



BI Norwegian Business School - campus Oslo

GRA 19703

Master Thesis

Thesis Master of Science

Narratives of change in OBOS and ManpowerGroup:
Temporal perspectives on gender equality

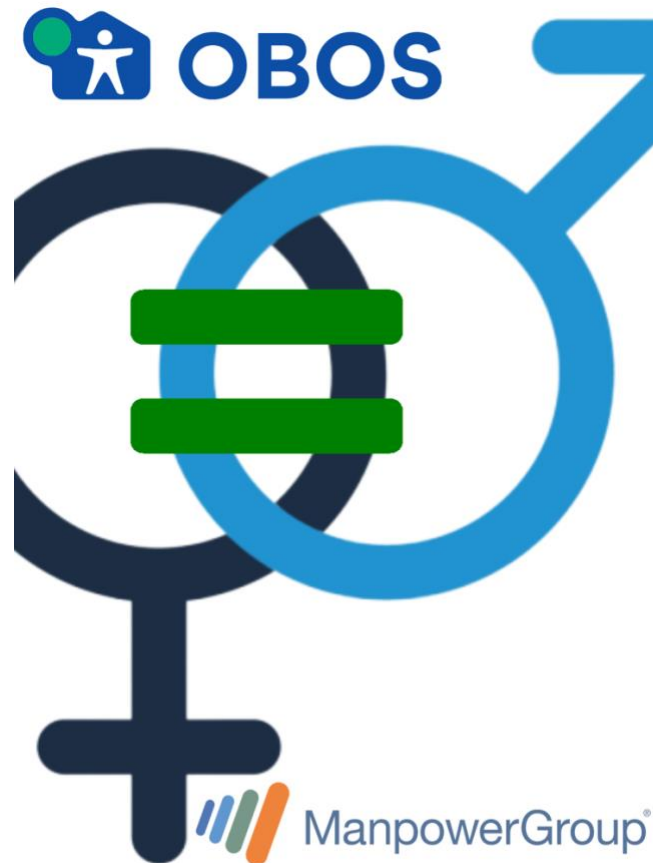
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Start: 15.01.2020 09.00

Finish: 01.09.2020 12.00

Narratives of change in OBOS and ManpowerGroup:

Temporal perspectives on gender equality



Examination Code:

GRA 19703

Study Program:

Master of Science in Business with Major in Leadership and Change

Supervisor:

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Campus:

BI Oslo

*“This thesis is a part of the MSc programme at BI Norwegian Business School.
The school takes no responsibility for the methods used, results found and conclusions
drawn.”*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a final result of our Master of Science in Leadership and Change at BI Norwegian Business School, we are proud to finally present our master thesis.

First and foremost, we want to thank our supervisor Øyvind Kvalnes who has been helpful with his valuable insights, support and feedback, and advice throughout this master thesis. Despite the difficult times with Covid-19, we are grateful for your guidance and a positive mindset toward our thesis.

We are also grateful to the partners of this master thesis, OBOS and ManpowerGroup, that have shared their thoughts and stories with great enthusiasm and passion. Their time and interest in our thesis have been crucial for our completion, and it would not have been possible without their participation. A special thank you goes to Heidi Aven who inspired us to write about gender equality. Her passion and willpower have made us believe that change can happen if we work together.

Our years at BI Norwegian Business School would not have been the same without our classmates and professors. We are grateful for their competence, support, and insight throughout these last few years.

Last but not least, we would like to thank our families for continuous support, love, and encouragement. We would also like to give a huge thank you to our emotional support, the great dog Finn, throughout these years. His hugs, cuddles, and long walks have been crucial and important for our success in our studies.

Cecilie Dokka
Oslo, June 2020

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Oslo, June 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	I
PART I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 GENDER INEQUALITY IS A GLOBAL ISSUE	1
1.2 GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE	1
1.3 NORWAY AND GENDER EQUALITY	2
1.3.1 <i>The Nordic Gender Equality Paradox</i>	2
1.4 SHE.....	3
1.4.1 <i>SHE and Heidi Aven</i>	3
1.5 MOTIVATION AND EXPECTATIONS.....	5
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	6
1.7 TWO TOP TEN COMPANIES	6
1.7.1 <i>OBOS</i>	7
1.7.2 <i>ManpowerGroup</i>	7
PART II: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	8
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	8
2.2 POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP	9
2.3 APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY	10
2.4 THE 4-D MODEL	11
2.4.1 <i>Discovery</i>	11
2.4.2 <i>Dream</i>	12
2.4.3 <i>Design</i>	12
2.4.4 <i>Destiny</i>	12
2.5 THE ROLE OF THE MANAGER	13
2.6 RECRUITMENT	14
2.7 ETHICAL AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP	16
2.7.1 <i>Inclusive leadership</i>	16
2.7.2 <i>Ethical Leadership</i>	19
PART III: METHODOLOGY.....	20
3.1 OVERVIEW.....	20
3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....	20
3.3 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS.....	21
3.4 DATA COLLECTION	21
3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	22
PART IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	23
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	23
4.1.1 <i>POS and the 4-D model</i>	23
4.1.2 <i>Main findings</i>	25
4.2 THE PAST	25
4.3 THE GAME-CHANGER.....	28
4.3.1 <i>Starts from the top</i>	28
4.3.2 <i>Put in on the agenda</i>	29
4.3.3 <i>A leadership responsibility</i>	30
4.4 WORKING TOWARD A GENDER EQUAL WORKPLACE	32
4.4.1 <i>Starting point with working with gender balance</i>	32
4.4.2 <i>Strategic and structural working</i>	34
Succession planning.....	34
New talents from the bottom.....	36
Affirmative action is not the answer.....	36
Education	37
4.5 CREATING THEIR OWN DESTINY	39
4.5.1 <i>Flexibility</i>	39
4.5.2 <i>Importance of mentors and leadership programs</i>	42
4.6 POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT	46
4.7 THE FUTURE	48

PART V: CONCLUSION.....	49
PART VI: LIMITATIONS.....	52
REFERENCES.....	53
APPENDICES	I
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW OBJECTS.....	I
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEADER AND EMPLOYEES.....	II
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT.....	IV

SUMMARY

The founder and CEO of SHE, Heidi Aven has built an index that will help companies uncover gender imbalance in their organization. The goal is to use hard facts to close the gender gap. Gender equality has become a challenge of our time, and organizations need to take steps to realize the many benefits and opportunities that lie within this field. In order to reach the global goal to *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*, companies need to get on board and be a part of the change that is a human right.

For this thesis, we have analyzed the work of ManpowerGroup and OBOS with gender equality. The reason why we chose these organizations is because of their high score on the SHE Index. To examine the organizations' success, the thesis presents several success factors that have made them successful with gender balance. Additionally, the thesis investigates OBOS and ManpowerGroup's journey toward gender equality with the use of narratives on the past, present, and future. These factors applied to theories of Positive Organizational Scholarship, Appreciative Inquiry, and ethical- and inclusive leadership. After interviewing 11 participants from different departments and roles, we outline findings and discussion in connection with theory to then reach a conclusion. Our main findings from this research are: *a leadership responsibility, important to have clear objectives and evaluate these regularly, systematic and structured work in terms of role models, programs, and flexibility, and aware of the potential for improvements in part of the organizations.*

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gender inequality is a global issue

The World Economic Forum has estimated that at the current rate of progress, it will take 108 years to close the global gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2018). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are working toward several goals for 2030 concerning peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future, where goal number five is gender equality. SDG number five is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and one of the targets reads as follows (Economic & Affairs, 2018):

“Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic, and public life.”

Gender equality should be a fundamental human right where everyone should have equal rights and opportunities to participate in society, regardless of gender, functional abilities, ethnicity, language, religion, and sexual orientation. However, the reality is that the world is facing gender inequality, and action is needed to move toward an equal society. There are, however, several organizations in Norway that have begun to work toward gender equality in leadership positions and top management. Most of these organizations have joined the SHE Index that reflects the status of gender equality in corporate life and shows that they have taken an important step in being part of the journey toward gender equality. Two of these organizations that score high on the SHE Index are OBOS and ManpowerGroup. In order to change the organizational environment, it would be interesting to identify *how* and *why* these two organizations have acted on this topic and also investigate how they have been working with it in the past, how they are working with it now, and how they imagine the future.

1.2 Gender inequality in the workforce

Even though it is a global problem in several stages, the focus of this thesis will be on the workforce and more specifically, the private sector. In order to get an overview of the global problem, we present some statistics. In S&P 500 companies, women account for almost 45 % of the workforce but are only represented at 27 % of the executive and senior-level official and manager positions. Not only is this a low representation, but at the top of the organization, women account for only 5 % of the CEO positions (Keloharju, Knüpfer & Tåg,

2019). McKinsey, in collaboration with Lean In, has studied women in the workplace for five years, and some of their findings include that the biggest obstacle women face is the first step up to management. According to their study, if women are promoted and hired to first-level managers at the same rates as men, we will add 1 million more women to management over the next five years (Huang, Krivkovich, Starikova, Yee, & Zanoschi, 2019).

1.3 Norway and gender equality

Norway is among the most gender equal countries in the world. In the latest Gender Gap Report, one of the most comprehensive world reports for gender equality, placed Norway in second place in 2020 (WEF, 2020). Nevertheless, research displays that the labor market is highly gender-divided. First, men and women are divided as they work in different sectors and industries. Second, there are differences in part-time and full-time work as well as management positions. Consequently, there are still many steps to take toward greater gender equality. Norway has taken 50th place in an international survey of gender balance among executives at all levels in the public and private sectors (The Royal Ministry of Children, 2016). Statistics reveal that women represent only 36.3% of Norway's top executives of 2019 (SSB, 2019a). Furthermore, the Government is working toward the goal to achieve more women in executive positions in the business sector (The Royal Ministry of Children, 2016).

1.3.1 The Nordic Gender Equality Paradox

The Nordic countries are considered the best when it comes to gender equality and the most egalitarian. Hovden, Kvande and Rasmussen (2011) looked closer into the *Norwegian paradox*, which describes the contrast in gender representation between politics and the working life. Norway was the first country to have a government with 40 % women, and the female part of the workforce is high overall (Hovden et al., 2011). Despite this, there are few women in top positions in the private sector. Even though the numbers have increased, there is still a long way to go before Norway reaches gender equality in top management. The Nordic Gender Equality Paradox describes the skewed gender differences in top management in the Nordic that people perceive as diverse. For our thesis, it is essential to be aware of the fact that this paradox exists, and we will look closer into *how* ManpowerGroup and OBOS are trying to break out of the paradox.

Even though Norway and the Nordic countries are close to equal participation between genders in the labor market, there is still a gender paradox. According to Nordicore (2019), the general gender equality paradox is that there is still male dominance in top positions in all sectors. Paradoxes should be distinguished depending on the perspectives. The Nordic Gender Equality Paradox can be distinguished between a comparative perspective and a national perspective. As stated by Nordicore (2019), the comparative perspective stresses that even though gender equality has advanced in the Nordic, the situation in top positions is as bad as in other countries. Male dominance in the private sector in the Nordic countries is still a problem even though the gender gap is worse overall in other countries (Hovden et al., 2011; Wahl, 2003). From the national perspective, it is pointed out that gender balance in top management is not in line with the recruitment base of the female candidates on the senior executive level (Nordicore, 2019).

Despite the Nordics being women-friendly and democratic, it may seem that women have to choose between career and family as research shows that the number of single women in elite positions is high (Hovden et al., 2011; Vianello & More, 2004). Some studies show that women take more responsibility at home and that there still is some perception that women are housewives, while men are those who should provide for the family (Halrynjo & Lyng, 2010). Thus, one of the challenges an organization can face is how they can arrange for a job situation that can reduce the tension of the work-versus-family-conflict (Bjørnåli, Farstad, Brovold & Terjesen, 2018).

1.4 SHE

1.4.1 SHE and Heidi Aven

In 2014, Heidi Aven, the founder of SHE, made in collaboration with Ernst Young (EY) an index to encourage stakeholders to focus on gender balance in leadership and workforce, equal compensation, and work life balance (SHE, 2020). Based on this index, we decided to contact the top ten organizations from the index to be a part of our thesis. Two of these, OBOS and ManpowerGroup, were ranked number three and seven respectively, and wanted to join us on this journey. Based on the last three indexes, OBOS has been in the top three and ManpowerGroup in the top twenty. However, it is noteworthy that the two last indexes cannot be compared because of different questions and score weighting.

Since this index is based on who is working well with gender equality, and because women in leadership is an ongoing process rather than a quick change, we decided to focus on success stories in each company. We were fortunate to meet the founder Heidi Aven, who gave us an in-depth understanding of the concept, SHE: the index, the community, and the conference. The most important objective is the UN SDG number five and in order to reach this, Aven wants to make the index global so more countries and companies can join the movement of increasing women in leadership positions.

I worked in Telenor for fourteen years and all of these years, I saw that the majority in leadership positions were men. This motivated me to make a system to get more women in leadership positions or to at least help with a network to voice the topic of gender inequality. Norway is considered a center for equality in many aspects and I wanted to put Norway on the map as a leader of gender equality. My overall goal is to make the index global, and we will launch the index in Sweden at the beginning of 2020 which I am very excited for. [Heidi Aven, CEO]

Further, we asked how the index came to light and how they had worked with it from the beginning. In addition, we talked about their collaboration with EY and how they have been an important partner in the SHE Index work.

Our goal was to find a way to document how far individual companies come with regard to gender balance, especially at the leadership level. The reason for the index was to reflect the true status of gender equality in corporate life. Furthermore, we wanted to understand the underlying factors in achieving progress with respect to equality. One of the most important distinctions we like to see is the company's progress and their willingness and action to create a better and more diversified future. [Heidi Aven, CEO]

Since the start of the index in 2018, there has been an increase in participants each year and the latest report quadrupled (SHE, 2020). Moreover, there have been enhancements, a new category called Diversity & Inclusion to capture a wider aspect of gender equality to emphasis on policies and practices, that help with long term positive changes for diversity and inclusion.

