An Androgynous leader: The best of both worlds

A study regarding gender stereotyping issues within management - why androgynous leaders are the best leaders.

Module Title: Capstone Project

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Abstract

A pivotal part of any retail store is the management. This research project focuses in to which management is the best for a retail store, while discussing the differing factors that stereotypical male, stereotypical female and androgynous leaders offer a retail store. This study examines how stereotypical male and stereotypical female leaders differ, yet a blend of both of these stereotyped leadership styles, as an androgynous leader, an androgynous leader would be the most beneficial within the retail workspace.

Within the past century, issues regarding gender have been prevalent within the workplace. This affects management and the how managers may be perceived which affects all types of management, including retail management. These issues are explored with qualitative and quantitative approaches throughout the research project to pose the question if androgynous leaders are the best type of leader for a retail environment. The differences between stereotypical male, stereotypical female and androgynous leaders approaches to management are dissected compared throughout the research. It is revealed through the research and literature reviews that stereotypical female leaders are the most preferred retail manager type. Although differing from the original hypothesis of the research project, it is analysed throughout the discussion and conclusion that perhaps androgynous leaders are not the best leaders for a retail environment in particular. However an Androgynous leader may be best for a different type of industry. With further research, this could be explored. As a female stereotypical leadership style is closely related to a relationship orientated and transformational leadership style, which heavily is influenced by communication, it suggests that perhaps this is the reason why a stereotypically female leader is more suited to a retail environment.

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National College of Ireland

Project Submission Sheet – 2021/2022

Student Name:	Ava Condon
Student ID:	18330936
Programme:	BA (Hons) Business **Year:** 3
Module:	Capstone
Lecturer:	Robert MacDonald
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Project Title:	An Androgynous leader: The best of both worlds. A study addressing gender stereotyping issues within management - why androgynous leaders are the best leaders.
Word Count:	10,007

I hereby certify that the information contained in this (my submission) is information pertaining to research I conducted for this project. All information other than my own contribution will be fully referenced and listed in the relevant bibliography section at the rear of the project.
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Signature:	Ava Condon
Date:	11/7/22

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Name: Ava Condon

Student Number: 18330936

Degree for which thesis is submitted: BA(Hons) Business

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Abstract

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued support throughout my college years, especially in final year and throughout my capstone module.

Secondly I would like to thank my capstone supervisor, Robert MacDonald, for his continued support and advice throughout my capstone module. Also a special mention to my peers within the capstone module, with each other's support and advice we have thankfully all completed the module.

Introduction

For many years, issues regarding gender within the workplace have been prevalent, whether it be issues with the gender pay gap, gender favouritism or the glass ceiling, these issues are still relevant within today's workplace. Typically, the gendered stereotype of male and females within leadership roles affects how and who attains a leadership role within an organisation. This is because of a range of different factors. It is suggested as that male traits n leadership are more desired than female traits and that male leaders are more appropriate leaders, yet it has also been purported that an androgynous mix of leadership traits would actually create the best type of leader for many reasons. An androgynous leader would allow for a stereotypical male approach and a stereotypical female approach to both be utilised within the business. *(Park,1997)*

As of 2016, women in Ireland have obtained more degrees than men in Ireland, with 43.2% of women having a third level qualification compared to 40.7% of males in Ireland having a third level qualification, according to the CSO. *(Central Statistics Office, 2016)* Yet there is still a gender gap at the top executive level of the labour force. According to the CSO , as of 2019, 'Women occupied only 11.5% of chief executive officer positions and 28.3% of senior executive roles'. (*Central Statistics Office, 2019)* With qualifications, which both genders achieve, being at a similar percentage, yet the gender gap of management still present, this suggests that there is an issue regarding gender, as to why the gender gap of management is not closed, as of yet.

Insight from Eagly, suggests that women, significantly more than men, use more of a transformational leadership style, which is undoubtedly, a more successful style of leadership. (*Eagly, 2013).* Many authors agree that the transformational leadership style is adapted to a great extent from the transactional leadership style, which allows for better performance results in many areas including individual, group and organisational performance. *(Bass & Avolio, 1994; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Lowe et al, 1996)* In turn, producing a more successful business plausibly due to the more transformational style of a female leader. Of course, this statement is situational and depends significantly on many different aspects of the business and the certain leaders personality traits and leadership style.

To reiterate, this study explores how androgynous leaders make the best leaders, while also uncovering how the gender stereotyping in leadership can affect women in achieving leadership roles. Considering the fact that a more transactional approach being a leadership style which is more appropriate for modern organisations, and closer in style to a stereotypical female style of leadership. This study discusses how an androgynous leadership style would actually be the most effective leadership style in the retail environment.

