



# Deconstructing project management: a gender analysis of project management guidelines

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## Abstract

Strong isomorphic forces are at work in the emerging project management profession. At the same time, competent project management practice is evolving and expanding to include both soft and hard skills. Contemporary gender scholarship purports that these different skill sets are founded on inherently gendered logic systems. Thus, questions regarding the role of masculine and feminine logic systems in project management become increasingly important. We deconstruct portions of one of the pre-eminent isomorphic forces at work today—the Project Management Body of Knowledge® (PMBOK)—to initiate discussion on the ways in which gendered logic systems play a role in generally-accepted project management practice.

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## 1. Introduction

Project management has been characterized as a “macho profession” [1,2]. As the profession confronts the growing need to manage expectations, relationships and trust [3,4], this style of behaviour is being called into question. As this profession evolves, scholars are noting a shift from a discipline based on technology and control to a focus on interactions and learning [5]. This trend towards accepting the “softer” side of project management appears to correlate with the increasing acceptance of feminine strengths legitimized by literature in organizational theory, management, and the sciences. In this context, questions regarding the role of masculinity and femininity become increasingly important to the emerging profession.

Examination of masculinities and femininities is contentious in organizational research, generally because

people view masculine behaviour as outside the realm of possibility or appropriateness for women, and feminine behaviour as outside the respectable capacities of men. Taking our lead from developmental theories that claim that healthy adult life involves moving toward wholeness, we argue that both male and female project managers need to understand the differences inherent in masculine and feminine ways of managing projects and claim the strengths of both approaches.

Ultimately, the practice of project management is influenced by the textual representation of appropriate practice. Every document contains implicit assumptions that influence readers’ choices of appropriate behaviours and ways of thinking—texts support some ways of thinking and discourage others. This research deconstructs an important socialization document produced by the Project Management Institute (PMI) to illuminate implicit assumptions and their implications for the practice of project management.

Our motive in this endeavour is straightforward: as long as the underlying logic in a profession remains implicit and undiscussed, members remain captive of an untheorized regime, limited in their capacity to see choices about how they work and lead others [6]. To

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introduce these issues, we review the theory of isomorphism and PMI's role as an isomorphic force in the emerging project management profession, highlight management research into the gendered nature of thought and action at work, present our methodological approach to this piece of work, and discuss findings from our preliminary textual analysis.

## 2. Isomorphism in project management

Isomorphism [7] is the process whereby individuals in widely varying corporate environments tend to think and behave in highly similar ways. This similarity arises because of internalized beliefs about what it means to be, in our case, a project manager. The project management occupational community, through vehicles such as publications, comprises a potent interpretation system [8] that models professional conduct for individuals. In the process of defining and promoting professional competence, this community implicitly endorses certain cognitive and external behaviours while discouraging others.

### 2.1. Role of PMI and PMBOK in isomorphism

Since 1969, the Project Management Institute has been the predominant professional association for project managers in North America and, some would argue, worldwide. It has taken a stewardship role in promoting the establishment of project management training standards, training, education, and research, and has grown to amass a global membership of over 90,000 in 2002 [9]. A key drive for the organization has been the spread of understanding and appreciation for the skills and behaviours collectively termed *project management*.

A central aspect of this mandate is the certification program resulting in the designation Project Management Professional (PMP®). Central to this training program is the Guide to The Project Management Body of Knowledge (or PMBOK® [52]), a 216-page manual that identifies the “generally-accepted” body of project management knowledge, providing a common language for project managers and common standards of project management quality, excellence, and professionalism. As a documented standard of how project managers ought to construct and define their success, PMBOK provides powerful messages about legitimate ways of thinking and behaving.

In North America, PMBOK is among the profession's most recognized and relied-upon expressions of what it is project managers know how to do. Thus, an exploration of the PMBOK will provide insights into the assumptions about work and skills reflected in today's practice of project management.

## 3. Gendered modes of thought and action

A growing body of literature supports the view that assumptions about work, skills, and perceptions of success, are inherently gendered [10–14]. (Silvia Gherardi [12] points out that the very word ‘work’ in many languages is masculine.) While the historical dominance of men in organizations is no longer the case, the dominance of masculinity in most workplaces remains. Fletcher [22] asserts that important feminine work activity such as team building and conflict resolution are rendered ‘non-work’ in today's highly technical, male dominated work environments. This intimates, she suggests, the “deeply interior silencing process” at work in apparently ‘gender-neutral’ organizational theory and practice which makes invisible the very skills and activities we recognize as crucial in today's project environments.