1.4.2 The structure of the index score

The index has two focus areas where one concerns the numbers that represent the current state of gender balance (60 % previous 80 %) within the company, whereas the remaining measures the initiatives that the company has put in place to increase gender equality and embed diversity and inclusion (D&I) (20 % previous 40 %) in the corporate culture (SHE, 2020). The current state of gender balance within the company is combined with five measures, whereas the gender balance at Board Level and the top three levels of the company:

1. Board of Directors (6 %)
2. CEO and Top Management (28,8 %)
3. Direct reports to Top Management (22,8 %)
4. All employees (2,4 %)

The initiatives to increase gender diversity are composed of initiatives taken by the company, like diversified hiring practices, leadership programs, and mentorship programs. This portion is the categories:

- Policies and measurement
Which policies the company has implemented, and how gender balance and equality is being tracked in the company.
- Actions
Which specific actions the company has implemented to improve gender equality.
- Talent and recruitment
Which initiatives, policies, and actions have the company implemented to recruit, retain, and develop talent of both genders?
- Gender pay gap
How much do women earn on average in the company compared to men?
- General diversity and inclusion (a new category of 2020)
Which general D&I policies have the company implemented? This was included to improve gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

1.5 Motivation and expectations

Throughout our studies at BI, we became interested in diversity and inclusion from our Managing Workplace Diversity class. Since studying leadership and change, with the hope of becoming leaders in the future, this course opened our eyes to the reality of female leaders. It is clear that there needs to be a change. Therefore, we wanted to investigate this topic closer as we want a better future for ourselves and our descendants. We believe that gender equality is a human right, and writing this thesis can help more companies to become gender equal and aware of the global issue. Since we have already picked out two companies that are working well with gender equality, we have also been inspired by the theories of Positive Organizational Scholarship and Appreciative Inquiry, which focus on the positive change. In this thesis, we expect that the companies show actions

done in order to work with gender equality. We also expect to find motivation in the top management for working with gender equality. Moreover, we think that there was male dominance in the past in both organizations and the oppression of women. Additionally, we assume that their work is well-known in the organization and not just empty words from the top management. We believe to find common ground for both organizations' success factors and similarities in the way the top management is working toward gender equality. Based on these arguments and expectations, we present our research questions in the next section.

1.6 Research Question

Research question allows you to focus on what is it about your area of interest that you want to learn more about (Bell et al., 2018). We chose this topic of interest because we believe it is important for women to be valued on the same terms as men. Furthermore, it is a global issue, and we hope that other organizations can learn new techniques, methods, and practices on *how* to cope better with gender inequality at work and transfer it to their organizations. Additionally, we want to know *why* these organizations have chosen to work with gender equality.

Accordingly, the aim of our study is to explore the following questions:

"How two successful major Norwegian companies perceive and work toward gender equality in top management? And why are they working with gender balance in the organizations?"

In order to answer these questions in the best manner, we have decided to emphasize the success stories in the organizations with the topics of Positive Organizational Scholarship, Appreciative Inquiry, and inclusive and ethical leadership theories. Each of these will reveal *how* and *why* these organizations have been successful in their work with gender equality. With the use of narrative analysis in past, present, and future viewpoints, we will get a historical aspect of their journey of becoming gender equal organizations.

1.7 Two top ten companies

From different industries but with the same goal of achieving gender equality, we present our two partners in this thesis, OBOS and ManpowerGroup. Based on

their score on the SHE Index, we decided to explore *how* and *why* they are working with gender equality.

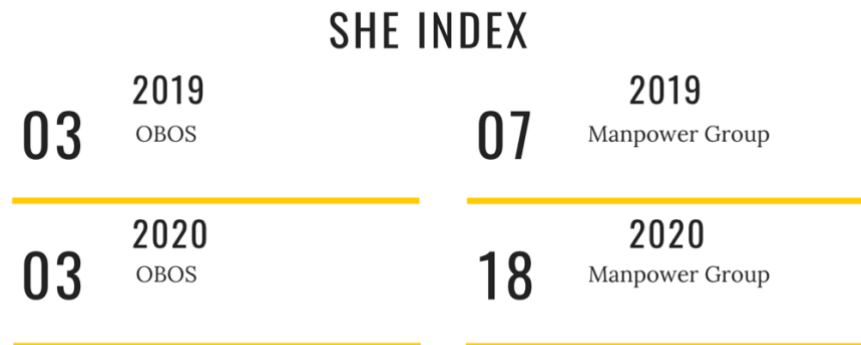


Figure 1: SHE Index scores from 2019 and 2020 for OBOS and ManpowerGroup

1.7.1 OBOS

OBOS was established in 1929 under the name "Oslo og omegn bolig- og sparelag." The first building was finished in 1931, and they were a huge part of the construction of several satellite cities in Oslo through the 1960s and 1970s (OBOS, n.d.a). Today, OBOS is organized as a housing cooperative owned by its members and has expanded to other parts of Norway, as well as Sweden and Denmark. Their purpose is to acquire housing for their members as well as offer them housing-related services. They have more than 450 000 members and revenue of 11,6 billion NOK (OBOS, n.d.a.). In the top management, 4 out of 10 directors are women and their ambition of having 50/50 men and women in the executive team, reporting directly to the CEO has been fulfilled (OBOS, n.d.b., SHE, 2019). The CEO of OBOS, Daniel Kjørberg Siraj, strives to get the focus on diversity on the national agenda. As late as in January 2020, he published an article that addressed the problem with a lack of diversity both in the private sector and in society in general. He wanted to focus even more on building an organizational culture where men and women get the same opportunities and are equally appreciated (Siraj, 2020).

1.7.2 ManpowerGroup

The ManpowerGroup was established in Milwaukee in the USA in 1948 and entered Norway in 1965. Today, they are present in more than 80 countries with 33 000 internal employees (ManpowerGroup, n.d.a). For this thesis, we are focusing on the Norwegian unit of the group. ManpowerGroup has operated with temporary hiring and staffing solutions in Norway since 1964 and today is

Norway's largest staffing agency. ManpowerGroup consists of Manpower, Experis, ManpowerGroup Solutions and Right Management and 35 office locations. In Norway, about 20 000 employees are hired annually, and 4 000 are recruited to permanent positions. Revenues are around NOK 3 billion (ManpowerGroup, n.d.b). In the top management, 4 of 6 members are women, including the CEO (ManpowerGroup, n.d.c).

PART II: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

A great deal of research has been covered for women leaders in top management positions. We will highlight some of the findings in existing literature as well as introduce some theoretical approaches we believe will fit well with our thesis. We have decided on Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), and ethical-and inclusive leadership. As this thesis is trying to answer *how* and *why* OBOS and ManpowerGroup are working toward gender balance, we believe these theories will best answer our research question. The reason for this is that POS and AI focus on positive change through a unique lens. The theories can be used to zoom in on *why* and *how* the organizations are doing regarding gender equality. We have, through the SHE Index, searched for companies that are working well with gender balance in organizations, and therefore, we know that there will be positives to find. To delve into this further, we were inspired to use POS and AI as they are concerned about the positives in outcomes, people, and organizations. We also believe that there is no better fit than to use the Appreciative Inquiry as it takes us from the beginning to the imaging future through the 4-D model. With regard to our thesis, research has shown that there is not a quick fix for the gender imbalance. Instead, there needs to be a sustainable change over a longer period of time and be supported from senior leadership (Fenwick, Costa, Sohal, & D'Netto, 2011; Kellough & Naff, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2015; Ng & Sears, 2018; Ng & Wyrick, 2011). Based on these findings, it is clear that leadership skills and values present in inclusive and ethical leadership theories will be vital. In addition, the sustainable change needs to happen from a top-down perspective with the leader in front and with clear objectives and structures the employees can follow.

2.2 Positive Organizational Scholarship

Our first theory is Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), which started as a movement in 2003 by Kim Cameron. POS started to research what factors led to "especially positives outcomes, processes and attributed of organizational and their members" (Cameron & Dutton, 2003). The reason why we find this theory interesting is that, in contrast to many other organizational frameworks, POS explicitly focuses on positive patterns and processes that leads to excellence in organizations. As we have mentioned earlier, we have picked out two companies, OBOS and ManpowerGroup, that are working well with gender balance based on their SHE index scores. By applying this theory, we can investigate the organizations through a new lens and explore how their actions and leadership have been positive and meaningful for the organization.

Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) focuses on companies creating positive work life and performance (Cameron & Dutton, 2003). This theory focuses on dynamics that are described with words such as excellence, thriving, flourishing, resilience, or virtuousness. The primary attention of POS is the positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of the organization and its team members (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003). The "O" in POS focuses on investigating positive processes and states that occur in association with organizational context, whereas the "S" focuses on pursuing rigorous, systematic, and theory-based foundations for positive phenomena (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011, p. 2). The word positive "P", however, has different interpretations. The one interpretation we felt that fit our emphasis to positive was *adopting a unique lens or an alternative perspective* (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011). POS is distinguished from traditional organizational studies in that it seeks to understand what represents and approaches the best of the human condition (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003).

In our thesis, we seek positives, hopefully through a unique lens in the organizations, to understand *how* their practices and outcomes contribute to gender equality. Since we are interested in finding out *why* and *how* these organizations are working toward a more gender equal workplace, it is essential to understand their processes, attributes, and outcomes. We have already established through the SHE index that they are working with gender equality, and based on their scores, they are one of the best companies to do so. Using this theory, we will be able to understand the organizations' work with gender equality from a

positive aspect. Furthermore, POS has gained particular momentum from literature in several other fields where one of these is Appreciative Inquiry. The following section will explain our second choice of theory.

2.3 Appreciative Inquiry

In the following section, we will outline the aspects of the theory called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). This theory is based on a change management approach that focuses on identifying what is working well, analyzing why it is working well, and then doing more of it (Rouse, 2010). According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005, p.7), the definition of "appreciative" is *1. "Valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. To increase in value, e.g., the economy has appreciated in value* whereas "inquire", on the other hand, has two interpretations: *"1. The act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.* Thus, the overall definition of Appreciative Inquiry is *"the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them."*

Based on these definitions, certain words and terms are important to focus on to answer our research question, like people, strengths, successes, and potentials, as well as exploration and new potentials and possibilities. We believe that this theory will fit the two organizations well as we want to explore their path from the beginning to an imagined future. In addition, we want to explore what *value* gender equality gives to the organization, employees, and society. Besides, it is important to *value* the best in people, both men and women, and explore how they are finding the best people in their organization and treat them equally. This theory also identifies what is working well and why it is working well. This is essential for our research question of answering both *how* and *why* they are working with gender equality. To understand what is working well and doing more of it, we introduce the 4-D model, which will help us establish structure in our thesis as well as answering our research questions.

2.4 The 4-D model

The creator of the theory, David Cooperrider, first originated the theory in 1987 through an article. Since then, a model has been developed that has been strongly connected to AI called the 4-D model (Kessler, 2013). This model is a narrative-based process that focuses on positive change based on four stages; discovery, dream, design, and delivery/destiny. These stages are identified after the "affirmative topic" is chosen. In our study, our affirmative topic is *gender equality in the workplace*. Moving on, the cycle of activity goes from engaging all members of the organization through in-depth interviews about strengths, resources, and capabilities and onward to the possible imaginings of the future. In between, it involves all activities in order to reach the imagining future and in what way the whole organization works toward the same goals (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

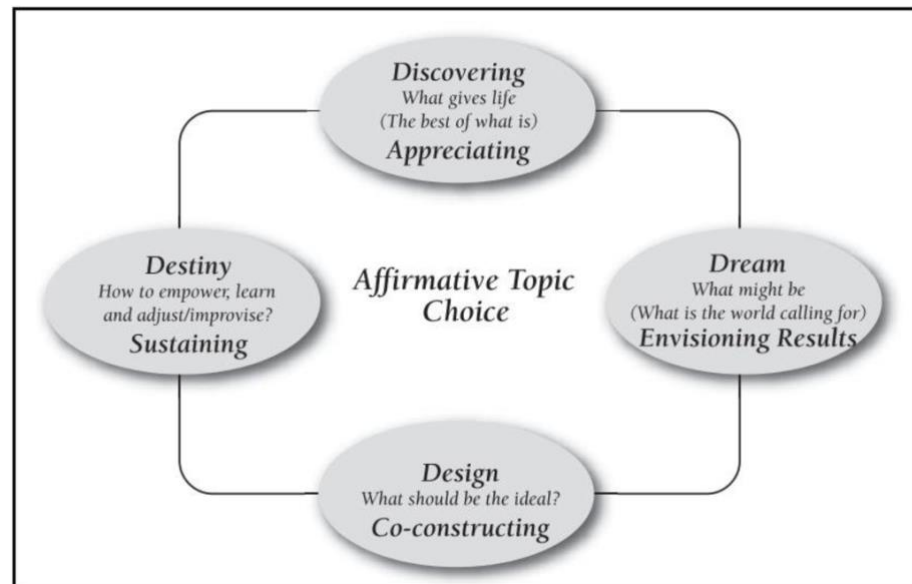


Figure 2: The 4-D model in Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p.16).

2.4.1 Discovery

The first phase of the model is discovery, where the purpose is to recognize and reflect on the best of what has been and what is (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Kessler, 2013). Instead of focusing on what is not working well, this phase concentrates on what is working well and how to learn from previous mistakes (Bushe, 2012). Telling and listening to meaningful, personal stories are considered central to creating widespread engagement and building relationships in the early stage of the change process (Kessler, 2013, p. 42).

2.4.2 *Dream*

In the next phase, the interviewees will imagine their organization at its best and attempt to identify the common strengths and aspirations if the members were fully aligned (Bushe, 2012). According to Ludema, Cooperrider and Barrett (2006) the purpose of the dream is "to engage the whole system in moving beyond the status quo to envision valued and vital features" (2006, p. 23). By creating words, phrases, and stories to map out the positive core of essential resources is important for this stage. Therefore, it is also crucial for team members of the organization to share images of their expectations and dreams for the organization's future (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Further, AI does not emphasize on the analytical journey. Rather it focuses on the journey of mutual discovery where participants' positive themes contribute to the organization's success (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003) The aim of this phase is to connect the discovery phase of the best of what is with the perception of employees' *what might be*.

