular, there was also only limited evidence of participants having applied the notion of stages and changing needs to their career planning, from early in their careers. However, most of the participants did provide a clear synopsis of what they felt generically represented the PM career and its stages. They typically described an early stage characterised by technical foundations, competition and rewards; a mid-stage characterised by growing management responsibility and work-life pressures (e.g. family); and a late stage characterised by authority, flexibility and growing detachment from the work environment (see section 4.3.4.1). This broadly aligns with Hall’s assessment of development needs in early, middle and late career (see Table 4).

This apparently emergent nature of awareness to life/career stages, as described above, is further supported by an earlier interview question which asked the participants to describe the extent to which they felt they had self-managed their career path to date (see section 4.3.2.5). In those responses there was strong evidence of perceived self-management yet very little supporting evidence of long term, stage-phased career planning. What was instead observed was a common orientation towards short- to mid-range planning, with anything longer term either disregarded or else quite intentionally left at the hands of serendipity.

Conclusion 3.2
The participants in this study overwhelmingly acknowledged the role of personal development in career path planning. However, they were largely polarised in their attitudes towards the role of organisations (employers) in supporting their development needs as project managers.

In support of this conclusion, the study showed that the participants generally had in mind, and were often already working on, a broad range of personal development needs and activities. When the
participants were asked what their future development priorities were, the responses were both
diverse and extensive. The researcher subsequently categorised the responses into eight types,
including: formal courses, expand multi-disciplinary skills, network learning, self-directed learning,
personal, advancement, soft skills and technical skills (see Table 36). Only one of the 25 participants
was not sure in their response to this question.

However, when the participants were then asked what level or type of support they needed or
expected from their organisation (employer) towards meeting these development priorities, the
responses were varied yet polarised (see section 4.3.4.4). While on the one hand some participants
described in detail what they needed and expected from their organisation, others described what
they did not need or expect from their organisation. From this latter form of response, some were
explainable in that the participants were self-employed contractors. However, others (including
employees) described a desire to remain as non-reliant on their organisation as possible. Several of
these participants elaborated on how an organisation’s needs logically come before its staff’s and
therefore how ignoring this fact as a careerist, whether out of loyalty or naivety, would be at the
individual’s peril. In an earlier question on extent of self-management, one participant poignantly
remarked, “Don’t trust those bastards in a corporate situation, you never know what’s gonna come
around the corner and you’ve got to have an alternative plan... [now] I always recognise the risk out
there.” (Participant 1, in section 4.3.2.5)

**Conclusion 3.3**

*The participants in this study identified the concept of retirement age as largely antiquated,
 overtaken in the modern career context by downshifting which epitomises flexibility, choice and lifestyle.*

In support of this conclusion, the participants were asked the extent to which they had thought
about the late or final part of their career as well as what this stage might look like (see section
4.3.4.5). The results showed that only two of the 25 participants described retirement age as a
feature of their later career. In contrast, 21 of the 25 participants described a late-stage career in
which downshifting was a feature. Downshifting in the context of this study includes any planned or
deliberate career-related change (to work type or pattern of work hours) intended to contribute to a
gradual and self-directed transition to non-working life. The most common strategies for
downshifting identified in this sample included: a move into consulting, a move into teaching, less
hours in paid work and more ‘giving back’ or voluntary work. A large majority of the participants
also expressed or else implied at least some concern about whether they would be able to adapt to
not working at all. They also tended to associate not working at all with no longer being valuable,
likewise, with losing one more rare and key preventative tool in the fight against deterioration in old
age.

**5.4 Conclusions in relation to the research problem**

The research problem identified at the outset of this study was that, not enough is known about
serial project managers, including their career path experiences, their attitudes and perceptions
about PM as a career and a profession, their potential contributions to strengthening the PM
profession, and their own future development needs. It was likewise recognised that this problem
of poor understanding has a plethora of implications, not only academically but for PM careerists,
their profession and the industry sectors in which their services are in demand. The research problem was borne out of a review of relevant literature, where it was identified that there are too few examples that provide either an undiluted focus on project managers specifically (versus project roles generally), or empirical evidence gleaned first-hand from project managers themselves. Moreover, it was identified that even less of the literature had captured project managers’ situations holistically or end-to-end, instead they had focused (often exclusively) on very specific subsets of inquiry. This in essence was the foundation of both the research problem as well as the resultant opportunity to bring the type of new knowledge and learning to bear that would be conducive to impacting a diverse audience of stakeholders.

There are two conclusions drawn in relation to the research problem, these are elaborated upon below.

**Conclusion 4.1**

*As a result of this study we now know more about the individual career paths and development of serial project managers including not least the subjective criteria that they bring to their own career situations.*

There are two key premises on which this conclusion is drawn. The first premise for this conclusion is that a robust body of new, individual-centric knowledge has been created and most particularly by having engaged directly, solely and holistically with serial project managers themselves, being the subject of investigation. The holistic aspect refers to having taken a relatively open approach to the research questions including having only loosely bounded them, in this case through the temporal dimensions of past, present and future. The second premise for this conclusion is that the type of knowledge and learning that has been captured has proven to be heavily embedded in the subjective criteria that serial project managers bring to their own career situations. This point fits particularly well with previous calls for further research on the subjective criteria that people bring to their own career situations (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005, p. 196; Heslin 2005).

Some examples of where and how the participants brought subjective criteria into their career situations are provided below:

1. Where the participants were asked how they had come to identify themselves as being a project manager (see section 4.3.2.1), the results showed that although five common factors could be attributed to the participants’ responses there was no strong trend evident in the mix or weighting of these factors. In short, how each participant perceived their identity as a project manager to have come about, was largely unique;

2. Where the participants were asked how many years’ industry experience they had had before considering themselves a bona fide project manager (see section 4.3.2.2), the results showed a wide variance in number of years, ranging from the very beginning of career (0 years, or immediate) through to very late in career (40+ years). Interestingly, some of the participants felt that they could not place a number of years against the question, because of its level of ambiguity and subjectivity in interpretation;

3. Where the participants were asked to describe the extent to which they had self-managed their career path to date (see section 4.3.2.5), description of actual extent aside the results
showed that each participant had their own interpretation of the types of events that constituted planned versus opportunistic;

4. Where the participants were probed around their views on personal branding (see section 4.3.2.6), each participant used their own subjective criteria to define or interpret personal branding as well as to place a weight on its importance;

5. Where the participants were asked whether they had ever seen or expected to see a plateau in their career (see section 4.3.2.7), the responses highlighted that each participant placed their own subjective criteria on the types of events that constituted a plateau. They additionally placed their own subjective views on whether career plateaus should be seen as desirable, undesirable or otherwise;

6. Where the participants were asked how valuable project management had been to them over time as a career theme (see section 4.3.3.2), the results indicated firstly that the participants had differing perceptions of how and when value was derived, and secondly, that they attributed different meanings to the concept of value. For instance some participants described their perception of value and how that had changed over time, whereas others focused on more tangible measures of value such as the positive role of the PM profession in building out their own skill base in areas such as soft skills. Others still, described the value of the PM profession in bringing emerging and increased recognition of the project manager as a professional role;