While men and women have differing tendencies to utilize certain sensemaking styles and exhibit certain types of skills, individuals of either sex are capable of both masculine- and feminine-gendered ways of knowing and behaving, in varying blends at different times and life circumstances [15,16]. While neither style is the exclusive nor intrinsic strength or liability of men or women, the observed tendency of certain logic systems underlying the behaviours of men and women over time have resulted in the terms *masculine* and *feminine*. Either tendency can be present in a biological male or female [16–21], and in varying degrees, both sets of capacities are present in any healthy individual.

### 3.1. Masculine modes of thought and action

Masculine sensemaking tends to value independence, self-sufficiency, separation, power deriving from hierarchical authority [22], competitiveness [23], and analytical and impersonal problem solving [18,19,24–26]. Individuals with strong masculine styles hold a value system focusing on mastery over their environment [19,26–28]. They apply objective and impersonal criteria to decision-making, taking an adversarial stance in evaluating information [16,17,29]. Their reasoning styles detach them from the individuals and situations they seek to understand. This detachment is termed ‘field independence,’ and manifests in a person's preference to fidelity and conformance to predetermined models of project reality, and preference to execute tasks according to those predetermined views, regardless of the peculiarities of the specific situation [30,50].

Individuals with highly developed masculine behaviours tend to exhibit strengths in acting decisively, and maintaining an appearance of assertiveness, masterfulness, and control [15]—often collectively termed agentic qualities [31]. Individuals with strong masculine managerial skills tend to be highly task-oriented, excel at

initiating structure through the development of roles and procedures, make leader and subordinate roles explicit, and ensure team members effectively follow prescribed structures in order to maintain high performance standards (Ibid.). They tend to thrive in situations and with people that respond well to directive leadership.

### 3.2. Feminine modes of thought and action

Feminine sensemaking involves placing primacy on one's connection with others [11,17,29]. Such individuals value sharing power [28] and information [24,32], prize democratic or participative decision-making [31,45], and tend to create cooperative work settings [19,29]. Their tendency to be seen as interpersonally supportive [32,34] likely derives from their reasoning style that connects them to others as they attempt to understand the experiences that produce another's viewpoint. Feminine cognition can be viewed as 'field dependent,' focusing on conceiving of tasks and plans through consideration of the particular, idiosyncratic demands of the moment. Field dependent behaviour is informed primarily in response to emerging realities, relationships, and information [30].

Individuals with highly developed feminine behaviours tend to excel in skills of empathy [17], mutuality [21,34], reciprocity, collaborative sensemaking and working styles [45], and a "sensitivity to [situations'] emotional contexts" [11,26,34]. They excel at being helpful, sympathetic, and understanding [35,36]. As managers, they tend to look out for the

welfare of subordinates [31], excel at developing strong networks of information and power sharing [24], contribute to the power and status of others [12], and may exert influence through reliance on innovation, and the strategic use of charisma [32]. Overall, their workplace behaviours can be characterized as highly interpersonal.

### 3.3. Summary

The tendencies outlined above are not prescriptions for men and women [14], nor are they comprehensive listings of the archetypes of masculinity and femininity. They do stand, however, as commonly observed and empirically verified managerial behaviours in work environments. While both masculine and feminine ways of knowing and being in workplaces are undoubtedly valuable for project management, and are equally complex [16], they are not equally valued in contemporary organizations [37].

Table 1 summarizes this discussion of gender constructs and provides examples of the kinds of work language associated with these different logic systems

The ways in which project managers frame their deliverables, their understanding of how to effectively mobilize a team, and their tendency to focus their energies on task or human aspects of the project management role are shaped by potent normative expectations about how to be seen as competent. The PMBOK is a prominent source of these expectations. Thus, we turn now to a textual analysis of the PMBOK guidelines.