Discrimination of women within the workplace

Discrimination against women in the workplace has been a reality in the working world for a large amount of time. This affects all women in the workplace and especially women aiming for managerial positions and ongoing advancement within their careers. The discrimination towards women within the workplace began with the socialization of children and cultures within educational systems affect the degree to which sexism comes to fruition within the workplace. Children usually see careers as stereotyped, for example, children have historically associated doctors as being male and nurses as being female. The issue is that this childhood view continues with sex bias that is embedded in the beliefs of many people and is still institutionalized within the policies and practices of many organizations. For example, a CEO is often more likely to be a man, which currently, is correct, statistically. These views remain with children throughout their lives and therefore can inevitably affect their careers as adults. This bias occurs daily and not only hinders the progression of many women's careers but also hinders the future success of a company as it can block them from attracting or retaining a substantial number of highly educated and experienced women within their workforce. *(Auster,1988)*

This discrimination within the workplace against women continues with the social aspects of the workplace. Informal 'old boy network' meetings can be a large part of social interaction between colleagues within the workplace and can be detrimental to the women of the organisation as it is often difficult and sometimes seemingly impossible for women to break into these long-established networks. This lasting cronyism can prove a major hindrance for women's advancement in the workplace. Women are more likely to be promoted to glass cliffs than men. Glass cliffs are precarious situations where there is greater risk and criticism associated with these positions. (*Hoyt,2010)* Therefore when promoted to a glass cliff, although it may seem like a great opportunity at first to the subject, it regularly transpires to be a promotion that doesn't actually benefit the woman's career due a low possibility of anything achievable resulting from the glass cliff. Thus, placing the subject in a situation where nothing in particular in benefits the advancement of the subject's career. A research study conducted Cooper and Davidson which explores several different females and their careers resulted in many women recognising the barriers that they are faced in progressing within their careers. These barriers were obvious to the females as soon as they entered middle management, without even entering senior management yet. Proving that these glass cliffs are encountered within all aspects of management and not just within senior management positions. *(Cooper et al, 1992)*

To truly understand the discrimination of women within the workplace, it is crucial to understand the different experiences men and women have within the workplace. Marshall understands that women in the past, have tended to follow their partners career paths due to domestic and familial responsibilities. This can result in male managers' prejudice. Interestingly, Marshall also discusses how this tends to make women within this position to focus on job opportunities rather career opportunities. This subsequently producing less opportunity for progression within their career, as it generates quicker essential monetary funds, rather than focusing on a career which

takes a longer amount of time to gain monetary benefits *(Marshall, 1984)* Mavin suggests that a further emphasis on work-life balance programmes which are open for men and women to attend would allow for a deeper understanding of what women face balancing their career, domestic responsibilities and familial responsibilities. These programmes would also encourage the development of businesses to ensure a breakdown of the original male model of management and organisation. Furthermore allowing modern businesses to develop further and to allow room for societal changes that are ever occurring *(Mavin, 2001)* .

The discrimination is significant throughout the whole process of a woman's career. During selection and recruitment, evaluators often presume that the males applying for the role will have the masculine attributes associated with the job and that the females applying for the position will lack these particular attributes required for the job, due to gender stereotyping embedded in our judgement. This suggests that the gender stereotyping of male and female attributes begins at the early stages of the recruitment process. For example; recruiters may presume a man or woman is not capable of carrying out the tasks required for a particular role due to their gender *(Auster, 1988)* This is the beginning of the stereotyping that can also affect the amount of opportunities that women are afforded to progress into leadership positions. This stereotyping affects the progression of women into leadership roles as it halts their experience. Indeed, this culture of gender stereotyping in the hiring process potentially affects the degree to which organisations are a success or failure.

Stereotypes of male and female leaders

Prime discusses how a person's sex is 'not a reliable indicator of how that person would lead'. Yet this does not prevent the stereotyping of female and male leaders within organisations *(Prime,2009).* There are general global stereotypical beliefs about male and female leadership performances in business. Women consistently are said to possess less leadership qualities than men. Female leaders are commonly less task oriented and are more relationship oriented than male leaders who are stereotypically said to be more task oriented and less relationship orientated. The common stereotyped male traits portray men to have all of the qualities for leadership whereas stereotyped female traits would portray women to be less suited to leadership positions. Within DeMatteo's study, where female managers were interviewed and surveyed, it was discovered that stereotypically male traits were defined as task-orientated; while usually being assertive and decisive, yet they had trouble being expressive. Those with stereotypical feminine traits were more people-orientated; while usually possessing good interpersonal skills but lacking assertiveness skills and decisiveness. Female managers with both feminine and masculine characteristics were discovered to be both people oriented and task orientated *(DeMatteo, 1994).* Women in leadership positions possessing more male attributes like being 'task orientated' are considered hostile leaders whereas the very same attributes are considered a demonstration of 'good leadership' when portrayed by a man. Typical female leadership behaviours include consulting, team building, more relationship oriented than task orientated behaviours, mentoring, supporting, rewarding, inspiring whereas male leadership behaviours include problem-solving, influencing upward and delegating. It is also a common tendency is to associate higher power and status with males. *(Prime et al, 2009)*

Ladegaard argues that due to ever-developing management styles and expectations, good management skills are no longer associated with just traditionally masculine leadership qualities, which include; being authoritative, strong-minded, decisive, aggressive, competitive and goal-orientated. These are all stereotypically attributes most people associate with males. It is acknowledged that good leadership now needs to be transformational, collaborative and relationship orientated. *(Ladegaard, 2011)*. Ostensibly, these are all attributes more stereotypically associated with females in leadership roles. Despite this, managers who are male do not always relate to male stereotypical traits that are more task-orientated. Furthermore, not all women possess those stereotypically traits that are more relationship orientated. Due to our automatic tendency as people to place others in a gender, either male or female, these are the most popular choices. Yet, androgynous is also a choice. (*Park,1997)*