7. Where the participants were asked what level of interaction they currently had with early PM careerists (see section 4.3.3.5), the results showed that each participant brought their own interpretation to how they perceived their level of interaction. For example some of the participants saw formality as a key determinant of interaction level, while others focused on the amount of time spent interacting. Others still, identified impact (broader than direct interaction) as a key determinant. In a further instance relativity was the key measure, whereby comparisons were made between the proportion of their time and effort spent with early PM careerists versus with others in their professional network;

8. Where the participants were asked how they defined career success (see section 4.3.3.7), the responses showed that each participant placed their own subjective criteria into responding to this question, including into interpreting what was meant by career. During the interviews some participants also sought the researcher’s opinion on where best to draw the boundary around the concept of career. So whilst most of the participants identified in their response that career is an interplay between life in and outside of work (e.g. ‘the office’), they each chose their own subjective response whereby some focused more on factors inside the workplace and others on factors external to work;

9. Where the participants were asked whether they had any fundamental regrets about their career path to date (see section 4.3.3.8), as well as how reliant they felt that their self-identity was on being a project manager (see section 4.3.3.9), it was apparent that the participants had necessarily applied subjective criteria both to their interpret of the question together with their ultimate response. In each case the researcher provided only limited elaboration to the participant when asked to clarify a question or define a term;
10. Where the participants were asked what stage of career (early, mid or late) that they felt they were currently in (see section 4.3.4.2), the results showed that each participant brought their own subjective criteria to their response, in particular in determining indicators of career stage. Some common indicators included age, experience, achievements, current role, remaining potential and remaining time to end of career;

11. Where the participants were asked what they felt their career development priorities were (see section 4.3.4.3), the results showed that each participant had brought their own subjective criteria to their response including in the types of priorities that they considered relevant as well as the level of specificity adopted in their response; and

12. Where the participants were then asked what level or type of support they needed or expected from their organisation (employer) towards meeting their development priorities (see section 4.3.4.4), the results showed that the participants used their own subjective criteria firstly in their immediate or direct answer to the question, and secondly in the level of additional context that chose as relevant to provide as part of their answer. For example some participants effectively gave no more than low/medium/high answers, whereas others went to great pains to explain why they held the attitude to employers that they did.

The pervasiveness of these examples only serves to reinforce the importance of adequately understanding the subjective criteria that serial project managers bring to their own career situations, if wishing to truly understand their individual career situations.

**Conclusion 4.2**

*Project managers tend to be highly experienced, multi-disciplined professionals whose association with the project management profession is often characterised by latency, emergence and self-identification. Moreover, with project management still being relatively young and emergent when compared to other and more traditional professions, the concept of the project manager career hence presents as a moving, impalpable target that whilst on the one hand benefits from being flexible to labour market demands, on the other hand seems inevitably encumbered with poor understanding, not least by project sponsors, early careerists and in many cases project managers themselves. This epitomises the situation of the serial project manager.*

The above is a summarising conclusion from this study. In addition to the evidence already captured indirectly in the conclusions in relation to the research questions, the following additional examples are provided:

1. The participants tended to be highly experienced and multi-disciplined and related to this they often had concurrent career themes, that is, careers outside of project management which they continued to maintain (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2);

2. The participants tended to perceive project management as an emerging or modern profession, albeit with inevitable challenges around its relative level of maturity compared to more traditional professions (see also, section 2.2.5);

3. Because of the low barriers to entry in the profession (a characteristic of the profession’s relatively low maturity level), the participants had to bring their own subjective criteria to
assessing what constitutes a project manager and therefore also to determining when and how they themselves had become a project manager and a member of the profession (see section 4.3.2 and also, section 2.2.6);

4. This confusion over what constitutes a project manager appears to extend into the demand side (see sections 4.3.3.2 and 4.3.3.3); and

5. The participants tended to be active in project management associations, suggesting that these associations hold relevance and that the roles that these associations promote and support are relevant also, including to the demand side (be it industry or otherwise) (see section 4.3.3.4).

The above examples, together with the study more generally, highlight how project managers and project management co-exist in an environment where the interplay between their respective needs and dependencies both help and hinder each others’ further maturing and development.

5.5 A model of the serial project manager’s career path and the two-pillar career

In this section the researcher introduces a generic model illustrating the career path of the serial project manager. In addition, a related yet formative concept of the ‘two-pillar career’ is introduced also.

5.5.1 The serial project manager’s career path

The results of this study have shown that there is no single or best path to becoming and staying a project manager. Figure 5-1 below illustrates the key influencing forces typically at play during the individually emerging career path of the serial project manager.

**Figure 5-1** Career path influencing forces in becoming and staying a serial project manager

![Diagram of career path influencing forces](Image)

**SOURCE:** Developed for this research

Whilst the above figure provides a comprehensive illustration of the key influencing forces in the career path of the serial project manager, it equally alludes to the common existence of a second and parallel (or concurrent) career path. The prevalence of this phenomenon in the careers of
project managers is seemingly heavily attributable to the emergent nature of their work, in other words, you cannot become a project manager before you have developed a repertoire of skills and experience and therefore all project managers tend to have had a previous occupation. Adding to this the temporary nature of projects, many serial project managers predictably choose to maintain their original occupation as a second line of work or expertise.

5.5.2 The two-pillar career: a formative risk-based model for modern careerists

Within academic and popular literature there are references to concepts such as ‘dual careers’, ‘concurrent multiple careers’, ‘slash careers’, ‘hyphenated careers’ and ‘portfolio careers’, all of which hint at the emergence of more than a singular career. This research generally supports such concepts, however, goes a step further to propose the ‘two-pillar career’ which as this study has demonstrated is particularly prevalent among serial project managers. The distinguishing feature of the two-pillar career orientation is that it specifically involves two (and two only) dominating core themes, each established by early-mid career and each maintained (including through development) over the individual’s life/career. In essence, each core theme represents a long-term investment in a particular field of occupational specialisation. A key positive impact (intentional or otherwise) of the two-pillar career is that it mitigates external risks, such as industry and occupation instability. It also positively impacts on internal factors by increasing optionality in relation to an individual’s career priorities by life stage. In this sense, the two-pillar career could be considered a career strategy to be considered, planned for and legitimately applied from as early as the beginning of one’s working life.

The key attributes of the two-pillar career include:

- **Coherence-oriented** – Each of the two pillars represents a core theme in the careerist’s overall resume of skills and experience. Other career themes may come and go but will not be characterised by the same level of investment, prominence or longevity. The two themes (and no more) dominate, acting as mainstays which can be represented in a simple way to the marketplace, to the benefit of the careerist’s reputation, integrity and employability;

- **Flexible** – The two pillars complement each other in a flexible, symbiotic relationship that changes over time. This means that the emergence and prominence of each pillar will differ based on (and influenced by) the careerist’s life/career stage and resultant needs. However, both pillars will ideally have been established, at least in embryonic form, by early career;

- **Risk-based** – Each pillar offers the careerist something that the other does not (e.g. low versus high barriers to entry, mental versus physical, variety versus routine), and therefore career-related risk is reduced (spread) and the careerist is better positioned for the inevitable changes that result from internal and external factors. Examples of internal factors include changing family demands, changed career aspirations and unforeseen circumstances (e.g. disability, mobility). Examples of external factors include economic climate, geopolitical influences and the growth or decline of professions; and

- **Pragmatic** – planning and serendipity are assumed to be equally relevant to career management, so in turn, each is assumed to benefit from the two-pillar career orientation. This means that the two-pillar career does not rely on the careerist being overly planning-
oriented. However, the careerist does need a minimum level of planning or else consciousness in relation to the model, in order to engage in it.