2.4.3 *Design*

Once the strategic focus or dream is expressed, attention turns to the third phase to design the future through dialogue to create the ideal organization. The purpose of this phase is to identify actions that will support the new possibilities identified in the dream phase (Bushe, 2012; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). This phase connects the discovery and dream phase by developing actual proposals for the new organizational state. The goal of this phase is to get to what Ludema et al. state as "Yes, this is an ideal or vision that we value and should aspire to. Let's make it happen" (2006, p.2). Therefore, at the end of this phase, participants should be able to identify with the outworked shared vision for the future.

2.4.4 *Destiny*

In the initial model, this phase was once called the delivery phase but later changed to destiny because the word evoked images of traditional change management (Kessler, 2013). In this phase, the goal is to build hope and sustain momentum for ongoing change and high performance (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). By sharing knowledge and join the conversation would help build a language that generates broader and deeper possibilities for action in the

organization, which will translate ideals into reality and beliefs into practice (Cooperrider et al., 2003; Ludema et al., 2006).

2.5 The role of the manager

The role of the manager can be critical for the success of their firm, as well as the success of the firm's employees. To answer our research question, we need to know more about how managers influence their businesses and whether there is any difference between male and female leaders. Neoliberal managerialism is characterized by Hovden et al. (2011) as a belief in the crucial importance of the role of managers for business success. When reviewing gender and management, the question can be if women or men do have any traits and skills that are crucial for managers, and if these traits depend on gender. Often, the feminine management style can be associated with empathy, team building, and cooperation (Hovden et al., 2011). Research has been directed at the search of "female management", and how it influences the organization.

Research shows that female leaders are performing as well as, or even better than, their male colleagues when it comes to both results and profit. Noland, Moran and Kotschwar (2016) based their research on a global survey of almost 22,000 firms, and the surveys reveal an absence of women in high leadership positions. Their research suggests that the presence of women in management may improve the organizations' performance. For profitable firms, a move from zero female leaders to 30 % representation is associated with a 15 % increase in net revenue margin. This may suggest that nondiscrimination firms have an advantage. The analysis did not uncover evidence of any significant effect of the quotas some countries have started.

The knowledge economy is a huge contributor when it comes to the shift from a more bureaucratic organizational form to a more democratic one, which may be more favorable for women. According to research, business organizations are characterized by a centralization of power at the top, and a decentralization of power at the operational level (Hovin, Kvande & Rasmussen, 2011; Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006). However, the study of Bjørnåli et al. (2018) shows that elite female managers have had support from their leaders early on in their careers. This has helped them to take responsibility and challenges already from the beginning. For these managers, the support and trust of their leaders have been

an important part for them to climb the career ladder and become leaders themselves. Thus, the women in the study try to decentralize the power in the organization and inspire women to dare to take the steps needed. However, there are certain explanations for why there are fewer women than men in top management. We present three of these explanations.

The first explanation Nordicore (2019) found is that the opportunity structures in the labor market, the corporate world, and academia favor men and their way of life while limiting women. The next explanation is that women are not willing to give what it takes to climb the career ladder. Instead, they choose family life over the long working hours a top management position may expect. The last explanation is the welfare-state paradox (Nordicore, 2019). In the Nordics, the welfare-state is deeply embedded in people's work lives, and it can be a part of why fewer women are top-managers. The region does have a gender-separated labor market where the typical female-dominated professions are in the public sector, and this sector may also facilitate the possibilities for female leaders in another way than the private sector does. Long parental leaves, state-subsidized childcare, and institutional arrangements can encourage fathers to proceed with their careers, while mothers combine moderate careers with commitments to the family (Nordicore, 2019; Savage, 2019).

2.6 Recruitment

Whom managers choose to recruit for a specific position plays a huge role in this person's future career path. In this thesis, we want to look closer into *how* ManpowerGroup and OBOS break the pattern of recruiting more men than women into top management positions. To reach the goal of more women in these positions, we believe that internal recruitment to new positions has to focus on personal development and future career goals for both genders. In the last decades, the number of women who pursue a degree has drastically increased, and more women than men get higher education. Top managers are often educated within either business or technical disciplines (Bjørnåli et al., 2018). In 2018, 56.8 % of those getting education within economics and administrative courses were women in contrast to the technical discipline, 29.1 % were women (SSB, 2019b). This education can help more women to acquire the necessary skills and traits to get top management positions. However, it is interesting to see that despite the

number of women getting a higher education within relevant fields, there are mostly men recruited to top management positions. Bjørnåli et al. (2018) shows that the choice of education does play a relatively small part of women's choice of career path while networks, work experience, and further education helped them on their way to reach their career goals.

Leader groups, professional networks, and boards have worked as an arena for recruitment, where the women have been recommended to the positions by other members of their network (Bjørnåli, et al., 2018; Stevenson & Crandell, 2017). Elites in power positions are usually recruited from higher social classes as well as having a similar type of education (Hovden et al., 2011). People in top management positions often know each other and are connected through the same network. New people are often elected by those who already hold elite positions in the organization. For many years, these groups have been quite homogenous as they have consisted of men at a certain age with a specific education. Thus, it can be essential to understand how these elite groups recognize and practice diversity management (Hovden et al., 2011).

Bjørnåli, Farstad, Brovold and Terjesen (2018) suggest three points on how to recruit women to top management positions:

1. Create awareness among female top managers that they are role models for female recruits: This can be done through management courses and by inviting the managers to hold lectures at universities.
2. Develop good mentor-arrangements: It is essential to teach managers of both genders to be a supporter and how they can facilitate the possibilities for women with the ambitions to become a manager. This can be done by creating trust, and support the careers of the female managers, by creating an arena with possibilities for building a network between top female managers and women with leadership ambitions.
3. Create safety and support in the workplace where women can dare to gradually take more responsibility: This can be done by showing that people feel happy in the manager role. For an internal female manager candidate, it can be easier to identify themselves with a female top manager in their own firm. This can motivate them to strive to make an impact through challenging management tasks.

2.7 Ethical and inclusive leadership

Diversity management literature suggests that support from senior leadership organization is key for the success of its diversity policies, programs, and initiatives (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2019). A strong leadership commitment enhances the profile of diversity management, elevating it to a significant strategic priority. Diversity management is based on leadership that emphasizes flexibility, openness for different perspectives, as well as respect and tolerance between employees (Sandal, Bye, Fyhn & Markova, 2013). To become a leading organization within gender equality, we believe the organization must have a bold and engaged leader. After conducting the interviews, we decided to connect the top management leadership traits and skills in ManpowerGroup and OBOS to two leadership styles we felt fit. Therefore, we chose ethical and inclusive leadership. Even though both can be used at all levels of leadership, we feel that inclusive leadership is more suitable for the top management, whereas ethical fits better for lower levels management. Both of these have sprung from servant, authentic, and transformational leadership. The common denominators from these theories are fairness, serving others, optimism, transparency, and commitment towards the organization's objectives (Yukl, 2013; Greenleaf, 1970; Lai, 2017; Kuvaas, 2017). We present our two theories in light of these in the next section.

2.7.1 Inclusive leadership

According to the research of Dillon and Bourke (2016), there will be a shift in how we work, which will reshape the environment and influence how people do business. Historically, the business has been a homogenous context. However, these trends will create a shift towards more diversity and change where managers' capabilities are important to be successful in the years to come. As the middle-class grows and the income levels rise, the diversity of markets will shift towards emerging markets. This will create vast opportunities for growth in many organizations, but it is essential to have a global mindset to succeed. It will also be a shift towards the diversity of customers. It has become even more critical to understand the customers' future needs in a digitalized world with increasing competition. To keep up with their competitors, organizations need to be innovative with a diversity of ideas. The manager's comprehension of how diverse ideas work can be critical to success. Future success will also depend on the manager's skills to optimize a diverse talent pool (Dillon & Bourke, 2016).

Based on these shifts, many leaders have to change the way they work and move a bit away from the traditional leadership methods towards a more inclusive form of leading.

The report of Dillon and Bourke (2016) shows that people feel included when they are treated fairly, their uniqueness is appreciated when they have a sense of belonging, and when they feel that their voices are heard during decision making. When looking at it from a manager's perspective, inclusive leadership will be about treating people fairly based on their characteristics rather than stereotypes. The leaders should also personalize individuals and try to understand their uniqueness and value it as well as accepting them as members of the team. Also, managers should leverage the thinking of diverse groups for smarter decision-making processes. Their report recognizes six signature traits in an inclusive leader, called the six Cs. These represent essential competence that is highly adapted to diversity. The six Cs from Dillon and Burke (2016) are:

1. *Curiosity*. "Highly inclusive leaders have an open mindset, a desire to understand how others view and experience the world, and a tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 13). Inclusive leaders should demonstrate a desire for continued learning and actively seeking perspectives of diverse others. They should be open to other people's viewpoints and listen when others are presenting their views. As they are curious, they will seek opportunities to connect with diverse people and be able to cope efficiently with change. They understand that different ideas and experiences will enable growth.
2. *Cultural Intelligence*. "Highly inclusive leaders are confident and effective in cross-cultural interactions" (p.15). Inclusive leaders will be interested in learning about other cultures and try to experience culturally diverse environments. As they are interested and have knowledge about different cultures, they also work well with people from different backgrounds and are confident in leading diverse teams. The managers will be able to change their style when a cross-cultural encounter requires it and use appropriate behavior in these encounters.
3. *Collaborative*. "Highly inclusive leaders empower individuals as well as create and leverage the thinking of diverse groups" (p. 16). Inclusive leaders will give their followers the freedom to handle challenging

situations and empower them to make decisions about subjects that impact their work. When employees have this freedom, they should also be held accountable for the performance they can control. The manager should ensure that members of their team respect and include each other and take proper action if any conflicts occur. It is the leader's responsibility to create a safe environment where their followers feel comfortable speaking their minds and including others in discussions. A diverse-thinking team is greater than the sum of its parts.

4. *Commitment*. "Highly inclusive leaders are committed to diversity and inclusion because these objectives align with their personal values and because they believe in the business case" (p. 8). The leaders are doing more than just talking about inclusion. They prioritize time, energy, and resources to address it, and signals that this is a real priority. The managers treat diversity and inclusion as a business priority and take personal responsibility for the outcomes of it.
5. *Courage*. "Highly inclusive leaders speak up and challenge the status quo, and they are humble about their strengths and weaknesses" (p. 10). Managers are responsible for holding others to accountable for non-inclusive behaviors in the workplace. They should also challenge established attitudes and practices that promote homogeneity in the organization. There should be room for mistakes, but the managers must have courage enough to admit when mistakes are made, and they should be able to acknowledge personal limitations.
6. *Cognizance of bias*. "Highly inclusive leaders are mindful of personal and organizational blind spots and self-regulate to help ensure fair-play" (p.11). Many biases can negatively impact the way decisions are made. Examples of this can be how people judge others according to unconscious stereotypes, to connect with people similar to themselves more easily, or to favor in-group members. But when managers are aware of this pitfall, it may be easier to control. It will be important to provide clear explanations and reasons why decisions were made. The manager should always try to employ transparent and consistent decision-making processes about talent, where the decisions should be fair and merit-based.

2.7.2 Ethical Leadership

Senior management is setting the ethical tone at the top of an organization. They are responsible for providing a moral foundation and create positive values that strengthen the organization's culture (Treviño, Brown & Day, 2014). Typically, ethical managers are proactively involved in influencing the ethical behavior of their followers. Ethical leadership is important for managers at all levels, and the traits and values connected with this leadership style are associated with effective leadership (Treviño, Brown & Day, 2014). According to Yukl (2013), seven values are emphasized in theories of ethical leadership:

1. *Integrity*: The leader communicates openly and honestly, keeps promises and commitments, acts in ways that are consistent with espoused values, admits and accepts responsibility for mistakes, does not attempt to manipulate or deceive people.
2. *Altruism*: The manager enjoys helping others and is willing to take risks or make sacrifices to protect or benefit others. He/she puts the needs of others ahead of their own needs, volunteers for service activities that require extra time, and are not part of the formal job requirements.
3. *Humility*: Treats others with respect, avoids status symbols and exclusive privileges, admits limitations and mistakes, is modest about achievements, emphasizes the contributions by others when a collective effort is successful.
4. *Empathy and healing*: Help others cope with emotional distress, encourage acceptance of diversity, act as a mediator or pacemaker, and encourage forgiveness and reconciliation after a diverse conflict
5. *Personal growth*: The leader encourages and facilitates the development of individual confidence and ability, even when not crucial for the current job, provides learning opportunities despite a risk of mistakes, provides mentoring and coaching when needed, and helps people learn from them.
6. *Fairness and justice*: Encourage and supports fair treatment of people, speak out against unfair and unjust practices or policies, oppose attempts to manipulate or deceive people or to undermine or violate their civil rights.
7. *Empowerment*: Consults with others about decisions that will affect them, provides an appropriate amount of autonomy and discretion to

subordinates, shares sensitive information with them, encourages them to express concerns, or dissenting views without becoming defensive.

PART III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

Our master thesis will be built upon a model by Ricour (1984) that accounts for the passage from past to present, and to an imagined future (Rhodes, Pullen & Clegg, 2010). By using this approach, we can get an extensive understanding of the companies' journey of becoming more gender equal. There will be an investigation of the changes from a top-down perspective in the organization and compare these with the perception of some employees with the use of storytelling. The purpose is to understand the transformation of feelings, opinions, and actions from both the top executives and employees in OBOS and ManpowerGroup. Additionally, we will compare the two organizations as they might have common success factors and aspects that might be used as a tool for other companies.

3.2 Qualitative research

Our aim with this master thesis is to explore two organizations' approaches to gender equality in the workplace by investigating what they have done in the past, what they are doing today, and how the future would look. Therefore, we propose a qualitative approach and support it with several arguments. First, to acquire the employees' experiences and knowledge, it is important to understand the participant and be present when listening. Second, our research questions intend to use an explorative procedure as for the credibility of the study. Third, we are not testing any theoretical approaches; instead, we are recording experiences and knowledge. Fourth, flexibility and limited structures are crucial for the participants to freely express and voice their feelings and experiences.