A female style of leadership is generally characterised as being personal, relational and facilitative, which would be normally preferred by women, whereas the male style would be characterised as assertive, directive and commanding and normally preferred by men. The female leader is stereotyped to usually take a more emotional approach which is why the majority of research suggests that women are more relationship oriented than task orientated *(Ladegaard,2011).* Whilst acknowledging this, due to the changing approach to management in many business sectors, a more relationship-oriented approach within management may be more attractive to many employees and employers alike. This suggests that a stereotypical female approach to leadership and management will in due course become a more popular style of management which should in turn increase the amount of females in management positions. *(Ladegaard, 2011)*

Cooper and Davidson discussed how there are a larger proportion of female leaders within service industries which are more relationship orientated. These include banking and retail services. With more male leaders within industrial services, which are more task orientated. These include industries like manufacturing and information technology. *(Cooper et al, 1992)* These results from Cooper and Davidson align with the ideas of stereotypical female leaders being more closely aligned with relationship orientated work place environment. With their counterpart of stereotypical male leaders being better suited to a task-orientated work place environment.

During the study conducted by Ladegaard, it was found that the main difference between male and female leaders was the way in which their employees responded to them. As previously mentioned, sex bias is embedded in many organisations, thus proving how organisations as a whole have a stereotyped idea of male and female leaders. As Ladegaard discusses, despite years of equal opportunities and diversity being to the forefront of many organisations' policies, many organisations still have a traditionally male standard of management ideals which 'simply positions women out of place'. This is leading to situations where, for women to gain an opportunity in a managerial position, similar to their male counterparts, they must change their approach to management to 'manage like a man' instead *(Ladegaard,2011).* Although 'managing like a man' is an option, as Ely and Padavic suggest to act masculine within a work environment is a 'double bind'. 'Managing like a man' vby

acting assertive and direct, would raise questions within the workplace about the expectation of traditional female traits that they, as a female, are predisposed to. However, if the female in question, were to act feminine within the workplace, this could hinder their progression within leadership *(Ely et al, 2007).* Which is why these stereotypical approaches of male and female managers could be seen as a societal issue as well as an issue within management of businesses.

Why androgynous leaders are the best leaders

As discussed by Atwater and Roush, in the modern working world, women are now being exposed to more and more leadership opportunities. This is due to the increasingly improved education and social-cultural advancements for women. This change of circumstances has somewhat reduced the number of barriers for women to advance in their careers. Additionally, the ban on sex-discrimination in the workplace has increased women's opportunities within the workplace, *(Atwater et al,1994).* These advancements within the last century have been crucial in further engaging women within their workplaces yet the gender gap is notably still present, particularly in leadership positions. One way to understand the gender gap, is to consider the differences between women and men on traits associated with leadership. Although personal traits do place a crucial part in effective leadership, traits should not be defined as either masculine or feminine, when both genders can portray these attributes. If an androgynous style of leadership is the ideal mix of the male and female leader, drawing from the most positive attributes of each style of stereotypical female and male managers, an androgynous approach seemingly creates the most effective manager. Many people associate an androgynous combination of styles with effective leadership, which includes diverse traits such as intelligence, risk taking, empathy and trustworthiness and the ability to persuade, motivate and inspire others. *(Park,1997)*

Some research indicates that men show a higher level of assertiveness than their female counterparts whereas women show a higher level of integrity than male colleagues. *(Hoyt,2010)* Within the workplace, male and female traits are seemingly similar, in terms of qualifications and therefore there should not be a discriminatory factor within the decision of management roles. Despite this, there currently is still discrimination against women within the workplace. The main cause of ongoing discrimination of this nature in the workplace is the stereotyping of working women. Contrary to popular belief and popular stereotypes within the workforce, women do not always lead with a more of a relationship-oriented style and less of a task-oriented style in organisational studies.

There is a significant disproportionate responsibility held by women with regard to domestic duties which consequently leads to women dealing with significantly more conflict between work and home responsibilities than men. Greater domestic responsibility may result in women having somewhat less experience than their male counterparts, which naturally contributes to the gender pay gap. Often workplaces don't place an emphasis on employees having a work/life balance and therefore this can affect progress for women due to the workplace cultural norms of long hours, no flexibility and possible travel and relocation expectations. As expected those who spend longer hours on these jobs and conform to these cultural norms tend to be

offered more promotional opportunities and experience significantly more advancement within the workplace. *(Hoyt, 2010)*

Effective leadership is clearly being redefined as leadership with different and diverse traits encapsulating more androgynous attributes rather than just male orientated attributes. This new definition of effective leadership heavily suggests that organisations that continue to stereotype typical male and female traits when recruiting for managerial positions potentially risk becoming less successful organisations. Such organisations can mitigate this grave risk and increase the likelihood of organisational success with detailed reflection on their gender stereotypical approaches and by broadening their outlook to consider the more recent redefined attributes of a successful leader.

Research Question and Objectives

Issues addressing gender stereotyping within management- why androgynous leaders are the best leaders.