The possible combinations comprising the two-pillar career are many and varied. A brief few examples include the engineer plus project manager, the academic plus consultant, and the IT programmer plus small business owner. From these and other examples it could be reasonably assumed that that the phenomenon of the two-pillar career is relatively commonplace, yet the level of realisation and consciousness by careerists is less clear. There does not for instance appear to be substantive empirical evidence outlining the conditions under which careerists tend to maintain and describe their career focus in double-barrelled terms. Critically therefore, the academic inquiry into this phenomenon could be expanded considerably for the benefit of both theory and practice.

5.6 **Implications for current practice**

This section draws on the findings, discussion and conclusions as presented so far, to offer some practical implications for current practice.

5.6.1 **Implications for early careerists**

The key implications of this study for early careerists relate to those who are contemplating a career as a project manager. In particular, these early careerists are best served to understand early on the characteristics of a PM career and the extent to which it may, or may not, suit them. There are many occupations and professions available in the modern workplace, and so, making good and well-informed career decisions up front offers real value in helping to find a path that meets the personal needs and preferences of the careerist. Of course serendipity should not be underestimated, however, good planning or at least an awareness of when an opportunity is presenting itself can be excellent tools for a smooth and enjoyable career.

There are 10 key considerations for early careerists, provided as a result of this study. They include:

1. The pathways to becoming a PM are many and varied. For the current generation of project managers, many have travelled their own unique path which has included working across a range of roles, industries and geographies. Participants in this study perceived that few project managers would describe their work as mundane and even fewer would pine to instead be working full-time in line organisations;

2. Evidence suggests that you cannot become a project manager overnight; the nature and the breadth of skills expected of a project manager can only be developed over time. Related to this, most project managers have at least a second career theme other than project management and for most, this second theme has been their path to becoming a project manager;

3. The formal barriers to entry into this profession are relatively low, especially when compared to more traditional professions such as law or medicine. You do not need a license to become a project manager. This has both positive and negative implications for the project manager’s career. On the one hand, talented individuals will not necessarily be held back by an enforced rate of progression through requirements such as academic qualification or indenturing. On the other hand, almost anyone can call themselves a project manager and so you may for instance find yourself one day in middle career with little more
to secure your employability than your reputation and ability to deliver results (i.e. the project);

4. The participants in this study defined career success in terms of three key factors including (in this order) challenging work, enjoyment of work and work-life balance;

5. On the path to becoming a bona fide project manager you may find it difficult to determine when you have arrived at your destination. If self-identity, certainty and security of role status are strong aspects of the career you are seeking, then project management is not necessarily your best option;

6. Employing organisations have inconsistent perspectives of what defines a project manager and this can lead to misaligned expectations between employers and project managers;

7. The world is becoming more project-oriented and so the demand for project managers is growing. Demand tends to be good for career prospects;

8. Project managers tend to self-manage their careers, at least to the extent that they tend to try and limit their reliance on employer organisations for their career development;

9. The project managers in this study had moderate to high levels of interaction with their PM association. This suggests that they find value in their membership and therefore that others, including early careerists potentially, will also find membership valuable; and

10. Very few of the participants in this study had fundamental regrets about their career choice.

The path to becoming a project manager is highly personalised, and therefore, there is no single or best way of planning for such a career. See also, previous section 5.5 including Figure 5-1.

5.6.2 Implications for practicing PMs

The key implications of this study for practicing PMs relate to the areas of greatest opportunity identified in this study. They include:

- **Peer networks** - project managers should individually seek to gain a greater appreciation of the attitudes and perceptions of other serial project managers. This study goes some way towards illustrating the value of understanding the career paths and the development of peers, through direct interpersonal interaction. In essence, it is through this understanding of each other that project managers will better understand the ‘ties that bind’ the profession with respect to the project manager career path;

- **Life/career stage** - project managers should give due consideration to their life/career stage and its relevance to their career path and development needs. This study found that career-life stage is inextricably linked to changing career and development needs over time and that level of awareness in this respect is an important factor in effective planning;

- **Organisational career path design** - project managers have a legitimate and integral role in influencing organisations in how they structure career path and development frameworks for project managers. This study found that the organisational view of framework requirements do not necessarily best fit the needs of individual project managers; and
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and implications

- **Supporting early careerists** - project managers should convert their support in principle for the role of experienced PMs in nurturing early careerists, into practical action (including outside of work). This study found that whilst the participants overwhelmingly agreed on the merits of supporting early careerists, this did not always translate into personal action.

The above implications are not exhaustive. Project managers interested in more fully understanding the implications to be derived from this study should review this study in its entirety.

5.6.3 Implications for PM associations

The results of this study suggest that PM associations are currently doing generally well in supporting their members but that more can and should be done. The two areas identified as important implications for PM associations from this study, include that (i) they should do more to support early careerists and the challenges in becoming a project manager (as outlined in section 5.6.1), and (ii) they must ensure to recognise the importance of the subjective criteria that project managers bring to their own career situations. This includes putting effort into understanding these criteria as well as evaluating their member products and services in light of this understanding.

5.6.4 Implications for project-oriented organisations

The key implication of this study for organisations is to use the findings to inform the intent and design of PM career paths in their organisation. In particular, organisations should recognise the subjective criteria that project managers bring to their own career situations (see Conclusion 4.1), as these are key to understanding individual needs. Based on this study, seven key tests that organisations could usefully apply when developing a career path framework in support of project managers include:

1. Does the framework design in general factor in the relevance of subjective criteria?
2. Has the framework design included a ‘make versus buy’ assessment, identifying which elements are best provided in-house and which are best placed with a third party provider, such as professional associations or consultants / trainers?
3. Does the framework design fit the size and scale of your organisation (is it too big, is it too small)? Also, is the underlying demand for each element clear? Similarly, is the framework funded?
4. Have the role types been defined? Is the organisation clear on what it means by each role and do the role types in the framework (leading to project manager, or higher) reflect your organisation’s needs, both now and into the future?
5. Does the framework design exist in isolation of other career frameworks in your organisation or is it integrated to allow careerists who desire it the option of movement between divisions and functions, irrespective of the division’s project-orientation?
6. Does the framework incorporate life/career stage thinking?
7. Have the project managers in your organisation (the users) reviewed the framework?
The above list is not exhaustive however it does offer a starting point. These tests, or questions, have been derived from the empirical evidence accumulated during the course of this study.