Table 1  
Work language associated with gender constructs

| Theoretical constructs                      | Citations     | Associated terms   |
|---|---------------|--|
| <b>Masculine</b>                            |               |  |
| Field independent                           | [16,17,29,30] | <i>Avoid, Categories, Closure, Conflict, Constrain, Control, Correct, Efficiency, Efficient,</i> |
| Separation from environment, others         | [19,26–28,30] | <i>Execute, Expectation, Formalize, Get, Getting, Hierarchical, Hierarchy, Impose,</i>           |
| Performance orientation                     | [15]          | <i>Influence, Initiate, Logic, Manage, Measure, Organize, Outside, Perform, Plan, Risk</i>       |
| Active                                      | [19,27]       | <i>(+ Uncertain  Threat Unknown), Sequential, Structure, Technique, Template,</i>                |
| Linear-sequential                           | [31]          | <i>Terminate, Tool, Uniform</i>  |
| Hierarchical authority                      | [22]          |  |
| Control over                                | [15,31]       |  |
| Analytical/impersonal problem solving       | [16,19,24–26] |  |
| Impersonal task focus                       | [24]          |  |
| <b>Feminine</b>                             |               |  |
| Field dependent/context sensitivity         | [11,30,31,33] | <i>Affect, Care, Connect, Consider, Coordinate, Devote, Discover, Disseminate, Emerge,</i>       |
| Connection to environment, others           | [11,17,29]    | <i>Estimate, Feedback, Generate, Informal, Lead, Link, Receive, Relate, Relationship,</i>        |
| Improvisational                             |               | <i>Respond, Response, Share, Unexpected, Unplanned</i>   |
| Receptive/responsive                        | [21,34]       |  |
| Non-linear                                  |               |  |
| Lateral-democratic authority                | [31,33]       |  |
| Shared power/Control with                   | [12,28,32,33] |  |
| focus on situational and emotional gestalts | [11,26,33]    |  |
| Interpersonal relationships                 | [31]          |  |

## 4. Methods

To gain insight into the assumptions about work underlying project management guidelines, we employed a literary analysis technique known as deconstruction. This section provides an introduction to deconstruction and a discussion of our approach in conducting this deconstruction.

### 4.1. Deconstruction

The great paradox of literature is that it is at once considered a rigorous and unreliable source of knowledge. Literary texts have been accorded the status of a self-authenticated meaning and truth, a position of privilege [38], and yet all forms of writing run up against perplexities of meaning and intent. “Interpretation is a quest for order and intelligibility among the manifold possible patterns the text holds out to a reader” (Ibid: 5).

A central assumption underlying this textual analysis is that writing is an organizational practice undertaken by a professional community for the purpose of replicating its knowledge and reasoning approaches in order to maintain and strengthen that community [39]. Documenting information gives the impression of fixing it, reaching a state of conclusion or certainty about meanings that may have been previously unresolved prior to being captured in written form. Deconstruction suspends the “taken for grantedness” of language (Ibid.), examining the language used to see what underlying assumptions are embodied within the text.

Deconstruction does not seek to criticize authors or destroy their ideas; rather, “it is an analytical strategy that permits us to question the limits that may have been imposed upon discourses of knowledge” (Ibid.). Anytime a profession seeks to codify its body of knowledge, it seeks to create closure on the spectrum of acceptable behaviours and thought processes available to individuals who seek to identify themselves with this profession. Deconstruction techniques allow us to question the particular closures implied by a text.

### 4.2. Study approach

This research began with an exploration of the gendered nature of thought and action. We synthesized the literature on the gendered nature of work and looked for constructs and terms that trigger further exploration of PMBOK for gender implications. The results of this phase of the research are summarized in Table 1. Next, we examined the PMBOK and flagged key sections of the text that provided examples of both masculine and feminine logic systems at work. We met to compare our readings of the text and come to agreement on coding strategies. This paper presents the initial analysis of key sections of the text: *Section I—The Project Management*

*Framework*, and select chapters of *Section II—The Project Management Knowledge Areas*. Finally, we scanned the PMBOK document into text format and imported it into a computerized qualitative textual analysis tool called ATLAS.ti. We then combed the text for the use of the terms highlighted in Table 1 and examined the context and usage of the terms.

In determining a textual analysis software tool to use for this project, we considered two options, ATLAS/ti and NUD\*IST, widely considered two of the foremost software packages for this purpose [40]. In a helpful comparison of the two programs, Barry [41] has noted that ATLAS/ti is particularly well suited to single time point projects, like the analysis of the PMBOK Guide. This program features an intuitive user interface, making it a relatively easy software package to learn. By contrast, NUD\*IST has been described as having a comparatively “clumsier interface” for new users to master (ibid). It is textually-based, and requires researchers to use a sequential, highly structured working style. Our research suggested that both ATLAS/ti and NUD\*IST were entirely capable of supporting the kind of textual analysis we desired on the PMBOK. Our decision to use ATLAS/ti instead of NUD\*IST was, essentially, a decision to use a software program best suited to the analytical preferences of the researchers. Our choice for ATLAS/ti was a choice to utilize a program that would enable us maximum flexibility to allow a coding structure to emerge as we worked with the data, to modify earlier coding decisions as that became necessary, and to work with a visually intuitive piece of software technology.