The research questions posits that androgynous leaders are the best leaders within the retail work environment while examining common issues regarding gender stereotyping within management. The objective of this research project is to explore whether the androgynous leader is the best leader for a retail environment. The research will also explore how the gender stereotyping of male and female managers can affect the managers themselves and their employees. Researchers have consistently identified how the stereotypical gendered roles of male and females can affect the career progression of male managers positively and female managers negatively. Laadegard is a significant researcher in the sphere of gender difference within management and has completed several pieces of insightful research regarding this ongoing issue, thus forming a large amount of the literature in this area and research evidence for a difference between male and female managers and their stereotypes. *(Laadegard,2011)* Despite this, not all female and male managers are suited into their stereotyped managerial role as their assigned gender, which can change the pathway how managers and staff alike can receive them as managers, as they are unlike their assumed stereotypical management style. Cooper and Davidson's research dissects how relationship orientated leaders are more suited to a retail environment rather than task orientated leader. Despite this not all stereotypical female leaders are relationship orientated, as suggested by DeMatteo *(Cooper et al,1992).* As DeMatteos' survey with female managers discusses, stereotypically female managers are significantly more likely to be relationship orientated in their leadership approach. Although stereotypically female managers are more relationship orientated whereas stereotypical male managers are more task orientated, this can also differ depending on the manager and the work environment they find themselves in. *(DeMatteo,1994)*

Although there have been notable advancements in women's progression within managerial fields, there is still a clear gap between the amount of male CEOs and females CEOs across business sectors. The gap remains in spite of more women completing third level degrees than men in recent years. A significant issue that still arises within the modern world is that women generally remain tasked with more domestic duties and familial responsibilities than their male colleagues. Despite there still being a significant gap, with the percentages of male and female leaders within management, there is clear opportunity for growth and change within the business sector. Particularly regarding how we assess leadership fields. It is apparent that androgynous leaders are leaders with mixed abilities. These include both relationship orientated and task orientated abilities which further suggests that an androgynous leader is most suitable for an ever changing working environment that demands different abilities, like retail. This study examines how stereotypical male and stereotypical female leaders differ, yet if there was a blend of both of these stereotyped leadership styles, as an androgynous leader, an androgynous leader would be the most beneficial within the retail work place.

SECTION C
Methodologies
Philosophical approach
This research is interpretive in nature. The ontological position of this study argues that androgynous leaders are more beneficial for team cohesion within a workplace, specifically a retail space. The epistemology of this study stems from the researchers own experience within a retail workplace, several literature reviews of different related journals which explore similar topics regarding gender stereotyping of management and how androgyny can be more beneficial within the workplace rather than stereotypical gendered roles. Laadegard discusses that the main difference between male and female leaders and management is how their employees respond to them. Sex bias is still embedded in many organisations which is frequently represents a barrier to female employees being promoted to higher authoritative positions. Despite this, according to many different researchers, a female stereotypical leader is more favoured within the workplace among employees, however an androgynous approach by managers would seemingly produce a 'best of both worlds' situation. An androgynous approach by both male and female leaders would allow for their most beneficial and effective traits to be used to organisational advantage within the workplace. Particularly within a retail setting, where there are a range of different issues that retail managers need to address including, dealing with employees, stock, customers and stakeholders, it is vital to have a leader with mixed abilities to be able to deal with each and every situation presented to them. Suggesting that a mixed ability approach would be most beneficial within a retail environment. (*Laadegard, 2011*)

The epistemology of this research project continues with qualitative research which allows for gathering of more detailed information and opinions on how managers approach their style of leadership and how they feel androgynous leaders may affect a workplace. The current research project also involves quantitative research which explores how employees feel about androgyny and stereotypical female and male traits within management and how these different androgynous traits and stereotypical traits may affect the cohesion of their team and workplace.

Research design
The approach being used for this research project is a mixed methods approach which includes qualitative and quantitative methods of research. This mixed methods approach of including qualitative and quantitative research is crucial. This allows for both experiences from employees and leaders within retail management to be analysed and to therefore give a better insight to which type of leader would be best suited for a retail environment.

The qualitative method used during this research project is interviews. The interviews with several different male and female managers will allow for discussion of the experience of these managers and allow them to voice different opinions on how their own leadership style may weigh more towards either a male or female approach and how this may affect their employees. This will allow for a larger amount of opinionated information on how androgynous traits may affect employees and management in a positive or negative way and also how stereotypical female and male traits may affect employees, management and the cohesion of a team within a retail workspace. The interviews also allowed for the managers traits and

experiences to be discussed. As the interviews are semi-structured, the aim of each interview is to allow a broad question for the interviewee to expand on as they seem fit. This approach is intended to draw out a more natural insight into the participants way of work rather than the interview leading the participants to fit into a certain predefined management style; stereotypical female manager, stereotypical male manager or an androgynous manager. The interviews are intended to uncover more insights regarding how retail managers feel about their own management style. As well as this, the interview should also elucidate which management style named in this research paper the managers feel best fits their own personal management style and which management style they feel best aligns with their team.

The quantitative approach used during this research project is carried out through surveys. The survey allows the researcher to explore an employee's point of view of how they feel management should approach situations which will further indicate how an androgynous approach will be more beneficial for the workplace. It is expected that the majority of employees will lean towards favouring more androgynous managerial approaches and styles rather than stereotypical male or female approaches. The mixed methods approach of using surveys and interviews with staff from different organisational positions within retail allows for a range of varying experiences to be considered and reviewed.