5.7 Limitations of this study

The following limitations are identified in relation to this study:

1. This study did not attempt to include any participants who did not self-identify as project managers;
2. This study only considered the personal perceptions of project managers in Queensland Australia and to this end did not attempt to gain any perceptions from other stand-alone occupations or professions;
3. This study did not distinguish between project managers who only manage projects, and project managers who may also manage programs or portfolios; and
4. This study did not attempt a detailed quantitative analysis of the responses as the research was exploratory and qualitative in nature.

Whilst the above limit the generalisability of the findings, they may also point the way for further research.

5.8 Further research

During this study a number of opportunities for further research became evident. These are presented below.

Further research could be undertaken to explore the gap between the generally very supportive attitude of project managers towards their potential role in supporting early careerists, and the extent to which this positive intent seems to fail to translate into practice (see also, Conclusion 2.2). For example, what is the participation rate of experienced PMs in providing direct support to career path frameworks and development programs of professional associations and companies? Likewise, how do the life/career stages of serial project managers affect their ability or desire to contribute to such initiatives?

Further research could be undertaken to ascertain the nature and extent of demand from non-early stage project manager careerists for career counselling (see also, section 1). As part of this, the research could also investigate the extent to which any current demand is being satisfied, as well as the range of means by which any gaps identified could be effectively addressed. There may additionally be an economic case for such work particularly in terms of potential benefits for the health, wellbeing and productivity of project managers.

Further research could be undertaken to more closely investigate conceptions of career success and differences between males and females, particularly as relates to attitudes on the importance of work-life balance (see also, section 5.2.5). The research could build upon the findings of this study, as well as others such as Lee, Lirio and Karakas (2006), discussed earlier.

Further research could be undertaken to replicate this study, to the extent practical. In the project management domain this study could be replicated in other countries and cultures and possibly also
among an expanded female participant group. It could also be replicated in other professions or occupations.

Further research could be undertaken to more closely investigate how the late career options available to project managers compare to the types and extent of options available in other professions or occupations. In this study, 17 of the 25 participants rejected the concept of a hard retirement age, instead describing what they felt were viable down-shifting strategies (see also, Conclusion 3.3). Perhaps project-oriented work provides clues to career longevity and continued productivity.

Further research could be undertaken to more closely bring together organisational perspectives and individual careerists’ perspectives in relation to the design of career path frameworks for project managers. This study has identified various incongruities between the two perspectives (see section 5.2.10). Further research would provide greater insight into both the problems and the solutions.

Finally, further research could be undertaken to validate the model of the ‘two-pillar career’ as formatively proposed in this study (see section 5.5.2). Three possible areas of inquiry are suggested. One area of inquiry could be to test the existence or prevalence of the construct, including across multiple occupations and industries. Key questions might include, are there common pairings and are there common contexts in which they are found? A second area of inquiry could be to identify and explore more specific contexts, where the traditional or ‘single pillar’ career is evidenced as not working well. Key questions might include, what is the nature of the problem and does the two-pillar career offer opportunities to positively reconfigure the context for careerists? A third area of inquiry, and keeping within the immediate domain of this study, could be to more fully explore the relatedness between the two-pillar career orientation and the ‘accidental project manager’. Key questions could include: how widespread is the ‘accidental project manager’ phenomenon in the working population, and, what influences whether or not careerists in these circumstances operationalise the two-pillar career orientation in their own career.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the findings of this study in light of academic literature, drawn conclusions in relation to the research questions and provided implications in relation to current practice. In this chapter the researcher additionally introduces (i) a generic model describing the serial project manager’s career path, as well as (ii) the ‘two-pillar career’ orientation, a risk-based model that both emulates and builds upon findings from this study in relation to the career behaviours of serial project managers. Chapter five also outlines the limitations of this study, together with opportunities for further research. This is the final chapter in the thesis.
References


APM 2006, APM body of knowledge, 5th ed. edn, Association for Project Management, High Wycombe.

APM competence framework, 2008, Association for Project management, High Wycombe.


References


Berg, BL 2004, *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, 5th edn. edn, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA.


Bredillet, CN 2010, 'Blowing hot and cold on project management', *Project Management Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 4-20.


Bridgstock, R 2007, 'Success in the protean career: A predictive study of professional artists and tertiary arts graduates', Queensland University of Technology.

References


---- 2002b, Career choice and development, 4th edn. edn, Jossey-Bass ; [Chichester : Wiley] [distributor], San Francisco, Calif.


Cooksey, RW 2007, 'Paradigm-independent meta-criteria for social & behavioural research', paper presented to 2nd annual postgraduate research conference: Bridging the gap between ideas and doing research, Armidale, NSW Australia, 3-6 July 2007.


---- 1963, Problems of research across multi-dimensional organizations, 29 August 1963.


San Francisco, Calif.


Denzin, NK & Lincoln, YS 2005, 'The discipline and practice of qualitative research', in NK Denzin & YS Lincoln (eds), The SAGE handbook of qualitative research, 3 edn, SAGE Publications.


References


Fisher, E 2011, 'What practitioners consider to be the skills and behaviours of an effective people project manager', International Journal of Project Management, vol. 29, no. 8, pp. 994-1002.


Ford, ME & Ford, DH 1987, Humans as self-constructing living systems: putting the framework to work, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, N.J.


Giammalvo, PD 2007, Is project management a profession? If yes, where does it fit in and if not, what is it?, ESC-Lille University.


---- 1966, *The psychology of vocational choice: A theory of personality types and model environments*, Blaisdell, Waltham, MA.


References


Keegan, A, Huemann, M & Turner, JR 2011, 'Beyond the line: exploring the HRM responsibilities of line managers, project managers and the HRM department in four project-oriented companies in the Netherlands, Austria, the UK and the USA', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 23, no. 15, pp. 3085-104.

Khapova, SN & Arthur, MB 2011, 'Interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary career studies', *Human Relations*, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 3-17.


Lee, MD, Lirio, P & Karakas, F 2006, 'Exploring career and personal outcomes and the meaning of career success among part-time professionals in organizations', in RJ Burke (ed.), *Research companion to work hours and work addiction*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham UK.


References


London, M 1982, Managing careers, Addison Wesley, Reading MA.


Merton, RK 1936, 'The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action', \textit{American Sociological Review}, vol. 1, no. 6, pp. 894-904.


---- 1999, \textit{Learning, practicing, and living the new careering}, Accelerated Development, Ann Arbor, MI.

References


Morris, PWG & Jamieson, A 2004, Translating corporate strategy into project strategy: realizing corporate strategy through project management, Project Management Institute, Newtown Square, PA.


© Jason D. Bingham


Parker, P & Arthur, M 2002, 'Bringing "new science" into careers research', *M@n@gement*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 105-25.


Perry, C, Alizadeh, Y & Riege, A 1997, 'Qualitative methods in entrepreneurship research', paper presented to Small Enterprise Associations of Australia and New Zealand, Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour.
References


References


Schein, EH 1978, Career dynamics : matching individual and organizational needs, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass. ; London.

---- 1993, Career anchors : discovering your real values, Rev. ed. edn, Pfeiffer & Co, Amsterdam ; London.