According to Bryman and Bell (2019, p. 355), qualitative research is defined as "a strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data." Qualitative research is more open-ended than quantitative, and it often is expressed by committing to viewing events and the social world through the eyes of the people (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). It is also noteworthy to mention two central tenets: 1. Face-to-face integration is the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being, and 2. You must participate in

the mind of another human being to acquire knowledge (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). In other words, it is crucial to be present to acquire the knowledge in order to make conclusions based on the insights and stories told by the participants. In qualitative research, the tendency is to view social life through processes. Pettigrew (1997) explains the process as it understands how the history of an organization shapes the present reality and how the interchange between agents and contexts occurs over time (Pettigrew, 1997). Another reason why this method is appropriate is flexibility and limited structure, as it is crucial to gain access to the world perspective from the participants. As of flexibility, it is easier to change directions during the investigation compared to quantitative research. For our thesis, it will be crucial to have this limited structure and flexibility, as we emphasize the participants' opinions and views.

3.3 Narrative analysis

Instead of reviewing the literature to add knowledge to the existing area of a subject, a narrative review uses stories to convince the audience and generates an understanding of the topic area (Bell et al., 2018). Based on the aforesaid, using Ricour's "threefold present" that accounts for the past, present, and the future will encourage participants to tell their stories by making meaningful and sensible connections. We have conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews where the narrative of the organizational change is presented across different departments and at different levels of seniority.

3.4 Data collection

We completed 11 interviews together. There were seven from ManpowerGroup, three from OBOS, and one with the founder of the SHE Index. To achieve breadth, there were interviews with leaders and employees, both males and females. Some people had been in the organizations for a long time while others were newer. We intended to interview top management and middle managers to understand *why* and *how* the organizations have started to work toward gender equality. On the other hand, we wanted some thoughts on how the employees felt gender equality was instigated in the organizations. To start our thesis, we interviewed the founder of SHE, Heidi Aven, where the interview consisted of getting a context-based understanding of her work with the index. We believe this first step was critical in order to understand their score for the index and in-depth

understanding of the constructs and mechanisms. This interview took place in January, and the rest took place in February and March. We have also used secondary data to comprehend if it is possible to undergird and support the interviewees' stories, as well as reviewing what the organizations have done in the past. The secondary data includes reports, studies, books, and articles about the organizations, diversity, and inclusion.

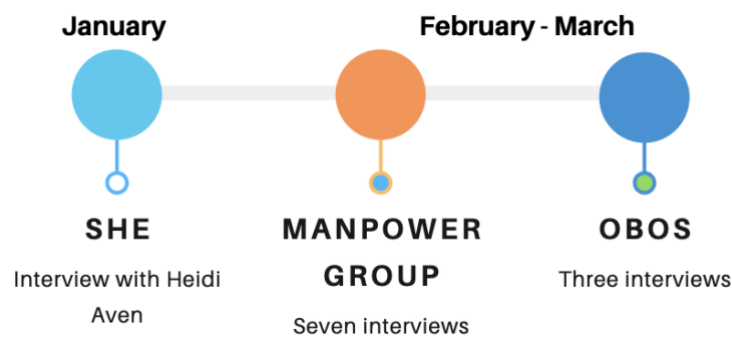


Figure 3: Timeline for interviews

By using semi-structured interviews, we established some guidelines which included specific aspects and topics to be covered (Bell & Bryman, 2018). Intentionally, we wanted to hold all the interviews in person, but the coronavirus forced us to have some virtually. In total, we had eight in person and three online, but all interviews employed mostly the same questions. Yet, we allowed the participants a great deal of leeway to get a broader understanding of their stories. Therefore, there was a great deal of flexibility, as well as a better and more in-depth understanding of the stories. At the end of each interview, we made sure we understood them right and asked an open question to the subjects if they had any additional information to supply, which also ensured we did not miss any relevant data. We had the opportunity to reconnect to make sense of the information or add information if we felt in need of more after transcribing the interviews.

3.5 Ethical considerations

For this research, the participation was voluntary, and the data collected from the participants was confidential. Before the interviews, the participants were asked to sign a consent. The main points were the right to withdraw at any time during the project's span and that all data will be deleted after the project's end (see Appendix C for the consent form). None of the participants decided to withdraw from the research. The thesis was submitted to the Norwegian Social Sciences Data

Services (NSD), and all audiotapes and transcriptions were deleted in line with their guidelines. Anonymity has been made according to the informed consent of all the employees. We have made fictive names to all the participants as well as referring them to employees rather than their respective roles. However, it is impossible to make the CEOs anonymous because there is only one CEO for the companies, and therefore we have used their title and names with permission.

PART IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

To answer our research questions, we were told several stories of *how* and *why* the organizations focus on gender equality and work toward a gender equal organization. There were not many surprises in the findings, and most of our expectations were met. The most surprising finding was that there were almost no differences between the organizations. The two most distinct differences between them were sector and globality. We argue that our method provided us with the right answers to the research question since we use both inductive and deductive approaches. In the following chapter, we present our findings and discussions regarding our theories: Positive Organizational Scholarship, Appreciative Inquiry, ethical, and inclusive leadership. Additionally, it was necessary to underline some of our findings with research to support and explain the actions and initiatives taken.

4.1.1 POS and the 4-D model

There has been a positive focus throughout the work with this thesis. We decided to look at the organizations' work through the use of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) theory, where the main goal is for companies to create positive work life and performance. In order to connect this theory to our findings, we have applied it to their work, leadership, and organization. We present the four steps in Appreciative Inquiry, which is a change approach subcategory of POS, where we explain the journey that has made the two organizations more gender equal. By this, we have incorporated the four steps: *discovery*, *dream*, *design*, and *destiny* in our findings. We have, however, let the participants express their potential for improvements as we see this as something positive rather than negative. Outside this framework, we have also asked the participants to address the future of gender equality in their organization to end the findings section.

As presented in the introduction, we chose to use the 4-D model from Cooperrider et al. (2003) because we believe it fits well with our thesis and because our interview questions were built on positives in the organizations. Based on the interviews with the CEOs, there was a clear plan to change toward a more gender balanced organization from the moment they were in charge. Throughout the years, they have completed extensive work. Their inner motivation and personal experiences of being role models to change to a more equal and fair workplace allowed them to start to work systematically using a top-down approach. By listening to their stories and experiences of this change, several findings align with the 4-D model from research (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003). We created two versions of the model that is modified for OBOS and ManpowerGroup.

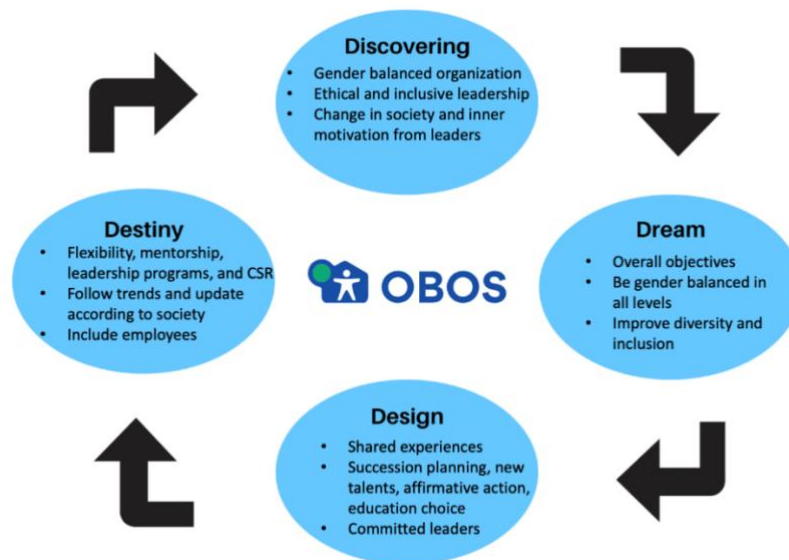


Figure 4: The 4-D model for OBOS

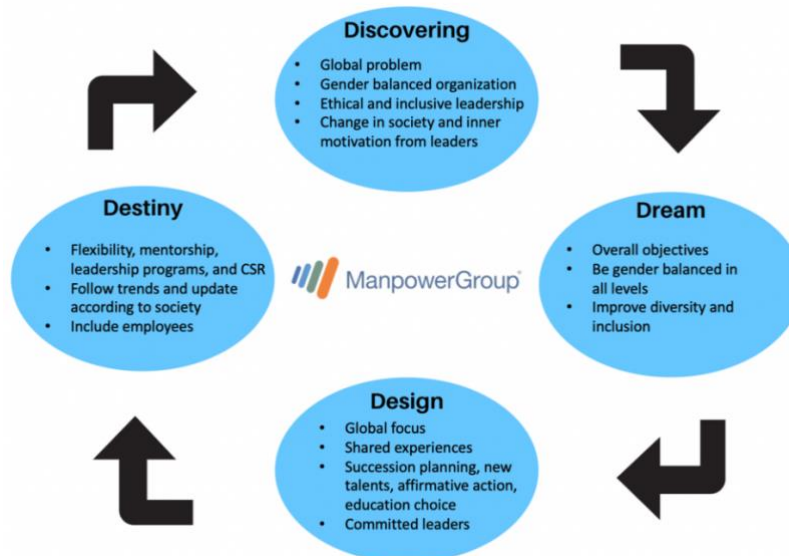


Figure 5: The 4-D model for ManpowerGroup

4.1.2 Main findings

In the light of our main findings, we present a table with an overview of the findings in connection to our research questions.

“How two successful major Norwegian companies perceive and work toward gender equality in top management? And why are they working with gender balance in the organizations”

Main findings	<i>How and why</i>
A leadership responsibility	<i>How:</i> Put it on the agenda, commit, follow-up, use their voice <i>Why:</i> The right thing to do, inner motivation, the world is changing
Systematic work with gender equality	<i>How:</i> Leadership- and mentorship programs, role models, recruitment process, planning for the future
Great gender balance in top management	<i>How:</i> Ongoing work, clear orders from the top <i>Why:</i> Better decisions, competitive advantage
Clear objectives and evaluations	<i>How:</i> Reports, close monitoring, follow-up, clear messages <i>Why:</i> “What gets measured, gets managed”
Flexibility	<i>How:</i> The welfare state, more opportunities <i>Why:</i> Equal opportunities, kindergarten, shared parental leave
Unsatisfactory at lower levels and in some departments	<i>How:</i> Continue measuring, follow-up and monitor, demand change and keep supporting from the top management <i>Why:</i> Important for internal recruiting, better decision-making in teams and departments

4.2 The past

The first phase *discovery* can be connected to the historical aspect of gender equality in the organizations and reflections from leadership. Since this phase concentrates on what is working well and how to learn from previous mistakes, it can be linked to the participants’ previous experiences and thoughts on the topic. Besides, it is a great starting point to get an overview of the situation in the past and establish *why* they have decided to work with gender balance.

OBOS and ManpowerGroup are organizations that have existed for many years and have been a part of the change in society. As statistics show (SSB, 2019a), the number of female top managers in the private sector is increasing, but there is still a long way to go. Based on the interviews, three factors were central in the past: male-dominated management, not a topic for discussion, and the existence of a glass ceiling. Therefore, it has been crucial for both organizations to learn from previous experiences. In ManpowerGroup, there were tendencies to having male-dominated management. Women were promoted to middle management but stopped there, whereas men typically got the top management positions. In OBOS, we were told that there was not a typical male-dominant culture, but their top management was unequal. Moreover, both organizations emphasize that gender equality was not a topic that was up for discussion or cared about; therefore, there was no reason to take action.

Earlier, you had to fight a lot more for your position, and women more than men. It was normal that women got to the middle manager level, but then it stopped there. Everyone knows that when being a middle manager, you have to do everything. It may even be the hardest role to be in. While the boys club got the top management roles. It was a time when there were no women represented in the top management. I think it was a bit based on who were friends with whom and to have the right connections. It was not much about what you did. [Åsne, ManpowerGroup]

This finding shows that there was a tendency of glass ceiling in ManpowerGroup. Glass ceiling is the strong tendency to favor men over women in filling high-level leadership positions (Yukl, 2013, p. 358). This also support the study of Hovden et al. (2011), which states that there have been homogenous groups in top management for several years, mostly consisting of men at a certain age and education. However, some men in the organization looked at the middle management position as something positive as they believed this was the starting point to climb the ladder. Several of the participants also expressed that the topic was not something they talked about or was not put on the agenda.

In comparison to ManpowerGroup, there were no direct findings from the interviews of this kind of barrier in OBOS. However, from our interpretation, we believe there were the same tendencies. Some of the answers showed and provided us with proof of glass ceiling and male dominance in top management. In one of the interviews, we were presented with an old picture of the top

management, where only men were represented except for one woman. The CEO explained the situation as the following.

There has been a problem in the past. When we look at the picture of the top management in OBOS from the year I got appointed, there was only one woman in the top management. I realized that, with the change of time and in the world, I had to take action to balance the top management. [CEO, OBOS]



Figure 6: Top Management OBOS 2014.



Figure 7: Top Management OBOS 2019.

Besides, the most common answer from both organizations about gender inequality was that it was not a topic for discussion at that given time. Moreover, the change has happened with society, the global focus of the SDG, and the media pressure of being an equal workplace. There were several participants that, after reminiscing that time, realized that it was not a healthy or equal workplace in the past.

My impression is that it was not a focus on gender equality in the past. It was only one woman in the top management, and she was working with HR and personnel and had no responsibilities for operational results. I do not think that gender equality was a topic at all, especially since there have been few women in construction and property historically. This changed when the CEO put equality on the agenda. [Ingvild, OBOS]

Before, there was no systematic approach to diversity. It was something we talked about and a buzzword about cultural mix or ethnicity. We talked about age, but there was little talk of women and men. Before then, we probably had a completely different percentage of men as leaders. In relation to numbers, the proportion of men was probably higher than the proportion of women we have in the company. So, there was no focus on these women, but I have always felt respected. [Randi, ManpowerGroup]

From the interviews, we can establish that the organizations have learned from previous mistakes and realized the need for change to achieve a more gender balanced organization. The old habits of glass ceiling and male dominance are over, and they have decided to act. These old habits will not be tolerated and can be explained as the starting point for *why* they started to work with gender equality. It can also explain in connection to AI as to focus on recognizing the best in people, which shows that women were not valued for their potentials (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) as they could not move further up in the organization. Since this was a learning point, there was more focus on changing the organizational structure and finding new ways instead of pointing fingers. In connection to *discovery* from the theory, it was interesting to observe and listen to the participants' reflections on what has been done in the past. Thus, even more important to realize *how* they can use these experiences to move forward. In the next section, we will show *how* leadership has been a crucial part of the change and contribution in the *discovery* phase.