It is essential to conduct these interviews as it shapes the research project and gives insight to a real retail environment and how managers and employees in a retail setting may react to certain situations. This will provide a more in depth understanding of how an average retail space may differ with management's use of different styles of leadership and varied managerial personality types. The current research allows for reporting of realistic first-hand depictions of management styles, rather than descriptions detailed in literature reviews which are considered second-hand information. This paper presents a more up-to-date analysis which takes into account different constraints which affects managers within the modern world, most notably, the global pandemic which has changed the modern retail experience with the competition of the growing market share of online stores being the more relevant than it has ever been. By completing the qualitative and quantitative research, it will allow for comparable research against both the qualitative and quantitative results as well as analysis and discussion with the literature review.

Quantitative Design
The survey will have 10 questions. The survey will be open to the public for a month, allowing enough time for a good amount of responses. Questions will be centred around how employees feel about managers and what type of traits they prefer in managers. Question one asks the age of the research participant. It is possible that determining the age of participants could provide insight if the answers provided throughout the survey reflected a clear generational difference of opinion. Question two asks the participant how long they have worked within retail, which again could possibly affect the participants responses. More experience within the retail environment and possibly experience with a larger number of managers may lead to different answers compared to those with less experience in the sector. Question 3 determines whether the participant may have had a leadership role which again may sway their opinion of how managers may approach staff and the manager questioned position.

Questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, ask more specific questions related to the managers traits and but each trait provided is related to a specific type of manager, whether it be stereotypical male and female styles or an androgynous type of managers personality trait. The answers to these questions should begin to form an idea if the participants rather a stereotypical male, stereotypical female or an androgynous leader.

Question 9 and 10 are even more specific in that they ask the participant to choose between certain traits. There are three sets of traits. These set of traits fall into the categories of either stereotypical male, female or androgynous traits. The answers for the questions aim to determine which type of manager each employee prefers. Furthering the research in the determining which type of leader is most preferred for the retail environment.

The outcome of this survey should be able to determine which type of manager an employee prefers, therefore helping to determine whether the research question is accurate.

Qualitative Design
This qualitative part of the research will be conducted with semi-structured interviews with several different managers with varying number of years of experience in retail management. There will be several different questions within these separate interviews. Each of these questions will help determine each managers approach to management and how they are each categorised within the three different types of managers within this research project.

The outcome of these interviews should be able to determine how the different styles of managers, whether androgynous or stereotypical male or female styles, affect their retail management roles and their staff and what the future of management may bring. The qualitative design and structure allows the interviewees to discuss their experiences within their leadership roles, which allow for further insight about the leadership roles.

Questions 1 to 5 posed to the interviewee are focused on drawing out how many years' experience the interviewee has as a retail manager, their experiences within management positions and who they feel they are as a manager. Similarly the quantitative design, these questions of experience further allows the researcher to determine whether perhaps a generational difference in opinion could affect how management view the workplace. This could affect how they interact with their employees and how they decide to perform as a leader.

Questions 6 and 7 allows the interviewee to reflect on their time within management and how they could possibly make improvements as a manager. This allows for a way for the interviewer to discover how management may view their positions and what is needed within the management field. This is important to gage what type of manager the interviewee could be, and to be able to distinguish whether they align with stereotyped gendered categories or the androgynous category.

Question 8 asks management participants define what is most important within their field of work, especially in a retail position. This may prove a challenging question for some managers and will permit the researcher to see if the manager is more emotionally focused on their employees or their customers, which can assign the interviewee to the stereotyped gendered categories or the androgynous category.

Questions 9 and 10 are directed towards stereotyped male and female leaders and discovering how this may still be affecting retail spaces or if it even is an issue within retail spaces. This may also allow the research to dissect the interviewees answer and to discover whether or not the interviewee may align with either a male stereotyped, female stereotyped or androgynous category of leadership.

Sampling
The survey was conducted through the online survey platform, survey monkey. It was then distributed through the researcher's personal social media platform of Instagram, further shared through messaging service of WhatsApp. It was also shared through colleagues that work within the same retail space as the researcher. The distribution approach for the survey facilitated snowball sampling, which allowed for diverse responses from a wider range of individuals. This allowed for a larger amount of responses as well. The questionnaire is aimed at people that work within a retail space currently or have previously worked with a retail space and therefore have experience with retail managers and the type of traits and personality common within retail environment. It is essential to particularly have answers from previous or current employees within a retail setting as these answers will give the most accurate responses for a retail setting. This will determine whether the research question is accurate and that androgynous leaders are better suited to the retail environment rather than stereotypical male or stereotypical female leaders. By using questions 9 and 10 with the sample of past and present retail workers, it allows for a wide range of different answers and a potential generational difference of opinion. The generational differencing of opinion could also be affected by the covid-19 pandemic which could possibly show a difference in management within post pandemic retail.

The process included interviews with several different managers and supervisors with different levels and types of experiences within the shopping retail sector, as well as the food and beverage retail sector. There were six managers altogether. Three managers were female. Three managers were male. It is important to have an equal amount of both female and male managers and supervisors to give a fair and equal opportunity for accurate responses for the qualitative research. All interviewees were of management or supervisory roles and had a range of different years of experience. The sample size of interviewees were largely based on the availability of the interviewees and willingness of interviewees to participate within the study, the majority of interviewees were previously known to the researcher due to being employed within the same large retail space.

Limitations
Limitations for this study revolve around the covid-19 pandemic. This included limitations such as not all interviewees being comfortable being interviewed in person due to risk of virus transmission. This potentially affects the interviews as

body language can provide crucial information about how an interviewee may feel about a topic.