Shenhar, AJ 1992, A two dimensional construct model for the classification of technical projects, Eatontown, NJ.


*Total cost management framework: An integrated approach to portfolio, program, and project management*, 2006, First edn, AACE International, Morgantown WV.


References


Zikmund, WG 2003, Business research methods, 7th edn, Thomson/South-Western, Mason, OH; [Great Britain].

Zwerman, WL, Thomas, J & Haydt, S 2004, Professionalization of project management: exploring the past to map the future, Project Management Institute, Newton Square, Pa.
## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Research and interview questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research &amp; Interview Questions</th>
<th>p1-10 Interview Script</th>
<th>p1-25 Interview Script</th>
<th>Analysis Spreadsheet</th>
<th>Chapter Headings</th>
<th>Researcher Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Body &gt; Attitudes and Perceptions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 1. What have today’s PMs’ career path experiences been?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. How do people come to identify themselves as a project manager?</td>
<td>1.1. What was your personal motivation for seeking professional status (PMP or similar)?</td>
<td>1.1. What was your personal motivation for becoming certified (PMP or similar), i.e., how did this come about?</td>
<td>1.1. How did you come to identify yourself as a project manager (certification, or otherwise)?</td>
<td>4.3.2 How do they come to identify themselves as project managers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. How many years’ industry experience had they had (to this point)?</td>
<td>1.2. How many years’ industry experience had you had, before the point at which you considered yourself a competent PM (i.e., certified or equivalent)?</td>
<td>1.2. How many years’ industry experience had you had (before certified, or if not, seeing self as a PM)?</td>
<td>4.3.2.2 How many years’ industry experience before identifying self as a PM?</td>
<td>Verification - This question captured number of years of industry experience up until ‘seeing’ self as a PM.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. How many different roles have they had during their career?</td>
<td>1.3. How many different roles have you had during your career (check for when you see self as PM)?</td>
<td>1.3. How many different roles of PMs have they had during their careers?</td>
<td>4.3.2.3 How many different roles of PMs have they had during their careers?</td>
<td>Verification - This question captured number of years of industry experience up until ‘seeing’ self as a PM.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. How many countries have they lived and worked in during their career?</td>
<td>1.4. How many countries have you worked in, as context to your background to becoming a competent PM?</td>
<td>1.4. How many countries have you worked and lived in (≥3 months) during your career?</td>
<td>4.3.2.4 How many countries have PMs lived and worked in?</td>
<td>Note - Researcher needed to clarify to participants only to report where lived and worked ≥ 3 months.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5. To what extent do they feel that they have self-managed their career?</td>
<td>1.5. To what extent do you feel that you have, or have not as the case may be, consciously self-managed your career path to date? (Focus on management effort and comparing to a traditional career)</td>
<td>1.5. To what extent do you feel that you have consciously self-managed your career path to date?</td>
<td>4.3.2.5 To what extent do PMs feel they have consciously self-managed their career path?</td>
<td>No additional comment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6. What do they know and think of personal branding in their own career?</td>
<td>1.6. How familiar and comfortable are you with the notion of personal branding, and to what extent do you feel that personal branding was important in your career path to date?</td>
<td>1.6. How familiar with personal branding and if so what has it meant for you (importance, use of)?</td>
<td>4.3.2.6 What do PMs think about the role of personal branding in their career to date?</td>
<td>This question was initially deployed presumptuously drawing a link between self-perception of being a PM and certification, which became apparent as a problem in interview 1. The question delivery was subsequently revised to avoid making this link (any subsequent reference by the researcher to certification was for probing only).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7. Have they seen, or do they expect to see, a so-called plateau(s) in their career?</td>
<td>1.7. Have you seen, or do you expect to see, a so-called ‘plateau’ in your career, and if so what does this mean for you? (explore ambition trajectory, other)</td>
<td>1.7. Have you seen, or do you expect to see, a so-called ‘plateau’ in your career (describe)?</td>
<td>4.3.2.7 Have PMs seen (or expect to see) a so-called plateau in their career?</td>
<td>Consistent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Jason D. Bingham
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH &amp; INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
<th>p1-10 interview script</th>
<th>p11-25 interview script</th>
<th>Analysis spreadsheet</th>
<th>Chapter headings</th>
<th>Researcher comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2. How do today’s PMs relate to their current situation including the PM profession?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.1 How PMs relate to their current career situation (PRESENT)</td>
<td>Research comments - section 2 (RQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. What if any professional memberships have they had and do they maintain?</td>
<td><strong>PRESENT:</strong> Professional affiliation</td>
<td><strong>PRESENT:</strong> How you relate to your current career context, incl. professional affiliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Are you or have you been a member of another professional body other than PMI (if yes, which) [Interviewer to note whether traditional/ non-traditional profession/ occupation related]</td>
<td>2.1. Are you a member of a PM professional body, e.g. PMI, AIOP, etc.?</td>
<td>2.1 PM body memberships? Non-PM body memberships? Any time gaps to explain?</td>
<td>4.3.3.1 What professional associations do PMs align with?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research question 2.1 was intended for capturing basic data on professional association memberships held during career. However, it was initially deployed assuming membership of PM professional association PMI (the sample design was initially confined to this group then broadened in final design). The problem quickly became apparent during interview 1. The question delivery was subsequently revised into 3 questions to (i) remove the incorrect assumption, and (ii) to capture the additional information relating to membership concurrency (overlap/multiple). Chapter 4 (Results &amp; Data Analysis) reports under single heading, with next research question (2.2);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Have you ever been a member of a non-PM professional body? (does the body represent traditional or non-traditional career?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. When and for how long have you held each of your one or more memberships?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2.2. Is their PM body (if holding a membership) their main professional affiliation?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. [If yes to question 2.3.] Do you consider that body, or PMI, as your primary/dominant membership allegiance?</td>
<td>2.4. Presently, is the PM body your primary affiliation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research question 2.2 was intended to expand on Research question 2.1 by asking about attitudes and preferences towards PMI-specific versus non-PM professional associations (specifically). Chapter 4 (Results &amp; Data Analysis) reports under single heading, with previous question (2.1);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5. What has been your most enduring professional affiliation during your career (PMI, or other)? If other, which?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2.3. In relative terms how valuable has PM been for them, as a career theme?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. What is the perceived relative value of PM as a career theme (incl. also, for example, a theme surviving multiple career transitions)?</td>