4.3 The game-changer

4.3.1 Starts from the top

Our main questions regarding this master thesis are “*how* the organizations perceive and work with gender equality” and “*why* are the organizations working with gender equality.” Throughout our interviews, there was a common denominator for both organizations, which was the importance of leadership. During the interviews, we asked the participants what they felt was the main reason for the change. The respondents were unanimous in their responses, and it was the *top leaders or CEOs* of the organizations that had been the reason for the change. To tackle the issue of gender equality, it is crucial to get the leader on board (Randel et al., 2018; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Syed & Ozbilgin, 2019; Traavik, 2019). Research also reveals that leaders who successfully manage diverse groups are altruistic, fair, curious, and honest (Yukl, 2013; Dillon & Burke, 2016).

Based on the descriptions from interviewees of the top management, we conclude that the CEOs of OBOS and ManpowerGroup are inclusive and ethical leaders as they are honest, committed, fair, and have integrity and courage (Dillon & Burke, 2016; Yukl, 2013). As stated by Dillon and Bourke (2016), inclusive leaders often

have six leadership traits. One of the traits focuses on courage as the leaders challenge the status quo (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). Both the CEOs of OBOS and ManpowerGroup dared to change toward an equal future. As mentioned earlier in our findings, the attitude in ManpowerGroup was that women usually reached the middle management level and could not break through the glass ceiling. For OBOS, it was not a topic for discussion. However, their subordinates expressed how their leaders dared to challenge the status quo.

It has definitely been Maalfrid, but even more the global CEO Jonas Prising. He is Swedish so he has a Swedish leadership philosophy. He started as CEO in 2014, where there was also a shift for the entire global group. Maalfrid for us in Norway, as an experienced woman with her clear beliefs and opinion that girls get what they want. I do not think you have to go far into the management literature until you see that the Scandinavian or Nordic leadership style is seen as something unique and I believe we are an example of this. [Randi, ManpowerGroup]

I would say that the change came with Daniel. He has had this on the agenda and focused on it and made it happen. Daniel is also very good at finding those symbol cases that are very clear and easy to communicate and show that OBOS is willing to take a stand. As I said to all our employees today was that so far it looks very good at the top management but is it that important on the top? Yes, it is almost the most important thing that it has to start there because balanced top management manages to achieve results much more than if it comes from the lower levels. [Kristin, OBOS]

4.3.2 Put in on the agenda

For this year's SHE Conference, which is Europe's largest gender diversity conference, the main solicitation was "less talk, more action". One distinct finding common for both companies was that the new CEOs put gender equality on the agenda. Inclusive leaders typically show a commitment to the course they have chosen for their organizations (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). Thus, the CEOs are doing more than only talking about inclusion; they prioritize their time and resources to address this matter. They both show the company and the outside that inclusion is a real priority for their organization. Ethical leaders have integrity where they act in ways that are consistent with espoused values (Yukl, 2013). By looking at these attributes, we can settle that the CEOs are ethical and inclusive leaders.

Throughout the interviews, we understood that by being committed and fair and having the top leaders' beliefs and philosophy, inclusion and equality would be prioritized and worked on (Yukl, 2013). ManpowerGroup's CEO tells us the story of being the only woman in the room makes you think "*why is it like this?*" and her inner motivation to make a change.

I have always worked intentionally to get more women in leading positions. It has been my philosophy. At my previous job, I was in top management as the only woman for all the years I worked there, and it makes you think about why and how this happened. There

had been women there before, and today there are more, but during my time there, I was the leader with the most women on my team compared to all the others. I realized that you need to start recruiting at a lower level to get women to higher leadership levels. So, I was very deliberate to get more women up and forward to take more leadership responsibility. [CEO, ManpowerGroup]

Also, the CEO of OBOS expressed the importance and his motivation for making the topic a priority in the organization. He has shown that the issue needs to be on the agenda and expresses that this is not the women's fight, it is the fight of all the men and women in the organization.

When I stepped in as CEO, I had the opportunity to do something about the gender balance. I started to think about the importance and how the world is changing, where you become aware of what to fix and see that you have to act. The advantage of having gender balance is to be completely free to choose afterward. With me being so clear on the priorities also helps the rest of the company working together with this topic. It is not just the women's program, but something we all agree on, both men and women. So, it comes from the top management part. This is something we need to achieve. [CEO, OBOS]

It is known that many organizations say they work with gender equality, but in real life, they are only portraying gender balance externally for reputation. However, OBOS and ManpowerGroup's CEOs are committed and speak out against the unfair treatment of employees (Yukl, 2013; Dillon and Bourke, 2016). We believe this is the starting point and the next is to act on their words.

4.3.3 A leadership responsibility

A distinction between OBOS and ManpowerGroup is their representation globally. OBOS is a Norwegian-based company, whereas ManpowerGroup is global represented in more than 80 countries. Therefore, in terms of leadership, there are some differences between the two organizations. The CEO of OBOS has more flexibility, power, and mandate because he is the top leader in the company. ManpowerGroup has its top leader in the US, where they get corporate orders they are obligated to follow. The CEO of ManpowerGroup, Jonas Prising, has therefore been an important player in the gender equality fight. With the mentality and mindset that change needs to start at the top, the CEO of Norway said the following.

When Jonas Prising became CEO of ManpowerGroup in 2014, he was clear about getting female leaders forward, and it needs to start at the top because it is not a human resources responsibility but a top management responsibility. Prising sent all the CEOs of the different countries in the group a letter stating that they have a responsibility to have two successors a woman and a man at any given time. Therefore, it was important that in the pipeline I needed to have in mind someone that could take over my job. If I could not present this, I had to start planning on how long it would take to have this plan in order. [CEO, ManpowerGroup]

According to several interviewees, Prising has been a vital figure on the road towards gender equality in ManpowerGroup and can be described as an ethical leader (Yukl, 2013). He encourages his global leaders to develop their confidence and provides them with learning opportunities. It can be difficult to lead such a huge group, and he must trust, share information, encourage to express concerns, and devote to the values in the company. Both Prising and Brath are dedicated to the work towards gender equality, and he has empowered (Yukl, 2013) Brath by making her the manager of the whole Nordic area. By giving his management group this kind of trust, it helps to encourage both personal growth and organizational growth. As the country leaders develop, they will be crucial for the company as they will be experts in their nations. Brath, as the leader of Norway, has been inspired and followed the same steps as Prising to become gender balanced. Through communicating openly and honestly, he has made it clear from the beginning that change has to start from the top, and that he will act consistently with the values stated in the organization.

He has been incredibly clear and said what he wants to achieve with his agenda on equality, where he follows this up with his management team. He means it and it is not just speeches of empty words. All honor to the global leadership of the ManpowerGroup for this. [Terje, ManpowerGroup]

In comparison to ManpowerGroup, OBOS has taken the fight for equality in their own hands as they are Norwegian-based and do not receive any orders from above. However, the CEO has the traits of integrity, commitment, and humility (Yukl, 2013; Dillon & Burke, 2016) and expresses that gender equality is the only right thing to do for everyone.

Leadership works as long as it is leadership. It does not improve with only putting words on a paper and call it a policy. It needs to be prioritized, put in a system, and specified in actions and priorities from the top management. Whether I am a man or a woman, it is my job to fix the things that are fundamentally strategic for OBOS, and gender equality is one of them. Young women do not want to work in a gender inequality company. They want to work in an equal company where they get the same opportunities as men and have role models to see that there is an opportunity to reach the top. [CEO, OBOS]

With the top management on board and the positive mindset from the CEOs, we have explored *how* and *why* they have taken a stand to fight gender equality. By analyzing their behaviors and skills with the leadership theories, we move on to the objectives, initiatives, and actions to become gender balanced. Since the objectives and actions are closely related, we have decided to incorporate the next phases, which we will explore closer in the next section.

4.4 Working toward a gender equal workplace

The next two phases in the 4-D model, *dream* and *design*, can be incorporated together. The reason is the connection as the *design* is the actions and initiatives done to reach the *dream*. We present the *dream* phase in relation to the objectives and how the leaders have included their top management to get on board because it was the core of their dream. Since many of our interviewees were pleased with the gender balance today, they looked even further at the potential they have in the future with respect to diversity and inclusiveness.

Another clear finding of *how* ManpowerGroup and OBOS are working with gender balance is their *systematic* and *structured* methods. By setting clear objectives from leadership and working strategically and structured with recruitment processes and developmental plans, they have achieved great outcomes on their way of becoming gender balanced. In the following section, we have outlined their work with gender equality from a top-down perspective. The organizations have done extensive work with the balance on leadership levels. However, there is still work to be done in the lower levels.

4.4.1 Starting point with working with gender balance

To become more gender equal, it is crucial that the leaders get on board (Traavik, 2019). Thus, the top management cannot only talk but need to move forward by practicing it regularly (Ernst and Young, 2019). Through Positive Organizational Scholarship, where the focus lies on creating positive performance, both organizations have focused on the positive outcomes of gender equality (Cameron & Dutton, 2003). Our interviewees believed that having a balanced management will give them a better perspective, as people of different genders, ages, and backgrounds will have different viewpoints. Research also shows that the presence of women in top management increases overall organization performance; thus, the nondiscrimination firms may have an advantage (Noland, Moran & Kotschwar, 2016).

As inclusive leaders, the CEOs of both firms have shown a commitment to work towards more diverse organizations (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). They treat equality as a business priority where they do not only talk about it but act on it. Starting from the top, both CEOs have a goal of having a reasonable gender balance in

their top management groups; ideally, it would be 50/50. However, as the balance also depends on availability of people and on the expertise, the balance of 40/60 is also approved in both organizations. At OBOS, the top management and the leader groups reporting directly to the top management are 50/50. From the time the CEO started, he recruited one woman every year, and it took four years until the top management was gender balanced. Siraj is the one who has fought for this balance and is the main reason that the top management is equal. The next step is to get a somewhat balanced leader group on every level of the organization.

We have to work systematically to manage this, and I hope that when I leave my position, I will leave behind a company where we do not discuss if gender equality but that we have fixed the problem. For this, it is not only the top management level but also down to all management levels in the company. Then we will be at the stage where we can recruit the best people both externally and internally, where the competence is what matters the most and you can choose the best one regardless of their gender. [CEO, OBOS]

In ManpowerGroup, the CEO has a goal of getting more women into corporate management, and Brath believes that it has been the right place to start. However, Manpower is global and receives corporate orders thereof some objectives are determined globally. One objective is that they must have at least 40 % female leaders. Currently, the top management has four women and three men, while their business management is 50/50. Thus, the top management is approximately equal. Therefore, in the same way as OBOS, ManpowerGroup in Norway can look at how to continue to work with balance further down in the organization. Several of our interviewees acknowledge that there is still a way to go before reaching gender balance in some of the management groups on the levels below. The global management of Manpower has also specified objectives based on UN's SDG, where inequalities and gender equality are a focus.

We are focusing on the UN's sustainability goals, where we have chosen to focus on four of these where two are concerned about equality. Goal number five is gender equality, and goal number ten is reduced inequalities. So, it is very important to us and it is something the global CEO takes seriously, where you need to show the progress of equality in the organization. [CEO, ManpowerGroup]

In addition to these overall goals set by the top management of both organizations, there are also goals internally in the different departments in the organizations. Some of these goals were on regional or local levels of management, but the common denominator is that the change has been initiated from a top-down perspective. In one of the departments in ManpowerGroup, we were told that they are required to be close to 50/50 as they are obligated in management. OBOS also have several objectives to create balance within the departments, but they got

objectives supporting others in their work towards gender balance as well. One of the interviewees in OBOS told us about one of the goals she had set for her department.

In my department, we have had a goal to find an entrepreneurial company with female co-founders, but it is not easy within prop-tech. We have to believe and understand what we choose to invest in, and the only criterion is that we could be a customer of this company ourselves. Therefore, we invested in a seed-corn fund called Antler, who have 40% women in their seed-corn program in Oslo, and people from 16 different countries.
[Ingvild, OBOS]

These organizational goals in both companies are assessed quarterly, where they evaluate the progress, look at the actual numbers, and decide what they are going to work on for the next quarter. They also have a more extensive yearly report where they oversee the year and discuss their progress and future progress. As we conclude with this *dream* phase, there needs to be clear objectives and expectations from the employees and leaders to work toward a gender equal workplace. This phase has shown the perception of *what might be*, which we will elaborate on it in the next phase, *design*.

4.4.2 Strategic and structural working

The *design* phase can be connected to the initiatives and actions the organizations have taken. This phase is a large part of our findings as they are done in the organizations to support the possibilities and create the ideal organization from the previous phases. This phase also connects the *discovery* and *dream* phases to actual actions done in order to get the organization to the new organizational state.

Succession planning

Another critical finding is the importance of succession planning. This practice is one of the vital factors to be successful with gender equality. Succession planning is the process of identifying and developing high potential employees, and preparing them for top leadership positions within an organization (Groves, 2007). Both companies expressed the importance of this systematic work approach by including both women and men in this planning. ManpowerGroup has developed a tool called “7 steps to conscious inclusion”, where number three concerns succession planning. In this step, instead of saying, “she doesn’t have the experience,” ask, “what do we need to make it work?” and then figure out what needs to be done to develop women to make sure they are in the succession plan.

ManpowerGroup has a goal of at least 40 % women should be in the succession plan to the top positions.

OBOS, on the other hand, ascertains that this planning is vital for the company's future success. Moreover, OBOS believes that employees are aware and conscious of the importance of gender equality in the plans and proposes that this has become a part of their culture. The research proposes that women as successors are positively associated with more favorable diversity climates for women, and positively associated with the performance of incumbent managers who nominated them as successors (Virick & Greer, 2012). One of the leaders in ManpowerGroup got to experience this succession planning closely as she tells us the story.