Time constraints were a significant limitation for the current project. More time would have allowed a more in depth exploration of many more different stances on the topic of gender stereotyping in retail management. An allocation of more time would also have allowed for a larger amount of interviews to be conducted and therefore could have swayed the results of the data analysis. A larger sample size with more data gathered on diverse management styles could easily have affected the results and analysis of the current research project. Indeed, including management from other industries in the sample, for instance the technology, finance and construction industries, may produce different results to the current research project .

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this capstone project, the researcher followed the National College of Irelands (NCI) guidelines as they were appropriate to this project. A consent form was presented to the participants of the survey at the start of the survey stating that on completion of the survey, all answers will be used within the project. A consent form was also presented to the participants of the interview at the beginning of the interview, stating that all answers provided may be used within the project. Interviewees were also asked to sign a consent form, ensuring they are aware that the interview will be recorded for purposes of the project. The interview was only conducted with willing and able interviewees were a time and date that suited both the interviewee and interviewer.

As per the National College of Ireland's (NCI) guidelines, all consent forms, survey answers, interview recordings will be stored on a safe file with a password encryption for the required amount of time, before being deleted.

SECTION D
Analysis and Findings
The analysis and findings section will display and discuss the data and findings from both the quantitative and qualitative sections. Both methods will allow the research question of 'why androgynous leaders are the best leaders' to be further discussed and answered. It will also give further insight on how management can be affected by different styles of leadership and how this may subsequently affect employees.

This survey was open for one month and produced a total of 76 responses. 84.21% of responses were from the 18-24 year old category, 6.58% of the responses were from the 25-34 year old category, 7.89% of the responses were from the 35-44 year old category and 1.32% of responses were from the 55-64 year old category. The survey was particularly aimed at people working in retail currently or by people that have previously worked in retail. The majority of the surveys completed through social media platforms including Instagram and WhatsApp which the majority of their prevalent users are within the younger age categories.

Throughout the Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative research, it was clear there were poignant parts of both pieces of research that related to each other. This demonstrated how unlike previously posited by this researcher, stereotypical female leadership is considered more appropriate for the retail space rather than androgynous leadership. During this section of the research project, the discussion will centre on the current research's results which go against the previously believed position that an androgynous approach would be best for retail management. In actuality, the quantitative and qualitative research results support a preference towards a stereotypical female leadership approach.

Relationship-orientated leader
A key theme throughout the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative research displayed that both the vast majority (83.3%) of retail managers who were interviewed leaned towards a more relationship orientated approach and over 75% of retail employees surveyed chose relationship orientated approach as their preferred management style. As previously discussed by Laadegard, a stereotypical female leader is more inclined to take a more emotional approach to their workplace which would be more classified to a relationship-orientated leader. Whereas a stereotypical male leader is more likely to take a more goal orientated approach which would strongly relate to a task orientated approach. *(Laadegard,2011)*
This also heavily relates to Cooper and Davidson's approach, which argues that relationship orientated leaders are more suited to a relationship led working environment, with an example of this being retail *(Cooper et al, 1992).*

Consistently, throughout both pieces of research, the female stereotypical traits were more apparent than stereotypical male traits or as previously thought, androgynous traits. This was apparent during the interviews when managers were asked to describe themselves as a manager. Traits that were named consistently by all six managers, three male and three female, were stereotypically female. These traits included; facilitative, understanding, supportive and encouraging. Prime discussed how these traits are stereotypically female traits which is how interviewed managers were either placed within the category of stereotypically female, stereotypically male or androgynous*. (Prime et al, 2009)* The question posed whether the retail managers

where either relationship orientated or task orientated. This resulted in four of the managers deciding they were both relationship orientated and task orientated as relationships and tasks were both crucial parts of their job and were equally important in their role as a retail manager. Thus defining these managers as possible androgynous leaders or as leaders of mixed abilities. Two of the managers concluded they were relationship orientated. All six managers used the word communication throughout their interviews as one of the most essential traits to possess as a manager. This also adds to the research as communication being so frequently mentioned throughout all interviews suggests that the managers interviewed may have been more relationship orientated than they previously presumed they were. The four managers that discussed both relationship orientated and task orientated traits can be classified as an androgynous style of leadership. Whereas the two managers that discussed only relationship orientated traits can be more accurately classified as displaying a stereotypical female type of leadership style.

Likewise, the survey returned similar results with 65,79% of those surveyed preferring a set of female stereotypical traits, which included understanding, relationship-orientated and non-confrontational. With only 5.26% of those surveyed choosing stereotypical male traits which included, dominant, less emotionally expressive and task orientated. 28.95% of employees chose an androgynous set of traits for a manager which included trust-worthy, facilitative and risk-taking. As those being surveyed didn't know which traits were stereotypically male, stereotypically female or androgynous, the research results would again imply that a stereotypically female manager would be preferred over an androgynous manager within a retail space.

In addition to this, a similar question was asked of the six retail managers within the interviews, as was asked of the retail employees within their survey for the quantitative research. This allowed for fair and comparable results from the quantitative and qualitative parts of the research project. This is crucial to be able to give accurate results and a conclusion for the hypothesis which is aligns with the research.