<td>2.3. Relatively, how valuable has PM been as a career theme? (does not ask how valuable in future)</td>
<td>4.3.3.2 How valuable do PMs find project management as a career theme?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consistent. The question delivery was adjusted after interview 2 to be more colloquial for better understanding and response from the participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. What is your degree of affiliation with PM, versus other disciplines (primary/secondary)? For example, are you a &quot;career PM&quot; and foremost?</td>
<td>2.4. What do you call (title/role) yourself when asked?</td>
<td>4.3.3.3 Do PMs call themselves PMs, or something else?</td>
<td></td>
<td>The question delivery was adjusted after interview 3 to be more colloquial for better understanding and response from the participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. What is their current level of interaction with their PM body?</td>
<td>2.5. How would you describe your current level of interaction with your PM body?</td>
<td>4.3.3.4 What are PMs’s levels of interaction with their project management association?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research question 2.4 was initially deployed assuming membership of a PM professional body (see also, research question 2.1 above). From interview, the question delivery was adjusted to include &quot;if applicable&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6. How would you describe your current level of interaction with your PM body? [if applicable]</td>
<td>2.5. How would you describe your current level of interaction with your PM body?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2.4.5. What is their current level of interaction with early PM careerists (including pre-career)?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7. How would you describe your current level of interaction with early PM careerists? [theme is &quot;putting back into the profession&quot;]</td>
<td>2.6. How would you describe your current level of interaction with early PM careerists?</td>
<td>4.3.3.5 What level of interaction do PMs have with early PM careerists?</td>
<td></td>
<td>No additional comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8. What are your thoughts generally about the role of experienced PMs and therefore the profession, in supporting early careerists (including students/deciders)</td>
<td>2.7. What are your thoughts generally about the role of experienced PMs (proxy for PM profession) in supporting early careerists (incl. pre-career)?</td>
<td>4.3.3.6 What level of interaction do PMs think they should have with early PM careerists?</td>
<td></td>
<td>No additional comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2.6. What are their thoughts more generally about PMs supporting early PM careerists?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9. How do you personally define or perceive &quot;career success&quot;?</td>
<td>2.8. How would you personally define career success?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2.7. How do they personally define career success?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10. How do / would you personally define or perceive &quot;career success&quot;? [probe beyond 'job satisfaction', if necessary]</td>
<td>2.9. Any fundamental regrets about your career path to date? [explore traditional vs non-traditional, and perceptions of easy vs hard] [QUESTION FORMALISED]</td>
<td>4.3.3.8 How many PMs have fundamental regrets about their career path to date?</td>
<td></td>
<td>This question was first asked in interviews 4, 8 and 9 as a probe. The question was formally placed on the question set for interviews 10-21.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11. Any fundamental regrets about your career and career path decisions to date? [explore traditional vs non-traditional, and perceptions of easy vs hard] [QUESTION FORMALISED]</td>
<td>2.9. Any fundamental regrets about your career path to date?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2.8. How would you personally define career success?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12. How reliant do you feel that your personal self-identity is being a PM [e.g. if you could never PM again, would you 'cramble', or 'happily move on'? [probe sense of connectedness between work/life] [QUESTION FORMALISED]</td>
<td>2.10. How reliant do you feel that your self-identity is on being a PM?</td>
<td>4.3.3.9 Do PMs feel reliant on their role as a source of self-identity?</td>
<td></td>
<td>This question was first asked in interviews 7 and 10 as a probe. The question was formally placed on the question set for interviews 10-21.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### RESEARCH & INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 3. What are today’s PMs’ views on their career futures and development priorities?</th>
<th>p1-10 interview script</th>
<th>p11-25 interview script</th>
<th>Analysis spreadsheet</th>
<th>Chapter headings</th>
<th>Researcher comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUTURE: Your PM career looking forward (extent of thinking and specific thoughts)</strong></td>
<td><strong>FUTURE: Your PM career looking forward (extent of thinking and specific thoughts)</strong></td>
<td>4.3.4 How PMs view their forward career path and development (FUTURE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 To what extent do you view your career and related needs in terms of life stage (early, mid, late)? (assume all of sample mid or late)</td>
<td>3.1 To what extent do you view your career and related needs in terms of life stage, that is, changing over time? Clarify - a common language to describe or partition career stage is (i) early, (ii) mid, (iii) “late” career. (Sample is experienced by design – therefore expect responses “mid” or “late”)</td>
<td>3.1 To what extent do you view your career and related needs in terms of life stage, that is, changing over time? (e.g. (i) early, (ii) mid, (iii) late career)</td>
<td>4.3.4.1 Do PMs view their career in terms of key stages, e.g. early-mid-late?</td>
<td>No additional comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 To what stage do you perceive yourself as being in presently? (early, mid, late)?</td>
<td>3.2 To what stage do you view your career as being in presently? [probe why]</td>
<td>3.2 To what stage of career do you see yourself as being in presently?</td>
<td>4.3.4.2 How do PMs describe their current career stage?</td>
<td>No additional comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 What are your key development needs and priorities going forward?</td>
<td>3.3 What are your development priorities going forward?</td>
<td>3.3 What are your development priorities going forward?</td>
<td>4.3.4.3 What development needs do PMs identify for themselves?</td>
<td>No additional comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 What level or type of support do they expect to receive from their organisation towards meeting these development priorities?</td>
<td>3.4 What level or type of support do you want or need from your organisation towards achieving these development priorities?</td>
<td>3.4 What level or type of support do you want or need from your organisation towards achieving these development priorities?</td>
<td>4.3.4.4 What career development support do PMs expect from their organisation?</td>
<td>No additional comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Describe the extent to which you have thought about what the end of your late stage of career may look like? [explore downsizing / retirement] [QUESTION FORMALISED]</td>
<td>3.5 To what extent have you thought about what the final part of your career will look like?</td>
<td>3.5 To what extent have you thought about what the final part of your career will look like?</td>
<td>4.3.4.5 To what extent do PMs think about and plan for the late stage of their career?</td>
<td>The question was first asked in interview 1 (as a probe to research question 3.3) then in each interview thereafter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COMPLETION OF MAIN QUESTION SET – PMs’ FINAL WORDS