As this is preliminary research, our research question was “*are masculine and feminine logics evident in the PMBOK Guide?*” We addressed this question through a qualitative analytical study of portions of the PMBOK guide. Qualitative approaches are commonly used in literary deconstruction because the context in which a given word or phrase is used is paramount to interpreting, in this case, evidence for masculine or feminine reasoning. Another choice would have been to conduct comprehensive frequency analysis of the use of specific terms. While frequencies would lend an appearance of unequivocal ‘objectivity,’ we feel including them could mislead readers, who might assume that every usage of a particular word proves masculinity or femininity regardless of the context in which it is used, and that we comprehensively analyzed the entire document (only select chapters were considered for this analysis) in this preliminary research.

Had we set out to argue *the extent or degree* to which gendered logics permeate this document, we would have of necessity conducted thorough qualitative and quantitative assessments of the use of the identified terms. However, we have oriented this study toward the more modest goal of arguing *the presence* of both gendered

approaches and have attempted to demonstrate how that presence manifests itself.

## 5. Findings

As indicated, the act of writing ideas down acts to create closure, and attempts to fix the intentional expression of the author(s) and exclude others. The PMBOK intends to document what thinking and behaviours are “generally accepted;” however, the authors caution, “generally accepted does not mean that the knowledge and practices described are or should be always responsible for determining what is appropriate” (p. 3). From the outset, then, the PMBOK acknowledges the challenge of prescribing generalized advice about the way things should be in preference over remaining open to the particular needs of an individual project.

This section presents the results of the preliminary thematic analysis of the PMBOK in four of several areas currently under investigation:

- Defining projects
- Conceiving of project management
- The role of the project manager
- Defining risk

Our intent is to show how the use of gendered logics is evident in the text and to highlight the implications of these differing logics for the profession.

### 5.1. Defining projects

The presence of both the masculine and the feminine play out in the profession’s defining of ‘projects’ themselves. Masculine, field independent reasoning is prominent in the project characteristics “*performed* by people” and “*planned, executed, controlled*” (our emphasis, p. 4) that focus on predetermination of project work and project participants as a means to achieving those predetermined ends. Projects, by definition, conclude “when the project’s objectives have been achieved. . . ” (p. 5). At the same time, a valuing and responsiveness to the particular—a hallmark of feminine, field dependent reasoning—appears in the discussion of projects being “temporary and *unique*. A project can . . . be *defined in terms of its distinctive characteristics*” Further, “*projects are a means to respond* to those requests that cannot be addressed within the organization’s normal operational limits” (our emphasis, p. 4). The profession articulates the life or impact of a project in both masculine and feminine terms: the project ceases to exist when predetermined objectives have been met;

and their influence goes far beyond the linear dimension of time—“projects may often have . . . social, economic, and environmental impacts that far outlast the projects themselves” (p. 5).

### 5.2. Conceiving of project management

Throughout the PMBOK, masculine and feminine reasoning styles inform differing perceptions about what project management work is all about. The masculine view has a clearly delineated approach of what should fall within the scope of a project, and what should be considered extraneous. It places great importance on discerning a project in terms that “[include] all the work required, and *only* the work required,” (our emphasis, p. 7) seeking to create a singular reality that eliminates information, events, persons, and agendas from the manager’s field of vision that could distract from this conception of reality. The basic thrust to develop a conception of project objectives and processes, and to preserve this perception intact, appears throughout the advice about appropriate project management reasoning styles and processes: “Sequential logic [is] designed to ensure proper definition;” and “numerous forms, charts, and checklists. . . provide structure and consistency. . . called project management methodologies. . . divide each project into several project phases to improve management control” (pp. 11–12). Such desire for clarity, control, and the cognitive filtering processes described above, are invaluable tactics to serve motives of efficiency.

Feminine reasoning operates on a less sharply discerned perception of what falls into the realm of project work. If the central modus operandi of its masculine counterpart is a preference for control, feminine reasoning utilizes a more fluid, responsive orientation to emergent project realities. Feminine thought processes note that projects have “stakeholders with differing needs and expectations” (p. 6). Oriented to the dynamic, evolving realities of project life, feminine approaches rely on relational connection between internal and external processes and people: “involving stakeholders in the project phases generally improves the probability of satisfying customer requirements and realizes the buy-in or shared ownership of the project. . . which is often critical to project success” (p. 32); and noting that project “processes are. . . iterative in nature” (p. 6). Each of these pieces of advice encourage an acknowledgement and acceptance of multiple project realities depending on the events that unfold and the players involved. While masculine reasoning anchors a project manager’s orientation toward decision making in a relatively fixed normative view of what is and what must be done, feminine cognition moves from the present moment toward a project end state that is provisional and acceptably uncertain, monitoring the environment for cues that affirm the appropriateness of that goal or



suggest it needs to be revisited, more easily discovering, adapting, and designing appropriate action as he or she moves through time.