I realized after a while that my previous boss had me on some block to become a potential successor to his role. That was not said, but I understood that he was preparing me for his role afterward. Then, I was also responsible for succession planning in the organization, and it was then I understood it. Unfortunately, he became acutely ill and I was thrown into the role ahead of time to my maturity. For me, it was terrible and could not believe that Maalfrid dared to take that chance. However, it became lasting and I got the offer, and she said that the shirt might be a little big, but you got this. [Randi, ManpowerGroup]

The CEO of OBOS explains their succession plan structure and the importance of talent watching to get good candidates for top position in the future.

We systematically monitor the best talents. I have a list with the responsible HR in top management where we have a talent watch and where we report to the board with successors at all levels. It concerns who will take over my job, who is going to take another manager's job, and in all our divisions, we have a clear succession plan on who is taking over. They do not have to be there today, but as long as they have the potential for the job in the future, they will be considered. We are very conscious that there should be a man and a woman in succession plans, and we do not need to write it down because it comes up by itself. It has become part of the culture. [CEO, OBOS]

Even though the top management are the ones who start the change, change has to come from the lower levels of the organization as well. OBOS and ManpowerGroup recruit a lot internally for manager positions, where they monitor talent closely in the organization and try to support those talents. Thus, they value the act of recognizing the best in people and their affirming past and success, as well as recognize their talent (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The next section will explore how they oversee talents from the lower levels in the organization.

New talents from the bottom

In ManpowerGroup, they always strive to have good female candidates in all positions. However, when recruiting, they want to choose the best candidate regardless of gender in every position. As their talent pool is balanced, there have been no problems finding female candidates for leadership positions. Several of our interviewees tell us that ManpowerGroup structures their talent development by using development plans. They have chosen to follow up on the female talents development plans to make sure the women are elevated and to reach the goal of at least 40 % women in the organization. Another aspect is to highlight individuals where they see potential and follow up on talents to raise them to the next level.

OBOS also recruits a lot internally, where they systematically follow their best talents. They also have a talent development program, which they use as a talent pool for potential managers. However, there are not many spots in these programs. Therefore, they also keep an eye on the applicants for the programs to see who is interested in management positions. Moreover, when these positions become available human resources will try to find candidates of both genders and fit the right candidate to the right roles. In these situations, gender is a criterion to secure gender balance. In some divisions where it has been mainly men, internal recruitment has resulted in more women in managing positions where the CEO has expressed the importance of a long-term focus to show women that it is possible to succeed.

Affirmative action is not the answer

An expression that is frequently used in the gender equality fight is affirmative action. Affirmative action is the act of providing special opportunities to a previously disadvantaged group in order to correct inequalities (Vermeulen & Coetzee, 2011, p.49). As many biases can negatively affect the recruitment process, the managers must be aware of this pitfall to make it easier to control (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). When recruiting, the manager should always try to employ transparent and consistent decision-making processes about talent, where the decisions made should be fair and merit-based. Throughout the interviews, both organizations expressed that they did not use affirmative action to work with gender balance. Instead, their main goal in the recruitment process is to get the

best candidate, and their structures in the recruitment should secure these processes. Even though the work towards gender balance is a part of the culture, they are conscious about how they recruit, and therefore they are coping better with gender balance in general. Both organizations have strategies where they specify the number of candidates of each gender they want in a particular phase of the recruitment process.

I am aware of having one man and one woman in the final part of the recruitment process, and that you always think about that perspective as far as possible. The best candidate should always be chosen. I tell our headhunter to find women, as they tend to just go after men as that is the easiest way in our sector. So, we have forced them to look into recruiting female candidates. But we always strive for that balance as far as possible. A culture dominated by one gender will negatively influence the culture. [CEO, OBOS]

Even though none of the organizations take affirmative action for specific positions, they are always aware of reaching their percentage goals on the number of women there should be in the organization. Thus, there may be subconscious affirmative action. Despite setting an objective to create balance, it does not always go as planned, and it is crucial to have a plan B.

We have just recruited a new employee within strategy, and we wanted a man. First, we chose a man, but he turned down the offer for different reasons. So, we went for the second choice, which was a woman with less experience, but at least as much potential. Of course, if we found a woman with more experience than our first choice, we would have chosen her. We had a predominance of competent female applicants, so in the second interview, there were three women and one man. We even tried to have two more men in the first round to be sure that there would be at least one man left for the second interview, so we are very aware of the balance. [Ingvild, OBOS]

The choice of education is an important factor in getting the best talents in the future. Therefore, in the next sections, we will explain how it can affect future gender equality in the different departments, even in those that are worse than others.

Education

In the last decades, the number of women pursuing a degree has increased, and more women are getting a higher education. According to Bjørnåli et al. (2018), top managers often have an education within either business or technical disciplines and in 2018 more women than men pursued a higher education within the business. Furthermore, the choice of education will impact the gender of talents the companies can attract. This change in the educational path may be a reason why women are overrepresented in many administrative positions. In OBOS and ManpowerGroup, there are some concerns that they will lack men in

parts of the organization in the future. To overcome gender inequality in all parts of the organizations, the interviewees believe that they need a more significant change in terms of education.

If we look at statistics for education and who complete high school, then it should not be men present at the workplace at all, and that is sad. It is a bit exaggerated, of course. But maybe, I will not say that equality has gone too far, but I think that if we look closer at middle school and high school, we have forgotten to take care of the boys, as they have some different needs in that period in life. [Åsne, ManpowerGroup]

For example, there are very few or none female carpenter apprentices, but you will be very happy if you get a female carpenter because it is rare. The biggest problem to get females to this area of our operations is that there is no recruitment basis. [Kristin, OBOS]

Gender equality goes both ways, and one gender should not be overrepresented. Both organizations have to be aware of the danger of getting too many women. However, despite the increase in the number of women taking classic management degrees, the number of women in top management does not increase at the same speed. For women's careers, the importance of networks, work experience, and further education are the major factors in their choice of career goals. Thus, organizations need to think in new ways to get women into management positions. Several interviewees from OBOS and ManpowerGroup believe that having female role models as managers helps them recruit more talented women that can rise through the ranks.

You have to begin to try hunting down the talents already as graduates and look at the access to female applicants there. But having female, strong leaders in an organization attracts women, so that is something I perceive as very positive. It usually is very hard to attract women to operative positions if you do not have any female managers in the organization. [Terje, ManpowerGroup]

This statement supports the study of Bjørnåli et al. (2018) that suggest that it will be easier to recruit female managers internally if the candidates can identify themselves with a female top manager in their firm. Thus, it can be challenging to break out of the cycle when you need female talents to recruit internally to top management, and you need women in top management to recruit female talent. However, as we have shown, OBOS and ManpowerGroup have come a long way and have successfully completed these goals starting from the top. Despite having many women in the organizations, there is a lack of them in operative positions. Therefore, the companies try to find ways to attract female applicants to these positions. The manager for HR in OBOS tells a story from where they could not find seniors to their projects within housing development and had to figure out a

new way of attracting the competence needed. This is a critical step in their way of getting more women in the areas that have too many men.

In housing development, there were few women and mostly middle-aged men. These men got older, and we needed to find a way to transfer their competence and knowledge. Eventually, we decided that the best thing was to develop the talents ourselves. Therefore, we recruited project assistants to the middle-aged project managers, where the goal was that these assistants should be project managers within two years. There were a lot of male applicants in the beginning, but now we see that the young female engineers are taking over. Now, we have to work the opposite way and try to find male talents. There must always be a balance, the culture needs that. But if the women are better, you have to hire them, and opposite. You always have to find the best candidate. [Kristin, OBOS]

We have now looked at the thoughts and reasons for *why* there is a need for change and *how* they are planning to work with gender equality. By including thoughts and experiences from employees with top management in front, we have connected *discovery* and *dream* by developing actual proposals for the new organizational stage. The next step, *destiny*, will be expressed as the actual actions done in order to become gender balanced.

4.5 Creating their own destiny

The next three sections of flexibility, mentorship- and leadership programs, and fight for equality in sport are connected to the last phase of the 4-D model, *destiny*. In this last phase, it is important to sustain the momentum for ongoing change and performance. Therefore, this phase can be connected to the ongoing work they are doing in order to keep the healthy gender balance in the organization. We have also decided to focus on the organization's work outside of the office as they are taking a stand in the gender equality fight on the football field. Showing support and encouragement toward gender equality gives the employees faith and pride in the organization, and also strengthens their stand in the gender equality fight. Moreover, it also helps translate ideals into reality and beliefs into practice because it gives a clearer picture of *how* the organizations work and *why* they are working with gender equality.

4.5.1 Flexibility

According to the research of Sandal et al. (2013), managers of diverse groups have to emphasize flexibility, as well as respect their employees. The managers of OBOS and ManpowerGroup have given employees flexibility as a way of *how* to work towards gender equality. Historically, women have been at home while their husbands were at work. Halrynjo and Lyng (2010) state that there is still a

perception that women are housewives who take more responsibility at home, while men can pursue their careers. Thus, there are some tendencies of women choosing between their careers and family. Also, the research of Nordicore (2019) states that one of the Nordic Gender Equality Paradox explanations is that women are not willing to give what it takes to advance in their careers. One of the leaders at ManpowerGroup stated.

We have it good here in Norway. This may be a reason why a lot of women are not as willing to fight for their careers and leave it up to the men. Men also have paternity leave, so it should not be a huge gap anymore. I think that women have the opportunity to get where they want, but we are spoiled with benefits and the social network, so we may choose that over our careers. In a phase in our lives, we girls tend to make a choice where we choose family over career. I think that the possibilities in Norway are great to be able to manage both career and family. As a single parent, I thought it was tough to deliver in kindergarten as well as deliver at work. As an employer, we try to facilitate this in the best way. This is important for both genders. You have to be flexible, and this flexibility goes both ways. If you really want a career, you have to give a lot back as well. [Åsne, ManpowerGroup]

During our interviews, several of our participants stated that the lack of female managers might come from choosing between family and career. In the Nordic countries, there should not be any difference between men and women regarding this choice as the welfare state enables both genders to have a career and family. The study of Savage (2019) tells us that longer parental leave and state-subsidized childcare should encourage men to be a bigger part of family life. Thus, the organizations must remember that flexibility in connection with children goes both ways. The CEO of ManpowerGroup also needs to remind herself about this from time to time.

A man in the finance department told me he was taking paternity leave. I replied, “wow, are you going on leave, that is a bit of a crisis”. Then, the finance director said that I am always the person talking about the importance of flexibility. You always know that the women will be gone, because that is what has been the norm. But when the men go away for 3-4 months it seems different, but it is as important that we facilitate for both parties. I will not have the pleasure of seeing him for those months; someone else at home will. Therefore, I think it is important that we facilitate for that period in life. Especially as a big organization, we have to show them support and give them the help they need in that situation. [CEO, ManpowerGroup]

The study of Bjørnåli, Farstad, Brovold and Terjesen (2018) indicated that one of the organization’s biggest challenges is finding a way to reduce the tension of the work-versus-family conflict. OBOS and ManpowerGroup tries to find ways to facilitate the workdays of their employees in the best way possible and are open for flexible hours. A manager at OBOS stated the following.

Both employees and employers have to be flexible. You have to be able to pick up your child, but then you also have to finish the work in the evening if you did not finish during

work hours. To manage that balance in modern work life without people getting burned out is the balance you should struggle to achieve. But if you want flexibility, you have to be flexible yourself. [Ingvild, OBOS]

To be able to create flexibility in the workplace, there has to be a mutual trust between the parts. According to Yukl (2013), ethical leaders have a trusting relationship with their employees. OBOS and ManpowerGroup got managers with typical traits based on ethical leadership theory. The employer must trust that the employees finish their tasks even though they have gone home early one day. Managers that are able to facilitate flexibility will build a better relationship with their team. This trait is typical for an ethical leader, where empathy and altruism are two of the main values (Yukl, 2013). The manager can help the employee by giving them flexibility and take the risk of losing control over the employees when they are not in the office. This sacrifice is crucial for protecting the benefits the flexibility gives the employees, but also the benefits these employees may give back to the organization. Ethical leaders also help others cope with emotional distress. An example might be the stress of having a sick child. One of the managers in OBOS gave us a great example of a situation where her employer let her stay home, despite working on completing a major international deal.

I have stayed at home with a sick child and had calls with big English banks. I sat at my child's play table in his room while he was watching Angry Birds in the living room. This while negotiating a 10 billion NOK deal. I had to mute the phone to start Angry Birds again and again. I do not think this would be possible working for an English bank. Despite this, we work even though we have a sick child. [Ingvild, OBOS]

This deal may not have gone through if it had not been for the flexibility given from OBOS. She did not have to go through the emotional distress from choosing between her child or going to the office. Trusting her to do her job, even at home without any supervision, benefits both the manager and OBOS. Through flexibility, employees will not only be able to give back to the organization but also be more motivated to work through problems that may come along. Despite having a welfare system, some are uncertain about their rights and how their employers handle their job situation when they are on parental leave. Two common denominators for ethical and inclusive leaders are open and honest communication with their followers. The leaders emphasize empowerment by consulting with the employees about decisions that will affect them (Yukl, 2013; Dillon & Bourke, 2016). This is a way to create a safe space where the employees can trust that their employer wants their best and cares about their points of view.

It was important for the employees to know that when coming back to work, their job was still there.

I may stay in this role for ten years, if I am able to be on parental leave multiple times. It happens that people that have been on leave get back to work and to a different role than they had when they left. But it is not as you come back to nothing; you are still employed. I know our HR director has a very good dialog with people on parental leave, so if you do a good job, you will always have a place to come back to. [Jenny, ManpowerGroup]

We have an employee who was supposed to take paternity leave almost immediately after he got hired. He had not quite clarified some things with the daycare or something. Then we, as the employer, were very flexible about him starting at work in April or after the summer when things were taken care of. You have to get your family in order before everything else. So, of course, we are aware of that. [Ingvild, OBOS]

The Norwegian welfare state is the foundation of the flexibility, and flexibility is a part of the foundation of the success of OBOS and ManpowerGroup. Flexibility in the workplace may be a vital factor in being successful at home and work. Thus, to attract the best candidates of both genders, organizations must be able to provide flexibility for their employees. Even though Nordicore (2019) states that women may not be as willing as men to climb the career ladder, our interviewees disagree. There are great possibilities in Norway for women as well as men to pursue their careers as well as managing their families. The possibilities the welfare state gives makes it possible for everyone to succeed “despite” choosing family life as well. These possibilities people get in their careers at ManpowerGroup and OBOS are not based on their gender, but their personal traits and motivation. One employee in ManpowerGroup sums it up.