| n/a | 4.1 End of formal questions. Is there anything else that you would like to add, to round this out [complete]? | 4.1 End of formal questions. Is there anything else that you would like to add, to round this out [complete]? | 4.1 End of formal questions. Is there anything else that you would like to add, to round this out [complete]? | 4.3.5 PMs final words on PM career paths and development | Note - This question was added in closing the interview, to help capture any residual thoughts from the participants and therefore to help reach saturation in the interview process. |

© Jason D. Bingham 175
### Appendix 2 – Research schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity / milestone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-Oct-2007</td>
<td>Submitted application for admission to DBA program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-Nov-2007</td>
<td>DBA director recommended application be approved; advanced standing granted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Dec-2007</td>
<td>Formal offer received, then subsequently accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Jan-2008</td>
<td>Commenced core unit - Qualitative Research Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-May-2008</td>
<td>Commenced core unit - Quantitative Research Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-Sep-2008</td>
<td>Commenced core unit - Preliminary Literature Review &amp; Research Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-May-2008</td>
<td>Attended SCU Doctoral Symposium - shared knowledge and thoughts with fellow candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-Nov-2008</td>
<td>Attended SCU Doctoral Symposium - shared knowledge and thoughts with fellow candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-May-2009</td>
<td>Attended SCU Doctoral Symposium - shared knowledge and thoughts with fellow candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07-Nov-2009</td>
<td>Attended SCU Doctoral Symposium - shared knowledge and thoughts with fellow candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-May-2010</td>
<td>Presented at CIPS conference, on professionalisation (re. Non-traditional careers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-May-2010</td>
<td>Attended SCU Doctoral Symposium - shared knowledge and thoughts with fellow candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-Jul-2010</td>
<td>Upload research info to personal website (info sheet, prelim lit review, proposal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Aug-2010</td>
<td>Research advertised on PMI Queensland Chapter website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-Aug-2010</td>
<td>Expedited ethics application submitted to SCU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-Aug-2010</td>
<td>Research advertised in PMI Queensland Chapter monthly newsletter to members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-Sep-2010</td>
<td>Research re-advertised on PMI Queensland Chapter website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-Sep-2010</td>
<td>Presented to PMI QLD Board and received support-in-kind for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Sep-2010</td>
<td>Ethics approval received from SCU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Sep-2010</td>
<td>Presented to PMI QLD members at monthly chapter evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Sep-2010</td>
<td>Email invitation to participate to 230nr. PMP-certified members of local PMI Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-Oct-2010</td>
<td>Emailed information sheet, preliminary literature review, research proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Oct-2010</td>
<td>Completed interviews 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Oct-2010</td>
<td>Commenced initial coding and categorising first tranche of interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-Nov-2010</td>
<td>Completed initial coding and categorising first tranche of interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-Nov-2010</td>
<td>Commenced interviews 11-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-Nov-2010</td>
<td>Attended SCU Doctoral Symposium - presented progress report, received feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-Nov-2010</td>
<td>Approached Australian Institute of Building for support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-Nov-2010</td>
<td>Completed interviews 11-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-Jun-2011</td>
<td>Data analysis section completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-June-2011</td>
<td>Commenced promotion via Social media, offering potential pre-order (“Request a copy”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-Jun-2011</td>
<td>“Request a copy of this research” web form turned on – <a href="http://www.jdbingham.com/research.html">www.jdbingham.com/research.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Jul-2011</td>
<td>Conclusions section completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-Aug-2011</td>
<td>Remainder of thesis drafted and ready for Supervisor’s review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Aug-2011</td>
<td>Full review by supervisor completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-Aug-2011</td>
<td>3rd party editor review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Aug-2011</td>
<td>Thesis submitted for examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-Dec-2011</td>
<td>Examiner feedback received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-Dec-2011</td>
<td>Commenced interviews 22-25 (additional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-Jan-2012</td>
<td>Submitted “PROPOSED TABLE OF THESIS CHANGES: STEP 1”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Jan-2012</td>
<td>Feedback from Higher Degrees Research Committee (HDRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Feb-2012</td>
<td>Completed interviews 22-25 (additional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity / milestone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-11-2012</td>
<td>Attended SCU Doctoral Symposium - shared knowledge and thoughts with fellow candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12-2012</td>
<td>Revised thesis draft completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-12-2012</td>
<td>Full review by supervisor completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-12-2012</td>
<td>Thesis submitted for re-examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-01-2013</td>
<td>Re-examination feedback received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-02-2013</td>
<td>Changes proposed for review by Supervisor and Director of Higher Degrees by Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-02-2013</td>
<td>Final changes recommended by Supervisor and DHDR to HDRC for consideration and approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-03-2013</td>
<td>Final changes (Step 1’) approved by Higher Degrees Review Committee (HDRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-03-2013</td>
<td>Final changes made, reviewed by Supervisor and DHDR, submitted to HDRC as ‘Step 2’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-04-2013</td>
<td>‘Step 2’ reviewed by HDRC. Award of degree recommended by HDRC.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 – Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: Career paths and development of experienced project managers
Name of researcher: Jason Bingham
Name of Supervisor: Dr James Cowley
(Note: details of the researcher and the supervisor are contained in the Information Sheet about this research)

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Southern Cross University researcher for their records.

Tick the box that applies, sign and date and give to the researcher

I agree to take part in the Southern Cross University research project specified above. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I have been provided with information at my level of comprehension about the purpose, methods, demands, risks, inconveniences and possible outcomes of this research, including any likelihood and form of publication of results. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that my participation is voluntary. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that I can choose not to participate in part or all of this research at any time, without negative consequence to me. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that any information that may identify me will be de-identified at the time of analysis of any data. Therefore, any information that I have provided cannot be linked to me (Privacy Act 1988 Cth). ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that neither my name nor any identifying information will be disclosed or published. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that all information gathered in this research is confidential. It will be kept securely and confidentially for 7 years at the University. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I am aware that I can contact the supervisor or researcher at any time with any queries. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that the ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the SCU Human Research Ethics Committee. ☐ Yes ☐ No

If I have concerns about the ethical conduct of this research, I understand that I can contact the SCU Ethics Complaints Officer. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Participant’s name: ____________________________________________

Participant’s signature: ________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________________

☐ Please tick this box and provide your email address or mail address (confidential) below if you wish to receive a summary of the results:

Email: _______________________________________________________

Mailing address: ______________________________________________
Appendix 4 – Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

INTRODUCTION

About the Research
The title of this research project is career paths and development of experienced project managers. This research is being conducted through the Graduate College of Management, at Southern Cross University. Southern Cross University has an extensive program of doctoral research relating to real world business issues.

As part of the research, experienced project managers are being invited to participate in one-to-one semi-structured interviews. This forms the core of the research. The sample is being drawn from practising managers of projects, programs and/or portfolios who are based in Queensland Australia. Each participant will require experience at least equivalent to PMI’s globally recognised PMP® credential. An alternative verification if by certificate would be AIPM’s CPPM post-nominal (or higher). Invitations to participate are being circulated through various local professional networks in Queensland. The interviews will occur between October and December 2010.

About the Researcher
The Researcher’s name is Jason Bingham. Jason is a business leader and manager of projects who is additionally and currently undertaking doctoral studies at Southern Cross University’s Graduate College of Management. He has 20 years industry experience. Further information about Jason is publicly available at http://au.linkedin.com/in/jdbingham.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

For the past 60 years or so, organisations have increasingly been using projects to achieve their strategic objectives. This has been in the context of a rapidly changing macro-environment which has exhibited increasing socio-economic complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity. Through projects, resources are mobilised in temporary activity to bring about value-adding change taking into account the relevant environmental factors. With projects representing such a significant proportion of the work mode supporting global economic activity, the importance of project management, including the human capital inputs, is apparent. Yet project management is a relatively young area of academic inquiry, being both broader and less mature as a discipline than more traditional examples such as engineering, medicine or law.

This research will more thoroughly explore the career path and development experiences, attitudes and perceptions of experienced project managers. The research is designed to bridge existing gaps in knowledge and knowledge and in doing so will pay close (but not exclusive) attention to the subjective criteria that project managers bring to their own career situations.