Stereotypical male leader
Both quantitative and qualitative findings, did not demonstrate a preference for a stereotypically male approach with none of the retail managers having traits associated with a stereotypical male managerial approach. Similarly with the quantitative research approach, only a small percentage (5.26%) of employees preferred a stereotypically male traits in a manager. Many of the answers, within both the quantitative and qualitative research leaned towards a preference among participants for a more stereotypically female leadership approach with the three male managers and three female managers being interviewed. Two of the female managers and two of the male managers both answered several of the questions with a stereotypical female approach. Whereas one female manager and one male manager answered the same set of questions showing a preference for an androgynous leadership approach. Furthermore, like the quantitative research method, there was a lack of stereotypical male manager responses, which also aligns with the quantitative analysis that stereotypical female managers are more accepted within a retail work environment. These results clearly show that the

stereotypical male traits would not be appropriate or ideally suited to a retail working environment. This also correlates to Cooper and Davidson's research with discusses how task orientated leaders, which are stereotypical male leaders are more suited to task led working environments, which include manufacturing and information technology. Where as relationship orientated leaders, which are stereotypically female leaders are better suited to relationship orientated workplaces which would include retail and banking *(Cooper et al, 1992).*

Stereotypically female leader instead of an androgynous leader
A significant unexpected result of both the qualitative and quantitative results is the obvious leaning towards a stereotypical female leadership approach instead of the expected androgynous approach. 83% of managers, both male and female and 65.79% of employees, again both male and female, preferred a set of stereotypical female traits, rather than androgynous or a stereotypical male approach. This suggests that a stereotypical female leader is a better fit for a retail working environment, rather than a stereotypical male leader or a mix of both, as in an androgynous leader. This was an unexpected resulted. However there were limitations in the current research project including time constraints and a larger sample size for both the qualitative and the quantitative research, with more varied opinions and experiences from both the managers and employees could have yielded different results.

SECTION E
Discussion and Conclusion

This study discusses gender stereotyping issues in the workplace and then delves into the question of whether or not androgynous leaders are the best leaders within a retail workplace. Section B of this research project focuses on a literature review of several studies within the management and leadership fields. The literature review details the background of androgynous leadership including issues regarding gender stereotyping within management, discrimination against women within the workplace, stereotyping of male leaders and female leaders and finally the discussion of why the current study posits that androgynous leaders are the best leaders.

Throughout Section B, the culture of bias towards women, the impact of this bias on women retaining significant leadership positions and the resulting effect on a business' success was explored. *(Auster,1998)* This bias affects the progression of women within leadership and therefore has a detrimental effect on their careers within leadership roles due to their lack of experience within leadership style roles. Hoyt dissects how women also experience social discrimination within the workplace, with old boys networks still playing a large role in a business' dynamic and social life. *(Hoyt, 2010)* Ely's discussion regarding discrimination issues that force women into a 'double bind' within the workplace by choosing between being feminine or masculine within the workplace, further pushes women away from progression. A choice of choosing whether to be masculine or feminine purely to progress in one's career should not be a decision that should be put into consideration *(Ely et al, 2007).* It can further affect women within the workplace as it prevents networking with many people in leadership positions. The discrimination associated with stereotyping between male and females applying for leadership positions can affect the progress of women's careers throughout the career lifecycle. This can not only be detrimental to the women's' careers but also to the business sector as a whole. *(Auster, 1998)* Marshall continues this argument discussing how women tend to balance familial and domestic duties as well as their career. This can result in women choosing job opportunities rather than career opportunities, even though they have less opportunity for progression towards management positions. Due to the intrinsic benefits that a job has over focusing on a career *(Mavin, 2001).* As Ladegaard discusses, management styles are ever-changing as well as management expectations. Traditionally management had a strong masculine stereotype influence, with words like authoritative, strong minded and competitive being strongly associated with a stereotypical masculine style. Yet a leadership style within a modern world should be more associated with traits like transformational, collaborative and relationship-orientated.*(Ladegaard,2011)*

Stereotypically female managers who are typically more relationship-orientated than stereotypical male managers, lean closer towards what Ladegaard suggests as the better leadership style in the modern world. Females traits include being more personal, facilitative and relationship-orientated *(Ladegaard,2011).* This suggests that an androgynous leader would be more beneficial to the workplace as it brings together both positive attributes of male and female stereotypical styles, therefore maintaining the relationship-orientated approach that female stereotypical leaders would be more inclined to use. Effective leadership is crucial for an organisation to

be able to cope with dynamic situations. This leadership is androgynous leadership as it encases the best traits of both female stereotypical leaders and male stereotypical leaders. This can also be described as a person with mixed abilities which would benefit a range of different industries and working environments, which could also possibly include retail as well as a range of other industries.

A mixed methods approach in this research study allowed for a deeper insight in how modern managers and modern employees within retail, associate with management and leadership skills that are needed. The quantitative research conducted with employees posed several differing answers compared to the interviews completed with managers. It is clear from this research that managers and employees have similar views on how management should be approached. 75% of employees responding that employees should be managers first priority, whereas all managers discussed how they think customers are managers first priority. This suggest that the majority of employees would prefer a relationship orientated manager, which again was proven further on in the survey when over 65% of employees chose a set of female stereotypical traits. Just over 5% of employees indicated a preference for the male stereotypical traits and 29% of employees favoured androgynous leadership traits in managers. From these results, it can be deduced that the majority of employees would choose a female stereotypical manager which fits the relationship orientated style of leadership.