There are opportunities for those who stand out and show persistence. If you are a humble and nice person at the same time, then opportunities will come. We, who are career-driven and wants to climb the ladder, we notice that ManpowerGroup wants to invest in us. We have a lot of competence and ambitions, and we are those who will run the organization in the future. [Jenny, ManpowerGroup]

4.5.2 Importance of mentors and leadership programs

The new SHE index focuses more on leadership programs, and a central finding was that OBOS and ManpowerGroup have implemented such programs to be attractive as employers, give equal opportunities and help to form the best talents internally. Bjørnåli et al. (2018) state that mentors and role models are essential for women who want to move forward with their careers. They suggest that having a female top manager in their firm as a role model can motivate women to dare to take a step up. ManpowerGroup and OBOS have both experienced that female role models have helped them recruit more women.

It is important to have female role models as managers. So, two out of three managers in IT in Experis are women, which helps us a lot when it comes to recruiting new talents because it shows that it is possible for women to have a career in Experis. [Terje, ManpowerGroup]

We want role models in our organization, and even though there are lots of women here, we have to show potential candidates that there are possibilities here. [CEO, OBOS]

Bjørnåli et al. (2018) show that building a network between female top leaders and women with leadership ambitions will increase the number of women in top management over time. OBOS and ManpowerGroup have created career development programs, where the participants can choose to have a mentor from the organization. ManpowerGroup has been a part of several external leadership programs like NHO's "female future" and Storebrand's "50/50". Likewise, they have their own leadership programs called "Emerging Leader" and "Future Leader" whereas these programs were addressed by leaders.

I think this is very good to grow as a leader. The program has been very successful, and it is quite important that if you have been through such a program that you are followed up. The goal is that the participants of the Emerging Leader program should get a new job within 1-2 years after the end of the program. [CEO, ManpowerGroup]

Before applying for Manpower's Future Leader program, participants had to be recommended and supported by their leader. If elected for the program, the participants can choose their mentor from their own country, and we were fortunate to talk to one of the participants of this program and her experience around it.

My old boss tipped me about the program as I want to be a manager. To get into the program, your leader has to recommend and support you as they have to know that you have the potential for handling such a role in the future. Of course, there is no guarantee that you will get a job like that after the programs' end. The program was amazing and really good. We were 12 participants nationally, and the program lasted from March until the end of the year. We had four workshops in total in Oslo, and one abroad with participants from other countries. It has also helped me tremendously to have the HR director as my mentor. My boss believes it is great that I have had a mentor outside the team. It requires a lot of reflection when you are new in such a demanding role. She is also a woman, so it is also great talking to her about balancing job and private life. [Jenny, ManpowerGroup]

OBOS has its own leadership program that consists of mentors, close supervising, and developing talent. Their program, called Extend, is combined with three words: leader, talent, and development. The program is not a direct leadership development program but more a talent development program. It is, however, a program considered for leaders as you need to have the ambition to be one. Extend is also used as their talent pool to future leadership positions.

We pick 12 employees under the age of 40 who hold different positions around the organization. Daniel was clear at the very beginning that there should be 50/50 or at least balanced. Fortunately, there have been competent applicants of both genders, so there has not really been a challenge. It is important that we get both genders upward and show that there are opportunities for everyone. I remember that for the last class, there were more women applicants than men. We have a gender balance for the mentors as well. [Kristin, OBOS]

OBOS has also started to use a new platform called Equality Check. Equality Check is a community-based platform of employee reviews rating equality in companies (Equality Check, 2020). They use this tool to get a better understanding of the employee's feelings of equality in the workplace, the culture, and create a better workplace through transparency.

We have also started to use tools where employees rate the equality specter and can comment and help us with valuable input. It is great to get some feedback from the staff because, essentially, they are the organization. I think that is very useful because we can believe that we succeed with this, but people have to experience that they have equal opportunities, and even if we say there is equality, there is a difference in perception of reality. [Kristin, OBOS]

Our finding supports the study of Bjørnåli, Farstad, Brovold and Terjesen (2018) that highlights the importance of good mentor-arrangements to be able to recruit women to top management positions. They also emphasized the importance of creating awareness among female top managers that they are role models for female recruits. Supporting the personal growth of their followers is one of the emphasized values of an ethical leader and can be done through mentoring and coaching others (Yukl, 2013). The CEO of ManpowerGroup tells us an interesting and meaningful story about a global mentorship program that she has been a part of and gotten a global understanding.

We had a mentoring program for women internally, where I was mentoring a lady in China. It was very exciting, and now I am mentoring a lady in France. It has been rewarding to learn from other countries where the culture is different, and you realize a lot of differences. I was asked how on earth have you managed to have two children? Because for the first time in China, you have now gone from having a one-child policy to maybe being allowed to have two. She did not understand how it was possible because they may have to travel a few hours back and forth from work, and the working hours are longer, maybe around 12-13 hours a day. So, then you start to understand the challenges because there are no kindergartens where you can pick your child up. You do not have to go longer than Germany where the children come home and eat lunch or in France to understand that we are privileged in Norway or in the Nordic countries with the benefits we have here. [CEO, ManpowerGroup]

This story is also a great example of the curiosity inclusive leaders hold (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). Brath shows a desire and a motivation to learn and understand how others experience the world. These mentorships are great opportunities to not only share her own experiences but also learn from the mentees and how work life

is in their countries. Through this arrangement, the CEO will build on her cultural intelligence (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). As an inclusive leader, Brath tries to experience culturally diverse environments to grow further as a manager. These relationships will help her increase her skills in changing managing style when a cross-cultural encounter requires it and make it easier to lead a more diverse group in the future. Thus, this will enable growth for both herself, the mentee, and the company.

Women also need more of a push as they tend to think they are underqualified. The women that have become top managers have often had support from their leaders through their careers, which has helped them to take more responsibility from the beginning. This trust and backing from the levels above have been crucial for these managers' career development (Bjørnåli, Farstad, Brovold & Terjesen, 2018). Several of our participants expressed this as an important factor.

We have to be more conscious about the girls and dare to challenge them a bit more. You cannot guarantee them a position, but you can challenge them to apply for it. When I recruit internally, I have talked to my colleagues and told them to give an extra push to those they know is good but who may be resistant when it comes to taking the next step. Doing this, many who would never apply on their own has taken the step to actually apply. They did not see that they had the competence needed before someone came and told them. So, a tip for managers may be to be a bit more aware of the girls and give them a little push. [Åsne, ManpowerGroup]

We have now looked at how OBOS and ManpowerGroup have worked to become more gender balanced in their organizations. Their destiny is composed of several actions, and it is essential to sustain these as well as introducing new possibilities and opportunities in the future. Moreover, the organizations have also taken a stand in the football fight regarding equality. There is still a long way to go for women's football, and it is an issue that has been addressed in the media for the last few years. However, our partners, ManpowerGroup and OBOS, have been role models in this fight, as they support gender equality on the football field.

4.5.3 Supporting gender equality on the field

It is noteworthy to mention that the leaders of OBOS and ManpowerGroup show cognizance of bias, commitment, and courage in society (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). This demonstrates corporate social responsibility and the genuineness of gender equality. Toppserien, which is the top division in women's football in Norway, has minimal resources and the women cannot live from playing football. OBOS

and ManpowerGroup, have both taken a stand in this ongoing fight. The leaders have shown great leadership skills encouraging fairness, integrity, and commitment (Dillon & Burke, 2016; Yukl, 2013). OBOS, as the first major player out fronting this, tells us that this was a necessary step to gender equality and saw an opportunity to promote the organization.

I am genuinely passionate about football and saw injustice. It also helps us on the internal journey of becoming gender equal, and to be a part of the change in football is a bonus. People also associate OBOS with women's football and the sponsorship has been great both ways. Every time someone writes about women's football and equal opportunities, OBOS will be mentioned in these discussions. We were very lucky with the timing of the sponsorship, but if the board had said "yes, it was a good idea, but it is a lot of money or something like that", the idea could have died. However, there were no complains and we decided to do it, and the rest is history. [CEO, OBOS]

ManpowerGroup has been inspired by the decision from OBOS and decided that they also wanted to take a stand by entering into a partnership with Toppfotball Kvinner.

Exciting things are happening in women's top football, and ManpowerGroup has a strong desire to be part of the emergence. This is a win-win situation, and for our part, we want to associate with a women's football that is in growth. At the same time, we can offer 400 highly motivated, structured, and resourceful people exclusively to our customers, which we are sure will be very interested. [CEO, ManpowerGroup]

Not only do ManpowerGroup and OBOS help on the football field in terms of resources and funds, but they also provide jobs and a workplace where they get the opportunity to pursue their dream of playing professional football as well as combining this with a job. This also strengthens the value of all people as they recognize that women are just as important as men when it comes to football, the world, and the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). By speaking out on unjust practices, like football, strengthens OBOS and ManpowerGroup but, more importantly, their leaders' integrity and commitment (Dillon & Burke, 2016; Yukl, 2013) to gender equality.

4.6 Potential for improvement

As explained earlier, ManpowerGroup and OBOS are in two different sectors, and there are different kinds of improvement areas in the companies. They have shown integrity and honesty (Yukl, 2013) about the areas where there is room for improvement. Both companies emphasized that they are not perfect, but most important, they are working on it. ManpowerGroup tells us that there is room for improvement in their parts of their organization but focus on the positives.

We have a lot of potential for improvement for things that we can do differently, but I am initially satisfied that we do not have to fight us through in the organization. I know of others who have to fight a lot more for equal rights, and I am very grateful for that. It also means that we can share a bit of ourselves and spread some security around the topic and not make it so scary. I also believe that the key word is structure. The ownership is with Maalfrid and Jonas, and it is essential to conquering inequality because if an HR manager tries to fight through something like this alone, it has no chance. [Randi, ManpowerGroup]

During the interviews, a common issue seemed to arise in both organizations. Both companies have worked towards gender equality for quite some time, but they have also started to have a shortage of men in some areas of the organization. Several of our participants voiced the issue of having too many women in certain areas like HR, as well as having too many men in some parts like construction and IT. OBOS tell us that they are aware of the unbalance between genders in certain parts of the company. However, the awareness makes it possible to take action and change this problem.

There is still a way to go in the lower levels of the organization. In HR, we are only women. I have recruited, and it has only been women. That is not good enough. We are focused on having a balance, either way. The next time I recruit someone into my team, it has to be a man. More balance creates more perspectives; it makes you think differently and come up with new ideas. It is easy getting stuck in the same patterns. Therefore, the balance is crucial. [Kristin, OBOS]

There are also areas with potential for improvement, such as how long people stay in their position. Solving this problem and open up for a more mobile environment internally can enable diversity on every level.

I think we have a great gender balance. However, many of my colleagues have been in their positions for several years, and that hinders the possibility for others to apply for that role. There is too little internal rotation on the management level, and this can result in unevenness. You have to look at the manager's mobility internally and how we work to avoid people staying in the same role as new eyes may be necessary to develop further. And here, age comes in as well. Most of the people in my management team are over 50 years old. It is important to have diversity at every level. [Jenny, ManpowerGroup]

Next, diversity- and inclusion-specter is broad in terms of different components. According to SHE 2020, an essential part of diversity and inclusion is gender equality that is the common denominator within all categories, spanning from age, disability, race, and ethnicity to sexual preferences (SHE, 2020). Since the two organizations have come a long way in the gender equality fight, they are looking even further in the diversity and inclusion specter, which we explain closer in the next section.

4.7 The future

It is impossible to know exactly what the future holds as trends, markets, and society change. Thus, organizations do what they believe will be relevant and to their advantage in the future. There will always be customers available as people need a roof over their heads and a job, where OBOS and ManpowerGroup help people achieve this. Thus, their biggest challenge is to stay relevant in their sectors and be the first choice for its customers. It is important to stay attractive to all of your customers and not just a small part of them. Therefore, it will be significant to work with the whole specter of diversity and inclusion. The traits of humility, fairness, and integrity will be important from the leadership in the future (Yukl, 2013).

We build much of our culture on having a social mission. It is about giving people work and getting vulnerable groups out to work and being able to understand how important it is to have work in a person's life. To have integrity and feel that you are contributing lies with sustainability and diversity. For us, this must become more and more visible to get the attraction of people. In the future, I think it is going to be even more critical and we have plans to launch new solutions to keep ourselves competitive in a tough market. [Randi, ManpowerGroup]

Based on the results on the SHE Index, as well as what we have discovered through our research, ManpowerGroup and OBOS have come a long way on the road to gender equality. When asked about their thoughts on equality in the future, interviewees from both organizations agreed that the next step is to work with diversity and inclusion in general, and not just gender. Furthermore, they emphasize to stay competitive in their sectors. They need to focus on broader aspects like age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs. However, there is also an issue as the possibilities to map these factors can be hard, but they are confident that they will find a way. We are told a story on how OBOS employed an older man in a management position, but he was the best candidate and therefore also the right one.

We hired a candidate that was 59 years old in a management position, it should not have anything to say, but in reality, it is hard for people over 55 to get new jobs, especially in management positions. Usually, people will have a person between 35-40 years. This story even reached the financial newspaper, and, for us, that was just even more positive and joyful because we were fortunate to have hired a huge competent person. Companies need to be more open about thinking more out of their box because we will meet this more frequently in the future. [Kristin, OBOS]

ManpowerGroup also voiced their opinions on the future of gender equality and emphasized the importance of including the whole society and not just a small part of it. They state that in order to have a competitive advantage in the market,

they are in need of the best talent, attract new and keep old customers, and acquire different mindsets to achieve the best solutions to get the best results.