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

Benefits of the Research
This research is intended to bring several benefits. First, the research will bridge identified gaps in knowledge by adding to literature. This is predominantly an academic benefit. Secondly (and leading from the first), the flow-on professional benefits expected, include:

- Better information to inform early careerists entering or contemplating entering project management;
- Improved responsiveness to project manager skills shortages in the relevant industry sectors;
- Better understanding by the profession of the experiences and future development needs of experienced project managers; and
- Better awareness by organisations of individual perspectives.
Dissemination of Findings

It is important that the findings of this research be disseminated to others. The findings will therefore be disseminated to others, in whole or in part, by various means including but not limited to peer-reviewed journals, conferences and industry publications. The privacy and confidentiality of participants will be respected at all times.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Researcher Responsibilities
The Researcher will:
• Ask each Participant to complete and return a Consent Form prior to the interview;
• Provide a suitable venue in Brisbane CBD for the interviews;
• Provide access for any Participant residing outside of south east Queensland to participate by phone;
• Provide each Participant access to the research findings; and
• At all times protect the privacy and confidentiality of each Participant.

Participant Responsibilities
The Participant will:
• Complete and return a Consent Form, before their interview;
• Allow 60 minutes for the interview, excluding travel and 15 minutes for introductions on arrival;
• Participate openly and honestly during the Interview;
• Attend the interview in attire suitable for the interview environment, which is business casual; and
• Indicate their interest in receiving a copy of the research findings by ticking the appropriate box on the Consent Form, when provided.

ETHICS

Privacy and Consent
Participants’ privacy is taken very seriously. No information allowing individual Participants to be identified will be disclosed or published as part of this research. In addition, Each Participant will be provided and required to complete and return a Consent Form containing further relevant information, prior to the their participation. All information gathered in this research will be kept securely for 7 years at the University.

Ethics Approval
This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Southern Cross University. The approval reference is ECN-10-156.

Complaints
If you have concerns about the ethical conduct of this research or the researcher, you should write to:

The Ethics Complaints Officer, Southern Cross University, PO Box 157, Lismore NSW 2480
Email: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

All information is confidential and will be handled as soon as possible.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about this research you can contact either the Researcher or Supervisor, as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Jason Bingham</th>
<th>0437 517 397</th>
<th><a href="mailto:j.bingham.10@scu.edu.au">j.bingham.10@scu.edu.au</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Dr James Cowley</td>
<td>0411 601 789</td>
<td><a href="mailto:crick@ozemail.com.au">crick@ozemail.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5 – Sample invitation (to local PM association members)

20 September 2010 (by email)

Attn: [full name] PMP

[recipient email address]

Your invitation to participate – PM Career Paths and Development (research interviews)

Dear [recipient first name],

I am writing to you personally to inform you of some important research that PMI Queensland Chapter is currently supporting and which I believe you may benefit from. You may have heard about this research already, through either the PMIQ monthly newsletter or else at our most recent Chapter meeting. This letter is to provide you some more information including why I believe you should consider personally participating.

This research is focused on interacting with experienced managers of projects, programs and portfolios – a target group typically associated with PMI’s PMP® credential – and our Chapter records indicate that you are current PMP® credential holder (hence this correspondence to you).

About this research

The title of this research project is ‘Career Paths and Development of Project Managers’. This research will explore the career path and development experiences, attitudes and perceptions of experienced project managers and has come about out of a need to bridge existing gaps in literature and knowledge on non-traditional career paths, in particular those of PMs. Other key points include:

- The research approach will pay close (but not exclusive) attention to the subjective criteria that project managers bring to their own career situations;
- As part of the research experienced project managers are being invited to participate in one-to-one semi-structured interviews, this forms the core of the research;
- The sample is being drawn from practising managers of projects, programs and/or portfolios whose experience is at least equivalent to PMI’s globally recognised PMP® credential;
- The sample is focusing on one region, Queensland Australia; and
- The interviews will commence in October 2010 and participation is limited to 25.

The expected benefits of this research

This research is intended to bring several benefits. First, the research will bridge identified gaps in knowledge by adding to literature. Secondly (and as important as the first), the flow-on professional benefits expected, include:

- Better information to inform early careerists entering or contemplating entering project management;
- Improved responsiveness to project manager skills shortages in the relevant industry sectors;
- Better understanding by the PM profession of the experiences and future development needs of experienced project managers (e.g. downshifting, role switching, flexible work arrangements, later retirement, etc); and

- Better awareness by organisations of individual perspectives.

Industry context – burning platform?

As you will be aware, for the past 60 years or so organisations have increasingly been using projects to achieve their strategic objectives. This has been in the context of a rapidly changing macro-environment which has exhibited increasing socio-economic complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity. Currently however, more than 20% of global economic activity occurs in projects, and in some emerging economies this figure exceeds 30%. In developed countries such as Australia, the key sectors of economic output such as the resources sector (mining, oil and gas) are all overwhelmingly project-based. Labour market projections for the resources sector in Australia illustrate the project demand – a 70% increase in project labour demand 2010-2015, resulting from 75 major projects worth AUD $110 billion and in addition, another 286 less-advanced projects worth AUD $250 billion. Data produced by the World Bank suggests that 22% of the world’s USD $48 trillion GDP is gross capital formation, which is almost entirely project-based. In India the figure is 34%, and in China it is 45%. In addition is the growing propensity across all industries to undertake more project-based activity within operating expenditures. So a key question is, how prepared is industry for an increasingly project-based world? And in turn, what might be the implications for PMs?

The Researcher

The Researcher’s name is Jason Bingham. Jason is a business leader and manager of projects, programs and portfolios who is additionally and currently undertaking doctoral studies at Southern Cross University’s Graduate College of Management. He has 20 years industry experience. He is also a current Director of PMI Queensland Chapter. Further information about Jason is publicly available at http://au.linkedin.com/in/jdbingham.

Ethics and related information – what you should be aware of

Prospective participants should note the following:

- No information allowing individual Participants to be identified will be disclosed or published as part of this research;

- Participants will be required to complete a Consent Form;

- Participants will be provided a full Information Sheet; and

- Participants will be provided access to the summary findings of this research.

How to participate

If you are interested in participating in this research and believe you fit the criteria please contact the Researcher (Jason Bingham), on 0437 517 397. Alternatively, see Jason’s website for further information – www.jdbingham.com.

In summary then, this research offers an excellent opportunity to contribute to relevant, industry-driven research that promises to benefit PM careeirsts, their profession and our increasingly project-based economy. I therefore strongly encourage you to consider participating, by volunteering the 60-90 minutes required to
incorporate your own, unique and valuable career path and development experiences and attitudes, into the outcomes.

If you are not interested in participating in this research, you do not need to reply or ‘unsubscribe’, this is the only personalised correspondence you will receive on the matter.

Faithfully,

President, PMI Queensland Chapter
Appendix 6 – Sample stand-up presentation slide (inviting participation)

Get involved in this PM research!

The diverse career paths and development of PMs

Individual stories and future perspectives

YOURs PLEASE!

Leave your business card
(i.e. contact details)

or

Grab an Info Sheet
(or see www.jdbingham.com)

or

Speak with Jason
(the Researcher)

The Researcher is sponsored by:

The Research is being conducted through:

The Research is supported by:

Rio Tinto

PMI

25 places in total
20 places remaining
Semi-structured interviews (one-to-one)
Commences shortly (October)
60-90 minutes total time required
Brisbane CBD

Just leave your business card, and you’re in!