Inherently, a feminine orientation to the goals and processes of project management is neither positive nor negative; however, it can be framed as problematic. PMBOK expresses a preference for clear, masculine, unified views in its warning that “different objectives [for a project] may come into conflict” (p. 17); the Guide does not acknowledge that the expression of multiple objectives also enables a richer understanding of the interests and needs of users, increasing the likelihood that more users will be satisfied by the project’s end result. Similarly, the document reveals its discomfort with the unknown: “The probability of successfully completing the project is lowest, and hence risk and uncertainty are highest, at the start of the project” (p. 12). A project’s beginning is the point at which a project is ‘pregnant’ with the greatest potentiality, opportunity for creativity and innovation; it is also the point at which a masculine-oriented project manager has the least clarity and guidance about what s/he is to perform. The Guide frames the initial stages as fraught with the threat of failure—an assessment that makes a great deal of sense to masculine reasoning and considerably less sense to feminine reasoning.

### 5.3. Role of project manager

The masculine logic system views individuals as separate from surrounding reality. This orientation favours acting on her or his environment according to pre-conceived plans and predefined conceptions of success: “The project management team must identify the stakeholders, determine their requirements, *and then* manage and influence those requirements to ensure a successful project” (our emphasis, p. 16). This sequence is carried out from a stance separate and apart from the reality the project manager must impact—the external environment is a force to be reckoned with in terms of its malleability or rigidity in supporting or inhibiting the attainment of stated project aims: for example, “the structure of the performing organization often *constrains* the availability of or terms under which resources become available to the project” (our emphasis, p. 19) and “The project team must periodically measure itself against the expectations of those *outside* the project” (our emphasis, p. 115). The masculine logic views environmental people and events, whether friendly or resistant, as forces to be influenced and acted upon.

The rationale for this logic is supported by much organizational literature. PMBOK cites definitions of “power” by Pfeffer [42] and Eccles et al. [43]: “to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do,” and “getting collective action from a group” (p. 26). “Getting” action from people is an agentic orientation

to human relationships [31] that is known to be strongly masculine and is evident throughout PMBOK’s descriptions of the project management task. In the statement, “Most projects are performed by a team created for the sole purpose of performing the project, and the team is disbanded when the project is complete” (p. 5), both projects and people are viewed as means to a desired organizational end. People and processes, in this view, are tools or inputs the project manager uses to perform project tasks.

The feminine approach to project work is also weakly present in the text in activities oriented toward “acting with” people, circumstances, and environments to realize desired objectives. The strong feminine project manager has an interest and readiness to respond to environmental change—not to brace against challenges to the initial project plan (masculine motivation), but to determine how changing circumstances may be worked *with* to create consensually defined success. The subtleties and complexities of project progress are noted, for example, “The nature and number of project stakeholders will often change as they project moves from phase to phase of its life cycle” (p. 108); and “Roles and responsibilities may vary over time” (p. 110). Accepting these complexities, the feminine mode of ‘acting with’ people and processes to carry out project tasks evolves fluid response strategies to note and work with shifting project realities—essentially, a strategy of adaptable readiness: “the results of [formal planning processes] should be reviewed regularly... to ensure continued applicability” (p. 109); and, “Leadership... may be demonstrated by many different individuals at many different times during the project” (p. 24). While the masculine orientation ‘gets’ others to execute project plans, the feminine approach engages in “coordinating people and other resources to carry out the plan” (p. 30), connoting a ‘power with’ orientation to managerial influence.

### 5.4. Defining risk

The profession reveals a strongly masculine orientation to issues of risk. To a project manager informed by the masculine value system, risk is a straightforward concept: that which threatens one’s ability to achieve predetermined projects objectives or success criteria. In PMBOK’s words, it is defined as “an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or a negative effect on a project objective” (p. 127); with objectives that are fixed, potential deviation from those objectives constitutes risk. The profession has evolved extensive and often elaborate tactics to exert control over the unknown. Careful instruction is offered, describing how uncertainties (i.e. risks) ought to be identified, structured, and controlled through various tactics or ‘methodologies,’ budgets, and reporting.