In Norway, it is easy to think of equality as just the difference between men and women. I think it is important for a company that has come this far to think that equality also is about other aspects. It is about equal pay; it is about the possibility to combine career and family, and how to facilitate this. You have to think about equality for people from different cultures and backgrounds, and this may be even more important to work towards in the years to come. Our goal for the future has to be diversity beyond gender. We have to mirror society, and I do not think we are there yet. [Åsne, ManpowerGroup]

ManpowerGroup and OBOS have been transparent and honest in their improvement areas, and they could not express enough that they are not perfect. However, perfect is not the goal, but the most important part for both organizations is the ongoing work to become gender equal in every part of the organization, especially leadership levels. By continuing the positive change approach (Cameron & Dutton, 2003), learning from the past, and doing more of the good things (Rouse, 2010), there will be many successful years for the organizations with diversity and inclusion. With the game changers of inclusive and ethical leadership in the organizations in the front, the possibilities are eternal.

PART V: CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored *how* and *why* OBOS and ManpowerGroup have worked with gender equality in their organization. By exploring our findings in the light of leadership theory, Positive Organizational Scholarship, and Appreciative Inquiry, we can conclude that both organizations are working well with gender equality. We have established and analyzed *how* they have worked to become gender balanced in most parts of their organizations through actions and initiatives. Furthermore, we have explored *why* they have been working with gender equality through inner and outer motivation from leaders and the world. From SHE Conference 2020, there was an opening statement of:

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. Be a part of the change you want to see.”

This statement underlines OBOS and ManpowerGroup’s work toward a more gender equal workplace. It is not something that can be changed fast or alone, but there needs to be continuing strategical work where the values of equality, inclusiveness, and leadership are present. It is also important to emphasize that the

work is toward equality and not more or less of one gender. The goal is to be equal and to have equal rights. The following section will present our conclusion in light of our main findings to our research questions.

The interviews revealed that the CEOs' impact, mindset, and leadership skills in the fight of gender equality is the most important enabler to be successful. These descriptions match the theory of inclusive leadership where the organization's leaders need to get on board (Randel et al., 2018; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Syed & Ozbilgin, 2019; Traavik, 2019). As the findings indicate, there would not have been a change if it was not for the leadership's decisions. Their influence and actions done in order to change the gender balance have been crucial in their work to become leaders within the field. Furthermore, it seems that their actions have been contagious throughout the company as several participants voiced their opinion on their good work and their importance in the fight. We believe that the CEOs of the two companies have managed to change the organization to a more gender balanced workplace by using their voice and skills as leaders. If it was not for them, the change would have or could not have happened due to their power in the organization. Thus, we support that it needs to start from the top management in order to make a difference and to become gender equal in the company.

In light of the positives in the organizations, we sought to find the actions and initiatives that created this positive change of gender equality in the organizations. By applying the theories of POS and AI, where the focus lies on the positive work the organizations have done and not their pitfalls, we found several fundamental reasons for their success. As concluded above, the change needs to be initiated from the top as they are the ones in charge of making the changes in the organizations. However, it does not help with empty words, so we then moved on to explore *how* they have been working with it. Throughout our interviews, we soon developed a common understanding that specific actions need to be done in the organizations to become equal or balanced. Many of our participants were proud and expressed their pride in working in an organization that takes this topic seriously. With their systematic work with recruitment processes, succession planning, leadership- and mentorship programs, talent watching, and sponsorship

in the football world, it has worked to their advantage in the organization and society.

One of the crucial findings that have helped OBOS and Manpower become more gender balanced is their shared vision of objectives connected to their design. This shared vision has come from their realizations from the discovery phase, where there were unconscious biases, glass ceiling existence, and male dominance in many parts of the organizations. As our 4-D model from Cooperrider et al. (2003) illustrates, by the CEOs taking a stand with clear objectives, and actions and together with their employees, they can overcome gender equality. By monitoring and evaluating their initiatives like succession planning and leadership and mentorship programs, there have been significant steps in the right direction for both organizations. Another important aspect connected to these initiatives is the importance of role models as women would dare to take a step upward and be trusted from leaders above (Bjørnåli et al., 2018). As of their destiny, the organizations need to keep working with gender balance and sustain momentum for ongoing change. There is still work to be done, and we are aware that areas that require improvement exist in different parts of the organizations. However, the leaders' integrity and commitment will be important as they move on working with gender balance and the larger specter of diversity and inclusion. We believe that the commitment from top management and the actions taken has revealed positive strides on their journey to become equal.

As we reminisced from the introduction, it is estimated that it will take around 108 years for women before gaining gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2018). This is the reality for many countries, organizations, and people in general. However, gender equality should be a fundamental human right. OBOS and ManpowerGroup are working to achieve this human right and have come far in their way. Another essential factor of this thesis also addresses OBOS and ManpowerGroup's contribution to society in the form of women's football. They have both taken a stand in the equality fight, and it shows that they take their corporate social responsibility seriously. They must use their platforms to help women reach the same opportunities as men. In addition, both organizations have a future focus on the bigger part of diversity, including age, ethnicity, race, and religious beliefs. By using their voice in society and showing people that we are

all equal and worthy, it is not only helpful for their organizations to attract new talents, but also to mirror the society they are helping in their daily lives.

Our findings have shown significant parts of success for OBOS and ManpowerGroup. Each of them is important on its own, but it is the combination that makes them special. By having an inclusive leadership, strong strategy, and invested employees, any organization can succeed in gender equality. We believe that the presented findings can contribute to other organizations that struggle or are unsure about how to work with gender inequalities. If organizations can learn and implement similar practices and mindset as OBOS and ManpowerGroup, we strongly believe that the hundred and eight years will be shorter to achieve the overall goal of gender equality. We will end our thesis with the slogan from this year's SHE Conference that was "less talk, more action".

PART VI: LIMITATIONS

We acknowledge some limitations with this thesis. Firstly, there were only a few interviews in general as we only interviewed 11 people, and especially a few from OBOS. This can be argued as not sufficient in terms of reliability and as having imbalance between the organizations. Secondly, participants might be afraid to speak the truth in the interviews or they want to promote their organizations even though there might be flaws. However, we felt that both organizations showed transparency and spoke from their hearts which made us trust their responses. Thirdly, there were few interviews in the lower levels in both organizations which makes it hard to conclude if their perception is the same as the top management.

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APPENDICES**Appendix A: Interview objects**

Overview of interview objects OBOS
Daniel K. Siraj - CEO
Ingvild Randstad
Kristin Gran

Overview of interview objects Manpower Group
Maalfrid Brath - CEO
Terje Solheim
Fredrik Hansen
Randi Sørensen
Åsne Hauge
Jenny Melby
Per Skar

SHE
Heidi Aven - CEO

Appendix B: Interview guide for leader and employees

Hvordan to vellykkede store norske selskaper oppfatter og jobber mot likestilling i toppledelsen? Og hvorfor de jobber med kjønnsbalanse i organisasjonen?

<p>Fase 1: Generelle spørsmål</p>	<p><u>Innledning (5 minutter)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Løs prat ⇒ Introduksjon av oss ⇒ Formål med oppgaven ⇒ Informere om samtykke/konfidensialitet ⇒ Spørre om tillatelse til å gjøre opptak ⇒ Kan du først fortelle litt om deg selv og din karriere? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hvor lenge har du jobbet i organisasjonen? ○ Hvor lenge har du jobbet i den jobber du har nå og hvilken hadde du før? 	<p>Bli bedre kjent med intervjuobjektene kjent</p>
<p>Fase 2: Historiefortelling: - Før til nå - En forestilt fremtid</p>	<p><u>Historiefortelling – åpne spørsmål (25 minutter)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Hvordan var det før? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hvordan var kjønns sammensetningen i organisasjonen generelt? • To øverste ledernivåene? • Fint med tall! ⇒ Hvem/hva/hvorfor var hovedgrunnen til endringen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hvordan var du involvert og hva var din rolle? • Hvis du ikke var involvert, hvordan har det påvirket deg og har du lagt merke til endringene? ⇒ Hvordan er kjønnsbalansen i dag? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ledelsen (konsernledelsen, mm) • Hvilke initiativer er i bruk? • Hvordan er du involvert? ⇒ Hvordan forutser du fremtiden for kjønnsbalansen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hvordan kan dere opprettholde en sunn kjønnsbalanse? • Hva skal dere gjøre for å være konkurransedyktig eller bruke det som en fordel? 	<p>Historien fra begynnelsen av å bli mer kjønn lik dagens.</p> <p>I tillegg å danne seg et bilde av hvordan fremtiden vil se ut</p> <p>Se etter nøkkelpersoner, like muligheter og utvikling</p>
<p>Fase 3: Reflekterende og fokuserte spørsmål ⇒ Retningslinjer og mål ⇒ Kjønns lønns gapet</p>	<p>Kjønnsbalansen (20 minutter)</p> <p><u>Retningslinjer og mål</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Hvordan konkrete målsetninger har dere for kjønnsbalansen i organisasjonen? ⇒ Hvordan og hvem var med å danne disse målsetningene? ⇒ Har du/dere et spesifikt mål? 	<p>Gjennombrudd og kunnskapsdeling</p> <p>Lærdommer</p>

<p>⇒ Talent og rekruttering</p> <p>⇒ Handling og målinger</p>	<p>⇒ Hvis ja, hvordan skal dere nå dette målet?</p> <p><i>Holdninger og tiltak</i></p> <p>⇒ Beskrive de tiltakene har dere gjort for å forbedre kjønnsbalansen?</p> <p><i>Her kan vi forklare at det kan være alt fra internt, eksternt, metoder, kultur, karriere, lederutvikling, varighet, omfang, mål</i></p> <p>⇒ Hvem var med å bestemme disse tiltakene? (menn? kvinner? begge?)</p> <p>⇒ Hvordan ble tiltakene til?</p> <p>⇒ Evaluering av tiltakene? Hvem gjør det og har det vært suksess?</p> <p><i>Talent og rekruttering:</i></p> <p>⇒ Hvordan sørger dere for at det kvinner lykkes i bedriften?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ledelseserfaring? <p>⇒ Er det en sporing av kvinner i talentpool deres?</p> <p>⇒ Når du rekrutterer til toppledemivåstillinger, vurderer du andelen kvinnelige kandidater?</p> <p>⇒ Rekrutteringsrutiner – hvordan er disse?</p>	<p>Se etter initiativer og engasjement fra toppledere</p>
<p>Fase 4: Avslutning og oppsummering</p>	<p>Oppsummering (10 minutter)</p> <p>⇒ Oppsummere funn</p> <p>⇒ Har vi forstått deg riktig?</p> <p>⇒ Er det noe du vil legge til?</p> <p>⇒ Noe helt til slutt, har du noen råd du vil gi til andre organisasjoner som ønsker økt kjønnsbalanse?</p>	<p>Få en felles forståelse av funnene som er samlet inn.</p>

Spørsmål til ansatte:

Fase 2:

- Hvordan opplevde du at bedriften jobbet med likestilling tidligere?
- Føler du at det har skjedd en forandring? Hvordan er det nå vs. hvordan det har vært?
 - Har du noen historier som kan forklare hvordan bedriften jobber for kjønnsbalanse?
- Virker det som for deg at organisasjonen genuint ønsker å gjøre en endring når det kommer til likestilling, eller fremmer de det mer for at det skal se bra ut utad?
- Hvem opplever du jobber for kjønnsbalanse i organisasjonen?
- Opplever du at dette er et viktig tema på alle nivåer?
- Vet du om noen overordnede mål dere jobber etter for å nå kjønnsbalanse?

Fase 3:

Retningslinjer og mål

- Er målene i organisasjonen/ledelsen kjent i alle ledd i organisasjonen?
- Hvilke retningslinjer og hvordan har ledelsen uttrykk for disse målene?
- *Hvis det er retningslinjer eller målsetting, hvordan skal alle hjelpe å nå disse?*

Holdninger og tiltak

- Hvilke initiativer og programmer merker du at organisasjonen tar?

Her kan vi forklare at det kan være alt fra internt, eksternt, metoder, kultur, karriere, lederutvikling, varighet, omfang, mål

- Har du blitt inkludert eller vært en del av prosessen i tiltakene?
- Hvem har du inntrykk av eller føler har startet dette arbeidet?
- Er det evaluering av tiltakene? Hvem gjør det og har det vært suksess?

Talent og rekruttering:

- Hvordan føler du mulighetene i bedriften er for å nå ledelsesnivåer?
- Rekrutteringsrutiner – hvordan er disse og føler du de har endret seg?

Appendix C: Informed consent

Request for taking part in the research project: “Gender equality in Norwegian organizations”

Purpose of the project

This is a master’s thesis where the purpose is to interview two organizations that are well known for their work with gender equality in the organization, based on a gender-balanced index, and to write success stories that can hopefully help other organizations. The objective is to understand how these organizations have been successful and why they have chosen to focus on gender equality.

The **research question(s)** of the study is: “*How two major Norwegian companies perceive and work toward gender equality in top management? And why are they working with gender equality in the organizations?*”

The project is a part of a master thesis at BI Norwegian Business (Handelshøyskolen|BI, Campus Oslo).

What does participation involve for you?

Participation in this project involves an interview with a maximum length of 60 minutes but can also take less depending on the answers. The interview will cover topics such as appreciative inquiry, leadership, and storytelling. We will record the interview and it will be used a microphone not in connection with the internet for your safety.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – what happens to the information from the interview?

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. All information collected in the interview will remain confidential and there will be no identifiable information about the participants connected to the audio recording. The individuals that will have access to the information are the Project Leads (Cecilie Dokka and Amalie Studsrød) and our supervisor Øyvind Kvalnes professor at BI.

The project will end on July 1st, and all digital recordings will be deleted at the project end.

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with BI Business School, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact Cecilie or Amalie (ceciliedokka@gmail.com, amaliestudsrod@outlook.com) or Øyvind Kvalnes (supervisor) by email: (oyvind.kvalnes@bi.no) or by telephone: (+4795204496)

Consent to participate in the study

I have received and understood information about the project Gender equality in Norwegian organizations and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

to participate in the interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, July 1st,

(Signed by participant, date)