Similar results appeared during interviews conducted with managers during the qualitative research process. This qualitative research gave more insight into managers traits and their experiences within the retail working environment with staff and their leadership responsibilities. The majority of managers interviewed would fit the description of a female stereotypical approach or an androgynous approach. Many managerial approaches discussed by the managers interviewed were very similar to female stereotypical approaches, which included empathy with a large emphasis on the relationship with employees. A smaller selection of managers were closer related to an androgynous approach or has androgynous tendencies when describing how they would manage certain situations.

Although the question at the beginning of the research project focused on androgynous leaders within the retail sector being the best option for a management style, it is clear throughout research that this may not be the case. As DeMatteo reveals within his research, stereotypical female leaders are more relationship orientated, this perhaps is the reason that a stereotypical female leader is more preferred. As socialising and communication is even more important within a retail customer setting, a relationship orientated manager may be seen as a more preferable style of leadership.*(DeMatteo, 1994)*

Referring back to the literature review, Prime discusses how stereotypical female leadership traits include more relationship orientated than task orientated traits, such as, mentoring, supporting, reward and inspiring. *(Prime et al, 2009)* There are more stereotypical female traits that are closely related to androgynous traits rather than stereotypical traits. It could be considered that because of this, a stereotypical female leader is more closely related to an androgynous leader rather a stereotypical male leader. Thus suggesting that a stereotypical female or an androgynous leader would both be appropriate managerial approaches within a retail working

environment. Laadegard argues that good leadership skills can no longer just be associated with traditional masculine leadership qualities, like authoritative, strong-minded, decisive, aggressive, competitive and goal orientated. As the world of management continues to develop and change, many aspects of management have to continue to change and develop with it. Transformational, collaborative and relationship orientated is how Laadegard describes good modern leadership. *(Laadegard, 2011).* Interestingly, this description of a leader would most closely relate to a stereotypical female leader, rather than a stereotypical male leader or even an androgynous leader. Thus agreeing again with the qualitative and quantitative research that would suggest that a stereotypical female with a relationship orientated style of leadership would be most appropriate within a retail environment. As mentioned within the literature review, Cooper and Davidson's discuss how averagely there are a larger amount of female leaders with management positions in service led industries, which includes banking and retail. With more male leaders within task led industries which include information technology and manufacturing *(Cooper et al, 1992).* This information similarly agrees with the qualitative and quantitative research results which would suggest that a stereotypical female leader is better suited to a retail environment due to a retail environment being more relationship orientated.

Eagly discusses how a transformational style of leadership, is undoubtedly a more successful style of leadership, compared to a transactional style of leadership. *(Eagly, 2013)* As previously stated throughout the research project, an androgynous leader possesses mixed abilities which could possibly allow the androgynous leader to work in several different industries. However, this does not mean that the androgynous leader is best suited towards any particular type of field. As previously mentioned, the transformational style of leadership, related to a relationship style of leadership, is again more associated with a stereotypical female leader This implies that even though an androgynous style of leadership may be more appropriate in certain workplaces, it may not be perfect for a retail workplace environment. Instead of an androgynous leadership style, a female stereotypical leader, or a transformational leadership style may be better for retail. This could be due to the more relationship-orientated approach undertaken by these leaders. As retail is predominately associated with people and relationships with customers, colleagues, buyers and other stakeholders of the business, relationships are crucial to a successful retail environment. This further agrees with Cooper and Davidson's research, which states that a relationship-orientated leader is most appropriate for a retail working environment *(Cooper et al, 1992).* If a leader is more relationship orientated within a retail environment, rather than task-orientated, it will only further benefit all stakeholders of the business and the success of the business itself. Not only does a relationship-oriented leader model communication skills for retail employees conversing with customers, but this approach also allows for any issues within in the business to be solved easily and in a timely fashion with good communication.

Although the hypothesis of the research project suggested that androgynous leaders were the best leaders for a retail environment due to many reasons, this may not be true for a retail environment. However, it is yet to be seen if androgynous leaders are the best leaders for other work place environments. An androgynous leader displays both relationship and task orientated leaders abilities and traits. In saying this, an

androgynous leader may have many different outcomes for a range of different situation that may be presented within their an environment. An androgynous leader is able to cope with any task or confrontation due to this large amount of different abilities at their disposal. *(Park, 1997)* However, as previously mentioned, a relationship orientated leader would be more suited to a retail environment in particular due to the amount of stakeholders within a retail working environment.

Further research on the topic of an androgynous leaders, should consider focussing on different organisations within different industries, including technology, production, construction, finance and science. These industries would have a larger focus on tasks rather than relationships, compared to a retail environments which are customer facing and possibly more suited to an androgynous leader for this reason. Due to time constraints, this was not possible for this research project. However with further research larger samples for surveys with employees and interviews with managers could yield a different answer to the hypothesis, due to further differing experiences and opinions across sectors. A larger sample size for quantitative and qualitative research would only further the investigation and possibly give a completely differing response.

In conclusion, an androgynous leader is not the best leader for a retail environment. A stereotypical female leader is best suited to a retail environment. This is due to the relationship-orientated approach of stereotypically female leaders which is suited to an environment heavily focused on relationships with many different stakeholders, rather than task orientated. Yet, an androgynous leader is still developing. With more research completed with androgynous leaders in several different industries, an androgynous leader may be prove perfectly suited to a different industries where task orientation is more crucial to achieving business goals.

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