Unquestionably, project managers have a responsibility to minimize cost and other inefficiencies, and risk management practices can help to do this. Interestingly, however, what remains unnoted in PMBOK's discussion of project risk is the reality that, to the degree that project manager's execute projects by successfully blocking obstructions or threats to initial planning, they may also prevent new information from influencing project processes or desired outcomes; they prevent creativity from entering into the project life cycle. The type of ready responsiveness outlined throughout this paper—the fluidity known to be a strength of feminine cognition and behaviour—takes a different approach to the unplanned events the profession frames as risk. Instead of seeing the occurrence of risk as exceptional events that ideally should not enter into daily project life, it remains receptive and interested in such “deviations,” intently seeking a potential only mentioned in passing in PMBOK: “Project risk includes both threats to the project's objectives *and opportunities to improve on those objectives*” (p. 127—our emphasis).

### 5.5. *Ultimately, what warrants the label 'knowledge' in this profession?*

While this document says much about what it means to be a competent project manager, the story of what the document does not say is equally as interesting. By its absence, the feminine logic system's strengths at dealing with ambiguity and complexity are not recognized as important project management practices, nor are its openness to creativity and innovation—even as more and more project management literature recognizes the need for these skills. While the PMBOK guide has undoubtedly made great strides to improve the calibre of project management worldwide, we question whether many men and women who operate in feminine ways have an equally legitimized space within the profession as represented by this important document. In the words of noted organizational scholar Joyce Fletcher, the much of the feminine side of project work appears to have been “disappeared” [44].

## 6. Conclusions

Documents such as the PMBOK strongly influence the development of the emerging profession. PMBOK is a potent force for isomorphism, signaling project managers worldwide about the appropriate use of masculinity and femininity. An exploration of the gendered nature of project management oversimplifies the profession by claiming to label its processes or people as either masculine or feminine. It is both. We see no value in inappropriately concluding a resolution to this dichotomy that sees both masculinity and femi-

ninity as presently—and appropriately—part of the reality of the PM profession. Neither masculine nor feminine ways of reasoning or behaving are inherently superior to the other. However, both have underlying assumptions about what should be valued, and both have consequences and implications that the profession needs to acknowledge.

By exploring the symbolic language indicators of appropriate project management behaviour, we suggest that the hard masculine logic systems exert considerable influence on the “best practice” outlined in the PMBOK. Softer feminine logic systems appear less influential and presumably less valued or trusted in the profession. The project management profession, acting as it does as a potent symbolic interpretive system, has an important opportunity (and an obligation?) to acknowledge and champion both gendered logic systems. This ongoing analysis suggests that the stewards of the project management profession place their greatest confidence in the unambiguous and clear in an attempt to develop the caliber and status of their evolving professional practices. By explicitly acknowledging a broader number of legitimate ways to attain project success, the profession could validate those professionals who operate with currently underrepresented logic styles, and encourage those who manage projects through overvalued logic styles to learn and practise diversifying their gendered cognitive and behavioural skill sets.

This research has significant practical import if we acknowledge the growing requirement for project managers to be professionals capable of making decisions and applying knowledge to changing and ambiguous situations rather than the traditional emphasis on simply making a plan happen. The measure of a professional is the ability to apply a body of knowledge to complex and dynamic work situations and readiness to justify that the appropriate and necessary actions for that particular situation were taken. Dealing with the ambiguity and interrelatedness of a profession will require project management professionals of both biological sexes to have keenly developed masculine *and* feminine logic systems. With such skill sets, we believe the profession will increase its value to corporations whose global competitiveness can be improved through more flexible, responsive project management. Emphasizing project management's ability to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty is the route for project management to be recognized as a strategic asset in tomorrow's organizations.

This research initiates a discussion about the ways in which masculine and feminine logic systems and behaviours are conceived as valuable resources to project managers. Our intent was to make visible the gendered discourse operating within the profession. As long as the masculinity and femininity embedded within the

profession's norms remain undefined, they remain inaccessible to dialogue and conscious choice [6]. If we have left you with more questions than answers, we are satisfied that we have opened the discourse and increased awareness of these perplexing issues.

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This research continues with interviews of men and women to explore the influence of gender in their daily experience as of project managers. If you wish to correspond with us or participate in future research, we would be pleased to engage in scholarly debate on the topic. Contact Pamela Buckle at [pamela.buckle@haskayne.ucalgary.ca](mailto:pamela.buckle@haskayne.ucalgary.ca).

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